

LITERARY NEWS and CRITICISM

Poison and Its Uses in Seventeenth Century France.

MADAME DE BRINVILLIERS AND HER TIMES, 1679-1675. By Hugh Stokes. With a frontispiece photogravure, and fifteen other illustrations. 8vo, pp. 315. 25c. John Lane Company.

What gives Mr. Stokes's study of the criminal career, trial and execution of Mme. de Brinvilliers its true value is his circumstantial study of the times in which she lived and of the part poison played in their dynastic, political, financial, social and family affairs. It was an age of murder by poison; an age also of the suppression of the truth in cases of the royal family or the great noble houses of France. Fashionable physicians were tactful and ready to take the

step in his book, which is of uncommon interest, especially, as has already been said, as a study of the morals of the society of that time.

THE LAW OF THE LAND

Beginnings of the Law, Bar and Bench in America.

A HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN BAR. By Charles Warren, of the Boston Bar. 8vo, pp. 312. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.

While chiefly of value to lawyers, Mr. Warren's book contains much of interest to the layman, who can glean from it some information concerning the development of American law under American

Changing conditions brought up new problems day by day. The liability of gas companies for negligence, the responsibility of streetcar companies for accidents, marine and fire insurance, patent cases, railroad and corporation law—all these problems sprang up during these thirty years and were provided for. Mr. Warren interweaves with his history of the bar the stories of great American lawyers and their most important cases.

THE SULTAN'S REALM

Turks and Subject Races, Present and Future.

TURKEY AND ITS PEOPLE. By Sir Edwin Pears, Knight Bachelor of the Bulgarian Order of Merit, Knight of the Greek Order of the Saviour, 8vo, pp. 41. George H. Doran & Co.

It was Sir Edward Pears who sent the first news of the Bulgarian atrocities of 1877 to the "London Daily News." His knowledge of the Turkish Empire is the fruit of nearly forty years' residence in the country, and he tells it here in a manner that is uncommonly informing, both in its larger outlines and in the infinite details of racial traits, the relations of Christians and Moslems dwelling together, their differences and modus vivendi in daily intercourse. The Turks he praises, as all do who know them well, but he does not forget to trace the causes that at times turn them into the fiends of international detestation. They are gradually dying out, owing chiefly to a scourge that rages among them almost unopposed by science. Indeed, they would have disappeared from European Turkey years ago but for constant immigration, chiefly from the Caucasus. They are a mixed race, the author tracing the energy and ability of the great Sultans chiefly to the white blood that came to them through their captured or purchased Christian mothers. What he has to say of the superstitions shared by Moslems and Christians under the Crescent forms curious reading. Both fear the evil eye; the Turks have an uneasy feeling that Christian churches have some kind of thaumaturgical power, and in many places they join the glances in veneration of ancient Christian tombs.

Pan-Islamism, according to this weighty authority, is a purely religious movement, which hardly touches Turkey at all, and is active almost exclusively in Africa, where its progress is closely watched by the white powers. In Turkey itself, the Koran, like the Bible among us, now has its higher critics, who question, and question unrelentingly, its long established infallibility.

Sir Edwin compares the progress of Bulgaria with that of Japan in its celebrity and scope. He hazards no prediction of the future of Macedonia, but everywhere in the realm, in Asia Minor as well as in Europe, he reports steady progress toward modern conditions.

There is little room for doubt that this is one of the best, most reliable, and most exhaustive works on its subject. It is marked by a fine impartiality, whether it deals with Turks, Greeks, Albanians or Armenians, among its notable merits being the author's unflinching eye for the common humanity of all these races in the danger zone of Europe. Last, but not least, Sir Edwin has a happy knack of illustrating his generalizations with concrete instances.

CONSERVATION.

A Popular Statement of a Vital Problem.

CHECKING THE WASTE. A Study in Conservation. By Mary Huston Gregory. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. 315. Indianapolis: The Bobbs-Merrill Company.

This is an instructive general survey of the natural wealth of our country, of its waste in the past and present, and of the measures to be taken if that waste is to be checked, and resources to be made to yield revenue to the full without further diminution, or, as is the case of coal, with only an irreducible minimum. Conservation, the author points out, is not a matter of government regulation, or of the ultimate greater profit of large corporations, but of us all, and we all, when properly informed, she holds, can influence the movement toward this end.

