

## THE PASSING SHOW

Sarah Bernhardt, in her one thousandth interview, is said to have expressed her mad admiration for Julia Marlowe. Now I don't believe Sarah ever said it. She did rave over Clara Morris once, for Morris was quite her style. But Marlowe! I should not exactly call it the yearning of the star for the moth, nor yet the passion of Heine's palm for the pine, but rather the longing of the range for the refrigerator.

The old question of the laureateship is up again in England, and the tide of favor seems to set toward Swinburne. Undoubtedly Mr. Swinburne is the greatest living English poet, indeed, since his brother in Apollo is picking okum in prison, he is the only one left us now. Swinburne is a great lyric poet, perhaps he is almost too much of a poet. Sometimes the matchless completeness of his rhythm almost drives one to distraction. English ears were not made for much rhythm. What with his rhythm and rhyme and alliteration, his meaning is frequently quite subordinated. He repeats his pet rhymes over and over, just as Homer takes those great thundering lines and huris them at you again and again for very delight in his own thunder. Swinburne is thoroughly a Greek, in his thought and treatment, as well as in his theme. The Greek tendencies are discernable in every detail of his verse, even in his indomitable love of joining an adjective and a verb to merely do the work of an adjective. Its the old trick of Homer's "loud sounding sea." Sometimes I think Swinburne himself quite forgets his meaning in the delight of his measure. He can do anything with poetic measures. He has even imitated the Sapphic measures perfectly in stubborn, unyielding English syllables. He is intoxicated with melody and drunk with sound. He is like a bacchante singing himself hoarse and scourging himself with rods at the Eleusinian mysteries. And yet he is a mighty singer. As Oscar Wilde said of him:

And he hath been with thee at Thes-saly,

And seen white Atlanta fleet of foot  
In passionless and fierce virginity  
Hunting the tusked boar. His honey-eyed lute

Hath pierced the cavern of the hollow hill,

And Venus laughs to know one knee  
will bow before her still.

And he hath kissed the lips of Proserpine,

And sung the Gallæan's requiem,  
That wounded forehead dashed with  
blood and wine

He hath discrowned, the Ancient  
Gods in him

Have found their last, most ardent  
worshiper,

And the new Sign grows gray and dim  
before its conqueror.

Le Temps, the great Paris journal,  
makes the following announcement:

"The height of decency has apparently  
been reached in "Le Charnet du Diable"  
the new fantasia piece in three acts and  
eight scenes, by MM. Ferrier and Blum,  
at the Varieties."

Ever since I can remember some hope-

ful and ambitious French theatre has been announcing that it has reached the height of indecency. I wish that one of them really would reach those glittering heights some day and then direct their energies into some other channel.

The Scotchmen seem to be the gods of the hour among the devotees of ephemeral literature just now, and the gentlemen who were last year wearing Trilby neckwear are cultivating bonnie briar bushes in their coat lapels. Mr. Ian Maclaren and Mr. Crockett have written some very fresh and satisfactory stories. They are all in dialect, which is a great advantage, as the reader, not understanding them, will not recognize their faults and will take their virtues for granted. Seriously, though, they have virtues and very pronounced ones. They are simple and they are direct. They are full of the quaint pathos of a sad people and the dim landscapes of a bleak country. But pathos in itself is not greatness. There are some facts and conditions that are in themselves pathetic, such as poverty, loneliness and death. A mere newspaper account of them is pathetic. That Crockett and Maclaren handle this element of pathos simply and without becoming maudlin, is greatly to their credit, but I doubt if it gives them any very high rank in literature. I doubt if local color alone ever gave real greatness to any man. There is a sameness and monotony about the work of these two Scotchmen that all too plainly asserts their limited powers and limited imagination. Apparently, living has taught them but a few lessons, that life is sad, that the world is Scotch and that creation is made up principally of heather and bonnie briar bushes. Local color, as Kipling once remarked, is a dangerous weapon. It is the element of women, they seldom write about anything else. The greatest artists, like Turgeneff, have always used it with an almost niggardly care. There are places in Turgeneff's novels where you can fairly feel him refraining from assisting himself by somber Russian landscapes and the thread-bare, pathetic Russian peasant. Certainly Mr. McLaren's most ardent admirer cannot call him versatile. One likes to read about sound, active, healthy men of the world sometimes, and not always about a collection of melancholy freaks. There is a wearisome sameness about the romances of old men and old women and boys and spinsters, who should have married and did not. The world is really not responsible for age or celibacy and gets tired of having the romances of these sad old people thrust forever in its face. And then in these plaintive Scotch romances the men are always preachers. I wonder if the population of Scotland is entirely made up of preachers? One thing, these Scotch story tellers will certainly do, they will supply the Sunday school libraries for generations to come.

Neither Mr. Crockett nor Mr. Maclaren have, so far as I know, successfully handled a long story. Stevenson said

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