

Literary News and Criticism

A Worker in the Cause of Universal Peace.

MEMOIRS OF BERTHA VON SUTNER. Authorized Translation by Nathan Haskell Dole. With Portrait. Two vols. 8vo, pp. xlii, 448; x, 443. Boston, Ginn & Co.

While the greater part of this engaging frank autobiography is devoted to its author's service and achievements in the cause of universal peace, it describes so interesting a private life that it will attract many readers to whom Frau von Suttner's life work makes an as yet but indifferent appeal.

Bertha Sophia Felicitas, Countess Kinsky of Chlinic and Tettau, the future author of "Die Waffen Nieder," was born at Prague on June 9, 1842, the daughter of a member of one of the great noble houses of the dual monarchy, who died soon after her birth, leaving his widow in decidedly moderate circumstances.

Frau von Suttner's reminiscences of her infancy and childhood contain no suggestion of precocity; she was just a child with the interests and pleasures of her age, growing up in the atmosphere of her birth, yet not entirely of it, because, as she takes care to explain, her mother was not "born" in the continental aristocratic sense, lacking the all important sixteen ancestral quarters.

When she came to the "backlash" period—"tapper" is the graceful English word for what Henry James has more felicitously called the "awkward age"—Bertha von Kinsky had the usual dreams and plans and aspirations. Above all, she confesses, she adored the military. Throughout the earlier parts of her autobiography this future apostle of peace speaks with wonder of the tardiness of the awakening of her zeal for the cause of Makenta, Solferino, Sadowa, even, Sedan, Metz, the siege of Paris and later the Turko-Russian war, all these made no impression upon her whatever; the reports of their horrors, her very share in the making of that, which in the days before the invention of antiseptics was Europe's international service to the wounded, failed to awaken her.

She had her own problems, it is true, problems serious enough to preoccupy a young girl. Her mother's small competence had dwindled considerably, thanks to the countess's belief in a "system" by which she tried to secure her own and her daughter's future at the expense of her husband's. Bertha was given to many proposals of marriage she rejected, several from old men, and rejected at once, or entertained for a while and declined ultimately. She and her mother had begun, moreover, to travel, for it had been discovered that the girl had an exceptionally promising voice. Mme. Viardot heard her, but refused to teach her until she had learned the rudiments of singing. Informing her, moreover, that a young woman of her social standing and possibilities was foolish to think of a professional career. In 1867 Bertha von Kinsky went to Paris, and there was inscribed as a pupil of the great singing teacher of the day. Her name and title gave her the entrée of the best circles wherever she went, bringing her the acquaintance, among many others, of the ex-Queen of Mingrelia, who had acknowledged the suzerainty of Russia over her principality in order to protect it against recurrent Turkish invasion. In 1870 Bertha went to Berlin to study the German method of singing, and there met a young princeling, a member of one of the greatest families of Europe, who, possessing a glorious tenor voice, was like herself, planning an operatic career. Their engagement followed, but the young man died suddenly on his way to New York, where he was to have made his first public appearance.

In 1873 the mother and daughter had reached the end of their financial resources. Enough was left to support the mother alone, but all hope of further study had to be abandoned. Moreover, as the author states with her engaging frankness, the prospect of an operatic success after thirty was not great. So she accepted a place as governess and companion to the daughters of Baron and Baroness von Suttner, in whose house she met their son, her future husband, Arthur Gundaccor von Suttner. The old baron had ambitious plans for her son, and disapproved of the attachment. However, the couple made a runaway match of it on June 12, 1878, and went to the Caucasus to seek their fortune. During the nine years of their life spent there they taught languages and music, the husband acted as bookkeeper in a mill, and ultimately the two began to write for publication, each independently. Their life during that time, says Frau von Suttner, resembled that of the French émigrés, who during their exile earned their living in many humble ways without losing caste. The Princess of Mingrelia saw to that.

Frau von Suttner had an established literary reputation when the couple returned to Austria in 1885. They visited France in the following year, and from that visit may be dated the beginning of her interest in the universal peace movement. It was Renan whose words made a potent impression on her in the course of a conversation between him and Ludovic Halévy at which she was present. Halévy had expressed a longing for the day of "revanche," but Renan excitedly took the other side. He did not conceal his horror for national wars in general, but as a thinker he was especially pained by the hostility between his nation and the "nation of thinkers."

