

work in bronze, called *Satan*, and Alfred Drury, 1755, *Circe*, a lady we are becoming a little tired of.

In these three short notices it has been impossible to even mention many of the more excellent pictures in this interesting, and in many ways, remarkable exhibition. The powerful work of the younger painters is well shown in Mr. Albey's, No. 797, *Frammetta's Song*, a splendid study of colour, and in 577, "Mary at the House of Elizabeth," and Mr. Gotch's *Child Enthroned*, 540. It is a pleasure to be able to record the great advance among our women artists—in the splendid picture by Miss Henrietta Rae, 564, to which reference has already been made. There are also, by women, many clever portraits and landscapes, of which space will not allow mention to be given.

A Book of the Week.

"A GAUNTLET."*

LAST week I reviewed Mathilde Serao's novel "Addio Amore." It was a poetic and a passionate story of the tragedy of a girl who found life without love barren and impossible.

"Farewell Love!" was essentially a story of the South, but this week I am going to bring before your notice a very different kind of tale. It is a play which is impregnated throughout with the uncompromising spirit of the North, Svava the heroine and the caster of the gauntlet is a girl full of vigorous virtue. She will have no love that is not worthy; no lover that does not come to her with a past as pure as her own. The key-note of the play is given in a conversation between Svava and her father.

Ries: "So Alf Christensen has grown beautiful? I suppose I must agree with you?"

Svava: "As he stood there—steadfast frank and pure—for he must be that too!"

Ries: "What do you mean by 'pure,' my dear girl?"

Svava: "Well, it means what I hope any one would understand by it when applied to myself."

Ries: "What! The word has the same meaning to you—neither more nor less—whether used of a man or a woman?"

Svava: "Yes, of course."

These are Svava's principles, but, at first, she is entirely unsuspecting that her betrothed is not the immaculate person that she believes him to be, and Alf. says to her:—

"If I saw you far off, among the others, it might be only a flying gleam of your arm, I loved to think: This arm has clung to *my* shoulder, to *my* neck, and to no other in the whole world. It is mine—it belongs to me, and to no one, no one, no one else!"

And Svava, believing that Alf's love, like her own, has been a unique experience in his existence, is happy in her engagement. But the snake is in the grass, and soon Svava learns that Alf has betrayed a young girl who was his mother's companion. After this revelation there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of the teeth by all the relations of both families. The marriage chorus has been sung, the wedding flowers have been gathered, but there will be no marriage

*"A Gauntlet," by Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, translated from the Norwegian by Osman Edwards, Longman & Co.

between the families of Ries and Christensen. There follows a pathetic scene between Svava and her mother. When the girl learns her father's unfaithfulness, the anguish of her mother's broken life, Svava cries out that such a discovery would have driven her mad, and her mother gently says:—

"Suppose I only bore it for the sake of my child?"

There is the story of many sad women's lives in that phrase.

Svava's eyes have been opened, and she will not marry Alf, knowing that he has betrayed and ruined another woman's life. The play ends with a powerful scene between her and her lover.

Svava: "As long as I live I shall never understand how a man can be so double. It is horrible."

Alf: "Have'nt we all two natures, then?"

Svava: "Two —?"

Alf: "Yes, you as much as I. . . . We were attracted to each other by natural affinity,—an affinity so strong as to annul any tendencies in which we differed. Did you ever shrink from me? No, you felt drawn towards me. Now you are hiding your real self, and that is why you are misled. . . ."

Svava: "You revolt me!"

Alf: "Are you still so deeply stirred by a word from me? You see how entirely you are mine! I know it, you know it yourself. Only yesterday—"

Svava: "Do you dare to remind me of yesterday?"

Alf: "Dare? Only yesterday—here on this very spot—you proved to me that you have two natures; you changed colour, you trembled, when I said that your arm had clung to my neck, and to no other, no other in the whole world!"

Svava: "Yes!—and yours to a hundred others!"

She flings her glove in his face and rushes off, and the flinging of the glove ends the last Act of the play. The pioneer women who are ever endeavouring to compass "The Higher Education of Men" will doubtless wave banners at gaining such a doughty champion for their cause as Bjørnson. For "A Gauntlet" is a powerful play, and there are some striking situations in it, as will be readily gathered from the quotations that are given above. But do not all these stories and plays that are written for the purpose of discussing crucial problems, such as equality of the sexes, heredity, etc., add to the sadness and dreariness of life? Though they may be educational for the race, yet to many people life is full of perplexity and sorrow, and formerly we could sometimes escape from its sadness between the pages of our books; but now so many modern novels and plays deal with these harassing questions, that it is no longer possible to find peace arrive with Mr. Mudie's weekly cart. Is King Romance dead, indeed? or will he come again, as Mr. Andrew Lang assures us he will, with clarion and with drum to arouse us from our morbid studies and bring a little happiness into our lives, a little music into our hearts, a little beauty and poetry into our thoughts, for these terrible vivisections of sad problems are fearfully depressing reading. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the average public will not read pamphlets, so it *may* possibly be good for coming generations that these matters should be discussed, that these drains of our existence should be trapped and ventilated. Therefore let us hope that in the future humanity will profit, for, undoubtedly, in the present lovers of the beautiful and the ennobling in literature suffer.

A. M. G.

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