

THE CRITIC'S CORNER.

DEVOTED TO COMMENT UPON RECENT PUBLICATION.

"The Wagner Story Book"—"Life and Letters of Erasmus"—"The Farmer's Boy"—Literary Notes.

THE WAGNER STORY BOOK. Fire-light tales of the great Music Dramas. By William Henry Frost. Illustrated by Sidney Richmond Burleigh. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York. \$1.50. For sale by West, Johnston & Co.

"What shall we give our children to read?" is one of the questions of the day. The eager restless, craving little minds, the quick imaginations feeding upon fancies before they have mastered facts, the infant appetite for the wonderful, how shall we foster and direct these? Where all the thinking is in pictures, fiction is an unknown word—expressing only a child's mental play—and there is no standard by which to measure the marvelous, the impossible. Dreams run into undefined lines of every day life and the child's tireless spirit, fresh from nature's fount, rises above our pale limitations of reason and sees only the wondrous early gods, and "the flaming ramparts of the world." So the wonder stories of all ages have been ransacked for our younglings from Homer to Captain Kidd, but no one before has had the happy thought of a Wagner Story Book.

Under the graceful guise of fairy tales seen in the fire and told to a child, we have here all the Scandinavian myths and poetic legends immortalized by being linked with the music of Wagner. It is a wholesome book besides, with its big mystical heroes, and enchantresses who always fail to overcome the right—something of the high, pure air of the Norse-land blows through its pages fresh and sweet and strong, are the pictures so daintily held up before the little girl who gazes with wide eyes into the fire to watch the fascinating procession—the stately swan of Lohengrin, the pilgrim's march in Tannhauser, the wondrous flower-garden of Parsifal and its holy grail shining under the dome. The undulating forms of the sea-nymph and before her, as they guard their glittering treasure; far down, hideous dwarfs are forging the margin ring, while above all, beckons the glorious palan of the gods. When the Trilogy is one day put before her it will not be only "the opera"—she will understand it all as a great moral drama. The sword of Siegfried, the birds that talk to him of the dragon, he slays the curse of the gods, will all rave their meaning. She comes face to face with the Valkyrias, "the choosers of the slain," as they gather at the bridge of Valhalla.

Nothing in classic fable equals in fire and poetry this wild ride of the Valkyrias coming with the speed of the winds from many a battlefield and on a pathway of cloud, each bearing the body and soul of a dead warrior into the paradise beyond. The plunging horses, that "choke the darkness from their loosened manes," reined by these golden-haired daughters of the god, calm, beautiful, majestic, their gory burdens before them, seem some splendid fragment of an old Norse frieze that Wagner has reproduced for modern art.

But besides word pictures the "story book" gives everywhere lessons for the little ones. The gods themselves grow pale and old when love is not with them—promises must be kept at any cost—punishment follows all crime, only the bravest and truest could wake the goddess who slept, guarded by the fire of purity and pity is divine; more potent than magic, saving the fallen and healing at a touch the wounds of this weary world.

LIFE AND LETTERS OF ERASMUS, by James Anthony Froude, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, \$2.50. For sale by West, Johnston & Co.

In this series of lectures, delivered at Oxford, 1893-4, and published precisely as delivered, Mr. Froude gives us not only a very sympathetic, valuable, and attractive piece of biography, but necessarily, Erasmus being what he was, glimpses at the principal actors in European political and religious life in an era when the world was in travail for the delivery of the pure and naked truth, and when the Spirit of God was moving upon the face of the waters.

The letters from which he has quoted are so numerous and so lengthy, that, as he himself says, he has been compelled to "abridge, compress, and epitomize." His object, he states, has "been rather to lead historical readers to a study of Erasmus' own writings than to provide an abbreviated substitute for them."

The personality of Erasmus, we are not long in discovering is one with which Mr. Froude is more closely in touch than that of the fearless, passionate, non-hearted German Luther, but while conceding much that he claims for the former, we are certainly not prepared to concede, even with so eminent and able a scholar as Mr. Froude, that to the two great men the former was the greater.

