LITERARY NEWS, VIEWS AND CRITICISM

NEW BOOKS.

A Race in Goodness.

The English Colonel in the subtly interesting story entitled "The Street Called Straight" (Harper and Brothers), which is a new work from the still anonymous hand that wrote "The Inner Shrine," says with melancholy emotion in one place: "It's preposterous to have another man racing about the world trying to do you good, by Jove!" This Col. Ashley, in America for the first time, was naturally disturbed by the unselfish benevolences, the large altruisms, so persistently practised by Peter Davenant, the big, modest, blue eyed, somewhat lumbering Bostonian, who also loved Olivia. Happily there was the widowed and charming Drusilla.

It is nicely shown in the story that these two ladies were very agreeable. They were sharp witted, quick and skilful in conversation, finished in manner. It is declared that Drusilla was not beautiful, like Olivia, but we are satisfied that she was beautiful enough. We dismiss the idea that her cheekbones were too evident. It will be noted that the Colonel came easily to a thoroughly favorable opinion of Drusilla after it had become clear to him that Olivia was for Peter. He was a man of perception, and it is not shown that he found any fault with her cheekbones.

The ladies were admirably Bostonian. They were entirely sensible of the beauty and distinction of the home association, but it adds to the interest that they had seen other bright visions and that they knew and valued the social life at British army posts. Drusilla, the widow of a young officer who had died of a fever in India, found it impossible to be happy away from the British army, and Col. Ashley's glamour would never have been dimmed for Olivia if Peter had not come along with his altruisms, making good her graceful and distinguished father's half million dollar embezzlement of trust funds, bringing over to the succor of the distressed family the good old transplanted aunt the well transmogrified but forever sterling Marquise de Melcourt from her Château of Melcourt-le-Danois in France doing everything he could to make it easy for Olivia to marry the Colonel. It was necessary for Peter to strike the Colonel that evening when they were walking along the Charles River embankment together, because the Colonel had called him a cad, but nothing could turn Peter from his determination to be good to the Colonel for Olivia's sake. The Colonel might say "By Jove!" and call it preposterous. Peter stuck to his ways of magnanimous goodness all the same.

We were glad to have matters turn out as they did finally. Drusilla wanted the Colonel, though she was properly careful not to tell him so; the Colonel transferred his well disciplined affections very readily to Drusilla when he had satisfied himself of Olivia's change of mind; Olivia loved Peter, though she had once snubbed him very cruelly and had for a time supposed that his qualities were inferior to the Colonel's (blind Olivia!), and there could be but one reward for modest Peter, whose joy on learning that Olivia loved him was only equalled by his astonishment. We think that he was almost too much astonished, but then he was extremely modest.

It seems to us that the Colonel's impression of distinction, which is declared repeatedly in the story, ought to have been brought out a little more clearly in what is reported of his conversation. Queer that his terse English style should have included so many expressions familiar here—"put up job," "putting up a bluff," "working the sentimental racket," "going the whole hog," "that's about the size of it." The illustrator, too, might have put more distinction into the pictures of the Colonel; also a good deal more into the counterfeit presentment of Olivia's magnificent father. The Colonel's trousers are ignoble, and so are Olivia's father's spats.

The idea that Olivia could be in love with Peter was thought by the Colonel to be "rot." It is said in the story: "He had only to call up the image of Davenant's hulking figure and heavy ways to see what rot it was. He himself was not vain of his appearance; he had too much to his credit to be obliged to descend to that; but he knew he was a distinguished man and that he looked it. The woman who could choose between him and Davenant would practically have no choice at all. That seemed to him conclusive." It was well that the excellent Peter should get ahead of him. When he saw that altruism was the game he took a hand at it. He did pretty well, but his effort was calculated rather than spontaneous; he was still behind Peter. His reward was ample. It is our opinion that he got a prize in Drusilla, who like her father, the Harvard professor, was extremely interesting.

Nonsense of Learned Men.

