

CURRENT LITERATURE.

1.—*Harold: a Drama.* By ALFRED TENNYSON. Author's Edition, from advance sheets. Boston: J. R. Osgood & Co. 1877. pp. 170.

THE first business of any one who criticises this new poem of Mr. Tennyson's is to notice the absence of any introductory matter to report to the reader the precise historical value of the personages, and to clear up some allusions. Without this no poem of the kind can straightly tell its own story. We have heard women object to Shakespeare's plays because they are forced to pause, in mid enjoyment of scenes and passages, to hunt for explanatory notes or turn up the pages of a glossary. It is worrisome to the feelings. Everybody knows concisely that Count William of Normandy invaded England, beat the Saxon King Harold at Hastings, introduced Norman laws and manners into the country, and gradually obliterated all its local and provincial differences. But a great many people will begin to read this play without any distinct recollection of the parts which the personages played, or of their respective relations. The impression will be nebulous, unless the memory is first refreshed. We doubt if even the average Englishman is adequately posted in all the details which the play involves. The critic must turn annalist to begin with, and offend American intelligence, by urging upon it a preliminary sketch; for the play really requires it.

Edward the Confessor was of Anglo-Saxon origin, the surviving son of Ethelred the Unready. So that he descended from the old stock of English kings. But he had spent a great part of his life in Normandy, becoming there well inoculated with Norman habits and methods. During his reign, 1041-1066, he encouraged Norman nobles to settle in England; gave them lands, castles, official posts; and patronized the Franco-Norman manners, much to the disgust of his Saxon Earls, one of whom, the proud Godwin, Harold's father, blazed into open resistance, and really checked the tendency. Edward spoke Norman, and used a Norman seal. The whole drift of thought and inclination

had thus for some time, in spite of native prejudice, been tending from France toward England, and the Conquest had by no means an *impromptu* character. Edward was so fond of Count William of Normandy that he promised to him the succession to the throne in default of issue. The Count was an illegitimate son of Robert, fourth Duke of Normandy, and Arletta, a tanner's daughter, with whom he became enamored as she was washing clothes in the stream below his castle.

The Anglo-Saxon rule had been slowly weakening. Ethelred was nicknamed Unready because he never came to time when the Northmen invaded his domains, ran up the rivers, and harried the towns. He resorted to the plan of a massacre to thin out the Danes, who had slowly grown into possession of Northumbria, and had also mingled considerably with the Saxons. Danes and Northmen, incensed at such perfidy, came down upon him with powerful expeditions: he taxed his subjects to buy them off with money, when he should have bled them in the nobler way. He died in 1016, leaving the realm in miserable plight.

Edmund, 1016-1017, an illegitimate son, fought the Danes bravely, challenged Canute to single combat, and, on the whole, conducted himself respectably. To put an end to bloodshed he consented to a division of England, leaving to Canute and his Danes the North. Shortly after this he was murdered, probably at Canute's instigation. About this time a Saxon peasant, named Godwin, made a notable figure of himself by carving power and fortune out of obscurity, and becoming the father of Harold.

Canute,—he who so delicately dampened his courtiers' flatteries by letting the tide wet him knee-high,—became king of all England, 1017-1035. He was succeeded by Harold Harefoot, his second son, 1035-1042, a despicable, unkingly fellow, who worked ill for the realm. His successor was Canute's third son, the Hardicanute, who reigned only two years; for he was mighty in drink, and was struck by apoplexy at a wedding, with the beaker in his hand.

Then came the weak-minded Confessor, a man dazed by omens, and devoted only to prayers and the chase. The ambitious Godwin, who aspired to the kingship, made it very hot and miserable for him.

Now when the play opens, Tostig, one of Godwin's sons,—a very irascible and sudden kind of man, whose fits of spleen were not healthy for bystanders,—was Earl of that part of Northern England which the Danes chiefly peopled. He bore no good-will to his brother Harold, whom the Confessor, on his death-bed, had named—so people averred—to be his successor. Unfortunately, some time before

that, Harold, cruising one day in the Channel, was wrecked on the French coast, misled by false lights of some fishermen. Count William took advantage of this stroke of luck, succored Harold, brought him to court, and dined and wined him into taking an oath to respect the Confessor's original selection of himself as his successor. So the Confessor, before dying, made Archbishop Stigand absolve Harold for the necessary breaking of that oath taken in Normandy. Thus, and by the acclaim of the people, Harold was raised to the throne. The Confessor's appointment was subject to the vote of the Witenagemote, National Assembly of Wise Men: it was cast for Harold, and to all appearance there was a Saxon king of England.

