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WILMINGTON, N. C.

SUNDAY, MAY 1, 1898.

MARGINALIA

We have access to several of the best critical journals and monthlies in the English speaking world. Their notices of latter-day novels show that the highly sensational and improbable, and the morbid and unhealthy, characterize most of the fictive books, when not tediously imperfect and palpably dull.

The novels are often unclean and unbecomingly filthy only fit for brothels. In the tendency in the crazy hunt after the unnatural, the base, the startling, all modesty and forbearance and propriety and decency are shoved aside, and writers abandoning the averted gaze cease to walk backward that they may cover the nakedness of parents and hide the shame of households.

It is dreadfully morbid and immoral stuff presented with an offensive realism that reminds one of the shambles and the dissecting room. The abnormal, the immoral, the most repulsive scenes and characters are sought in all of the most abandoned and piquant details. The baser, the lower, the more vicious, the more unfeeling and brutal characters can be developed and scenes portrayed the greater the satisfaction of the writers and the intenser the delight of the class of readers that relish and rejoice in the awful revelations of depravity and sin.

No one knowing these things can possibly fall to believe that this last decade of a century nearing rapidly its close is one of putrid literature and moral and mental decadence. There have been many greivous and vile offenders in these novels of abomination and decay, but perhaps none has surpassed the Italian D'Annunzio, some of whose nastiest novels have been unfortunately translated and made accessible to ignorance and grovelling tastes.

His novels are unknown to us, we rejoice to say, save only through reviewers who have scored them with caustic severity so richly merited, we judge, from the analyses of them. They are filthy and concentrated in descriptions of barefaced lust. He has given himself up to the study of the repellant, the baleful, the dismal, the morbid.

"The Intruder" is possibly his lowest effort, in which he descends to the bottom of the cesspool. An able criticism in the New York Evening Post says of it:

"The incidents, like the persons, are of no great importance for their own sake; nothing is very significant except the spectacle of a man abnormally sensitive to the physical impressions, dismally indecent, sometimes brutally coarse, thrusting himself before the world naked and unshamed. It is true that he has not thrust himself upon an English speaking world, has not deliberately exposed his unhappy personality to a people alien in temperament, unsympathetic in thought, and of hostile literary tradition. Mr. Hornblow and others must bear the burden of that indiscretion and settle it with their phantom consciences."

It is sad to know that some reviewers have forgotten decency and duty, and have praised these woeful, blasting books as works of great genius quite worthy of attention. This is a pitiful and disgusting abuse of a high office. The New York critic quoted from says: "So far from observing a policy of silence during the last two or three months, English reviewers have been discussing the appalling Italian with a fluency which he might envy, and often with an obscenity such as he achieves only in his most mystic moments.

be merry, for tomorrow we die," proclaims at least a hearty animalism, and is a message of light and joy beside D'Annunzio's "let us desire and hate and loathe ourselves, only to plunge into grosser abomination, until, worn out, diseased, mad, we die." A philosophy which assumes universal uncleanness, indicating no means of purification while impotently frothing about the unpleasantness of our state, is not a philosophy to temper representations of immorality."

Some of the critics avoid the vain philosophy, so honeycombed with error and vice, and take refuge behind the beauty and charm of the Italian's style. That D'Annunzio has such a gift is not denied by the hostile critics. The able criticism we have copied from concedes this, and says the "beauty of phrase and image he undoubtedly commands, and yet his taste is so bad that he can begin a sentence in the language of poetry and finish it in the language of pathology." Poisons of the most deadly sort may be concealed by the art of the chemists, as the bitterest ingredients may be sugar-coated.

There are two things about certain literature, that "yellow" novels and dialect stories, even of the "Kallyard" variety, have about had their little day. What a rush of glare and glory they have had. It has been shown by experience that neither the strictly realistic, the fertile symbolistic nor the flamboyant romantic story can hold the fort all to itself and shut out all other comers. It is assured that there is a middle ground—via media—in this as in other things that appeal to the human understanding and an educated taste, and that great novelists are apt to employ more or less of all three systems or methods consciously or carelessly, in building great works of fiction that give promise of permanency of value. We think this indeed a healthful sign, and makes it possible to return to the old-art that gave to the world the greatest of Jane Austen, Walter Scott, W. M. Thackeray, Charles Dickens, and George Eliot, and in France Eugene Sue and Victor Hugo. We omit purposely Dumas, the elder, consummate as he is as a story teller, and Balzac and Georges Sand, both eminently gifted and unclean.

