SOME NEW BOOKS.

The Cyclopædia of American Biography.

The sixth and concluding volume of Appleton's *Cyclopædia of American Biography*, edited by JAMES GRANT WILSON and JOHN FISKE, is particularly rich in contributions important by reason of their subjects or rendered interesting by the reputation of the writers. Here we have, for instance, lives of George Washington, by Robert C. Winthrop (who also contributes a short biography of his ancestor, John Winthrop); of Daniel Webster and John Tyler, by John Fiske; of Martin Van Buren, by Dr. J. C. Welling; of Zachary Taylor, by Jefferson Davis; of Samuel J. Tilden, by Andrew H. Green; of Gen. George H. Thomas, by Col. Henry Stone; of John G. Whittier, by James Russell Lowell; of Sir Henry Vane, the Younger, by James Kendall Hosmer, and of the eminent American lexicographers, Noah Webster and Joseph E. Worcester, by Dr. Rossiter Johnson. We would also direct attention to the sketches of George Ticknor, of Jeffries Wyman, of H. D. Thoreau, and of the Winthrop, Van Rensselaer, and Van Cortland families. Altogether, this volume represents an amazing amount of well-directed research and criticism by the most competent hands. We may add that the supplement, comprising some thirty pages, and allotted to persons omitted in the body of the work, includes, curiously enough, the name of President Benjamin Harrison.

We observe that Mr. Winthrop, in his life of Washington, says but little about his subject's English ancestry, on the sufficient ground that several questions of genealogy remain unsolved. All we know with certainty is that John Washington (the great grandfather of George), who had resided at South Cave, in the East Riding of Yorkshire, came over to Virginia with his brother Andrew in 1657. He must have brought a certain amount of money with him, for he purchased lands enough to become an extensive planter. It seems, however, that the Washington family could not have held a high place among the Tidewater aristocracy; otherwise, the children would have had larger educational opportunities. Up to the age of 12 George Washington's only instructor was a parish sexton, and although subsequently up to his 16th year, when he finally left school, he had a somewhat better qualified instructor, he learned nothing except reading, writing, and arithmetic, with a little geometry and surveying. This at a time when contemporary Virginian youth of good family were sent abroad to study at the English universities or the Inns of Court, and at the very least matriculated at William and Mary College. In fine, George Washington as a young man was probably even more imperfectly educated than Patrick Henry, who had managed to master the rudiments of the law and to gain admission to the bar. He was, however, as well educated, perhaps, as most English lads intended for the naval or military service; and Mr. Winthrop reminds us that it was owing to his mother's influence that George refused a midshipman's warrant obtained for him by a half brother when he was fourteen years old. We may be sure that, had this warrant been accepted, George Washington would never have served under the Continental Congress. It is very improbable that he would have thrown up his commission to enter the service of the revolted colonies.

Mr. Winthrop's account of Washington's first inauguration is full of details which will prove especially interesting at this time. On the alleged indebtedness of Washington to Hamilton and others in respect of many of his letters, addresses, and official papers Mr. Winthrop does not touch. We think, indeed, that this biographical article, admirable as it is in most particulars, might have been more instructive had it been less conventionally eulogistic. So dense a cloud of myths has collected about Washington that it is needful, now and then, to cast a little shadow on his lineaments in order to bring out their human traits. No one will dispute that Mr. Winthrop's panegyric is true, so far as it goes, but does it contain the whole truth, and do we really gain anything by transforming a soldier and patriot into a demigod?

It seems to us that Mr. John Fiske also, in his review of the life of Daniel Webster, writes rather as an ingenious and eloquent advocate than as a disinterested historian looking back from the sobering distance of forty years. Thus the biographer essays to reconcile Webster's free-trade speech of 1824 with the protectionist policy which he supported in 1828, and afterward throughout his life. The fact, of course, is that the pecuniary interests of his Massachusetts constituents had shifted from one side to the other of the question of protection, and unless Webster had veered with them he must have abandoned a political career. But Webster was a lawyer before he became a politician, and the lawyer in politics is seldom a model of fidelity to principle. Mr. Fiske, indeed, admits that, in Webster's controversy with Calhoun regarding the nature of the union formed by the Constitution and the existence of a right of secession, the former's historical argument was in some places weak. He pertinently adds that the question was not so simple as it appeared to the disputants. The theories and intentions of 1789 were one thing, the facts of 1833 another. It is not so easy for the biographer to justify, as he tries to do, Webster's remaining in Tyler's Cabinet (after the Whigs of Massachusetts had declared Tyler no longer a member of the party), or to vindicate the motives which prompted the famous 7th of March speech. On the whole, the tenor of this article is anachronistic, for there are few surviving votaries of the once fervent Webster cult.

Like the author of the life of Tyler lately published in the "American Statesmen" series, Mr. Fiske shows a disposition to make amends to the tenth President for the depreciation and aspersion of which he has been for nearly half a century a victim. The present biographer points out that Tyler was in no sense a traitor to the Whig party. He had never pretended to be a Whig, and he was nominated for the Vice-Presidency on the Harrison ticket, with the avowed aim of winning support from the disaffected Democrats. Moreover, the Convention which nominated him adopted no platform. Tyler ran, therefore, on his record, and he had uniformly expressed the conviction that a United States bank was unconstitutional. The completeness of the victory which Tyler gained over the advocates of a bank is shown, as Mr. Fiske recalls, by the fact that not a word was said about the bank question in the Whig platform of 1844. It is true that Tyler failed to obtain the Democratic nomination in the last-mentioned year, but his friends and the supporters of his Texas programme were strong enough in the Democratic Convention to defeat Van Buren, and he managed by an outside nomination to coerce the Democrats into formally inviting him to rejoin their party. Mr. Fiske, in short, makes it clear that, considered as a politician, Tyler was by no means a failure. He was more consistent than most of his contemporaries in public life. Even his advocacy of an ordinance of secession in the Virginia Convention in 1861 was an example of consistency, for in the days of nullification, while deeming coercion inexpedient, he had always pronounced coercion indefensible.

