BOOKS OF THE DAY.

WITH several biographies and studies of eminent writers—men and women—now under my hand, I have been pondering on certain phases and conditions of the literary life. How far is an author's work and success affected by financial circumstances at the outset of a career, or by early experiences in youth, by the character of parents and their encouragement, or otherwise, of budding talent? On the whole, I should say that an uncongenial home and parental repression are a more serious handicap than lack of means.

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One shining example of an author—fortunately still with us—who has risen to the heights from small beginnings, forms the subject of an industrious chronicle entitled "BARRIE." The Story of a Genius. By J. A. Hammerton. With forty-one Illustrations (Sampson Low; 16s.). Mr. Hammerton, who is also the author of "Barrieland: A Thrums Pilgrimage," besides appreciations of Stevenson and Meredith, has evidently devoted to his task an enormous research and meticulous attention to detail. The result is extremely interesting, and, to the perfect Barrie-ite, the length of the book will be no bar. Leaning on a dictum of Arnold Bennett that biographies of the living are generally too full of sentiment and adulation, Mr. Hammerton has deliberately refrained from consulting Sir James himself. "I offer this new work of mine," he writes, "as an unauthorised biography . . . it is published without his knowledge or consent." The author's motive was to preserve impartiality and a free hand in criticism, but I do not notice any strictures which personal contact with his hero might have prevented; in fact, the book exhales a spirit of admiration. Personally, I should have thought it advisable to go to the fountain-head while the fountain is still playing. I should have done so myself in the only biography that I ever perpetrated, but for the unfortunate fact that the fountain had dried up.

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Having several other books to notice, I must be brief about them all. But I cannot resist one little extract about Sir James Barrie's first job as a journalist, in Nottingham, where he was leader-writer on a local paper. "The proprietors," we read, "were mindful of the souls of 'the comps,' but recked little about those of the 'liter'y gents.' Hibbert adds some delectable details of 'Penny,' the foreman compositor, who was left to get the paper out as best he could. He divided copy into two classes: (1) 'noos,' the importance of which he judged by the relative nearness of its place of origin; (2) 'tripe,' which embraced all literary matter, such as leaders, reviews, and special articles—indeed, everything the new arrival from Scotland had agreed to supply."

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Sir James Barrie, though not born, like a Forsyte, with a silver spoon in his mouth, was exceedingly fortunate in his parents. Of David Barrie we read: "No father was ever more resolved that his sons should have the best schooling, at no matter what sacrifice to himself. The parental thriftiness that enabled the oldest boy to go to Aberdeen University must have bordered on the heroic. A weaver's weekly earnings amounted then barely to one pound. . . . Eighteen years later, when James went to Edinburgh, matters were very different: the days of scraping and vigilant economy were past, though those of plenty had still to come."

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Mention of the fact that Barrie was one of the privileged few who dined with Meredith on his eightieth birthday brings me to "THE LIFE OF GEORGE MEREDITH." By Robert Esmonde Sencourt. With Coloured Frontispiece from a Miniature Portrait. (Chapman and Hall; 16s.). Here we learn that "it was Meredith who first suggested to Barrie that he should try the writing of plays." "It is a curious anomaly," Mr. Sencourt observes, "that has made a man of the stature of George Meredith wait twenty years for his authoritative biography. But the fault was his own; when he died Lord Morley and Meredith's other executors approached Sir James Barrie . . . but Sir James refused, because he knew that Meredith was violently opposed to the idea of anyone writing his life. He wanted to be known through his work alone. The result he did not foresee was that men would insist on having knowledge about him; that false rumours would be a deforming mirror." The same thing has happened with several other eminent Victorians, and there are still some—Matthew Arnold, for instance—to be rescued officially from their own misguided self-obscuration.

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To turn from Barrie to Meredith is to experience a strong contrast of mental atmosphere, for we read of Meredith: "A vast impatience shows itself in mercilessness among the most intimate relations of life. . . . The ardent lover was not an easy person to live with." There are recorded "cuts of sarcasm at his wife and even at his children. "For his father," we read, "he never cared much, and even to his old age there was no softening of his judgment." At fourteen, "he did not trust his father; he was not satisfied with what was being done for him." Learning that he was a ward in Chancery and that money of his own was available for his education, he arranged himself to go to school in Germany. Referring to the autobiographical element in several of the novels—(*e.g.*, "Evan Harrington," "Harry Richmond," and "Richard Feverel")—Mr. Sencourt remarks that "the desperate tension of Meredith's princely genius and his narrow circumstances forced him into creative action in direct reference to his own life." The biographer has painted a vivid portrait (not omitting the warts) of one whom he describes as being "like the heroes and heroines he created, a figure on the grand scale."

