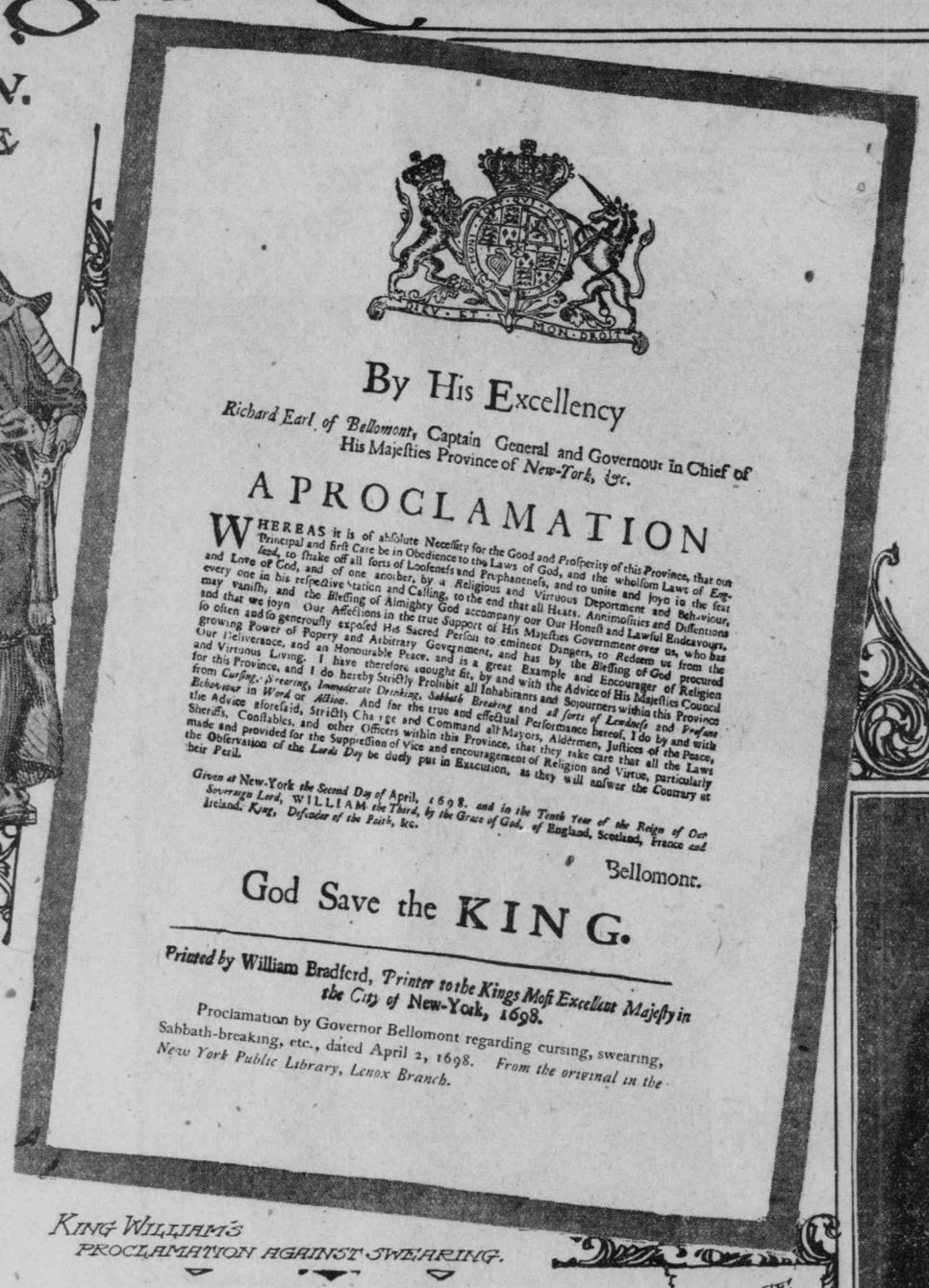
Through Reader's Specs

BY ROBERT W. RITCHIE

PETER STUYVESANT, LAST DUTCH GOVERNOR OF NEW AMSTERDAM.



By His Excellency

Richard Earl of Bellomont, Captain General and Governour in Chief of His Majesties Province of New-York, &c.

