

LONDON LITERARY LETTER.

Written for THE NEW YORK TIMES
SATURDAY REVIEW
By William L. Alden.

LONDON, May 15.—The flood of books which ought to be bound in khaki—as indeed some of them are—continues to rise. It is already a sort of inundation. We have war stories, and books on war; books on South Africa, and books on the political relations of England and the Boers. This sort of thing threatens to go on while the war lasts, and how long it will last no one ventures to predict. Oh! I forget Lord Wolseley, who some time ago predicted that the war would be over by the 15th of May. But then Wolseley was always a sanguine man.

With the exception of two or three books by war correspondents—such as Steevens and Ralph—not much can be said in favor of the khaki flood. Most of the books dealing with the war have plainly been written to meet a real or fancied demand, and they have more or less of the character of machine-made books. Winston Churchill's book of personal experience will be published soon, and ought to be one of the best of the lot. However, Churchill has much of the impetuosity of the late Lord Randolph Churchill, and there will almost certainly be things in his book which will become the subject of acrimonious debate.

The appearance of the new Daily Express, with a letter of recommendation from the German Emperor, was an event. It is not often that a personage of the importance of the Kaiser stands sponsor for a new daily paper. In this instance the German Emperor has certainly done a thing that will increase his popularity in England, for he has shown in the most unmistakable way that he wishes to remain on friendly terms with England. As for the new paper, it has been a success from its first number. It is edited with remarkable skill, and it has hit the public taste. It is said that among its proprietors are, in addition to Mr. C. Arthur Pearson, those well known capitalists, Sir George Newnes, Sir Thomas Lipton, and Sir William Ingram, the proprietor of The Illustrated London News. Evidently it has unlimited funds at its disposal, but in view of its immediate success it is doubtful if its millionaire backers will have any calls made upon their purses.

Mr. Rudyard's Kipling's letters on the war, which are appearing in The Daily Mail, will enable the latter to bear with complacency the success of its new rival. In them it seems to me that we see Mr. Kipling at his best. Not only does he describe what he has seen in South Africa with that wonderful vividness and that inspiration of epithet which always characterize his work, but he shows a breadth of statesmanship that would be in its right place in the Cabinet. Can it be that Mr. Kipling is to add to his laurels as poet, and romancer, and journalist, the crown of statesmanship? There are certainly thousands of men who are reading his letters to-day who would decidedly prefer that the rule of the empire should be entrusted to him, rather than to half a dozen of the leaders on both sides of the House of Commons.

Mr. Theodore Cook has resigned the editorship of The St. James's Gazette, and the paper has undergone considerable change in the hands of the new editor. Precisely why Mr. Cook resigned I do not know. Possibly he differed with the proprietors as to certain questions of the day. There is a curious disposition on the part of newspaper men to insist upon the right of the editor of a paper to advocate a policy of which the proprietors disapprove, and when an editor is forced to resign his position he is hailed as a martyr to principle. It does not seem quite clear to men who are not employed on newspapers that proprietors have no rights whatever. Nevertheless, there is an undoubted tendency among journalists to claim for themselves exemption from some of the laws which govern other men, and an editor who is turned out of his position because he will advocate a policy which his proprietors believe to be wrong, or who is put in prison for advocating the assassination of some honest constitutional monarch, is usually hailed as a martyr who deserves the admiration and sympathy of mankind.

Mr. W. H. Mallock's "Doctrine and Doctrinal Disruption" is an important book, which thoughtful men can hardly fail to read. I have found it a most unsatisfactory book. It aims to show that the Church of England has no authoritative source of doctrine, and, therefore, her members should instantly go over to the Church of Rome. What it really shows is that if a man cannot believe four doctrines he should instantly believe eight. Of course Mr. Mallock does not say precisely this, but his argument that because the Anglican finds certain doctrines incredible, he should

therefore go into the Church of Rome and swallow a quantity of still more incredible doctrines amounts to very much the same thing.

Another book of unusual interest is Prince Kropotkin's "Memoirs of a Revolutionist." It should, however, have been called "Memoirs of an Amiable Crank." Prince Kropotkin is widely known as a chemist and an anarchist. What is the connection between chemistry and anarchy is not clear. One would naturally fancy that the student of a science so exact as chemistry would be a conservative rather than an anarchist, but in point of fact the Russian chemist usually makes that science a step on the road to Nihilism. The book shows Prince Kropotkin to be an amiable enthusiast, and were there no such thing as dynamite in the world he might be a harmless enthusiast. The late Stepniak, as he preferred to call himself, was also a most amiable person in private life, but I do not know that when a person is blown up with dynamite the fact that the dynamiter is an amiable person reconciles the unfortunate man to his fate.

The "Trial of the Bantocks" is a professedly humorous book, but its humor does not appeal to me. This is very likely my fault, and not the fault of Mr. G. S. Street, the author. It is certainly a popular book, and as a rule the press has spoken well of it. It often happens that one's humor is another man's weariness. There are many people who can see no humor in Mr. Jerome's books, and one of the most intelligent and cultivated men I ever knew, who had, as a rule, a very keen appreciation of humor, could see nothing humorous in Mark Twain. The "Bantocks" is certainly clever in its way, and very likely the public will prefer it to Mr. Jerome's new book, "Three Men on the Bummel." I like the latter very much, and although it does not come to one as an agreeable surprise, as did "Three Men in a Boat," it is heartily welcomed by Mr. Jerome's very large circle of admirers.

Mr. Eden Phillpotts has been compelled by ill-health to lay aside temporarily the new novel on which he has been for some time at work. Mr. Phillpotts has been for some years what a friend of mine calls a "lunger"—that is to say, he has a pair of delicate lungs which require frequent attention. He made the mistake of spending the recent abominable Winter in England but rest and a change of climate will undoubtedly put him on his legs again. Mr. Phillpotts is personally a charming man, and he has a large circle of warm friends, who will probably insist that hereafter he avoid the risk of a Winter in the land of rain, fog, and east wind.

We are soon to have a new novel by Miss Marie Corelli, entitled "A Master Christian." Probably the hero is to be superior as a Christian to Mr. Hall Caine's famous Christian. Then we are promised a new novel by Mr. Rider Haggard, called "Black Heart and White," which presumably deals with Kafirs and Boers. Mrs. Flora Steele has a new novel ready and within a few weeks we shall have Mr. Wells's "Love and Mr. Lewisham," which was originally published as a serial in the weekly edition of The London Times. Mr. George Meredith's long-promised volume of poems is now promised for the present Spring season and doubtless Mr. Kipling's letters from the Cape will appear in book form before the war is over.

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