JOHN EVELYN.

Mr. Austin Dobson's New Edition of the Famous Diary.

THE DIARY OF JOHN EVELYN. With an Introduction and Notes by Austin Dobson. In three volumes. Illustrated. 8vo, pp. lxxii, 355; vi, 439; vi, 429. The Macmillan Company.

The publishing policy which nowadays so often gives the reader an old book instead of a new one, is never more deserving of praise than when it gives us perfect editions of the celebrated diarists or letter writers, gossips like Pepys, Walpole, Fanny Burney and John Evelyn. In no other enterprises are the resources of modern bookmaking exploited more legitimately or to better purpose. Illustration, which is sometimes an intrusive affair, becomes a downright boon when it is a question of matching a text full of comment on historic figures and places with portraits and views reproduced from historic prints and paintings. The art of annotation justifies itself, if anywhere, in a new edition of a classic of personalia. Finally, there is always the chance that the editing of one of these useful reprints will be placed in the hands of a man born to do just such work. This new edition of Evelyn offers a case in point.

Mr. Dobson is himself a little dubious about what the readers of his "Evelyn" may think of his right to overhaul the narrative of that curious type of "an age of extraordinary events and revolutions." His repute has all been gained by researches in the literature of the eighteenth century, and Evelyn belongs to the seventeenth. But Mr. Dobson is quite right in his surmise that "the qualities which make for research in one epoch are equally serviceable to another; nay, that those qualities may even be quickened and intensified by a special enthusiasm for the subject in hand." Besides, he has been an attentive reader of Evelyn for many years. The upshot of the matter is that he shows in his treatment of this book all the skill and sympathy which he brought to the editing of Fanny Burney, a year or so ago, and he has done his work on this latter occasion in a manner to put all lovers of the sage of Wotton in his debt. It must be added that the publishers have spared no pains to give the text, as he has prepared it, a substantial and attractive setting. Paper and type are just what they ought to be, the portraits in photogravure, and the views in halftone, are equally well printed, and the volumes are convenient in size, light in hand, and neatly bound in red covers. The book is meant not only to look well upon the shelf, but to be used, and we do not doubt but that it will commend itself to those who know Evelyn well, and to many new readers.

The notes in this edition call for only slight comment. We may best describe their merit in saying that they correct, or judiciously amplify, matters of fact. Mr. Dobson is not a commentator to air more or less appropriate opinions at the bottom of the page. What he has to say about Evelyn he says in a long introduction, which is also a good condensed survey of the diarist's career. On one point the author of this essay strikes a note which might, perhaps, lead to misunderstanding. The Diary is not, says Mr. Dobson, "a psychological document, making intimate revelation, conscious or unconscious, of its writer's personality." We wonder if the critic does not here allow himself to be diverted by the equable tone of Evelyn's pages from a realization of the fact that the diarist was not, after all, a type of spiritual complexity? In other words, might not Evelyn have talked a great deal more than he actually does talk about his inner emotions, and still have left us a portrait of himself in no wise differing, as regards essentials, from the one that we possess? The candor of Pepys means so much to us largely because Pepys was a man of a certain sort. Evelyn was nothing like so racy a type, and if he had been put upon the rack he could not have exhibited qualities of soul other than those which lie upon the surface of his Diary. There is a phase of his character which the man's native goodness and dignity somehow seem to keep his biographers from estimating at quite its true value. They instinctively shrink from calling this staid courtier a dilettante, no doubt because the word connotes, in the earlier English memoirs, a certain levity, or, at least, a certain detachment from public affairs, and Evelyn was not by any means an indifferent patriot. But hard words break no bones, and, indeed, there is nothing really harsh in the conception of John Evelyn as something of an epicurean, a delicately selfish lover of the things of the mind.