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS it is of absolute Necessity for the Good and Prosperity of this Province, that our Principal and first Care be in Obedience to the Laws of God, and the wholsom Laws of England, to shake off all sorts of Loofeness and Prophaneness, and to unite and joyn in the fear and Love of God, and of one another, by a Religious and Virtuous Deportment and Behaviour, every one in his respective Station and Calling, to the end that all Heats, Animosities and Dissentions may vanish, and the Blessing of Almighty God accompany our Our Honest and Lawful Endeavours, and that we joyn Our Affections in the true Support of His Majesties Government over us, who has so often and so generously exposed His Sacred Person to eminent Dangers, to Redeem us from the growing Power of Popery and Arbitrary Government, and has by the Blessing of God procured Our Deliverance, and an Honourable Peace, and is a great Example and Encourager of Religion and Virtuous Living. I have therefore thought fit, by and with the Advice of His Majesties Council for this Province, and I do hereby Strictly Prohibit all Inhabitants and Sojourners within this Province from Cursing, Swearing, Immoderate Drinking, Sabbath Breaking and all sorts of Lewdness and Profane Behaviour in Word or Action. And for the true and effectual Performance hereof, I do by and with the Advice aforesaid, Strictly Charge and Command all Mayors, Aldermen, Justices of the Peace, Sheriffs, Constables, and other Officers within this Province, that they take care that all the Laws made and provided for the Suppression of Vice and encouragement of Religion and Virtue, particularly the Observation of the Lords Day be duly put in Execution, as they will answer the Contrary at their Peril.

Given at New-York the Second Day of April, 1698. and in the Tenth Year of the Reign of Our Sovereign Lord, WILLIAM the Third, by the Grace of God, of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith, &c.

Bellomont.

God Save the KING.

Printed by William Bradford, Printer to the Kings Most Excellent Majesty in the City of New-York, 1698.

Proclamation by Governor Bellomont regarding cursing, swearing, Sabbath-breaking, etc., dated April 2, 1698. *From the original in the New York Public Library, Lenox Branch.*

KING WILLIAM'S PROCLAMATION AGAINST SWEARING.

GEORGE CALVERT, LORD BALTIMORE, PROJECTOR OF MARYLAND COLONY.

Establishment of Middle Colonies

IN previous issues of this page of book criticisms opportunity has been taken to call attention to the "History of North America," projected in twenty volumes under the general editorship of Guy Carleton Lee, and extended reviews of the first three of these volumes have been offered. To the fourth, "The Colonization of the Middle States," by Professor F. R. Jones of the faculty of Bryn Mawr College, attention is now due.

It must be recognized that to each of the twenty collaborators in this vastly comprehensive history of the continent from the stone age to the present day a task of no easy achievement is assigned. In the general scheme of editorship Professor Lee has had to distribute the work of authorship in blocks, as it were, an epoch to each, thus sacrificing continuity to the exigencies of the whole scheme. The author of "Colonization of the Middle States," like the other historians, has his province quite strictly confined. Prohibited from the nature of this compilation from catching the significance of great colonial movements outside of his territory, save in so far as they affect his own province, the writer suffers from an enforced lack of perspective and scope of view; he keeps his eyes too close to written order of things without opportunity to catch fundamentals of the entire colonial history.

Professor Lee introduces the volume with a plaint on the lack of interest taken in the colonial history of the Middle States. Always, says he, has our interest been divided between Puritan New England and Cavalier Virginia, whose respective sons have not ceased in their laudatory exploitation of the early history of these two sections. He believes that this sectional particularization against the middle colonies has been due to the dearth of writers native to the district. The author of the present volume, however, takes a far less peevish view of the question than his editor with the explanation that in this, the middle zone, there was a blending of the characteristics of both New England and Virginia, making economic and governmental conditions of a neutral order. This has led to a complete exploitation of State histories to the neglect of interstate or intercolonial records.

The Dutch settlement of New York is given the first attention. Tracing very succinctly the earliest Dutch voyages of exploration in and about the Hudson, Connecticut and Delaware rivers, Jones emphasizes the strictly commercial spirit which characterized all of the sturdy Hollanders' earliest exploits. They came not to till the soil and build homes, but to strip the land of its wealth of skins and sail away to convert pelts into dollars. Just when the Dutch began to consider New Amsterdam a permanent abiding place, however, the author leaves to conjecture.

The formation of the Dutch West India Company, its powers, the inauguration of the patroon system of land tenure under its instrument of authority—these affairs give opportunity for a brief though fairly complete survey of the governmental idea as expressed by Peter Stuyvesant and his predecessors in office at Manhattan. Though elaborating at length upon difficulties arising out of the old feudal system of tenure, the feuds and open ruptures between governors and governed and all the rest of the strictly chronological, strictly dry facts of history, the author fails to give any insight into the social and economic conditions and customs that made this new Holland of the West the most quaintly picturesque of all the colonies. Even though cramped for space on account of the scope of his subject, Jones could have inserted a livening chapter on Dutch New York with profit to his work.

