

WORLD OF LETTERS.

FICTION.

It was thought that after Robert Louis Stevenson had written "Jekyll and Hyde" and "The Suicide Club" the possibilities of the horrible in fiction were pretty well exhausted during this generation at least; but H. G. Wells, in his latest book, proves otherwise.

"The Island of Dr. Moreau" (New York: Stone & Kimball) is described on its title page as "A Possibility." Human life can thank their stars it is not likely ever to become a reality. Such a narrative of horrors, so intense, realistic and vivid, and yet nowhere sensibly overdrawn, has rarely before been printed in any age; it confirms Mr. Wells' claim to the possession of the most ambitious and strenuous imagination in contemporary letters.

Dr. Moreau is a noted vivisectionist, who, being driven from England by the harking of unscientific sentimentality, established himself in a small island in the South Pacific. For ten years he here experiments unintermittently. Then a castaway (who tells the story) is thrown on the island and sees some astonishing results of the doctor's handling of the matter.

"You forget all that a skilled vivisector can do with living things," said Moreau. "Small efforts have been made—amputation, tongue-cutting, excision. Of course, you know a spirit may be induced or cured by surgery. Then in the case of excisions you have all kinds of secondary changes, pigmentation, disturbance of the action of the various organs in the secretion of fatty tissue."

"Manufactured monsters," said I. "Then you mean to tell me that more of these things are to be done? Have you animals carved and wrought into new shapes? To the study of the plasticity of living forms my life has been devoted."

There is further conversation along this line, until we come to the following: "But," said I, "these things—these animals!" He said that was so and proceeded to point out that the possibility of vivisection does not stop at mere physical metamorphosis. A pig may be educated. The mental structure is even less determinate than the bodily. In our growing science of hypnomy, we have seen the possibility of superseding old inherent instincts by new suggestions, grafting upon or replacing the inherited fixed ideas. Very much indeed of what we call moral education, he said, is such an artificial modification and perversion of instinct; gyanic capacity is trained into courageous self-sacrifice, and suppressed sensuality into religious emotion. And the great difference between man and monkey is in the larynx, he continued—in the incapacity to frame delicately different sounds, and in the change in its most intimate structure.

The island, in other words, was peopled with man-made animals, having the shape, the voice and some of the cruder instincts of men, set before a background of ferocity and bestiality. The putative narrator of the story lived for nine months amongst these beast folk and the novel is mainly a description of his and their unparalleled experiences.

In a different vein, but every whit as interesting, is "Dr. Nikola" by Guy Boothby (published by the Appletons in their novel and story library). Dr. Nikola is an impossible hypnotist and discoverer of occult mysteries, who makes all persons bow to his strong mesmerism force and relentless will. He learns that in a Tibetan monastery live a race of monks who have accumulated extraordinary knowledge covering thousands of centuries. He determines to penetrate into this holy of Oriental holies and possess himself of its wonderful secrets. He does this at the last minute, with singular consequences. The reader who brings this novel will swallow many improbable abilities before he lays the book down.

but he will not stop until he shall have read it through.

Following in the path marked out by Zane Grey, Abraham Cahan, Lithuanian Jew and a political refugee, has given us in "Yek, a Tale of the New York Ghetto" (New York: D. Appleton & Co.), an interesting and at times vivid picture of the slum life of the Hebrew colonists of New York. It is a picture of poverty, but it is not unequal, with every detail telling eloquently of the persecutions which have come to a noble race; yet there are human touches to the book which reveal the underlying thread of common humanity. The reader of this book will find in it a certain proportion of the characters it depicts, but if he be a fair-minded man, he will be filled with unmitigated shame to think that it was the persecution of so-called Christians which reduced these people to the level almost of hunted beasts.

There is admirable adroitness in the manner in which Clyde Fitch in "Some Correspondence and Six Conversations" (New York: Stone & Kimball) touches upon social foibles. His brush is feathery in its lightness; it gives off only the faintest of odors, but in a half-dozen strokes the artist composes a picture that is at once recognizable as accurate and instinct with the true spirit of the theme. The idea of packing a whole comedy of modern life into two, four or six brief letters is feebly conceived, and is consistently executed, while as for the conversations, they are simply delicious. If Mr. Fitch's art is a trifle superficial, no one can deny that it is exquisite as far as it goes.