His views regarding Henry VIII. are, of course, those whose expression startled the public years ago.

To presenting the character of Erasmus justly Mr. Froude has lent all the force and charm of his delightfully distinctive literary style with the result that he has given to the public a book combining educational value with the fascination sure to attach to a brilliant and sympathetic sketch of a vivid life lived in vivid times. The quotations from the letters of Erasmus are aptly introduced, and emphasize Mr. Froude's views of his character, as well as suggest by their literal reflections of the times in which he lived, their value to historical readers as a study, which latter was Mr. Froude's avowed object in introducing them.

THE BURIAL OF THE GUNS: By Thomas Nelson Page, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, \$1.25. For sale by West, Johnston & Co.

This volume contains six short stories by Mr. Page, of which "The Burial of the Guns" is one, which, with "The Gray Jacket of No. 4" and "Little Darby" are the best.

The war period, abounding as it did in pathos and broken romances, furnishes the background for these, which are all marked by Mr. Page's characteristic quality as a story writer, absolute simplicity.

"Miss Dangedille's Roses" is simply the old story of a true man and a false

woman under new names. It has no originality to commend it, nor any other quality except its clear purity of tone. Indeed the adjective that will be oftentimes applied to the contents of this volume from Messrs. Scribner will be "pleasant" and it will be precisely the adjective most expressive of their character. Without special force, originality or beauty, they are yet attractive reading.

THE FARMER'S BOY: Written and illustrated by Clifton Johnson, D. Appleton & Company, New York. \$2.50. For sale by West, Johnston & Co.

The New England farmer's boy is, in this beautifully bound and finely illustrated volume, given Mr. Johnson's attention to the extent of one hundred and sixteen pages, terminating in a sleigh ride which carries the small traveler out of sight.

The writer presents a picture of the boy's life during the entire year, and the boy represents hundreds of boys on New England farms. His work, his play, his life in the fields and in the home, Mr. Johnson pictures with a fidelity that would suggest that very probably he was once a New England boy, and the illustrations in which the handsome book abounds are readily true to life.

It would appear that this boy finds life extremely agreeable, on the whole, although by no means without its roughness. He has his work to do, and is not the subject of superfluous sentiment on the part of his energetic and thrifty parents, but he has his holidays and if his mother's affection shows itself principally in putting him into dry shoes when he wets his feet, consoling him with cookies when the cow kicks the milk pan over, and insisting with energy upon prayers night and morning, no matter how low the thermometer, it is an affection, he knows, as true as it is unemphatic, and, on the whole, the kind his growing masculine dignity best likes and most appreciates. The mechanical work on the book is absolutely faultless.

Literary Notes.

The short, alert, space figure and keen face of the Autocrat have been for so many years familiar in the streets of Boston that the possibility of seeing Dr. Holmes no more could scarcely enter the mind. All those who were accustomed to the passing vision of the poet in the Old Corner Bookstore, and on his daily walk to State street, must still expect to see him a living part of our literary present as of the greater days of the past. Thousands of his fellow-citizens, who knew him by sight, liked to point him out to one another.

During the last year or two, when he has not walked about much alone, the public's glimpses of Dr. Holmes have been rarer. He was usually in his place at King's Chapel, and literary pilgrims from other cities liked to go there to see him sitting in that high-side pew in the gallery, often nodding, as he humorously confessed, growing old, sleeping as peacefully when an Oriental spoke as when listening to a New England man.

The symphony rehearsal Friday afternoons attracted him with much regularity during the season. He liked hearing the concert a day in advance of the Saturday night people, he would say, and there was always for him the tribute which is paid to fame in the groups of people ready to stand and gaze at him getting in and out of his carriage in Hamilton place. His appearance at public assemblies of any sort where he was expected to take part grew very rare. But after his illness of last winter, Dr. Holmes accepted a great many of the invitations, which were often more nearly entreaties, to go about and he always, naturally, guest of honor in many homes and at many festivals of clubs and societies.

