BOOKS of the Week—Genius, Astigmatism and Eye-Strain—Decay of the Novel—The Anglo-Scottish Literary War—Bret Harte's Own Poverty Flat—Connolly's Olympian Leap Into Fame—Critical Reviews and Literary Chitchat.

"Biographic Clinics" is a modest volume issued this past week from the press of P. Blakiston's Son & Co., Philadelphia, the reading of which will be found absorbingly interesting by even the average unscientific person inclined to be discouraged from the attempt at first glimpse of the book's title.

This is because the author, Doctor George M. Gould, a recognized authority as the editor of "American Medicine," presents in this publication his professional theory of the origin of ill health of De Quincey, Carlyle, Darwin, Huxley and Browning, informing us, after an array of evidence in support, that the sufferings of these great men were directly due to eye strain. The standing of the author in his calling commands respect for his conclusions, and will probably insure profound attention to the remarkable work now just issued.

It comes with a touch of pathos to the lover of the gentle De Quincey that the stomach and liver ailments and nervous depression which first drove him to the use of morphine, resulting in lifetime slavery to the opium habit, were the reflex result of astigmatism, yet, apparently, Doctor Gould makes this fact plain. In the light of modern science he studies what he terms the principal clinical facts of De Quincey's life, and shows from the biographical material still available that all the symptoms of visual defect and eye-strain are therein set forth. The fact that De Quincey, acute sufferer though he was, lived to the age of 85 certainly goes to prove that no organic disease was responsible for his ill health. Doctor Gould presents a convincing mass of evidence intended to show that, from the age of 14, De Quincey undoubtedly suffered from eye-strain. Then he proceeds to tell the truths, unknown to medical men of De Quincey's time, but familiar truths of to-day, of the disastrous effect of this condition upon the physical health and nervous system of the victim. This clinical study of De Quincey's life is so simply reported as to be well within the comprehension of unprofessional readers, and is deeply interesting in its bearing upon his troubled story. The startling finding in the case is practically to the effect that an oculist of to-day would have instantly located the seat of De Quincey's ill health; glasses with the lenses proper to his case would have been provided; this avoidance of eye-strain would have shielded De Quincey from the sufferings that made him resort to opium, and his life would have been happy and infinitely more productive in his beloved field of literature.

As with De Quincey, but differing, as a matter of course, in degree and in details, so with Darwin, Carlyle, Huxley and Browning. In each case we are confronted with the clinical facts of the life under consideration. Again it is shown to us how plainly the symptoms of eye-strain or astigmatism appear to the keen gaze of the trained oculist of the present day. Darwin's sufferings from nausea, from palpitation of the heart, from morbid nervous conditions, the suffering abating whenever the strain on his eyes was relaxed, are traced directly to eye troubles. Grim old Carlyle's dyspepsia, insomnia and nervous ailments, as also the heart pains of which he complained, these, we are told, were because of the reflex action of eye-strain. The crusty Scotchman, with a pair of glasses suited to his needs, would probably have been a reasonably amiable soul, less trying to the crucified Jane, his long-suffering wife, and assuredly more sane and content and satisfying in his life environment.

Huxley, "hypochondriacal and bedevilled,"

JEROME K. JEROME.

Because his novel, "Paul Kelver," is so like "David Copperfield," England is now hailing him as a second Dickens.

cursed with dyspeptic nausea, nervously depressed and with a heart out of order, is shown to have over-exerted his eyes, and thus paid the penalty. Browning, with that stubborn pain in the head, nervous and dizzy, weakened by "heart exhaustion," a constant source of worry to poor Elizabeth Barrett—he would have been a comfortable poet to know familiarly had the strain on his eyes been relieved. As it was, though well to do in the world's goods, temperate in habit, with no real cause for great distress of mind, the reflex action of eye-strain brought upon him ills that made life seem a burden, causing him to cry aloud of his "weariness of soul." And with this study of the suffering poet, the personal phase of Doctor Gould's surprising "Biographic Clinics" reaches its close. It leaves the reader both marveling and pitying that, if the Gould diagnosis be correct, so great and lasting anguish in high minds should have been endured because of troubles that might have been dispelled by spectacle-

MISS CLARA E. LAUGHLIN.

Her book, "Stories of Authors' Loves," proves anew that purveyors of sentiment suffer sentimental tribulations of exceptional nature.

lenses properly ground for adjustment to overworked eyes.

"THE DECAY OF THE NOVEL."

Literary Optimists Find Reason to Doubt the Truthfulness of the Cry to This Effect.

When one encounters the title of Mr. Benjamin Swift's paper in the Critic for the current month, "The Decay of the Novel," and begins its reading under the depressing influence of such a caption, the sound of the literary jeremiad echoes dismally in one's ears.