A rather elaborate and fanciful joke, that will appeal strongly to a limited audience, has been perpetrated by R. D., apparently a collector of old prints, in "A Lyttel Booke of Nonsense" (Macmillans). He has taken a number of old woodcuts, or portions of them, few less than 100 years old, among which we recognize some old friends, including, unless we are greatly mistaken, bits by Albrecht Dürer, and has given to each an extremely modern explanation in limerick form. Even in these he has at times intentionally twisted Edward Lear to his use. There are some who will enjoy thoroughly the author's irreverent fun. An example of what R. D. has done is the somewhat familiar mediæval woodcut of a man in the stocks that has been used in several histories. The limerick attached to this is:

> "There was a young fellow of Clewer,
> Who was trying the open air cure;
> When they said, 'Are you snug?'
> He said, 'Bring me a rug
> It's really too much to endure.'"

The president of Leland Stanford Junior University, Dr. David Starr Jordan, is a father as well as a biologist. In "Eric's Book of Beasts" (Paul Elder and Company, San Francisco) he publishes an album of animal caricatures, painted at the demand of a small boy, with verses to accompany them. The pictures are amusing and show artistic skill; of the jingles the less said the better. Children are easily satisfied.

Two Tales of Cawnpore.

We have remarked the persistence of the romancers notwithstanding all that has been urged by very earnest advocates in behalf of the realistic plan. Two new stories picture for us the terrible days of the Indian mutiny, particularly the shocking incidents of the siege and massacre at Cawnpore. Patricia Wentworth's "The Devil's Wind" (G. P. Putnam's Sons) is an English prize story. It is well written and comes to be vividly interesting. At first we have an English scene, a calm Victorian domestic scene of the year 1854. There are some interruptions of the calm. We find the sterling Helen Wilmot regarding scornfully, rather angrily, the portraits and the wall paper in her Aunt Lucy's drawing room, a repository of art objects that disturbed Helen, though everybody else thought them very nice indeed. We find also the darkly handsome Francis Manners, whose mother was a Hindu, throwing himself with unsuitable Eastern fervor at the feet of the beautiful Adela Lauriston, whose heart was habitually quite cool and who made him get up. Adela felt, however, that it was desirable to marry somebody, and accordingly we have her bestowing herself upon Capt. Morton, the hero of the tale. With these central characters the story proceeds to its arena of dreadful action in India. We have the revolt and massacre at Urzeepore before the Cawnpore tragedy. Morton and Helen escape and wander away. They marry, supposing that Adela is dead. Adela also supposes. Believing her husband to be no more she marries the half Indian Francis Manners. Matters are awkward when all becomes known, but the trouble adjusts itself. If the reader thinks at times that Helen and the Captain are almost too noble and forbearing, let him remember that this was in Queen Victoria's day, in 1857, when scrupulous behavior was expected.

Mr. Charles E. Pearce also tells the story of Cawnpore in his red covered book called "Red Revenge," in letters as bold and plain as automobile numbers (A. C. McClurg and Company, Chicago). Dick Heron drank more champagne and brandy than was quite proper at the entertainment in he Nana's palace at Bithoor. It was reported that his behavior was rather scandalous, and doubtless that was the reason why Ruth Armitage, the belle of Cawnpore, snubbed him next day. He grieved, but soon afterward he went again to the palace, secretly and at night with the dusky Hoosein Khanum, who was a very dangerous young woman. He found himself in immediate trouble and there was plenty more to come. The story tells how suspicion filled the air, how the rumors flew, how the goojurs and he budmash began to stir ominously, how he chupatty and the lotus leaf were passed about. It tells of the plottings of the Nana and his adviser, the wicked Azimoolah Khan; of the outbreak of the Sepoys; of the siege and masscare; of the coming of Havelock and the relief. Poor Dick was killed, but his brother Philip came, who had been in the cavalry charge at Balaklava, and Philip was in time to save Ruth Armitage, of whom the story says: "True, her cheek were thin and wan, her form wasted, but her eyes were more lustrous than ever." Philip found Ruth bound to a pillar in a secret room of the Bithoor palace. Hooseinee Khanum was with her and had intended to kill her, but on Philip's appearance this wicked woman, in trying to escape through the window, fell to the pavement and was dashed to pieces. The novelist mentions Jezebel. The story is eventful and readable. We wonder if they really did say "jolly good" (page 70) in the year 1857.

French Literature.

The number of short histories of French literature in French is legion, but as yet we have not come across a satisfactory book on the subject in English. Prof. C. H. Conrad Wright of Harvard University endeavors to fill the deficiency with "A History of French Literature" (Oxford University Press; Henry Frowde), a substantial volume of nearly 1,000 pages, which will be found useful for reference, as it is unusually complete, and readable as a survey of the field, though it will hardly inspire the reader to read the books the author describes. He adopts the principle of admiring nothing, of checking praise with adverse criticism, and, under the guise of impartiality, of administering far more blame than laudation.

