REVIEWS OF BOOKS

WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN.

The Ifs of History. By Joseph Edgar Chamberlin. Published by the Henry Altemus Company, Philadelphia.

There is no doubt of the entertaining nature of this work. We can all indulge in speculation, and, in fact, we do indulge in speculation from time to time, considering what might have happened if certain leading events in the history of the world had turned out otherwise than they did. The speculations indulged in herein turn upon twenty-two propositions, viz.: "If Themistocles Had Not Beaten Aristides in an Athenian Election;" "If the Moors Had Won the Battle of Tours;" "If King Ethelred of England Had Not Married the Norman Emma;" "If Columbus Had Kept His Straight Course Westward;" "If Queen Elizabeth of England Had Left a Son or Daughter;" "If the Philharmonic Had Not Given Concerts at Vicenza;" "If the Spanish Armada Had Sailed at Its Appointed Time;" "If Champlain Had Tarried in Plymouth Bay;" "If Charles II. Had Accepted the Kingship of Virginia;" "If Admiral Penn Had Persisted in Disowning His Son William;" "If the Boy George Washington Had Become a British Midshipman;" "If Alexander Hamilton Had Not Written About the Hurricane;" "If Lafayette Had Held the French Reign of Terror in Check;" "If Gilbert Livingston Had Not Voted New York Into the Union;" "If the Pirate Jean Lafitte Had Joined the British at New Orleans;" "If James MacDonell Had Not Closed the Gates of Hugomont Castle;" "If Abraham Lincoln's Father Had Moved Southward, Not Northward;" "If Skipper Jennings Had Not Rescued Certain Shipwrecked Japanese;" "If Orsini's Bomb Had Not Failed to Destroy Napoleon III.;" "If President James Buchanan Had Enforced the Law in November, 1860;" "If the Confederates Had Marched on Washington After Bull Run;" "If the Confederate States Had Purchased the East Indian Company's Fleet in 1861."

Mr. Chamberlin has made some very interesting speculations on all of these points. At the same time if all these things had turned out differently then there would have been minor switchboards upon which other "ifs" could have accumulated, indulging in yet further and indefinite speculation. This sort of thing, in fact, forms an endless chain whereby from one "if" you might evolve a hundred others. And there is no end to the original "ifs." Probably, however, this old world would have dragged on about the same in any case. Mr. Chamberlin, however, has taken many minor events for his suppositions. He might well have speculated on what might have happened if the Persians had beaten the Greeks at Marathon or afterwards at Salamis; or if the Greeks had been victorious at Syracuse; or if Hannibal had conquered Rome, or the Turks Vienna. There are many large pivotal events that might be speculated upon in the same way, by imagining what might have been if the result had been different. But it may be doubted if any reverse would have much retarded the world's progress and the development of our Christian civilization. Probably no reversal would have made any very great difference in the history of humanity. And if there had been a reversal in each case, then somebody could have written such a work as this and speculated whether the actual things having happened that are mentioned in this book, what might have been the result. Humanity, as a matter of fact, digs along pretty much to suit itself, without much regard to the personalities, the incidents, or the occasions. It is absolutely impossible, for instance, to imagine the United States under the control either of Spain, France, or Great Britain, no matter what might have occurred if England had not beaten the French in Canada, if the Spanish had not been ousted from Louisiana and then the French bought off in their turn by the United States. This was a land devoted to freedom from the first, and would have been a free land in any contingency and under all circumstances. And so any general speculation is vain as to what might have followed in case what did not happen had in fact happened. In no case would it have made very material difference in the forward march of the human race. And yet Mr. Chamberlin has here treated us in excellent vein to a series of very ingenious speculations.

A TERROR OF THE AIR.

The Flying Death. By Samuel Hopkins Adams. Illustrated by C. E. Macauley. Published by The McClure Company, New York.

Mr. Adams always manages to bring into his stories some tremendous phenomenon and to work it out to its unexpected termination. There is in this book an account of one of the imaginable survivals of a prehistoric age in a life that combines the bird and the reptile, in the enormous pteranodon, aptly called the tiger of the air, a tremendous reptile-bird of prey. Its victims in this book are a sailor, a juggler, and it is guilty of various forms of destructive mischief. But it is not until the conclusion that the mystery is solved. All through the book this mysterious death force shows its presence only in the effects of its visits, and these are of the most enormous significance. Great things are done—slaughter committed, destruction visited without any seeming possible cause. Consternation ensues upon these visits and a superstitious awe is developed that is natural in the presence of an invincible opponent who not only cannot be reached, but who cannot even be definitely defined or located. It is a stirring story indeed, well worthy of the co-author with Stewart Edward White of "The Mystery," a story printed last year in The Salt Lake Tribune, a story which also had for its central motif a tremendous force of chemical and radial action as exhibited in a science ship on the Pacific ocean. The peril surrounding the actors in this later work, while not so universally devastating as in "The Mystery," are still gruesome and terrible enough to awaken the profoundest astonishment and terror. The author has conceived an ingenious theme, and has certainly worked it out in realistic fashion.