The extraordinary quantity and mediocre average quality of the present output of fiction furnish the theme for Mr. Swift's reflections. He notes with sorrow that an enormous demand for novels has created an enormous supply of novels. Publishers are reaching out in every direction for men and women who have the gift of story-telling. They proclaim their writers to the reading world as of surpassing genius. Almost coincidently with publication the novels hurled by wholesale upon the market are described in glowing terms, many of them being declared masterpieces, worthy of the genuinely great minds whose works have stood the only convincing tests, that of time.

Meanwhile, the public of to-day, Mr. Swift believes, is in the main profoundly indifferent to the quality of novels as regards truthfulness to life, literary style, worthiness of thought and ideals, genuineness of characterization. They "go to the book stall as they go to the buffet. They are in need of literary snacks, and a book which does not possess the virtues of a pick-me-up is generally rejected." Their selections are controlled and directed largely by publishers' puffs, by the printed lists of the "best-selling books," by the prevalence of a system of criticism based on counting-room considerations. The logical result of these conditions is the flood of inferior fictional literature now sweeping over the land.

Happily, however, even Mr. Swift himself, in this mournful contemplation of "the decay of the novel," incidentally makes confession of the redeeming truth of the situation, which is that, in despite of the evil days upon which we have fallen, the true literary craftsman will yet choose to remain steadfast to the higher demands of his craft; the "saving minority" of readers will discover and cherish the worthy novels; the judgment possible only to time will preserve the good work and allow the inferior to be forgotten. Indeed, there is something almost amusing in the vehemence with which Mr. Swift, after having racked our souls with bewailing, brings himself and us back to the comforting conviction that things are not as bad as they seem. "Letters are in a state of chaos," he says in conclusion, "but the spirit of literature does not die, and the literary clowns and mountebanks of the hour may be allowed to dance their brief tarantella for the derision of wise men."

Which is a most sound and excellent conclusion. There is nothing new under the sun, we must remember, and the conditions now existing in the literary world have existed in varying degrees almost from the beginning of printed literature. The books that have lived are but an infinitesimal proportion of the books that have been published, and they were not always granted an early recognition. More often than not they have been temporarily eclipsed by second-class books, emerging into favor only when time brought a sober second judgment to their world. As far back as the "spacious days of Queen Elizabeth" too many books were published and too many mediocrities encouraged by transient fame. Then, as well, the master in the field was not infallibly acclaimed. A contemporaneous study of the poets and dramatists of Shakespeare's time omitted Shakespeare from its list. And, as for the curse of unworthy novels at the present moment, did not Edgar Allan Poe complain, more than fifty years ago, of the eagerness of publishers to publish almost any "book of romance, full of absurd improbabilities, bad grammar, and wanting in every other thing necessary to make it a book at all," to the exclusion of genuine literature?

Wherefore it is permissible for us to take heart of grace and feel reasonably sure that literature is not going to the "demnition bow-wows." While it is true that, with regard to the unworthy novel, we cannot echo the cry of the immortal Denis in "The Cloister and the Hearth," "Courage, my friend! The devil is dead!" Yet may we be absolutely confident that he shall die. And your true literary optimist will even find justification for content in the fact of the "enormous demand" that has created an "enormous supply" of novels. Surely where so many novels are being written and published some of them must be worth while, true and simple and sanely strong, like those we get from Thomas Hardy and Eden Philpotts and James Lane Allen. Surely, when the world is so mad with the lust of reading, there must be some who read with discrimination, and whose ranks are recruiting through the uplifting of others by means of any reading at all. And let's keep this homely truth in mind: We see the faults of our own times more clearly because they are nearer to us. We are not the only generation to be plagued with a superabundance of books, not all of which happen to be masterpieces.

ENGLISHMAN AND SCOT.

The Comedy of Their Envenomed Literary War Contains Certain Direful Possibilities That Justify a Shudder or Two.

Refreshing comedy is introduced into the literary life of to-day by means of the racial war now on between England and Scotland, in which volumes of national abuse are weapons and publishers are the medium through whom the respective broadsides are fired.

The entertaining conflict was begun when Mr. T. W. H. Crosland saw fit to publish last fall his audacious book entitled, "The Unspeakable Scot." This act may be distinctly charged against Mr. Crosland as "conduct calculated to provoke a disturbance of the peace," inasmuch as it must have been difficult for any Scot, proud devils as they are, to read "The Unspeakable Scot" and not instantly don his blue bonnet and hike over the border in a foray after the heart's blood of the author. Especially as Mr. Crosland's book set all the English-speaking world to laughing.

And now comes Mr. Angus McNeill—hoot, mon! but there's a Caledonian patronymic for you!—with his book, "The Egregious English," and it seems to be Auld Scotia's turn to laugh. The vulnerable points of the lowland Saxon are searched out and assailed with a vigor characteristic of a Scotchman of letters. The English people are ridiculed in their business, in their literature, in their sports, in their homes, even in their cups. Angus McNeill has no mercy upon them, and the fierce snarling of the bagpipes is heard above the roar of the vengeful fight which he makes.

