

Literary News and Criticism

An Anecdotic Study of Balzac as a Man.

BALZAC. By Frederick Lawton, M. A. With thirty-two illustrations. Svo, pp. xi, 388. Wessels & Bissell Company.

While the dedication to Rodin of this new biography of the author of the Comedie Humaine explicitly states that the sculptor's much discussed statue "first tempted the author to write this book," the opening phrase of the preface is in reality the explanation of its genesis and tendency. Mr. Lawton does not agree with the late M. Brunetiere's theory, on which his study of Balzac was written, that a knowledge of an author's life is not necessarily important to a just appreciation of his work.

This book is, then, a biography first of all, with constant reference to its reflection in its subject's works. It betrays a wide acquaintance with the large Balzac literature already in existence, yet it does not lack originality of viewpoint, which occasionally leads the author into the quicksands of personal experience and work which he upholds-it leads him into conjecture. Surely, such a suggestion as the following is far fetched:

In the "Shagreen Skin," which embodies some of Balzac's youthful experience, the hero was saved from committing suicide after ruining himself by an accident which forms the thread of the story. Possibly, during the bankruptcy proceedings (in re the failure of Balzac's venture in the printing business), there may have been a fit of despair which urged the insolvent printer to end his own troubles in the Seine.

If Mr. Lawton scarcely succeeds in giving the Human Comedy a new interest, and hardly proves the closeness of the relationship between it and its author's own experiences in life, he certainly furnishes still another anecdotic life of Balzac. This latest of his biographies is, indeed, no blind hero worshipper, but he covers his hero's follies of character and action with the cloak of charity for the sake of his genius-his vanity, as great as that of the elder Du-

days, now vanished. Mr. Mansfield even goes back to the days of the Romans in his search for origins, and, in the case of parks, to those of the Druids.

In a book covering so vast a period the information given is of necessity fragmentary, concentrating on the great periods, and presupposing a measure of general historic knowledge in the reader. There is an introductory chapter on the evolution of French gardens, and another, rather sketchy, on the royal hunt; the general introduction, too, is decidedly "general," because it attempts so very much in so very brief a space, but the chapters that follow are packed with information that is worth while, even though gradually the palaces usurp the major part of space at the expense of the parks and gardens. Mrs. Mansfield's illustrations in color, wash and line are too well known to require comment.

THE LUST OF WAR

An Instance of It in the Italian Renaissance.

THE ROMANCE OF A MEDICI WAR-RIOR. Being the True Story of Giovanni Delle Bande Nere, to Which is Added the Life of His Son, Cosimo I., Grand Duke of Tuscany. A Study in Heredity. By Christopher Hare. With photographic frontispiece and sixteen other illustrations. Svo, pp. 315. Charles Scribner's Sons.

This book has a good title. Its central figure was above all things a creature of romance, one of those portentous types whose adventures go appropriately enough into epic verse. The next best form for a biographer to choose in dealing with their exploits is just such a form as is employed by the lady who calls herself Christopher Hare. She tells the story of Giovanni Delle Bande Nere more or less in historical wise, but also with the touches characteristic of the novelist. She dramatizes his career, portrays him as a hero and sketches him in his family life with a certain freedom that adds atmosphere to fact.

ROUND ABOUT PARIS

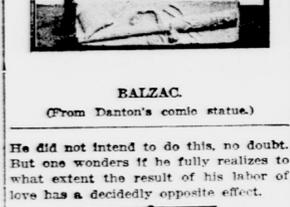
Residences of French Rulers in and Near the City.

ROYAL PALACES AND PARKS OF FRANCE. By Francis Mitton. With many illustrations reproduced from paintings made on the spot by Blanche McManus. In box, svo, pp. viii, 371. Boston: L. C. Page & Co.

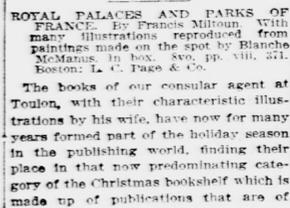
The books of our consular agent at Toulon, with their characteristic illustrations by his wife, have now for many years formed part of the holiday season in the publishing world, finding their place in that now predominating category of the Christmas bookshelf which is made up of publications that are of

lasting interest and service, not for the moment only.

Mr. and Mrs. Mansfield have crossed and recrossed France in search of material for their volumes. Castles, chateaus and cathedrals of North and South, of Normandy and Brittany, Touraine and the Loire region, Burgundy, Navarre, and the Spanish border have been made more familiar to us in their pages, and, strange as it may seem, they make it clear in this latest volume of theirs how much even one who knows his Paris tolerably well may still have to learn of its minor, forgotten abodes of royalty. The Louvre, Tuileries, Luxembourg, Elisee, Saint-Cloud, Versailles and Chantilly are perfectly familiar to us all, but much that is new and of interest may be found here concerning the minor abodes of French rulers, such as Marly, Saint-Germain, the Chateau de Maintenon, Bagatelle, Maisons-Laffitte, and about their palaces of earlier



BALZAC. (From Danton's comic statue.)



BALZAC'S VILLA, LES JARDIES. (From a photograph.)