To be in Evelyn's company is unquestionably to share, frequently enough, in grave and even noble emotions. As we noted only a few weeks ago, in discussing Mr. Wheatley's new edition of the Diary, there are subjects like the Great Fire in London, the character of the Second Charles and the diarist's love for his wife or for his "deare, sweete, desireable" Mary, which he touches with so strong or so tender a pen that it is impossible to think of him save as of a man of deep nature. Yet, when all is said, the Diary is chiefly interesting as the record of a clear-eyed, calm observer, a man who may be never so close to great events but that he will still remain the disinterested onlooker—a man with the temperament of a dilettante. So far are we from thinking the less of him for this fact that we really find in his generally dispassionate attitude a special charm. He may on occasion be a little vehement. The dilettante is necessarily a critic, and there were divers opportunities offered to Evelyn to indulge, in the privacy of his diary, in criticisms forcible and warm. But mostly the picture that he draws is drawn in limpid light, without prejudice, without violence. He is one of the most restful of the famous diarists, one of the most beguiling on a long winter evening, and the reader who enjoys losing himself by the fireside in the byways of history should find a gift after his own heart in Mr. Dobson's three beautiful volumes.

BULWER AT WORK.

His Conscientious Method of Writing a Novel, a Poem, or a Play.

Bulwer Lytton, it appears, had a high opinion of the craft to which he belonged, stoutly upholding the intellectual dignity of the novelist's and story writer's occupation. T. H. S. Escott recalls, in the current number of "Chambers's Journal," a conversation wherein, at some length and with much enthusiasm, Bulwer "dwelt upon the clearness and tenacity of brain necessary not only for the invention of plot and underplot, but for keeping the one general motive of the whole steadily in view, as well as in developing the characters, each in his or her natural place, to work the machinery of the narrative." It is added that the novelist himself always considered "Zanoni" to be his best work.

"When," Bulwer used to say—Mr. Escott quotes—"I meditate a novel, a poem, or a play, whose chief scenes are in a particular country and whose characters belong to certain periods, I begin, so far as is practicable, by steeping myself in the local color of the lands wherein the creatures of my imagination live and move. If this can be done by actual residence in the country itself I make my habitation there. There, too, I generally discover persons I can press into my service by making them unconsciously sit for their portraits. In other cases I pass days, weeks, months, sometimes even years, among the most authentic documents I can lay hands upon. But in either case I seldom attempt to transfer to paper my matured and circumstantial impressions till some time after the assimilation of the material has been completed. I then write the thing piecemeal, sometimes not more than a hundred lines at a sitting, putting down the pen, or more often the scribbling pencil, directly I feel the freshness of thought passing off. Later on I review the results of each separate writing and redact them into paragraphs, chapters, scenes or acts, as the case may be." These are statements calculated to astonish the authors of modern "commercial fiction."

In some comments on Macaulay the Talker Mr. Escott quotes Brougham's saying that Melbourne objected to Macaulay in the Cabinet because he did not like "ten parrots and the chime of bells." He quotes, also, an estimate of Macaulay's talk given him by Froude—"a conversational cannonade with seldom a pause for fresh ammunition."

A characteristic glimpse of Carlyle we find in these reminiscences:

Some opening remark of his had encouraged me to talk to the Sage. "I dare say," he said, "people have told you that I am a regular bear of a man. That is only when I do not get exactly what I like, or am out of sorts. But when there is no cold on the liver of me, and everything goes exactly as I would have the people upstairs order it, I am little less than an angel."

Among the literary stories recently told by Mr. Escott is one of Douglas Cook, of the London "Saturday Review," and his contributor, Mrs. Lynn Linton. "Has he not," she would say, "stormed at me, cursed me, on one occasion actually hit me, on one of his bad days?"

HENRY IV, KING OF FRANCE AND NAVARRE.
(From the portrait attributed to Pierre de Moustier.)

"OVER, FORK OVER."

From Notes and Queries.

