SOME NEW BOOKS.

Four American Novels.

Among the American novels deserving of high commendation which have been published during the last year is *Red Rock, A Chronicle of Reconstruction*, by THOMAS NELSON PAGE (Scribner's). This story is, primarily, a work of art; from the æsthetic view point, it leaves but little, if anything, to be desired. It is more than this, however; it is inspired by a patriotic motive. We do not hesitate to say that no other book published since the close of the Civil War has done so much to give Northern readers that thorough knowledge of their Southern brethren which is the indispensable condition of a revival of sympathy and friendship between the sections. With lucidity and vividness the author brings out the inherited principles and traditions that impelled the South to secession, and; by the singular attractiveness of the types that he depicts, he wins respect and admiration for the fine elements of the Southern character. The scene and the time are happily chosen for his purpose. It is in a Virginia rural community, amid the throes of the reconstruction period, that the lot of the men and women who live on Mr. Page's canvas is appropriately; cast. No State but Virginia would suit them; no date but the year or two immediately following the collapse of the Rebellion. At that stage of the readjustment of society in the Old Dominion to strange conditions, much of the past was left and the future was still undefined. In the relations of the larger landowners to one another, to their white dependents, to their colored household servants, and to the black field laborers, there yet survived not a little of the freedom, the gayety, the courtesy, the kindness, and, we may add, the improvidence, of the ante-bellum atmosphere The generation which had to solve for Virginia the grave problems of reconstruction had been reared before the outbreak of secession; the generation which was to know the Civil War from history only was as yet unborn. Such was the pivotal epoch which Mr. Page has selected for description, and it is plain that he could have chosen none more essentially dramatic or more replete with contrasts. Among the masculine examples of the twofold effect produced upon Virginians of 1865-6 by their earlier blithe environment and their recent grievous experience, there is just such a variety as the difference of temperaments might be expected to assure. Bitterness, nay vindictiveness, here; an unquenchable optimism there; in one man the old recklessness persists; in another, we discern the germs of a new thrift and foresight. Diverse as was the influence of impoverishment upon the former masters, our author shows that the consequences of emancipation were no less manifold among the former slaves. Devotion here; defiance there; sometimes an inclination to adhere to lifelong habits of labor; at other times, a disposition to abandon them; in the beginning, a tendency to lean, as of old, upon the rural aristocracy; followed by suspicion, at first of slow growth, but aggravated and sown broadcast by political emissaries of a low grade from the Northern States. A point to which attention is directed by Mr. Page is the marked dissimilarity on the part of the Northern men who were temporarily brought into close contact with the ex-slaveholders on the one hand and the ex-slaves on the other. We are told that, as a rule, nothing could be more magnanimous, more sympathetic, more discreetly desirous of alleviating hardship, than the conduct of Northern officers belonging to the regular army. Very different was the attitude of the ex-sutlers, transformed into village storekeepers, and of the horde of speculators, who settled like vultures upon mortgaged estates, whose owners were too poor to till them. More galling and more harmful still, because tainted with ingratitude and envenomed with long-hidden envy, was the course pursued by many a native poor white, who, before the war, had been only too glad to secure the post of overseer.

All of these products of the tragical contrast between antecedent and actual circumstances, products each of which had its part to play in the drama of Reconstruction, stand forth sharp and clear upon Mr. Page's canvas and contribute their several shares to the evolution of the tale. Considered merely as a narrative, the exposition of a plot amid the unravelling of which we watch the development of character under the impact of incident, this story "Red Rock," deserves to have as it already has had, a multitude of readers. If we were asked, however, to single out its capital merit, we should say that it lies in the author's delineation of the purity, the truthfulness, the loyalty, the exquisite refinement, the graciousness, the charm of the Virginia gentlewoman of the generation born before the war. Were her manners antiquated? Were they provincial? Mr. Page shall answer. "Do you, young lady, observe Miss Thomasia the next time she enters the room or addresses a servant; and do you, good sir, polished by travel and contact with the most fashionable—second-class—society of two continents, watch Gen. Legaie and Dr. Cary when they meet Miss Thomasia, or greet the applewoman on the corner, or the waggoner on the road. What an air suddenly comes in with them of old Courts and polished halls, when all gentlemen bowed low before ladies and wore swords to defend their honor! What an odor, as it were, of those gardens which Watteau painted floats in as they enter! Does the young man of to-day imagine that the Virginia gentleman of forty years ago might be easily imitated or surpassed? That is not Mr. Page's opinion "Do not you attempt it," he tells us. "You cannot do it. You are thinking of yourself; they were thinking of others and the devoirs they owed them. You are republican, and brought up to consider yourself 'as good as any and better than most.' Sound doctrine for the citizen, no doubt; but it spoils the bow. Even you, Miss or Madam, for all your silks or satins, cannot do it like Miss Thomasia. You are imitating the Duchess you saw once, perhaps, in Hyde Park. The Duchess would have imitated Miss Thomasia. You are, at best, an imitation; Miss Thomasia is the reality. Do not laugh at her or call her provincial. She belongs to the realm where sincerity dwells and the heart still rules—the realm of old-time courtesy and high breeding; you are the real provincial. It is a wide realm, though; and, some day, if Heaven be good to you, you may reach it. But it must be by the highway of Sincerity and Truth. No other road leads there." We must find space for one more quotation. It is from the preface, and conveys the quintessence of the impression which the author intended to produce, and has produced, by his book. "The people of that section"—the Red Rock section of Virginia—"were the product of a system of which it is the fashion nowadays to have only words of condemnation. Every ass that passes by kicks at the dead lion. It was an Oligarchy, they say, which ruled and lorded it over all but those favored ones who belonged to it. But has one ever known the members of a Democracy to rule so justly? If they shone in prosperity, much more they shone in adversity; if they bore themselves haughtily in their day of triumph, they have borne defeat with splendid fortitude. Their old family seats, with everything else in the world, were lost to them; their dignity became grandeur. Their entire system crumbled and fell about them in ruins; they remained unmoved. They were subjected to the greatest humiliation of modern times: their slaves were put over them. They reconquered their section and preserved the civilization of the Anglo-Saxons."

II.