She deals with soil, forests and water, so closely linked together in this matter of protection, re-enrichment, reclamation and yield, with coal and other fuels, with our minerals, our animal foods, and the parts played by insects and birds on farms and in orchards. Our fire waste begins in the forests, is continued in our buildings, and is found also in our reckless use of fuel, the waste here begin-



AN EXAMPLE OF WASTE OF FUEL AND LUMBER IN A MAINE FOREST. (From a photograph in "Checking the Waste.")

ning, in the case of coal, with wasteful methods of mining, and being carried on in the prodigious loss in the generation of power and the escape of unused gases.

The author traces our wasteful ways to their origin in a small population among natural resources that appeared inexhaustible. The time has come, not only to check the continuation of this waste, but to repair its results where that can be done, and to add to our natural wealth by the reclamation of arid lands by irrigation, and of swamps by drainage. The uses to which we can put our abundant water supply for purposes of transportation have but just begun to receive the attention they deserve—in short, the author deals with her subject thoroughly, in all its aspects, including,

last of all, the human waste, the loss of productiveness caused by preventable ill health, by disease, by individual inefficiency. She closes with a chapter on the preservation and extension of the natural beauties of this country—another aspect of practical, material value.

The book, while thorough and scientific, is what its publishers claim it to be, popular in treatment. It presents the cause it champions clearly and forcefully.

LOUISE D'ALBANY

The Chequered Life of a So-Called Queen.

THE LAST STUART QUEEN: LOUISE, Countess of Albany; Her Life and Letters. By Herbert M. Vaughan, F. S. A. Illustrated. 8vo, pp. 253. Brentano's.

There is ever a glamour of romance hanging about the story of the unfortunate House of Stuart, though, truth to tell, its sons when coldly contemplated seem a sorry company. The last of them was, no doubt, as the Young Chevalier, a fascinating figure for an historical novel, and a being whom his unucky adherents considered worth dying for—but in later days what a poor creature was this Charles Edward! It was in those days that the flabby, fish-eyed, elderly gentleman of disreputable habits led to the altar, in a little Italian hill town, that very pretty girl of nineteen, Louise Maximilienne Caroline Emmanuelle, Princess of Stolberg-Gedern. To this lady—who was never, by the way, a queen, except to the fanatics of the White Rose—Mr. Vaughan devotes an unnecessarily bulky book. It is another of the many current biographies which largely depend for effect on a flavor of scandal; the greater part of it is given over to the sentimental life, together with Louise and her poet lover, Vittorio Alfieri. It is not a very edifying tale.

So far as long descent went Louise was a true fairy princess and a poverty-stricken one. Her father, Prince Gustave Adolphe of Stolberg-Gedern, was a brave soldier, who died in battle as the commander of one of Empress Maria-Teresa's regiments when his eldest daughter, Louise, was only five years old. Her mother, who was a princess owning as many quarterings as her husband, had to depend on the bounty of the Empress, but managed to lead a life of frivolous amusement and to marry off three of her girls more or less prosperously. There is nothing to show that Louise, for one, objected to her marriage; the biographer goes so far as to say that she was "supremely happy."

Her husband's royal rank appealed to her sense of pride, his marked attention to her seemed a gratification she was having another woman she cordially disliked and about to settle in a country which she ardently longed to avoid. In spite of her lord's blighted and puffy face, in spite even of an odor of brandy which was perceptible notwithstanding all the perfuming perfume, it does not appear that Louise was seized with any immediate feeling of repulsion; on the contrary, she rather liked this splendidly dressed middle-aged prince with the broad blue ribbon and his agreeable stories of past adventure. An intense thrill of personal importance must also have possessed her as she, Louise of Stolberg, had been hidden to inscribe her name in the marriage register as "Queen of Great Britain, France and Ireland" whilst she gathered from her attentive husband's remarks that she might expect to be received with real honors in Rome.

As for the so-called Queen, what little queen could be more winning? A pair of sparkling black eyes shone from under a mass of beautiful blond hair. Her complexion was daintily pink and white, she was slender and graceful and had a taste for literature and art. When the party arrived in Rome she was warmly greeted and heartily admired. But her dreams of regal state promptly fled; the pompous Pretender could not be taken seriously as a monarch either by the Papal court or Roman society. Louise nevertheless was happy; she loved Rome, her "favorite of all the places in this world," she had many flattering friends, and Charles, for a year or two at least, was gentle and indulgent. He had more or less absorbing occupation in his efforts to be officially recognized as King in Rome, and he hoped for a Prince of Wales whose appearance would undoubtedly increase his political importance. Louise had no child; the Pope would not give him royal honors. Ever more sour and dour grew the Chevalier de St. George, and presently deserting Rome, he carried his young wife off to Florence.