It is difficult to discover what there is in French literature that Prof. Wright really cares for. He tells us in his preface that he prefers the writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a taste that many share. This may account for the summary way in which he hurries over the brilliant and attractive mediæval period. When it comes to the centuries he favors, however, we find the same inability to appreciate; he comes nearer admiring Rabelais than any other author, apparently on account of the richness of his vocabulary, and he goes so far as to excuse his "indecency." For Molière he seems to care little: "A Frenchman will tell you that Molière is the greatest humorist of all times and will as a rule unhesitatingly place him above Shakespeare. For this there is some justification." Then follows a dissection of the unfortunate author. So with poor La Fontaine. "All his life he seemed to suffer from moral ataxia." "His 'Contes' in their filth equal Rabelais." Nowhere does Prof. Wright mention the influence on the language of the "Fables," which is almost comparable to that of the King James Bible in English. In more modern times the student will wonder why people should read Dumas or Georges Sand or Balzac or Alfred de Musset, if they are as mediocre as represented here.

Prof. Wright's English is something of a curiosity. He drops into slang and into current vulgarisms readily and unexpectedly; he startles by curt judgments and needlessly frank expressions. We wonder if college students have to listen to much of this curious style. With all its faults, however, the statements of facts in Prof. Wright's book are generally accurate; it covers the ground very completely, and if readers will disregard the criticisms till after they have read the works criticised they will find it helpful. We can only feel sorry for the author, that he should have been obliged by his profession to read so much literature that was distasteful to him.

Curious and Useful Information.

A remarkably valuable and timely book has been put together by Dr. Robert William Rogers of the Drew Theological Seminary in "Cuneiform Parallels to the Old Testament" (Eaton and Mains, New York). Theologians and ministers who are not experts in Assyriology, as well as the general public that is interested in the researches of archaeology, have been obliged to take heretofore the substance of the new discoveries at second hand. In this volume Dr. Rogers translates and publishes every text relating in any way to the period of the Old Testament that has so far been brought to light from the excavations in Assyria and Babylonia. He accompanies all his translations with transliterations of the original text, prefixes to each a brief introduction, adds the requisite bibliography and at the end gives forty-eight plates of the actual inscriptions. It is a thorough and scholarly piece of work admirably done, which brings within reach of all who can use it the sum of all that has been discovered in Mesopotamia up to date.

A complete tabulation of the symbols used in art will be found in "A Glossary of Important Symbols," by Mrs. Adelaide S. Hall, curator of the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts (Bates and Guild Company, Boston). The arrangement is in three columns, containing first, the country where the symbol is used; next, the symbol itself, and last, its signification. The explanation of numbers and colors is given too. There is an index, so that all information can be found with the least possible loss of time. The little book will be very valuable to all who care for art.

There is no more persistent popularizer of astronomical knowledge than Mr. Garrett P. Serviss; in lectures, in stories, in magazine articles and in books he has endeavored to attract notice to his favorite science and it will be through no fault of his "Astronomy in a Nutshell" (G. P. Putnam's Sons) if watching the skies does not become a popular pastime. Long practice enables Mr. Serviss to put the essential facts about astronomy in language so plain that a person of any education can understand him and become interested. The book is illustrated with many pictures and diagrams.

At this season the appearance of a new, revised and enlarged edition of a botanical handbook whose value has been proved by ten years experience, F. Schuyler Mathews's "Field Book of American Wild Flowers" (G. P. Putnam's Sons) is very timely. The book fits into the pocket and will give immediate help to every one who wanders about the country. Keys and indexes facilitate reference, and the text is helped out with hundreds of pictures, some of which, in color, are beautiful.

Of like character, but more abridged and technical in the descriptions, is the "Illustrated Key to the Wild and Commonly Cultivated Trees" of this part of our country and the adjacent parts of Canada, by J. Franklin Collins and Howard W. Preston (Henry Holt and Company). The key is arranged in the main according to the character of the leaves, but there is a systematic list of trees and also an index.