We believe that, in the year now nearly ended, no novel has attained so large a circulation as *David Harum*, by EDWARD NOYES WESTCOTT (Appleton's). How shall we explain the phenomenon? It is scarcely explicable by the assertion that "David Harum" is a loose-jointed, unconventional, ineffectual tale built around some horse-trade stories. Undoubtedly, the horse-trade stories are there, and good ones they are. Even were they cut out, the figure of David Harum himself would remain almost unmutilated; there would be enough left to exhibit the sturdy, cross-grained, humorous, superficially hard, but fundamentally winning traits of a truly original individuality, if not, as the author himself assures us, of a type by no means unfamiliar in Central New York, but hitherto undepicted if not unstudied. As for the epithet, loose-jointed, there may be some ground for it. There are some feminine characters in the book who might be dropped as superfluous; they sin against a cardinal canon of the novelist's art, having nothing whatever to do with the development of the plot, if plot there may be said to be. It must also be acknowledged that, in the fortunes of the *jeune premier* of the comedy, we take only a languid interest. Too often, his pale conventionalism serves only the purpose of a foil for the rugged personality which fills the foreground of the stage. The lady of his affections is even more spectral than he. There is, on the other hand, no doubt about the vitality, the realism, the crispness of certain characterizations; those, for instance, of Harum's sister and of the Deacon, subordinate as their portraits are to the half-grotesque but interesting lineaments of the country banker himself, who knows little of books but much of human nature, and in whom some unexpected gleams of Quixotic generosity and tenderness light up his bucolic wisdom. Sweet and juicy at the kernel, David Harum's outside is as rough and shaggy as a hickorynut's. A rude experience of his narrow world has taught him suspicion. He does not take for granted that every customer and every new acquaintance is honest and loyal as the day. He tests before he trusts; but, when he gives his confidence, it is without reserve. Meanwhile he is an optimist in his way. He thinks that even troubles have their uses: are diversions, in fact. "A reasonable amount of fleas," he says, "is good for a dog; they keep him from broodin' on bein' a dog." But, while the reputed Shylock is a real philanthropist, he opines that business is business, and that there is no fun in bargaining if one can't get the best of it. As a banker, his integrity is flawless; nevertheless, being no saint, but a human being subject to the law of the survival of the fittest, he acknowledges that, in a horse trade, he is guided by a comical distortion of the golden rule: "Do unto the other feller the way he'd like to do unto you—an' do it fust." We would not take leave of a book which has contributed a new and striking personality to American literature without expressing the regret which, we are sure, is shared by its multitudinous readers, that no second novel can be looked for from the author's hand. He was not destined to know of his work's success, for he died while its proofsheets were undergoing revision.

III.

We should class with American novels the volumes respectively entitled *Friends in Exile* and *Lady Blanche's Salon*, both of which are published by F. Tennyson Neely, because their author, Mr. Lloyd Bryce, is an American, and because the former story deals with a theme upon which Mr. Henry James loves to discourse, that of Americans in Europe, while, in the latter tale, a certain phase of London society is studied from an American point of view. If by "Friends in Exile" are meant travelling Americans, it is well known that these are apt to include some who would not be accepted, even as acquaintances, on this side of the Atlantic. Especially exposed to undesirable entanglements is he who occupies the post of Ambassador or Minister at a foreign capital, especially if he has been more familiar hitherto with politics than with diplomacy, and if his experience has lain in legislative chambers rather than in drawing-rooms. We have sent since the Civil War at least one Minister to France and one Minister to Italy who might have served as the original of the able and interesting, but unconventional, and, where women are concerned, somewhat gullible person, who, in Mr. Bryce's novel, represents the United States at Paris. His own sex would find Judge Jackson quite keensighted enough for self-defence, but he is easily deluded by a fascinating compatriot, who, without having taken the trouble to secure a divorce from an unappreciated husband, has visited Europe in quest of adventures. There is humor in the description of the skill with which the net of coquetry is thrown around the amateur diplomatist, and of the instinctive uneasiness with which his middle-aged and commonplace wife surveys the manœuvres of which her lord and master is the object. Mrs. Asher is the name of the somewhat mysterious and too captivating *Americaine*, and the impression which she made at an early stage upon the American Ambassador and his wife is neatly indicated in the following bit of dialogue: "I wish we could go home to Dianapolis, Samuel," exclaimed Mrs. Jackson to her husband as they were returning from a ball. "Why so, mother?" "It is difficult to explain, Samuel. I do not wish to set myself up on a pedestal, or assume a monopoly of all the virtues; but do you know it sometimes seems to me," said the lady earnestly, "that Paris is an immoral city." It shocks her, she says, to see married women dancing with other women's husbands She also opines that people preserve their individuality more distinctly, and are more to each other in smaller places than in a city like Paris which is, in truth, a world. "Yes, that has often occurred to me, also," replied the Ambassador; "Crowds destroy friendship as well as true domesticity. "But we, at any rate, will always be all in all to each other will we not, Samuel? You will never let these crowds draw us asunder, or any one come between us?" Judge Jackson put his arm affectionately about his wife's waist. "I'm not the kind, Martha, to let any one come between us, am I?" "But Mrs. Asher, Samuel; it does seem, at times, as if you took a heap of interest in her." "Mrs. Asher? Why, she's a countrywoman of ours. I'm here to protect her. A mere chit of a woman, scarcely more than a child." "True, Samuel, but you know it sometimes seems to me as if she were quite capable of protecting herself." It should not be inferred from this quotation that "Friends in Exile" is a comedy; on the contrary, it has a tragic close, and the writer's power of characterization is signally attested by the fact that we cannot witness without sympathy the fate of the weak and perverse, but, nevertheless, attractive woman who is the heroine of the story.