But Tostig had been cherishing a secret preference for the kingship. Why not he, as well as that other son of Godwin? This expensive brother had once been condemned to death by the Confessor, but, at Harold's intercession, the sentence was commuted to banishment. Tostig imagined that the apparent favor was a diplomatic trick: a brother's life saved, and at the same time judiciously disposed of. So Tostig was not dearly in love with Harold. Hardly was the Confessor's pious breath exhaled, when he sailed over to Sweden, and proposed invasion of England, partition of the realm, and profitable raiding, to King Sweyn. But he was not the verdant swain that should pull Tostig's piping hot chestnuts out of the fire. Then Tostig betook himself to Harold Hardrade of Norway: a hard raider was he indeed, seven feet high, very sweeping and persuasive with the axe. He saw a good thing in it, and presumed he could manage Tostig afterwards. Two hundred Viking vessels sailed, filled with freebooting gentlemen of the olden time, when thievery at the sword's point was meritorious. No Tweedism for such scrupulous Christians; but let every man be bidden to stand and defend himself, or then and there deliver: certainly that was not pilfering, but rather a system of exchange and distribution. These cruisers of a peculiar commerce slipped into the English rivers, went ravaging and readjusting property up the Humber, took York: and there the seven feet of Harold were proclaimed king of Tostig's old kingdom. A highly creditable beginning! Now it only remained for the amiable brother to move southward and "try confusions" with the king of England.

It is quite time that Harold, satisfactorily king by popular vote and approval, should file a demurrer against these irregular proceedings. This he does, reporting it in great force at Stamford Bridge, seven miles east of York, on September 20, 1066. By a stratagem, pre-

tending that he fled, he lured the Danes out of their palisades and line of shields, then turned upon them in the open field. Great was the slaughter. An arrow went slithering through the Norse giant's neck, and the great artery emptied seven feet of kingdom into that space of earth. Tostig's pique and turbulence was also quenched for ever. The genteel, piratical keels made what haste they could out of the river.

If Harold felt any inclination to drop a tear or two over Tostig, he had short time for it. A tired and splashed horseman comes stumping into the banquet of victory, arrests Harold's cup at his lips with the tidings that Count William, on the route to be styled Conqueror, had landed at Pevensey to pick up the Confessor's little gift, and to settle with Harold that matter of the oath. The Count did not venture into the interior, but, with his fleet for a base, went ravaging right and left, in order to compel Harold to come down to him. Of course Harold broke up at Stamford Bridge, and drew his forces down toward the Sussex coast; he went, probably, by that famous Gathelin, or Watling Street, the old Roman road built by Vitellianus, who was called by Britons *Guctalin*. But, before starting, Harold yielded to the popular desire among all parties at the North that he should effect a union and pacification by marrying their favorite Queen, Aldwyth, Welsh widow of king Griffyth, whom Harold himself had killed in an expedition to reduce the mountaineers.

Strange and brief wooing, but not so fierce as that between Gloster in Richard III. and Lady Anne, daughter-in-law of the Henry VI. who was done to death by Gloster. Harold could always control and adapt himself to situations, and he possessed, with a relish for humor, the quality which the French call *bonhomie*. We suspect Aldwyth was not quite clear in her mind what should be the upshot of the marriage, whether love or vengeance. Sometimes she thought that, in spite of the Welsh experience, she loved him, or might do so if she could become Queen of England. Her jealousy of other women appears early in the play, where she secretly observes an interview between Harold and Edith. But the marriage seemed to her—as it did to him—to be a comfortable diplomatic arrangement: so, with no time to squander in honeymooning, they march southward to open the first page of the Domesday Book of England.

Senlac, which is pronounced ominously in the Confessor's dream (p. 97) Sanguelac, Bloody Lake, is near Hastings in Essex, sixty miles south-east of London. There, on the ridge of Battle, the Saxons drove their palisades, and stood in a long row of imperturbable shields.