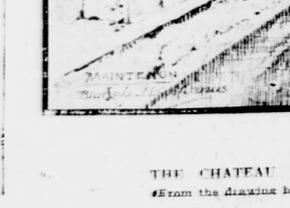
mas, his fanfaronnades of his amazing productivity and his appalling destitution, his posing, his mystifications, his search for a rich wife who need be neither beautiful nor young, his attitude toward his mother, his affair with Mme. de Hanska, his lifelong avidity of money. "His impetuosity," says Mr. Lawton very justly, "reduced him to regard every goal of his ambition as having merely a cash value." And as for "L'Inconnu," he agrees more or less with Brunetiere's dismissal of the affair as a case of the vanity of a noble lady watching that of a man of letters of middle class origin, who posed as a son of nobility. "In ripper age," Mr. Lawton agrees, "his attachment to Mme. Hanska was a bizarre medley of flattered vanity, artistic appreciation of beauty, and cold calculation. His epistles reek with each and all of these."

While appreciating the significance of the mature Mme. de Berny in the early life of Balzac, Mr. Lawton dismisses her rather briefly, and of the novelist's sister he tells us far too little. It is here, as well as elsewhere, that one recognizes anew the solid merits of an earlier study of Balzac, Mrs. Sandys'. But then, with such a wealth of literature as the subject to draw upon, additional studies of him, biographical and critical, must needs be matters of selection and condensation, unless they are allowed to run to many volumes. To return to Mme. Hanska for a moment, Mr. Lawton has another surmise, that of the birth of a child before their marriage, a surmise for which he adduces indirect proof. He might also have included that hugely entertaining letter of explanation which Balzac wrote to M. de Hanska, in answer to one from that worthy Polish gentleman which, like the lady's own part of the correspondence, is lost to us, but whose tenor can be easily surmised.

One of the welcome features of this book is the attention it pays to Balzac in caricature, reproducing several amusing specimens. Of the author's "get-rich-quick" schemes, to use a current expression, plenty is said, and of his magnificence in his early days, his coach-and-six, his secretaries, his rivalry in his play with Dumas and Lamartine, his professional envy of Victor Hugo, his vanity that took seriously the hoaxes played upon him by his friends, as when they persuaded a girl of the opera to pose as a duchess enamoured of him. On another occasion:

Alphonse Karr, as a joke, crowned him with flowers, and Balzac, in all good faith, completely accepted the compliment. Around him the laughter broke out, and Balzac, and at length he found it with volleys that shook the room.

Mr. Lawton also prints an amazing "poem" written by Balzac for the publisher of the "Shagreen Skin," which is worthy of a place among the curiosities of the publishing business. In brief, the book is delightfully anecdotic, it collects



THE CHATEAU DE MAINTENON. (From the drawing by Blanche McManus.)

those told of cats and dogs, because the young pachyderms had encountered on their way a herd of wild elephants. Mr. Stebbing gives an anecdote of a subaltern, just "out," who, on the occasion of his first tiger hunt, was put in the last and worst position, where, supposedly, he could at least do no harm, but who began to shoot almost before his seniors had reached their stations. The hunt was spoiled. When asked by his fuming colonel what he meant by such behavior, "Sir," he answered, "wretched in smiles, 'You told me to shoot only at tigers. I got three; how many did you get?' And he told the truth. It is the forester and naturalist who has the last word in Mr. Wilmot's pages:

As a rule, the man who passes his life among the big game, attacks it in his youth with the ferocity born of primal instincts and of novelty. As he grows older he becomes more merciful, till at last intimate acquaintance conduces to sympathetic affection. He may still feel his blood boil with the excitement of a tiger hunt, but for the rest the wild beasts afford a companionship that is fully recognized in the feeling of solitude experienced when living in a forest devoid of animal life. To read by day on the ground the circumstances and occupations of his neighbors, their passions and dangers, supplies that added interest which brings vigor to the continuous labor of the forester.

The illustrations of Mr. Wilmot's book are excellent.

NOBLE PORTRAITS

Two Hundred Years of Brilliant Engraving.

FRENCH PORTRAIT ENGRAVING OF THE XVIIITH AND XVIIIITH CENTURIES. By T. F. Thomas. Illustrated 4to, xviii, 211. The Macmillan Company.

An honorable place has been kept waiting for this book. It deals with a subject of great interest to the print collector which has not hitherto been exhaustively surveyed for its own sake, and Mr. Thomas is unmistakably qualified, both by his knowledge and his enthusiasm, to give us the needed treatise. He proceeds with admirable system, indicating the origins of the French school of engraving, fully portraying the masters who conferred renown upon it, and carrying his narrative down through the eighteenth century to the final extinction of a great tradition amid the disasters of the Revolution. He is enthusiastic, as we have said, but not uncritical. Good judgment marks his observations, and the book is not only balanced in form but thoroughly sound in substance. His two score illustrations are of rare merit. They supply, so far as reproductions can do so, the qualities of the originals, and the subjects have been chosen so discreetly that to read this book is very like poring over a portfolio of masterpieces in the company of a helpful connoisseur.

