TWIN BARDS OF DEMOCRACY.

"Browning and Whitman: A Study in Democracy." By Oscar L. Triggs. (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co.)

This is one of the volumes of the Dilettanti Library, in which Browning has already been the subject of two volumes and Whitman of one. Browning, so far as Browning is concerned, the attitude of Mr. Triggs is a new one, while his familiarity with the theme of Whitman is very close. In a brief preface Mr. Triggs states the leading ideas of his book. Both are poets of life, of life as it is realised by men and women in their practical activities and creations. To them the will of God, by which we mean national means of State, or Church, or school, is the support of the soul; this, before all laws, forms, institutions, policies, economics, is the "Word" which Browning and Whitman are taken as the true Democratic poets because they are in a peculiar degree the poets of the soul. As for Browning—

He, at least, believed in soul, was very sure of soul

It is the air, the new birth, the vivifying of the soul that is the essence of Browning's poetry. "When the light begins to shine himself a man's worth something." And the meaning of life Browning, in "Rabbi Ben Ezra," holds to be the opportunity for the soul to grow—

Machinery just meant
To give the spirit glad employment,
Try thee, and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

Man has begun to rise out of nature; progress is therefore his distinctive mark.

Not God's and not the beast's—God is, they are not

Man partly is, and wholly hopes to be.

Whitman, whom Mr. Triggs regards as "the supreme bard of the soul," is even clearer perhaps—

Truly am he who places over you no master, lower, better, God, beyond what waits intrinsically in yourself.

And again—

I have dreamed that the purport and essence of the known life, the transient
Is to form and decide identity for the unknown life, the permanent.

Soul and body with both poets are not distinct entities; there is no dualism in their thought. Says Whitman—

Body and soul are one thing with two names
For more or less elaborate stuff.

And Whitman joins—

I am the poet of the Body and I am the poet of the Soul,

and also—

It is not to diffuse you that you were born of your mother and father, it is to identify you.

The world is one, man is one, the soul makes the body, and God is not a being outside the world, governing it as a captain governs a vessel. He is in the world, acting through the forms of being, through life will, organs and affections of man. That being so, man cannot be vile in any part of him; he is divine, and everything inherent in his nature has its own justification. Hence asceticism is condemned, and evil is shown to be an educative force. Hear Browning again—

If you chose to play!—is my principle,
Let a man contribute the utmost
For his life's set prize, be it what it will.

And Whitman declares—

Henceforth I will go celebrate anything I see or am,
And sing and laugh and deny nothing.

This, therefore, is the justification of the blending of the names of Browning and Whitman. They both reveal the greatness and divinity of man in every attribute of his nature, physical and spiritual. They explain him to himself, and suggest his growth even through crime. They are thus optimistic, and therefore are of the essence of Democracy, which is not possible except it be admitted that man is in essence an aspiring and noble being capable of being educated to the highest dignity of character. The great agency in the education of men is, in the view of both poets, love, and not mere knowledge or analytic reasoning. Democracy is itself based on the closer interlacing of human interests, on the fact that we must and do care for one another, while it adds to the growth of human love as no other organisation of society in the past has ever added. Such is the main drift of this vigorous and interesting little book.

We must dwell for one moment on Mr. Triggs' defence of his Democrat, which is the superficial reader who thinks Whitman art-less, should be of interest. Mr. Triggs has rates Whitman rather to Wagner than to Browning. He regards Wagner as much more a poet and philosopher than musician, the song and orchestral accompaniments in his musical dramas being subsidiary, and explanatory. Wagner's central element and harmony of content and expression are their principal function. Wagner's leadby is "that which belongs to the idea, and is of it, a beauty which may include even discord and dissonance, as essential elements." Our century's burden of emotional thought is so immense that the older forms have been found inadequate to contain it, and poetry, Wagner, is the defence alike of Wagner and of Whitman. Not that they ignored art, but it is recognition of "the subordinate place of the harsh and discordant, in the great synthesis of harmony." "Art has changed in recognition of the place of emotional thought." We cannot agree with Mr. Triggs that this is a complete defence of Whitman, some of whose lines are simply not poetry at all in any possible sense; but it is regards the main body of Whitman's work the defence is adequate and good. Neither can we entirely agree with Mr. Triggs in his too thorough-going idealisation of America as the supreme exponent of Democracy. But Mr. Triggs "hails" from Chicago, and must, therefore, be excused.

"A VERY QUEER CAROL."

THE EDITOR OF THE DAILY CHRONICLE.

SIR,—Many thanks for your kindly criticism of my "Wandering Jew." It is so you say a "very queer Carol" it then is. Well is very queer, and among the queerest phenomena of life is literature. Had you spent the whole of Christmas Day in reading, I should still have been grateful to you for your kindly thought, the spirit of the thing is absolutely "reverential"; and I will make bold to add that neither you nor any other critic will ever forget from the memory of the Christ whom I have painted—the patient, long-suffering, ever-misunderstood, ever-misjudged, ever-loved and outcast Christ of the Nineteenth Century. I have simply expressed in a pathetic image what thousands of living men now see and feel and what, as I have said, they can never forget.

