

NEW BOOKS

Reviews of Important and Interesting New Publications.

People who think that pure imagination had its climax and conclusion in "Monte Cristo" and that even Mr. A. C. Gantez has furnished no unimpeachable evidence to the contrary, should read "An American Emperor," by Louis Tracy (G. P. Putnam's Sons), and make a careful account of their impressions after the fact. We have often pointed out the inevitable relation, the unavoidable interdependence and similarity, that exist between the realistic and the romantic in fiction. Prof. Brander Matthews especially has laughed at the idea that he should be set down as a mere transcriber, devoid of fancy, concerned solely with the small, obvious, undisputed, uninteresting facts of life. He has been at the pains to sublimate the idea of local color, and is doubtless to be credited with the mental preservation, the persistent understanding, of Mulberry Bend and the bohemia circles that used to run through Eighteenth street to the Hoboken Ferry. But he has done far more than this. In "His Father's Son" and in "An Idyl of Narragansett Pier" he was indeed a scrupulous realist, exacting truth and subordinating interest most successfully. He was scrupulous, too, in dealing exclusively with the actual, identified, and exalted facts of life. In his account of Maggie O'Donnell's adventure with a burglar in Chatham street, and of the sanguinary ruin of Maggie's nightgown on that eventful and extremely dangerous occasion. If the burglar's aim had directed his bullet six inches to the right, or the other (or forgot, which side it would have killed Maggie, and the need would never have been hers to patch her nightgown or to interest herself in the restoration of it in the wash. On the other hand, the account by Prof. Matthews of his interview with the Flying Dutchman, in which he revealed myriads of facts, and almost everything that is purely fanciful in literature, was, of course, unrealistic to a degree, and showed conclusively how the same skillful hand may exercise its cunning in perfectly contrived ways. All of which suggests to us, and is suggested by, the circumstances that "An American Emperor" is realistic and romantic both—possibly also naturalistic, impressionistic, sensistiv, and symbolical. Whether it is a protest against riches or an encouragement to the reader to become rich we are not sure. Mr. Jerome K. Vanstart, the principal character in the story, seems to be founded either upon a fact or upon the sincere comprehension of one. He owned vast territories, the story says; he controlled railways and fleets; cities paid him tribute, and myriads of workers toiled that his wealth might magnify itself. This might be the late James Fisk, Jr., who was Commodore of certain Sound Steamboats, had a railroad influence, and who used to appear conspicuously dressed in nautical and other uniforms. It is probable, however, that the main idea of Vanstart arose from a group of plutocratic Americans of the period. Possibly a single distinguished American was selected to make Vanstart possible. It is declared, for instance, that "his character" "was to build his Fifth avenue residence of solid gold he could do so, and then pass with silver the avenue and West Fifty-seventh street in front of his house." It is also declared of Vanstart that he "is going to lay out Fifty-eighth street in copper," and that he "has just added a cent a ton to freight rates on the New York Central." A passage in the story which renders Vanstart again obscure, and which reduces him to a variety of unrecognizable character in the story, is his representation as buying a hotel and suborning an opera house in order to bring himself to the notice of a French princess, an exclusive person enough, but one who would obviously never insist upon an introduction with preliminaries so tremendous. There is a picture of the Princess, representing her at the moment when she first shakes hands with him and observes: "You perhaps do not know that I am a lineal descendant of two lines of the Kings of France." She has a large head and an indifferent inferior figure. The observer will marvel that two lines of French Kings should have been incompetent to provide her with a better physical appearance. This, however, is the fault of the illustrator; in the text she is all that a princess should or could ever hope to be. It is needless to dwell upon the incidental character of Jim Hutton, who, as Vanstart's refuse to box with a man of Vanstart's wealth. The story carries us to Europe and Africa presently, and involves us in a scheme to make Vanstart the Emperor of France. As we have intimated, the realism of this tale is modified by a sufficient injection of pure fancy. It is necessary to record that Vanstart is moved after all to have like a true American; that he leaves the Princess to her kind and marries a girl who is recommended by her democratic affiliations and convictions, and as well by great personal loveliness, and that America Jim enthusiastically approves of him, bestowing upon him a respectful regard good for ever and over. It is pleasant, too, to be able to say that the incidental scheme involved in the great engineering and commercial enterprise known as the "Sabara Limited," was not disastrous to Vanstart, and that he is a successful man, and that the superstitious and disturbed natives who are shattered by his own dynamite. He seems to have been a worthy as well as a rich person, and to have earned his rewards in both business and love. He illustrates the happiness that is possible even to the rich, and the advantages of capital that is virtuously applied. The illustrations of the story contrive to make it appear to be a good deal more tremendous than it really is. M. Ribou illustrated at the moment when his "narrow forehead and high nose were wrinkled into a frown of intense meaning," presents a fearful appearance as anything that we now remember, and nothing could be better calculated to upset the nerves than the picture illustrating the idea that one of the schemes considered in the story was "monstrous" and amounted to "the betrayal of France." The populace is here represented as heaped in a profuse preparation; a chief figure on the left, cast powerfully in shadow, after the fashion of Gérôme's great picture, is abasing his nose upon the pavement, and the chief right-hand figure nervously essays to read his newspaper and recover his sun umbrella at the same time. Still the text is sufficiently spirited. It has general imagination, and specific power of phrase, and we do not believe that we could be easily patient with anybody peculiar enough to find fault with it.