A clear and interesting presentation of a matter of vital importance, in language that can be understood by people with no technical training, has been made by Henry N. Ogden and H. Burdett Cleveland in "Practical Methods of Sewage Disposal" (John Wiley's Sons, New York). The individual application of these methods must be naturally in the country, for the cities take the business out of people's hands; the authors explain modern methods and the advantages of each and tell what can be done in specific instances.

Some New Fiction.

The daily happenings of real life are so much stranger than the fancies of fiction that a writer with imagination enough to read between the lines of necessarily condensed statements can find abundant material for a dozen stories in any issue of any newspaper, a fact that many authors have discovered long ago. That does not mean, however, that noted events can be jumbled together haphazard, which is what Mr. A. E. W. Mason has done in "The Turnstile" (Charles Scribner's Sons). The last earthquake in South America, the quest for the south pole, the new rich Jews in English society, life on an Argentine ranch, the betrayal of Metz, are dragged in to help out descriptions of British elections, political methods and parliamentary life. These last have probably a certain value as impressions from personal experience. It all seems rather tremendous machinery to set in motion to solve a pretty simple moral problem, the rousing of a self-seeking man to grasping the higher ideals of the woman who loves him. There are brilliant bits of character drawing, elaborate painting that is hardly in harmony with the broad scale of the picture; the energetic woman who keeps her weaker husband up to his work, the wastrel who goes to the dogs, his dignified father who also fails when brought to the mark, the influence of terror on the romantic heroine, many others that may be portraits; but they are cast aside as soon as the author has interested his readers in them. They certainly have a right to look for better things from Mr. Mason.

In "As It Was in the Beginning" (Desmond Fitz Gerald, New York) the late Philip Verrall Mighels tried his hand at the Robinson Crusoe theme with its modern complication of having a girl shipwrecked with the hero. The young man triumphs over nature in the usual manner, though the author is rather vague regarding his methods, save in the matter of manufacturing gunpowder. This he employs to great advantage in destroying a giant tiger and in fighting off head hunting Dyaks, with which complicated fight the main portion of the story busies itself. The book is remarkable for the joyousness with which the author throws off all editorial control and revels to his heart's content in fine language, exuberant description and all the grammatical and rhetorical faults that the blue pencil corrects.

The quaint, kind hearted detective, Joseph Muller, that Augusta Groner has invented appears also in her "Mene Tekel" (Duffield and Company), but remains modestly in the background. The story has to do with the extraordinary actions of two rival parties of archaeologists in the deserts of Mesopotomia. It is a painful exposure of what bloodthirstiness bad archaeologists are capable of. The homely scenes, as is usually the case with this author, are natural and attractive; the scientific parts and the reverence shown for men of science are unintentionally funny. We trust the author will stick to detective tales.

There is action and villainy enough in Mr. George C. Shedd's "The Isle of Strife" (Small, Maynard and Company, Boston) to satisfy any one. We could have dispensed with the author's recapitulation of the substance of an earlier story, to which this, in a way, is a sequel. We note that one villain escapes at the end and fear that may mean a further continuation. The story, however, can stand on its own merits. The hero shows as much capacity when he is put in a tight place as he shows idiocy in getting into a scrape. The encounters with the German, in spite of their stupidity, are amusing and there is spirit in the hand to hand conflicts. The invention of a community of French fishermen on a Maine coast island deserved better treatment.

There is a pretty idea in every one of the short stories included in Mr. John Luther Long's "Baby Grand" (Richard G. Badger, Boston). That they should also be all rather theatrical was perhaps inevitable, but that fault is offset by the author's giving full rein to his fancy.

A new profession is revealed in Mr. Forrest Halsey's "The Bawlerout" (Desmond Fitz Gerald), that of a person employed by usurers to enforce payment by making a disturbance at the place where the debtor is employed. In this case the person is a capable and attractive young woman. The story begins as a sort of sociological tract, showing the evil ways of the money lenders to the poor, and that part is well done. It verges soon, however, into plain melodrama of the most conventional sort.

Even though he is a member of the French Academy and a contributor to the *Révue des Deux Mondes* M. René Bazin as a novelist is not very inspiring; there is a whole library of second rate fiction of a generation past that is better worth translating than his stories. Still, he is a contemporary, and he is at his best when he describes French provincial life. In "The Penitent" (Eveleigh Nash; J. B. Lippincott Company), he tells the rather sordid story of a Breton girl who enters into service in Paris, and after going wrong decides to return to her home and her duty.