It was in 1887 that the slight leaven began to work. In that year Frau von Suttner learned with surprise that the world's peace movement was already so far advanced as to have crystallized into the International Peace and Arbitration Society. The writings of its founder, Hodgson Pratt, decided her future course, whose first fruit was the now famous novel, "Die Waffen Nieder." None of the German editors to whose periodicals Frau von Suttner had been contributing for years dared to undertake its serial publication; that was "quite out of the question in a military country" and "large classes of their readers would take offense." So the story was published in book form at

once, with the well known result. She says:

"From this quite unexpected success I draw only one conclusion: The idea which permeates the book was to the taste of the public. I am ready to believe that the book against war, appearing at the beginning of the 70's, when the intoxication of victory still prevailed in Germany and the grateful clamor for revenge still raged in France, would have had no success whatever. The cult of arms, too, had to attain a certain dimension whereby it has since then harassed the peoples under its heavy yoke, it had to have brought the world to a brink of ruin in order that the watchword 'Away with Weapons' might find so powerful an echo."

Henceforth the autobiography becomes almost exclusively a history of the growth of the propaganda for universal peace, of the foundation of societies in different countries, of international congresses and conferences at Bern, Brussels, Antwerp, Budapest, The Hague, of progress and hopes and disappointments, and of prominent men of all countries met in the course of constant travelling in the service of the cause. The autobiography ends with the death of Herr von Suttner in December, 1902, and with a confident prophecy of ultimate victory. There is a supplementary chapter on the author's visit to this country in 1908. The translation is well done and there is a good index.

THE IMPOSTOR

A Gallery of Entertaining Portraits.

IMPOSTORS. By Bram Stoker. Illustrated. 8vo, pp. 38. The Strand, Walton Company.

Mr. Stoker has written an entertaining and informing book on a subject which, as he observes in his preface, could be made to yield many more volumes besides this one. He does not concern himself with the ethical aspect of imposture for many purposes, but confines himself to a statement of the facts in each case so far as he has been able to collect them from various sources.

The volume opens with the cases of some of the many pretenders to thrones, or at least to royal birth, who have come near success—Perkin Warbeck, the pseudo-Sebastian of Portugal, the many false Dauphins, the self-styled Princess Olive, who claimed legitimate descent from the Duke of Cumberland, brother of George III, and included in her forgeries a marriage certificate between that monarch when still Prince of Wales and the Fair Quakeress, and, finally, one of the Russian pretenses, Anasthe, who passed himself off in Montenegro as the murdered Czar, Peter III of Russia. A man of great gifts, he won the leadership of the little principality, and governed it wisely. Denounced by Catherine the Great, he was imprisoned, but the Montenegro's need of his strong hand in an impending war with Turkey was so great that he was liberated at the suggestion of the Russian representative and reinstated as regent, which post he held until his assassination in 1774 at the instigation of the Turks. In the case of the pseudo-Dauphin, Mr. Stoker stops with the first Naundorff, the original pretender, but this case is an exceptional one, because this claim has become hereditary, the present generation of Naundorffs having only recently taken legal steps to procure the recognition of their French citizenship, which, if granted, would involve a tact official recognition of their claimed Bourbon descent. On the other hand, new evidence comes just come to light, in the shape of a letter written by the Duchesse d'Angoulême, the Dauphin's sister, denouncing the original Naundorff as an impostor.

In the case of a trio of magicians, Paracelsus, Cagliostro and Mesmer, Mr. Stoker points out that we must distinguish between deliberate impostors and, as in the case of Paracelsus, earnest scientific investigators who, all innocent, had unfounded accusations of imposture brought against them by the ignorance and superstition of their contemporaries. Still worse is the case of the poor woman, burned by thousands, who were charged with witchcraft. The worst impostor in the book, by the way, a creature to whom the author does such justice as can be done with the resources of denunciatory English, is Matthew Hopkins, the "witch finder," who earned a living by discovering witches for a fixed fee. One is glad to know that he was ultimately tortured as others had been tortured through him, and hanged. Mr. Stoker, by the way, identifies Cagliostro with Joseph Balsamo, a point upon which doubt has been thrown recently by Mr. W. R. H. Trowbridge, in his life of that "magician." The inclusion of the Wandering Jew as an impostor who never even existed is ingenious, but in reality he belongs to the field of legend. The many women who have disguised themselves as men, the better to be able to fend for themselves in various walks of life, cannot be called impostors. They were simply masqueraders. The case of Mlle. de Maupin, made famous by Gautier, is an exceptional one, and the Chevalier d'Eon has justice done to him here. John Law and the Tichborne claimant are not forgotten.