A LADY ON ICE.

Virginie. By Ernest Oldmeadow. Published by The McClure Company, New York.

This is a story of mystery, partly French and partly English. There is a young lady who is involved in certain love affairs, and whom it was necessary, it appears, to have those concerned believe to be dead. There was, accordingly, a mock funeral, then the lady was packed in ice and conveyed to an English bungalow, where a young English gentleman with plenty of money, with a great capacity for loving, and with no prior attachment, was living. He had obtained something of a repute as an archaeologist, by reason of certain excavations of an old Roman villa he had made on the neighboring ground. And under pretense of the archaeological fraternity, the man in charge of this ice-packed lady approached the young English gentleman. Matters went along in due course between the girl and the Englishman, but finally there was an attempt at interference, an escape, a tracing, a final confession, and an unloosing of many twisted skeins. The author has certainly made an interesting story of it, and has kept the interest going from first to last. It is a story agreeable to read, with sufficient uncertainities in the story itself to lure the reader on. And the style of the writer is also a distinct attraction in itself.

COMPLICATED CRIMINALITY.

The Black Bag. By Louis Joseph Vance. With Illustrations by Thomas Fogarty. Published by The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Indianapolis.

This, like the author's former story, "The Brass Bowl," is made up of ingenious complications in roguery. There is involved here a certain black bag which is supposed to contain a princely inheritance in valuable jewels. The one in whose custody this bag is on the opening of the story is a depraved character, going under the name of Calendar, who is dining with his daughter in a restaurant in London. A young American artist who has just heard of the break-up of his firm's business by the earthquake and fire in San Francisco has come away from Paris and is about to depart for home. He happens to be dining in the same restaurant with Calendar, who a short while before had visited the young American, Philip Kirkwood, with a sort of indefinite proposal with a rascally flavor upon it and was incontinently dismissed. Kirkwood is approached in the restaurant by Calendar and is given the custody of the daughter, because, Calendar explained, he was himself about to be arrested as soon as he left the house. Kirkwood undertakes the custody of the girl, and immediately his trouble begins. The London police nab him as he goes out, but, on being convinced that he is not Calendar, let him go. He takes the girl to the theater and then leaves her near a deserted house on a street in darker London. But he was not contented to leave her so, and made his way back to the house. To get in he had to thresh a man on guard, and after he got in he had to nearly kill another fellow before he could get to the girl. He finally gets her, though, and the two, she having obtained the bag, make their escape. Then the girl is lured away from Kirkwood while he is in a sort of confederate's house waiting for the girl's father. All sorts of trouble and misfits come on; Calendar appears, upbraids his partner for making the sneak. There is a trip to Holland; Kirkwood upbraids Calendar and his partner on board a filthy ship in the harbor, obtains possession of the black bag, gets the girl, and they make their escape. They are followed, however, and finally fall into the hands of an old friend of Kirkwood's, who, in the opening chapter of this story, had offered him money and any aid that might be necessary. This man's name is Brentwick. The final elopement, the pursuit, the discovery of the real villain, and the straightening out of the relations of the girl, all form a very interesting and satisfactorily told episode. It is certainly a lively book, in which adventure, the shadow of crime, ruffianism, and in a sense a portion of the nether world appears to be deliberately sought for exposition. The whole is a fabric very ingeniously woven and mighty entertaining to read.

INGENIOUS MYSTIFICATION.

The Magistrate's Own Case. By Baron Palle Rosenkrantz. Published by The McClure Company, New York.

This is a sort of detective story divided into three portions. The Introduction, "A Murder and an Arrest;" First Part, "The Investigation;" Second Part, "The Trial" and "Conclusion." The "Murder" and "Arrest" are told about in a way that foreshadows the interesting developments that follow in the work. "The Investigation," is of the usual plausible kind, very elaborate, apparently convincing, and yet, as developed in the final part, absolutely misleading. The "Trial" is also misleading in part, but most absorbing in details and results, in which the great detective wins his own case. And then the conclusion is that he has done enough for one life, and intends to retire. It is a most interestingly written story, in which the author has shown decided power and attractiveness of style. A detective story, with plenty of mystery in it, ingeniously constructed, and with the incidents and actions plausibly interwoven and dove-tailed, is always sure of readers, for the human mind delights in such puzzles and their working out and unraveling. And this is one of the most ingenious stories of the kind that we have seen for a long time. It is sure to be popular, and it deserves to be.