Let us hope that Ireland will not be drawn into this literary warfare now raging on the larger of the British Isles. The soul shudders to think of what would happen if the "fighting Irish" try their hands

A LATE PORTRAIT OF KIPLING,

Whose "Just So Stories" represent his highest ambition, which is to "write books that children will want."

at a lettered Donnybrook. It's bad enough for the English Crosland and the Scotch McNeil to be jabbing each other full of envenomed ink from opposing banks of the Tweed.

BRET HARTE'S ESTATE.

The Leading American Short-Story Writer Left a Fortune of but $1,800 as Representing the Financial Rewards of Literary Fame.

It would seem to be in order to call the attention of the aspirant for literary fame to the fact that the late Bret Harte, as it now develops, left an estate appraised at only $1,800, as the material token of his many years of popularity with the reading public.

Not for a long time has a more striking illustration of the modest financial rewards of literary success been presented. It is true that Bret Harte was not a good man of business, but it is equally true that he was not a prodigal. For years he had lived an unostentatious life in England, a life calling for nothing more than a moderate income to meet its demands. There is many a bookkeeper who lives on a more expensive scale.

During these years Bret Harte's books enjoyed a steady sale. His royalties must surely have been above the average in the literary world. In the heyday of his fame his stories were in great demand. At no time has he dropped from the public view. He had been a reasonably industrious worker, contributing stories to English and American magazines and bringing them out in book form with no long intervals of time elapsing between. Yet he died a poor man.

But there is probably little use in citing his example as a warning. The young writer who aims at the financial rewards of his craft looks to the exceptional cases of fortune-winning authors. The genuinely creative soul writes for the exercise of its God-given gift. So there you are. Bret Harte died poor in vain. Of the making of books there will be no end.

LEAPING INTO FAME.

James B. Connolly's Winning Olympian Jump at Athens Helps to Swell the Renown of His "Out of Gloucester" Sea Tales.

Readers of the January numbers of periodicals devoted to a discussion of books and writers in this country cannot but be impressed by the fact that James B. Connolly, author of the volume of sea stories entitled "Out of Gloucester," is coming in for a deal of attention.

It may be said, indeed, that Mr. Connolly seems literally to have leaped into fame, since that renowned jump of his which won the highest prize in the first athletic event at the Olympian games in Athens several years ago figures so prominently in the contemplation of his personality and achievements. The combination of an international athletic champion and a successful writer of fiction is apparently irresistible to the bookish world.

Undoubtedly, the physical prowess of the young Bostonian was not without its effect in commending him to President Roosevelt's favor. The strenuous national executive loves brain and brawn with an equal love. It is easy to believe that more than a passing thought of the record-breaking Olympian leap made by Connolly was in the President's mind when, after a delighted perusal of "Out of Gloucester," he wrote a letter of warm congratulation to the author. And there is nothing to regret in the fact of the popular favor won by the bracketing of distinguished feats of mind and muscle opposite the one name. A generation whose athletes gain renown by their literary work, or, if you prefer, whose literary men are champion athletes, is a strong generation.

"The Work of Wall Street."

By the business man and everybody interested in financial topics Sereno S. Pratt's new book, "The Work of Wall Street," will be read with eager pleasure, while the general reader who likes now and then a novelty in book-ware will find it diverting and instructive.

Wall street in its outer aspects has been a fruitful topic for playwrights, novelists, magazine writers and economists, but few people have any clear comprehension of its inner, intricate workings. These Mr. Pratt portrays and in a manner to enlist attention. The author knows whereof he speaks, and possesses in marked degree the art to entertain. Under another's hand Wall street might be a dull and forbidding topic. Mr. Pratt, whose life-time experience with a pen has taught him many niceties of expression, invests it with something akin to fascination.

Pratt, at eighteen, was editor of the St. Albans Advertiser. Later he became city editor of the old New York Commercial Bulletin—now the Journal of Commerce and Commercial Bulletin. Afterwards he was Will street editor of the New York World. At present he is New York representative of the Philadelphia Ledger.

In these capacities he has enjoyed the friendship and confidence of Wall street's best-known financiers and has been intrusted with many street secrets. His training and intimate knowledge fit him well to give an impartial review of the inside workings of that small, mysterious and powerful center. Mr. Pratt has indulged in no theories, no moralizing or philosophising, but has simply reported facts as they existed and do exist, leaving others to speculate upon them if they choose. The book is illustrated and contains many interesting charts, diagrams and forms. Published by Appletons.

"A Son of Destiny."

