

"lord," "brothas and sistas," "summattime," "wintatime," and so forth. Having stated once for all, on an early page, in his inimitable style, that the characters "in their parlance replaced the letter *r* by vowel sounds almost too obscure to be represented, except where it came last in a word before a word beginning with a vowel, according to the custom universal in rural New England," he might surely have spared us the elaboration of this trifling point all the weary way to his lame and impotent conclusion.

"The Awkward Age." By Henry James. London: Heinemann. 1899.

Mr. James will imperil his vogue if he is not careful. We have grown to look upon him as a dainty, dapper, well-groomed author, who, despite some Transatlantic eccentricities, could be introduced to our friends of both sexes. But every year he grows more careless of his literary person, his epigrams are more flashy, his innuendoes are less clean-shaven, until in his present presentation he may almost be denied admittance as shabby-genteel. Were this his first appearance, we would dismiss him as an American intent upon a very serious attempt to depict English society, but possessed of no materials other than those reposing in his inner consciousness. His men, though represented as belonging to a smart set, are neither English nor gentlemen. They exclaim "See here" upon the slightest provocation; we hear of "the perfection of their evening dress and the special smartness of their sleeveless overcoats;" and their behaviour always recalls that of a strolling mummer, who mistakes insolence for ease and rudeness for wit. The ladies are mere caricatures of new women, and the children, of "awkward age," parody the precocity of the most unnatural French creations. Nine-tenths of the book are conversation, and consist of tedious, vain repetition. And yet we feel that the characters are alive, though we can never conjure up any interest in them or come to desire their better acquaintance. The coherence of the style may best be gauged by an extract: "Lord Pethererton, a man of five-and-thirty, whose robust but symmetrical proportions gave to his dark-blue double-breasted coat an air of tightness that just failed of compromising his tailor, had for his main facial sign a certain pleasant brutality, the effect partly of a bold, handsome parade of carnivorous teeth, partly of an expression of nose suggesting that this feature had paid a little, in the heat of youth, for some aggression at the time admired and even publicly commemorated." Was there ever such a sentence outside a shilling shocker? As for the story, Mr. James has no more to tell than the needy knife-grinder, and equally little right to an expectation of our sixpences.

"Adrian Rome." By Ernest Dowson and Arthur Moore. London: Methuen. 1899.

Adrian Rome was a fortunate young gentleman of wealth and position who would have done very well but for that fatal "artistic temperament." He is not a fiddler of genius, but a minor poet. He writes a successful play. With the perversity of the artistic temperament, as trying in books as in life, he marries a cold, unsympathetic, elegant, society lady to whom minor poets and poetry are incomprehensible. We fancy she would have understood politics; but that is not very clear; she might possibly have been satisfied with a husband who shot and hunted. In these depressing circumstances Adrian's inspiration dried up; he and his "Work," and his "Art" were at a standstill. Then he remembered Sylvia. A very painful position it was no doubt; but he would have made the best of it if he had not had a yacht, for he could not then have meditated a cruise with Sylvia in the Mediterranean. We do not discover any particular capability in Sylvia of stimulating the production of literature; but we must take this secret of Adrian's egoism for granted. Besides, owing to an accident, the experiment was not made. We can never know therefore whether wife desertion is really a specific for the exhausted minor poet. It would be unfair to say that the authors do not interest us or enable us to see the real pathos of the situation. But the scraps of political conversation are silly; and Brooke the Oxford

don is insufferable. He is supposed to say "charming things with a languid sting in them," and he perpetrates pages of such "charming" epigrams as "There's nothing so distinguished as failure except a really brilliant success." Of Corbyn the theatrical critic, and Miss Lucerne the actress, there is not enough. The theatrical element, with which the authors apparently are familiar, is prominent throughout the book.

"Miss Cayley's Adventures." By Grant Allen. London: Grant Richards. 1899.

Once upon a time Mr. Grant Allen quaffed the waters of the Pierian spring and the world revelled in the inspired pages of "The Woman Who Did." To-day he has frankly gone over to the merry-makers. "Miss Cayley's Adventures" are so innocent of any serious import that they might have been told on the strength of half a dozen Transatlantic "cocktails;" they are as replete with inconsequent absurdity as a modern farce. Lois Cayley, "of a military family, you know," leaves Girton almost penniless and an orphan. She overhears in Kensington Gardens a conversation between two ladies about a recalcitrant maid, offers her services, and is forthwith launched on a sea of Continental adventures. She gets friends, income (by the sale of bicycles on commission for example), performs a marvellous Alpine feat in rescuing one Harold (whose offer of marriage she had just refused), afterwards goes to his rescue in a more prosaic sense and winds up with matrimony. Here is an example of the dialogue: "Then my heart rose, and I gave way. 'If ever you were poor,' I faltered,—'penniless, hunted, friendless—come to me, Harold, and I will help and comfort you. But not till then. Not till then, I implore you.' He leant back and clasped his hands. 'You have given me something to live for, dear Lois,' he murmured. 'I will try to be poor—penniless, hunted, friendless. To win you I will try.'" The poor fellow did "try;" but the effort has evidently cost the author a large overdraft on his fund of humour. Mr. Gordon Browne's illustrations are the best things in the book.

"The Black Douglas." By S. R. Crockett. London: Smith, Elder. 1899.

After all there is no real reason why Mr. Crockett should not disport himself in melodrama if that element pleases him. There is always a certain market and a certain public for such wares. Thus the fact that "The Black Douglas" is just so much lurid nightmare by no means presupposes the unpopularity of the book. But it is impossible to take melodrama seriously, and the imperfections of "The Black Douglas" are manifest. The Black Douglas himself is a picturesque figure enough, but he is unhappily killed off in the middle of the book. From this point any gleam of probability dies, and the atmosphere becomes fearsomely what Toddy would call "bludgy." But the danger of ultra-superlative writing here receives melancholy illustration. After the first shock it has no effect, except to irritate. We follow the murderer Gilles de Retz to his castle in France. Here children are murdered wholesale, but the pathos is cheap and poor. Gilles de Retz's followers transform themselves into wolves at will, and in that capacity bite unhappy wights to death, but the whole performance smacks only of the limelight. Mr. Crockett is not Scott and his minute elaboration has a perilous likeness to padding. And when the whole blood-red pageant has passed we remember regretfully that the tale of common things was once written simply and well by the author of "The Lilac Sunbonnet."

"God's Greeting: a Story of this our Day." By John Garrett Leigh. London: Smith, Elder. 1899.

A tale full of pathos, but somewhat obscure. Its interest is sharply qualified by the conversations, covering page after page, in the Lancashire miners' dialect. But the endurance and patience of the men who face death daily, and to whom life is but one long toil, are strongly depicted. Amongst them also moves a tender-hearted, thoughtful scholar, who, when his day's labour is over, flies to his books and his dreamings. Around him and the girl heroine the real interest of the tale revolves. Both seek to bring "God's Greeting" to the sons of toil.