A gentleman named Hasting, of predatory sympathies, had made

this coast of England particularly unpleasant during the reign of Alfred. He came to England in 891, and devoted the next six years to the demolition of Alfreð, but was demolished instead at this very place that was settled by him and called after his name? probably upon Senlac ridge, which was called Battle after the defeat of Harold. Battle Abbey is in the neighborhood, founded by the Conqueror. Now the travail of England shall consecrate these spots, and the Abbey shall long preserve the roll of Norman valor.

Harold counted upon being reinforced by Queen Aldwyth's two brothers with troops out of Northumbria. They do not appear, waiting judiciously, at the instance of the Queen herself, to see if Harold is victorious. Harold understands the half-way love of the Queen (p. 138), and, diving through her practices, wishes to part from her. But she remains jealously near him, because Edith is there.

The battle of Hastings was fought October 16, 1066. At first it went desperately against Count William: his foot was routed twice, two or three horses were killed under him, his knights could not break through the parapet of shields. As long as Harold's men stood there, according to strict orders issued by him, the Anglo-Saxon rule was safe. But at length William repeated Harold's stratagem at Stamford; as if by some irony of fate, the Saxons rushed out to pursue, and were cut down by the mailed horsemen.

Who is this Edith, who wanders by night over the field, scanning the corpses by lanthorn-light? She was a fair ward of the thin-blooded Confessor, who put her into Waltham Abbey to prevent Harold from marrying her. Harold loves her in secret: some say he is secretly married to her; some say another thing. Now she and the Queen, all jealousies quenched in the Bloody Lake of the day, meet in this tender search for their Harold's body. The corpses are so maimed, the faces so slashed, that recognition cannot be reached that way. But Edith identifies the body of her lover by that mark upon his shoulder, which, in a certain moment—not of hate—her own teeth had inflicted.

The Brunanburg alluded to on p. 140 was a place near Lincoln, where King Athelstan the Saxon utterly discomfited Northumbrian Dane Anlaf (Olaf) and his Scotch mercenaries, who were bringing things to a dangerous pass for England. This was in 938: some say in 940.

Now the gentle reader can take up the poem; and we make Mr. Tennyson a present of this sketch for his next edition.

The narrative plainly furnishes the poet with many points that crave a picturesque treatment, and he has not neglected them. The

first scene describes the dismay of the people about the palace at the appearance of a comet. We know that a very extraordinary one was observed about the time of the Confessor's illness, and was as usual credited with an evil disposition. Leofwin and Harold mark their natures with a rationalistic vein. They banter the comet and the bystanders. If it really announces the wrath of Heaven, Leofwin says, the wrath of Heaven has three tails, the devil only one. Harold says, in quite the Shakspearean humor,—

"The worst that follows
Things that seem jerk'd out of the common rut
Of Nature is the hot religious fool,
Who, seeing war in heaven, for heaven's credit
Makes it on earth."

So when the Confessor relates his vision that the seven sleepers in the cave at Ephesus had turned from right to left, Harold remarks that they might as well turn from left to right and go to sleep again.

The scene at the palace of Bayeux in Normandy, that was afterward so famous for its historical tapestries, is dramatic, and also theatrically effective. Count William has the wrecked Harold in his power, but treats him considerably in order to secure his voice in England when the time for the successorship to the Confessor shall arrive. The incident and all the intrigue of the conversation are admirably sustained toward the climax of the moment when Harold is induced to swear upon the ark that contains relics of saints. So could the scene of the Confessor's dying be made effective: he dozes while people confer and plot around his couch, occasionally waking,—now to relate his bodeful visions, now to extort from Harold a promise to have nothing to do with Edith,—and suddenly dies with the cry of the Bloody Lake upon his lips.

The sleep of Harold on the eve of the battle of Hastings, during which are visions and speeches of the Confessor, of Harold's two brothers,—Tostig, and another left in a Norman dungeon as a hostage,—and of Norman saints, is too palpable an imitation of similar scenes in Shakspeare. Harold wakes, calling for a battle-axe instead of a horse: but his monologue finely reviews the motives of his past actions. The agitated conversation between Edith and old Stigand while the battle is raging outside, and he reports from his place of vantage its wavering fortunes; the chanting by the canons of Waltham of Latin hymns that reflect the color of his reports and become a refrain to them; and the old man's cry when the arrow predicted by the

Confessor pierces Harold,—might all be made very effective. So also the midnight search of the two reconciled women for the body of Harold.

