

LITERARY NEWS, VIEWS AND CRITICISM

NEW BOOKS.

Two Children in Africa.

Henry Sienkiewicz's story of "Through the Desert" (Benziger Brothers) relates the surprising adventures of two children who were kidnapped in Egypt and carried to Khartoum and Fashoda at the time when the Mahdi was conducting his holy war and who made their own independent way then through a still unexplored and most formidable country until a repeated benevolent fortune performed for them a final great favor and delivered them safely at Mombasa.

The children lived at Port Said. Stasch was strong and well exercised. He would row across to the Arabian shore, where he would catch a horse or a camel and play at being a fakir in the desert. He shot wild Egyptian ducks and geese with a steady hand and a true eye. He spoke Arabic like an Arab and knew the Kri-ashabli dialect, which is spoken throughout the greatest part of Africa.

At Port Said he could talk with the Dinka and Schilluk negroes, who came from far up the Nile. He also spoke English, French and Polish fluently. Of all languages Stasch loved Polish best. It is not a particularly servicable language in Africa, but he was a little partial. He had almost forgotten to tell that though the Arabs and negroes at Port Said would like fish Stasch could beat them all. On the way to Mombasa he traversed many broad places where he would have given much for the opportunity to swim.

At Medinet-el-Fayoum, where the children were spending Christmas, Stasch received a present of a fine rifle with plenty of cartridges. He went out shooting on the river, and at each shot the doomed bird fell. The Arab rowers would smack their lips and cry "Bismillah!" It was at this holiday time that the kidnapping was accomplished. The rifle was taken along, but naturally Stasch was not allowed to be its custodian. As the desert Nile at Stasch's order dropped one of her gloves and then the other. They were meant to be signs to guide rescuers, but the trick was detected. "You little viper!" hissed one of the captors, the brutal Gebhr. "He beat her with his scourge, a terrible Arabian whip which will tear open even the skin of a camel."

Stasch sprang like a wildcat at Gebhr and bore him down, but the powerful Sudanese recovered himself and scoured the boy. "I shall beat this scorpion to death," cried Gebhr, grinding his teeth. Happily the scorpion, Idris, who contained the kidnappers, interfered. "Begone, you fool!" he cried, and seizing Gebhr "he tossed and shook him like a palm branch."

There were perils on this journey. When the great hurricane was encountered "the hearts of the Arabs and Bedouins quaked with fear." They "well knew that if one of the great sand spouts which continually form in the centre of the vortex it would knock down the riders and then would in the twinkling of an eye lay them under mountains of sand, there to remain until some similar storm should uncover their bones and scatter them over the desert." After the hurricane came the thunder storm. "The lightning pierced the sand filled air with vivid blue and red flashes and the rain when it came resembled at first threads, then ropes, and at last it seemed as if overflowing streams from invisible clouds were deluging the earth. It was while the kidnappers were sleeping after the exhaustion of the sand storm and the refreshment of the rain that Stasch attempted to make an end of the enemy by shooting them all. He managed to obtain his rifle and the box of cartridges, but just as he was stepping from the mouth of the cave in order to take up a commanding position his dog, the great mastiff Saba, greeted him with a joyous bark, whereupon the kidnappers awoke, threw him down, bound him, beat him, stamped upon him and would have cut off his right hand if Idris had permitted it.

Stasch found opportunity to be rid of his captors. In their fear of a lion that barred their way in a narrow gorge they let Stasch have his gun. "He will kill the lion," they said. Their belief was justified. The lion crouched ready to spring. "At this instant Stasch sighted the gun straight at the middle of the animal's forehead and pulled the trigger. The shot resounded. The lion reared, rose to his full height, fell over on his back with his four paws in the air, and in his death agony rolled off the rock, plunging down to the bottom of the ravine."

After that Stasch turned his rifle upon the kidnappers and shot them all. The wicked Gebhr "fell to the ground like a bag of sand. The other Sudanese leaped forward in his saddle and struck the horse's neck with his bloody forehead. The two Bedouins screamed with fright and springing from their horses rushed at Stasch. The bend in the ravine was directly behind them, and had they fled there, as Stasch ardently hoped, they would have been able to escape death. But blinded by fear and rage, they thought to reach the boy and stab him before he had time to reload. Fools! They had scarcely gone a few steps when the trigger clicked again. The ravine rang with the echoes of the shots and both men fell face downward to the ground, wriggling like fish out of water. One of them was shot in the throat and not very dangerously wounded; he rose again and supported himself on his hands, but at the same moment Saba buried his teeth in his neck. Dead silence ensued. "It was all a shocking but a necessary deed. Nell was greatly overcome."

