

ventured to appear in London streets in rational costume. Now, as a considerable sufferer from this kind of thing—though I am a mere maleman compelled through lameness to use a hand tricycle—I think it is quite time with our boasted improvement in education and manners, that any person maliciously addressing remarks to another person, with the intention of exciting ridicule, or annoying that person, might be given in charge of the nearest constable; and, with a couple of witnesses to substantiate the charge, be liable to a small fine. This might allow respectable people to use the streets without being subject to the screams and ribald laughter of ignorant asses who fail to perceive that a man using a peculiar machine with his hands is a cripple, and, not like themselves, a candidate for Colney Hatch or Bedlam."

Queen Margharita, of Italy, has appointed Madame Maria Farne as her doctor, thereby testifying to her appreciation of her own sex, and giving an impetus to the women's cause—more especially to that of medical women. We could wish that all women of influence would be just enough to recognize merit in their own sex.

It is stated that in Italy every facility is given to women to study for the medical profession; but that when it comes to competition in work, and professional jealousy is aroused, their path is not so smooth. Professional jealousy is not, we are sorry to say, confined to Italy. We wish it were!

Madame Salazar Zampine, who undertook to organize the Italian "National Council of Women," seems to meet with many difficulties, Italians being apprehensive of anything international. The fact that the movement has the support of the Queen should help to dispel prejudice in this respect.

A Book of the Week.

"THE NEW FICTION, AND OTHER ESSAYS ON LITERARY SUBJECTS."

To anybody with the "literary feeling," this volume of Mr. Traill's essays, mainly printed from the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Fortnightly*, the *Contemporary*, etc., will be a real treat.

Mr. Traill's style is a thing to be enjoyed. It is discriminating, pointed, subtle, and also it is full of a certain genial cynicism which is delightful, when (as he says of Disraeli's style) "one has acquired the taste for it."

The first essay in the book, that on the "New Fiction," is the one that will be most interesting to the general reader, because it handles one of the burning topics of the day—the ultimate aim and scope of fiction as such. It is so well done that even those who are the most ardent disciples of realism must perforce be interested, however little they may be convinced. It is really an examination of the art of Mr. Arthur Morrison, and Mr. Stephen Crane. The former, it appears (to whom, in passing, I should like to pay my own tribute of a considerable admiration), objects to being described as a "realist."

* "The New Fiction, and other Essays on Literary Subjects." By H. D. Traill. (Hurst and Blackett.)

"... In fact, it would not surprise me if he were to protest against my describing his books even as 'fiction'; so insistent is he, I understand, on their literal and historical accuracy, so earnest is he in assuring us that every character whom he portrays has had a real existence, and every incident he relates, an actual occurrence,—so artless, in short, is his confidence in a justification which has no sort of relevancy to the defence of a work of art."

Here is the charge that Mr. Traill brings against the "New Realism," a charge which he proceeds to substantiate out of the mouths of the two novelists in question:—

"We find our attention solicited by a New Realism, of which the two most obvious things to be said are, that it is unreal with the falsity of the half truth, and as old as the habit of exaggeration."

Mr. Traill, whose appreciation of Mr. Morrison's powers is real, and generous, quotes at length from the ever-memorable introduction to the "Tales of Mean Streets." Concerning the pathos of that introduction, the critic shows very clearly that the "infinite melancholy" of the picture arises from the art of the writer, not out of the subject matter. It is not the "meanness of the mean street," nor the "exceptionally dull and narrow lives of its inhabitants," that touch the springs of our emotions:—

"Why, if I had Mr. Morrison's fine descriptive gift, I would select a street quite other than mean, a street consisting, not of poverty-stricken little houses, but of 'eligible' suburban villas, a street inhabited, not by hard-pressed artisans, but by comfortable, even by 'warm' City men; and I would undertake to describe it, and the daily lives of its inhabitants. . . . I say that had I the pen of Mr. Morrison, I would undertake so to describe these things, that the heart of the reader should sink and shrink within him at the thought of man's lot upon earth!"

This is the secret: the novelist's power lies in the art of putting things, and the unmitigated squalor, the unredeemed desolation and brutality of "Tales of Mean Streets" are in fact no nearer the truth than the old tales of peerless women and noble prigs, where everyone lived happily ever after.

"Evil and good in the human heart,
Evil and good—but the mixture of each
Is a marvel and a curse."

I have left myself no space for further description of these fascinating essays. That on the "Political Novel" is a peg on which to hang an interesting criticism of "Sir George Tressidy"; that on the "Novel of Manners" contains a charming and discerning appreciation of the art of Jane Austen; and that on the "Future of Humour" is in Mr. Traill's best vein of sly fun and sharp satire.

If it were permitted to the mouse to criticize the mountain, I would say that I think Mr. Traill overrates Disraeli as a novelist, but this is a mere matter of private taste. G. M. R.

WHAT TO READ.

"A History of Our Own Times," from 1880 to 1897, by Justin McCarthy, M.P.

"Fire and Sword in the Sudan." A Personal Narrative of Fighting and Serving the Dervishes, 1879-1895. By Rudolf C. Slatin Pasha, C.B. Translated by Colonel F. R. Wingate, C.B., D.S.O., R.A.

"The Church of England before the Reformation," by the Rev. Dyson Hague, M.A.

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