In Dr. Welling's sketch of Martin Van Buren, as in the life of the same distinguished politician in the "American Statesmen" series, we recognize a creditable willingness to render justice to a man long vilified and misunderstood. From the author's final estimate of his subject's career and character we quote some sentences, noticeable alike for penetration and impartiality of view, and for neatness of expression. "Fertile in the contrivance of means for the attainment of the public ends which he deemed desirable, he was called the little magician from the deftness of his touch in politics. But, combining the statesman's foresight with the politician's tact, he showed his sagacity rather by seeking a majority for his views than by following the views of a majority. Accused of non-committalism, and with some show of reason in the early stages of his career, it was only as to men and minor measures of policy that he practised a prudent reticence. On questions of deeper principle he boldly took the unpopular side. * * * Dispensing patronage according to the received custom of his times, he yet maintained a high standard of appointment. * * * As a statesman he had his complete fagot of opinions, to which he adhered in evil or good report."

In connection with this estimate of Van Buren it is especially instructive to read the short life of his most eminent disciple, Samuel J. Tilden, contributed to this volume by the closest of Tilden's surviving friends, Mr. Andrew H. Green. We can only wish that Mr. Green had given us an extended biography instead of the outline which occupies only a page and a half. All the principal events, however, of Tilden's life are indicated, and the author bears his weighty testimony to two facts which have sometimes been disputed; first, that Tilden was opposed to the Electoral Commission, believing in "the exclusive jurisdiction of the two Houses to count the electoral votes by their own servants and under such instruction as they might deem proper to give;" and, secondly, that his determination was fixed in 1880 as well as 1884 not to be again a candidate for the Presidency.

In the three pages allotted to Gen. Thomas we find traced with clearness and keen appreciation the remarkable series of achievements that, beginning with the engagement at Mill Springs (described as "the first real victory for the national cause since the disaster at Bull Run"), culminated in the decisive battle of Nashville on Dec. 15 and 16, 1864, which "overthrew the last organized Confederate army in the Southwest." Due stress is laid on the intervening actions at Murfreesboro and Chickamauga, where Thomas held his ground, although the right of the national army was swept away. Col. Stone brings out the facts that Thomas was thoroughly trained in all departments of his profession, so that when he was placed in command of a corps he had had personal experience of every arm of the service, and that "when the war ended he was the only general officer of high rank and distinction (except Sheridan and Hancock) who had served uninterruptedly in the army."

Although the sketch of Whittier, for which the editors of this volume are indebted to Mr. Lowell, covers but a page and a half, it is enriched with many an illuminative comment, and suggested rather than formulated criticism, which linger in the memory. Reminding us that Whittier is a Quaker, and recalling the fact that the first of his forefathers who joined the Society of Friends became a convert at a time when that sect was severely persecuted in the colony of Massachusetts Bay, Mr. Lowell opines that "there may be something of heredity in the unswerving constancy of Whittier to unpopular opinions." Again alluding to Whittier's religious views, Mr. Lowell deems it "worth remarking that the nobler qualities of the Puritans have nowhere found such adequate literary expression since Milton as in this member of a sect which they did their utmost to suppress." Apropos of Whittier's revival of the legends of his neighborhood, "Floyd Ireson" is pronounced "among the best of modern ballads, surpassed by none save Scott, if even by him." Mr. Lowell does not omit to chronicle the interesting incidents that Whittier's ambition to become a poet was awakened in him, appropriately enough, by a copy of Burns's poems, and that he first received encouragement from William Lloyd Garrison, who published some of Whittier's immature experiments in verse in his paper at Newburyport. But, although the biographer has no doubt that these pleasant relations with Garrison had something to do with Whittier's enlistment in the anti-slavery crusade, he notes that the poet refused to follow his friend in "the renunciation of political action as one means of reform," and that, "when the civil war was impending, he would have evaded it, if possible, by any concession short of surrender."

The popularity of Whittier, who in this respect was second to Longfellow alone among American poets, is attributed by Mr. Lowell partly to "the nobly simple character of the man, transparent through his verse," and partly to the fact that "his poetry, concerning itself chiefly with the obvious aspects of life and speculation, has kept close to the highest levels of the average thought and sentiment." To the same effect we read later that "he deals with simple motives and with experiences common to all, and accordingly his scenery (whether of the outward or the inward eye) is domestically welcome to all his countrymen. * * * One feels that it is a neighbor who is speaking." Between Whittier and Cowper Mr. Lowell finds "many points of spiritual likeness, especially in their unmetaphysicized love of outward nature, their austerity tempered with playful humor, and in that humanity which establishes a tie of affectionate companionship between them and their readers." The biographer adds that "Whittier has done as much for the scenery of New England as Scott for that of Scotland." Mr. Lowell's concluding comment is that "one quality above all others in Whittier—his innate and unstudied Americanism—has rendered him alike acceptable to his countrymen and to his kindred beyond the sea."

Two conclusive reasons are mentioned by Mr. Hosmer for the inclusion of the name of Sir Henry Vane in a cyclopædia of American biography. In 1636, at the age of 24, Vane was chosen Governor of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, and through his influence subsequently exerted in England, the Rhode Island charter was in large measure secured. How incorruptible Vane was in an age of corruption is attested by the memorable fact that, having been made Treasurer of the Navy in 1640, he turned over to Parliament the fees of his office, £30,000 a year—an immense sum in the middle of the seventeenth century—deeming, he said, such a revenue too great for a subject. The independence of the man is forcibly demonstrated by his defiance of Charles I., his imprisonment under Cromwell, and his execution under Charles II.

There are points of likeness in the lives of the two American lexicographers, Noah Webster and Joseph E. Worcester. Both in their boyhood worked on a farm, both graduated at Yale College, both for some years afterward taught school, and both devoted the greater part of their lives to the production of educational books. Of Webster's spelling book, first published in 1783, 62,000,000 copies have been published. Worcester's historical compendia also had a great sale. Oddly enough, when we remember that Worcester was twenty-six years younger, his first essay in lexicography (an edition of Johnson's Dictionary) was published in the same year (1828) in which Webster brought out his "American Dictionary of the English Language." It was not until 1860 that Worcester's great quarto "Dictionary of the English Language" appeared. The difference between the principles on which these works were originally produced is accurately stated by Dr. Rossiter Johnson: "Worcester endeavored simply to represent the English language as it was, while Webster tried to improve it and set it forth as he thought it ought to be." But, as he says, the later editions of Webster have so far departed from its original plan that there is now but little difference as regards essential qualities between the two lexicons.