A young Georgian by the name of Arthur Handby Marks, born in 1864, gave much promise of superior talents. He died aged twenty-eight at Nashville, Tenn. He had some experience in the foreign service as consul. A volume written by him has but recently appeared in New York. It is introduced by Bishop Thomas F. Gallor, who gives some account of a life that was so soon cut short and yet might have developed into some thing remarkable if he had been spared for decades. The volume has this curious title—"Igerne and Other Writings." The title is the name of a story. We have not seen the book but have been interested in some selections we saw from it. In England he met Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes when that very eminent American author in advanced age paid his last visit to that classical land. He gives a most graphic portrait of the venerable octogenarian or nearly so. It is so good that the New York Times's "Saturday Review," says that "for fineness of lines, and daintiness of conception is of singular merit." After copying the pen portrait of the "Autocrat" it says "There have been many pen-and-ink portraits of Oliver Wendell Holmes, but none quite as good as this." That our readers may have some understanding of the excellence of this young Georgian's gifts with the pen, we copy what was written when he was probably but twenty-two or three, for he met Dr. Holmes in 1886. We give the concluding part only of the description:

"Around his eyes are collected those merry wrinkles which show that during the long life in which he had made so many people laugh, he had laughed not a little himself. These wrinkles, converging in his eyes like minute channels, seemed to drain into them all the expression of his face, and this accounts for their brightness. * * * I never saw before such a sympathetic expression. * * * and combining all the features, I am able to recognize the face of the poet, which is greater than either the man, the wit, or the philosopher, for the whole is more than any of its parts. * * * I took my final leave and retired, feeling that I had been talking to some good boy's grandfather."

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RELIGIOUS EDITORIALS FOR SUNDAY.

The Bible denounces covetousness as a sin—so great it shuts out man from Heaven. The preachers who are faithful are sure to preach against this despotic sin. It binds its victims in iron manacles and fills their hearts with the enchantments of song. There is but little doubt that next to worldliness the sin of covetousness is the most dominating passion in the churches and damns more souls. The restraints of religion puts a barrier to vicious indulgence and thereby enables the Christian to accumulate. It has taught him beside to be "diligent in business." The consequence is there is accumulation—superfluity, and upon this the contest begins. If the deceitfulness of the heart and the selfish influences with which he is surrounded, gain the ascendancy, he turns the blessing of God into a curse. Yet God has not neglected to warn his servants on this perilous point in their lives.

If what has been said is true, it will follow that one of the pressing needs

of the world and the Church, is a remedy for covetousness.

Who owns the cattle on a thousand hills? Who made the worlds? Who created man? Who is indeed the creator and preserver of all mankind; and who controls and perpetuates the machinery of the great worlds flung out into space? There is but one answer—it is God. He is therefore, the true owner and source of all property. His creating power gives Him supreme ownership. He preserves and he possesses. Man is His creature, His almoner only. So it follows infallibly that the farthest reach of man's power cannot go beyond the collection and profitable employment of God's property. "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine." So it must be that man's supposed ownership of property or any thing whatever, is the simple gift of God. Man stands toward God as only an agent to use wisely, frugally and to the will of God. There is another thought certainly worthy of the consideration of any man of ordinary intelligence. It is that the salvation of the soul is not conditioned in any way upon the ownership of property of any kind. It is not essential in the remotest degree that either present happiness or a future state of bliss and rest shall depend upon an earthly condition of prosperity in dollars and cents. The poor really stand a better chance of salvation than the rich, although poverty of pocket in no sense is any proper plea for an entrance into Heaven, but poverty of spirit is an essential. "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." It is held by profound thinkers, by close observers, by patient students of the Bible, that the possession of property in innumerable cases has a positive tendency, an unmistakable influence, in alienating the heart from God, and causing men to make it their little god. Hear what God saith: "The care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the Word, and he becometh unfaithful." "They that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves with many sorrows."

It is safe to say that owning property, being rich in a worldly way, is no passport to Heaven, is no cause for God's favor, is not necessarily promotive of happiness in this life. It is not sinful or wrong to make money, honestly and justly, but it is a sin in God's eyes to be covetous, which he declares is idolatry.

