

that can well be imagined. There can be no question, it seems to us, that such a reckless production does absolute harm, as its object is merely to attract and not to teach, or even to be pleasant to look at.

In striking contrast are some of the works of Mr. Dudley Hardy. But the French are far ahead of us in clever natural work, as was shown by certain coloured posters exhibited in the Exhibition of French Art, which was opened last winter in the Grafton Galleries.

It must not be thought that the designing of such work is below the notice of really great artists. Mr. Maddox Brown has well urged that mural painting, when it has been practised by easel painters, has invariably raised those painters to higher flights than they seem capable of in the smaller path, and in illustration of this point, he appeals to the work of Raphael, Michael Angelo, Domenichino, and Andrea del Sarto. It must be thankfully admitted that there is a notable improvement in our mural advertisements, and as we are satisfied that they afford a very sure indication of the growth of public taste, it may be hoped that ere long the ungraceful and ill-drawn "poster" will vanish.

### A Book of the Week.

#### "PROSE FANCIES."\*

SOME months ago I reviewed in these pages M. Le Gallienne's last volume of Prose which was entitled, "The Religion of a Literary Man." The present collection of Essays, which will be published in the course of the week, is a *salmi* of "Prose Fancies," reprinted from the pages of *The Speaker*, *The Sketch*, and *The Illustrated London News*. This volume will have a pathetic interest for all those who know anything of the private life of the young poet who, in such a short space of time, has written verses that have commended him to the notice and appreciation not only of some of our greatest literary critics but also to the affections of a large section of the British public. The volume is dedicated "To my dear wife—my prose for her poetry"; and further, the last essay in the volume, entitled "White Soul," was written by the author as a token of gratitude and love, describing the charming personality and sweet nature of his little young wife, but just before the book was published, Mrs. Le Gallienne died of typhoid fever, after ten days' illness, and, therefore, never lived to see the tender dedication, nor to read the tribute of sincere attachment, that was written by her husband. Mrs. Le Gallienne was a bright and fascinating little woman, and was possessed of an eerie charm that captivated all those who knew her. Those people who are interested in occult phenomena will not fail to notice the strange forebodings ever felt by Mrs. Le Gallienne as to her future. Weeks before she passed away, and when she was in the enjoyment of the most perfect health, the following lines were written:—

"Her dreams are nearly all about dying, and, though she is obviously robust, there is that transparent, ethereal look in her face which makes old women say 'she is not long for this world.'"

\*"Prose Fancies." By Richard Le Gallienne. (London: Matthews and Lane.) 3s. 6d. net.

Once she dreamt that she had seen three old men playing at cards, and that one of them told her that she was to die in the Spring—

"Yet with all this, she is the sunniest, healthiest, most domestic little soul that breathes; and, no doubt, the materialist would be right in saying that all this *spirituelle* nonsense is but a trick of her transparent blonde complexion, a chance quality in the colour of her great luminous eyes."

If Mr. Le Gallienne had known the sad tragedy that was waiting to descend into his happy married life, he would most likely never have penned and published these lines; but the book was in the Press and ready for publication when "God took the little white soul to Himself"; and, therefore, as I say, the volume, with its radiant dedication and containing the last essay to his wife, gains a new and pathetic interest from the mysterious fulfilment of her strange forebodings.

The rest of the Essays in the volume vary in artistic merit, some of the Prose being poetry—and of a high order of poetry—while some of them are less interesting, and seem almost unworthy to be placed beside their beautiful companions. Among those that will be read with profit and delight may be ranked, "The Devils on the Needle," "The Apparition of Youth," and, best of all, "Transferable Lives," while "Anarchy in a Library" seems strangely inadequate to have been written by such a book-lover as the author of that exquisite piece of prose poetry "The Book Bills of Narcissus," while "The Measure of a Man" and "Apollo's Market," though pleasant reading when found between the pages of a weekly paper, seem hardly worthy of being enshrined in a bound volume of gathered fragments, and of placing beside such "violet scented" phrases as—

"I think of the ten thousand virgins who go mateless about the world, with hearts like hidden treasure, awaiting the 'prince's kiss' that never comes; virgin mothers, whose bosoms shall never know the light warm touch of baby's hands." . . . How often one sees such a one in train or omnibus, her eyes may be spilling the precious spikenard of their maternal love on some happier woman's 'child.'

Mr. Le Gallienne then describes a girl "waiting for the marital kiss that would set all the sweet bells of her nature a-chime:—

"And my imagination went on making pictures: how her eyes would suddenly brighten up like the Northern aurora, how a strange bloom would settle on her somewhat weary face, and a dimple steal into her chin; how, when she reached home and sat down to read 'Jane Austen' to her mother, her mother would suddenly imagine roses in the room, and she would blushing answer, 'Nay, mother, it is my cheeks'; and presently the mother would ask: 'Where is that smell of violets coming from?' and again she would answer: 'Nay, mother, it is my thoughts!' and yet again the mother would say: 'Hush! listen to that wonderful bird singing yonder!' and she would answer: 'Nay, mother dear, it is only my heart.'"

Obviously, the above "Prose Fancies," are written by a man writer, who, with the recollection of a happy married existence, perhaps fails to comprehend the bright, useful, and contented lives of many unwedded women in these days; but while making due allowance for the mere male mind that conceived them, we must acknowledge that they are dainty and poetic fancies.

A. M. G.

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