It was worth while for some pains to be taken with this volume. The French portrait engraver, like those masters of mezzotint who flourished across the Channel in the eighteenth century, were artists of large abilities and notable traits of individuality. Even more than their English brethren, they left the stamp of creative art upon their work. This observation especially applies to the founders of the school. A master like Nanteuil is, indeed, to be reckoned with as a purely original force. His

INDIAN JUNGLES

Forestry and Shooting in King George's Empire.

FOREST LIFE AND SPORT IN INDIA. By Scintill Eardley-Wilmot, C. I. E., late Inspector General of Forests to the Government of India. Illustrated with photographs by Mabel Eardley-Wilmot. 8vo, pp. xi, 224. Longmans, Green & Co.

The two volumes here under discussion are both the work of officials of the Indian Forest Service, both of them lovers of the jungle, of nature, as well as of sport. The spirit of the lonely, silent wilderness is in the pages of both, its fascination, the growing strength of the grip it gains upon the soul and the

mind of him who makes it his habitation and studies its moods, its stealthy sounds and their meanings. In Mr. Wilmot's book all this is described at greater length. Mr. Stebbing deals with it only sufficiently to suggest the atmosphere of the jungle and its joys, the environment and its difficulties. He is the forester on a shikar, the sportsman seeking game. Mr. Wilmot is, first of all, the naturalist who delights in what he has observed of the ways of game, big and small, while hunting, and in this regard he adds many an interesting page to our knowledge of the denizens of the wild. But here, again, one may turn with profit to his colleague, as in the case of the wily panther.

One cannot help arriving at the opinion that in the course of centuries of contact perhaps the animal has assimilated some of the habits and ways of thought and shall we add, the craft and guile of man himself; man as represented by the Indian shikari in the wilder tracts of the country, one will necessarily have a close acquaintance with the habits of the animals living in their vicinity. In our centuries during which the hunter and panther have been living side by side, it is absurd to conclude that the animal has assimilated a considerable amount of man's guile and craft, or that he may be considered to be a greater cunning.

A curious parallel to this passage is found in Mr. Wilmot's observations on the tiger, which, however, strike a colder and deeper note in the psychology of the wilderness:

As a rule the jungle trails will not readily give information as to the whereabouts of a tiger, and it is not till he passes the hunter's camp, or the neighborhood, and they ask for help of set to work to remove him; thus, the killing of plough or the capture of a tiger, once the hunter while the tiger that contents himself with gathering about the camp, and the latter goes and comes amongst the herdsmen and their cattle, and is sometimes even seen by the night watchmen as he prowls around the fields in the hope of seizing a meal from amongst the trespassing herds of deer.



GIOVANNI DELLE BANDE NERE. (From the bust by San Gallo.)

that he fought for this or that master, and always for himself, for the glory of success. The military affairs of sixteenth century Italy are kaleidoscopic. It is enough to note that Christopher Hare handles them with considerable skill, keeping Giovanni in the centre of the picture without distorting her perspective. She gives us, too, a vivid sense of the soldier's absorption in his campaigns and the pathos of his married life. He loved Maria Salvati, but not as devotedly as she loved him, and the poor wife had to balance the rare glimpses of him that rejoiced her soul with long periods of loneliness and neglect. In her treatment of these matters the author still further demonstrates her ability to realize historical personages in a simple, human way. Her portraits have vitality. She shows the same effectiveness in her account of Giovanni's son, Cosimo, clearly exhibiting his craftiness and his gifts for intrigue. The biography of the son, coming after that of the father, spells, in a measure, anti-climax, but it makes a suggestive contrast, useful to the student of history. This book is a clever contribution to the study of a period which abounded in paradox.

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A FOREST ROAD IN BENGAL. (From a photograph by Mabel Eardley-Wilmot.)

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into the bargain a grave simplicity of feeling which that period was to lose. Mr. Thomas rightly accompanies his appreciative analysis of this weighty craftsman with a few biographical notes, showing with what aplomb Nanteuil moved through the artistic life of his time. It is not surprising to read that he was honored by the King and received in the salons with marked respect. The statesmen and courtiers of Louis XIV sat to him as to a great painter. As painters, in a sense, the French portrait engravers did their work, developing qualities of line, form and tone which lifted their plates to a plane on which they were comparable to portraits in color; but they were true, of course, to the principles of a special technique, and Mr. Thomas is nowhere more luminous or more interesting than in his exposition of the significance of the burin pure and simple. He dis-

resting that with a little more power the author might have made it one. The book opens upon scenes of no great novelty—the shabby quarters of a blind violinist, the Parisian theatre in whose orchestra he earns his meagre living—and as the different characters are introduced they promise nothing particularly fresh. But then there comes a curious interlude, pointing to the existence in Haarlem of an ancient Dr. Meisterlinmer, who is occupied with things dark and terrible, and presently we are watching one of the strangest struggles ever set forth in fiction. Meisterlinmer, Saint-Ambin and the close of Augustin de may give sight to the musician, having a mysterious lantern with which to accomplish the miracle, but overlaid upon this purely scientific motive are issues involving the hearts of two women, and, what is more, a philosophy of good and

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