The New England Quaker poet, John G. Whittier, sang some pleasant, flowing songs rich in melody of a gentle kind and sweet with the flavor of true piety. Here are a few lines that are worth reading and reflecting upon:

It may not be our lot to wield, The sickle in the ripened field; Nor ours to hear on summer eves The reapers' song upon the sheaves. Yet where our duty's task is wrought, In unison with God's great thought, The near and future blend in one, And whatsoever is willed is done.

Mr. Bok lately made a bad slip-up when he declared that in this country the Sunday school was on the decline. Of course such a statement could not pass unchallenged. There is a little New York religious paper called "Our Wedge." It has driven a "wedge" into a foolish statement that the religious papers are "losing in circulation, and in intellectual ability and serious conviction." While some religious newspapers doubtless show falling off in ability and are not sufficiently religious, others are abler conducted and are more influential than ever before. "Our Wedge" shows "that since 1888 the number of religious papers in this country has doubled, and that their circulation has trebled. In New York there were ten years ago 85 religious papers with a combined circulation of 900,000. There are now 156, with a circulation of one million and a half copies per issue."

As to the decay of Sunday schools, Mr. Bok's vain contention, there is a very gratifying and steady improvement annually—as there should be. It is true as to both great sections. In the "Church Economist" Rev. Dr. A. F. Shaufler, of New York city, writes that "the Sunday schools of the United States are on the increase in numbers and efficiency. Statistics show the increase in enrollment from 6,500,000 in 1875, to 12,000,000 in 1896. He shows Mr. Bok to be ignorant and inexperienced in Sunday school work.

"The simple fact is that today better work is being done in the Sunday schools than ever before. More help are at the teachers' disposal; more conventions, institutes, summer schools, courses of study are prepared and provided for the teacher than ever before." These examples of error are striking exemplifications of the folly of writing in ignorance, and making hasty statements without serious research and desire to learn the precise facts and the truth. It is very often met with in journalism as in books, that statements concerning Christianity are as baseless as falsehood, and are often the pure coinage of ignorance." The "American Sunday School Union has made a compilation as to Sunday schools which shows that a great deal remains to be done and should arouse the Christian denominations to more activity and zeal. It estimates the total population in 1896 as 70,505,321, calculates the number of children and youth between 5 and 18 years of age to be 20,865,377, for whom there are 132,632 Sunday schools,

It being impossible to determine the number of those who attend Sunday school, an estimate is made that 11,500,000 of the youth are nonattendants and receive no Biblical instruction, while 1,500,000 are supposed to attend Roman Catholic and other Sunday schools not represented in the tables."

AT A ALARMING CONDITION IN SPAIN

The news from Spain that appears to be reliable, and comes from Madrid as late as 25th, is of character to excite hope in this country that the war may not last for a year or more as many declare. There is a revolt in many parts of Spain by mobs, and this makes the government tremble in its shoes, for the unsteady demonstrations are spreading. If these displays should concentrate upon the throne, it may be seriously endangered. It is known that over twenty large cities are daily in the hands of uncontrolled masses for hours at a time. The unsteady is represented as intense both by the government, and the city and other authorities. Socialists, anarchists, republicans and revolutionists are of the number who make uneasy him who wears the crown, and his advisers and supporters. It is feared that if reverses should occur in Cuba that they would precipitate an attempt at revolution at home. This is the way, it is stated, that nearly all Spanish revolts have occurred in the past. The eloquent patriot and former president of Spain, when it attempted the role of a republic, has stated that in no event will he lead a revolution. He is rather thankful in his speech and glorifies his country perhaps over much. Cagelar said in part:

"Appreciating the valor of his countrymen," he will predict that the quarrel between the young and unwelcome nation and the old and fighting race in the world will result in the traditional heroism of Spain inflicting severe chastisement on the selfish and material interests of the big democratic republic, whose existence and prosperity is due to Spain's discovery and support of the American continent off the yoke of slavery."

The government fears the pressure and alarm so poignantly it is appealing to the powers of Europe to render aid that both political and financial collapse may be avoided. The dynasty is evidently in a shaky condition, and one splendid American victory might make it topple into ruin."