In "The Prison Flower" (Richard G. Badger), Romaine Callender is inspired to elaborate a portion of a hackneyed and almost forgotten school text book, De Maistre's "Picciola," into a commonplace historical romance of Napoleon and Josephine.

Foreign Parts.

There is a Paris wholly unknown to the ordinary traveller and even more to the Parisians themselves, some fragments of which crop up still amid all the demolitions that follow in the train of modern improvements, the Paris that the readers of Dumas and Balzac wish to see. No more delightful or authoritative guide through this could be wished for than M. Georges Cain, the curator of the famous Carnavalet museum, some of whose interesting excursions have been translated by Louise Seymour Houghton, under the title "Byways of Paris" (Duffield and Company). These are no learned essays, but bright, readable articles, which hide the author's erudition. They deal not only with places that have historical, antiquarian or literary associations, but also with queer bits of Paris that people have heard of, like the Montmartre of the nineteenth century and the dancing classes of the Opéra. The volume is very fully illustrated.

Twice in recent years has Mrs. Mabel Loomis Todd had occasion to visit Tripoli for astronomical purposes, and her book "Tripoli the Mysterious" (Small, Maynard and Company, Boston) has the serious advantage of recording conditions and impressions wholly removed from the present. In the preface, to be sure, Mrs. Todd describes the beginnings of the troubles with Italy, but her text was composed before they were dreamed of and relates to Tripoli as it had been for a century. There is some account of the war with the United States, but in the main Mrs. Todd holds to descriptions of the city, the people, the customs and the two eclipse expeditions.

With no title page that we can discover, "The Japan Year Book for 1912" comes to us, we infer, from the Japan Year Book Company, Tokio. It contains the important and interesting statistical information that such books usually convey, in compact form, expressed in excellent English. Besides it has a list of persons of note, with brief accounts of them, a short "Who's Who in Japan" covering 120 pages. There are personal notices too under art and a brief business directory. The book will be found of great use, especially to foreigners who desire precise information about matters in Japan.

The more he writes the less satisfactory does Mr. C. Reginald Enock become. He began by descriptions of the less known portions of South America, and there his powers of observation and the need of definite knowledge gave his book value. Thence he proceeded to better known regions and to the United States, exhibiting a superficiality that did not inspire confidence. In "The Secret of the Pacific" (T. Fisher Unwin; Charles Scribner's Sons) he takes up the problem of the aboriginal settlement of America with jaunty assurance and slapdash inferences from the books of others. He, unfortunately, lacks the equipment that can give authority to his statements, even if he boldly asserts as proven theories and guesses which specialists only advance with caution.

Two new editions of Baedeker handbooks come just in time for the summer travellers. "Baedeker's Norway, Sweden and Denmark," appearing in the tenth edition, thoroughly revised, should be carried by visitors to the Olympic games. For the adventurous expeditions to Iceland and to Spitzbergen are now included (Karl Baedeker, Leipzig; Charles Scribner's Sons). For those who take the Mediterranean trip "Baedeker's Palestine and Syria" is now ready in a fifth edition, remodelled and augmented. This includes the trips into Mesopotamia to Bagdad, and for the first time the island of Cyprus.

Other Books.

A queer literary autobiography will be found in "The Fiction Factory," by John Milton Edwards (The Editor Company, Ridgewood, N. J.). The name, we are told, is a pseudonym, but the author gives indications by which the reader can identify him, if he cares to. He explains in detail, with the figures, how in twenty-two years of industrious work in writing fiction, chiefly five and ten cent novels, he earned $65,000. He proves that he made a steady livelihood, and it may be that the pay was good for the matter he turned out, but most people will shudder at his task.

The two volumes of essays in "The World's Leaders" series (Henry Holt and Company) are eminently respectable in execution, but the copyright date 1912 seems an anachronism, for they are early Victorian in conception. In "The World's Leading Painters" Mr. George B. Rose tells with marked conservatism the stories of Leonardo, Raphael, Titian, Rubens, Velasquez and Rembrandt; in "The World's Great Poets" Mr. H. W. Boynton discourses on Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton and Goethe. The series seems very suitable for country reading clubs.

An enthusiastic sketch of Congressman William Sulzer by Mr. George W. Blake precedes a collection of "Sulzer's Short Speeches" on the great variety of questions that interest that gentleman (J. S. Ogilvie Publishing Company, New York). Mr. Blake thinks that Mr. Sulzer would be a desirable Democratic candidate for the Governorship.

