



IN the course of a long life, given up chiefly to official work and to work done for every reason but that of personal impulse, Dr. Garnett found time and opportunity to write two books after his own heart. To be more precise, I would say that he put his heart into one and his mind into the other. It was the heart that had to wait longest for its chance. 'De Flagello Myrteo: Thoughts and Fancies on Love' was written at the age of seventy, in two brief periods; and the conditions under which it was written were curiously similar to what has been told us of his own way of work by the writer whom it most resembles, Coventry Patmore, whom Dr. Garnett had known at the British Museum as a young man, whose poetry, as he told me, he had come to like with difficulty, for whom he had made the first selection of his poems, the 'Florilegium Amantis' of 1879, and to whom he had returned in spirit, or whom he had perhaps first really encountered, at the very end of his life. Patmore, a strenuous artist, wrote rarely, and most of his work was done in short periods of inspiration or improvisation, with long tideless intervals between. I can hardly use any less word than that of inspiration for this beautiful little book of 'thoughts,' in which prose has almost the certainty of poetry, and verse, at times, an elegance not less penetrating than that of the prose. Thought and form are alike sublimated to an essence, and it is difficult to choose among sayings

said so finally, and in tones tender and playful, scornful and ecstatic, in turn. Here are a few, which represent no more than a few of the kinds of thought and fancy:

‘In the religion of Love the courtesan is a heretic; but the nun is an atheist.’

‘If one had disparaged Laura to Petrarch, and Beatrice to Dante, indignation would have made Petrarch voluble, and Dante dumb.’

‘It is said that Hope was the only good Genius left in Pandora’s casket: but which of the others could have lived without her?’

‘Love, alas! often puts golden treasure into an earthen vessel; but he never puts earth into a vessel of gold, unless it be earth from a grave.’

It was with such calm, solemn, and luminous meditations that one who had seemed all his life to be a Stoic, perhaps a Cynic philosopher, made his own last preparations. I have said elsewhere, speaking of ‘The Twilight of the Gods,’ that other book into which he put himself, that this ‘learned mockery, so sane, so rational, dancing in the fetters of artful pedantry, makes a sort of Punch and Judy show of the comedy of civilization’; and I can think of no image which would better represent the hilarity, violence, and contemptuous aloofness of his way of juggling with great names, great conventions, frozen ideals, paralyzed beliefs. On the surface these tales are pieces of light-hearted buffoonery, and I see, among the opinions of the press quoted on the fly-leaf of the enlarged edition

of 1903, references, evidently made in all good faith, to the 'Ingoldsby Legends' and the 'Bab Ballads.' Neither Barham nor Mr. Gilbert, two writers of equally intoxicating brilliance of nonsense, ever wasted thought on an idea deeper than a pin would scratch. Dr. Garnett's book would have been publicly burned by any government in any age which had really taken seriously the beliefs which it professed in theory. It is a text-book of intellectual anarchy; it is loaded with symbols of revolution; but the air of our century is proof against it, it will never go off with the least damage to our idols.

ARTHUR SYMONS.



BEFORE an attempt is made to supplement in any other way what has already been written about Dr. Garnett from various points of view, a special word of gratitude has to be said for the help and encouragement which he constantly gave to this magazine. Not only did he lend it countenance and authority by acting as one of its consulting editors, but he found time to write for it three very characteristic articles;¹ he was quick to express his pleasure at any contribution of unusual interest which appeared in its pages, and he frequently offered suggestions of subjects which might be written on,

¹ 'Early Spanish-American Printing,' vol. i, pp. 139-146; 'On the De Missione Legatorum Japonensium' (Macao, 1590), vol. ii, pp. 172-182; 'Some Notes on Ancient Writing and Writing Materials,' vol. iv, pp. 225-235.