The subject of *Lady Blanche's Salon* is suggested by the sub-title "A Story of Some Souls." The coterie of which Lady Blanche is the star is euphuistically described as composed exclusively of "souls;" bodies are supposed to be eliminated, but their theoretical absence does not seem to impair a lady's taste in dress. Whether there is, or is not, a presumption that "souls" would be successful in this mundane sphere, we know not; it is certain that the frequenters of Lady Blanche's salon were failures, selected by her for that very reason. Her husband explains that "she can play the leading part so much more easily with the derelicts of life than with really successful people." A pack of incapables offers her an effective background. These failures, each of whom is brought upon the stage and made to talk after his kind, include a "positivist with sallow complexion, an incisive manner and a general tendency to pessimistic comment; an unfrocked priest who had left the Church for the study of bacteriology, and, it was said, in company with a layman's wife; a Parsee who wore a purple turban and brought with him the atmosphere of faraway lands and religions; a Jewish rabbi with a dark beard and a habit of sitting uneasily on the edge of a chair; an inventor in search of capital that proved illusive; a dramatist who had had six plays damned; a Decadent poet responsible for the failure of his publisher; and two artists, one of whom could paint but not talk, while the other could talk but not paint." To sum up, in the words of Lady Blanche's husband, "the damndest mixture a respectable house in London could produce." It may occur to the reader that, to label these gentlemen in advance as failures is an uncommonly asjute proceeding on the author's part, because, if any of their conversational pyrotechnics should miss fire, nobody would be disappointed. In point of fact, however, the "souls" talk well, and, as for Lady Blanche herself, she is an extremely winsome person. The love affair which runs through the story is recounted with singular refinement. The heroine's fastidious purity puts the normal Britannic denouement out of the question. The tale ends sadly; how could it end otherwise, when a spiritual-minded woman is beloved by two men, and he whom she loves is not her husband.

The Prince de Ligne's Memoirs.

We had occasion, not long ago, to refer to an abridgement of the memoirs of the Duc de Saint-Simon, arranged and translated by Miss KATHERINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY, published by Messrs. Hardy, Pratt & Co. We are indebted to the same translator and the same publishers for a judicious and copious selection in two volumes, large octavo, from the *Memoirs of the Prince de Ligne*. The author of the papers, here submitted in an English version, died in 1814; his comparative nearness to our own time will cause his memoirs to be read with more interest than those of Saint-Simon, although they have no higher value for the student of history. The Prince de Ligne's style, moreover, is far more captivating; it is the conversational style of a well read, singularly clever, exquisitely well bred and exceptionally charming man of the world. His reminiscences cover the whole period from the beginning of the Seven Year's War to the first abdication of Napoleon. He was an intimate personal friend of Marie Antoinette, of the Empress Catherine of Russia and of Joseph II. of Austria. He was also a friend and correspondent of Frederick the Great, of Stanislaus Poniatowski, King of Poland, of Voltaire, Rousseau, Beaumarchais, Casanova and a host of other persons more or less famous in their day. All of these persons, and many others, are depicted with a vividness as striking as it is unconventional in the Prince's reminiscent writings. We shall endeavor to exemplify the attractiveness of the book before us by noting what the author has to say about two of the most eminent people whom we encounter in his memoirs.

We should begin by reminding the reader who the Prince de Ligne was, and how brilliant a part he played in the social world of the *ancien regime*. With the carelessness of a grand seigneur, he records on the first page of his memoirs that "a man in my chancellor's office, my German secretary thinks (and I, too, for that matter) that he has read on an old parchment that we are descended from a king of Bohemia. He also says that he has seen on a tomb, I do not know where, that we are descended from Charlemagne, through a certain Thierry d'Enfer; he says the genealogists give us the same stock as the House of Lorraine, but that others declare we are a branch of that of Baden. There must be something in all this, for my father was devilishly proud. What makes me think there may be a touch of Charlemagne or of Wittikind in our blood is that we have had the Golden Fleece for the last four centuries, and are princes of the Empire for the last two." The Prince adds: "We have always been brave from father to son; even the bastards who gloried in being called so, and had the rank of nobles. I have seen a tomb with this inscription: 'Bastard of Ligne, killed in Africa.' Many of my ancestors have been killed in battle. My great grandfather, a man of much merit, was imprisoned because of his bravery in Spain, where he was President of the council of war in Castile, Viceroy of Sicily, Governor General of the Milanais, &c.; often beating, sometimes beaten, and captured, at last, after marvellous deeds. My great grandmother—a princess of Nassau, daughter-in-law of the Lorraine-niece of Henri III—and my grandfather, were killed hunting at Baubour, (a hunting box near Belœil, in the Austrian Low Countries) in the woods, while waiting at their post for the boar. We may here mention that our Prince's mother was a Princesse de Salm. Born in the Austrian Low Countries in 1735, he was, at the age of thirteen, made a chamberlain at the Viennese Court by the Emperor Francis I. and, at the age of nineteen, he was married to a princess of Lichtenstein, by whom he had many children, although he saw her but infrequently. At the age of twenty-two, he entered the Austrian service in the Ligne dragoons, and rose to the rank of field-marshal. It was a great disappointment to him that he was never permitted to command in chief. Those who have studied his military career have expressed the opinion that he might have attained high military distinction had an opportunity been given him, for, without speaking of his intrepidity on the battlefield, he possessed the keen, quick and comprehensive glance of the true soldier. After the French occupation of Belgium and the confiscation of the revenues of his little principality, he retired to Vienna, where he employed himself in writing. At intervals, from 1795 to 1811, he published no fewer than thirty-four volumes, under the collective title of "A Literary, Military and Sentimental Miscellany." In 1812, he published a new collection of letters, and in 1816, after his death, there appeared in Berlin a book called "Philosophy of Catholicism." He left many unpublished works, one of which, a fragmentary memoir, saw the light in 1845-46 in the Paris *Revue Nouvelle*.

I.