As to the literary quality of the poem, I am indifferent. I have no respect whatever for mere art or mere literature. But I can't be bullied into a belief that "heaven," the poetic equivalent of our good old Anglo-Saxon "heaven," is to be pronounced so as to rhyme with "even"! "Heaven" is good Anglo-Saxon too, and "heavven" is its equivalent. I know little or nothing of the poets you name, but I wrote "clouds white as wool" long before Jonathan Swift wrote it, and I deny that Lord Tennyson had any personal property in "divine despair." These expressions, I fancy, are the stock-in-trade of rhymesters, generally, like "red rose," "silver moon," and "twinkling star." Again thanking you for your critical appreciation, I am, &c., ROBERT BUCHANAN.

N.B.—I have not said a word about your reference to the follies of my youth. *Et ego in Bohemia fui!* And I too was once a critic! But you might have added that after treading violently on the gentleman's corns I "apologised."—R. B.

Mukthal, 25, Mansfield-gardens, South Hampstead, Jan. 11.

CHANGE THE BLOOD wherever you find its impurity carrying through the skin in pimples, eruptions, and foul humours, or in the sluggish circulation, causing dullness, languor, or when a fever or other malady will follow soon. Keep your blood pure, and the health of the system will follow. Impurities of the blood, of whatever name or nature, are literally carried out of the system by the use of Dr. Williams' Wild Cherry Blood Mixture. Of chemists everywhere, at 2s. 9d. per bottle.—ADVT.

ALL SORTS.

"The Fishguard Invasion; or, Three Days in 1797." Some passages taken from the Diary of the late Rev. Daniel Rowlands, sometime Vicar of Llanfihangelgwyn. (London: F. Fisher Unwin.)

The author has retold a little-known and much forgotten story. Something less than a hundred years ago this sea-girt isle was threatened with a French invasion. He was not a very serious person, he was much to lack in munitions and morals, and the incidents of his adventure are not creditable to him; but no doubt he created a considerable bustle in the immediate neighbourhood of Fishguard. Brought to the shores of French Revolution having more criminals on its hands than it quite knew how to deal with, shipped them off, and, as it turned out, burn, and outrage in the name of liberty, fraternity, and equality. The French invasion was a little war to the castles and peace to the cottages, but castle and cottage preferred to settle their little differences for themselves, and the whole gang of out-at-elbow rapscallions were promptly laid by the heels by a crowd of Welsh women in red cloaks, mistook them for regular soldiers, and marched them off under conditions. It is worthy of note that their leader was an Irish-American. That redoubtable worthy, by the way, is the front and brag and blister has to end in scuttle. The story is compiled from authentic documents, and is brightly and graphically written.

"Wands." A Story in Seven Chapters. By K. Tynan. (London: Ward and Downey.)

This slight volume belongs to Mr. Arrowsmith's "Note-Book Series"—one taken from the volumes of that they are got up in the form of note-books and printed only on one side of the leaf. The story grows up in the trim and proper garden and strangle the flowers, thus producing a wilderness, and the flowers, left to grow dutiful married persons, dwelling in a garden of love for some three years. "Dick's love for Bess was soft, and woman." Just But then to Acacia Villa one fine day comes Jessie, a cousin of Daisy's, a "joyous, gold-crowned, soft, and woman." Just escaped from girlhood, "altogether delightful—daringly impudent, saucily sweet." Bessington the whole thing grows apace. It is an unknown society story, very human in its development and interest. It is not in any hard and unsympathetic way that the moral lesson is not very effectively inculcated. Here and there, it is carelessly and ungrammatical. "They are very nice, those sort of brothers, aren't they? Aren't they, indeed?

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"Stories from *Black and White*." By W. E. Norris, W. Clark Russell, Thomas Hardy, E. Lynn Linton, James Payn, J. M. Barrie, Mrs. Oliphant, and Mrs. Ewing. (London: Chapman and Hall, Limited.)

We offer the publication of the fact—we do but state it, yet a fact it is—that not one of the distinguished writers whose stories appear in "Black and White" has produced a story anywhere nearly up to his or her ordinary level of literary excellence. Mr. Barrie's story is the best of the but most of all it is true of Mr. Thomas Hardy. In his story, "To Please his Wife," there is nothing of the strong art of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," "The Mayor of Casterbridge," "The Woodlanders," "The Return of the Native," "Far from the Madding Crowd," "Two on a Tower," "The Hand of Ethelberta," "The Trumpet-Major," "A Laodicean," "Desperate Remedies," "Under the Greenwood Tree," "A Pair of Blue Eyes," "Two Marriages," "Jude the Obscure," "The Pipes of Pan," "Life's Little Ironies," "A Group of Noble Dames," "Wessex Tales," "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," "Wessex Poems," "Poems of Past and Present," "The Dynasts," "The Well-Beloved