The circumstance is often overlooked that although George Ticknor, one of the greatest scholars that this country has produced, is, like Longfellow, commonly associated with Harvard (because they both held the professorship of modern languages and literature in that institution) he graduated elsewhere, namely, at Dartmouth. After taking his degree in 1807, Ticknor spent the next eight years mainly in self-directed study, but in 1815 he went to Göttingen and remained four years in Europe, applying himself to a critical examination of the chief national literatures. He brought home with him a library which in time grew to be the most valuable private collection in the United States. It was particularly rich in books relating to Spain, and Ticknor's studies were gradually concentrated in this direction. His "History of Spanish Literature," which was first published just forty years ago, is one of the few books of its kind which has not been superseded. It remains what Humboldt called it, a masterpiece.

We have reserved for the last an article which for several reasons is likely to prove the most attractive to curiosity in this volume. We refer to the biography of President Zachary Taylor by his son-in-law, Jefferson Davis. It appears that, as in the case of Jackson and William Henry Harrison, Taylor's lack of education was exaggerated in the impressions current among his contemporaries. It is true that in his youth he had but meagre opportunities of obtaining instruction. But he taught himself many things with which he is not popularly supposed to have been conversant. Mr. Davis tells us, for example, that he had "extensively studied both ancient and modern history, especially the English," and the fact is recorded that "his reply to Secretary Marcy's strictures in regard to the capitulation of Monterey," which, owing to its vigor of thought and grace of expression, had been attributed to a member of his staff, "was written by Gen. Taylor's own hand in the open air by the camp fire at Victoria, Mexico." To Taylor's integrity his son-in-law pays the following tribute: "Nepotism had with him no quarter. So strict was he that to be a relative was an obstacle to appointment. Gen. Winfield Scott related to the writer an anecdote that may appropriately close this sketch. He said he had remarked to his wife that Gen. Taylor was an upright man, to which she replied, 'He is not;' that he insisted his long acquaintance with him should enable him to judge better than she. But she persisted in her denial, and he asked:

"'Then what manner of man is he?' when she responded, 'He is a downright man.'"

M. W. H.

The Poet of Fate and Wine.

One of the most interesting problems in literature is to determine whether the real name of a certain lyric poet and epicurean philosopher of the first order of genius is Ghias uddin Abul fathah Omar, or Edward Fitzgerald. Omar was a Persian, born in the eleventh century, and dead early in the twelfth. He lived three hundred years before Chaucer. Fitzgerald was an Englishman of the nineteenth century, a college mate of Tennyson and of Thackeray. He published anonymously in 1858 what purported to be a metrical translation of some of the rubaiyat, or quatrains, of Omar. On that version by Fitzgerald rests the poetic fame of Omar Khayyam, so far as the modern estimate is concerned. There have been other translations since then in English, French, and German, but the poet that the Western world of the nineteenth century knows as Omar Khayyam is, so to speak, Omar plus Fitzgerald. How much is Omar and how much Fitzgerald?

The scope of the question as to the relative performances of originator and translator will be made plain by a supposititious case. Suppose that Horace—the peer of Omar-Fitzgerald in some qualities, the inferior in others—had written in a language that rendered his Odes practically inaccessible until the middle of the present century. Suppose him discovered and introduced to the English-speaking public in a metrical version by Martin Farquhar Tupper. The poetic rank of Horace is immediately fixed, and fixed on the wrong level, by this unfortunate circumstance. It is impossible to conceive a Tupperized Horace any better than Tupper himself. No critic esteems Horace-Tupper. No lover of genuine poetry reads him. No true poet cares to look him up in the original and render him anew. The golden vessel has been tin-plated by the translator, and a tin-plated thing Horace remains to the eyes of the world. On the other hand, suppose, under the same conditions, that Mævius, or Bavius, or any bad fifth-rate poet of the Augustan age, has the rare good fortune to be unearthed and adopted by some anonymous Byron or Tennyson or Browning, who, using the almost forgotten name as a mask and the wretched Latin fragments as a pretext, proceeds to hang upon the latter all the wealth of a truly great poetic individuality. Mævius-Browning, let us say, bursts upon the view of the nineteenth century as Mævius; the Browning part of the combination is unknown or ignored. In this case the base metal is covered thick with the gold. For all time to come Mævius-Browning figures as Mævius, and the world hails Mævius as a great poet reclaimed from oblivion and established in his rightful place in the temple of fame. It becomes the fashion for the knowing ones to exalt Mævius above the recognized authors of the world's literature. Mævius is in vogue, there is a Mævius cult, and students go to the original only to find new beauties in a text which is conventionally appreciated not on its own merits, but at the value of the translator's genius. If subsequent versions in English fail to bear out the first impression of Mævius's greatness, the fact is easily explained. The old poet has fallen into incompetent hands; for has not a certain Browning shown by his faithful and intelligent translation what marvellous merit there really is in the original?

While this supposes an extreme case, it serves to illustrate the importance of the question as between Omar Khayyam and his translator, Fitzgerald. Has the Englishman merely enabled us to do simple justice to the genius of the Persian, and is he entitled, therefore, only to such credit as belongs to a useful if somewhat mechanical performance? Or has the Englishman's genius magnified and refined and glorified the qualities which it found in Omar, caring nothing for its own fame; and was Edward Fitzgerald, in fact, one of the rarest and truest poets of modern times?

II.

The essential facts about Omar Khayyam, or Omar the Tentmaker, are these:

He was a modest individual, for when, according to the Oriental custom, he adopted a poetic surname, he designated himself by the humble trade of his father, instead of swaggering into poetry, as Firdusi did under the name of the Celestial, or as did Sadi, The Felicitous. Moreover, when one of his early friends became powerful in Persian politics, Omar declined office or title, and was content to receive a moderate pension.

