NEW PUBLICATIONS.

SOME NEW NOVELS.

A WASHINGTON WINTER. By MADELEINE VINTON DAHLGREN. 12mo, pp. 247. James R. Osgood & Co.

MASTER BIELAND AND HIS WORKMEN. By BERTHOLD AUERBACH. Translated by E. Hancock. Leisure Hour Series. 16mo, pp. 266. Henry Holt & Co.

YOLANDE. By WILLIAM BLACK. 12mo, cloth. 4to. Franklin Square Library. Harper & Brothers.

Mrs. Dahlgren's book can hardly be called a novel. It has no plot worth mention, its undercurrent of intrigue being of the slightest and most hackneyed sort. The withholding of an offer of marriage from a beautiful girl by the scheming father of her rival is a device which is stale indeed, and it is worked out in an absurdly melodramatic fashion. A war claim against Government with a hint of lobbying and of Congressional dishonesty suggest an interesting, if unsavory, excursion into a not too well-trodden field; but it is not followed up, and is set aside so abruptly, in truth, as to leave the reader in a state of bewilderment. This attempt at plot serves only to develop certain unpleasant traits in a low politician, Senator Spangler, who is a coarser edition of the Senator Radcliff of "Democracy." The episode of the war claim and the selfish passion of Spangler for the beautiful widow, its owner, strongly reminds one of that clever but one-sided novel. The resemblance is possibly a testimony to the truth of Mrs. Dahlgren's portraiture. Some of her chacters are mere puppets evidently used to carry her story; others are "types" which it may be hoped are somewhat overdrawn. In her description of a winter in Washington this picture would probably most delight the British admirer of "Democracy":

The wife of the first Secretary called upon was gorgeously arrayed in a stunning dress of terra-cotta-red brocade, profusely furbelowed and trimmed with black Spanish lace; while an extraordinary turban headdress, surmounted by a plume such as he of Navarre wore, completed the costume, and gave her a very top-lofty air. The day was one of that exceptional loveliness so often enjoyed in a Washington winter; but the glorious sunlight was carefully excluded from this pretentious house. Every shutter was closed; the heavy draperies were all closely drawn, so as to shut out any possible ray of cheerful sunlight. Scores of gas-jets, covered with red shades, were in full blast; and as the front doors were of necessity opened every moment for the ingress and egress of the motley crowd, the effect of the ever-conflicting hues was hideous. An immense negro, with a voice like a Corliss engine, asked the names and then announced the comers, who were borne in on the blast of sound. As our little party entered the house they were promptly accosted: "Wot's yer names?"

"Mrs. Wilton, Miss Wilton, Miss Stevens, and Prince Nikolaus Skybeloff"; these were no sooner given than the ebony usher bawled out, "Miss Meton, Miss Steves, and Prints Niklass Skylark"; upon which Mrs. Secretary at once shook hands all round, exclaiming: "How d' ye do, Miss Metow, Miss Steves, and Mr. What's-your-name? This is my little gal Sary."

Now Sarah, who stood in a straight line on a crack of the floor beside her mother, was taking a look at the world at twelve and wore a blue silk dress flounced to her waist, and her hair banged.

"It is pleasant," said Mrs. Wilton, more courteous than candid, perhaps, "to have your daughter assist you, madam."

"Oh, yes," said Mrs. Secretary; "I'm greatly obleeged to you mum. Sary's a good gal. I never hev to lick her. Won't you, Miss Metow, and them other ladies, and Mr. What's-his-name, that's cum with you, take something to eat? One gets very done out, going the rounds and peddling of cards all day long. The vittles is in the back room, and yer more than welcome. We never give drinks here, because we are wholly, entirely, and tea-totally temperance."

"Thanks," said Mrs. Wilton; "we will take tea then."

As they gained the welcome fresh air the Prince exclaimed: "It is well I am with you, ladies, for otherwise I should need a glossary to explain the idiom."