HOME FOLKS

If we are not much mistaken Mr. Bryan's petatorial production for North Carolina democrats, will do more harm than good. It is a waste of powder for a Western gunner to be shooting into the democratic preserves in plain, solid, honest old North Carolina.

It is announced that the Bazaar-temple sermon before Washington and Lee University, Virginia, at the commencement in June, will be delivered by Rev. Thomas Hume, D. D., L. D., Professor of English, in the University of North Carolina. A great scholarly production may be looked for from this native son of Virginia.

A gentleman of education, influence and high standing has written a letter which has not intended for the public eye. It is too much to the point to be kept to ourselves, so against protest, we give it a place in the columns of the Messenger this morning. It is about the checker, and is headed "A Voice from Northeast North Carolina." Read it.

Household Gods. The ancient Greeks believed that the Penates were the gods who presided at the welfare and prosperity of the family. They were worshiped as household gods in every home. The household god of today is Dr. King's New Discovery. For consumption, coughs, colic and for all affections of Throat, Chest and Lungs it is invaluable. It has been tried for a quarter of a century and is guaranteed to cure, or money refunded. No household should be without this good angel. It is pleasant to take and a safe and sure remedy for old and young. Free trial bottles at R. Bellamy's drug store. Regular size 50 cents and \$1.00.

An American Hero

The Kansas City Journal speaks the other day of modern naval weapons as being almost entirely untried, making the single exception of the imperfect test furnished by the late war between China and Japan. In that war the Chinese battleship Chen-Yuen was commanded by Captain Fuhko McGiffin, "the only man of American European blood who ever commanded a modern warship in battle." Captain McGiffin was an American, having been born at Washington in 1839, and he was about 34 years old when the battle occurred.

The Home Magazine recently contained a long article on Captain McGiffin in which "competent authority" is quoted to show that his diary has never been surpassed in the history of the world. He was a graduate of the Annapolis naval academy, and he found that his own country had no place to offer him. At the breaking out of hostilities he was placed in command of the Chen-Yuen and fought the sea battle of the Yalu river, this being the only Chinese ship that came out of the fray with credit. According to his biographer he wrote as follows to his brother just before the battle: "You know it is too difficult to one wounded since the new ammunition came in. It is better to die than to be wounded, and have the chance of being dreadfully mangled, and then patched up with half my senses and sense gone, yet a triumph of surgical skill." "No, I prefer to step down, or up, and out of the world."

Chinese officers, in among whom he jumped and administered some lusty blows. Left thus without assistance he fought the battle alone, sometimes steering the ship, sometimes training the guns, at all times cheering the crew and urging them to their duty. We quote: "He received forty wounds, many of them caused by splinters of wood; he with his own hands extracted a large splinter from his hip, and holding his eye-lids open with his finger, this heroic man navigated his ship, which had been struck four hundred times, safely to its dock, skilfully evading capture, the Chen-Yuen being the only one of the Chinese vessels that came out of that fight with credit."

Continuing, Captain McGiffin's biographer says: "The Japanese offered \$5,000 for his capture, but did not have the satisfaction of taking him. About what he dreaded had happened; his nerves, limbs and senses were shattered. After the battle of the Yalu, he went into a hospital in China for a time, but finding himself with little promise of complete recovery, he came to America. Unfortunately he was indisposed to submit to treatment; he insisted on dressing his own wounds. His body had the appearance of a checkerboard, with its many bruises; there were still in him bullets and splinters; he was compelled to walk with two canes. His pain was so great that he spent hours hobbling back and forth across the floor, saying that he was more comfortable thus than in a sitting or reclining posture."

Within a year this heroic American died. When death was almost at his bedside he said of himself in a jesting way: "I am still in the Chinese navy; but I am not in good standing. You know it is customary there for a naval officer when he loses a battle to commit suicide, and they wanted me to follow the custom, but I declined with thanks."

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Wadesboro Messenger: Sunday night the barn on Mr. W. B. Sellers' place on Peck's river Modern township, was, together with its contents, consisting of a lot of feed, tools, etc., destroyed by fire. One mule also perished in the flames.—A general rise in the price of heavy groceries has occurred in the last two weeks, as a result of the war with Spain. Flour is up 75 cents a barrel, coffee 2 cents a pound, meat 5 cents a bushel, and the end is not yet.

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