A mass of information that will be useful to the trade is included in the "Export Trade Directory for 1912-13," edited by B. Olney Hough (The American Exporter, New York). The New York houses are classified in various convenient ways; then follow exporters in other parts of the United States, lists of banking houses, steamship lines, consuls and so forth.

Much matter relating to universal peace has been put together by Lucile Gulliver in "The Friendship of Nations" (Ginn and Company, Boston). The arrangement seems rather confused, and some of the selections seem irrelevant to the layman. It certainly is not suitable for supplementary reading in the schools, for unfortunately, as matters stand now, advocacy of general peace involves much distortion of controversial historical facts.

The handy "Rand-McNally Pocket Map of New York" is issued in the 1912 edition, corrected to date and with the population figures from the 1910 census. (Rand, McNally and Company, Chicago.)

Books Received.

"The Correspondence of Jonathan Swift, D. D." Volume III. Edited by F. Elrington Ball. (Macmillans.)

"Italy's War for a Desert." Francis McCullagh. (Herbert and Daniel, London.)

"The Cathedral Churches of England." Helen Marshall Pratt. (Duffield and Company.)

"Nature's Harmonic Unity." Samuel Colman. (G. P. Putnam's Sons.)

"Liberty of Contract and Labor Laws." Roger Foster. (American School of Correspondence, Chicago.)

"The Day of the Saxon." Homer Lea. (Harpers.)

"The Novels of Fyodor Dostoevsky. Volume I. The Brothers Karamazov." Translated by Constance Garnett. (Macmillans.)

"A Butterfly on the Wheel." C. Ranger Gull. (William Rickey and Company, New York.)

"Danger." (Richard G. Badger, Boston.)

"Slami Tervola." Hilman Pyläläinen. (Bernard Grasset, Paris.)

"Trois Villes Saintes." Emile Baumann. (Bernard Grasset.)

"Replanning Small Cities." John Nolen. (B. W. Huebsch, New York.)

"Individualism." Joseph Jordan Deveny. (The Individualist Publishing Company, Cleveland.)

"The Sheriff of Badger." George Patullo. (Appletons.)

"The Making of Poetry." Arthur H. R. Fairchild, Ph. D. (G. P. Putnam's Sons.)

"Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America." Frank M. Chapman. (Appletons.)

"A Farmer's Note Book." C. E. D. Phelps. (Richard G. Badger.)

"The Story of Christopher Columbus." Charles W. Moores. (Houghton Mifflin Company.)

"A Plaything of the Gods." Carl Gray. (Sherman, French and Company, Boston.)

"Christ Among the Cattle." Frederic Rowland Marvin. (Sherman, French and Company.)

"Efficiency. Its Spiritual Source." Thomas Tapper, Litt. D. (The Platt and Peck Company, New York.)

"The Strenuous Life Spiritual." A. Vander Nalien. (R. F. Fenno and Company, New York.)

"Auction—All Values Bridge and Dummy Play." John B. Gleason. (A. W. Gleason, New York.)

"French Newspaper Reader." Félix Weill. (American Book Company.)

"Christopher Marlowe." Edited by William Lyon Phelps. (American Book Company.)

"Webster and Tourneur." Edited by Ashley H. Thorndike. (American Book Company.)

"Beaumont and Fletcher." Edited by Felix E. Schelling. (American Book Company.)

"Oakdale Boys in Camp." Morgan Scott. (Hurst and Company, New York.)

"Lulu, Alice and Jimmie Wibblewobble." Howard R. Garis. (R. F. Fenno and Company.)

"Mary, Queen of Scots." Bjönstierne Björnson, translated by August Sahlberg. (Specialty Syndicate Press, Chicago.)

"Songs of the Prairies." Robert J. C. Stead. (The Platt and Peck Company.)

"Wayside Blossoms." Mary Matthews Bray. (Richard G. Badger.)

"Poems of the West." S. Gertsmon. (Richard G. Badger.)

"Madawaska." Thomas G. Devine. (Richard G. Badger.)

The Poet Laureate.

From the London Evening Standard.

The Poet Laureate, Mr. Alfred Austin, is 77 years of age to-day. Born at Headingley, in 1835, the second son of a Leeds merchant, Mr. Austin graduated at London University at the age of 18, and four years later was called to the bar. He practised the law for three years, and then devoted himself to foreign travel and literature. He became Poet Laureate in 1896. Last year he published his autobiography.

