

A Book of the Week.

THE NEW CANTERBURY TALES.*

It is a difficult thing to give a criticism of the last new volume of this curious, fascinating, tantalizing writer. There is so much to charm, so much to condemn in the tales, that one knows not where first to have him, whether to belaud his fresh, vital humanity, or to deplore his more than occasional grossness; whether to admire his wonderful approach to the exact spirit of mediæval mankind, or to wish that he had selected a period when the flesh and its demands might be supposed to be not so greatly in evidence.

No student of Chaucer and Boccaccio, no true lover of Malory, can fail to admit the surpassing cleverness of the work, both in manner and matter. One feels that both the state of society and the tendencies called forth by such a social condition, are given with a strong picturesqueness, a masterly hand, the movements of a mind that has so saturated itself in the spirit of the times, that it writes naturally of what is now ancient history. One feels that, to Maurice Hewlett, the England of Edward the Third is a more real place, a place in which he would feel more at home, than the England of Edward VII.

The persons who swarm his canvas—Salomon Brazenhead, Sir Belem of the Red Fell, Otho de Grandison, Isotta Beltraffi, the Prioress and the Scrivener, all seem rather to have walked from the pages of Froissart than to be the product of a Twentieth Century brain. They and their doings he gives us at large, and without editing; and though prudishness can hardly be set down as one of the sins of this age we think most readers will agree that there is not a tale in the collection which they would care to have to read aloud to an audience of both sexes. It is not that the moral is bad; the author and most of the raconteurs are decidedly on the side of the angels, but the works of the arch-enemy are detailed at such length as to suggest a most evident desire on the part of most of those seeking the shrine of S. Thomas, to linger in that gentleman's company.

Most prodigal of material is this author. He gives you all the framework for a real romance in the small company jogging along the Pilgrim's way from Winchester. There is the Prioress and her niece, and the young man, to escape whom said niece has been sent on pilgrimage, and who is wearing an assumed name, and is suspected by the shipman of wearing an assumed sex also. But of this romance we see only unsatisfying fragments, and at the end there is nothing. We know not whether this lover got rewarded or punished for his temerity; the story is broken off, we having been brought into contact with the persons of the drama just long enough to feel such treatment an injustice.

The most charming of the tales is that called "The Cast of the Apple," which tells of the twin brother and sister, Lewknor and the lady Audiart, so much alike that when both were dressed in mail there was no telling one from the other. This story is spoiled, to our thinking, by the fact that it is too short. It might have made such a romance as "The Forest Lovers" if the author had so willed.

"Eugenio and Galeotto" is cast in the true spirit of

* By Maurice Hewlett. (Archibald Constable.)

joyous levity, which is the mark of the "Renaissance." As for Dan Costard's story, we confess ourselves to be among those who, as the author in the preface suggests, think he would have done better to keep it to himself.

G. M. R.

Verses.

"PRESIDENT TEDDY ROOSEVELT."

America's Teddy is fearless and free,
Statesman and ranchman and soldier is he;
Ready, resourceful, a model for grit,
Orator, pugilist, patriot, wit;
A scholar as well as a master of force,
He'll write you a book or he'll break you a horse;
Energy typified, truthful and healthy,
Full of contempt for the indolent wealthy,
Enemy stern of the Tammany set—
That is America's Teddy, you bet.

—From *Books of To-day* for October.

COUNTER-THOUGHTS.

"What is the baby thinking about?
Very wonderful things no doubt."

What are the old folks thinking about?
Very wonderful things no doubt.
A thought like this filled the baby's head
(A wonderful baby and very well read).

He gazed at Grandpa and Grandma, too;
And mirrored the pair in his eyes of blue,
As side by side they sat there, rocking—
He with his pipe, and she with her stocking.

And the baby wondered, as well he might,
Why old folks always were happy and bright;
And he said in his heart with a blithe little start
That showed how gladly he'd act his part:

"I'll find some baby as soon as I can,
To stay with me till I'm grown an old man,
And, side by side, we'll sit there, rocking—
I with my pipe, and she with her stocking."

By MARY MAPES DODGE.

What to Read.

"Memoirs of Sir James Paget." Edited by one of his sons.

"Women and Their Work." By the Hon. Mrs. A. T. Lyttelton.

"The Mystery of Mary Stuart." By Andrew Lang.

"The Benefactress." By the author of "Elizabeth and her German Garden."

"The Alien." By F. F. Montresor.

"Angel." By B. M. Croker.

"The Right of Way." By Gilbert Parker.

"New Canterbury Tales." By Maurice Hewlett.

"The Laird's Luck." By A. T. Quiller-Couch.

"Kim." By Rudyard Kipling.

"The Herb Moon." By John Oliver Hobbes.

"Farewell, Nikola." By Guy Boothby.

"The Embarrassing Orphan." By W. E. Norris.

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