

GOTHIC.

ANOTHER CONTROVERSIAL STUDY OF ITS GROWTH IN ENGLAND.

A HISTORY OF GOTHIC ART IN ENGLAND. By Edward S. Prior, M. A. With Illustrations by Gerald C. Horsley, and Many Plans and Diagrams. Quarto. Pp. xiv, 465. The Macmillan Company.

To the art critic who is accustomed to keep abreast of his subject in current literature a new book on Gothic architecture is in the nature of a boon. It almost invariably shows one more author in what may fairly be designated as "a state of mind." Some writers there are who can keep their heads in dealing with this theme. There is, for example, Professor Charles Herbert Moore, of Harvard, who has written in his "Development and Character of Gothic Architecture" a work as constantly judicious as it is scholarly and enlightening. But the latest in the field, Mr. Prior, is one of those who must plunge into controversy, and must, therefore, by the same token, delight his reviewer. The controversy is the old one between those who maintain that French Gothic is the purest and those who refuse to admit that English Gothic is inferior; between those who think that England owes a debt to the mediaeval French architects and those who have doubts on that subject. Patriotism, of course, plays its part in the quarrel, and we are not surprised, though we are certainly amused, to find Mr. Prior saying, of the faith of the French in their Gothic, that it "is patriotic, and usually as exclusive as the 'salvation' of certain religious sectaries, who would keep 'heaven' to themselves." He thinks, too, that Professor Moore is "more jealous for France even than the Frenchmen." For himself, of course, he is all for art, and patriotism may go hang; only, being human, we find him writing with all the ardor of a rabid English patriot.

The theory of Gothic architecture maintained by Viollet le Duc and developed with convincing power by Professor Moore in the book to which we have alluded is that the earliest Gothic designers proceeded on a basis of thrust and counter thrust. The church architecture of the Ile de France illustrated a definite departure from the principle of inertia to that of life. All of the parts of a building were so arranged as to be interdependent. A cathedral became a living organism from which, logically, nothing could be taken away without detriment to the whole. Not a single detail in the whole vast fabric was without its constructive import. This is reasonable enough, and in all essentials can be proved at Amiens, at Rheims, at Beauvais and elsewhere. There is, so far as we can see, no reason why patriotism should incline any man to adopt a different view. It is not a matter of transcendent importance whether the English cathedral builders derived their inspiration absolutely from the French or not, nor does it make the English cathedrals any less beautiful if they happen to illustrate modifications of the pure Gothic idea. But with most English writers on Gothic architecture life is unendurable if they cannot question the superiority and the priority of the French school. The misfortune is, too, that in their advocacy of one they not only do injustice to the other, but they are very apt to fall into serious error.

Thus, Mr. Prior is aware of the differences between the French and English masterpieces he has studied, and he is ready to admit these differences; but in his anxiety lest we should render too much honor to France, he protests against the definition of Gothic advanced by critics like Professor Moore. He grants that "the unity of an organic perfection lay in the creations of French art," but he adds that the least part of this perfection was "the mechanical skill by which the processes of building have been used to perfect the portrayal of the idea." Here he loses sight of the fact that the mechanical skill is merely the expression of an idea, that it is an indispensable part of Gothic architecture, that it is, in short, the thing itself. Mr. Prior seems to regard it as a subordinate detail, as something of which the early builders were, in a certain sense, unconscious. "The Gothic spirit," he says, "was that of aspiring growth, the leaping upward of a flame, the piercing of the air with spire and pinnacle, the uplifting of the ribbed vault," and he considers the modern theory of thrust and counter thrust as the key to the whole question, in the light of a theory formulated after the event. Here we believe he is wrong, and his own words confirm our opinion. Cathedral building in France, he says, "became the passion of the community rising in revolt against the pressure of monastic domination." This, which does not seem at first blush to look to the technical side of the matter after all really involves it, because it states one large, embracing fact, the fact of Gothic architecture in France being an expression of the genius of a people. The great ecclesiastical fabric rising into space like some aerial machine was at once a scientific formula and a spiritual inspiration; it fused both into a unit. In England the spiritual inspiration played its part, but the scientific formula was never so thoroughly or so instinctively adopted, the genius of the people being in this case against it. The result was that the English built splendid cathedrals which we may call Gothic, but we insist upon the distinction that they do not represent Gothic in its purest estate; for that we must go to France.

We have spoken of the error into which a writer with prepossessions like Mr. Prior's is bound to fall. He mistakes decoration for con-

struction. Pure Gothic means to him a surface thing, where it should mean a definite idea of construction. Leaving the controversial side of his book, we hasten to say that he has produced some interesting pages on the Gothic monuments of England. The reader who wants good technical descriptions of the churches and cathedrals will find them here, strong in the minutiae of moulding, arch and carving, and reinforced with drawings that are lucid transcripts of fact. The author may be unduly concerned about the rank which is to be given to the buildings he commemorates, but at all events he writes of them with sympathy and clearness. For those who can make the proper deductions this is a desirable book, a welcome

FICTION.

