

last ten days. He stayed at Benavente for two nights, occupying himself with desk work of all kinds, and abandoning the pursuit of the British to Bessieres and Soult. The great "coup" had failed; instead of capturing the expeditionary force, he could but harass it on its way to the sea. Such a task was beneath his own dignity; it would compromise the imperial reputation for infallibility, if a campaign that had opened with blows like Espinosa, Tudela, and the capture of Madrid ended in a long and effectual stern-chase. If Bonaparte had continued the hunt himself, with the mere result of arriving in time to see Moore embark and depart, he would have felt that his prestige had been lowered. He tacitly confessed as much himself long years after, when, in one of his lucubrations at St. Helena, he remarked that he would have conducted the pursuit in person, if he had but known that contrary winds had prevented the fleet of British transports from reaching Corunna. But of this he was unaware at the time; and since he calculated that Moore could be harassed, perhaps, but not destroyed or captured, he resolved to halt and turn back. Soult should have the duty of escorting the British to the sea; they were to be pressed vigorously, and, with luck, the Emperor trusted that half of them might never see England again. But no complete success could be expected, and he did not wish to appear personally in any enterprise that was but partially successful.

What Napoleon "confessed," according to this fragment, provides a fragile enough basis for Mr. Oman's cocksure assertion. It is odd, too, that it has not occurred to him that the job of pursuing Moore was one which Napoleon might merely have considered within the capacity of a lesser soldier than himself. Is it possible that Mr. Oman has rejected this hypothesis simply because it is not flattering to his national pride? But he is generally as impartial as he is workmanlike, and we have nothing but praise for the broad outlines of his scheme. In his first section he gives an excellently clear account of conditions in Spain, and especially at the court, at the time when Napoleon was beginning his encroachments upon the Bourbon dynasty in the peninsula. He portrays with few but effective touches the doddering old King, Charles IV; his vulgar and unscrupulous spouse, and their pusillanimous son, Ferdinand. He pays, of course, much attention to Godoy, and not only sketches the personality of the Prince of the Peace with a skillful hand, but exposes with penetrating judgment his share in the squalid situation at Madrid, of which Napoleon took such questionable advantage. The chapters summarizing Spanish affairs from the Treaty of Fontainebleau to the disastrous culmination of Murat's administration at Madrid, in the outbreak of the Second of May, are followed by four in which the geography of the peninsula and the character of the French and Spanish armies are luminously surveyed. The succeeding chapters, which embrace important episodes like the siege of Saragossa; Dupont's ill-fated campaign, with the capitulation of Baylen; Vimiero and the Convention of Cintra, Tudela and Corunna, are profoundly interesting, not only in their exposition of these and other highly significant events, but in their incidental elucidation of the general drift of affairs in Spain down to the close of Moore's campaign. Mr. Oman may not be eloquent, but at all events he is systematic, and gives us a full and instructive narrative, one obviously based on really intimate knowledge of the subject, and we await with interest the completion of his task. There are voluminous appendices, including some very apposite documents, and the maps are all that could be desired, which is more than we can say of the portraits. Though well printed, the book is carelessly bound, one of the maps having been badly cut in the trimming of the margins.

CHARLOTTE BRONTE.

THE VILLAGE GOSSIP AS COMMENTATOR ON HER WORKS.

The first volume in a new and complete edition of Charlotte Brontë's works has just been published by Dodd, Mead & Co. It is devoted to "Jane Eyre," it contains also "The Moors," an unpublished fragment, and it is provided with a prefatory note and an introduction by Dr. W. Robertson Nicoll, who will edit all the volumes in the series. There can never be too many editions of Charlotte Brontë, and we are always glad to see a new one printed as this is, in clear type, on good paper, and clothed in binding that is substantial and in good taste. The publishers have in this case done everything that could be expected of them. But of Dr. Nicoll as editor it is impossible to speak with the same cordiality.

In the first place, he characterizes the hitherto unpublished fragments which the edition is to contain as "not unworthy of her genius." If Dr. Nicoll really believes that he is justified in speaking in this manner about "The Moors," then he is, on his own showing, incompetent to speak critically of Charlotte Brontë at all. He informs us that this fragment was received from the author's husband, the Rev. A. B. Nicholls, and adds, "It was written during her married life, and is probably, though not certainly, the last thing she ever wrote." If she wrote these thirty-two pages when she was a girl they might be regarded with the good natured tolerance bestowed upon the crude experiments of youth. If she wrote them in her maturity they must be taken as indicating nothing less than a deplorable distortion of her genius, if not the complete collapse of her powers. In any case, it is unfortunate that so uncharacteristic and fragmentary a manuscript, deliberately left unpublished by the author herself, should now be included in an edition of her works.