When the Prince de Ligne was sojourning in Paris near the close of the reign of Louis XV, he saw a good deal of Mme. Du Barry, whom he much preferred to the Pompadour. "I do not know why," he says, in his memoirs, "I did not profit by the friendship Mme. Du Barry had for me before it turned into love. From delicacy, I refused to ask her assistance to gain a lawsuit of some consequence to me. One day at her toilette, I told her, when she asked me before the King for a memorandum about it, that I would give it to Lacroix, the hairdresser, for her curlpapers, for that was the only means I knew of getting business into her head. She laughed, and the King, too, and he repeated it twenty times running, for he was a kind of automaton that seemed to be wound up to go by springs. On account of friends of my friends, the De Choiseul's, for whom, however, I did not care much, I did not continue to visit Mme. Du Barry, and scarcely saw her again until within a few months of the King's death. But I did have a duel on her behalf with that queen of intriguers, Mme. de N—k—rck—, who wanted to marry the King, and took to religion for that purpose. In a letter of explanation which I wrote to her, I said, 'Your grace, Madame, the King's graces and the grace of God give you a right to everything; nevertheless, etc.'" Elsewhere in his memoirs the Prince denounces those who had only ill words for the Du Barry. "The vile courtiers of Mme. de Pompadour, a little bourgeoise who eloped from her husband, cried out upon the corruption of morals when the King took another mistress, although the latter had a far better heart than the former, and did not meddle in either war or politics," except to remove Choiseul and substitute the Duc d'Aiguillon in the post of *Premier Ministre*. The author of these memoirs recalls the fact that, when Louis XV was dying, the courtiers of Mme. Du Barry abandoned her, but he goes on to say: "I who had neglected her until recently for five or six years, was now with her constantly I said to her famous brother-in-law, the *roue* du Barry, 'the farce is played out, and you can go.' 'Why should I go?' he said in his droll provincial accent; 'If they affront me, I'll turn the kingdom into a republic.' That sounded at the time like the impossible boast of a braggart, but the future realized it through men who were more rascally, but less able than he. Some time later, the young King (Louis XVI) heard that I had given a letter from Mme. Du Barry to the Queen (Marie Antoinette) asking Her Majesty to smooth the Du Barry's pecuniary affairs which her unconcern and perfect disinterestedness had allowed to become very bad at the death of the late King.'That is a pretty embassy you have taken upon yourself,' the young King said to me. I replied that I took it because I was quite certain no one but I would dare to do so. On my way to Versailles, I used to go round by Luciennes [Mme. Du Barry's chalet]; Mme. Du Barry was always a most excellent person, and, as late as seven years ago [that is about the date of her execution] was very handsome to see and very good to know."

We pass to some of the pages which contain the portrait of Marie Antoinette. On page 199 of the first volume, we read that "As for the Queen, the radiance of her presence harmed her. The jealousy of the women whom she crushed by the beauty of her complexion and the carriage of her head, ever seeking to harm her as a woman, harmed her also as a Queen." The Prince goes on to show how every innocent act of hers would be distorted by feminine onlookers. Thus, "She defended herself against the intrigues of two parties, each of which wanted to give her a lover, on which the women of the Court [the Polignacs and Mme. de Lamballe are, of course, excepted] declared her inimical 'to Frenchmen;' and all the more because she was friendly with foreigners from whom she had neither traps nor importunity to fear." Then, again, "She dines with one friend, and, sometimes, goes to see another friend after supper; so they say she is 'familiar.' That is not what the few persons who lived in her familiarity would say. Her delicate, sure sense of the becoming awed them as much as her majesty. It was as impossible to forget it as it was to forget one's self. She is sensible of the friendship of certain persons who are the most devoted to her; then she is declared to be 'enamored' of them. Sometimes, she exacts too much for their families; then she is 'unreasonable.'" Her promenades in the evening on the terrace or on horseback in the Bois de Boulogne, or sometimes on foot by the music around the orangery, 'seemed suspicious.' Her most naive pleasures were thought criminal; her general loving-kindness was 'coquettish.' She feared to win at cards at which she was compelled to play, whereupon the vicious people would say that she 'wasted the money of the State.' Until she was twenty-five years old, she laughed, and sang, and danced; soured observers called her 'frivolous.' By and by, the affairs of the kingdom became embroiled, and the spirit of party divided society; she would take no sides, so they denounced her as 'ungrateful.' Foreseeing misfortunes, she no longer amused herself; consequently, they declared her 'intriguing.' She dropped certain little requests or recommendations she had made to the King or the Ministers as soon as she feared they were troublesome; then she was 'fickle.'" With so many crimes laid to her charge, and all so well proved, did she not, asks our author, deserve her misfortunes?

Elsewhere, we read that "The Queen, beautiful as the day, and almost always in her own hair except on occasions of ceremony, when her toilet, about which she never cared, was regulated for her—was naturally talked about; for everybody wanted to please her. The late Leczinska (the consort of Louis XV.), old before her time, and rather ugly, in a large cap called, I think, 'butterfly,' would sometimes command certain questionable plays at the theatre; but no one found fault with her for that. Devout ladies like scandals. When in our time they gave us a play of that sort we used to call it the '*repertoire de la Reine*,' and Marie Antoinette would scold us, laughing, and say we might at least make known that it was the Queen who came before her. No one ever dared to risk too free a speech in her presence, nor too gay a tale, nor a coarse insinuation. She had taste and judgment; and, as for the three Graces, she united them all in herself alone." Who could see her, day after day, continues our author, without adoring her? "I did not feel it wholly until she said to me: 'My mother thinks it wrong that you should be so long at Versailles. Go and spend a little time with your regiment, and write letters to Vienna, to let them know you are there, and then come back here.' The kindness, the delicacy, but more than all, the thought that I must spend two weeks away from her brought the tears to my eyes, which her pretty heedlessness of those early days, keeping her a hundred leagues away from gallantry, prevented her from seeing. As I have never believed in passions that are not reciprocal, two weeks cured me of what I avow here to myself for the first time, and would never avow to others in her lifetime for fear of being laughed at. But consider," continues the Prince de Ligne, "how this sentiment, which gave place to the warmest friendship, would have detected a passion in that charming Queen, had she felt one for any man; and with what horror I saw her given in Paris and thence, thanks to their vile libels, all over Europe, to the Duke de Coigny, to M. le Comte D'Artois, M. de Lamberti, M. de Fersen, Mr. Conway, Lord Stratheden and other Englishmen as silly as himself, and two or three stupid Germans. Did I ever see aught in her society that did not bear the stamp of grace, kindness and good taste? She scented an intriguer at a league's distance. She detested pretensions of all kinds."

II.