There, knowing that his claims of royalty would have no effect upon the grand duke, Charles adopted the style of Count of Albany, and it was as Countess of Albany that Louise was thereafter known to the world. The imitation of a court was maintained by the Pretender within the walls of his palace, and his queen's social experiences were thereby much restricted. She accepted the situ-

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS.

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Molly Day, May 18th

A New Novel
By Maria Thompson Daviess, Author of *Miss Selina Lue*, &c.

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Molly is a widow, plump and merry and young. Molly loved Alfred Bennett in her debutante days; now he is coming home a distinguished diplomat and wants to see Molly in the same blue muslin dress (waist measure twenty-three inches) which she had worn at seventeen.

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BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS.

Imagine a better book on the subject, written in a simpler, less self-conscious style.

"LE SCARABEE SACRÉ"

A Novel That Is the Sensation of the Moment in Paris.

Paris, May 10.

"Le Scarabee Sacré," generally conceded to be the best and most daring work of Elsa Jerusalem, has been translated from German into French by J. W. Bienenstock and Claude Margelle, and is now published by Fasquelle. Under the guise of a novel, this is a profound, masterful study of one of the most painful social problems of our time. The central figure of the tragedy is a young woman, Milada Rezek, who is the natural child of an Austrian nobleman, but is kept in the east from grasp of her beautiful but depraved and alcoholic mother. Milada is born, brought up and "lives her life" in a soil of virulent muck that one might suppose would stifle all

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MADAME DE BRINVILLIERS ON HER WAY TO EXECUTION. (From a portrait in "Madame de Brinvilliers and Her Times.")

most delicate of hints. Their autopsies invariably showed "natural causes," or at least their reports were so discreetly worded as to be susceptible of more than one interpretation. Moreover, their sentence was still in its infancy. Alchemists flourished, and were even encouraged by the state. Colbert, for instance, establishing government laboratories for their use, in the expectation that their experiments would add new resources to the national industries. Fashionable paupers peddled poisons secretly, as to-day they occasionally sell wines, cigars and other luxuries on commission. A certain preparation of arsenic was currently known as the "powder of succession."

The French literature of the period contains many references to this way of removing husbands and wives, inconvenient princes and rich relatives. Of course, the trade in antidotes, in nostrums that insured immunity, flourished. Men of rank took an antidote every morning as a regular part of the day's routine. The poison most in use was "venin de crapaud." It consisted of the ptomaines of animals—toads by preference—that had been killed with sublimated arsenic, vitriol being added to make assurance doubly sure. France's foremost chemist, an honored scientist, Christopher Glaser, undoubtedly assisted Mme. de Brinvilliers in poisoning her relations.

Assassination by poison had been perfected in the Italy of the Borgias and the Medici. Catherine de Medici introduced it into France. Marie de Medici employed it constantly as a means to her ends. How subtle these poisons really were is an open question. Mr. Stokes holds that the seventeenth century knew many drafts and powders whose secret has been lost. It is more likely, however, that the gross feeding and drinking of those days, combined with the small knowledge of diagnosis of the medical profession, enabled the poisoners to employ crude mixtures that nowadays would be detected at once by their symptoms. It is likely, also, that the current custom of ascribing every sudden death of a prominent personage to this agency exaggerated the true state of affairs. Still, it none the less points to the prevalence of the habit, while the investigation begun by order of Louis XIV, three years after Marie de Brinvilliers's execution, revealed the existence of a state of affairs that was truly appalling. The sinister heroine of these revelations was the notorious woman Volsein.

The Marquise de Brinvilliers was convicted in 1676 of having, with her lover's aid, poisoned her father and her two brothers. The motive for the first crime was revenge, the father having obtained a "lettre de cachet" for the lover when the scandal became too great. It was in the Bastille that the man, an adventurer who called himself Sainte-Croix, became the pupil of a fellow prisoner, the Italian poisoner Exili. Mme. de Brinvilliers's father had been a rich man; the fortunes of her two brothers tempted her next. Her sister, grown suspicious, moved into the country and saw carefully to her cuisine. Sainte-Croix died suddenly, killed, according to tradition, by the fumes of his experiments with still subtler poisons. Among his effects was found a box of liquids and powders, with directions that it should be given to Mme. de Brinvilliers or burned unopened. The poisons it contained led to the woman's arrest. The case had many ramifications, and indirectly involved others of eminent standing, but the woman kept their secret to the last.