He was probably better known to his contemporaries as a mathematician and an astronomer than as a poet. Omar ran for a time the royal observatory. He was one of eight scientific men chosen by the Sultan to reform the calendar, and he also wrote a treatise on Algebra, which has come down to the present generation in rather better shape than his poetical remains.

His verses were not especially popular in his day. This is shown by the scarcity of manuscript copies of his poems in the East, and by the mutilated and fragmentary character of the few that do exist.

In the estimate of his own countrymen after his death and up to the present time, Omar has always been ranked among the lesser and not with the greater poets of Persia. The seven great lights are Firdusi, Anwari, Nizami, Jalal uddin Rumi, Sadi, Hafiz, and Jami. Omar's name had never been considered as worthy to stand with these. The Persian critics and the European scholars who reflected Eastern opinion classed him rather with such minor poets as Rashid uddin Watwat and Hakim Azraki and Hatifi—names little known outside of the limited circle of special students of Persian literature. It was not until the appearance of Fitzgerald's version that anybody discovered in Omar's rubaiyat a finer and more intellectual quality than belongs to Sadi, to Firdusi, or to Hafiz.

We may also present in brief all that it is important to know about Omar's translator:

Edward Fitzgerald was likewise a very modest man. He cultivated poetry because he loved it, and he cared not a rap for his personal fame. The rubaiyat were published anonymously, Mr. Quaritch printing the book; and even after it had won appreciation and had excited profound curiosity as to the authorship, Mr. Fitzgerald would not allow his name to appear on the title page of any of the later editions.

Mr. Fitzgerald was a Persian scholar only at second hand. He became interested in the Iranic literature through his friendship with Edward B. Cowell, a Cambridge Orientalist of distinguished attainments. They read the forgotten Omar together, probably first in the text of the manuscript in the Bodleian Library, the only manuscript then known in England. This contained only about one hundred and fifty rubaiyat. The exploitation of other manuscripts, such as those of Calcutta, Lucknow, and Teheran, has been a process for the most part subsequent to and stimulated by the appearance of Fitzgerald's version.

The later metrical translation by Mr. F. H. Whinfield renders two hundred and fifty-three rubaiyat, while Mr. Fitzgerald's poem in its final form consists of only one hundred and one stanzas. Mr. Whinfield is a competent Orientalist and a satisfactory versifier; yet while his far more literal version reveals in Omar Khayyam a most interesting poetic personality, and one which can well afford to stand on its own merits, it is not the Omar that Mr. Fitzgerald presents.

The latest essay is by a gentleman in Milwaukee, who published a few months ago a small volume entitled *The Strophes of Omar Khayyam*, translated from the Persian by JOHN LESLIE GARNER. (The Corbitt & Skidmore Co., Milwaukee.) We do not know who Mr. Garner is, or whether his version, as the title page implies, is directly from the Persian. Were it not for that assertion, and for the somewhat pretentious and puzzling announcement that "accuracy of translation was the principal aim," and that "the texts used in this translation were Whinfield's, Nicolas's, *and* the lithographed edition of Lucknow," we should suspect that what he has done is merely to paraphrase existing translations, metrical and prose. His notes and critical remarks, in the few instances in which we have taken the trouble to trace them, are lifted almost bodily from the commentaries of his predecessors. His direct acquaintance with the language of the original must be limited, for he does not seem to know that *rubaiyat* is the Arabic plural of *rubaiy*, and not a singular noun. Nor can we imagine why he styles the quatrains strophes, since strophes they are not. Nevertheless, it is a significant and interesting fact that Omar Khayyam should have found an interpreter in the Western town heretofore chiefly noted as the headquarters of the Wisconsin School of Female Poets. Moreover, this new version by a fairly intelligent person is, like Whinfield's, although to a less degree, useful for comparison with Fitzgerald's noble poem.

Both of these translators copy Mr. Fitzgerald's metrical arrangement, which was itself a departure from Omar's. The original rubaiyat are quatrains of verses, the first, second, and fourth, and sometimes the third, rhyming. Each quatrain is a complete poem in itself, without necessary connection of idea with that preceding or that following it. They are grouped together according to the vowel or consonant sound distinguishing the rhyming syllable at the end of the line. The succession is alphabetic and purely arbitrary, having no relation to the sense of the verses. The lines are of varying length and prosody. Mr. Whinfield compares the normal verse to such an English Alexandrine as this from Matthew Arnold, the stress falling on the italicized words:

> We *mark* not the *world's* course, but would have *it* take *ours*.

Mr. Fitzgerald preserved the quatrain and the scheme of rhyme, but reduced the miscellaneous rhythm to a uniform ten-syllable iambic line, as seen in the fine opening stanza of his first edition:

> Awake! for Morning in the Bowl of Night
> Has flung the Stone that puts the Stars to Flight;
> And lo! the Hunter of the East has caught
> The Sultan's Turret in a Noose of Light.

This metrical arrangement is one of the most spirited and effective now employed by English poets. It lends itself with equal felicity to almost every mood that requires poetic expression. Swinburne's ear, sensitive beyond any other to the music of versification, at once recognized its value. He adopted it and used it in the "Laus Veneris" and elsewhere; and his numberless imitators have made this three-rhymed quatrain of Omar Khayyan, as modified by Fitzgerald, tolerably familiar to the reading public. It turned up a short time ago in the "Asmodeus" of Mrs. Amélie Rives-Chanler.

Thus we see that Mr. Fitzgerald established happily the form which has come to be inseparably a part of the accepted idea of Omar Khayyan's individuality. It counts for him as a good face counts in the popular estimate of a man's character.

