action and the vesting of ownership (dominium, possession might be the seed of ruin) in the ease of industrial property in the state does not necessarily involve absolute democracy. The very conception of the state as a person is, indeed, precisely the case it does not. We are strongly of opinion that as state aid and state control and even state ownership is more and more introduced, as it is certain to be, the great political discovery will be the necessity of doing away with the rule of numbers if the machine is to work at all.

TWO SYMBOLISTS.

"Poesies de Stéphane Mallarmé."  Bruxelles : E. Villars, 1890.


Certain writers, in whom the artist's contempt for common things has been carried to its utmost limit, should only be read in books of beautiful and slightly unusual form. Perhaps of all modern writers Villiers and Mallarmé have most carefully sought the most remote ideal, and seem most to require some elaborate presentation to the reader. Mallarmé, indeed, delighted in keeping up pretty obstacles in the reader's way, not only in the concealing of his meaning by style, but in a futile, fragmentary, and only too luxurious method of publication, which made it difficult for most people to get his books at all, even for unlimited sums of money. And Villiers, the contrary, after publishing his first book, the "Premières Poesies" of 1889, in the delicate type of Perrin de Lyesse, on thin paper, with old gold covers, became careless as to how his books appeared, and has been read in a disorderly second edition of volumes, some of them as hideous as the original edition of "L'Epine Future," with its red stars and stripes, its Apollo and Cupid and grey city landscape. It is therefore with singular pleasure that we welcome the two beautiful books which have lately been published by M. Deman, the well-known publisher of Rops: one, the fullest collection of Mallarmé's poems which has ever been published, the other a selection of twenty stories by Villiers. The Mallarmé is white and red, the poems printed in italics, a frontispiece by Rops; the Villiers is a large square volume in shimmering dark green and gold, with headpieces and tailpieces, in two tints, by M. Th. van Rysselberghe. These scrolls and titles are done with a sort of reverent self-suppression, as if, for once, decoration existed for a book and not the book for the decoration, which is hardly the quality for which modern decorators are most conspicuous.

In the "Poesies," as I have no doubt, Mallarmé's final selection from his own poems. Some of it is even now. The magnificent and mysterious fragment of "Héroïde," his masterpiece, perhaps, is, though not completed, more than doubled in length by the addition of a long passage on which he was at work almost to the time of his death. It is curious to note that the new passage is written in exactly the style of the older passage, though in the interval between the writing of the one and the writing of the other Mallarmé had completely changed his style. By an effort of will he had thought himself back into an earlier style, and the two fragments join without an apparent seam. There were, it appears, still a hymn or lyric spoken by S. John and a concluding monologue, to be added to the poem; but we have at least the whole of the dialogue between Héroïde and the Nurse, certainly a poem sufficiently complete in itself. The other new pieces are in the latest manner, mainly without punctuation; they would scarcely by altering, one imagines, even if punctuated. In the course of a few centuries, we are convinced, every line of Mallarmé will have become perfectly clear, as a corrupt Greek becomes clear in time. Even now a learned commentator could probably do much to explain them, at the cost of a life-long labor; but scholars are only given to the living and of a remote past. Mallarmé can afford to wait: he will not be forced out of print; he need not hang about on the market for us of the present there are the clear and lovely early poems, so delightfully brought together in the white and red book before us.

"L'inéssibilité de l'air et des pierres," a serene and gem-like quality, entirely true in its time, is in all these poems, in which a particular kind of French verse resembles its own ideal. Mallarmé is the poet of a few, a limited poet, perfect within his limits; the French literary artist, his own symbol. In a beautiful poem he compares himself to the painter of tea-cups who spends his life in painting a strange flower.

"Sur tes tasses de neige à la lune rave," a flower which has perfumed his whole existence, since, as a child, he had felt it grow itself upon the "blue filigree of his soul."

A very different image must be sought if we wish to sum up the characteristics of Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. An uncertain artist, he was a man of passionate and lofty genius, and he has left us a great mass of imperfect work, out of which we have to form for ourselves whatever notion we can of a man greater than his work. Our first impression, on looking at the twenty stories which make up the present selection, was that the selection had been badly made. Where is "Les Denoëlisses de Bélinettis?" we asked ourselves, remembering that this short, ironical masterpiece is "Le Convive des Derniers Fiers," with its subtlety of horror: "Santimentalisme," with its tragic and tender modernity: "L'Etoile Vauban," with its sombre and taciturn intensity? Story after story came into our mind, finer, it seemed to us, in the artistic qualities of the story than many of those selected. Second thoughts inclined us to think that the selection could already have been better. For it is a selection made after a plan, and it shows not indeed always Villiers at his best as a story-teller, but throughout, Villiers at his best at the point of elevation: the man, whom we are always trying to see through his work, and the man as he would have himself. There is not a collection of stories in French of greater nobility than these "Histoires Souveraines" in which a regal pomp of speech drapes a more than regal sovereignty of soul. The Villiers who mocked mean things and attacked base things is no longer there; the idealist is at home in his own world, among his ideals.

THE PRIVATE SECRETARY.

"Recollections by Sir Algernon West."  London: Smith, Elder, 1890. 21s.

On laying down these pleasant and amusing volumes, it is easy to understand why Sir Algernon West was such a success. In 1851 he entered the Inland Revenue Department as a temporary clerk at 6s. a day, and it seems but yesterday that he quitted it as Chairman and a K.C.B. But men never understand what they have done themselves. On an early page in the first volume the author says, with explicit reference to Mr. Macaulay's "M SS. of Alexander Pope," "I have often wondered at the success of some men whose qualifications did not seem to justify it." Yet Sir Algernon need not have wondered, if he had strictly examined himself as to the secret of his own advancement. Sir George Cornwall Lewis observed, with his profound, if cynical, sagacity that "every man was able adequately to perform the duties of an office which he was clever enough to get." Nothing is easier to procure and nothing is harder to practise, than the gospel of getting-on. Make yourself pleasant to the world, and the world will make itself pleasant to you, is the formula, which sounds simple and obvious enough, but is in reality not that little meaning matter. Pope thoroughly grasped by Sir Algernon West. Unconsciously he reveals himself in these recollections as one born to be liked, used, trusted, even if punctually promoted, by his fellows. In the two volumes there is not a note of querulousness or egoism. There is no obstruction of disagreeable democratic principles—only once a curt and brusque reference to the rev. angus domi—though in his early days he must have suffered from imposthume. His modesty about himself is no more than the modesty of quite unaffected by the fact that for many years he was not only Mr. Gladstone's personal secretary amongst the great men of the earth. Though "breed in the kennel" of the Whigs (hit