

... With ...
BOOK and VERSE

By "John O'Dreams"

"LONDON MEMORIES" will be eagerly looked for by the countless admirers of the work of St. John Gaskell. Knowing his London from one end to another, with the sympathy, tolerance and imaginative vision of the writer, allied with a genius for the graceful word and phrase, this is a book that will be bought for its literary excellence and cherished in memory of a great light in the world of journalism, which is now unhappily quenched forever.

EXCEEDINGLY droll is M. Dekobra's latest fictional effort, entitled "The Sphinx has Spoken." Couched in naive and attractive form, this narrative of two British officers on the Indian frontier is to be commended to those who like to read of still another friendship between David and Jonathan. Gay camaraderie and companionship are threatened when the inevitable woman appears upon the stage; for both love this irresistible siren, and who could help it? All ends well, however, and one is sorry to read "Finis" to this admirable tale of fun and frolic, with a happy conclusion that is not to be despised these dim days.

"BUT Not for Love," by Beatrice Kean Seymour, adds yet another to the already overwhelmingly large number of novels amongst artistic temperament in throes of tender passion. Skill in construction is apparent, Mrs. Seymour being a practised writer, the milieu for the most part being London, though later it is switched to wild woodland, which affords setting for tempestuous romance. Various members of smart bohemia, flaming youth, and intelligentia of a stratum of society, flit through the pages, but fail to materialise into abiding place in the consciousness; perhaps the best portrait being that of author-father of lovely modern heroine, he being of roving disposition and inflammable temper, and emphatically of the philandering order of male. Not finding him satisfactory as a parent, his moody daughter goes a-wandering, and, finding herself stormstead in a mountain fastness, promptly falls in love with the owner thereof, a handsome young giant, but strangely unattractive, who speaks in broad vernacular. Tempted by the heavy dower of his unexpected guest, he incontinently marries her, but fails to recognise the truth of the adage. "'Tis well to be off with the old love" before taking on the bonds of the holy estate, and the end is tragedy, which somehow fails to impress. We think Mrs. Seymour is a better critic of other people's novels than creator of her own.

OUR FORTNIGHTLY BOOK REVIEW

Three Masters

Balzac, Dickens, Dostoeffsky.

By STEFAN ZWEIG

"THREE Masters," written by a German man of letters, and available in an admirable translation, is an interesting computation of the respective merit and influence of the lives of three geniuses of differing nationality, outlook, and ideals. The brilliant author's analysis of literary and spiritual characteristics of his protagonists is a consummate piece of work, and shows discernment and accuracy of knowledge of the attributes of these three, who are so diverse, yet are linked together by soaring imagination and ability to depict the life and spirit of their countrymen.

Beginning with the author of "Comedie Humaine," Herr Zweig resolves into lucidity the tremendous scope and achievement of the work of the great Gallic novelist, tracing influence of Napoleonic wars upon a vivid and questing youth, who in turn resolved upon world conquest—the world of the emotions. To that end, Balzac for a few years wandered the streets, entered great houses, stalked at midnight through dens of infamy, striving to unravel the secret of human impulse and lust and ambition. No struggle was too hard, no deprivation too unnerving, no road too steep to reach his goal, as upon fact and physiognomy he turned the X-rays of his darting eye and flashing intellect. Finally, after these years of study, he betook himself to an attic, and the composition began of that great portrait gallery of those who, actuated by fear or scorn of cupidity, or hate, surge through his imperishable pages. Who can forget Rastignac, the ruthless arrivist, Vautrin, the despoiled Goriot and his graceless daughters? Truly a master limner of mankind, the great Frenchman, in the words of his commentator, was a meteorologist of social

air currents, a mathematician of the will, an analytical chemist of the passions.

In his diagnosis of the place of Charles Dickens in the world of letters, the writer shows equal precision and penetration. There is a short resume of the dreary childhood of the author of "Oliver Twist," and of his emergence from the writing of shorthand under the portals of Parliament, to a place in the sun after the publication of "The Pickwick Papers." The point of view of the German writer is interesting and scrupulously fair, recognising as it does how truly the Dickens books mirrored the lives of the Victorians, their tastes, their ways and their works. In Herr Zweig's opinion the great exponent of the tragedy and comedy of English middle-class life is not successful when he essays to sketch the aristocrat, the plutocrat, the social star; but he tells us that "Dickens spread a golden halo over humdrum existence and gave to simple things and unpretentious people a glory all their own," though never by any chance does to stray beyond the bourgeois moral code.

The third of this great literary triumvirate is the most arresting in mightiness of purpose and achievement. Born in the lodge of a workhouse infirmary, Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoeffsky died, after a tempestuous and poverty-stricken existence, in a mean street in a poor quarter of Petersburg. But at his graveside all classes met in amity, called thither by devotion to the dead writer who so loved his fellow-men; and scions of royalty, priests and thinkers jostled lackeys and wastrels and guttersnipes, because of the message that had been trumpeted to storm-

MR. JOHN DRINKWATER, sound and versatile poet, playwright, and critical essayist, has delved into the past in his latest contribution to literature. Though perhaps it will add little to the laurels already won by this talented writer, the biography of the entertaining and garrulous Samuel Pepys, from Mr. Drinkwater's angle of vision, makes interesting reading, though perhaps not so highly spiced with romantic interludes as one would have expected in the life of the old saturnalian. The author deals extensively with official achievement of his intriguing protagonist, and those interested in this most frank and famous of diarists will find an account of his pedigree and a recapitulation of the main episodes of his life, both public and private. Mr. Drinkwater's work is always worth while, and his latest searchlight on modes and manners of a former age is no exception.

wracked and suffering and wrongdoer. The great exponent of Russian life and character is presented with meticulous and loving accuracy, no attempt being made at sublimation of the fate-driven genius, whose spirit emerged triumphant, animated by unswerving purpose. Of his imperishable purpose to uplift his people, and the earnestness of his propaganda, we are left in no doubt, in spite of a career of sin and poverty and exile. In the end he triumphed as he would have wished to triumph, by the message proclaimed to sorrowing millions in those few books written in suffering and duress. "Tate never relinquished its pressure upon him, but by accepting thralldom to fate, Dostoeffsky became victor over suffering, and with his amazing power of transfiguring experience, cut the ground from beneath the feet of destiny and deprived it of its dominion."

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