Again, Mr. Fitzgerald's method of dealing with the substance of the original was one of transmutation rather than of translation. He made no systematic attempt to render literally the phrases or the ideas of the Persian poet. His obvious purpose was to reproduce the spirit and style of Omar Khayyam, taking the largest license with the text, and frequently departing from it altogether. Some of the English quatrains are vast improvements on the corresponding rubaiyat of the Persian. Some are dextrous combinations of isolated phrases and widely separated ideas, informed with a thought that is not Omar's. Some appear to be wholly new, opening lines of thought which have no equivalent or even suggestion in the Persian. While a merely mechanical rendering would leave no room for such a question as we are considering, a theory of "translation" like that upon which Mr. Fitzgerald proceeded affords every opportunity for independent and creative genius to assert itself. If the poetic spirit and manner of the "translator" happen to be different from and finer than those of the original, the product will inevitably be different from and finer than the raw material. Analysis will show that this is the case.

III.

J. B. Nicolas, once First Dragoman of the French Embassy at Teheran and afterward French Consul at Reshd, carefully translated in prose between four and five hundred of the rubaiyat. His translation, together with the Persian text, was published at the expense of the French Government ten years after the appearance of Mr. Fitzgerald's first edition. The literal fidelity of M. Nicolas's work has not been disputed. It affords a basis of comparison next best to the Persian text itself; and that is a great help, since of the few English-speaking persons who can read Omar in the original fluently enough to estimate him as a poet, still fewer, probably, possess the other qualifications for making the critical estimate. A good Persian scholar is not necessarily a judge of poetry.

Let us now take two consecutive stanzas in which the Fitzgerald version illustrates the philosophy of contentment, and examine the principle of their construction:

> With me along the strip of Herbage strown
> That just divides the desert from the sown,
> Where name of Slave and Sultan is forgot—
> And Peace to Mahmud on his golden Throne.
>
> A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
> A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
> Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
> Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow!

In the Persian, as translated by Nicolas, three similar but widely separated rubaiyat seem to supply the rough material for Fitzgerald's two stanzas. One of these is here closely rendered:

> What I ask is a flask of red wine, a book of poetry, a moment of respite in life, and half a loaf. If with that I might, dear one, dwell with thee in some desert place, it would be happiness preferable to a Sultan's in his realm.

M. Nicolas seeks everywhere in Omar's most convivial and carnal verses a mystic and deeply devotional interpretation. He believes that the rubaiyat throughout must not be taken in the literal sense, but that all the apparent eulogies of sensual enjoyment refer in fact to divine love and transcendental asceticism; in other words, that Omar was a Sufi philosopher and religionist, not a careless epicurean and skeptic. This perversion of judgment leads M. Nicolas to expend a remarkable foot note upon Omar's expressed desire for a female companion in the wilderness. "It is God," he explains, "here addressed by the poet. It is He with whom he desired to dwell in a desert place during the short time he had to remain in this world." How far this interpretation strains probability may be judged from the text of the two similar quatrains which Mr. Fitzgerald blends with that just quoted:

> In the spring I love to sit at the edge of a cultivated field, with an idol like to a houri and a pitcher of wine, if there is any; and, although I may be generally blamed for all this, I'll be doggoned if thus situated I ever hanker for Paradise.
>
> When one has a loaf of bread, two *mins* of wine, and a leg of mutton, and can go and sit in some lonely spot with a young beauty with tulip-colored cheeks, O, it is a joy beyond the reach of any Sultan!

Now compare Fitzgerald's rendering of the idea thrice repeated in the three Persian quatrains with Mr. Whinfield's more literal but less imaginative version:

> Give me a flask of wine, a crust of bread,
> A quiet mind, a book of verse to read,
> With thee, O love, to share my lowly roof,
> I would not take the Sultan's crown instead.
>
> Come, brim my cup with foaming head of wine,
> And bring a bunch of bread, a mutton chine,
> And sit you by me, O sweet tulip cheeks,
> I would not change the Sultan's state for mine.

And with Mr. Garner's Milwaukee version, in which every variation from Fitzgerald and Whinfield is mere added commonplace, beer poured into champagne:

> Yes, Loved One, when the Laughing Spring is blowing,
> With Thee beside me and the Cup o'erflowing,
> I pass the day upon this Waving Meadow,
> And dream the while, no thought on Heaven bestowing.
>
> A Flask of Wine, a Loaf of Bread,
> To every care and worldly sorrow dead,
> I covet not, when thou, oh Love, art near,
> The jewelled Crown upon the Sultan's Head.

Take likewise the Persian quatrain thus translated:

> Oh, beloved, before grief comes to assail thee, bid them serve us with rosy wine. And *thou*, O careless fool, thou art not made of gold that thou shouldst expect to be dug up again after they have once buried thee.

Mr. Whinfield makes of this:

> Ere you succumb to shocks of mortal pain,
> Your roses gather, and your wine cups drain;
> You are not gold, and once entombed in earth,
> No one will care to dig you up again.

And the Milwaukee version loads the central thought with trivialities:

> Yes, bid the Saki fill the Brimming Measure,
> And may thy closing days be spent in Pleasure,
> For when thy Dust within the Ground is laid,
> 'Twill ne'er be sought as some long buried Treasure.

In this rubaiy Omar has put two distinct maxims. The first is one of his numberless variations of the *dum vivimus vivamus* theme. The second is a striking reminder of the commonness of human clay. Both of the versions above blend the two ideas and weaken both. Fitzgerald seizes upon the more impressive suggestion, and, letting everything else go, presents it in these lovely lines:

> And those who husbanded the Golden grain,
> And those who flung it to the winds like Rain,
> Alike to no such aureate earth are turn'd
> As buried once, Men want dug up again.

The passages already given are fair specimens of Fitzgerald's treatment of those rubaiyat in which he has kept in comparatively close relations with the original. They are not translations; they are more than translations. But there is another class of stanzas, forming in bulk a considerable part of the entire poem, and in significance and beauty by far the most important part, wherein the independent genius of the English poet has so transformed and adorned the Persian's verses, that it is no more reasonable to call Omar the author than to say that Matteo Bandello, and not William Shakespeare, wrote "Much Ado About Nothing" and the "Twelfth Night."

To this class belong some of the best known and oftenest quoted stanzas of the English poem, such as these:

> Then to the Lip of this poor Earthen Urn
> I lean'd, the Secret of my Life to learn:
> And Lip to Lip it murmured, "While you live,
> Drink! for once dead, you never shall return."
>
> I think the Vessel, that with fugitive
> Articulation answer'd, once did live,
> And drink! and ah! the passive Lip I kissed,
> How many Kisses might it take—and give!
>
> For I remember stopping by the way
> To watch a Potter thumping his wet clay;
> And with its all-obliterated Tongue
> It murmured, "Gently, Brother, gently, pray!"