Mr. Stokes follows the trial step by step.

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conditions that is but slightly dealt with by the general historian.

We learn, for instance, from Mr. Warren that, contrary to a cherished tradition, the common law of England was far from generally accepted in the colonies:

It was never historically true that either in Massachusetts, Connecticut or Rhode Island the colonists recognized the English common law as binding *ipso facto*. So far from being proud of it "as their birthright," they were, in fact, anxious to escape from it, and from the ideas connected with it in their mind. The real fact is that during these years, 1620-1700, the colonists were making common law for themselves, and their usages and customs, and the expedients to which they were forced in order to adapt their rules of life to the surroundings and the times, gradually hardened into positive rules of law.

The lawyer was, moreover, held in low esteem by the colonists. In New England the theocracy ruled by the light of the Bible, in preference to that of man-made law; in Pennsylvania the Quakers opposed all contention, and in New York and the South merchants and land owners jealously sought to protect their own exercise of power. Royal governors interfered whenever they saw fit; in brief, conditions did not encourage the evolution of a trained bar until the middle of the eighteenth century, when commerce, shipbuilding, fisheries, the rapidly growing complexity of life, created a need of lawyers versed in law as a science. Many new contingencies arose, unprovided for by statute or local custom, and necessitated recourse to the common law for decisions. What precedents existed grew numerous and confusing. At the time of the War for Independence each colony had developed its bar of trained lawyers. They rendered important patriotic services, furnishing twenty-five of the fifty-five Signers of the Declaration of Independence, and thirty-one of the fifty-five members of the Federal Constitutional Convention, while in the first Congress ten of the twenty-five Senators and seventeen of the sixty-five Representatives were members of the bar.

Still, on the conclusion of peace the prejudice against lawyers as a class revived, partly on account of the great number of eminent loyalists the profession had produced, but also because of the popular hatred of everything English, including the English common law. The chief obstacle in the way of the development of the profession in the Republic was, however, the lack of any distinct body of American law, owing to the non-existence of American law books and law reports. Independence from English decisions must be had, and thus came into existence the body of American law reporters and law writers. Connecticut was the first state to pass, in 1785, a statute requiring the judges of the Supreme and Superior courts to file written opinions, in order that this might be laid "a foundation for a more perfect and permanent system of common laws" in the state. Four years later Ephraim Kirby made the first collection of cases, and published it as "Kirby's Reports."

The first American law professorship in America, and the second in any English speaking country, was founded by Thomas Jefferson in William and Mary College, in 1779—the "professorship of law and police." The first man to hold the chair was George Wythe. One of his first students was John Marshall, of whose decisions as Chief Justice it has been said that

The period of 1830-60 was marked by a development in state and federal law far greater than that of any other era in the legal history of the country.

whence the lady and her poet escaped with difficulty after a dangerous altercation with the mob at the barrier. A queer performance was Louise's unique appearance at the court of George III as the Princess of Stolberg-Gedern. It is recorded that she was well dressed and not at all embarrassed; that the good natured King talked to her a good deal on general topics, while Queen Charlotte



LOUISE D'ALBANY. (From a portrait in "The Last Stuart Queen.")

was less expansive. Louise was nearly forty then and nobody found her beautiful or even interesting. Walpole said she was "German and ordinary."

We have mentioned the needless bulkiness of this biography. Brought into smaller compass the narrative would be much more effective. We could easily spare the mass of Louise's commonplace and tedious letters. They can but rouse wonder as to the mental processes of the persons who discovered intellect in their writer.

CHIPS FROM A WORKSHOP

The Diversions of a Boston Bookman.

THE LIBRARIAN AT PLAY. By Edmond Lester Pearson. 12mo, pp. 301. Boston: Small, Maynard & Co.

Mr. Pearson is deeply versed in books; still more deeply in the shallowness in mind of many of their readers, and of not a few of their authors. The librarian's life is not a happy one, unless he be blessed with a sense of humor. Fate, destined Mr. Pearson for the Boston Public Library, compensated him with the gift of drawing much tolerant amusement from much exasperation of spirit. She also provided him with a safety valve in the shape of a weekly "column" in the Saturday issue of a Boston evening paper, to be read and digested, along with much other entertaining and improving matter, while the beans are baking and the brown bread is steaming for Sunday morning's breakfast.

