

LITERATURE

THE BOOK OF THE WEEK.

"Heralds of Revolt." By William Barry, D.D. London: Hodder & Staughton. (From the Methodist Book Depot, Adelaide).

The collection of essays to which Dr. Barry has given the title "Heralds of Revolt" attracted so much attention on their first appearance that many will rejoice to learn of the appearance of a cheap edition, revised and enlarged by the inclusion of a paper on criticism, originally contributed, like some of the other papers, to the "Quarterly Review." As readers of his stories are well aware, Dr. Barry is not only a man of highly refined and cultivated taste, but he has made a very close study of modern literature and dogma, with which, as stated in the sub-title, his volume deals. Essays on the genius of George Eliot and the author of "John Ingelman," are followed by studies of Carlyle and Heine. The modern French novel is then examined, and a later chapter is taken up with suggestive remarks on French realism and decadence. "Neo-Paganism" and "Latter-day Pagans" have chapters to themselves, and a sympathetic paper on Pierre Loti is followed by one on the dolorous gospel of Friedrich Nietzsche. In point of length the treatment of the various subjects is by no means inadequate, as may be understood when it is stated that with the introduction and an index the volume runs to considerably upwards of 400 large pages. In the essay on the teaching of Carlyle, well-worn as the subject is, Dr. Barry has much to say that is new. The prophet of silence was vociferous in 34 volumes. What in the jargon of the day, was his final "message?" Carlyle was above all else a critic of all accepted beliefs, but he had, we are told, certain positive beliefs of his own:—

He was nothing if not a religious teacher. But true messenger from the Ideal, as I hold him to be, he took away from the sum of religious knowledge more than he brought to it. This great and noble spirit did not know Christ. In this way he fell short of the standard of truth and eclipsed the light of his fellows. He sank to the level of a beathen stoic; nay, he went back to the dispensation of fear which lacks the Stoic rectitude and calm. His law was that of Sinai, not of the Mount of Beatitudes; the lesson which

Mount of Beatitudes; the lesson which he loved to repeat rose no higher than that of the Hebrew Testament, interpreted without reference to the New. In his Bible there was no New Testament. And while it is a portentous fact that England still needs, at this stage of history, to be terrified into morality and religion by the threat of temporal retribution, it must ever be a lowering of Carlyle in the scale of greatness that he taught like his own Mohammed rather than like the Master of Light. He spoke mighty words, but he had little in common with that dove-like, brooding spirit which drew forth strength out of sweetness, and was able to hush the great waters and rebuke the waves. The Old Law must be preached to those whose training has made them incapable of receiving the New without it. But the teacher ought not to share its limitation and incapacity. Carlyle, it is impossible to doubt, was neither Greek nor Christian, but Old Hebrew. He never did get quite clear of Houndsditch, endeavor as he might, and though with perverse ingratitude he reviled the Jews and everything Jewish, even Mr. Froude admits that his chief merit was to read the world's history, as a kind of Old Testament, with himself for its Moses and Ezra.

In the essay on George Eliot Dr. Barry dwells more emphatically than other writers have done on her abounding sense of humor. He regards her as the artist illustration of Thackeray's apothegm—"Humor is wit tempered by love." It was because of her great love for the old and homely, for the rural folk of her youth, with all their loutish stupidity, that at

times she made them food for innocent laughter:—

There may be some readers, neither finical nor lackadaisical, who think that George Eliot's humor does occasionally border on the grotesque; and it is once in a way more massive than delicate. But these are spots on the sun. George Eliot is not only a great humorist, in spite of her sex, but it seems clear that she is the greatest, always excepting Carlyle, in modern literature. Her humor, like the melancholy of which it is sometimes the parent, and sometimes the offspring, is compounded of many samples, and has the most varied applications. The humorist in grain goes counter to the world's established form; he is sad at a wedding breakfast, and makes a pun at a funeral. And therefore humor, like every species of originality, carries with it a peril for the owner, and is liable to explode upon him as well as his friends. But George Eliot, being many things besides a humorist, has not driven in her liking for incongruities over the precipice though she comes to its very brink. When Herbert Spencer bids her behold in prospect the Survival of the Fittest she draws back in alarm, and asks what is to be the fate of all the lovable oddities she remembers down in Loamshire.

what is to be the fate of all the lovable oddities she remembers down in Loamshire, and still wears in her heart. It does not soothe her to be told that unless they perish the world cannot be perfect. She objects to perfection at such a price.

Georg Eliot was, of course, an agnostic and had no belief in a hereafter. There were wrongs whose only solution would be the grave. The wicked might flourish like a green bay-tree, but in time, like the bay-tree, they would wither and be cut down. As for their victims, the grave would end their sufferings. Yet in the future of the race George Eliot had an ardent belief, and if we cannot be happy ourselves we can promote the happiness of our descendants by legislative and other changes that will better their environment. And while rejecting the dogmas of Christianity, George Eliot was a firm believer in its moral code:—

How unaffected, loving, helpful we might be, did the spirit of Christianity rule us! How foolish and unhappy we shall remain until we learn those principles of true knowledge, or science, which make it clear that, however the Christian legends may be exploded as mythical, the sayings of Christ, the self-sacrifice of Christ, the humanity of Christ, the compassion of Christ, must enter as elements into any theory of religion that is to govern the future! It is a religion that many other leading spirits profess to hold; but none have given expression to its aspirations in shapes so clear and beautiful. When we have looked upon Dinah Morris, Adam Bede, Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Daniel Deronda, through the eyes of the great woman who has drawn such significant personages for us we shall have gained an insight into this new religion that has so remarkable a literature and that aims at the sceptre of social sovereignty. If it survives it will be in the form that George Eliot has given it.

