

is a model of ease, simplicity, and naturalness ; it is, what it should be, a lucid medium to convey the idea. Next to never does a word like *lightsome*, which has a smack of literary self-consciousness, bring one up with a jar. The writer knows his New York thoroughly and loves it, too. Familiar with this *locale*, so rich for the purposes of the perceptive, sympathetic maker of fiction, he has the good sense to stick to it, sure that it is an exhaustless mine to work, and that he will extract therefrom his most precious ore.

A great variety of types is presented. We pass from the fashionable drawing-room to the corner bar-room ; we hear the talk of upper society, of the horse-show, and that of the cook, the chambermaid, and the butler below-stairs. We see as through a peep-hole a suggestion of the work of the journalist, the playwright, and the actor. We are on Madison Square with a pair of uptown lovers, or on the Battery with lovers less exclusive, but quite as much in earnest. The street musician, the trained nurse, the homeless vagrant, and the Salvation Army shouter enlist our interest in turn, and are flesh-and-blood creatures all, fellows in the great fight. There is both light and shade, laughter and tears ; the situations are never theatric, but, rather, inevitable with the unprejudiced inevitability of Life itself. In the best of these outlines—a word well indicating the author's method—in that very strong and truthful sketch, "The Vigil of McDowell Sutro," with its vivid description of a night spent perforce out of doors by a penniless Westerner ; or "The Solo Orchestra," happy in title and delightfully heartfelt in feeling ; or such things as "An Irrepressible Conflict" and "In the Watches of the Night," delicately conducted variants of the eternal love motive, Professor Matthews gives us fiction that is altogether satisfactory. To cavil at it argues, it seems to us, insensitiveness to the many-voiced appeal of humanity. The poetry of it all is just as evident as the realism. The dialogue, where dialogue is used, has the light touch and the accent of verity which give a colloquialism that is neither smart nor vulgar. Professor Matthews has learned a fact important to the novelist : that slang, so called, is idiom in the making. We can think of no stu-

### BRANDER MATTHEWS'S SHORT STORIES.\*

In the group of American fictionists who are doing earnest, honest, and skilful work in portraying the many phases of life to be found in New York City, Brander Matthews has come to occupy an honourable place. Both in the short story and the novel he has made studies that for quiet, unobtrusive truth and accurate yet atmospheric handling of the material, call for admiration. His latest contribution, *Outlines in Local Colour*, a dozen sketches of Manhattan, deepens one's sense of obligation to a writer who has steadily progressed in fictional art and broadened in his sympathies. Professor Matthews is a realist in the true sense of that hard-riden word ; his scenes and characters have the verisimilitude of actuality, with that selective instinct and sense of proportion which result in convincing the reader and charming him as well. It is impossible to go through this volume without being instructed in the great drama of human existence. It matters not at all that only glimpses and moments of life are presented, that commonplace folk are on the boards in the play, and that the detail is photographic. The little narratives are true, they are attractive ; when that is said, all is said. The style

\* *Outlines in Local Colour*. By Brander Matthews. New York : Harper & Bros. \$1.25.

dent of Eastern city life who is more the master of this adjunct of his art. The stories are done with such apparent ease, there is so little attempt at plot for plot's sake, that the careless or shallow may rise from a perusal of the book, thinking it a slight performance. A more grievous mistake could not be made. To suggest much in little is in fiction very difficult; *Outlines in Local Colour* does this and does it triumphantly. It is not realism in the narrow or unpleasant sense that we are given, but realism walking hand in hand with romance. Such fiction, based on the most careful, keen-eyed observation and study, controlled and shaped by a fine art, and warmed and humanised by a genuine democratic sympathy for all sorts and conditions of men, is of the finest efflorescence of the story-maker's craft. Professor Matthews is a worthy member of a school of which Mr. Howells is the natural head—a school which will receive its true praise and place only when some historian of the future discovers the value of the social documents left by these writers in revealing our age in its habit as it lived.

*Richard Burton.*