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MARIA MONTESSORI.

Something About the Founder of an Educational Departure.

Dr. Maria Montessori, the originator of the Montessori method of educating children, might, if she wished, outrank even such literary social lions as Gabriele d'Annunzio as a attraction to the exclusive and elegant salons of Rome. But although the Queen of Italy and many women of title call her their friend, she prefers her quiet study to their receptions. Whenever possible, she declines invitations which to most women, however scholarly, would be agreeable. Once in a while she permits herself to be dragged out to tea with the wife of some foreign Ambassador, but generally she does not. She is not only shy about social affairs, although a person of commanding presence, but her one interest is genuinely her work, and not talking about it.

Dr. Montessori is primarily a student and a thorough one. Her scholarship is untiring and exhaustive, and she repeatedly examined thousands of women to ascertain one single point of demonstration. Although in her book, "Scientific Pedagogy," translated for America as "The Montessori Method," is filled with practical common sense and evidences of her sympathetic love for children, yet it also gives evidence of the sternest sort of experimental exactness, which trait shows itself even more in the advance proofs of her next book, "Pedagogical Anthropology."

In her scholarship Dr. Montessori shows rather an unusual combination of thoroughness and enthusiasm. Something of the same paradox is seen in the fact that though she loves to see children play, she herself does not care to play. She is a physician, but like most Italian women, she knows nothing whatever of such sports as golf and tennis. When she is worn out by her ceaseless attention to training teachers and directing many schools, she slips away to the gray green olive groves and the green convent gardens of the Grotto Terrata, near Tivoli.

Her reading is broad and by no means all Italian. She loves and often quotes Wordsworth, and knows modern Italian, French, Russian and German literature. Curiously enough, although she is a true daughter of the Catholic Church, she is very fond of Nietzsche.

Dr. Montessori's independence of character was well shown in her recent quarrel with Signor Talamo, the director of the great building society in whose tenements she founded the first Casa Bambini, or Montessori schools. Signor Talamo after a time wanted to start schools with ill trained teachers and insufficient apparatus in some of his tenements. He was her financial sponsor, but she refused to acknowledge the imitations as Montessori schools and could not be forced into acquiescence with the signor's wishes.

She is the first of the Italian "new women"—the first to get the degree of M. D. By men all over the world she is now recognized as a leader, and her medical experience illustrates many things about her. She gave up a large practice to carry on her installation of schools for the scientific education of children, but she has never forgotten that she is a physician. She has draughted and induced the Italian Parliament to pass laws for the better government of insane asylums and the protection of children. Recently when there was a scourge of cholera in one of the poorer quarters of Rome she entered the quarantined district and stayed there for weeks comforting her former patients, whether they were well to do or poor, and saving many lives at a time when many physicians fled from the district.

Prizes for Young Writers.

From the London Evening Standard.

Mr. Thomas Hardy made a remark worth thinking over in his acknowledgment of the gold medal awarded him by the Royal Society of Literature. He was, he said, rather an old boy to receive a medal, and was particularly unfortunate in having no younger boy to whom he could hand it on, so that, without undervaluing the receipt of it—rather, indeed, because he valued it so highly—he had been thinking whether prizes of some kind could not be offered by the society to makers of literature earlier in life to urge them to further efforts. We hope not only this society but others concerned with literature will take the hint. In England we do honor to writers who have succeeded; we do not encourage authors whose success is yet to make.

When we contrast our own poverty in this respect with the wealth of French enterprise we must cease to wonder that the young writer in France stands much more chance of being heard of than his brother of England. The Frenchman has ever so many prospects of official recognition to brighten his literary beginnings. The Englishman has only his publisher to look to.

Modern Works for the Blind.

Geneva correspondence London Standard.

A circulating library for the blind in Switzerland was started at Zurich in 1904 by Dr. Charles Revel on a small scale.

The readers, who now number about 250, have so far been supplied only with classic authors, but they demand modern writers, and their wish is likely to be recorded, as many Swiss are willing to subscribe toward the extra expense, estimated at £50. The books so far supplied by the society are the works of Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller, Racine, Victor Hugo, Ibsen, but the blind ask for more modern works in order to keep themselves in touch with present day literature.

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