

unconventional author. I have just finished reading the last chapter, and I expect most readers will agree with me in finding the volume, as a whole, distinctly disappointing. Pages of hoarse railing against the religions, moralities and conventions of all European nations; scathing comments on their egotistic wickedness; bitter diatribes upon the law and policies of the powers that be; and an utter incapability of seeing goodness in anything or anybody—this mixture makes up the printed matter which Herr Nordau has given to the world under the alluring title of *Conventional Lies*. He preaches, like the socialist, the doctrine of "Down with everything and everybody that's up," but, like them, he proposes no workable remedy for the ills that oppress mankind, no great truths that shall supersede and obliterate those *Conventional Lies* of our existence, that all thoughtful people must deplore and desire to purify and amend.

After an acid preface chapter, in which he proves himself incapable of belief or enthusiasm for any works of God or man, Max Nordau deals with "The Lie of Religion," and as he does not believe in the Deity, the immortality of the soul, or the power of prayer, and considers that the Bible as a work of literary value "is surpassed by everything written in the last two thousand years by authors even of the second rank," he disposes with facility of the Lie of Religion. He also confutes the "Lie of a Monarchy and Aristocracy" by pointing out that they owe their existence and perpetuation to Religion.

In his chapter on the Political Lie he gives a long and dull account of the sufferings endured by a fictitious personage whom he names "Hans," and endeavours to convince his readers that humanity owes nothing to politics and State government but taxes, and the nuisance of having always to obtain certificates and licences before it can be born, married, buried, or able to build houses, and start businesses. I confess this chapter seemed to me sheer nonsense, and was not even amusing or plausible nonsense. But the following chapter, which is entitled the "Economic Lie," is full of valuable suggestions to a thoughtful mind, and deserves to be well and carefully read and studied, for in it Max Nordau distinguishes with great vigour of argument the radical difference between *real* and *relative* poverty. Real poverty, he argues, is being cold and hungry, but relative poverty "signifies a condition of lack of means to satisfy the wants which man has artificially acquired; not the indispensable requisites for the preservation of life and health, but those of which the individual usually becomes conscious by the comparison of his manner of living with that of others." This pregnant argument is developed through many pages of vigorous writing, and it is easy to see how much can be made of the foolishness as well as the culpability of educating the masses of the people to consider the luxuries as the necessities of life.

The arguments that he brings to bear as to the innate falseness of modern financial speculation and undertakings are very striking, and personally I should like to see this chapter on "The Economic Lie" extracted from the rest of the book and published as a separate pamphlet for the benefit of the multitude.

It is to be doubted if anyone will find the arguments against the Matrimonial Lie very profitable reading. People now-a-days seem to find a great deal to say against marriage as a permanent institution, but

there is little doubt that if it were abandoned this world would be a worse place for women than it is at present; and though Herr Nordau has a great deal that is forcible to say against the low standard of morality which induces women to marry for maintenance and a home instead of for love, yet an impartial analyst of his arguments would not find that he offers any great inducement for sensible men and women to abandon their conventional but safe views upon the marriage and home question, and love and live merely as the inclination of the moment prompts them to do. The author's peroration, entitled "Closing Harmony," is intended to be eloquent, but only succeeds in being pompous and pedantic, and in exchange for the "Conventional Lies" he gives us no lovely truths, only a kind of vague forecast that in time, if we abandon our old Gospels and adopt his, humanity will become a fact instead of an abstract idea, and the lot of later-born generations will be "to live in the pure atmosphere of the future, flooded with brighter sunshine, in this perpetual fellowship, true, enlightened, good and free."

A. M. G.

Review.

A MEDICAL POET.*

THAT the Profession of Physic is not incompatible with the possession of the poetic faculty has lately received a fresh illustration in the person of Dr. William S. Mavor, from whose pen has appeared—through the medium of Mr. Elliot Stock, of Paternoster Row—what the author modestly describes as a "Booklet of verse," and entitles "In Leisure Time." Unlike his famous predecessor, Milton, Dr. W. S. Mavor has not, for the most part, essayed to deal with "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." On the contrary, he has rather challenged the verdict of criticism upon a series of poems in reference to topics which may be said to form the common subject-matter of Poetry itself, and which have been handled in all ages and in all countries with more or less felicity. Odes to the Muses, and to the Seasons, Sonnets to Past Time, to the Fates, and to Himself, "Triolets" and "Rondeaux" in relation to Love and Honour, and a prolonged list of various Measures somewhat too bashfully deprecated by the title of "Et Cætera"—since the last of them is, perhaps, the finest piece in the volume—all proclaim that the author has no fear of entering the lists with the poets and poetasters of the past and the present. Nor need he be ashamed of the comparison. Intrinsicly, and looked upon as purely imaginative and literary efforts, many of the little pieces contained in the "Booklet" deserve and demand our unstinted admiration. Originality of thought can, of course, only now and then occur in the treatment of themes so familiar, but there is much originality in the choice and turns of language; and, greatly to the credit of the writer's care and finish, there is scarcely any faulty rhyme or even rhythm throughout his entire work! The laws of Logic likewise—a rare thing with modern writers, and especially modern poets—are observed as carefully as

* "In Leisure Time," by Dr. William S. Mavor. (Elliot Stock.)

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