Stasch found quinine when Nell was taken with the fever. He came upon the camp of a Swiss explorer who was dying of wounds inflicted by a wild boar. In this camp there were also a number of negroes in the last stages of the sleeping sickness. When all these people had died Stasch and Nell went on their way with forty Remington rifles and a great supply of varied stores. They tamed an elephant, helped an African King to defeat his enemies, armed and drilled a large caravan, and finally in a most perilous moment sent up rockets which attracted to them Capt. Glen and Dr. Clark of Mombasa, whom they had once met in a railway train on the way from Port Said to Cairo. The story contains much botanical and other information concerning Africa. It is full of interest. An informing and a thoroughly exciting story.

Tales of Modern English Life.

The patient, careful dissection of a literary impostor is performed with evident relish by Mr. Philip Gibbs in "Oliver's Kind Women" (Dana Estes and Company, Boston). The selfishness and meanness of the handsome, attractive young fellow who makes everybody serve him is disclosed at the beginning; he is vain, lazy, eager for luxury, devoid of honor or morality and keeps harping on "temperament," but women like him accept, they allow him to pay them attentions and even to compromise them, but, with one exception, they will not let him make love to them. Like the men, who see through him, with all their liking they despise him. The people are chiefly of the newspaper world that Mr. Gibbs has described before. The episodes that serve to show the steps in the hero's degradation are interesting and amusing pictures of London life. The shock of poverty and starvation makes him pull himself together at the end, but the author is too honest to make his readers do more than hope that his temporary reform may last. It is a pretty thorough exposure of juvenile self-sufficiency, but there is vigor in the drawing of the subsidiary characters, there is truth in the pictures of London, and the subject is handled so lightly as to be entertaining and not depressing.

Another study of a "temperament," but of a different quality, will be found in Mr. Ralph Straus's "The Prison Without a Wall" (Henry Holt and Company). It is to Mr. De Morgan's example, we fear, that much of the air of mystery and much discursiveness in the book is due, but the author writes with distinction. The impetuous sister and the dreaming brother are equally helpless against the evil of the world. She chooses a special racial instead of a capacious man for a husband, but discards him when she finds out what she has done. He is physically deficient in some way and constitutionally averse to strife; he also shows great capacity for doing what he is told to do notwithstanding his absentmindedness. His choice of a college fellowship seems natural even if it conflicts with his duties as a rich landed proprietor. He is happy and contented in his scholarly pursuits, so that sending him off in quest of the eternal feminine seems needless cruelty; he comes to grief, of course, at the hands of an unprincipled adventuress, but retires, not much injured, into his college. The reader will like the amiable hero, though he will be perplexed over many of his actions; he will resent the abuse of his trust, but he will be glad to see a young child. He will be puzzled as to what the author means in this long story; it reads like a romance built by an undergraduate around a picturesque professor.

A new edition of Mr. Leonard Herrick's "The Actor-Manager" is issued by Mitchell Kennerly, accompanied by enthusiastic praise from Mr. W. D. Howells. The story is the best piece of work that we have seen by this author, and the beginning is brilliant. The adventures of a dreary Christmas Day interest the reader in the man and the woman; then, as Mr. Herrick is fond of doing, he drops the woman and the story turns to a description of the life of stage people. We have an actress who is certainly not new to either French or English fiction; competent, but caring nothing for her art save in so far as it assures her notoriety and financial success. She is analyzed rather cruelly, but from a man's point of view; we fancy she could have something to say for herself if she had the chance. The hero's individuality is blurred by his efforts to advance his ideals. The author shows his familiarity with the shady side of theatrical life and arouses sympathy for actors who are out of work, but is his psychology as deep as Mr. Howells thinks? A farcical idea is stretched out to make a whole volume by Mr. Vincent Brown in "The Irresistible Husband" (Brentano), and, as is the way in farces, the characters are fitted with their comic dress at the start and do not change. A youthful grandmother is exasperated by her family's flaunting her new dignity and the baby in her face. She runs away and tries to compromise herself, but is pursued by the family, which has no fears about her. There is much merry, inconsequential chatter and the grand-

FRAN

A New Novel by John Breckenridge Ellis

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mother is captured at last. The scene is at a Highland hotel, which gives the opportunity for jests at the Scotch. The people are pleasant enough except the villain, who is much too vulgar and stupid to fit in with the rest. We suspect the author's intention is to provide the text for a farce comedy.