On page 209 our author recurs to this subject. "Her so-called gallantry was never anything but a deep and perhaps distinguishing friendship for one or two persons, and the general coquetry of a woman and a queen who seeks to please everybody. Even in those earliest days, when her youth and inexperience might have encouraged some to be too much at their ease with her, there was not one of us who had the happiness of daily intercourse with her who would have dared to abuse it by even the most trifling impropriety. She made herself the Queen without being aware of it, and we adored her, but did not dream of loving her. Her father, the Emperor Francis I, received at his table the principal officers of the Crown, and allowed them the utmost liberty. Her mother, the Empress Maria Theresa, admitted to her intimacy most of the court ladies, and even stayed with some during the summer in their country houses. She might there be seen walking up and down and knitting in the gardens, or reading in a grotto, without a single lady of honor in attedance. It was thus that Marie Antoinette from her very childhood had acquired habits of innocent freedom and familiarity, which, when she brought them to France, were judged severely." We are assured that the blame cast upon her extravagance and luxury was just as illfounded. Our author declares that "there was never a lady in waiting, a king's mistress or a minister's wife who did not have more than she. She thought so little of her toilet that, for a long time, she let her hair be dressed extremely ill by a man called Larceleur, who was among those who went to fetch her from Vienna, because she feared to give him pain by dismissing him. It is true that, as soon as she was out of his hands, she would put her own hands to her hair and arrange it to suit her face. As for the slander about her gambling, I never saw her lose more than two thousand louis, and that was at games of etiquette, where she was always afraid of winning from those who were obliged to take part in them. I remember that one day I went into the antechamber and begged from her footmen twenty-five louis, which she wanted to give to a lady in need." With regard to Marie Antoinette's finances, the Prince remembers that "one day she amused herself very much when I laughed at her strong box, in which I knew that there was not a single louis, being taken to Fontainebleau at full galop, surrounded by guards, according to a ridiculous court custom, like numerous others, such, for instance, as paying 60,000 francs a year for twine to tie up parcels. The Queen laughed herself at abuses she dared not reform; and especially about her chicken, which cost a hundred louis a year. I forget whether it was the late Queen or Marie Therese, or Anne d'Autriche, who asked for a chicken after her dinner for either herself or her dogs. There was none to be had, and, every year since then, provision had been made at the same hour, which became, in the end, a regular court charge and perquisite." We are told on page 210 that, after a while the Queen, being no longer so very young, thought that she might enjoy the opera balls as quietly and safely as the most ordinary woman of her kingdom. "She was not more fortunate in this than in other matters. In fact, I could prove that, beginning with the death of five or six hundred persons on the day of her marriage with the best but not most tempting man in the kingdom, I have never known her to enjoy a perfectly happy day. The opera balls were the signal for fresh persecution. The Queen, not to be recognized, as she was certain of being, by us, and even by Frenchmen who knew her but slightly, would speak only to puzzled foreigners. Hence a thousand stories and a thousand lovers, English, Russians, Swedes and Poles. I never liked that she should go to those balls, partly for this very reason, and partly because she was very tiresome the next day, having so many things to tell about the masks, and what she had said and what they had said to her, till it was quite intolerable. If we had been willing to do the same, it would have been more piquant than her pretended adventures."

It should be borne in mind that these memoirs were not published until many years after the author's death. Touching this point, the Prince himself remarks: "I should not write all this if I were to be read at present, but a hundred years later these little things which now seem nothing will be pleasant. I judge from what I have seen of the 'Souvenirs of Madame de Caylus,' the 'Memoirs of the Mother of the Regent,' those of Saint-Simon and other writers of anecdotes of the Court of France of their respective periods. There are hundreds of other anecdotes that I have now forgotten that are worth, perhaps, more than these." One or two of such anecdotes recur to our author later, and will be found set down on pages 283-85. It was on his return from Poland in 1780, after the death of the Empress Maria Theresa, that he had the ill fortune to displease the Queen very innocently. "As she mourned the death of her mother so deeply, I did not expect to see her first in public. But one of those officious persons who are always seeing and hearing things crookedly found me with the Comtesse Diane [de Polignac] during the hour for a public dinner of the Queen. 'She knows you have arrived,' he said, 'and she takes it very ill of you not to go to her at once.' I was foolish enough to believe him, and went. When she saw me the Queen began to weep before all the Court, who were present, as usual, at the Sunday dinner, and she said to me, on leaving the table: 'You might have spared my feelings this public scene. You are Austrian enough not to disregard the customs of my country.' I explained to her the cause of my indiscretion, and the storm, like so many others, where we live in a zone of tempests, went by." It seems that, on another occasion, the Prince found himself suddenly out of favor with the Queen without suspecting it, because of some trifling bit of gayety he had permitted himself, so she told him afterward, about the Emperor and the Queen of Naples. "While she was playing cards in the apartments of the Princesse de Lamballe I placed myself behind her chair with my usual confidence, which never supposes that people are displeased with me. She did not speak to me, but I thought that was only because I was so much with her. I spoke to her, and she answered curtly; still I suspected nothing. Mme. de Lamballe reminded me of it after the game and seemed quite frightened, and, being as good and kind as she is pretty, she promised to find out the reason. She told me the next day. As there was a mask ball in Paris that night, I hoped for an opportunity to have an explanation with the Queen. She (Mme. de Lamballe) noticed that I was extremely sad all day, and she told Mme. de Simiane to make me believe that she was the Queen, telling her a part of our quarrel, and assuring her that I should be a very good subject to mystify. I fell into the trap. Mme. de Simiane showed me her beautiful hands, which were not, however, as beautiful as those of the Queen, but she made them her letters of credit. I was agitated; I believe I wept, and I justified myself with excessive warmth. She promised that we should continue on the same good terms as before. I represented to her that one never could trust to kings and queens, and I was afraid she would not be as kind to me the next day; therefore, to reassure me, I begged her to pinch the tip of her right ear every time that I pinched mine during the play the next evening at Versailles, where I always stood just below her box. In vain did I almost tear my ear off; the Queen did not touch hers. I had an opportunity of speaking to her about it as we came out. She thought me crazy, and it made her laugh so much that she forgot her anger; which, after all, was not great, and there is but a step from laughter to forgiveness. People who laugh are always ready to pardon, and all the more if they are adorable young queens." The author's recollections of Marie Antoinette end with this apostrophe: "If there be, indeed, Elysian Fields hereafter, that beautiful and most unfortunate Queen will tell me she remembers how, on her relating to me some outrage the Parisians had done her, I called them her 'vile, charming subjects,' seeing even then the harm done by levity and ingratitude, but far, indeed, from foreseeing that those, subjects would cease to be charming, and become what they have been from 1789 to 1797. Noble, sublime beautiful, adorable and hapless daughter and sister of my masters, look down from where you are amid the recompense of your virtues and see the eternal regrets of those who, like myself, were the witnesses of your goodness, and are ever filled with tender admiration and unceasing sorrow."