Dr. Canon Doyle considers Thomas Hardy and George Meredith as the deans of the literary faculty in England, the legitimate successors of Dickens and Thackeray. He, like Mr. Howells, considers fiction a finer art to-day than it was in the lifetime of the last generation.

The "Penny Dreadful" is not unknown, as it seems, in Germany, where it bears the characteristic title of "Shudder Romance." It is not sold in the shops, but is carried about from street to street and village to village by an army of colporteurs. The Berlin "Tagliche Rundschau" asserts that there are no fewer than 45,000 "Shudder Romance" colporteurs, who earn their bread by the sale of weekly numbers of these novels in Germany and Austria. It estimates the regular subscribers at about 20,000,000. These novels of crime and horror are not complete in one number, like those in our comparatively innocent penny novelettes, but usually run to about 150 weekly numbers, and rarely conclude in less space than 100 numbers.

W. Clarke Russell who has won fame as a writer of sea stories, suffers so greatly from rheumatism that at times he can use neither his hands nor his feet, and is compelled to dictate his literary work. His home is near Bath, England.

A London weekly perpetrates the following appalling joke: "Mr. Kipling is beginning to take a deep interest in dairying. Every morning he milks—but that's an 'udder story,' as Ruyard himself would remark."

From the Publishers' Circular it is learned that the fever to be Poet-Laureate is now raging in the poetic soul of Scotland. The countrymen of Burns consider themselves endowed by nature with the gift of song, and some of them are not backward in announcing their opinions. An Edinburgh gentleman has recently filed an application for the position; and now his example is followed by a son of Glasgow. The latter candidate gives fully particulars concerning himself physically—size, age, weight, etc.—and states that he has never worn a kilt. He "can write poetry under any circumstances or on any subject, and with such rare facility that, although appointed laureate, all country orders will still continue to be punctually attended to."

Queen Marguerite of Italy's pearls are almost unparalleled in beauty and value, some of them being the size of robin's eggs. Since the first year of their marriage King Humbert has given his lovely consort at Christmas and on the occasion of her birthday one rope of pearls of extreme magnificence. This celebrated collar, which has been added to from year to year, reaches now down to the Queen's waist, and when she wears them on state occasions they are accompanied by a diadem of hugh pearls, given to her on her marriage by her mother, and by two admirable bracelets, composed of sixteen rows of perfect Ceylon pearls, the gift of the late Emperor Frederick of Germany, who was a great admirer of the fair Marguerite.

FOOD FOR REFLECTION.

GATHERED FROM THE RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL PRESS.

Words of Wisdom on Religious and Moral Subjects Which are Worth Attention From the Thoughtful.

Thy Neighbor as Thyself.

What lack of Paradise
If, in anglic verse,
Each unto each, as to himself, were dear?
If we in soul desired,
Whatever form might hide,
Own brother and own sister everywhere?
Edwin Arnold.

The Example of Christ.

"When the Lord came into the world, it was in a much worse condition than it is to-day. The wealth of the world was gathered into fewer hands, comparatively, than it is among us; the vilest slavery that ever stained the annals of human history prevailed throughout the civilized globe; public and private virtue were but reminiscences of the past, while every vice of which human nature was capable held universal and almost unrebuked sway over the human heart. And yet our Lord, who came for the purpose of setting all things right, had not a word to say of economic reforms or of political renovation. On the contrary, He taught that men should 'Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's.' Though He rebuked the Pharisees, He taught that they sat 'in Moses' seat,' and said unto the multitude, 'All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works; that is, according to their hypocritical motives. He refused on another occasion to be made 'a judge and divider' over the people, and taught at least by implication that if they would avoid the sin of covetousness, such judgment would be unnecessary. It is true He scourged the money-changers and them that sold doves out of the Temple; that He consoled chiefly with the poor and downtrodden, and that He fed the multitude and healed the sick; but these were the outward effects of the inward salvation that He wrought for them, while He left the question of social and economic reforms absolutely untouched. And He did this because He knew that the greater included the less; that if He could purge the hearts of men of the greed and avarice, the cruelty and lust that possessed them, at the rest would follow of itself; and that without this no amount of moral reform or civic regeneration would accomplish more than a temporary purpose. He knew that what men needed was salvation from their sins—redemption from the power of their enemies; and that this redemption could not be accomplished except by actual combats with the bells and victories over them. He knew that if He could work out such a redemption in behalf of men, and that if they would avail themselves of it by repentance and the life of charity, it would inaugurate a reign of 'peace on Earth and good-will toward men,' and that nothing else would. He preached, therefore, not economics, but religion; not reform, but repentance; not the overthrow of Caesar, but the establishment of the kingdom of Heaven."—Literary Digest.