The strangest story of all in this book of many strange careers is, however, retained for the end. In "The Hisley Boy" Mr. Stoker tells an amazing tradition which he has unearthed in old Hisley, in Buckinghamshire, the childhood home of Queen Elizabeth. According to this tale, locally believed in but hitherto unknown to England at large, Elizabeth died early in life, a boy being substituted for those in charge of her, who may well have dreaded the anger of Henry VIII had the truth been confessed to him. Mr. Stoker reviews the tradition at length in the light of history and contemporary documentary evidence, and offers an ingenious theory to the effect that even if the substitution really took place it only resulted in placing on the throne of England another descendant of Henry VIII, but an illegitimate one.

JOHN HARE'S STORY OF IRVING.

From a recent address.

One of the fallings charged to his account was that of extravagance—that he did not know the value of money. It is quite true, he did not know the value of money—by himself; but he knew its value to others. He knew it was to be a sovereign, and he gave it to them with a lavish hand.

Once, not long before his death, playing a three-nights' engagement in an unpretentious Midland town, his habit was to give to the theatre (a very short distance from his hotel) in the same dilapidated fly. The fare is, the conveyance was shabby, the driver old, poor and worn out. At the conclusion of the evening, as he entered his hotel, Irving said to the landlady, "Have you paid the cabman?" "Yes, Sir Henry," "What did you give him for himself?" "I gave him half a crown, Sir Henry." "Give him a sovereign," was the reply. "I do not drive," the driver very well and he does not." This little anecdote goes to prove that the man who seems to me to be

THE WORLD'S BANKS

A Brilliant French Treatise on Finance.

Paris, December 30.

M. Raphael-Georges Lévy, who is now recognized as a leading authority in banking and monetary questions, has written a comprehensive treatise and history of finance, entitled "Banques d'Emission et Trésors Publics," just published by Hachette, at an opportune moment. M. Lévy's opinions on financial matters have the same weight as those of his friend, M. Paul Leroy Beaulieu, in regard to economic problems.

The volume contains a trustworthy, impartial and, above all, scientific history of the banking systems of the principal countries of America and Europe. Banks of issue and their relations with the public treasury, establishing national credit, are considered from every point of view. The results obtained by the system of a state monopoly of the issue of banknotes limited to one institution, as is the case in France, Belgium, Holland, Spain and Austria-Hungary, are compared with the methods of countries which confine the privilege to a limited number of banks, as in England, Germany and Italy, and again with the system of according the right of issue to an unlimited number of institutions on condition of their fulfillment of certain legal requirements, as is the case with the national banks of the United States.

Problems such as that which is now faced by the New York Associated Banks, and, in fact, the entire banking and currency system of the United States—the inadequacy of which was so clearly set forth by Mr. MacVeagh, Secretary of the Treasury—are analyzed with great care by M. Lévy, and each feature is compared in a practical way with the methods prevailing in France, England, Germany, Japan, Brazil, Argentina and other countries. The following figures show in a striking manner the amount of banknotes in circulation in each country in proportion to the bullion reserve funds on hand or banks of issue in seven countries at the close of the year 1908. The figures represent the numbers of millions of dollars.

United States—700 currency, against 185 bullion reserve.
France—1,330 currency, against 600 bullion reserve.
England—140 currency, against 300 Bank of England bullion reserve fund.
Germany—518 currency, against 230 bullion reserve.
Austria-Hungary—460 currency, against 860 bullion reserve.
Italy—250 currency, against 200 bullion reserve.
Russia—630 currency, against 670 bullion reserve.

It will be seen that the United States leads all the other nations in having a currency circulation in greater proportion to the specie reserve. England and Russia are the only countries whose bullion reserves are greater than the currency in circulation. The Bank of France overtops all the other banking institutions with its figures, showing that in 1908 its banknotes in circulation amounted to 1,330, as against its specie reserve fund of 600.

INTERESTING PEOPLE

Literary History and Literary Biography.

Andrew Lang, in The London Morning Post.

"It is the writer's conviction," says Professor Schelling, of the University of Pennsylvania, in a new book, "that until the history of literature cuts loose from the tyranny of biography, as history at large has long since done, the public has little to expect toward the realm of the higher aims of literary study." Now I want to know how many people wish to "realize the higher aims of literary study," whatever they may be, who do not read biographies. I think, to enjoy the best literature, to take pleasure in it, to have it, as they say, at one's finger ends. How far this is from being a widely felt want, the public has little to expect from authors. But there is also a great deal of pleasure (and the whole affair of literature is to give pleasure) in knowing about the lives of the men and women who wrote the books we read. They were interesting people. I do not want to peer over the wall of private life. The lives between the amiable historian of Frederick the Great and his angelic wife, and the poet of the dying Keats to Miss Frances Brawne; the bequest of only the second best bed to Mrs. Shakespeare (née Hathaway or Whately); the ample of what we can do without, but it is highly interesting to know how a great author lived and thought; what sort of man he was among other men; what sort of boy he was; what sort of sportsman he was; what he liked; and all about the making of him. If it were not interesting why should so many men of genius have told us so much about themselves? Not to mention Rousseau, who told us what we should want to know, and see little reason for believing, not to mention St. Augustine (and I wish he had told as much more), Thackeray is always delightful when he tells us what he himself knows, or what he has learned from his autobiography; and it is much to be regretted that if Homer ever wrote his autobiography, it is lost. Of course he never did, nobody knows anything about his life and adventures.