"You would need more than a glossary here," replied Mrs. Wilton, "for the woman we have just left illustrates American institutions in all their glory. Her husband first saw her really beautiful arms, it is said, as she stood over a wash-tub with sleeves uprolled, at the door of her father's inn, in Texas. The future Secretary had a large cattle ranch on the Texan plains, and he took the buxom beauty home as his wife, and installed her as mistress over his roomy house. His flocks and herds prospered, and his money sent him to Congress, from whence his stentorian voice lifted him into a Cabinet position, where, as you see, his wife is doing the honors."

The scene in the Secretary's mansion has a fit parallel in a scene in the House when the Honorable Mr. Ignotus* was making a little maiden speech asking for an appropriation for the Mississippi levees."

As he stood sawing the air wildly with his long, lank arms, and swinging his ungainly person to and fro, he presented a very absurd appearance. The high-pitched, thin, nasal voice added to the ludicrous effect, and the House, in a sort of caprice, gave him their attention for a few moments.

"I tell you what, Mr. Speaker," said he, "at Waterproof, where I live, we are always under water!"

Here he was cut short by a burly Texan, from the interior of the State, who bawled out: "Mr. Speaker, appropriate a *barrel* of whiskey to dry him up."

The gavel of the Speaker came down to enforce silence—but a blue grass Kentucky member was on his feet: "Mr. Speaker, I vote that old Bourbon, and plenty of it, be given him."

Again the gavel raps, and the House is aroused to the absurdity of the thing; when Ignotus, in his shrillest, highest nasal twang calls out: "Mr. Speaker, I guess I'll take the old Bourbon straight, with a biskuit and a bolony sassage."

A roar of laughter rose far above the pounding of the Speaker's gavel, for the House was for the nonce in one of its insubordinate moods, and not to be so easily quelled.

"The sergeant-at-arms will do his duty, and arrest disorderly members," shouted the Speaker.

"I am afraid," said Mme. de Beaulieu. "Take me away.

Senator Spangler is a vulgarian, brutal, selfish and ignorant, and it is questionable taste in an American to show to the world as a type of her countrymen in power a creature so detestable. She must give us leave to doubt the accuracy of her coloring. When the Senator first arrives in Washington a modest boarding-house and a flaming red velvet gown for his wife fail to help him into society. "It's not enough," he declares, "to be a plain Senator and live on the south side of Pennsylvania avenue unless you have the gift of gab and speechify and orate. There's something, too, besides my pile of money needed,—more money, a big house, and to give entertainments." In pursuance of these objects the Senator builds an enormous palace with what he calls "a *pert-cochon*," and gives a house-warming at which divers extraordinary and well-known persons appear:

With the punctuality of country manners the first who entered at the precise moment of invitation were the Honorable Mr. and Mrs. Ignotus. The gentleman—in a frock coat of rustic cut, baggy trousers, white kid gloves and black silk necktie—*felt fine*, if he did not look so. The dress of Mrs. Ignotus had been the nine days' wonder of Waterproof, the little town where they lived,—being so called because always partially submerged. The fashionable dressmaker of Waterproof expected to achieve a national reputation in the admiration the display of her skill must excite. The dress was of terra-cotta-red, slazy silk; the skirt was ruffled to the waist, and each ruffle edged with black cotton lace. "To be sure it's imitation, marm," said she, "but no one will know any better." The corsage was of that abominable outline called half-low, and the sleeves were cut short just above the elbow; while white ruching was crowded in round the neck and sleeves. A broad pink-brocade sash was tied in a bow behind, according to directions; and a wreath of red, white and blue roses surmounted a fabulous erection of false frizzled hair. As her neck was long and thin, this garland, with her fluttering sash, gave her very much the appearance of a liberty-pole. Ignotus had grumbled about the cost of this dress, but finally compromised without a lawsuit, by trading off a barrel of bad whiskey for *the goods*; but he was now in splendid humor, and declared frequently that evening, as he strutted up and down with his wife plastered to his arm, that Mrs. Ignotus took the "shine off all creation." Upon being asked how he was, he invariably answered in a liberal way, and with a majestic wave of the hand: "Tip-top!" . . .