SLIPSHOD WRITING FROM A PROFESSOR OF LITERATURE.

THE ACTION AND THE WORD. By Brander Matthews. 12mo, pp. 261. Harper & Bros.
JENNIE BAXTER, JOURNALIST. By Robert Barr. 12mo, pp. 37. Frederick A. Stokes Company.
THE PRELUDE AND THE PLAY. By Rufus Mann. 12mo, pp. 416. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.
 In "The Action and the Word" Professor Brander Matthews deals with a theme familiar enough in New-York life. Carla Brookfield,

of the kind of humor in which Professor Matthews constantly indulges.

But it is in the matter of style that this book is most astonishing. As Professor Matthews belongs to the English department of Columbia College, and has frequently lectured and written on the subject of the novel, we might at least expect him to employ good English. Here are a few examples of his style:

"The most of the articles were highly complimentary, not to call them fulsome." "It seemed to Evert that the actor was playing the part of a gentleman, whereas Miss Archibald had struck him as quite ladylike." "He asked himself whether there was anything in the actor's calling which forced a man to be thinking always of himself, and he wondered whether Carla might be infected by this. He had not time to analyze this novel suggestion when she came toward him." "Evert did as he was bid, and in a minute the curtain rose on the third act, which for Frou Frou is the most exciting in the play, since she never leaves the stage, and since the emotions she has to express must be kept in hand carefully, so that they swell slowly in intensity until they break forth almost unrestrained in the final scene between the two sisters." "Evert wanted air; he wanted a long walk; he wished he was on horseback on the seashore, with the ocean breeze blowing full on him and sweeping away all sickly odors of the theatre."

Before undertaking another novel Professor Matthews would do well to make a careful study of the subjunctive mood. He might also find it profitable to curb what he would probably call his "satire." There is no humor in "satire" that consists in gross distortions of human nature and of facts.

"Jennie Baxter, Journalist," by Robert Barr, is a curiously conglomerate tale. It might be the work of the combined talents of Anthony Hope, Conan Doyle and Mr. Barr himself. Mr. Hope might have supplied the plot, Dr. Doyle might have furnished the detective elements, and Mr. Barr might have given the distinctive American spirit. The heroine, from whom the book takes its title, is an extremely modern, vivacious and amusing young woman, but, of course, Mr. Barr would be the first to admit that she belongs to comic opera. So, too, do the romantic adventures through which she passes. The book is none the less readable on this account, however. Mr. Barr's detective is so like an old literary favorite, now deceased, that one speech will suffice to show where Mr. Barr draws his inspiration. "My dear fellow," said the detective, wearily, "no one travels with a typewriting machine unless that person is a typewriter. The girl, if you will notice, is now engaged in filling the leaves of her book with shorthand; therefore that proves her occupation. That she is secretary to a rich man is evidenced by the fact that she crossed in the Servia first cabin, as you may see by glancing at the label on the case; that she came alone, which is to say her employer was not with her, is indicated by the typewriter being marked 'Not Wanted,' so it was put down into the hold. If a Chicago business man had been travelling with his secretary the typewriter case would have been labelled instead 'Cabin, Wanted,' for a Chicago man of business would have to write some hundreds of letters, even on the ocean, to be ready for posting the moment he came ashore. The typewriter case is evidently new, and is stamped with the name and address of its sellers in Chicago. That she came by the Great Western is shown by the fact that 'Chester' appears on still another label. That she has special business in England we may well believe; otherwise she would have crossed on the French line direct from New-York. So you see, my dear boy, these are all matters of observation and quite patent to any one who cares to use his eyes." And it is only a short time ago that we considered writing of this sort monstrously clever in fact, almost marvellous.

Though modern in theme, "The Prelude and the Play," by Rufus Mann, is decidedly old-fashioned in treatment. So far as the author's method is concerned it might have been written fifty years ago, before the art of fiction, as Mr. Howells likes to insist, had become the superior art that it is now. It develops the old story of the two young people who marry, misunderstand each other, drift apart, only to come together again with a deeper appreciation and sympathy. It is altogether too long drawn out but it is very carefully written and it has a nice flavor of its own.

DR. VAN DYKE'S BROWNING STORY.