The memoirs which Shakespeare did not write would have been worth more than several of his early plays. The letters of Dr. Johnson, Scott and Macaulay are monuments of the best literature in the world. The great Samuel, except in the "Lives of the Poets" (biography again), never wrote anything worth a hundred pages of Boswell's immortal biography. Nobody reads any of the doctor's works, except the aforesaid "Lives of the Poets," "Rasselas" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes." The life of Dickens, though that of a man who is an invaluable commentary on his works, and is worth a wilderness of "Little Dorrits." We can read Isaac Walton's lives of men whose works are usually content to skip. A thoroughly well informed life of Swift cannot be written; so much the better, but his autobiographical fragment, "The Journal to Stella," outweighs a number of "Conducts of the Allies" which Dr. Johnson said he did not pine for an autobiography of William Wordsworth; we have quite enough of that in blank verse. No one of Shelley could be written because Shelley himself did not know the facts—nobody knew them; and there will never be an authentic life of Byron. But what Hoggarth wrote about Shelley is a poem in every way, and it is the Eternal Undergraduate. A true biography of the author of "Piers Plowman" would be very like a true biography of Mr. Carlyle; the history of literature wants and cannot get it. Professor Hoggarth, in I, I Plowmen, I admit that any man who "abandons his mind to it" would continue Piers, but I agree with Monsieur Hoggarth that they agree

only one author of "Piers Plowman," because I cannot think it likely that four same person did abandon his mind to it. He pretended to love the country, which he liked as much as Mr. Carlyle liked Craigenputtock, and he was not the rich and fat, as a squire, but a poor man, and not thinking well of the poor.

Scientific professors of the history of literature wish to provide a supply of literary history without biography, and there is no demand except among other people for young persons who desire professional chairs. Notoriously the general public cares infinitely less for literature than for information about the makers of literature.

People who are all agog when they hear that he once lodged at the house of a rosy French Huguenot wigmaker. I learn on excellent authority that the same wigmaker had married the sister of his religion, was excommunicated from his tabernacle because he was a night rake, and after, not a constant, but a frequent, rather than a consistent, frequenter of the theatre. The problem at once flashes on the mind: Did the society of Shakespeare corrupt the once austere French perituler and Puritan, his landlady? Or did Shakespeare forsake her? "The people have a right to know," but permit nox alia.

If the demand for personal details is not gratified, then except persons of culture prefer to read new books or essays about old books than to read the old books themselves. They would rather have heard La Fontaine talk about Baruch, than to read Baruch himself. Thackeray, Leigh Hunt, Lamb and Macaulay about the comic playwrights of 1615-1700; and who reads the plays of the playwrights? In Thackeray's lecture on Shakespeare he says: "I have read two or three of Congreve's plays over before speaking of him." What a concession to research! He does not say: "I have read two or three of them, but I have not read the rest." Thackeray did not desire to pursue his studies—manifestly he was bored to desolation. "It is a weary feast, that banquet of wit beneath him to read, very soon it really so weary? Monsieur Jules Lemaitre, I think, in his capacity as a dramatic critic, said of a new play that it was like an *un bon repas*. The Duke of Marlborough's diamond necklace (£7,000) from the same august and gaudy hand. I am able to add a lady of London, the late daughter of the Lady Churchills asked the innocent question: "Why is the necklace marked with the initials W. C.?" So Lady Louisa wrote to Walter Scott: "Here is an addition to the list of your diamonds." Thackeray began by informing the most literary audience in London that "it is of the men and their lives, rather than of the books, that I speak." "I speak to you." It would have been useless to speak of the books; it was enough to speak in the style of angels about the venerable chestnut such as Mrs. Bracegirdle's legacy, which she had inherited from the Duchess of Marlborough's diamond necklace (£7,000) from the same august and gaudy hand. I am able to add a lady of London, the late daughter of the Lady Churchills asked the innocent question: "Why is the necklace marked with the initials W. C.?" 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