Such a story as Laura Dayton Fessenden's "Colonial Dame" (Rand, McNally & Co.) must commend itself to many readers. This is a love tale of the Revolution, told in a phrase and with the romantic and exalted spirit suited to that time. These are days of considerable flippancy—days good a good deal too much in that way, perhaps—and a genuine tale of romance is a breath of fresh air in a stifling time. Here are some of the characters and carefully evolved, and character seriously and carefully evolved, and very likely just. Perhaps we shall never know exactly what Washington was like, though he has grown more human through the researches of recent years and is more like Thackeray's picture, in "The Virginians," than the figure erected by H. Headley in a long time instilled upon in the school histories. In a recent book we had a glimpse of him frightening a lot of girls in a Virginia country house who were going down to the cellar at a late hour of the night in search of oysters and pie. Love is often serious enough, and "A Colonial Dame" has ample justification for its exalted tone. If Washington trifled occasionally, nothing is more certain than that he did not always trifle. Certainly he would not trifle in the presence of a serious love affair; and it is questionable if Patrick Henry ever trifled. What is the preponderance of the fact of the facts of history, it is certain that this tale, considering the nature of its theme, is not astray. It is well told, full of the decorous and grateful spirit of old romance. Another story, "A Puritan Lover," a longer narrative in the same general vein, but more varied in its impressions, goes with it to

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WIRELESS TELEPHONE WIRE

John S. Kennedy seems to have to keep the Telephone Company from putting a system of aerial cables and wires over private property, and one of the blocks involved is that bounded by Fifth and Sixth avenues and Fifty-sixth and Fifty-seventh streets. Last summer, before beginning the work, the company set out to get permits from the property owners affected to run wires along the boundary walls and fences which separate the lots on Fifty-seventh street from those on Fifty-sixth. It secured the permits of all, it is said, except Mr. Kennedy, who owns a West Fifty-seventh street. Frederic Cromwell, who owns a West Fifty-sixth street, gave a verbal permit on condition that Mr. Kennedy's consent was secured. The consent of Mr. Cromwell's house has been extended to the end of the block, and the blank wall of his house forms the rear end of one of Mr. Kennedy's lots. Any wires or cables, therefore, on this wall would overhang Mr. Kennedy's property. Mr. Kennedy has planted vines at the bottom of the wall, which have so grown that they completely cover it, and he was unwilling to have them injured by the driving of poles and staples, and the straggling of wires, and when his consent was sought again it was again refused.

Then the New York Telephone Company took the matter into its own hands and decided to string the wires over the wall, which it liked it or not, and he brought this suit to stop the work. Mr. Kennedy is a fighter. It was he who brought suit to stop the work of the Telephone Company under the Contract Labor Law, and the work, but paid the \$10,000 fine. He did this to show what he thought was the absurdity of the law. A month before the hearing he had completed and sent back some Scotch gardeners he had imported to work on his country place. On such occasions, Mr. Kennedy says, his servants have driven away employees of the telephone company, who have scaled the fences and straggled over the wall. Mr. Kennedy has books for wires, but he found that driving them off did not prevent them from renewing their work. He has had the wall of his premises almost constantly watched, and at times has sat himself on the wall, and almost always kept a watch for them, he decided to apply to the court.

TO MAKE COWLES PAY ALIMONY. Bostonian's Wife Wants Him Compelled to Give Goods. Lizzie V. Cowles, who recently obtained a judgment of absolute divorce against Eugene Cowles, singer in the Bostonians, with a provision for \$38 a week for her support and \$10 more for the support of their son, had a motion on before Justice Smyth of the Supreme Court yesterday to compel Cowles to give a bond for \$1,000 to secure payment of the alimony. Cowles, it was shown, is getting a salary of \$150 a week. Mrs. Cowles avers that she and her son are without support and that Cowles has gone on the road and will not return to her unless he is compelled to. The further hearing was over till next Friday.

RECENT VOLUMES: GLORIA VICTIS. By J. A. MITCHELL (Editor of Life), 12mo., \$1.25. A new book by the author of the popular "Amos Todd," now in its seventh edition. It represents his most important literary work to date, and it presents more sharply the views of certain aspects of New York life than have ever before appeared.

THE HISTORY OF OUR NAVY. From Its Origin to the Present Day. 1775-1897. By JOHN R. SIKES, 4 vols., 12mo., with 400 illustrations, maps, and diagrams, \$8.00. On the whole the best history of the United States Navy thus far published. "Army and Navy Journal."

SIR TOADY LION

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By S. R. CROCKETT, Author of "Sweetheart Travellers," "The Raiders," &c. ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON BROWNE.

TOO GOOD BOYS. Not allowed to read this book. By order Field Marshal Napoleon Smith.

The success of "Sweetheart Travellers" established Mr. Crockett's position as the prince of story tellers for the young. His new book is said to be founded on the incidents of his own childhood. That it is charming and attractive to adults, as well as to young people, will not surprise the thousands of readers who enjoyed "Sweetheart Travellers." GORDON BROWNE has illustrated it profusely, and it will be published in uniformity with "SWEETHEART TRAVELLERS."

SWEETHEART TRAVELLERS. "A child's book for children, for women and for men." By S. R. CROCKETT. With numerous illustrations by GORDON BROWNE and W. H. GROOMER.

THE STORY OF GLADSTONE'S LIFE. By JUSTIN MCCARTHY, author of "A History of Our Own Times." Illustrated with numerous Portraits, Views of Places associated with Mr. Gladstone's Life, &c. Cloth. 8vo. Price \$6.

LITTLE HOMESPUN. (Just out.) Many of the characters who made so many friends in "Courage" appear in this book. The story describes a summer spent by the heroine and some friends near Washington and incidentally describes visits to several of the historical spots in the vicinity.

A LOYAL LITTLE RED COAT. A Story of Childhood in New York a Hundred Years ago. With over sixty vignette illustrations by H. A. OGDEN. 4to, cloth, \$1.50.

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