The Value of Civility.

There would be fewer broken friendships fewer unhappy unions and family quarrels, were it not so much the custom among intimate friends and relations to neglect the small courtesies of life. It is the foundation of misery in marriage, and many a serious and life-long estrangement has begun, not from want of affection so much as from lack of that delicate and instinctive appreciation of the feelings of others which makes a person shrink from saying unpleasant things or finding fault, unless absolutely obliged, and in any case to avoid wounding the offender's sense of dignity, or stirring up within him feelings of opposition and animosity; for although many persons profess to be above taking offense at honest censure, and even seem to court criticism, yet it must be very carefully administered not to be unpalatable. Even kind and generous actions are often so uncouthly performed as to cause the recipient more pain than pleasure, while a reproof or denial may be so sweetened by courtesy as almost to do away with any sense of mortification or disappointment. Good breeding is always inclined to form a favorable judgment, and to give others the credit of being actuated by worthy motives. It does not wish or seem to know more about people than they themselves desire should be known, but it is always prepared, when necessary, to take an interest in the affairs of others, while self is not suffered to obtrude unduly.—The Baptist Weekly.

Pleasant People.

Some men move through life as a band of music moves down the street, flinging out pleasure on every side through the air, to every one far and near who can listen. Some men fill the air with their presence and sweetness, as orchards in October days fill the air with perfume of ripe fruit. Some women cling to their own houses like the honeysuckle over the door, yet, like it, sweeten all the region with the subtle fragrance of their goodness. They are trees of righteousness which are ever dropping precious fruits around them. There are lives which shine like starbeams, or charm the heart like songs sung upon a holy day.

How a great a bounty and a blessing it is to hold the royal gifts of the soul so that they shall be music to some, and fragrance to others, and life to all! It would be no unworthy thing to live for—to make the power which we have within us the breath of other men's joy; to scatter sunshine where only clouds and shadows reign; to fill the atmosphere where earth's weary toilers must stand with a brightness which they cannot create for themselves, and which they long to enjoy and appreciate.—Exchange.

Punishment for selfishness.

In the case of an honest and a generous man, he is his own poorest company. Such a man knows his own failings, his own meannesses. He will, when he can, get away from himself and identify his interests with the concerns of others. The selfish man, whose thoughts center in himself and whose aspirations concern only his own personal aggrandizement is the loneliest of creatures. To be sure, a man's physical suffering may be alleviated whatever his character, as the Sisters of Mercy ministered to the needs of that famous English fop, Beau Brummel, after the close of a long career of self-adulation, during which royalty and

the butterflies of fashion swarmed about him. But Brummel is not now remembered for anything good or brave. He lived for himself. He died without friends. Loneliness is the punishment the world inflicts for selfishness.—Young Men's Era.

The Distraction.

Self-adaptation is not self-annihilation. The wise adapting of ourselves to others, and the suiting of ourselves to circumstances, is an exercise of original power, not a servile imitating or paralysis of self. Says Phillips Brooks, "Only he who lives a life of his own can help the lives of other men."—S. S. Times.

The Spoken Word.

The spoken word, next to the written word is, of all things on earth, most vital. Once spoken, the word cannot be recalled. If it be a rash word, an angry word, a word of untruth or of malice, an impure or profane word, it has gone, as an arrow from the bow, on its mission of evil, and all bad angels wait to speed it on. Let us pause before we speak, and let our words be words of loving kindness.—Exchange.

Look Upward.