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Meredith was one of several great writers, including also Coventry Patmore and Francis Thompson, who regarded as their Egeria that fine poet and essayist commemorated by her daughter in "ALICE MEYNELL": A Memoir. By Viola Meynell. Illustrated (Jonathan Cape; 15s.). It was her discerning review of "The Amazing Marriage" in the "Wares of Autolycus" column of the old *Pall Mall Gazette* that first drew Meredith's attention to her work. Their correspondence developed into close friendship, and, on Meredith's part, sheer adoration. His tribute to the beauty of Alice Meynell's prose was enough in itself to establish a literary reputation. "I can fancy Matthew Arnold," he says, "lighting on such essays . . . saying with refreshment, 'She can write' . . . imagine Carlyle listening, without the weariful gesture, to his wife's reading of the same, hearing them to the end, and giving his comment—'That woman thinks' . . . She will some day rank as one of the great English women of Letters."

This delightfully intimate record of her, spiced with humour and full of fresh glimpses, in letters and otherwise, of many famous contemporaries, enables us to see more deeply into the heart of one who, even to her best friends, was occasionally something of an enigma. Alice Meynell grew up in a congenial atmosphere, and, like her sister, Lady Butler, the famous battle-painter, she found few obstacles to the growth of her genius. "Their father taught the two little girls all that he would have taught them had they been sons. He was perhaps a stern taskmaster . . . ." He possessed, however, "a fixed and ample income."

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What a contrast between the sunshine of Alice Meynell's youth and married life and the black frost of penury and cruel repression that blighted the young lives at Haworth Parsonage, as told anew in "CHARLOTTE BRONTE": A Psychological Study. By Rosamond Langbridge (Heinemann; 8s. 6d.). The Rev. Patrick Brontë's income may have been fixed, but it was certainly not ample, and none of it was spent on making life brighter for little girls. He was something more than a stern taskmaster—in fact, this book portrays him as a domestic tyrant of the worst type, "the ugly product of a hideous religion." Add, too, the hardships and privations of school life at a feminine counterpart of Dotheboys Hall. All this, of course, has been discussed before, but the author approaches it from a more candid and modern standpoint. Her outspoken book is a tonic antidote to Mrs. Gaskell's memoir.

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Another famous woman writer, with "a heavy father" worthy to stand beside Parson Brontë and in some respects even more bitterly uncompromising, is the subject of "ANDROMEDA IN WIMPOLE STREET": The Romance of Elizabeth Barrett Browning. By Dormer Creston (Thornton Butterworth; 10s. 6d.). Here again we have a modern woman's attack on Victorian prejudice and convention, but Miss Creston's motive has been rather to detach from Mrs. Browning's life the episode of courtship and elopement as a self-contained romantic story. This book also is a recasting of familiar material. Edward Barrett is the villain of the piece, and what emerges most strikingly is his extraordinary implacability. Most fathers are rather pleased when their daughters marry. Not so Mr. Barrett, who regarded any such proposal as an insult and a disgrace.

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In conclusion, I will name several other books of biographical and literary interest to which I hope to return. In the memoirs both of Meredith and Mrs. Meynell occurs more than one link with the subject of "CARDINAL NEWMAN": A Study. By J. Lewis May, with Portrait Frontispiece (Geoffery Bles; 10s. 6d.)—a work of great value and distinction. One of America's leading novelists has dropped into autobiography to highly entertaining effect in "A BOOK ABOUT MYSELF." By Theodore Dreiser. (Constable; 10s.). Some amusing reminiscences about the author of "The Apple Cart" compose a slim volume, which I would willingly see fatter, called "ADVENTURES WITH BERNARD SHAW." By Dan Rider. Illustrated (Morby and Mitchell Kennerley; 2s. 6d.). All the authors mentioned in this article—except Mr. Dreiser—figure in "A LITERARY HISTORY OF ENGLAND." By Bernard Groom, Senior English Master at Clifton College (Longmans Green; 8s. 6d.). The book seems to me very well done.