Of the fourteen papers in this little volume twelve are transcribed from the column of their original appearance. The other two are printed here for the first time. It is with the patrons whose bookish friend, philosopher and guide Mr. Pearson would be, if they would only let him, that he discourses, rather than of the books which they call for, often by bewildering description of their appearance and contents rather than by title and author. He has also encountered and ejected the bad little boy who visits the library not to improve his mind, but to swap the good little boys or theirs with the month's magazines. And he has lived to encounter the bad little boy's father, who came to fight and stayed to approve.

The above were talking is allowed yields the greatest human interest—"heart interest," also, as it is called by the publishers of the best sellers. Here enamoured youth looks into the eyes that are the books, the arts, the academies that show, contain and nourish all the world. Here, also, undergraduate youth from Cambridge airs its inconvertible ignorance of English literature, while in the next alcove grumbles the disturbed man who turns half a library over to make still another book.

Mr. Pearson has invented—in theory at least—an "interest gauge," which is not a financial table of calculations, but an instrument for the registering of the measure of a reader's interest in what he is reading. And to the ranks of bookish collectors he adds two new specialists—him the "literary zoo," which contains all the famous animals of literature, Count Fosco's cockatoo and white mice, the horse that carried the good news to Ghent, Keats's nightingale and Poe's raven, Rip Van Winkle's Schneider, the jabbawock and the snark, the runcible cat and the black one, the cockalorum and the slithy tove, the Jumping Frog and Shere Khan, Rikki-tikki-tavi, and even the basket of the

imaginary mongoose that ate the imaginary snakes.

The author-collector specializes in the lethal weapons of literature—the rapier of Laertes, Mme. Defarge's pistol, the knife of Markheim, Bob Acres's duelling pistols, the laser that Merlin stole from King Arthur's court, and the Yankee at King Arthur's court, and many more. It is ingenious entertainment for the reader immediately catches the zest for this sort of imaginary collecting, and begins to add to Mr. Pearson's own.

ETCHING

Some Impressions of Old and Modern Types.

ETCHINGS. By Frederick Wedmore. (The Connoisseur's Library.) Illustrated, 4to, pp. xlii, 22. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

This addition to a good service is really addressed not so much to the connoisseur as to the collector who is just beginning to take an interest in a fascinating subject. Mr. Wedmore is a critic of the impressionistic order, a writer of likes and dislikes. But he has at least a warm interest in his theme, and treats it in such wise as to stimulate the reader. His illustrations are unusually good, and they include, happily, many fine things. Rembrandt, of course, heads the list. As frontispiece Mr. Wedmore reproduces one of the greatest of the master's portraits, the "Clement de Jonghe." This is the print over which Whistler was wont to hang entranced. Mr. Kennedy, the compiler of the monumental Grollier catalogue of Whistler's etchings, once showed him a particularly fine impression of this Rembrandt, and he wrote beneath it: "Without flaw; beautiful as a canvas by Tintoret—beyond which there is nothing."

Appropos of another of the great Dutchman's plates, the "Jan Six," Mr. Wedmore recalls that Haden bought an impression of it some years ago for \$1,750, and sketches Sir Seymour as flushed and excited over the struggle he had had to make to get the prize.

This author is infectiously appreciative of Rembrandt, and he writes to good purpose of the latter's contemporaries. On the other hand, passing to a modern Dutch etcher, to Bauer, he says that interesting but not at all remarkable craftsman perhaps too generous a tribute. He has a good saying on the etchings of Claude: "They are so classic and so eminently fresh; they have an air of grand seigneur, ceremonious, stately with the paucity of Nature; they are capable, besides, of an appeal so homely, intimate, and cheerful." Van Dyke, Tiepolo, Callot and other earlier types are justly traversed, and Mr. Wedmore is interesting on Goya, though, by the way, it is odd that while referring to Spain he should neglect the brilliant etchings of Fortuny. There are other unfortunate omissions. The pages on American etchers, apart from Whistler, make the slenderest sheaf and are absurdly inadequate.

In his dealings with the moderns Mr. Wedmore is, to tell the truth, less satisfactory as a guide than when he is describing the heroes of the past. The personal equation is very much to the fore, and one is conscious, also, of a certain complacency. Unmistakably, Mr. Wedmore attaches importance to his own opinions. One result of this is an exaggeration about some of his estimates; that of Zorn, for example, excites little sympathy. Mr. Wedmore refers in his preface to the fact that English appreciation of etchings has increased of late, and this, he adds, is "extremely agreeable to me, personally." The latter revelation is a little quaint, but it is doubtless well meant, and doubtless, too, this volume will help to stimulate a healthy taste. But we can

BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS.

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