Of the first stanza there is a suggestion in the text of the Bodleian Library manuscript, but nothing to correspond in the Persian of Nicolas. The second can barely be identified with the following rubaiy:

> This jug has been, like me, a loving and unhappy creature. It has sighed for a lock of the hair of some young girl. This handle that you see attached to its neck was an arm amorously passed around some beauty's neck.

The third stanza, so finely rendered by Fitzgerald, is much nearer the Persian:

> Yesterday I saw at the bazar a potter vigorously treading clay to knead it. This clay seemed to say to him, "I also have been like you: treat me, therefore, less harshly."

The other famous passage about the vessels in the potter's shop, making in itself a complete poem, is worth quoting in full:

> As under cover of departing day
> Slunk hunger-stricken Ramazan away,
> Once more within the Potter's house alone
> I stood, surrounded by the Shapes of Clay.
>
> Shapes of all Sorts and Sizes, great and small,
> That stood along the floor and by the wall;
> And some loquacious vessels were; and some
> Listened perhaps, but never talked at all.
>
> Said one among them: "Surely not in vain
> My substance of the common Earth was ta'en
> And to this figure moulded, to be broke
> Or trampled back to shapeless Earth again."
>
> Then said a Second: "Ne'er a peevish Boy
> Would break the Bowl from which he drank in joy;
> And He that with his hand the Vessel made
> Will surely not in after Wrath destroy."
>
> After a momentary silence spoke
> Some Vessel of a more ungainly make:
> "They sneer at me for leaning all awry;
> What! did the Hand then of the Potter shake?"
>
> Whereat some one of the loquacious Lot—
> I think a Sufi pipkin—waxing hot:
> "All this of Pot and Potter? Tell me, then,
> Who is the Potter, pray, and who the Pot?"
>
> "Why," said another, "some there are who tell
> Of One who threatens he will toss to Hell
> The luckless Pots he marr'd in making—Pish!
> He's a Good Fellow, and 'twill all be well."
>
> "Well," murmured one, "let whoso make or buy,
> My Clay with long Oblivion is gone dry;
> But fill me with the old familiar Juice,
> Methinks I might recover by and by."
>
> So while the Vessels one by one were speaking,
> The little Moon looked in that all were seeking,
> And then they jogg'd each other, "Brother! Brother!
> Now for the Porter's shoulder knot a creaking!"

Mr. Fitzgerald has erected this continuous poem, forming a humorously philosophical apologue of Agnosticism and Destiny, upon the scant foundations afforded by these four isolated and unrelated rubaiyat in the Persian:

> Yesterday I visited a potter's workshop. I saw there two thousand jugs, some talking, others silent. Each of them seemed to say to me, "Where is the potter? Where is the purchaser of jugs? Where is the seller of them?"
>
> Who will ever believe that he who has made the cup can contemplate destroying it? All these beautiful heads, all these lovely arms, all these charming hands, by what love have they been created, and by what hatred are they destroyed!
>
> When, upset, I fall at the feet of Death, when the destroying angel has reduced me to the state of a plucked fowl, then see that nothing is made of my dust but a drinking cup, for perhaps the perfume of the wine it contains will revive me for an instant.
>
> When the tree of my existence is uprooted, when the parts of my body are scattered, let them make jugs of my dust and fill those jugs with wine; then that dust will revive.

It is a curious fact that an intelligent writer in the *Nation*, reviewing Longfellow's "Keramos" about a dozen years ago, instanced these very stanzas of the English poet to show how much subtler and more spiritual was the poetic art of the old Persian than that of Mr. Longfellow.

Even in the matter of Oriental imagery, Fitzgerald has touched Omar's verses only to improve them. There is a justly admired figure in the twenty-fifth rubaiy:

> Alike for those who for To-day prepare,
> And those that after some To-morrow stare,
> *A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries*
> "Fools! Your Reward is neither Here nor There."

The figure is Fitzgerald's, not Omar's. The Persian is, "One on the watch." In the same way, there is an interesting allusion in the fifty-seventh rubaiy to Omar's scientific services in reforming the defective and antiquated calendar then used in Persia:

> Ah, but my Computations, People say,
> Reduced the year to better reckoning? Nay,
> 'Twas only striking from the calendar
> Unborn To-morrow, and dead Yesterday.

The personal allusion is Mr. Fitzgerald's, as indeed is the fine philosophical turn given to a train of thought that is not particularly impressive in the original:

> My term of existence is exhausted in some few days. It passes away as passes the wind of the desert. So while there remains a breath of life, there are two days about which I never shall disturb myself, the day to come and the day that is gone.

We might multiply these illustrations of Omar's indebtedness to Fitzgerald almost to the full extent of the Fitzgerald poem. More than a quarter of the one hundred and one stanzas in the English poem have not been traced even in suggestion to any rubaiy in the Persian. And among them are some of the finest verses, as for example:

> For some we loved, the loveliest and the best
> That from his Vintage rolling Time hath prest,
> Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,
> And one by one crept silently to rest.

And this:

> Would but the Desert of the Fountain yield
> One glimpse—if dimly, yet, indeed, reveal'd,
> To which the fainting Traveller might spring,
> As springs the trampled herbage of the field!

Once more we shall exhibit the original text as rendered in French by Nicolas alongside of the versions of Whinfield, Mr. Garner, and Fitzgerald:

NICOLAS.

> This vault of the skies, under which we are the prey of vertigo, may be likened, for the sake of the thought, to a lantern. The universe is this lantern. The sun represents the flame of the light; and we, like the images on the lantern, remain there in stupefaction.

WHINFIELD.

> These circling heavens, which make us so dismayed,
> I liken to a lamp's revolving shade;
> The sun the candlestick, the earth the shade,
> And men the trembling forms thereon portrayed.

GARNER.