III.

In 1780 the Prince de Ligne paid his first visit to Russia. Owing to the regard which the Emperor Joseph II. was known to have for him, our author was received with great cordiality at the Court of Petersburg. From that time until her death in 1796 the Empress Catherine II, was in more or less frequent correspondence with him. The account given of her in this book differs materially from most of the current biographies The first portrait of Catherine, a rough draught, will be found on pages 303-6 of the first volume. The Prince testifies that "The Empress is a mixture of soul and good sense, of loftiness and vigor. Those are the four columns that support the great colossus that she governs. Her perceptions are not quick; one must never be too subtle in jest or wit, for she is liable to suppose it the reverse of what is meant; what we say to her must be as simple as she herself. Her Majesty is a little susceptible. If her imperial self-love takes umbrage as to her wars or her finances, or even as to the Russian climate, she is no longer at her ease. But, far from revenging herself, even for a real offence, she merely withdraws her familiarity, and it is difficult to obtain it again. She has so amazing a kindliness that, even after heavy labors, which may have related to treaties of alliance or partitions of Europe and Asia, she is ready to concern herself with the interests of her friends; persuading one of them, for instance, as I knew her to do, to cease making debts." In proof of what he has said as to Catherine's manner of sometimes taking things askew, our author relates the following incident. It is, it seems, a Russian custom to chant the Te Deum all over the Empire after a victory; and, in Petersburg, a minister of state reads in a loud voice an account of the battle, with a list of killed and wounded and of all those who have specially distinguished themselves. "On one occasion when this was done, the Empress, on her return from the ceremony to give audience to M. de Segur (French Ambassador to the Russian Court) said to him: 'I beg your pardon for having kept you waiting.' To which, as a flatterer of charming good taste, he replied: 'Madam, I am resigned; though I foresee it will soon be intolerable, for we shall have these ceremonies every day.' Referring to this bit of flattery, which meant, of course, that he expected her to be always victorious, the Empress said to me: 'Did you notice how ill-humored the Comte de Segur was? These Frenchmen never can get accustomed to my successes.' In vain I endeavored to set her right. With an air of the utmost attention, she did not listen to me, or even understand that I was explaining the matter. Segur was not happy in his compliments. One day, when Peter the Great was mentioned before her, I said without wit, but with much truth, that she was worth more than he. Segur told her the same thing, but with far more delicacy, to which she answered: 'You are right, M. Le Comte, in saying that we cannot be compared.' He gave himself to all the devils; and, as for me, I could not speak for laughing."

The Prince de Ligne says that by principle, whether because she did not want to be led away in conversation, or because she wished to avoid being bored, the Empress never allowed anyone to speak to her on public affairs. "All things had to go through her ministers, who were only the canals of her ocean of wisdom; her own head was her cabinet. Catherine was never so great as under some reverse. She would have given her whole wealth, the last inch of her vast dominions, and life itself, sooner than do, I will not say a meanness, but any action that was not honorable. In her could be seen and noted all the points of difference between exalted and exaggerated sentiment." Our author goes on to say that, "When I found myself obliged by her great kindness to spend my days from 5 o'clock to 10 in her private society with five or six other persons, I brought her to trial in my own mind, and judged her living as the Kings of Egypt in ancient times were tried and judged at their deaths, in order to feel wholly at my ease. M. de la Rulhieres, in his history of 'Anarchy in Poland,' has collected all sorts of lies and false tales of every kind. Before speaking of the death of Peter III [Catherine's husband, who was strangled], he ought to have questioned, as I did, the old servants at Oranienbaum, where the Emperor was murdered. Nothing could better prove the total ignorance of the great Catherine about a death she never ordered than the perfect liberty those old servants of the Emperor had to tell what happened. Apparently, she is ignorant that the crime was imputed to her. I learned incidentally from those who did not like her that she was seized with an involuntary convulsion when she heard of the death at the house of Comte Panin, where she happened to be with the Grand Chamberlain Schuvaloff. Probably the fear of being thought an accomplice produced that effect. She did not dethrone her husband until she knew positively that, on the following day, he would incarcerate her in a convent for the sole crime of being loved by the Empire as much as he was detested by it." Another indication of Catherine's innocence is cited. "Jesting with us one day when the Grand Equerry Narischkin pretended to be the Grand Turk, 'Let us strangle him,' she said. Would she ever have uttered that word if she had stained her hands with a death of that kind? To this first accusation, her detractors have added crime upon crime The poisoning of Ivan, that of the first Grand Duchess, and, lastly, of Potemkin. The lies of lacqueys, or of souls as base, have endeavored to tarnish the lustre of that immortal reign. So much the worse for the fools who invented them, and the malignant hearts that believe them!" Our author concludes his first reminiscences of Catherine with the assurance that "It was for love of truth, and in order that nothing might trouble the pleasure I should have in being with her that I investigated these facts. But one only needed to see the Empress, to hear her, to know the history of her life, in order to be certain of her goodness, her justice and her unalterable kindness."

IV.

Early in 1786, the Empress Catherine II determined to make a journey through her newly acquired dominion of the Crimea, otherwise called the Greek Kingdom of Bosporus, which had been long ruled by Tartar Khans as vassals of the Ottoman Sultan, but which was ceded to Russia in 1783. This journey was intended to be, and was, a triumphal progress, and the Empress wrote to the Prince de Ligne inviting her to accompany her. Delays occurred so that the start was not made till Jan., 1787, when the Empress left Czarsko Zelo, attended by the principal personages of her Court, and by the Ambassadors of France, Austria, England and Prussia. The King of Poland met her on the way, and the Emperor of Austria, Joseph II, joined her at Kherson. The Prince de Ligne wrote a series of letters descriptive of this journey to the Marquise de Coigny; they are reproduced in the second volume of this work, and set forth the author's latest impressions of a remarkable woman. They were printed after the Empress's death by the author himself, who gives the following reason for their publication: "I request malicious persons who have read the 'Private Life of Catherine II,' and another libel called her 'Amours,' not to believe them. There may be a few little things that are true in the accounts which have appeared of the journey of the Empress to the Crimea; probably remembered and repeated by those to whom I told them. But, as they are mingled with other things that are not true at all, I have resolved to publish the letters that I wrote during this journey. If Her Imperial Majesty of all the Russias were still living, I should not publish her praises; when I sang them, she did not hear them, nor will she now."