Life is not a mean succession of little trivialities. Man is not a mere creature of appetite and passion. God has lifted the world and man into the sweep of His great thought. The world he is remaking glorious. You and me He will recreate divine. It rests with us to place ourselves in the line of redemption. Look up that you may be lifted up. Your Saviour, your destiny, your guiding stars are not beneath, but above. Then let yours be the upward look and the onward effort!—Berry.

The Great Men.

The thoroughly great men are those who have done everything thoroughly, and who have never despised anything, however small, of God's making.—Ruskin.

Religious Notes.

The Missionary Council of the Protestant Episcopal Church was in session last week in Hartford, Conn. About forty bishops and over two hundred laymen and clerical delegates were in attendance. Among the topics were Associate Missions, Lay Helpers and Missions, Women's Auxiliaries, Work among the Colored Race and Work among the Jews. The immediate management of the missions rests with the Board of Managers in New York; but these yearly meetings of the Council serve to stir up interest in the cause of missions and make this branch of the Church's work better known to the people. Considerable interest was felt in the Anglican Missionary Conference in London, which was held not long since and at which there were a number of representatives from this country.

It is reported that the persecution of the Armenians in Fresno, Cal., to which reference has been made at different times, is growing more malignant daily. As a consequence at the annual meeting of the home and foreign organization of the Women of the Congregational Churches on the Pacific Coast, held at Ventura, Cal., recently, resolutions were adopted protesting against this persecution, and extending to the Armenians full assurance of sympathy and fellowship. Similar action was also taken by the General Association of Southern California.

The Methodist Missionary Society reports receipts for the month of September, 1893, \$229,162 against \$161,912 for September, 1892. This makes the total receipts for eleven months \$996,982, against \$906,506 for the preceding year.

For the first time in many years the American Sunday-School Union makes a special appeal to the churches. The past year has been one of the most successful in the history of the society, showing the establishment of 1,785 new Sunday-schools, and the conversion of nearly 11,000 persons.

According to the Lutheran World, in a German population of at least 75,000 there is but one German Lutheran Church in Cincinnati. The German congregations there are independent and are served by a chief of German ecclesiastics, whose chief Gospel is that of "liberty of thought and license of conduct." In a conversation with a number of these they were asked whether they were Lutherans. To this they replied, "We be Luther's men, but not Lutherans." They also said they rejected the Augsburg Confession, declared the Bible their only creed, and had no such "Romanish shackles as creeds." The divinity or deity of Christ they denied, and when their attention was called to passages setting forth His deity they passed that they "were not written by an Apostle; but like the accounts of the fall, the flood and the resurrection, are not to be believed." When questioned as to their view of the Lord's Supper, they claimed that they were Zwinglians and not Lutherans.

Probably one of the most interesting sects in Russia is the Dukhoborts, inhabiting large districts of Western Transcaucasia. Their name, "Westerners with the Spirit," indicates that the society at its beginning held views analogous to those of the German Pietists. They were men of strong character and faith. But as time went on, and active persecution of them ceased, they began to show signs of worldliness, to amass money and land, and forget their pristine simplicity of life. News from the Caucasus now states that a strangely interesting revival movement is stirring these people. Their leader, Verigin, has called upon them to divide their property equally among all the brethren, and in response to his call some of the richest Dukhoborts have relinquished everything they possess, one man probably the richest among them, having cheerfully withdrawn his whole property of \$5,000 from the bank and distributed it among his less opulent brethren. Verigin has ordered in all the women of the sect who are in service in neighboring towns; they are not to leave their homes in the future. And in view of the possibility of a future revival from the faith their energetic leader is stirring them up to leave the fat lands of the Caucasus for the remote and desolate steppes of the province of Archangel on the shores of the White Sea. The Dukhoborts number about one hundred thousand.

Women work on the railroads and in the mines near Dresden for about 25 cents a day. They are said to do grading and tunneling with as much satisfaction to their employers as if they were men. They get less wages than the men.

Josephine Suffecka Jayoska, who is said to be a grandchild of Pulaski, the Polish patriot, and once a Countess at St. Petersburg, sells papers in front of the Brooklyn post office.