

and pest up his books daily; for no man, however securely placed, can be absolutely sure that he will not one day become bankrupt. There are thousands of honest people in the world with whom book-keeping is next door to an impossibility, and it is on these people that the severity of the new recommendations will fall. Officialdom of course is book-keeping mad. The debtor who has kept books unskillfully—and most people keep books unskillfully—is the Official Receiver's delight. It gives him so many chances of raising suspicious issues. We have heard a Registrar upbraid a debtor for entering a cheque on both sides of an account. The debtor explained meekly that it was an exchange cheque, yet the Registrar ordered him to stand down and adjourned the case for the production of proper accounts. We gather further from the Committee's report that they would like to compel all debtors to apply for their discharge. They assert that the reason why bankrupts so commonly fail to do this is that they have committed criminal or fraudulent acts which did not come to the knowledge of the Official Receiver up to the time of the public examination. In some instances this may, of course, be true, but in our opinion the real reason why such a large percentage of undischarged bankrupts refuse to apply for their discharges is that they do not wish for the publicity and rehearsal of their misfortunes occasioned by applications for discharge. In any case, compelling a man to apply for what he possibly does not want savours of the kind of law which Englishmen will not put up with.

X.

LORD HOWARD DE WALDEN'S "LANVAL."

COMMENTS BY FRANK HARRIS.

"LANVAL," the four-act blank verse play of Lord Howard de Walden, has again been played, and is again to be played, we understand, and no doubt the ordinary critic who has never come within hailing distance of poetry in his life, will expatiate upon its faults, and was eloquent over its shortcomings. He will possibly point out how the *cæsura* occurs very frequently at the end of the second foot, utterly oblivious of the fact that Euripides always put the *cæsura* in the second foot, and yet was a poet of some importance.

I find beautiful poetry on almost every page of this play of "Lanval." Here is a phrase: Howard de Walden talks of "Angels armoured in delight"; or this, as an evidence of how a man at six and twenty may have already learned to draw sweetness out of the bitter of experience:

"Suffice it, I have failed.

I do not charge injustice to the world,
Nor blame mankind for blindness that my deeds
Are out of sight. I can accept defeat,
And with some sorrow put my dreams away."

Shakespeare would have hugged the writer for that last line; it is his own spirit:

"I can accept defeat,

And with some sorrow put my dreams away."

Or would you have a piece of worldly wisdom?

"The Devil take all those who have a mind
To cure injustice; there'll be trouble here."

Or this about the charcoal burners when Lanval wishes them good sleep:

"Did I desire

To wish them well, I think to sleep is best,

Since 'tis denied them to pursue great ends."

It is poetry like this that your critic of the *Daily Mail* can not abide, and the scribe of the *Daily Chronicle* evidently thinks that anyone can write just as well, if not better.

JEREMIAH IN THE QUARTIER
MONTPARNASSE.

THE Taverne Dumesnil was the knock-out blow. Long had the freedom of Bohemia struggled against the stiff collars and prudery of the English, and even their attempts to establish the Oxford manner—or rather *mœurs*—on the Boulevard Montparnasse; long had it borne with the

crassness of the Amurrikans, and even their story-book chivalry; but when the bourgeoisie set up such a fortress as the Taverne Dumesnil at the very key of the situation, the corner of the Place de Rennes, Art had to go.

How pitifully strange this field of Armageddon, where the old guard still stand to their arms. I was in the Café—Diderot, let us call it!—the other night, and beheld the stricken field. It was a goodly company. Four hayseed Yankees from Wayback, in the middle distance; far off, old Government clerks and shopboys—the army of Blücher, so to say; in the foreground an American billiard-sharper trying to cheat out of a five-franc piece a sober, stolid Yorkshireman who was perfectly informed of his character; in the corner "Whisky Bill," always too busy drinking to do anything else; next him the sharper's wife, trying to keep the home together by ogling (with the worn eyes set hollow in the pasty unmodelled face) the son of a British Ambassador. Vain task! Deep-seated, retired, contemplating all with the vision of a god, sits smoking the one great colourist of his time, a little glass of *crème de menthe* at his elbow. By him, silent and strong, a goodly man, one to match

"the dead men that bore us
At a song, at a kiss, at a crime."

Next him, big and jolly, a baldheaded man with a fair, drooping moustache, whose hobby it had been to mix himself up in South American politics. Then, colourless ghosts, even in this life. Vain phantoms, how shall you live after you die? See, in all this crowd two men, and only two, who may outlive the twentieth century. But they can give none of their light and strength to redeem the invading flood that threatens to swallow them.

So much was clear; and I turned away, sick at heart; my one consolation to say: "Well, were the days of glory any better? Are we not constantly the dupes of the past?" So I went to the station, to see if I could find a train. But all the trains went to Somewhere, and I wanted to go to Nowhere. Pondering, I sauntered up the boulevard. And then, with a "rire de folle," came running at me my old friend, the blossom of the Quartier, caught me and kissed me in the midst of the broad boulevard. (Ninon, I will call her, the name is as good as another.) Now when I saw Ninon I said to myself, "The old times are come back." But there I was quite wrong. We sat on the boulevard, as old friends should, and talked. A strange discovery! She who had been the blossom of the Quartier, was now its seed, its soul.

Perfectly without the consciousness of sin, beautiful without knowing it, hating fine clothes because one cannot romp in them, there was the Child Eternal. (How I hate the Eternal Woman; it is the child that we all love!) A woman she had been at twenty-one; to-day, at twenty-six, she had grown five years younger; she had become the Avatar of the Quartier. The soul of the place had taken unto itself a body; I suppose it wanted to "move." Let us watch carefully where Ninon goes; she will one day leave the Quartier; and where she settles will be a nest wherein the young birds of a new Art may get their food, and fledge themselves, and fly. And I shall come, a white-haired wanderer, and sit at that fireside where Ninon sits, and feel proud if I have helped her ever so little to do a world-work such as she may do.

She is yet too young to know—yet she has grown grave, strong, profound; I think she suspects!—she has set herself the hopeless task of bringing one of our modern students to the light of her own wisdom. "all will be well as long as I do what I like." (A nasty one, that, for your ethicists and your altruists and your categorical-imperative-mongers!) But he is not even an artist; she will soon abandon the unequal contest, and Montparnasse will grow as respectable as its own cemetery would be without the sombre monument of Charles Baudelaire. The Ghost of Baudelaire will seek a more congenial spot. Ninon, when you go away, find room in your kerchief for the ghost of Baudelaire!

And we will raise a monument to you, that when the bourgeoisie have sown the place with their dust and ashes and un-Attic salt, men may remember that "once upon a time, there was a fairy kingdom."

But, like all truths, it will probably be criticised away into sun-myths and folk-lore. At least, let us thank our stars that we shall not be alive to see it.

Alexander Crowley.

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