From The Philadelphia Post.
 Dr. Henry van Dyke, of Princeton, delivered his lecture on Robert Browning recently in Philadelphia in the Young Men's Christian Association Hall. He was introduced by the Rev. Charles Wood, pastor of the Walnut Street Presbyterian Church, who said that he knew a story about Browning which he doubted if even such an authority as Dr. van Dyke was familiar with. It was the story of a young woman engaged to a British officer. When she found out that he was not acquainted with the poetry of Robert Browning she immediately broke the engagement. Six months later the officer presented himself and asked to be examined on Browning. She found that he had read all of "The Ring and the Book," knew the plot of "Paracelsus" and could recite the greater part of "Sordello." Six weeks later Robert Browning himself gave away the bride. Dr. van Dyke made no allusion to his ignorance of this story until the close of his introductory remarks. He reviewed the great influence of Browning, attested even by the separation of families. Then he paused, and, turning to Dr. Wood, said: "Here follows in my manuscript the story which Dr. Wood has told."



GLOUCESTER CATHEDRAL.

companion to that "History of Renaissance Architecture in England," by Mr. Reginald Blomfield, which is published in the same form.

RUDYARD KIPLING'S LATEST HERO.

From McClure's Magazine.
 The life of Second Lieutenant Walter Setton followed its appointed channel. His battalion, nominally efficient, was actually a training school for recruits, and to this he, written, acted and spoken many times a day, he adjusted himself. When he could by any means escape from the limited amount of toil expected by the Government he did so, employing the same shameless excuses that he had used at school or Sandhurst. He knew his drills; he honestly believed that they covered the whole art of war. He knew the "internal economy of his regiment." That is to say, he could answer leading questions about coal and wood allowances, cubic footage of barrack accommodation, canteen routine and the men's messing arrangements. For the rest, he devoted himself with no thought of wrong to getting as much as possible out of the richest and easiest life the world has yet made; and to despising the "outsider"—the man beyond his circle. His training to this end was as complete as that of his brethren. He did it blantly, politely, unconsciously, with perfect sincerity. As a child he had learned early to despise his nurse, for she was a servant and a woman; his sisters he had looked down upon, and his governess, for much the same reasons. His home atmosphere had taught him to despise the terrible thing called "dissent." At his private school his seniors showed him how to despise the junior master, who was poor, and here his home training served again. At his public school he despised the new boy—the boy who wore a colored tie when the order of the day was for black. They were all avatars of the "outsider." If you "got mixed up with an outsider," you ended by being "compromised." He had no clear ideas of what that meant, but suspected the worst. His religion he took from his parents, and it had some very sound dogmas about outsiders behaving decently. Science to him was a name connected with examination papers. He could not work up any interest in foreign armies because, after all, a foreigner was a foreigner and the rankest form of "outsider." Meals came when you rang for them; you were carried about the world, which is the home counties, in vehicles for which you paid. You were moved about London by the same means; and if you crossed the Channel you took a steamer. But how, or when, or why these things were made, or worked, or begotten, or what they felt or thought or said or who belonged to them, he had not, nor ever wished to have, the shadow of an idea. His lack of imagination was equalled only by his stupendous lack of curiosity.

married to a man of some social position, is persuaded by injudicious friends to take part in amateur theatricals. Her head is so turned by the experience that she thinks seriously of abandoning her home, where she has lived happily with her husband and her baby, and taking to the road as a professional actress. In the end, however, she very sensibly changes her mind and stays where she belongs. Now this is all simple enough, and no great art would be required to make it plausible. It would take considerable art, however, to make it interesting. Unfortunately, Professor Matthews does not succeed in making it either interesting or plausible. In the treatment of his heroine he falls into one of those traps that even the experienced novelist lays for himself now and then. Though he describes his heroine, or, rather, allows her to be described by her husband and by her friends, as a brilliant and fascinating little creature, she appears in her own actions and speech to be extremely superficial and tiresome. "Why," says the doting Brookfield on one occasion, "she is always getting a care and attention from waiters and car porters and men of that sort—an attention quite different in kind from that they pay to other women; and she enjoys that, too, although she probably hasn't really looked at any one of them enough to identify him five minutes after." Among her accomplishments is her knowledge of the French language. "You speak it in real Parisian," says one of the characters, the most curious Frenchman that we have as yet found in literature. Such specimens of French as we find in the book, by the way, are delightful examples of perfectly translated English. "Did you notice that undulating walk of hers?" says another admirer, Mr. De Ruyter, the novelist—observe the pun—who figures in so many of Professor Matthews's pages. "She seems simply to swim across the room." The picture of Mrs. Brookfield engaged in swimming across the room is indeed edifying. Equally fine is the report which the reference brings out from Mrs. Jimmy Suydam, who, according to Professor Matthews, is a great personage in New-York society. "Perhaps she learned to swim at Narragansett," said Mrs. Jimmy, with a hard little laugh. "It seems she made Evert Brookfield swim after her." This is a very fair example