Mystery Tales.

A slapdash criminal tale, with no consideration for human life, is what the reader will meet in Mr. Burton E. Stevenson's "The Boile Cabinet" (Dodd, Mead and Company). It belongs to the "Arsène Lupin" school, in which the malefactor gets the better of his pursuers regardless of all probability and takes pleasure in explaining, either before or after, just what has happened. The story will keep the reader excited from beginning to end; it differs from others of its kind in that one person, neither a reporter nor a detective, uses his brains to draw an inference. The reporter's strength, like the thief's, lies in intuition beyond the reader's powers. Mr. Stevenson would have added force to the stupid detective's downfall if he had made him a shade more dense than his intelligent sleuth. The cabinet story is a thriller, all the same.

Some vague knowledge about the facts that have been learned concerning radium would have helped Mr. Albert Dorrington in writing "The Radium Terrors" (Doubleday, Page and Company). It deals with the doings of a gang of Japanese malefactors, which tries to inflict injuries by the use of radium and to charge exorbitant fees for curing them in its hospital. There are other ingenious ideas, such as training a white rat for purposes of theft and using an automobile to buck through a crowd. The detectives, however, are very crude and their methods more arbitrary than the English law permits. The author writes an immature jumble which hardly holds the reader's interest.

It is a long distance from Wolfville to the East Side of New York, and Mr. Alfred Henry Lewis's art has suffered greatly in the journey. In "The Apocryphs of New York" (G. W. Dillingham Company) he gives an account of a number of crimes of violence that have been perpetrated in recent years, using real names and dressing them up in the sensational style that some journals affect, with liberal doses of dialect and appeals to police evidence. Where the stories are too slight for purposes of space they are padded out with generalities about the criminal classes.

Another Handbook on Socialism.

Ira D. Cross's "The Essentials of Socialism" (Macmillan) is offered as a handbook on socialism which shall not be biased by propaganda. In defining socialism Dr. Cross distinguishes among the three significations of the word—the set of theories, the political party and the proposed stage of society—but his own definition is concerned with the proposed stage of society. Other chapters deal with the inevitability of socialism, methods of obtaining collective ownership and so on. While Dr. Cross puts the burden of proof upon the Socialist, he presents the existing order rather as a buffer than as advancing any counter arguments of itself. Each chapter is followed by a detailed bibliography. The material is in general presented in an assertion borne out by history or statistics. Dr. Cross is more successful with this method than his excursions into argument, which are hardly close enough to satisfy the careful thinker. The average reader, however, will get from the book a good notion of what constitutes the essentials of socialism.

The Home University Library.

Of the excellent and helpful "Home University Library" (Williams and Norgate; Henry Holt and Company) nine more little volumes are at hand. As is inevitable in every "series," they differ in value and interest; some authors have done their best to make their special subjects popular, while others have taken their task in a more perfunctory spirit.

A brilliant and charming book, as delightful an introduction to the subject as can be imagined, is Mr. Bertrand Russell's "The Problem of Philosophy," a plain exposition of the fundamental ideas on which the science is based, the essentials only, put so clearly that a child can understand it. The mode of presentation is even more instructive than the matters it deals with. Equally entertaining and broad in its scope is Mr. R. B. Marrett's "Anthropology." The author does not restrict himself to a description of his science, but explains on what foundations it rests. In Dr. A. F. Pollard's "The History of England" too we have a good example of broad generalization that is not marred by trivial detail, a book that may be read with profit by all, even those most familiar with English history. Planned more on the model of textbooks are M. A. G. Bradley's "Canada," which describes the Dominion and its history under British rule, the French part being limited practically to present

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system and with contests between the heroine and a sanctimonious but forceful young woman who is her father's secretary and objects to losing her place. The father's affection for his daughter is well concealed till he finds her looking into the open jaws of a circus lion. The reason for all the mystery is a good one; some scenes are pretty and some characters are drawn cleverly. It is a pity that the author should not have made good use of his material.

At the start the reader of Mr. William R. Castle Jr.'s "The Green Vase" (Dodd, Mead and Company) will believe that he is to be treated to a comparison between the democratic vulgarity of South Boston and the aesthetic culture of the Back Bay, and will wonder how the heroine and her husband could have come together without discovering their dissimilar ideas. The dropping of a trolley car through the draw of the Dover street bridge, however, turns the story into an amnesia problem, the heroine living during the years of forgetfulness as the wife of the person who rescues her. The author expatiates on her innocence and pleads for the man who has stolen her. When he dies of consumption the husband turns up again and the wife's memory is restored through the article that gives a name to the story. What the story proves we cannot make out. An evil tongue and malignant person, who speaks in dialect and apparently is meant to be humorous, is a libel on the women of South Boston.

