

A PAGE OF VERSE

OLD GOBLIN LANE

BY MADELEINE NIGHTINGALE

[Beacon]

LONG years ago men cut it deep
Through Heathdene Copse; its banks
are steep
And ripples of red sand-falls creep,
With every rain,
To flood the shelves where mosses
sprout
And tiny seedling things throw out
Sparse leaves; they call it round about
'Old Goblin Lane.'

Cresting each slope, wood-bushes cling
And o'er its edges downward fling
Strange-featured filaments that swing
Before the breeze;
And twisted forms, grotesque and gray,
All blotched with fungus and decay,
Lean down and leer upon the way
Malignities.

Which though, perchance, but tree-
roots seem
To townsmen, otherwise they deem
That nightly needs must drive their
team
This homeward road;
And urge their horses' sober pace
Till heaving chest and straining trace
Have trundled briskly through the
place
The heaviest load.

For aged villagers will tell
Of strange occurrences and fell,
Of 'token' seen and evil spell
On travelers cast;
Of boggarts from the wood that slide
And spring unwary backs astride,
And how he whom the boggarts ride
Turns mad at last.

And even we whose paths afar
So sane and so prosaic are,
Whose skeptic souls no terrors jar
Nor charms enchain,
Some eerie magic there have found
That from the loveliness around
Steals forth and claps our hearts in
pound
In Goblin Lane.

THE BLACKBIRD

BY HUMBERT WOLFE

[Chapbook]

IN the far corner
close by the swings
every morning
a blackbird sings.

His bill's so yellow
his coat's so black
that he makes a fellow
whistle back.

Ann my daughter
thinks that he
sings for us two
especially.

MORNING

BY HUMBERT WOLFE

[Chapbook]

IF all of us were doomed to die
when we had lived a minute
I think I know what Ann and I
would wish to happen in it.

We'd let our sixty seconds run
where chestnut-blossom hardens
some early morning at Kensington
when spring is in the Gardens.

LIFE, LETTERS, AND THE ARTS

ENGLISH AND FRENCH LITERARY RELATIONS

FRENCH critics who write about English literature have a way of beating the native critics at their own game, and — however loath the English-speaking nations may be to admit it — the rule hardly holds good the other way. English and American books on French literature, though useful enough to Englishmen and Americans, do not usually find any great number of readers in France.

Has not Canon Ainger left on record an epigram and pun combined to honor the talents of Taine and to mark his superiority to the English critics who dealt with the same subjects as he?

Our English critics their dull wits keep straining,
When — enter Taine! And all is entertaining.

And did not the reverend gentleman himself retailor his own epigram to swathe the literary person of M. Jules Jusserand, French Ambassador at Washington?

A Frenchman straying into English fields
Of letters, seldom has a *locus standi*;
But if there's one to whom objection yields,
'T is Jusserand — he has the *jus errandi*!

Perhaps, however, French critics of English letters have a *locus standi* more frequently than Canon Ainger thought. Two, at least, of the modern Parisian critics — though they can hardly aspire to the laurels of a Taine — are writing illuminating criticism of contemporary literature in England and the United States. They are M. Valéry Larbaud, whose article on American poetry was printed in the *Living Age* last year, and M. Abel Chevalley, whose book on *Le roman anglais de notre temps* is reviewed by M. Larbaud in the last number of *La Revue de France*.

M. Larbaud loses no time in remark-

ing that 'this is the work of a specialist, and — if I may use the expression — the work of a specialist who knows his job; certainly there are not very many Frenchmen who have read as many English novels as he has.'

The appearance of the book leads M. Larbaud to reflect that a list of the books which constitute the links between the intellectual life of England and France is badly needed. Such books, he thinks, fall into three classes: first, works that have obviously been influenced by the author's reading in another language, examples of which are plentiful enough — Voltaire and Byron, Bayle and W. S. Landor, Wordsworth and the other members of the Lake School on Sainte-Beuve, and Verlaine on Arthur Symons; second, translations of the classics, of important books, and of ephemeral works which are nevertheless much read in their own time; and finally, critical works like Voltaire's *Lettres philosophiques* and Taine's *Histoire de la littérature anglaise*.

With the characteristic precision of a French critic, M. Larbaud specifies clearly what he means when he speaks of 'important' books. To be regarded as a landmark in literary history, either a book must have exerted an important influence over other books written during the period following its publication, or a critical literature must have grown up about it, or else it must continue to be read and studied by the literary people of the country to whose literature it belongs.

This is the only kind of book that M. Larbaud is willing to admit for consideration by 'literary historians' — in other words college professors, though the courteous Frenchman strews the path of those persecuted souls with roses, instead of hurling the accustomed