The last letter which the Prince de Ligne received from the Empress Catherine II was penned in July, 1796. In November of that year she was seized with apoplexy, and died without regaining consciousness in the sixty-seventh year of her age. The Prince was staggered by the blow. With the Empress disappeared the last living link to his brilliant past; more than that, it was a loss to his affections. Immediately after her death, he wrote an account of her which was published in his miscellaneous works, and which is reproduced on pages 216-29 of the book before us. He begins by telling us that "She was still handsome sixteen years ago," that is to say in 1780, when she was fifty-one years old. "It was plain that she had always been beautiful rather than pretty; the majesty of her forehead was tempered by the eyes and the charm of her smile, but that forehead told all. Without being a Lavater, one could read there, as in a book, genius, justice, honesty, courage, depth, equanimity, gentleness, calmness, firmness. The breadth of that brow revealed the faculties of memory and imagination; there was room there for all. Her slightly pointed chin was not absolutely advanced, but it was certainly far from retreating, and had much nobility. The oval of her face was not well defined on this account; though the face itself was infinitely pleasing for the frankness and gayety that dwelt upon her lips. She had a fresh complexion and a beautiful bust; the last, however, only came to her at the cost of her waist, which once was slender almost to breaking. In Russia the women grow fat very fast." In those days it was by no means superfluous to add that she was fastidiously cleanly. Our author opines that, if she had not had a fashion of drawing her hair back, when it ought to have fallen lower and framed her face, she would certainly have looked better. "One scarcely perceived that she was short. She told me in her slow way that at one time she had been extremely quick in her movements—a thing of which it was impossible to form an idea. Her three bows in masculine fashion *a la Russe* were always made on entering a room, precisely in the same manner; one to the right, one to the left, the third to the middle in front of her. Everything about her was measured and methodical. She had the art of listening; and so great a habit of presence of mind that she seemed to be understanding when, perhaps, she was really thinking of something else. She never talked for the sake of talking, and she brought the best out of those who talked to her. Nevertheless, the Empress Maria Theresa had far more witchery and fascination. She gratified and allured much more than the Empress Catherine at first sight, being led on by the desire to please every one in general; then her grace gave her powers that were more or less studied. Our Empress charmed; the Russian Empress allowed the much less powerful impression that she first made to deepen. They resembled each other in one thing, namely, that though the universe should crumble at their feet, *impavidas ferient ruinae*. Nothing on earth could have made them give way. Their great souls were armored against reverses; enthusiasm flew before one and marched behind the other." The Prince de Ligne expresses the conviction that, if the sex of Catherine the Great had allowed her the activity of a man, able to see everything for himself and enter into all details, there would have not been a single abuse left in her dominions. Apart from these details, he does not hesitate to pronounce her a greater sovereign than was Peter the Great; she would never have made his shameful capitulation at the Pruth. We are told that her predecessors, Anne and Elizabeth, would, on the contrary, have made only commonplace men, whereas, as women, their reigns were not without glory. Catherine II united the qualities she had remarked in them with all those that made her the creator rather than the autocrat of her empire. She was easily a greater statesman than either of those Empresses; she never risked anything, and, whether belligerent or peacemaking, she never met with a single reverse.

The quality of Catherine's intellect was sturdy rather than supple. Our author recalls that 'she never said any but good things (I could cite thousands) yet never a witty one. 'Is it not true,' she said to me more than once, 'that you never heard me utter a *bon mot*? You never expected to find me so stupid, did you?'" The courtier replied that he preferred her careless talk, which grew sublime when it touched on noble facts of history, of feeling or of government. 'What sort of looking person did you suppose me to be?' was the next query. "Tall, stiff, eyes like stars and a great hoop." This amused her whenever she thought of it, and she often reproached the Prince for it. "I thought," I explained, "there would be nothing to do except admire; and admiration is wearisome." He goes on to note that it was the contrast of the simplicity of all she said in social life with the great things that she did which made her so piquant. She would laugh at paltry things, idle quotations, nonsense and could amuse herself with nothing. "Isn't it true," she asked one day, "that I should never have wit enough for Paris? I am convinced that, if I had been one of the women of my country who go there in travelling, the Parisians would never have asked me to supper." She called herself sometimes 'your imperturbable," because once when the two were speaking of the qualities of the soul, the Prince told her that was pre-eminently hers. The word, which took her a quarter of an hour to pronounce, rolling it out with her majestic and sonorous slowness, diverted her much, especially when, to lengthen it still more, she would say, "Have I then imperturbability? But what can you expect," she added. "Mlle. Gardel never taught me any better; she was one of those old French governesses, a refugee. She taught me enough to be married in my own neighborhood. But Mlle. Gardel and I, we never expected all this." The Empress, it seems, always accused herself of ignorance; and, one day, when she was arguing with the Prince on that point, and he had proved to her that she knew by heart Lycurgus, Solon, Pericles, Locke, Montesquieu and the great eras of Athens, Sparta, Rome, modern Italy, France and the histories of all lands, he said: "As your Majesty insists upon it, I shall say of you what the valet of Pere Griffet said of his master after complaining to me that his master never knew where he had put his snuff box, his pen or his handkerchief, 'believe me, Monsieur, that man is not what you think him. Outside of his learning, he knows nothing.'" Her Majesty made use of this pretension of ignorance to laugh at doctors, academists semi-learned men and sham conoisseurs.

V.