"Checkers, a Hard Luck Story" (Chicago: Herbert, Stone & Co.) is distinctly American in theme. In it Henry M. Blossom, Jr., has drawn a veritable picture of the race track as a social and financial institution, with its terminology put into dialect forms that every one will recognize as true to the subject. It is a story of a man who, as the writer of fiction has approached the sporting field from the same half-satirical, half-humorous standpoint, and the result is a book distinctly fresh, original and, if we may use the word, up-to-date. Mechanically, too, it is worthy of approval. Its flaming crimson cloth covers are appropriately "flashy," while type and paper are of the newest grade of excellence.

"A Daughter of Cuba" by Helen M. Bowen (New York: The Merrimac Co.) is fittingly described on its title-page as "a story of love and war." It is a narrative spun round the struggle for Cuban independence, with its hero a brave American who does impossible feats at arms, and its heroine a handsome sonnetta who, contrary to all the laws of fiction, does not marry the hero in the last chapter. For the reasons why we refer all curious persons to the book itself.

MISCELLANEOUS.

From the Roycroft Printing shop in the town of Aurora, comes another of these artistic books with which this new Venetian band of bookmakers (we mean no reflection upon the gentlemen of the turf) are wont at uncertain intervals to delight bibliophiles. It is a sister book to the "Song of Songs," issued last year; being "The Journal of a Student of the Book of Ecclesiastes," with an essay by Elbert Hubbard. But 712 copies are to be issued: 700 printed on Holland hand-made paper and twelve on Japan vellum, the whole numbered and signed by Mr. Hubbard, to be followed by the distribution of the copies to the subscribers and the destruction of title-pages, colophon and borders. The binding is in white buckram with rough paper sides; the size an imperial octavo.

It is, of course, a delight to read the musings of the "son of David" as they appear in this little book of essays; but far more to the relish of the seeker after modernized wisdom is the introductory essay of Mr. Hubbard. To say that he has caught the spirit of the Hebrew monologist and re-voiced it in the more conventional phraseology of our time is to say what anyone who has read the "Book of Ecclesiastes" presents an individual meaning; if it were not so it would not so long have survived. In its depths we mirror our own mental characteristics—a fact true of all inspired literature.

According to the reviewer's reading, the man who wrote that book, whoever he was and the supposition that it was Solomon does not meet with the present essayist's approval; did not write for publication; had, in short, no ambitious idea that he was writing for immortality. Mr. Hubbard observes, "are like farmers in a photograph gallery—very different persons from the awkward men in shirt sleeves who so gracefully toss the golden sheaves over the cross-beams into the mow. In Shakespeare there is a careless quality which shows that of whatever he he never blotted a line. And although we say with Ben Jonson, would he had blotted a thousand, the work lives and is deathless on account of its very imperfections. A lawyer's brief, a malfeactor's defense, a shop-keeper's advertisement, may be perfect to the letter, but their author's motives are ulterior, and like all other selfish things that strive to clutch and hold they are ephemeral. Only second rate men have exalted aims. The great of earth simply endeavor to do their work, not to be great."

"To me," the essayist remarks, further on, "the Book of Ecclesiastes is simply the Journal of a man who has lived long and studied much; who has traveled and observed and meditated; who has tasted of all the so-called pleasures of life. And now he has played the game to the limit, and Old Age plucking him by the sleeve, he recognizes that he is about to quit. We catch him off his guard and hear him talking aloud."

TOWN WHICH IS IN NEED OF WOMEN

Vancouver Village, Where the Fair Sex is in Great Demand.

SOME RARE BARGAINS IN MATRIMONY

Lonely Maidens Can Procure Husbands to Suit the Most Fastidious. Big Sums Awaiting Those Who Will Be Life Companions.

From the San Francisco Examiner.

There is a city in the western part of Canada, close to the Pacific Ocean, which is named by all who visit it the most desolate spot upon the face of the earth. Its climate is good, its natural resources excellent, its houses fair, its streets well paved, yet within this town there is an air of forlorn desolation that strikes the most careless traveler that comes within its boundary.

It is on Vancouver Island, a sweet, fair spot. And the desolation is caused by one thing—only one. The lack of women and girls.

Today the doorsteps of this town are crowded with the most fastidious of the fair sex. There are many towns upon the island, but this one lacks women so sadly that in a recent census of the place it was found nearly 30,000 short. This number includes a count of serving women, waitresses, and iron. It also includes working girls and women who are not expected to marry. And, of course, it took in the queens of the city, the fair matrons of the homes and the mistresses of the pretty establishments.

THE PROPOSITION.