At that moment the hitherto smooth course of the reel seemed to become agitated as if by some unexpected disturbance, and various lithe dancers were seen flying in and out of their places at odd times; than were heard little shrieks of laughter, and young girls shaking their fans and crying out: "O General!"

"What can the flutter mean?" asked Mrs. Wilton, who was somewhat uneasy for Amabel and Stella.

"Just nothing at all," said the Commodore in a snappish way,—"of any consequence to divert us from the supper table. Don't you see, it's only General Sherman, who has taken a hand in the reel, and is cutting an old-fashioned double pigeon-wing, in order and out of order, and insisting on leading out the pretty girls, and they are all in a titter of amusement."

"And sure enough," said Senator Roland, "it is original and also inimitable. The hero of the ball-room!"

At that moment a grave, rather stolid, but evidently amused looker-on stood near, but so very still and quiet he had not been observed, until the merry Stella, whom General Sherman had just "turned, out of turn," appealed to this staid spectator.

"O General Grant, what shall we do with General Sherman? Look at the confusion he makes! Please take him in charge."

General Grant, thus appealed to, only answered very sedately, but with a twinkle in his eye: "I can do nothing, Miss Stevens. General Sherman is a Democrat; we will have to let him go."

Every one laughed. Mrs. Wilton, Senator Roland, General Garfield, and the satisfied Commodore passed on into the supper-room, where that gentleman led the way directly to the punch-bowl.

Here a scene that was not very decorous occurred, for which "ye ancient mariner" was responsible. Standing near was that very Cabinet officer whose wife had that very morning declared such energetic temperance principles for herself and family. Now the Commodore took the opportunity, when Senator Roland and General Garfield were closely engaged—in the discussion of a joint plan, in which the Senate and the House were to act in a committee of conference, of which these gentlemen were members—to get up a little by-play for the amusement of Mrs. Wilton, whom he always desired to entertain. He therefore began to expatiate upon the excellent qualities of the punch to the Secretary, at the same time filling some glasses with the delectable but heady compound.

"I assure you, Mr. Secretary," he suggested, "it is a sure preservative against cold, pneumonia and fever. There is no head ache in it, and it makes a man 'a man for a' that,' as Burns so happily sings"; handing a glass with one hand, while he tossed off a bumper with the other. "To sweethearts and wives, as we old sailors say"; toasted he. The Secretary wavered, sniffed the punch, and the aroma entered his brain. It was too much; and virtue lost her favored stronghold, as the whilom temperance lecturer swallowed the liquid at one draught, re-echoing, "Sweethearts and wives to you, Commodore!"

It was the work of an instant to refill and repledge and requaff.

"Now for a nightcap," said the Commodore, perfectly enchanted at the unexpected success of his manœuvre; and the third bumper was raised to the now ready lips, when the arm of the recreant was suddenly but firmly grasped by no less a personage than Mrs. Secretary herself.

"Fie, fie, sir," said she.

"Let me alone, Sarah," said he of bibulous taste, hilarious enough to be for once independent.

"But," stammered the poor woman, utterly dismayed, "your temperance pledge!"

"To your very good health, Commodore," answered the demented man; "here goes!" tossing down the third glass. "You see how it is, Commodore,—the-o-ret-i-cal-ly I'm tem-per-r-rance, but—practic-ti-cal-ly I im-bibe!"

At this instant his wife, seizing him by the arm, whispered in his ear: "Jake, you old fool, come home at once! Don't you see, with all your theoretical nonsense, that you are practically drunk?" With this they disappeared. . . .

"Mrs. Wilton," said General Garfield, suddenly turning toward her, "how does this grand new house impress you?"

"General, it is too confusing for thought," said she. "It spreads out like a peacock, and we are all overshadowed by the iridescence."

"Come now," said the General, "that is too clever for this atmosphere. Keep such scintillations for your own delightful *conversaziones*. Shall we promenade?"

"How can I?"

"Why not?"

"To be sandwiched in the crowd, General?"

"You do not wish to be *one of many*," said he, "yet it is our national motto."