The first chapter of "The Moors" introduces us to a prosperous, but hopelessly sordid interior. Mr. Moore is a blackguard (and seems

proud of it), and his wife is, in her way, quite as small souled. The scene between them in this chapter would be revolting if it had not all the marks of cheap caricature. In the second chapter a decent young man appears, and a very vulgar young woman, and the talk that ensues in this precious household is unnatural and stupid. The third chapter takes us into Mr. Moore's back parlor, which is "redolent both of tobacco and of brandy and water," but fortunately there are only nine or ten lines to it. If Charlotte Brontë had any intention of continuing "The Moors" in the same strain the interruption of her task can only be regarded as a merciful dispensation. In short, this fragment is so abysmally inferior that the publication of it now is an affront to the author's memory. Turning to Dr. Nicoll's editorial remarks, we are no more favorably impressed than by his inclusion of "The Moors."

We need not blame him unduly for talking on one page of William Caldwell Roscoe and on another of William Roscoe Caldwell, when presumably he means the same man, for this is doubtless only a slip of the pen, though it should have been corrected in proof. We can overlook, too, though it certainly is amazing, a sentence like this: "That the 'gay company' already referred to is the swan-like bevy of fine ladies



MARSHAL SOULT.
(From the portrait by Rouillard.)

whose entrance is pictured in 'Jane Eyre,' are the Sidgwicks, there can be no doubt." But we protest against being bored at this late day with tattle about the early reception of "Jane Eyre"—to say that "the honors of early recognition belong to a writer in the 'Examiner' and to G. H. Lewes" is to give the most uninteresting sort of "editorial" comment, to say the least—and Dr. Nicoll is no more illuminating when he takes to offering us what we suppose he would call reflections. Alluding to the attacks which have been made on "Jane Eyre" he says: "Here arise questions which are still freely debated, and into which I have no wish to enter." Nevertheless, he immediately adds: "Suffice it to say that the charge of coarseness is intelligible and perhaps not altogether without justification." This is refreshing indeed. But Dr. Nicoll can rise to greater heights. "Mr. Nussey had the distinction," he says, "of being the first to propose marriage to Charlotte Brontë, in 1839. Mr. Shorter has printed her reply [for which, of course, we ought to be enormously grateful], a reply which makes it clear that the lover had never touched her heart in the least degree. . . . Charlotte Brontë refused three proposals, and I think if James Taylor had been persevering enough he might have won her." What right has Dr. Nicoll for thinking anything of the sort? What business is it of his whether Charlotte Brontë refused three proposals or three hundred? Is it really the editor of a famous figure in literature that we are supposed to be reading, or is it a village gossip, discoursing to a parcel of congenial tabbies over tea and tating?

The International Congress of the Historical Sciences will be held in Rome during the April of next year. Three hundred persons, "The Athenæum" says, have already inscribed their names as supporters of the congress. In giving the reasons why April in Rome is preferable to October the circular states that, apart from climatic differences between the spring and the autumn, the preparatory labors for the congress will be so long and arduous that they would oblige the committee to spend all the hot summer in Rome if the congress were held in October.

SHAKESPEARIAN STUDY.

AN ANALYSIS OF FIVE OF THE PLAYS.

SHAKESPEARE'S PLOTS. An Essay in Dramatic Construction. By William H. Fleming. Octavo, pp. ix, 467. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

Mr. Fleming's aim in this study of five of Shakespeare's plays has been to "present the rhetorical perspective, the balance between the minor parts and the plays as complete and perfect works of dramatic art." The usual method of detailed study, scene by scene, act by act, he thinks, takes from the student any conception of a drama as a work of art the primal quality of which is unity. Consequently he has created an elaborate classification of the essential parts of a drama, which he considers to be these: Introduction, growth, climax, fall, catastrophe. There are a main action and different subactions. Then there is the plot, "which binds these divisions, actions, together, and makes the play an organic whole." There are, in nature, and hence, as Mr. Fleming thinks, in every work of art, unity, variety, complexity, order, comparison, contrasts, complement, principality, subordination, balance; and derived from them, grouping, organic form, symmetry.

transition from the sub to the main action, the tragic subaction having been completed. With all this doctrinaire classification, Mr. Fleming's analyses are not without sympathy, and not without insight and appreciation of Shakespeare's qualities. But it is not a kind of criticism that will generally enhance the understanding or appreciation of the plays.