"Over, fork over," is the motto of the Cuninghame family, whose arms display a shake fork sable on a field argent. Nisbet has the following as to the origin of the motto and arms:

Frederick Vanbassan, a Norwegian and a very confident genealogist, wrote a manuscript (now in the Lawyers' Library) of the rise of some families with us, among whom is that of the Cunninghams, whose first progenitor he calls Malcolm, the son of Friskine, who assisted Prince Malcolm (afterward King, surnamed Canmore) to escape from Macbeth's tyranny, and being hotly pursued by the usurper's men, was forced at a place to hide his master by forking straw or hay above him; and after, upon that prince's happy accession to the crown, he rewarded his preserver, Malcolm, with the thanedom of Cunningham, from which he and his posterity have their surname, and took his figure to represent the shake fork with which he forked hay or straw above the prince, to perpetuate the happy deliverance their progenitor had the good fortune to give to their prince.

LETTERS AS PROPERTY.

Andrew Lang, in The Illustrated News.

As far as I can see, it is not only the receiver of the letters who can publish them after the demise of the writer, it is any one who has got the manuscript into his legal possession, any one who is its "lawful proprietor." This is a pretty lookout, if such be the law of the land. Every one will be obliged to write letters of the most dull and formal character, keeping authenticated copies, as the Scot did when he was courting. It is too late for me to be cautious; I have already "given myself away," like everybody else. But yesterday, in a letter, I casually described an eminent foreign savant as a "prize ass." That is not my sincere and well-considered opinion of the distinguished theorist, but, if I understand the law, anybody who can get legal possession of the epistle may publish it as soon as the breath is out of my body. Moreover, many poets have written verses "perhaps a little gay," not meant for publication. May holders of the manuscripts publish them? If so, I am sorry for the widows of the poets. Poor ladies, they have to blush for their joyous lords.

MALAGA.

From The London Outlook.

Out between the sea and city the white dust is flying,
Down in the dusty garden great roses blow,
Dust on every tawny hillside where the wind is sighing,
And deep in every rutty path where the mules and bullocks go.

For the dust of Moor and Roman and of empires older,
All dead pride and glory of the stormy ancient days,
Lies along each street and valley, blows from hill and bowlder,
Wraps the sunset city in a dusky golden haze.

Spain that once was famed and splendid, fame all turned to powder,
Dried and dead her greatness like the brick-burnt hill,
Where the burning sunsets fade away while winds grow louder
Under this translucent sky blowing as they will.

LITERARY NOTES.

It is hinted that Mr. Marion Crawford's forthcoming novel, "Prima Donna," is to be a sequel to his "Fair Margaret," a story in which the heroine's adventures were left unfinished in a most tantalizing manner.

Mr. Crawford is engaged with Professor Giuseppe Tomassetti in writing a "History of Rome in the Middle Ages." Professor Tomassetti is the custodian of the remarkable Colonna Archives. The work is said to be based on hitherto inaccessible material. The first volume is now on the Macmillan press.

One of the persons who "cannot get to believe that William Shakespeare wrote the plays attributed to him" does not think that Dr. Bleibtren is correct in assigning their authorship to the Earl of Rutland. He advances the theory that William Stanley, Earl of Derby, was their author, basing this theory on a reference in two contemporary news letters, dated 1599:—"Therle of Darby is busyed in penning comedies for the common players." This ingenious person observes:

The great scholar, as well as poet and observant student of life in England and Italy, who wrote those plays cared no more for them after they had been thrown off his mind and he had seen them acted than the modern journalist does for his ephemeral leaders, though some of the best work in contemporary literature, because spontaneous.

That these manuscripts fell somehow into Shakespeare's hands is certain, and he was able to appreciate, if not their literary, at least their market value, and sold them to the printers, having had time to make those personal interpolations which are considered proof of his authorship.