Some New Fiction.

The collection of short stories by Mr. Gouverneur Morris entitled "It" (Charles Scribner's Sons), though the contents vary in merit, is far above the average of magazine stories in interest and in style. The chief fault to be found with them is that the author is too conscious of the literary tools he is using and cares more for them than for the story he is telling. The title story, which is capital, may serve as an example. Mr. Morris works up his readers to a state of terror regarding the place and the idol which haunts it; he then turns to comedy, with the funny explanation of what the idol is and what it fears. The sea captain's love making is brilliant, but the use made of the menagerie he had on board is disappointing. Mr. Morris surely has got beyond the stage of experimenting, and he writes too well to permit himself such bits of smartness as the floating down the Hoogy of "butts of half burnt Hindus."

The beginning of "Loaf Farm Camp," by Mr. Harry Herbert Knibbs (Houghton Mifflin Company) is fresh and attractive, with its old prospector, its wild child of nature and its rough and tumble fight. Later there is also an estimable bulldog. So long as the story sticks to the backwoods it rings true. It turns to civilization very soon, however, becoming more and more commonplace and conventional. The old man's explanation, which might have fitted in the beginning, makes a very clumsy ending.

A charming and spirited young girl in "Naomi of the Island," by Lucy Thurston Abbott (L. C. Page and Company, Boston), is bullied by an ill tempered virago, who has undertaken to bring her up. She leaves her under distressing circumstances, completes her education, is taken up by wealthy people, with whose assistance she discomfits her former tormentor, and is recognized as belonging to them by means of a locket. She is loved by a young man and leaves the reader in doubt as to which one she prefers till the last page. This story, which is not startlingly novel, is interrupted at intervals by letters from a young woman who describes Porto Rico and her own love affairs there.

In "Polly of the Hospital Staff," by Emma C. Dowd (Houghton Mifflin Company), a locket is likewise the means of rescuing the heroine from the vulgar tenement people who had taken her in charge. The young person has an angelic disposition which endears her to all who meet her; she is employed to tell stories to the children in the convalescent ward and

renders services to other patients. She is adopted by the doctor when he marries her favorite nurse. It is a simple tale of a sort once very common, redolent of infantile sweetness.

Other Books.

Another highly interesting volume has been added to the Dent "Medieval Towns" series in "The Story of Avignon," by Mr. Thomas Okey, with pretty pictures by Mr. Percy Wadham (J. M. Dent and Sons; E. P. Dutton and Company). It is surprising that a town with the individuality of Avignon should have waited till it was the thirty-second in the series. There is plenty of romance connected with the little State that was only swallowed up by France at the Revolution, what with the Popes, the Schism and Petrarch, and we could have wished that the story had been entrusted to an author more lively and less dry than Mr. Okey. He has performed his task very conscientiously, devoting most of his space to the history, the authentic history that is to say, for he does not even mention Alphonse Daudet's name, but describing the buildings briefly also. A touch of sympathy for the Tartarian side of Provence, some reminiscence of the fair Imperia and her like, would not have been out of place, but Mr. Okey does what he can; he presents the serious facts in an authoritative manner and his monograph is valuable and instructive.

The chief interest in Mr. Charles Rowley's "Fifty Years of Work Without Wages" (Hodder and Stoughton; George H. Doran Company) lies in the side lights

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thrown in Manchester's struggle to improve itself. Mr. Rowley met many famous people of whom we would like to hear something, but save for a casual anecdote now and then, not always new, he tells nothing of interest. So with his sketches of bygone Manchester men; only occasionally does he give a definite picture. On the other hand he has gathered entertaining matter regarding the beginnings of the Owens college and the steps in building up the university; he tells of the municipal improvements in Manchester, and particularly of the efforts to popularize art and music, and he gives a quite full account of the organization erected in Ancoats, his own district, for recreation and mutual improvement. He writes in a delightfully unaffected manner.

The first volume of a new "British Voyagers" series is promising. It is adapted from "Hakluyt's Voyages" by Mr. Albert M. Hyamson and entitled "Elizabethan Adventurers Upon the Span-

Continued on Eleventh Page.

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OTHER BOOKS READY TODAY

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