On the whole, the play is far more dramatic than Mr. Tennyson's "Queen Mary," more evenly sustained, richer with pleasant and vigorous lines and quotable passages. When Mr. Tennyson speaks of an abyss as "undescendible," he probably refers to an abyss so low in its mind—or in his—that it can descend no farther: but the word is not likely to be of use in literature, for it knocks the bottom out of every thing. To "Molochize," that is, to sacrifice children to clear heaven of the comet, is better. The general style is one of absolute simplicity.

There are also two or three distinct characters. They are persons: they not only act and speak historically, but they account for the history. The traits contrast with each other in the way that is most competent to evolve the play. Harold is not only a man who is fated to occupy the transition-epoch of his country's history, but exactly the kind of man who sums up the drift of it and makes it possible. He must needs live just at this time to contribute a personality to change the face of England. The times work upon the basis of his mental and emotional disposition, and create a character which is at once demonic and human,—that is, composed of the unconscious Will of powers that move through the conscious mixture of the man. His frank hatred of priestly cant, contempt for the papal threatenings which espouse the cause of Count William, his brave reliance on his own Anglo-Saxons, his light raillery of fears that are born of superstition or of the gathering of pregnant events,—all these traits are touched with a hand so clear and light that they seem autobiographical. The poet rescues the man from the stinginess of historical analysis, and constructs the Harold who ought to and must have lived.

Edith's sad dream is "a gnat that vex thy pillow. Had I been by, I would have spoiled his horn." There is a touch of Ophelia in the tone of Edith, when she sings of lovers drowned long ago in the "cruel river Swale" (p. 98). When was that sung? inquires Harold. And Edith replies, "Here to the nightingales." To which Harold freely answers, "Their anthems of no church, how sweet they are!" And, when Harold learns that the Pope has blessed Count William and sent to him a precious hair of Peter, he breaks into derisive laughter. To Edith, the sound of it was strange and ghastly: but Harold says, No,—"This was old human laughter in old Rome before a pope was born." Edith's songs are excellently soft and low; her love is timid, but deep as the tenderest opaline sky, deep to the heart's deepest,

least-fathomed space. We feel the private woe that is involved with the pathos of a great determining moment of a country's destiny. We follow it from the midnight search into the unavailing seclusion of Waltham Abbey.

The play swarms with quotable lines. In the mouth of Irving, Booth, Barrett, they would lighten up and charm along the most protracted of the scenes. Plainly, Mr. Tennyson has at length succeeded in writing a play.

J. W.

2.—*Talks about Labor, and concerning the Evolution of Justice between the Laborers and the Capitalists.* By J. N. LARNED. New York: D. Appleton & Co. 1876. pp. 162.

WE may say, at once, of this little work, that it is a thoroughly good book—for its purpose, and so far as it goes. It almost disarms criticism by the modesty of its pretensions, while it enhances our estimate of its value, almost at every page, by the solidity and excellence of its achievement. It is one of a class of publications which is now coming forward to meet the demand that is growing rapidly, in the public mind, for an intelligible as well as a scientific solution of the labor question. Twenty or thirty years ago, works of a similar *animus* were published by Josiah Warren and those of his school of thought, which completely subsoiled the domain of political economy, and investigated and settled for ever, upon a thoroughly scientific basis, the fundamental questions of commercial equity. The work now under review, like others of its class, does not at all reach so profound and final a conclusion of the subject. It simply approximates it. It talks, through its whole length, about equity, with no attempt at a definition of equity itself. Such a definition, in terse, exact, scientific terms, would perhaps fall under the author's meaning when he repudiates the idea that he has for presentation "any copyrighted or patented formula whatever,"—a bit of ungenerous and captious "slang," which mars the introduction, and which, at least, in so far as it applies to more exact and weighty treatises on the subject, might better have been omitted.