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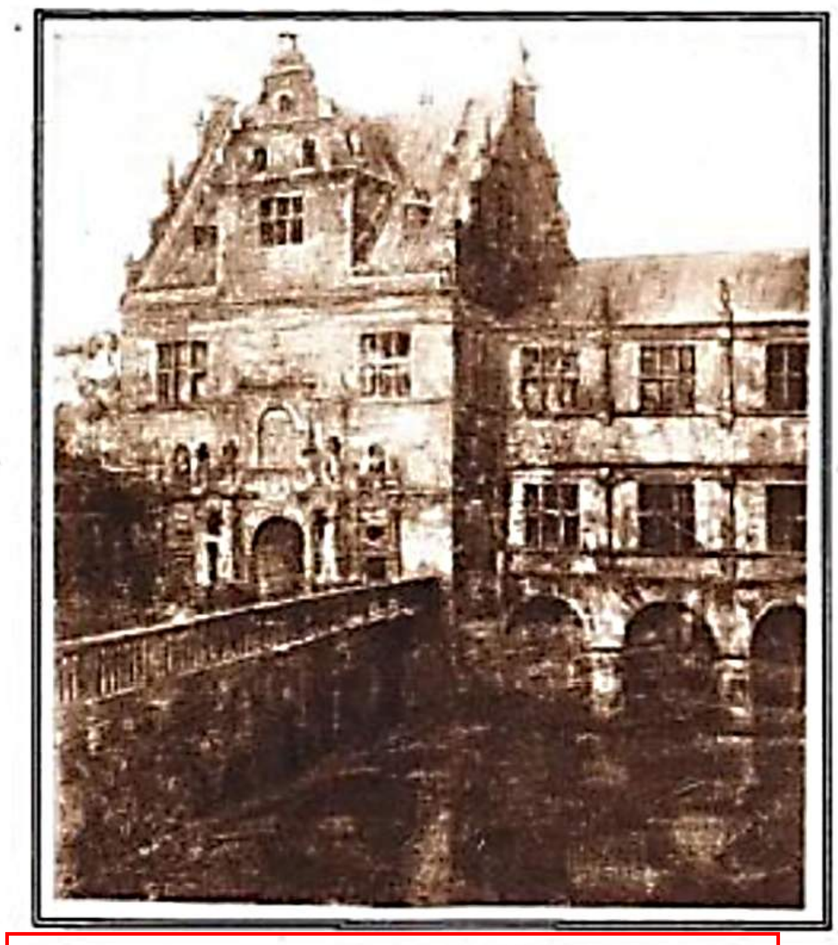
A new instalment of a kindred work on a special branch of English literature, treated on a larger scale, is "THE HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH NOVEL." The Later Romances and the Establishment of Realism. By Ernest A. Baker. (Witherby; 16s.). This is the third volume of a scholarly work, to be followed apparently by several others. Finally, I would add a word of welcome and commendation to an interesting new venture in the publication, at a popular price, of standard works still in copyright. This is a new series called "Nash's Famous Modern Books," issued in decorative paper covers and printed in large, clear type on good paper. The first number is "THE LIFE OF THE BEE." By Maurice Maeterlinck (Eveleigh Nash and Grayson; 1s.). Others announced are "BELIEF IN GOD." By Bishop Gore; "HUMAN EXPERIENCE." By Viscount Haldane; "THE LIGHT OF ASIA." By Sir Edwin Arnold. Such a series will be a great aid to the movement for adult education.

C. E. B.



FROM A DANISH ARTIST'S LONDON EXHIBITION: "THE MINT GATE, FREDERIKSBORG CASTLE, DENMARK," BY SVEND HAMMERSHOI—ONE OF HIS FINE ARCHITECTURAL PAINTINGS. (SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 654.)

On page 654 of this number Mr. P. G. Konody, the well-known art critic, discusses the work of Mr. Svend Hammershoi, the distinguished Danish painter, whose exhibition was recently opened, for a week, at the Royal Institute of British Architects, 9, Conduit Street, under the auspices of the Anglo-Danish Society. The subjects of his paintings are old buildings in Denmark and in this country, notably at Oxford and Wells Cathedral, and his treatment of architecture is marked by accuracy of detail subordinated to tonal effect. Mr. Svend Hammershoi must not be confused with his brother, Mr. Vilhelm Hammershoi, a famous painter of interiors, who exhibited some years ago at the Guildhall, and is represented at the Tate Gallery. Mr. Svend Hammershoi's recent exhibition also included pottery and silverware executed from his designs, by Mr. Herman A. Kähler and Mr. Holger Kyster respectively.

THE ART OF SVEND HAMMERSHOI: "ROSENBORG CASTLE, COPENHAGEN," A BEAUTIFUL EXAMPLE OF HIS PICTURES OF OLD BUILDINGS IN DENMARK AND ENGLAND, RECENTLY EXHIBITED IN LONDON.