Leo Tolstoy's second paper on "Shakespeare and the Drama" is pronounced in England to be as narrow and illogical as the first. "Notes and Queries" says of it: "We recognize in the later instalment, however, the note of personal vanity always to be expected in such utterances. The whole constitutes a painful lesson on human littleness."

According to Tolstoy, the first cause of Shakespeare's fame was that "the Germans wished to oppose to the cold French drama, of which they had grown weary, and which, no doubt, was tedious enough, a livelier and freer one. The second cause was that the young German writers required a model for writing their own dramas. The third and principal cause was the activity of the learned and zealous æsthetic German critics without æsthetic feeling, who invented the theory of objective art, deliberately rejecting the religious essence of the drama."

The volume on Shakespeare in the "English Men of Letters" series has been prepared by Professor Walter Raleigh, and it will appear this season.

The presentation of the Nobel prize to Giosuè Carducci, the eminent Italian poet, took place recently at his villa in Bologna. The poet, who is now helpless from a paralytic seizure, uttered a few words of thanks, with tears running down his cheeks. It is doubtful if he will ever work again. Queen Margherita, who has done many a kind and noble thing, not long ago bought the Carducci villa and the poet's library and other effects, to the end, we are told, that in his old age and suffering he should not be troubled by sordid questions of ways and means.

In the recently published Life of Sir Charles Fox Bunbury, the grandnephew of Charles James Fox, there is an amusing glimpse of Coleridge derived from Miss Fox, sister to the third Lord Holland:

She was one of a party at Bowood, of course when last century was young. Coleridge was there also, the bright particular star of the gathering. At dinner some one happened to mention the literature of Germany. Whereupon the poet launched into a prosy dissertation on the subject. He held the company—with the persistency of the Ancient Mariner himself—with his interminable harangue. Nobody else could get a word in edgeways. When the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing room Coleridge was still unabashed and unexhausted. His poem "Christabel" was then unpublished, but he volunteered graciously to roll up the curtain, and went through the whole of it to the consternation of the company. Then comes the unkindest cut of all. He used to prime himself for society by large doses of laudanum.

The writings of Captain John Smith, the records of his travels, adventures, observations and discoveries, are to be brought out here by the Macmillan Company in two handsome volumes, printed on antique paper, in form like the recently published volumes of "Coryat's Crudities." This edition will be printed from the original editions and will contain facsimile reproductions of all the rare maps and illustrations in the originals, including the portraits of the Duchess of Richmond and Pocahontas. The edition is a limited one.

The quaint portrait of Pocahontas is not quainter than Captain John's letter to the Queen of England describing Powhatan's "most deare and well beloved daughter, being but a childe of twelve or thirteen yeers of age, whose compassionate, pitiful heart, of desperate estate, gave me much cause to respect her."

After some six weeks fatting among those Salvage Courtiers, at the minute of my execution, she hazarded the beating out of her owne braines to save mine, and not only that but so prevailed with her father, that I was safely conducted to James towne where I found about eight and thirtie miserable poore and sicke creatures, to keepe possession of all those large territories of Virginia. Such was the weaknesse of this poore Commonwealth, as had the Salvages not fed us we directly had starved. And this relieife, most gracious Queene, was commonly brought us by this Lady Pocahontas.

An edition of Mr. H. C. Chatfield Taylor's biography of Molière is to be brought out in London. The book has just won for its author the decoration of the Legion of Honor.

A book of caricatures by Gustave Doré has just been published in Paris. They were drawn from various types of individuals observed by him during the winter of 1871, when he had sought refuge with some friends at Versailles from the troubles of the Commune.

MR. BAGOT'S "TEMPTATION."

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: While thanking you for your notice in your issue of December 21 last of my forthcoming novel "Temptation," may I correct a statement likely to lead to a misunderstanding concerning the nature of that novel? Its plot, scenery and characters are not, as stated, laid in mediæval Italy, but in the Italy of our own day. I am, yours faithfully,

RICHARD BAGOT.

Rome, January 11, 1907.