But, for its purposes, the book, so to speak, would not be so good, if it were better. It is an apt and excellent adaptation to the present inquiring stage of public interest in a great subject. It is

neither too learned nor too shallow; and it is full of really valuable contributions to that great rising science of sociological ethics, which sub-transcends the realm of ideas heretofore occupied by Political Economy. The author has also exactly grasped the limits of the range of inquiry he is engaged in. "I have," he says (or he puts the statement in the mouth of one of the locutors, the book being cast in the form of dialogue),—"I have no quarrel to make with political economy, as I said last night. I only contend that there is a larger social philosophy—an ethical economy, so to speak—which embraces political economy and extends far outside of it, and into the wider domain of which we have got to carry such questions as this."

A few other extracts will show, at once, the vigorous style, the accurate thought, and the bold, progressive genius and drift of the author:—

"It (the labor question) has become already *the* question above all other questions in social importance, and we have not another problem in the world to-day that is pressing upon us so sternly for an equitable solution as that one which is involved in the perpetual contention between capitalists and laborers."

"This labor question of to-day succeeds the slavery question of yesterday, inevitably, by the nature of things. Having determined that one man may not own the labor of another man, how can we help going on to inquire about and ascertain the just terms on which the labor of one may be used by another? It is plainly, to my mind, the sequent step—the next proceeding in the inquisition of human rights which we are forced to enter upon, whether willingly or not. Our civilization, as we call it, is, more than any thing else, an evolution of the sentiment of justice among men, and almost every other fruit of civilization, in its moral aspect, is incident to that or developed out of it. This results so from the kneading and moulding of men into organic social masses—a process which tends steadily to press out the savage egotism or selfishness which saturates the isolated human being. Now, that sentiment of justice, or sensibility to injustice, in society, which has only to-day gathered enlightenment enough to abhor a legal system of servitude which it tolerated yesterday, cannot have reached yet the end of its education in that direction, but rather the beginning of new teachings that are larger and more exact. Just as surely as it has recognized the hideous oppression of law which made one man the master by ownership of another, just so surely it is going to take cognizance now of the oppression of those circumstances in the social state which give to one an overmastering power over his fellow.

"This movement of education among men to a truer apprehension of justice and right, in place of conventional notions which confuse the moral sense, is not an eccentric one: it follows logical paths to its several ends, and can be traced like the construction of so many syllogisms in human history. In fact, the slow judicial action of society, sifting out rights from wrongs by clumsy methods and tardy forms of procedure, and so establishing equity between its members, is almost all there is of history that is worth a serious study."

"When the slave went out of court a triumphant suitor, the laborer for hire came in and took his place; for when the great chancery court of civilization pronounced against the possession by one man of the labor of another, through mastery, or force, or operation of law, it bound itself to go further in the matter and to investigate the equity of the terms under which one man, in any other way, may possess the fruits of another's labor; the equity, that is, of the division to be made between him who toils and him who possesses the tools and the materials with which and on which the toil is expended. The trial of this question is on. Its hearing has begun. It cannot be arrested by any injunction, nor by any change of venue, nor by any stopping of the ears nor shutting of the eyes. It will go on and on, to the end, whether that be this century or the next one."

On the fifty-second and fifty-third pages of his book, Mr. Larned sums up the various methods by which capital is accumulated in individual hands. This he does under five heads. The first covers immediate production, or the legitimate savings of the producer from his own industry; the fourth is by inheritance; and the last is acquisition "by actual, unquestionable fraud." The two remaining modes are thus stated: "2. Capital which accrues to those who have the faculty to organize and direct with efficiency the productive labor of others; or the faculty to make large, economical combinations in the exchanging of the products of labor between different parts of the world; or the ingenious faculty which improves the implements and processes of productive industry; or the enterprising, sagacious faculty that conceives and carries out great public works, which result in wider and more intimate relations between the diverse industries of the world. 3. Capital that is gotten into possession by what we call speculation, which is either mere gambling or a shrewd catching of opportunities in trade, produced very often by public calamities, or by disturbances of industry and commerce that are adverse to the public weal."

