

BOOK REVIEWS

BY SARAH B. HARRIS

The Craftsman

GEMLET and chisel, a new venture! Its name is The Craftsman, hailing from Eastwood, N.Y., launched the first of October, 1901. "Long life to the captain and the crew." The literary freight of the Craftsman: William Morris, some thoughts upon his life, art and influence. William Morris, his career as a socialist. The firm of William Morris & Co., decorators. The opera of Patience and the aesthetic movement. Two friends, Morris and Burne Jones.

With the initial number of the Craftsman the united crafts of Eastwood, N. J., begin a work for which they hope to gain the sympathy of a wide public. The new association is a guild of cabinet makers, metal and leather workers, which has been recently formed for the production of household furnishings. The guild rises upon those foundations into which the genius of William Morris and Burne Jones is built and the united crafts will endeavor to extend the principles established by Morris in both the artistic and socialistic sense. They seek to substitute the luxury of taste for the luxury of costliness. They teach that beauty does not imply elaboration. They employ only those forms and materials which make for simplicity and dignity of effect and they hope to unite in one person the designer and the workman.

Morris, the master, put this principle in practice. He executed with his own hands what his brain had conceived, and his apprentices followed his example to the limit of their power. Morris' direct aim was to perfect the art of the artisan. This aim the "United Crafts" declares is theirs also. To make known their existence and object. The Craftsman, the monthly periodical, has been established. Its issues will be devoted to the consideration of the relation of art to labor, and to pleas for an art developed by the people for the people. The first number contains an excellent likeness of the noble head and face of Morris and eight illustrations of furniture and rooms filled with the simple, strong furniture such as Morris made to last through generations. The desks, chairs, sofas and tables are parts of squares. They are simple in line and many of the chairs and tables are pegged together so that the strength and simplicity of their construction is fully shown. There are no whorls of decoration to afford baffling caves of dust, no veneering, no slender spindles to break at an unwary touch, no spidery legs to be carefully avoided by one's portly grandfather. The lines are neat, strong, clean and above all, secure. Such furniture is a lesson in sincerity and frankness and the lasting and wearing qualities of these virtues. The subconscious influence of furniture and the familiar objects of the home upon a child is being pointed out by students of the department of child-culture. While the world of the child is small and contains few objects and while the mind of the child is most plastic and retains, after age has obscured the impressions of middle life, distinct recollections of youth, it is apparent that furniture which teaches a lesson of sincerity, strength, and simplicity plays no unimportant part in the formation of standards of character value.

The Old Town

Nebraska City is not the metropolis of Nebraska, nor the cite where the most business is done, but it is one of the oldest towns of the state, situated on the Missouri, that slow-creeping shallow river that capriciously drops out of sight and reappears again, that occupies a wider bed than it can fill most of the year, so that in

the spring it can have room to stretch when the melting snows broaden and deepen it to more than four times its usual volume. Around Nebraska City the land that is rolling swales in other parts of the state is roughened into hills gullied by the little streams that hurry to the river and shaded by bird-planted and hand-planted trees. Nebraska City and Brownville are the only towns in the state with a visible, brooding past that a noisy, bustling present does not interrupt, overshadow and dispute. Nebraska City has atmosphere. Miss Bullock's prose poem celebrating the beauty and charm of the Old Town has just been republished by the Morton Press of Nebraska City. It is finely illustrated with views of the town and country, printed on heavily enameled paper and bound in green and white with the sign-post pointing the way to the Old Town and the jeering crows perched upon it. This book with Miss Morton's volume of poetry and William Reed Dunroy's Corn-Tassels and Tumble Weeds are the most picturesque and soil-fragrant volumes yet published of Nebraska. Two of these books have been published in and celebrate Nebraska City, showing that the atmosphere is favorable to poetry and fertile reflection. People living in the west are just now looking about for something distinctively western to send their friends in the east. These three volumes, by three Nebraska poets are breezy as the plains; they have the wide horizons of Nebraska and the unfettered spirit of those who settled here from old time. They are fitting souvenirs of the land of shallow water.