> A turning magic lantern show this world,
> Around the sun as candle swiftly whirled,
> While Mortals are but Phantom Figures traced
> Upon the shade, forever onward hurled.

FITZGERALD.

> *We are no other than a moving row*
> *Of magic Shadow-shapes that come and go*
> *Round with the Sun-illumined Lantern held*
> *In Midnight by the Master of the Show.*

NICOLAS.

> We here below are only puppets with which the wheeling firmament diverts itself, and this is truth and not metaphor. We are, in fact, the pieces upon this checker board of existence, which we quit at last to enter one by one into the coffin of annihilation.

WHINFIELD.

> We are but chess men, who to move are fain
> Just as the great Chess player doth ordain,
> He moves us on life's chess board to and fro,
> And then in death's box shuts us up again.

GARNER.

> We are all puppets of the Sky, we run
> As wills the Player till the Game is done,
> And when the Player wearies of the sport,
> He throws us into darkness one by one.

FITZGERALD.

> *But helpless Pieces of the Game He plays*
> *Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days—*
> *Hither and thither moves, and checks, and slays,*
> *And one by one back in the closet lays.*
>
> *The Ball no question makes of Ayes and Noes,*
> *But Here or There as strikes the Player goes;*
> *And He that toss'd you down into the field*
> *He knows about it all—He knows! HE knows!*
>
> *The Moving Finger writes; and having writ*
> *Moves on; nor all your piety nor wit*
> *Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line*
> *Nor all your tears wash out a Word of it.*

Of the one hundred and one quatrains in Fitzgerald's version, thirty-eight correspond more or less closely to certain rubaiyat in the Persian; seventeen have some resemblance to rubaiyat in the Persian; nineteen are composite—that is, made up of fragments and suggestions from more than one rubaiy in the Persian; while twenty-seven of Fitzgerald's stanzas have not been traced to any source in the text of the manuscripts.

IV.

We have spoken of M. Nicolas's persistent ingenuity in discovering a deep religious meaning beneath Omar Khayyam's devil-may-care verses. The French commentator and translator was not the first to find in the rubaiyat evidence that Omar was a mystic and a pious devotee. The idea that this accomplished agnostic and epicurean was really writing sacred poetry when he sang of wine and tulip cheeks was not too grotesque for acceptance by the Sufi theologians two or three centuries after his own time. They also interpreted the erotic rhapsodies of Hafiz as mystical praises of Divine Love. They found an allegorical meaning, intelligible only to adepts, in nearly every Persian poet of passion or of sensual enjoyment. They could have twisted a whole religious creed out of Anacreon, or Horace, or Villon, or Tom Moore, or the hot-toddy songs of Robert Burns; for their interpretation of the outgivings of frank animalism was based on a code of equivalents something like this:

> Unbelief—Belief.
> Wine—Devotion.
> Intoxication—Ecstatic contemplation of the Divine attributes.
> Idolatry—Worship of the true God.
> Sleep—Meditation on the Divine perfections.
> Licentiousness—Ascetic piety.
> Kisses and embraces—Religious raptures.
> Perfume—Hope of Divine favor.
> Wantonness—Religious ardor.
> Female beauty—The perfection of the Supreme Being.
> Women's hair—The expansion of Divine glory.
> Red lips—The hidden mysteries of God's essence.
> Drunken stupor—Abstraction from earthly thoughts.
> The down on a woman's cheek—The world of spirits.
> A black mole—The point of indivisible unity.
> The tavern keeper or the cup bearer—A religious sage and instructor.
> The tavern itself—A place of prayer.

These specimen definitions from the mystic dictionary illustrate the scheme of interpretation pursued by Nicolas all through his comments on the rubaiyat of Omar. Critically, the Frenchman's notes are as valueless and absurd as his literal translation of the Persian text is useful. An amusing example of the use to which he puts his mystical instrument is afforded by a quatrain which neither Fitzgerald nor Whinfield cared to render:

> The man who is in love should keep crazy drunk all the year round, soaked in wine, covered with dishonor; for when we are in our sound senses chagrin assails us from every side. Once drunk, let happen what may!

Silenus or Pantagruel could not have put more crudely this prescription of moral anæsthesia. To M. Nicolas, who lived many years in Persia, the quatrain had a very different significance. "Here the poet," as he explains in a foot note, "means by lover or man in love the Sufi smitten with love for the Deity. He would have him constantly absorbed by the intoxication of that love, to the end that in such a state, entirely detached from the interests of here below, he may apply himself exclusively to the contemplation of celestial things, even at the cost of what the ungodly call dishonor." In another quatrain Omar, who is frequently inconsistent, advances a slightly different theory of the functions of the cup:

> When I'm not drunk, my happiness is incomplete. When I'm dead drunk, ignorance takes the place of reason. There exists a state half way betwixt drunkenness and soberness. Oh, with what joy I constitute myself the slave of that half-way state, for there life is!

On this M. Nicolas remarks with delicious naïveté, "It seems singular that Khayyam here gives the preference to semi-intoxication, after having urged his disciples to abandon themselves to drunkenness—that is, to the Divine love—without any reserve whatever." A hundred illustrations could not make more clear the nonsense of M. Nicolas's theory of Omar Khayyam. Mr. Fitzgerald's mind entertained no such preposterous illusion. The first edition of his version of the rubaiyat was published, as we have said, ten years before the appearance of M. Nicolas's French translation of the Teheran text. In the preface to Mr. Fitzgerald's third edition he alluded to Nicolas's interpretation only to make fun of it. He was a poet with a fine sense of the humorous, and the Sufi-Nicolas theory was too much for his gravity. Mr. Fitzgerald from the first saw the old Persian precisely as he was—an agnostic philosopher, with red blood in his body, a free thinker and idol smasher, who combined Voltairean limpidity of thought with the sensual directness of Rabelais, a fatalist with a most cheerful appreciation of the good things that fate brings, a very honest and human person who in perfect good temper had abandoned the problem of To-morrow to devote himself in a wholly sane if somewhat hilarious manner to the management of To-day. The accidents apart, we should say that Omar Khayyam's intellect was essentially modern and western, if such minds belonged to any particular century or civilization. They have existed everywhere and in every age, and it is just as superfluous to extract a mystic meaning from the rubaiyat as it would be to attempt to evolve a system of Shaker theology from the fugitive writings of Henry Labouchere.