Very different was the philosophy of Heinrich Heine, if his attitude towards life can be called a philosophy at all. Rebelling against the "dog virtue of humility" with which he identified the Christian creed, and which abandoned the world to Cæsar, and reserved all its good things for the privileged few. Heine preached the gospel of self-indulgence. Let everyone get as much pleasure as he could, and exalt the flesh with its vices and concupiscences. It must be remembered, however, that Heine lived in a day when the laws of political economy were very imperfectly understood, and when inequalities of worldly fortune were regarded as an inevitable law of the universe no more possible to combat than the law which decrees that water shall not run uphill. Consequently Heine had no

run uphill. Consequently Heine had no hope of any improvement in the existing scheme of the distribution of wealth. If the poor were doomed to be unhappy let them not add to their misery by the voluntary deprivations inculcated by the Christian creed, was his injunction:—

For eight years Heine lay dying. Did he change his manner of thought and become a sincere Christian, as in those days was often rumored? It is hard to say. The creed of self-indulgence had broken down; he openly confessed it, but it does not follow that he put any better in its

place. Rather the cynical scepticism which always lay at the bottom of his thinking came to the surface; and he jested and shook his cap and bells in sight of eternity, with a look half-frightened as might a clown on the stage who feels that he is dying but must play his part. Here was a musical soul, which in bitter times or in heroic obedience to the faith it scorned might have filled its generation with melody, kindled hopes, lightened a thousand hearts, and drawn to itself unspeakable love and veneration. But, thanks in large measure to the corrupt society into which it was born, no such undying melody came from it. Heine was perverse and sensual, a blackamoor, whom no washing seven times repeated will make white. For the abuse of his transcendent gifts he must answer at a higher judgment seat than man's. Nevertheless when we reflect on the conditions of his bringing up, on the great and small tyrannies under which he lived in his native land, on the Paris of Louis Philippe to which he was banished, on the absence of a Christian ideal whether of individual or social existence in the Europe of half a century ago, we shall recognise that he did not fall by his own hand. One thing he has proved to evidence—That genius without principle acts only as a chaotic force. And a second that no mere Hellenism will save the world.

Nietzsche, to whom a chapter is given, was in many respects a disciple of Heine. He certainly shared the aversion to Christianity as a "slave morality" which the German poet professed during the greater part of his life. But he was not without hope of a great future for the race, though the hope was built on a queen foundation. It was that everyone would treat his neighbor as his enemy and dedicate his energies to the advancement of Number 1. Let everyone get rid of that "slave morality," that sympathy for others on which modern democracy is founded, and so shall the "overman" be created whose production is not a moral duty, but a physiological one for mankind:—

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against all that Christians hold sacred cannot be read without an uneasy feeling that they do perhaps give form and impetus to what Thomas Hardy describes as "the lines of tacit opinion," upon which many shape their lives though comparatively few would defend them, even when the doors were shut. Morality is law, and law is a limit; how might mankind fulfil its destiny, were limits abolished!

Nietzsche's gospel makes strength and cunning the test of human advancement. Only those are fitted to survive who can prove their worth by their ability to trample on, or overreach, their fellows. This, as Dr. Barry observes, has not been the standard of human progress, even among the Darwinians, for science teaches the need of self-restraint in the individual if the race is to advance. It repudiates, as Huxley has said, the "Gladiatorial theory of existence." But our mode of treatment of the sick and weak, in Nietzsche's view, turns civilisation into a lazaretto. It is contrary to the method of Nature who weeds out of her garden the feeble, kills the unhealthy, cherishes the strong:—

These are not new conceptions, though flung out with a passion of hatred which even among anti-Christians, is almost without parallel. Nietzsche gives in abstract form—he was hardly capable of breathing into the hollow phantom the breath of life—precisely the same view of religion which Heine tricked out in the pantheistic splendours of his book, "Webe Deutschland." Spirit is a negation, according to both these evangelists, of "sense and seeming"—the immortal soul, the world to come, a transcendent Deity, sin, judgment, and conscience, are terms in a fanciful doctrine, like Alchemy or star-gazing. It was fully time that the question should be asked of evolution whether it is moving, and what is the law of its ascent? Is the Christian creed essential to it or can we so read the writing in man's flesh and spirit as to conclude that "seeming" is the only world, adaptation to it the only wisdom? Is evolution merely the working out of a physiological problem, or is it something in the end quite different? Shall we hold that phenomena are the sum of reality, and take as a principle that nothing is true, everything is lawful? To have stated a question accurately, the wise tell us, is half-way to the answer. And in his headlong iridescent style, the madman and genius, Friedrich Nietzsche, has stated the question of science.