ORCHARD'S GRUESOME STORY.

The Confessions and Autobiography of Harry Orchard. Illustrated with Photographs. Published by The McClure Company, New York.

This is the story, in amplified form, that was told by Harry Orchard when he was on the stand in the Haywood trial at Boise last year. The photographs of Orchard carried in this work do not make him out a bad-looking fellow at all. Rather he looks as if he might be a sort of rough-and-ready exhorter and good fellow; but the portrait of Steve Adams is distinctly foxy. There is a portrait also of Detective James McParland which shows a face of strength and determination. Governor Peabody is shown as an alert, well-appearing man. There is a picture of the "Executive Board of the Western Federation of Miners in 1905;" a picture of the "Two Steunenberg Bombs;" and a portrait of Frank Steunenberg. The contents embrace a sketch of Orchard's early life in Ontario; of union rule in the Coeur d'Alenes; of the blowing up of the Bunker Hill mill; of life at Cripple Creek, and the big strike of 1903; of the coming of the militia to Cripple Creek; of the explosion in the Vindicator mine; Orchard's first visit to headquarters; the attempt to assassinate Governor Peabody; the shooting of Lyte Gregory; the blowing up of the Independence depot; the trip to San Francisco and the blowing up of Fred Bradley; the first bomb for Governor Peabody and other bombs for street work; and the set bombs for Judges Goddard and Gabbert; the start after Governor Steunenberg and his assassination; Orchard's experience in the jail and penitentiary; and, finally, a chapter devoted to the reasons why he wrote this book; these reasons being to ease his conscience and to do right. It is a horrible story altogether. The jury found it absolutely incredible. We are inclined to believe, however, that the most of it is true, and especially that Orchard tells truly what he, in fact, did in all the outrages that he tells about. It is a ghastly sort of book, but it is one for which there will undoubtedly be a very large demand.

THE DEATH OF "OUIDA."

Springfield Republican, January 26.

"Ouida," the novelist, for more than forty-five years known under that pen name, died yesterday in Italy, at Viareggio, where her residence had been for a long time; and, it is said, in distressing poverty. This was most unjust to a very honest and humane woman, whose writings had indeed gone out of fashion, but who had been of no small consequence in the world through her writings for entertainment, and also for children and for humanity toward our lesser fellows of the animal world, especially in her antagonism to vivisection, which she justly hated as brutalizing man by the torture of the little animals for merely curious purposes, after experiment had proved all it could. It is the most hateful aspect of science. As a writer of fiction, she produced many novels of a peculiar passionate fervor and force which were regarded is highly improper in those early days, but as compared with books written since were as mild as skimmed milk. These stories had their fine qualities, and all of them were readable. "Strathmore," "Chandos," "Under Two Flags," "Idalia," "Tricotrin," "In a Winter City," "Wanda," "Pipistrello," "Moths," "Princess Napraxine," are a few titles out of some fifty between 1863 and 1901. Interspersed among the novels, which in later years lost their questionable flavor, were such exquisite things as "A Dog of Flanders," "Two Little Wooden Shoes," "The Silver Christ," "Street Dust."

In her later years she was constantly writing against the desecration and ruin of old historic monuments in Italy, against the merciless outrages of scientific investigations on the little creatures of God, and in every way showing a deep and tender humanity. It is lamentable that she had not acquired from her large output of books a sufficient sum to sustain her life. The Italian Minister of Instruction had repeatedly within recent years sent her moneys which had been subscribed for her aid, and yet she had only lately, since last summer, refused contributions, preferring her poverty—unless them a fund gathered by Marie Corelli, who naturally entertained a sympathy for her elder predecessor. Among her peculiarities was a great fondness for dogs, and she maintained many of them, depriving herself of the necessities of life to feed them. She had but one attendant on her death—an old servant in whose arms she expired. She had become blind in one eye, and the other was badly affected. It may be hoped that some of the stories of her closing days are exaggerated, as that she was during the last few months of her life compelled to sleep out of doors because of inability to pay for a night's lodging. She died of asthma complicated by heart disease.

Her name was Louise de la Ramee, French by ancestry, British by birth, being a native of Bury St. Edmunds, born there about 1840, and so 68 years old. Her pseudonym, "Ouida," was derived from her childish pronunciation of "Louisa." She had a florid style and a perfervid temperament, which gave character to her best-known novels. In the way of literary standing there is not much to be claimed for her work, but, as aforesaid, she was deeply engaged sympathies for humanity, treatment of animals compelled a high respect for her endeavors in their behalf, which were characterized by personal devotion as well as writing.

State of Ohio, City of Toledo, Lucas county.—ss.
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