It is not to be expected that such a condition of affairs could exist without becoming known. The thrifty longshoremen of the place and the woodmen, the miners, and the merchants have written east about it, and a few days ago the mayor of the place was surprised and delighted to receive a letter containing a suggestion. It was that, as women were too numerous in the east to find the homes they desired, the mayor should devote a part of the funds of the town to sending east a car load of marriageable young women to come and settle in the vacant homes. The letters suggested that as the young women were not in affluent circumstances, most of them living with married sisters or supporting themselves, it might be a good thing to provide each with a small amount of money to chat her way to the frontier coast and marry one of the needy men.

The letter so impressed the Mayor of the place that he laid it before a committee of men and women, for there are a few women there, and they do not mind a little of the expense. Their only objection was that they did not like to see the money go to the east. They suggested a committee of men and women to meet them. "When they get off the boat," said the chairman of the committee, "we will appear in person, and make them feel at home at once, men as well as women being there to say, 'How do you do?'"

CHAIRMAN HANNA.

Mr. Hanna is a man of business and is interested in politics only in so far as politics may be employed to promote the welfare of the country. It is his good fortune to be the distinguished and bosom friend of the statesman to whom the country turns for guidance on the road to prosperity. What he has done to bring about the election of McKinley has been done from the most unselfish motives and without expectation of recompense beyond identification with the patriotic cause in which his friends, no more than the country, are so deeply interested. It is McKinley's wonderful good fortune that the work of the anti-trust campaign, as well as of the regular campaign, has been so ably and devotedly done in whose hands his honor is safe and who wish no success apart from his own.

WORTH HER WEIGHT IN GOLD.

There are places upon the frontier of the United States, villages, some of them recently opened up, Territories and upon the limits of cultivation, where a woman is worth her weight in gold and a great deal more. There is a genuine baring of women constantly taking place.

Let a woman from the city go there and the "courtship" begins immediately, and great rivalry there is for her hand. The men have gold ore to offer their own "claims," they want a good home to live in. They will hire Chinamen or half breeds, anything to do the hard work in a business in the city and will light the parlor lamp at night and sit in the window and wait for them to come home.

The "price" for a pretty woman of good education and family in a newly cultivated town is great enough to establish a man in business in the city and introduce him to society. The agent of a matrimonial bureau in Chicago, who, as much out of curiosity as for business, kept himself in touch with frontier men, received a letter from a wealthy miner of a certain desolate territory. "I need a wife," wrote the miner, "and if you can persuade a good-looking woman to come out here and take a look at me I can gamble she will have me. I won't show her my brasses, but I'll let her get a fair square at the mine. I'll name her figure she can have it. Mine put in her name the day before she becomes Mrs. Hawkins."

The "price" of a woman—for with such a luck matrimonial arrangements "true love" goes to the wall and cupid goes home out of his occupation—depends upon the woman and the location. In thriving villages, where every man owns his own farm, a pretty girl wants a good house "clear," a big acreage of land, and a good-looking man. The live stock also takes into account by her. Homelier girls get less. And so all the way down to the woman who is angular and sour, and who must be contented with a farm hand and lots of hard work. That is the way things are managed here. The El Dorado, or the man where every woman can get a husband "as quick as wink," and where every man is waiting for a girl to come along.

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A SPIRITUALIST SPEAKS.

Advice from a Prominent Member of this Society.

She Tells a "Moon" Reporter the Secret of Her Good Health and Happiness.

When a person has been cured from a malady that has troubled him for years and the best physicians in the country were powerless to grapple with it. When the patient had suffered for years all the agonies that pen can describe, and then was cured by a remedy, it is no wonder that the patient who has thus been cured would be loath in the praise of that remedy. This is the case of Henry Weston, whose story was told in the Moon several months ago. It will be remembered that Mr. Weston doctored with one of the best specialists in the country and found no relief, and then after a few boxes of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills had been taken he was well. Mr. Weston is so jubilant over his recovery that he never tires of telling his story to others. It was through him that Mrs. John Estell, of South Avenue, was induced to try them. She is well acquainted with Mr. Weston, and through his advice and knowing that he had been cured by this remedy, she was induced to try them.

A Moon reporter called on Mrs. Estell and asked her if the story of her cure was true. She said that she knew of the remarkable cure of Mr. Weston, and she was suffering from the after effects of the grippe and a bad case of indigestion. She received, with a local physician and received no special benefit. Mr. Weston had urged her to try the pills, and after she had made up her mind to try them she was induced to try them. She had longed for had to be let alone. She was troubled with that awful disease of indigestion and the long train of diseases that go with it. She suffered with her head aching and her stomach which had troubled her for so many years was better. For years she had to eat only the easiest food that could be digested, and they had not the least bit of doubt about her receiving great benefit. She took the medicine. She bought a box and in a very short time she was a new woman. The pills had done her good. 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