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SHAKESPEARE UP-TO-DATE.

It is said that these are the days of mushroom reputations, and that people like Mr. George Bernard Shaw, Mrs. Pankhurst, Mr. Hall Caine and Miss Marie Corelli receive more attention than the immortals whose works will live aeons after such ephemeral celebrities are forgotten, and there is more than a grain of truth in this complaint. It is true that the present generation gives but slight consideration to the works of the really great; they remain in stately solitude upon the bookshelves, untouched, forgotten; while the airy nothings of self-styled twentieth century prophets are eagerly snapped up and devoured, albeit their consumption usually entails a particularly violent form of mental dyspepsia.

George Bernard Shaw, for example, founded his reputation and earned momentary fame by consistently decrying the writings of a predecessor of his in the realm of drama, an author whose plays are—at least, in the opinion of an impartial critic—equal in importance to Mrs. Warren's Profession and Captain Brassbound's Conversion. Our reference is to the late Mr. William Shakespeare, of whom it has been wittily said that he had had the double misfortune to incur Mr. Shaw's displeasure and to inspire the cut of Mr. Hall Caine's beard. Among the many who worship Mr. Shaw as the Superman, and who hang upon his cryptic utterances as if they were the inspired sentences of a deity, it has become fashionable to repudiate the weight and charm of Shakespeare's plays. They pick his language to pieces, they mercilessly sneer at his plots, they even question the historical accuracy of his plays. In fact, the Bard of Avon has become the target for all manner of light-headed, cheap aspersions, while eccentrics, whose only claim to consideration is their eccentricity, have been raised as tin gods for the public to fall down before and worship.

The courageous individual who will have none of these false gods, who proclaims aloud his faith in the towering superiority of the forgotten dead, is well-nigh overwhelmed by a storm of sarcasm from the numerous band of "intellectuals" who slavishly follow the teachings of iconoclast Shaw. One of their contentions is that Shakespeare's language necessitates an exhaustive study for a proper understanding, and it has even been suggested that some competent littérateur should be assigned the task of divesting some of the more famous plays of their theatrical trappings and ruthlessly sacrificing the rules of versification, so that they may be reduced to a form that will be readily comprehended by the ordinary reader. As an example in point, one brilliant genius has endeavoured to crystallise one of Shakespeare's most famous efforts into a more popular shape, and has for this purpose taken the immortal soliloquy by Hamlet. While the punctilious critic may find occasion to cavil at the extremely modern character of the phraseology employed, it cannot be denied that the attempt has, at least, the merit of originality. The genius responsible assures us that although he has discarded the antiquated setting in which the gems of this soliloquy originally reposed, he has in no way tarnished their lustre. On this vexed point we must allow our readers to judge for themselves:—

HAMLET'S SOLILOQUY.

"Shall I, or shan't I? That's what worries me; I can't decide if it's best to put up with them when you get more kicks than ha'pence,

Or whether it is better to give the other fellow a kick in the neck and so stop all further annoyance.

Then, when we hand in our checks, it is no more than just going to sleep,

And when we go to bye-bye, we forget the headache, heartache, and all the other worries that the doctors tell us we are liable to. Well, that's all right—if it comes off!

But suppose you dream? Ah, that's a question, isn't it?

For, if we dream now, what are we likely to dream when the long sleep comes?

That's the kind of thought that pulls us up pretty sharp.

For who would chance his luck in the world,—

Being sat on daily; being given the go-by;

Having one's best girl pair off with another fellow; waiting to hear the verdict;

Trying to find civility in a post-office;

And being so meek that everybody takes advantage of us,

When, all the while, we have it in our power to get out of it at any moment?

Only—we don't, any of us, much fancy visiting that unknown destination for which no return tickets are issued;

We'd sooner put up with the troubles we have Than go running about looking for more!

And don't you think that's wise?"

GENERAL NEWS.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

KING EDWARD AND THE CZAR.

According to the Vienna *Neue Freie Presse*, it is considered not improbable that a meeting between King Edward and the Czar will take place before the King's return to England.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

At the sitting on Thursday, Sir Edward Grey, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said that the treaty with regard to the Aland islands of 1856 was not affected by the Baltic convention.