How sharp is the contrast between Nietzsche and Pierre Loti, to whom a brilliant essay is devoted! Though a wonderful story writer, Loti, eschews the world of ordinary French novelists, and, indeed, is hardly conscious of "society" and its ways. His stories, exquisite in simplicity as in style, depend for their strength and

as in style, depend for their strength and interest on the power of introspection and their appeal to the instincts of love and pity. Introspection, the effort to recall past sensations, to stereotype a multitude of ephemeral impressions—these things sometimes tend towards the morbid:—

In Loti, however, we find many touches that are pretty and delightful, not at all morbid—the child-like fetishism of early things, from the sun-stained garden-wall, and the dark green sea, which, when he saw it for the first time, seemed to rise up on all sides, "moving everywhere with a threatening motion," to the exotic savor of the house next door, which is redolent of spices and scents from the Antilles. It is an awakening world, the associations of which were by-and-by to determine his vocation. The solitary boy, who worships his mother with a French devotion, and hates school, and gets Aunt Claire to do his lessons for him, and "does not want to grow up," and makes friends of birds and beasts, and hunts after butterflies, who cannot write a theme or a description—much less a story—but keeps in secret the diary of his own thoughts, and is looked upon by the other fellows in his class as "odd and uppish," while he torments himself with religious scruples, and thinks he should like to be the pasteur of a lonely parish, where he might renew the saintly marvels of les cevennes, had already in his composition everything to which Pierre Loti is indebted for his success in literature. He had but to print himself at length in a volume, expressing with the utmost force and distinction his individual traits, and fame was sure to follow.

Pierre Loti is the nom de plume of M. Viaud, the captain of a French frigate. In 1867, at the age of 17, he became a naval cadet, and later was able to realise his childhood's dream of a world-wide tour, in which he would hold converse with the inhabitants of many lands. A visit to Tahiti gave him a taste for tropical nature, and it was after the exotic plants he loved so well that he was named by his fellow-officers Loti. His cosmopolitan tastes constitute one of his principal charms. He hurries us from one end of the world to the other, now to unfold for us the drama of unhappy love played out on the waste shores and bleak rocks of the northern seas, then to show us lovers meeting and sighing by the shores of the Bosphorus, or under the brilliant heaven of Japan, or in some "Summer isle of Eden in dark purple wastes of sea." Like Kipling, he has discovered the rich store of literary romance which lies hid under the problems of ethnography and geography. His constant theme is the relation of Western civilisation with a primitive or an Oriental people. In "Madame Chrysanthème" we are in

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Japan, that piquant land of mirth and fantastic beauty; in the "Roman d'un Spahi," we are between the burning sun and the burning soil of Africa; in "Azizade" we breathe the voluptuous air of the lands of the cypress and myrtle; in the "Mariage de Loti" we are in the jewel-like islands of the Pacific. Nearly always there is the same story to tell. The man of the superior race loves, and is loved by, the woman of the inferior; and such loves do not end happily. The sailor departs in his ship at the call of the great Gods, and a deserted Dido, a foreign Ariadne, is left lamenting by the shore of the inexorable sea. It is a simple story, but told with such art, so exquisite a sense of pathos and such profound and artistic feeling for Nature as will hardly be found in another living writer. To meditate on sunrises and sunsets and wander about all seas, escaping from the petty miseries of ordinary existence into an aerial world of skies and waters—such is Pierre Loti's delight. Unfortunately while rebelling against the customary standards of life, and disdaining the ethics of a self-seeking world, he puts no large philosophy in their place:—

The human will, so powerful in fact, so splendid a resource as it ought to be in literature, is with him of small account. Like oil floating on water, which slips over it but does not mingle with it, the human ego, in these great circles of sky and sea, emerges, floats for a little, is dissipated one knows not how, and Nature alone remains, a triumph and a mystery. Passive enjoyment, passive contemplation, yielding sorrow—these make the Eastern temper, which is that of M. Loti. Compare with it the Greek artist's principle of energy, resistant or creative, and let us see what that has done in the world. With the cultivation of inward moods there is no slight tendency in pity to become self-pity, and the natural impulses may be trained as on the stage to play a part in which the acting is everything. Nor do we believe that M. Loti's pessimism will guarantee him against these consequences. His arrogance may be a protest on behalf of man that there is in him a spirit, a character, which does not deserve to be mocked by the world of blind forces now too strong for him. But the Supreme is not a mocker; and "Baal" and Shiva, whom M. Loti—as we learn from the quaint little story of "Suleima"—is inclined to worship, are false gods. The terror of the unknown is one thing; quite another is the melancholy of the Unknowable. It is astonishing that M. Loti should not perceive either in science or in faith a lifting over his head of the spiritual heavens with their infinite azure, when he has always the eyes, and very often the heart, of a child. Like Amiel, disgusted with the real, he cannot frame to himself an ideal from the Bible

or the Book of Nature. We pity him, even while we admire the tender and exquisite pictures he has been showing us; for the finest things in his volumes are but reminiscences of these.