"I cannot, General; I revolt from a crowd. All *crushes* are vulgar, no matter how distinguished their component parts. No drawing-room effect can be splendid when one is elbowed."

"But," asked he, "what if one steadily advances, and works out of the crush?"

"Ah," said Mrs. Wilton, "that is quite another thing; and if you, General Garfield, look fixedly ahead, above and beyond all, there is still to be reached an *ultima thule*."

"Do you think so?" said he with lowered voice and dilated eye; "but where, and how reach it?"

"It lies in the direction of the White House, and is within your grasp," whispered she.

"And—you—think so?" he repeated vagnely, not looking at her, but as if he would search futurity.

"I know so," was the response.

Then there was silence. Mrs. Wilton took the proffered arm of Senator Roland, who at that moment rejoined them, and General Garfield bade good-night. His excellent wife, with her customary good sense, had preferred to stay at home with the children on that stormy night. Did General Garfield then dream of an *ultima thule*?

The quality of the conversation in which Mrs. Dahlgren's characters indulge is not, it may be seen, particularly brilliant, and it is in many places made worse by an undue peppering of French words and phrases. This is carried so far as to recall the novels of the affected days of Lady Lytton and Lady Blessington. As a disjointed and exaggerated series of pictures of Washington life and people the book will have a passing interest perhaps; but we should be sorry indeed to have it accepted by a foreigner as an actual representation of official society and of political methods in America.

—Auerbach's last story shows that for the sake of his literary fame he did not die too soon. "Master Bieland" is entirely unworthy of the author of "On the Heights." It is dull, flat and without sufficient motive. The scene is laid in a small provincial city in Germany, wherein Bieland, a wealthy boot and shoe manufacturer, is one of the most honored citizens. It is discovered that he is sending forth from his shop sham work in which paste plays a more important part than good waxed thread. A report concerning its cheapness and badness is made at the Philadelphia Exhibition, and the old man is scorned as having disgraced himself and his city by his abominable boots and shoes. Remorse and the hatred of his neighbors overcome him and he dies suddenly with the honest tools of his youth in his hands. In this lies whatever reason for being the story has; the by-play of love and friendship is forced, and the characters are not so clearly conceived nor so skilfully drawn as to do honor to the creator of Walpurga, Irma and the King.

—Facility in writing and the modern money-making mania combine in these days to spoil many a clever novelist. When to lightly turn off a novel or two a year means to win the material good things of life, the average writer does not hesitate; art and future fame go to the wall, and the novel is an indigestible mass of fiction, pleasant enough, but pleasant for the day only. The searching study, the patient work which mould a masterpiece demand time and perhaps insure poverty—so what is the "successful novelist" to do? We do not say that Mr. William Black deliberately chooses to work faster than his excellent talents warrant; but we may at least suggest to him that fewer novels might mean for him better ones. An interval of rest and reflection might, for example, end in the production of a heroine new to his pen; his readers are, in truth, tired of the prodigious female progeny born to the father and mother of the "Princess of Thule." It is not possible perhaps to have too many bright, brave and sincere girls in fiction, but they ought not to be so uniform in their brightness, bravery and sincerity as to become bores. Sheila under her various names has grown fatiguing, and even a Becky Sharpe would be welcome as a change. Mr. Black has effected in himself an admirable reformation in the matter of his sunsets and coast-pictures; let him now reflect upon his Heroine.

Yolande is almost an exact reproduction of Natalie Berezolyi, and is a wise and right-thinking maiden whose exploits are two—the giving up a youth she mildly likes for the man she adores, and the curing her mother of a very bad habit of taking narcotics. Mrs. Winterbourne has dosed herself for half her life, and all the efforts of husband and friends to reclaim her have failed.. Yolande steps in and effects the cure with an airy rapidity which is more agreeable than artistic. This whole episode of Yolande's unfortunate mother is strained to the last degree.

It goes without saying that Mr. Black's style is pleasant, his narrative smoothly and lightly carried. He has not one spark of humor, but that is an equipment without which the average modern novelist easily sails the sea of fiction.

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