> Those who are endowed with knowledge and virtue, who by their powerful intellects have become the torch of their disciples—even those have not taken one step out of this profound darkness. They have told us a few fables and have fallen asleep again.
>
> Drink wine, for that is what will put an end to the anxieties of your soul. It will deliver you from your meditations upon the two and seventy creeds.

That is practically the whole of Omar's philosophy. The idea that there was anything mystical or transcendental in his make-up may safely be dismissed.

V.

The conclusion to which this examination leads is that Fitzgerald gave more than he took. He was introduced to a literature rich in suggestion and material by his friend Cowell. In the fragmentary and dislocated poetical remains of Omar Khayyam, a personality almost forgotten by the world, Fitzgerald found a philosophy and a poetic tone to which his own genius peculiarly responded. There are now extant perhaps nine hundred of Omar Khayyam's quatrains. How many of these Fitzgerald ever saw we do not know, nor is the question important. He saw and studied enough of Omar to absorb the essence of his philosophy and to acquire a fund of phrases, images, and motives which he combined in a poem of seventy-five, and afterwards of one hundred and one quatrains, in a metrical arrangement of his own. The Persian rubaiyat are disconnected, and belong in no particular order. They are severally as independent as the epigrams of Martial. The effect of the constant repetition of a few themes is wearisome. It is wearisome in the literal prose translation; it is tiresome in all the metrical versions save one. In Fitzgerald's arrangement the succession of quatrains is reasoned, the sense is often continuous and artistically developed, and the whole poem has about as much of unity and consecutiveness, let us say, as Tennyson's "In Memoriam." The impression it makes in its entirety on every intelligent mind as a complete and symmetrical poem of noble proportions, and not merely a haphazard collection of versified apothegms, is undividedly due to Mr. Fitzgerald's genius.

But, much more than that, Fitzgerald rendered what Omar Khayyam gave—or, rather, what Omar Khayyam suggested—with a profounder insight, a more refined philosophy, and a mightier and incomparably subtler art than the Son of the Tentmaker possessed. So true is this that we venture to say that any person with a mind sensitive to the beauties of poetic expression will select from the rubaiyat ten stanzas in which there is more of Fitzgerald than of Omar, to one which is more Omar's than Fitzgerald's.

The philosophy may be rejected, the ethics of life and conduct despised, and the conclusions abhorred, yet there remains nevertheless a majestic poem, of its kind matchless in the English language. It is Edward Fitzgerald's poem, and the efforts of subsequent translators only serve to make this fact more clearly apparent.

E. P. M.

BOOK NOTES.

Frederick A. Stokes & Brother publish "Fun From Life," a capital selection from the columns of our sprightly contemporary, *Life*.

"The Immanent God and Other Sermons," by Abraham W. Jackson (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.), are simple, clearly written discourses, the production evidently of an advanced Unitarian.

Under the title of "In Memory of John McCullough" the De Vinne Press have issued an elegant volume containing a biography of the deceased tragedian and an elegy by William Winter, and memorial papers by Henry Edwards, W. F. Johnson, and Steele Mackaye. The edition is limited to 500 copies, and no more will be printed.

Frederic Saunders, the librarian of the Astor Library, is the author of "The Washington Centennial Souvenir" (Thomas Whittaker), a work appropriate to the approaching great centennial festival. It is largely made up of tributes to Washington by various hands, with a tolerably full account, handsomely illustrated, of the New York of a hundred years ago.

A new novel by Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett is an event of interest. This time it is a Spanish novel, called "The Pretty Sister of José" (Scribners), and those who read it will find that it belongs to the same family as Mrs. Burnett's earlier and larger romances. The hero is a bull fighter, and the heroine belongs to the same social level. The story takes hold of the interest of the reader at the beginning and never lets go until the end. It is very neatly illustrated by Reinhart.

Under the title of "The Wandering Knight" the Catholic Publication Society Company has issued a translation of an allegorical romance by Jean de Cartheny, which, as well as the name of the athor, has long been forgotten. It first appeared in 1572, and derives any importance that may attach to it at the present day from the suggestion that it was the source to which John Bunyan was indebted for the general idea and much of the material employed in his "Pilgrim's Progress." It is a work noticeable for its devout spirit, but in invention and liveliness of fancy falls immeasurably short of Bunyan's masterpiece. The present translation was made from the edition of 1572 under ecclesiastical supervision.

Among stories of a dramatic or even sensational character, "An I. D. B. in South Africa," by Louise Vescelius-Sheldon (John W. Lovell & Co.), may claim a prominent place. The scene is laid among the diamond fields of Kimberley, South Africa, and representatives of the people, collected from all parts of the civilized world, who are to be found there, take part in the plot. There is, however, less of local coloring than might be anticipated, but the heroine, of mixed African and European blood, will probably find more favor in the reader's eyes than would her octoroon sister in the Southern States of the American Union, if placed under similar trying circumstances. It is a well-told and skilfully developed tale, which, working on old and familiar lines, never fails to hold the attention. The illustrations by C. E. Graves and Al Hencke are of unusually good quality.

An interesting illustration of one of the most fascinating hobbies of the day among American autograph collectors is afforded in Mr. Lyman C. Draper's "Essay on the Autographic Collections of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution" (Burns & Son). It is an elaborate history of the subject and of what may be called its romance, in which particular attention has been bestowed upon the autograph of Thomas Lynch, Jr., that supreme prize which so many ardent collectors have vainly striven to obtain. As only twenty-four genuine letters or signatures by Mr. Lynch are known to be in existence, and there is very slight hope of discovering more, the search for them may be considered practically closed. As individual autographs they would be almost worthless, and it is only by their association with those of the other signers of the Declaration of Independence that they acquire a sudden and comparatively unreasonable value. Incidentally Mr. Draper gives a good deal of curious information concerning American collectors and their treasures, and his book will interest many outside of this rather exclusive circle.