It was at this point that the writer might, with great advantage, have stated the true law of equity. Failing of it, he has failed to point out the *instrument or method* by which the true industrial chieftains (those who have preëminent faculties, under the first of these two heads), and the mere speculators (under the second of them), secure alike their undue advantage over the ordinary or commonplace laborer. That instrument or method is embraced in the single word *profit*, by which should then be signified *something over and above equivalents*. This would bring us directly to the demand for a definition of equivalency in trade, or in the exchange of labor and its products, and so to the nut of the whole matter. When it shall be known and taught to the public that profit-making, now regarded as entirely innocent and even praiseworthy, is essentially wicked, as much so in kind as slave-holding,

and of the same quality; and when a public conscience shall have been created on that basis, justice will be done to the laborer, and not earlier. Commerce without profit-making may be effected in several ways,—coöperative, communistic, etc.; but, as the simplest and most perfect method, by the mere adoption of *Cost as the Limit of Price*; with, in all other respects, the utmost individual freedom—free competition without profit-making, which would turn the competition wholly into the channel of excellence in the performance. Of course, people will wonder, for a while, how commerce and work of all kinds could be done without the stimulus of profit-making; just as Southerners could not conceive how negroes could be induced to work without the stimulus of flogging. But the fog will clear up after a while, and people will understand the matter very well, and wonder how it could ever have been inconceivable.

To escape the hell we are in, of free competition and profit-making, now crushing the life out of the laborer, we are tendered the opposite hell of arbitrary intervention forcefully conforming the private conduct of individuals to the despotic will of somebody other than the individual—a despot or the despotic majority—and crushing the life out of free enterprise, as the alternative.

The heaven that lies between these two extremes is simple equity—the exchange of products absolutely without profit (which is only another name for swindling), with equal and fair play to all; to those who direct and organize, and those who exchange, on the same terms as to those who labor directly in production—simply according to the number of hours and the severity of the work, with no allowance whatever made at this point on the ground of superior abilities.

By this means the autonomy of the utmost individualism is reconciled with all the extended efficiency and coöperation of the compactest communism. The other substitute for the present system, which now commands most attention, and which was just alluded to as despotic intervention in the labor question, is the quasi-military organization of all the great industries,—first devised by St. Simon, and now revived by the Social Democracy of Germany, an already powerful and growing party, and represented in a smaller way under the lead of Mr. Joel Densmore, a real thinker of the people, in this country.

If capitalists would be good enough and wise enough and just enough to inaugurate the Equity System while they have the power remaining in their hands, they would bridge over the chasm, and conduct the world at once to its stage of industrial harmony. But this they probably will not do. They will act as the slaveholders did, and meet the slaveholders' retribution. The rising wave of the Social

Democracy, now no bigger than a man's hand in this country, already somewhat swollen in Germany, will probably overwhelm them as the war did the slaveholders. The masses, the common laborers, have the power already in their own hands; and they, or their leaders and "next friends" acting for them, have only "to get the hang" of using the power: and they are already experimenting on the subject. They will have neither the wisdom nor the patience to inaugurate a system of simple equity. Force and stringency will be their method; and so very likely the world must have a baptism into the tender theory and practice of the Social Democracy, before Scientific Equity will be attained to. This last must, however, be the outcome; the perfect method, which shall be the truth between the conflicting false, or, at least, imperfect methods. The several methods of compelling men to do right, before they voluntarily choose the right, have their various degrees of advantage; but they all have the disadvantage of not being right. The right is that the right should be voluntarily and lovingly accepted purely because it is right, and with no wish or desire for an unjust personal advantage.

But though equity, on the basis of trade, yields no compensation to superior faculties, or capacity to bless others, this is not the whole story. The love of equal justice is not our only mental faculty. It is only a basis of harmonious adjustment among men. After it is secured, there is free play for gratitude, admiration, loyalty, and other higher faculties of the human make-up. There is a natural and truly admirable tendency in the minds of men to admire and reward the benefactions of social chieftains in the form of voluntary tribute. If this sentiment endowed a great inventor with a million of dollars, no injustice or disharmony would result. It is all otherwise when the million dollars is extorted as an advantage. So, in the future, when equity shall prevail, great organizers and leaders of industry may receive, as tribute, a portion of what they now levy as profit. Equity will distribute the wealth to all, according to the burden borne, with the impartiality of a scientific and rigorous law; but one of the blessings of the proximate equality of possession, on this basis, will be the freedom immediately to destroy the balance again, on the other basis of our higher sentiments. What is slaveholding and swindling when taken as profit (the denial of equity), will be admirable and alike honorable to both parties when given as tribute by the great masses benefited to their few eminent benefactors; and the great leaders of industry will come some day to trust themselves lovingly and entirely to those better impulses of the race.