We are told that Catherine II. always carried with her in travelling the portrait of Peter the Great. She explained to our author why she did so. "It is that I may ask myself at any moment of the day, what would he have ordered, what would he have forbidden, what would he have done, were he now in my place?" She averred that what made her like Joseph II. was his resemblance to Peter the Great in activity, and the desire to be instructed and to give instruction, and also in his devotion to the State. "He has a serious mind," she said to the Prince de Ligne, "and is also very agreeable. He is always occupied in useful things; his head is forever at work." One could never say a depreciative word of Peter the Great or Louis XIV. before the Empress, or the least little thing against religion or morals; she would scarcely tolerate, either, anything the least risky, though carefully veiled, although she might laugh under her breath at it. She never allowed herself to jest in such matters or about persons. Sometimes, in presence of the one whom the joke concerned, she would touch upon it very gently, but she always ended by giving pleasure to the man himself. Upon her courage our author has on one or more occasions remarked: "Just before entering Barozisarai, our sixteen little Tartar horses were unable to hold back the great carriage with six places in which we made our entrance to the Crimea, and were forced to run away with it down the slope of a hill, with a precipice on one side. There was every reason to suppose that our necks would be broken. I should have been more frightened myself, but that I wanted to see if the Empress were so. She was perfectly calm—as if she was still at the breakfast table we had just left. I looked also at the Emperor [Joseph II.], who was putting a good face on an ugly matter. The sixteen little horses all fell down, one on top of another, as I had expected, and that saved our lives. But what an upsetting might have taken place in Europe! Sixty millions of inhabitants were within one minute of changing masters. I heard the touching 'Allah! Allah!' of our Tartar escort, invoking heaven to preserve the life of its new sovereign."

The Empress was very hard to please in her reading. She would have nothing sad, it appears, or too refined in quintessence of mind or feeling. She liked the romances of Le Sage, Moliere and Corneille. "Racine is not the man for me," she said, "except in 'Mithridates.'" Rabelais and Scarron had made her laugh in former times, but she did not recollect them. She had very little memory for frivolous or useless things, but she never forgot anything that was interesting. Characteristically, she liked the Plutarch of Amyot, the Tacitus of Amelot de la Houssaye, and Montaigne. "I am a Gaul of the North," she told our author. "I understand the old French, but I do not understand the new. I have tried to get something out of your clever men of isms. I have had them come to Russia, and have sometimes written to them, but they bore me and they never understand me. There's no one like my kind protector, Voltaire. Do you know it was he who brought me into vogue. He paid me well for the pleasure I have taken all my life in reading him; he has taught me a great many things while amusing me." Catherine II. neither liked nor really knew modern literature; she had more logic than letters. Even her frivolous writings, her comedies, for instance she composed some always had some moral purpose. All the letters that our author received from her are filled with large, strong and vividly luminous ideas; sometimes with keen criticisms, especially when something in Europe had made her indignant. Besides all this, much gayety and good nature. The Prince de Ligne thinks that "her style has more clearness than lightness; her serious works are profound. Her history of Russia is, to my mind, worth more than the chronological tables of President Henault; but little shadings and the charm of details and color were not her forte. Frederick the Great had no color, but he had all the rest, and he was better read than Catherine."

Her greatest dissimulation was in not saying all that she thought and all that she knew; nothing sly or insidious ever came from her lips. She was too proud to deceive; and, if she deceived herself, she would get out of it by relying on her luck and her superiority to events, which she loved to master Some thoughts, however, of the reverses that befell the reign of Louis XIV at its close did cross her mind, but they passed like clouds. "I am," the author says, "the only one that saw that, for a single quarter of an hour, the last declaration of war against Turkey made her reflect humbly that nothing in this world is stable, and that success and glory are uncertain. Yet she left her apartment that day with the same serene air she had worn before her courier departed, and with the same confidence with which she inspired from the first her whole empire." Her traits of humanity were of daily occurrence. Our author remembers her saying to him one day: "I made my fire myself this morning, so as not to oblige my servants to get up too early, because it is so cold. There was a little chimney-sweep in the chimney who never supposed I would get up at half past 5; he screamed like a demon; I put out the fire as fast as I could and begged his pardon." It is known that Catherine almost never sent anyone to Siberia, and she never condemned any one to death Often she appealed to the judges against their sentences; she would urge them to re-examine and prove whether or not she was wrong; and she frequently furnished the means of defence to accused persons. The Prince de Ligne, however, recalls that he, at times, detected a sort of sweet maliciousness in her—a glance of kindness or perhaps a benefit bestowed in order to embarrass those of whom she had reason to complain; such, for instance, as a grandee of the empire who had talked too freely about her. Here is an instance of her so-called despotism. She forbade a man of her court, who was an unconscionable spendthrift, to live in his own house, saying: "You shall have in mine twice a day a table served for twelve persons; the company you are so fond of having in your own house you will have in mine. I forbid you to ruin yourself. But I order you to continue the same extravagance here, as it gives you so much pleasure."

The portrait of Catherine II is thus completed by the Prince de Ligne: "Calumny which has not respected the most beautiful, the best, the most feeling, the most lovable of queens—whose soul and conduct I am, more than any other, able to justify—will doubtless, without respect for the greatest of sovereigns strew thorns upon her grave also; it snatched away the flowers that should have covered that of Antoinette; it will tear away the laurels from that of Catherine. The inventors of anecdotes, the libellers, the false ferrets of history, the evil-intentioned, the malignant by profession and all the heedless people seeking to say a piquant thing or earn a little money, may try, perhaps, to lower her celebrity But she will triumph over all People will remember of her what I have seen myself as I journeyed two thousand leagues beside her through her states; they will remember the love and adoration of her subjects, and, in her armies, the love and enthusiasm of her soldiers. I have seen the latter in the trenches braving the balls of the infidels and the rigor of the elements, consoling and animating their hearts with the name of Matouschka—their mother and their idol. I have here said what I would never say of the Empress during her lifetime, but what my love for truth has made me write on the morrow of the day when I learned that the brightest star that lighted our hemisphere had disappeared."

We have here been able to give only a faint idea of the attractiveness of these memoirs. We add that, notwithstanding the difficulties presented by the author's conversational and idiomatic style, the task of translation has been successfully, nay admirably, performed. The book should have a multitude of readers. None, assuredly, who desire a well-selected library will dispense with it. M. W. H.

Bill's Serious Condition.

From the Memphis Scimitar.

In the mountains of east Tennessee the natives, or rather the lower circle of natives, take many liberties with the Queen's English. A physician who practises in that region tells of an incident illustrative of this. He had a patient who was being nursed by a friend. One day the doctor called and said to the nurse:

"Well Jim, how is Bill?"

"Bill air mighty bad to-day Doc," Jim responded. "His whole nervous system seems to be in a perfect strategy."