(Continued.)

ever construct such a hall, because there is probably not enough money in it compared with the return to be got from investing the same amount of capital in a theatre or a cinema. Our only hope is in some institution such as the B.B.C., which certainly ought to have a concert-hall of its own. The B.B.C. could afford to build a first-class concert-hall of the kind I have described, because it would not only be a permanent asset and save them large sums of money which are spent at present in renting halls, but also because it would be of great social service to the community. This is a factor which the ordinary business concert agent and impresario cannot take into account, unless, of course, he happens to be both very rich and very public-spirited. But as the B.B.C. is a semi-Governmental institution, and exists not to make profits merely out of the license fees it receives, but to provide a socially beneficent service, the question of building a suitable concert-hall for the public, a concert-hall which can offer a large number of low-priced seats, is extremely important and will have to be seriously considered.

In the meantime, an attempt is being made to reach this new public by another method. Mrs. Courtauld and Dr. Malcolm Sargent are giving a series of six orchestral concerts beginning on Oct. 22 next, and for these concerts they have made special arrangements. They state in their memorandum: "The organisers have a particular object in view—that is, to stimulate interest in all music, and to obtain a wider and more stable concert audience drawn from lovers of music who for various reasons have been unable to subscribe regularly to concerts and who may have had to confine themselves in a great measure to mechanical music. With this object a *Concert Club* has been formed, to which employees' clubs connected with the big business establishments, students', teachers', and other social organisations, etc., are invited to subscribe for blocks of seats at considerably below the usual Queen's Hall prices. Tickets at these reduced rates will be confined strictly to the use of members of such organisations. These tickets can be sold only in the series of six, not singly, but are transferable to members of the same organisations. They can be purchased at these reduced rates only through professional or business organisations, musical societies, clubs, etc. Members of such organisations who wish to avail themselves of this opportunity can purchase tickets only through an accredited representative of their organisation, who must apply to the Secretary, 20, Portman Square."

The reductions in price are as follows: 1s. 6d. (that is, 9s. for the six concerts) for seats usually sold at 2s. 4d.; 2s. 6d. (that is, 15s. for the six concerts) for seats usually sold at 3s.; 3s. 6d. (that is, 21s. for the six concerts) for seats usually sold at 5s. 9d.; 5s. (that is, 30s. for the six concerts) for seats usually sold at 8s. 6d. It will be seen that the reductions are considerable, and, of course, at these prices the concerts must inevitably show a loss, which the promoters are prepared to bear in the hope of building up a large membership of the new concert club.

If the membership were large enough, it would be possible to give each concert in duplicate. This would make such a reduction in the overhead charges, in advertising, rehearsing, etc., that it would be possible for the enterprise to become self-supporting. The scheme has been well thought out, and it has every prospect of proving brilliantly successful. Already, I am informed, there have been applications for over two-thirds of the seats available, the 9s. and 15s. series having been over-applied for. This latter fact is a further proof, incidentally, of my contention that there are never enough cheap seats for the public demand at good orchestral concerts.

New works, both foreign and English, are to be performed. Foreign conductors of great eminence, such as Bruno Walter and Otto Klemperer, have been engaged, and the first concert will open the series brilliantly with Mr. Artur Schnabel as the pianist in Beethoven's G major and Brahms's D minor concertos.

W. J. Turner.

A DANISH PAINTER OF ARCHITECTURE.

(See Illustrations on Page 646.)

DANISH art has so far been almost a closed book to English students. The one name that has a familiar ring in English ears is that of Vilhelm Hammershoi, thanks to that artist's Exhibition, some few years ago, at the Guildhall, and the acquisition of one of his paintings by the Tate Gallery. There is a peculiar fascination about those quiet, grey, intimate interiors by Vilhelm Hammershoi, that rival the achievements of a Vermeer, a Terborch, or a Pieter de Hoogh.

The qualities that distinguish Vilhelm Hammershoi's art—"the subtle and poetic sensing of the mood of the scene and hour," are found in the paintings of another Danish artist, who is at the present moment holding an exhibition at the galleries of the Royal Institute of British Architects, and this artist happens to be a brother of Vilhelm Hammershoi.

The locality of this exceptionally interesting exhibition indicates that Mr. Svend Hammershoi is mainly concerned with architectural subjects. He has found his *motifs* among the Oxford colleges, and the castles and churches and old buildings of his native Denmark. The spirit of his art is closely akin to that of his brother's; his handling has more breadth and less "neatness"; and, like his brother, he is mainly concerned with the spirit and mood of the scene depicted. His pictures convey that feeling of intimacy which only results from the artist's complete sympathy with, and absorption in, his subject. Architecture is to him not dead stone, but a living thing. He does not slur over architectural details, but they interest him far less than the romantic associations of these venerable buildings, and the relations of these buildings to the trees by which they are at times partly screened. Unity of effect is his chief aim, and a general mellowness of tone his chief means for achieving his aim. Mr. Svend Hammershoi has also achieved distinction as a designer of ceramics and silverware.

P. G. Konody.