Rosalynde's Lovers

Rosalynde, Mr. Thompson's new heroine, wears thin summer dresses and suggests a dainty spring day filled with whiffs of cherry and apple blossoms, but she suggests just spring and the odors and colors and freshness that come into one's mind when the image of spring occurs to it. Rosalynde is girlhood, but she lacks individualization. She can represent any good and pretty girl, but she cannot readily be identified with any girl of one's acquaintance. And her lovers are just young men. One has "curly short hair with a glint of gold where the ends turn up under the rim of his cap, and his face has a Norwegian suggestion in its fairness, strengthened somewhat by a peculiar yet not uncomely forward thrust of his rather heavy chin, which bore a rimpled yellow beard, short, fine and not very thick, running thence up to his ears; and his mustaches but half veiled his mouth." The other lover was dark. "His face was of a dusky olive, while his eyes, hair brows and mustache were nut-brown, with a dark-yellowish gloom hovering about them." This is quite in the style of the fortune-teller, who always tells her young lady customer, after she has crossed her palm with silver, that there are two lovers disputing for her favor, one dark and the other fair. One a son of mystery, dark-browed and gloomy, the other fair, a very mother's son of joy. These descriptions will fit any dark and any fair young man, so the fortune-teller is perfectly safe. Most any girl knows two young men of contrasting complexions who are potentially her lovers. Mr. Thompson's use of the word mustaches for the ornament of one young man's countenance and mustache to describe the over-lip decoration of the other is puzzling. There is probably a difference which escapes the interpretation of a feminine reader or reviewer.

It is by no means a bad quality, this of universality, but I think Mr. Thompson wrote this story some time

ago, before the success of Alice of Old Vincennes. Alice was a nice young girl, too, but she was of a more distinct type; she was of the variety piquant and saucy. One might not recognize her in a rencontre, but the least analytic gentleman would recognize her type. Rosalynde belongs just to the young girl variety; there is nothing in what Mr. Thompson tells us to distinguish her or help us to classify her. And this is an age of analysis wherein those who read books are accustomed to be given the parts. Then they can do the rest of the work and press the specimen into the volume and the page of the herbarium where it belongs.

Notwithstanding that Rosalynde's Lovers is distinctly not so clever a book as Alice of Old Vincennes, it is a pleasant love story and ends as it should. The dreams of young girls and of young men have no especially literary flavor. The girl, if she happens to be fair, dreams of a dark young man, but she could not describe him any more definitely or satisfactorily. She would not know him herself should she meet him, although she is always looking for him. He is dark and young and strong and chivalrous and wealthy. Sometimes she imagines him painting pictures, sometimes he has a melting tenor voice and sometimes he plays the piano like Paderewski. The halo of her own desire and imagination dazzles her eyes so that she never sees his features nor could she describe his clothes if it should become necessary. Thus Mr. Thompson. His hero will be plain enough to the girls who read his story, and Rosalynde is sufficiently identified to the young men. For she was "brown-haired, brown-eyed, berry-lipped, she had a bright and lissome figure and she fitted to and fro filling the air with a suggestion of heliotrope and violet." What unattached young man whose dreams of women have not crystallized into the face and figure of her who is to be his legal mate would not be satisfied with this description? The story is as innocuous as a bunch of heliotrope. It is doubtless a pleasure to Mr. Thompson to reflect that the young man who reads it will say to himself, "My girl," and every young girl will say of Breyton, who had all the virtues and had besides an income of half a million dollars a year, "I am going to marry a man like that."

The book is bound in grey linen, issued by the Bowen-Merrill Co., of Indianapolis, and is profusely illustrated with etchings and half-tones by G. Alden Peirson.

Little Men

To bend above the pages which absorbed one as a child and to find the charm fled is an uncomfortable experience. It discredits the standards of our childhood and lowers confidence in our contemporary judgment—a most unfortunate consequence of disillusionment.

Little Men, Little Women and An Old-Fashioned Girl have illuminated the childhood of many little girls, and thousands, grown-up, have read the stories to their own children. To have one's juvenile judgment confirmed by one's mature judgment and by one's children, too, is flattering to the author whose works are being tried by such widely different standards.

Miss Alcott's books have been tested thus and the verdict is still favorable. The new editions of these old favorites have been given to the children of the little girls who read about Demi and Daisy, about Laurie, Jo, Beth, Amy and Mr. Bhaer. And as the mother or aunt reads the Christmas present to the children she recalls her own childhood and in its most exciting incidents the children share. An old book, in a new edition, has the charm of the old and the new. The old book, besides telling its own story, is inextricably tangled with the life of many lives.

The new edition of Little Men issued by Little, Brown & Co., is printed in large type and illustrated by Mr. Reginald D. Birch, who first won a deserved popularity by his pictures of Little Lord Fauntleroy and by his work on the pages of St. Nicholas.

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