FICTION.

A BEGUILING STORY OF LOVE AND CRIME.

MICHAEL FERRIER. By E. Frances Poynter. 12mo, pp. 307. The Macmillan Company.

MORCHESTER. A Story of American Society, Politics and Affairs. By Charles Datchet. 12mo, pp. 480. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

THE LATE RETURNING. By Margery Williams. 16mo, pp. 205. The Macmillan Company.

The author of "Michael Ferrier" begins her story in an unconventional and not very promising manner, lapses then into convention, and presently resumes in her opening key, with the difference that she is much better than her promise. Miss Poynter has, indeed, produced an unusually beguiling novel. The traits of her hero that threaten to make him uninteresting she succeeds in placing where they belong, in a subordinate position, and the reader thinks only of Michael's experience as a lover. That experience ought, one would say, to be fairly, if not altogether, happy. The man is a poet and the heroine is suited to him. Both, it may be remarked, make very agreeable company. But there are other factors to be reckoned with in the plot. If Helen Umfraville has a tower of strength in Miss Beavan, her sole protector in London, Michael has a more than doubtful friend in Lady Mills, a well drawn type of mingled kindness and selfishness, gentleness and cruelty. Michael's temperament has much to do with the curious tragedy toward which the narrative is directed, but Lady Mills bears her share in the matter, and so the book is strengthened where, at the outset, we expected it to be weakest, in dramatic balance. This novel is an interesting specimen of the average clever fiction of the day. It is nowhere really remarkable, either in characterization or situation, though the last journey of the hero and heroine together discloses a certain inventive faculty in Miss Poynter. But it is an arresting story, adequately told; the men and women in it are clearly enough differentiated, and are indubitably alive. There is understanding of human nature in "Michael Ferrier," and there is what we are happy to say is, after all, frequently encountered in the average clever fiction to which we have just alluded, a distinctive literary and imaginative quality.

"Morchester" is a spirited, well meant and plausible study of life in a minor American city. It is rather too long for its plot, and it has more explanatory talk than good art justifies, but it holds the reader's interest to the end. It is more a story of business than of sentiment, a romance of selfish greed, a sermon on "the squeeze" in politics and affairs. The hero is, of course, a fine fellow, a young Bayard of a manufacturer, struggling in a net spun by the powers who want what is his. He is saved by a beautiful girl, a creature as sagacious as she is charming. Remaining femininely in the background, she defeats unholy schemes, furnishes the sinews of war, and maintains the effective watchfulness of a guardian angel. Does the hero properly recognize her wise and lofty devotion? We leave the reader to find out. The women of the book are less closely and successfully studied than are its men, and there is a curious air of unreality about its sentimental passages. But this, we imagine, may be in accordance with the plan of the author, who appears to have had in mind chiefly the explication of modern forces in practical life. One of his characters puts a question which the current of the story illustrates, if it does not answer: "Will the strong man play the game according to the natural law, the inherited instincts to which he owes his being, or according to an inspired precept?"

Vivacious, picturesque and "scrappy" in effect, "The Late Returning" is an odd mixture of realism and lime-lit melodrama. It is superficial, it is formless; a thing of "touch and go," it is almost wholly unpleasant from cover to cover. It deals with that incidental platitude, a revolutionary uprising in a little state of tropical America. When we note that it has no local color to speak of, and as little plot, and add that its chief characters are stupid where they are not vague, it would seem that the story was sufficiently described. Yet, if superfluous, it is not without merit in that it has here and there the accent of life. The principal testimony to the truth of the assertion of feminine authorship is the prodigious number of "swear words" peppering its pages—a favorite device of the gentler sex in the production of would-be masculine fiction.

Mr. Thomas E. Watson's history of France does not commend itself to the reviewer of "The London Academy": "Instead of trying to put himself in his characters' place and to get at their real motives, he appears to view them from a standpoint of lofty superiority. He almost apologizes for their limitations. 'Poor, ignorant folk,' he seems to say. 'My readers and I, who are so vastly enlightened, must not expect too much from them.' That is the attitude: a contemptuous patronage which is both unscientific and exasperating. We want portraits of the Merovingians, not caricatures."