

REALITY AND ROMANCE.*

How varied are the voices of Romance that draws its material from history is well shown by the four volumes that I have before me. Some hours ago they were just four volumes with diversely inviting pictorial jackets for piquing the curiosity; now they represent so many excursions into the past which I have taken with greatly differing guides into strangely contrasting surroundings, some historical only in "colour" and setting, with all the riotous imagination of the true romances, others in which the historical is but touched up and revived as it were by romantic addition.

By Mr. Rafael Sabatini we are taken back to that mediæval Italy which he knows so well how to make real for us, and are treated to a veritable orgy of romantic happenings in following the story of Bellarion who, possessed of the youthful belief that there was no such thing as sin in the world, "on a day of August of the year of grace 1407, departed from the Convent of Our Lady of Grace of Cigliano" bound as he thought for Pavia and, as he intended, for the acquisition of Greek and other learning. Wonderful indeed were the adventures into which he was forthwith plunged, adventures the most startling, and often of such a character that he was only saved for further adventure by the readiness with which he could lie, or the quickness of his wit. Early in his venturing forth into the world he happened upon the Princess Valeria, and though he was being hunted as the associate of a robber and murderer, we realise that this is as it were the crucial meeting on which all else is to depend. Nor does the author in any way disappoint us. His readiness of invention in discovering fresh hairbreadth 'scapes for his hero holds the attention of the reader in fascinated fashion, even as that hero's constant resourcefulness wins that reader's unflinching admiration. Mr. Sabatini is a veritable master of the art of presenting the colourful romance of history, and he has I think given us nothing better of its kind than this story of "Bellarion the Fortunate" in its vivid setting of the Italy of the early fifteenth century.

It is romance of a very different kind that we get in "The Exquisite Perdita"; instead of the broad, sweeping historical romance full of movement and episode, we come to something that has the effect of the biographical rather than the historical. Mrs. Barrington, who has specialised in this particular kind of novel, has taken as her new heroine that actress who blazed the comet of a few brief seasons at Drury Lane Theatre, and won a not very enviable fame as "Perdita," not so much by her genius as an actress as by her beauty and by the fact that that beauty caught, and held for a brief while, the roving fancy of that Prince of Wales who some twenty years after her death became King George the Fourth. The author gives us the life story of "Perdita," and in doing so has much to tell of the notable people with whom that story is linked—the veteran David Garrick, the rising Richard Brinsley Sheridan, his wife and sister-in-law and others, and though the story is heightened with romantic touches it presents an impressive series of pictures of the social life of London during the closing decades of the eighteenth century. The author now and again allows a somewhat artificial style to puzzle us with such a sentence as: "So encouraged she wrote more ambitiously and became a kind of fashionable London Sappho, which failings were decently buried on the score of genius which can scarcely be expected to run at ease in the harness of everyday punctilio."

In Mr. Bernard Hamilton's story too we get historical romance in the biographical form, a graphic, moving and deeply impressive presentation of the career of one of the greatest figures of the French Revolution—Georges Danton, "the wild amorphous Titan" of Carlyle. It is historical romance, if it may be said without being invidious, more serious and better worth while than that concerned with

* "Bellarion the Fortunate." By Rafael Sabatini. 7s. 6d. (Hutchinson.)—"The Giant. Romance." By Bernard Hamilton. 7s. 6d. (Hutchinson.)—"The Exquisite Perdita." By E. Barrington. 7s. 6d. (Harrap.)—"The High Adventure." By Jeffery Farnol. 7s. 6d. (Hutchinson.)

S.P.C.K.

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the small talents and frailty of a prince's plaything. It is difficult to realise that the episodes in these two stories were roughly contemporaneous. Mr. Hamilton has, it is evident, closely studied his subject, even lived with it as it were, and has been able to present the result of that study with the glamour of romance while keeping to the broad facts of the man's history—he has indeed given us, what he terms a romantic biography of this prodigious Danton. Not since reading "The Gods are Athirst" of Anatole France have I come across any work rendering with such forceful reality some aspects of the great French Revolution.

With Mr. Jeffery Farnol we leave the actualities of history presented by the pen of Romance, for romance itself in the "setting" of a period which affords as it were the dramatic background to a tale of love and treachery that might almost belong to any period. The period he has chosen is that of about a hundred years ago or rather more—the days of dressy "bucks," of high play and (of course) of the prize ring. Full of incident and crowded with characters, several of whom are imagined and limned in a manner quite Dickensian, Mr. Farnol's new novel is marked by the vigorous presentation of exciting episodes, and suffused with the wholesome sentiment which he knows so well how to employ, and which together serve to make him one of the most popular exponents of the romantic spirit. WALTER JERROLD.



Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson.

However, the stormy events which terminated Sanderson's guardianship of the Russell boys occurred a few years before these published Journals commence, and it may be that by 1879 the writer had undergone a change in his religious views.

The Journals of Cobden-Sanderson are intensely interesting and all-revealing, a fine example of autobiography in the best and real meaning of the word. For these are the revelations of a supremely sensitive and deep-thinking man, the impressions of his mind, the records of his response to life and Nature, rather than an account of his public actions and the notable people he knew in the course of a long life (though he often does give vivid and illuminating glimpses of such people). As Lord Russell says, Cobden-Sanderson had a temper and was moody. These faults are all set down in the man's Journal and condemned in the hope of future amendment. His intimate domestic joys and sorrows are all here, together with his temperamental response to all aspects of Nature in sunshine or storm, in vernal spring or autumnal decay. Thoughts of death, the end, the unknown future, were daily and ever with him; they darkened even his happiest hours. A happy firelit scene of home; a garden in its splendour of June roses; the changing pageant of the river seen from his windows on Hammersmith Mall—all would lead, in the manner of Omar, to wistful speculation of the hour when he would no longer

be a part of the scene or episode, but gone—whither, ah, who can tell?

"The waves of the river are being blown by the wind on the shore—break, break, break. But the wind shakes the windows, and dies away and is still. The sun shines, and is shadowed. Time passes eternally—to what bourne? I rest this Sabbath morn, and sometimes I put my hands together and think, 'One day I shall be saying good-bye to all this, one day, some such day as this, these sounds will break on the shores of my being for the last time, these nights, this sun, for the last time be as the face of a dear friend, seen and seen no more. . . . The wind whistles to itself and moans in the window, and the door shudders and shakes.'"

He was deeply affected by the sentiment of Place, and loved his successive homes in 3, Paper Buildings, Temple; Goodyers, Hendon; 49 (now 55), Froggnal, Hampstead; and those on Hammersmith Mall.

For a few years after his marriage, Cobden-Sanderson, with but little money of his own and middle-age at hand, was worried as to his future independence and the best means of earning his living in a way compatible with his aspirations that his work should be manual labour resulting in a thing of beauty. He said:

"My aim should be, not the survival of my own work or its 'price in the market,' but the creation and survival of the spirit with which I would have all work pursued, and all beauty designed."

With his ideals he combined a real sympathy for the so-called labouring classes, and he voiced the usual illogical tenets of socialism. On the other hand he was not in sympathy with William Morris's ideals of art and industry; rather he found his guiding star in Ruskin.

Cobden-Sanderson commenced his work as a bookbinder in 1883. His friends were dubious at the experiment, for

A DIARY OF SELF-REVELATION.*

Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson (1840–1922) will be remembered as the barrister who became a bookbinder and printer, of high ideals, and as a member of that distinguished group of artistic people—the Burne-Joneses, the Morrisises and the Richmonds—who shed a lustre upon the Hammersmith district, where the several families all resided thirty-odd years ago.

In his earlier years Sanderson (for the name of Cobden was only prefixed to his own surname after he married Anne, daughter of Richard Cobden, in 1882) had been associated with a very different set of people—the brilliant but eccentric family of Stanley of Alderley, with all its attendant ramifications of alliance with the Russells, the Carlisles, the Fox-Pitts. Sanderson was an intimate friend at Cambridge of Lord Amberley (son of the first Earl Russell), who married a Stanley of Alderley, and it thus came about that Sanderson was appointed guardian to the present Earl Russell and his brother, Bertrand. In Lord Russell's book, "My Life and Adventures," published three years ago, he is the subject of some acid comment and described as "rather an unbalanced person," "wayward," and of "an ungovernable temper." Lord Russell's parents both died when he was still a boy, and Sanderson had been instructed to bring his wards up as agnostics: a curious choice of preceptor, because in Cobden-Sanderson's Journals there is no hint of sympathy with agnosticism, but on the contrary evidence of a wide-embracing belief in all things allied to Christianity and the unseen world.

* "The Journals of Thomas James Cobden-Sanderson, 1879–1922," 2 vols. £4 4s. (Richard Cobden-Sanderson: Thavies Inn.)