With grim "Old Hickory" Jackson as its hero, an historical novel ought to be strenuously interesting, one would think, yet Miss Mary C. Francis has failed to accomplish this in "A Son of Destiny," recently published by the Federal Book Company of New York. The story is sadly deficient as regards dramatic construction, the little romance which is injected into its pages to occupy them when Jackson is not striding across them fails to command the reader's interest, and the narrative element is so lacking, when the volume is considered as a novel, that disappointment is inevitable. On the other hand, viewed as a contribution to history, there is so obvious a commingling of fact and fancy that we must distrust Miss Francis's efforts in this direction. The literary style of the author is too high-flown to commend itself to a discriminating taste, and there is evidence of hasty construction in her work, which indicates an absence of conscientious regard for the proper performance of a task in letters.

"Nathan, the Wise."

Lessing's famous drama, "Nathan, the Wise," is issued in the original German this week by the American Book Company, New York, with a scholarly introduction by Tobias J. C. Dieckhoff, professor of German in the University of Michigan. This edition is prepared especially for mature students, and furnishes all the material necessary for critical study and correct appreciation. The genesis, religious content, sources and historical foundation of the play are discussed in the introduction, and there are copious notes explaining linguistic points. A novelty in such publications is the appendix in German, expounding the significance of the drama in relation to Lessing's other works.

"Racquets, Tennis and Squash."

Lovers of the less violent sports will doubtless be gratefully appreciative of "Racquets, Tennis and Squash," a handbook of instruction in these games just published by the Appletons. The volume may be taken as authoritative, inasmuch as the author, Eustace Miles, M. A., of King's College, Cambridge, is the amateur racquet champion of the world at singles and of England at doubles, amateur tennis champion of the world, holder of the gold prize and amateur squash-tennis champion of America in 1900. Mr. Miles is emphatically a conscientious instructor. He would seem to have left nothing undone in the way of full enlightenment of readers, and his teaching extends from the smallest detail of position and hand-grip to the most comprehensive study of the games as a whole and in their relation one to the other. The instructions are illustrated with numerous photographs and diagrams of practical value to players, and the book promises to be a standard publication in its especial field.

"Pipe Dreams and Twilight Tales."

"Pipe Dreams and Twilight Tales," by Birdsall Jackson (F. M. Buckles & Co.; New York), is an unassuming little volume of short stories, dialect sketches and occasional verse that may be read with some pleasure in idle moments. There have been less meritorious volumes published with a greater flourish of trumpets, and, while no profound impression will be created in this instance, it is refreshing to remember that the author himself cherishes but a modest estimate of his work. "There will be no fights to the death," he tells us. "There will be no treasures buried. Nor will there be any chronicle of the deeds of great historical personages. But there will be some sketches of everyday characters—vignettes of common life and experience." This is quite restful after so much strenuous literature, and makes one regard the venture with a grateful liking that is not dispelled by a reading of Mr. Jackson's quiet stories, pen pictures and poems.

New Books Received.

The following books have been received by The Republic this week for review:

"The Work of Wall Street." By S. S. Pratt. D. Appleton & Co., publishers, New York. $1.25.

"Racquets—Tennis & Squash." E. H. Miles. D. Appleton & Co. $1.60.

"Biographic Clinics." The origin of the ill health of De Quincey, Carlyle, Darwin, Huxley and Browning. By George M. Gould, M. D. P. Blakiston's Son & Co., Philadelphia.

"A Son of Destiny." The story of Andrew Jackson. By Mary C. Francis. The Federal Book Company, New York.

"Pipe Dreams and Twilight Tales." By Birdsall Jackson. F. M. Buckles & Co., New York. $1.25.

"Ethan Allen of Green Mountain Fame." A hero of the Revolution. By Charles Walter Brown. M. A. Donohue & Co., Chicago.

"Lessing's Nathan Der Weise." Introduction, notes and an appendix of parallel passages by Tobias J. C. Dieckhoff. American Book Company, New York City.

"Early Voyages Up and Down the Mississippi." By Cavelier, St. Cosme, Le Sueur, Gravier and Guignas. With an introduction, notes and an index by John Gilmary Shea. John Munsell, Albany.

Nearly every one having rooms to rent advertise in The Sunday Republic. Don't be left out. Give your ad. to any druggist to send in for you.

Stones Tumble on Track.

REPUBLIC SPECIAL.

Madison, Ind., Jan. 16.—Three tremendous stones fell on the track in the deep cut on the incline plane between here and North Madison to-night, delaying the incoming passenger train, and many walked down to the city. Workmen are endeavoring to remove the obstruction. No one was killed.

A Personal Note to the Public

I firmly believe that if every man and woman of moderate means, young and old, married or not, would read the series "How We Saved for a Home" in The Ladies' Home Journal, that thousands would date the beginning of their true living from that day.

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Edward Bok

Editor of The Ladies' Home Journal

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SMALL, MAYNARD & COMPANY, Publishers BOSTON