

LITERARY NOTES.

The talk of the month in metropolitan literary circles is "The Open Question," the novel by the well known American actress, Elizabeth Robins. The book was published in England last autumn, and came to America with the stamp of approval of the best English critics. The noted artist, Whistler, has pronounced it, in his estimation, the novel of the age, and at some time or other we may look for an edition with appropriate illustrations from his brush. "Dr. Kellner," the great German savant, is another celebrity who was struck at first sight with the artistic power of the novel. As soon as he had read it, he wrote to Miss Robins, asking that he be permitted to translate it into German. With such a European record behind this book, it is of interest to note its reception in the author's country. New York critics are very much divided in their opinions, but all agree that it is a novel of unusual power, and one that it is destined to be talked about through the length and breadth of the land. One critic said that it was one of "the" great American novels. Another was certain that it was anything but that, and while admitting the genius of the writer, condemned the book severely. The novel which has created such a literary sensation on both sides of the Atlantic is called "A Tale of Two Temperaments," and is a study of an American family that has degenerated through long-continued intermarriage and inherited disease.



By Courtesy of Harper & Brothers.

This family—the Ganos, were prominent Southern people and were reduced to poverty by the war, after which they removed to a small town somewhere in the Middle States, when the greater part of the scene is laid. Ethan Gano, the hero of the story, was brought up by his maternal grandfather in Boston, and Val Gano, the heroine, with Mrs. Gano in the country town in the Middle States. The first half of the book describes the youth of each. Ethan has inherited a great fortune from his grandfather, while Val, his first cousin, is almost in poverty. Matters are at such a stage when Ethan, after years of European life, comes back to Mrs. Gano and Val. It is the first time Val has seen him. She has heard much about him, has written to him, and has dreamed of seeing him. She falls in love with him at first sight, and he returns her love. Outlined briefly, the points of the tragedy that follow are these: They have decided to marry, when Ethan has a long conversation with Val's father, who knows nothing of his daughter's love for Ethan. Val overhears this conversation, in which John Gano points out the curse that intermarrying has brought upon the Gano family, the fact that consumption is hereditary on both sides of the house, and expresses the opinion that it would be criminal for a Gano to

perpetuate the race. In spite of all that Val and Ethan make their compact to marry, and determine to have one year of perfect happiness; and they decide if a new life announces its coming to commit suicide together. They enjoy their year of perfect happiness, and then, as a child is about to be born, they fulfill their compact. In a little sail-boat they sail away into the sunset out through the Golden Gate, and there the story ends. There are in reality two open questions: One is, whether it is right for physically unfit men and women to perpetuate their race, and the other whether suffering men and women are justified in opening for themselves the gates of death. The book is suggestive merely. It simply states the questions and makes no attempt to answer them. The tragedy is made more powerful by the fact that Val and Ethan combine in themselves the very highest intellectual powers and are both in the best of physical health when the compact is carried out. It is the fear of what may come—what is almost sure to come—that makes it wrong for them to do otherwise.

IN THE NIGHT.

I dreamed last night my Love was dead!
The dreadful thing was this,—
Not that my lips would feel no more
The kindness of her kiss;
Not that my feet the weary years
Would go uncomraded;
Not that of all my love for her
So much was left unsaid;—
But, sickening, I remembered how
I had been false to her!
"Oh, God," I cried aloud, "she knows
I have been false to her!"
—March Lippincott's.

"Is Marriage a Hindrance to a Woman's Self-Development?" is the subject which opens the March issue of The American Queen. Gertrude Atherton, Sarah Grand, Mary Wynne and Mrs. Hamilton discuss it from varying points of view, each supporting her side of the proposition with argument and eloquence. The papers are well written and will undoubtedly command deep interest.

Andre Castaigne, whose brilliant pictures illustrating the "Life of Alexander the Great," are now appearing in The Century Magazine, has just been created a "Chevalier de la Legion d'Honneur" through the personal interest and action of M. Faure, President of the French Republic.

PUZZLING.

I marvel, if to congress Roberts goes,
How to avoid ensuing social throes,
For Christians could not, on their hallowed lives,
"Request the pleasure of himself and wives."
Again, 'twould be provocative of strife
Should he be asked "to dine and bring his wife."
A most uncomfortable kind of hitch
Would follow if he wrote and queried
"Which?"
—Town Topics.

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She (scornfully)—I believe he only
married her for her money.
He (decidedly)—Well he's earned it.

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