

A Book of the Week.

"OUTRE-MER."*

THE famous French novelist, M. Paul Bourget, has been travelling in America, and he has published his notes in book form. Of recent years we have read volumes about the American experiences of distinguished writers and politicians, and Max O'Rell has published for our edification "Jonathan et son Continent;" but Paul Bourget, by reason of his great reputation as a writer, and by a certain calmness of judgment, demands special attention for his description of America, and of the manners, customs, peculiarities and idiosyncrasies of the inhabitants of that vast continent "Outre-Mer."

M. Bourget is profoundly interested in the great social problems of the century, and in New York he finds much to attract and rivet his attention. He does not say much that is very striking or new in these volumes, but what he does say, he says very lucidly, for Bourget is not a superficial thinker—he is not content with examining the mere surface of men, manners and things. For instance, in his description of the women of America, he is not content with summing up their various and diverse characteristics in one effective epigram or in one aphoristic phrase, as so many previous writers have been content to do, but he analyses them under different headings—The Beautiful Woman, The Ambitious Woman, The Convivial Woman, &c. Then he has one or two untranslatable but very graphic French nomenclatures, such as "La Bluffeuse" (the advertising, self-evident girl), "La Garconière" (the tom-boy), and these are subdivided into the physical tom-boy and the intellectual tom-boy, and all these various types of American girls and women are very wittily and amusingly depicted. M. Bourget thinks that society in America is the scene of the "Apotheosis of the Young Girl," and he points out that it is impossible for a Frenchman travelling in America to recognise from her appearance, manners, dress and jewels, any difference between the American "young girl" and the American "married woman." Young girls in America gain no liberty by marriage, on the contrary, they gain only duties: "a husband to endure, children to support, and an establishment to keep up." The girls know this and say gaily, "we must amuse ourselves before we marry, for who knows what will happen afterwards." In fact, M. Bourget says:—

"After a near acquaintance with many conditions of humanity, I believe for a young man of 20 to 25 years of age the most complete chances of happiness are to be found in a young Englishman of good family who is finishing his studies at Oxford, and for a young girl who is born an American, with a father who has made his fortune in mines, railways, or inland speculations, and who starts with good society connections, in New York or Washington."

But only a very small portion of these two volumes is devoted to recording the novelist's impressions of American society, though in all probability it is just these few chapters that will be most read and commented upon, for M. Bourget has proved himself to be such a keen observer of his own countrywomen that

those who are admirers of his admirably written—if rather chilly—novels, cannot fail to be interested in his description of American girls and women.

To turn to the graver parts of his treatise on America, it is very striking to read the respectful testimony that he bears with regard to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in America. It appears that the sympathy of the prelates of that Church has been given to what may be called the higher kind of Socialism. One of the most interesting chapters in the book is devoted to an interview accorded to Bourget by the Archbishop, "Monsieur Ireland," who remarked to him—

"It is a great advantage to American bishops that no one is astonished to see us at meetings, no matter what they may be about. For instance, you could not well imagine the Archbishop of Paris assisting at a banquet given by the Sanitary Association, of a drainage undertaking: but if I failed to go I should surprise everybody. Such things give us many occasions for making people understand what the Catholic Church really is."

But the part of this publication that will, I think, prove most interesting and valuable to the general reader, are the many chapters that deal with "Ceux d'en Bas," for never before has such a graphic description of the very lowest circles of American life been brought before our notice. Needless to say that the phraseology in which these volumes are written is masterly and well worth studying. Anyone unacquainted with Bourget's writings will be perhaps a trifle surprised at the *naïve* manner in which he works up English words and sentences into his pages, but he does it so well, that the result is very successful. But let any young and aspiring writer beware of imitating the great modern French novelist in this peculiarity, and writing foreign words and phrases into his halting English, for after all it is a peculiarity, and as such should never be attempted by a novice.

A. M. G.

Reviews.

THE *Englishwoman's Review* for April contains an interesting article by Miss Orme, the senior Lady Assistant Commissioner on the Employment of Women.

She deals with the employment of barmaids, book-keepers, waitresses in hotels and restaurants, public-houses, and other such places. She has found that the hours of service are exceedingly long, the greater number of barmaids working from sixty to seventy hours a week. A few work shorter hours, and a considerable number much longer.

In temperance houses the hours are much shorter, the average being fifty to sixty hours.

Barmaids are well fed and are allowed sufficient time for their meals, which probably accounts for their good state of health. Wages are generally about 10s. a week with board and lodging, and they have to pay for breakage of glass, &c.

"Treating" is one of the difficulties of the life, and frequently leads to drinking habits; in some places the barmaid is not allowed to accept drinks, or may accept instead a box of chocolates.

In many cases in London restaurants the sanitary accommodation for the waitresses is extremely bad.

* "Outre-Mer," by Paul Bourget. 2 vols. 7 francs. Alphonse Lemerre, Editeur, Paris. 1895.

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