Sir E. A. Sassoon (*Cons.*, Hythe) asked whether the Porte could alienate any portion of the increased Customs revenue from its purpose and apply it to the creation of a kilometre guarantee such as Germany was endeavouring to obtain for the prolongation of the Bagdad railway. Sir Edward Grey replied, all the revenue derived from the increased Customs duties was to be strictly employed for the Macedonian budget. The Porte, therefore, was not at liberty to devote any part of that revenue to another use.

The debate on the Licensing Bill was then resumed.

MEETING OF THE LIBERAL PARTY.

A meeting of the Liberal party was held at the Reform Club on Thursday in honour of the new Prime Minister. Mr. Asquith, in acknowledging the welcome given to him, said that the secret of the vitality of the Liberal party was to be found in their ceaseless activity. The Prime Minister made no proposals with regard to a change of programme or of policy. The party should, he said, uphold the principle of free trade and turn their attention to the education question and the Licensing Bill. Mr. Asquith indicated that the important subject of old age pensions would come up for discussion in connection with the Budget. Home Rule was not mentioned.

THE WARSHIP DISASTERS.

Latest reports indicate that the accident to the battleship "Britannia" was not attended with very serious consequences, although five men are badly scalded. In company with the remainder of the Channel Fleet, the "Britannia" left Queensferry early on Monday morning for Portland. The ships got away separately, so as to be able the more easily to carry out the 24 hours' full-power steam trial which they had been ordered to do on the passage round. The trial commenced on Monday evening. Early on Tuesday morning a tube of one of the water-tube boilers burst, and the compartment, in which about half a dozen men were at work, was instantly filled with steam, and the hot fumes from the furnace. As soon as possible the men were rescued from their terrible position, and the trial was suspended. The injured received every attention at the hands of the ship's surgeons, and by order of Lord Charles Beresford the "Britannia" proceeded at once to Portsmouth, to land the injured at the Naval Hospital. The ship reached Spithead at ten o'clock at night, but made no communication with the shore. Early next morning a hospital boat was sent out, and five men were conveyed to the Royal Naval Hospital at Haslar, where they remain. The injury to the boiler is considered of a minor character, and can easily be made good by the ship's staff. The "Britannia" left Spithead on Thursday to rejoin the Channel Fleet at Portland.

A survey of the American liner "St. Paul," shows that from the 26 ft. mark down to the keel the stem is completely carried away, and that her plates are damaged for about 20 ft. abaft of the stem. This will necessitate the casting of a new stem, and it is doubtful whether the vessel will be able to take up her next sailing about a month hence. Every effort, however, will be made to enable her to do so. The White Star liner "Teutonic", which sailed from Southampton for New York on Wednesday, had on board the majority of the "St. Paul's" passengers. The mails, which are mainly Continental, are being carried by the North German Lloyd liner "Kronprinzessin Cecilie."

Two officers and four quartermasters of the "St. Paul" attended the funeral of the "Gladiator" victims, at Haslar Cemetery on Wednesday, and floral tributes from the American Line officials and crew of the "St. Paul" were sent to be placed on the graves.

A letter from the American Line forwarding a cheque for £500 for the "Gladiator" sufferers, has been received by the Mayor of Portsmouth, Councillor Foster. This brings the total of the Naval Disaster Fund to over £2,100. Several donations are earmarked for the "Tiger" or "Gladiator" sufferers. The letter from the American Line says: "The cheque is forwarded as a mark of our deep sympathy with those who have been so sadly afflicted by this most unfortunate casualty."

NEW CRUISER'S MARVELLOUS SPEED.

A London telegram received yesterday announces that all previous speed records of battleships and cruisers have been broken by the phenomenal performance of H. M. S. "Indomitable", the new British armoured cruiser. The contract speed was 25 knots, but the actual performance has far exceeded this. Over the Admiralty measured mile the huge vessel attained a speed of 28 knots, a truly astounding achievement, while during a prolonged trial her average was easily kept at 26 1/2 knots.

(Continued on page 2.)