That the record of old Peter Stuyvesant's quarrels may be taken aptly as the record of his Governorship is rather a strong assertion for the author to make and one not dovetailing with the word of the genial Diedrich Knickerbocker.

"Frequently," says Jones, "at the same time Stuyvesant would be engaged in disputes with the English and the Swedes about territorial claims; with the colonial patroons in regard to the respective merits of company and patroonship privilege; and with his own people as to what were the prerogatives of the directors and privileges of the people. When it was not all of these disputes together, it was a combination of some two or three of them." A hard character this, indeed, for poor old Peter of the wooden leg.

Maybe because of the element of the obviously ridiculous which made itself manifest so many times, the author's account of the Swedish settlements in the Delaware country is better reading. To Captain David Pieters de Vries of Hoorn, a worthy old sea dog, be all honor for that his shipload of Swedes was successfully discharged on a Delaware shore in April, 1631, and the little State-to-be was thus born. Then came more Swedes and some protests from the Dutch and from the English, for the hardy Norsks were settled upon land everybody claimed and nobody owned. Then came troubles. Doughty old Governor Printz fired a shot at a vessel load of New England Yankees and then, by way of making amends, charged them forty shillings—the price of the shot. Next Moens Kling, commander of a Swedish fort, led an army of eight men against Commissary Hudde, the Dutchman, and cut down all his apple trees. Comes then Jan Rysingh, new Governor of New Sweden, and signalizes his advent by capturing a fort held by seven soldiers. This story of the Swedes in Delaware is brave reading.

After a review of the events leading up to the occupation of New Amsterdam by the English, the author takes the reader over the wider field of colonization and furnishes a study of the "migration of the oppressed" by showing the sources, the extent and the distribution of the many immigrants which persecution had driven to the shores of the new world. In this study we have a succinct review of the conditions that operated to bring about the self-exile of these people, and we are enabled to understand their peculiar dispositions in the face of their new environments, and so are better fitted to comprehend the parts they played in the upbuilding of the nation among whose pioneers they were. The Walloons, the Puritans, the Huguenots, the Quakers, the Mennonites, the Lutherans, the Jews, the Waldenses, the Labadists, the Roman Catholics, the Palatines, the Moravians, the Tunkers, all escaped from the terrors of European persecution, and found in the early colonies of the Middle States and Maryland a refuge from oppression and in general an unfettered liberty to work out their own success, while they enjoyed that liberty of conscience that had been denied them in their native lands. The events involved in these migrations are ably outlined in the present work.

A particular phase of this migration is treated under the head "Lord Baltimore's Experiment, 1632-1685"; this covers not merely the moving cause of the establishment of the Maryland colony, but also the outline story of this privileged colony's progress for over half a century. Both the proprietary and the colonists were placed under liberal conditions in relation to the mother country. The early troubles of the new colonists with those of Virginia and the jealous opposition of the latter are followed step by step. The beginnings of legislative power; the assertion of the colonists' right to self-government; the material development of the colony; its administrative regulations; its ecclesiastical matters, and its boundary troubles with Virginia and Pennsylvania are each and all amply reviewed.

Under the caption "Penn's Holy Experiment," Jones gives a detailed account of the founding of Pennsylvania, paying especial attention to the nature of the colony's constitution and its many impracticabilities born of the founder's religious and social beliefs. Returning to the case of affairs after the dethronement of the Stuarts in England, the peaceable characteristics that are usually attributed to the Quaker colony are not in very strong evidence as the author traces the proceedings of its Assembly in its relation to the proprietary and its governor. Of course the disputes were in no small degree based upon dislike of the military measures required, but there was also the strong antipathy to expenditure for government, in spite of the material prosperity of the people. With the breaking of the sentimental ties that bound the people to the founder, there was greater need for discretion in the choice of the proprietary's governor, and in Keith an excellent representative was found to maintain harmony. The course of the financial policy of the colony is closely followed, and the growth of the mixed population and its effects upon the prosperity of the colony clearly traced. Of course we have an appreciative notice of Franklin and his great services to the commonwealth he distinguished—this is an indispensable subject. The narrative covering Pennsylvania is brought down to the period of Washington's expedition against the French.

Lord Baltimore's religious experiment in the founding of Maryland, the subsequent history of that proprietary colony until the War of the Revolution, and the settlement and growth of New Jersey—subjects of lesser interest—are treated in the measure due their importance and the author closes his narrative with the assumption of parliamentary control over the colonies.

A word in general criticism and "Colonization of the Middle States" is dismissed. Adequately has the author covered the subject and very closely has he followed the lines of competent authority. This one element of a good historical work is missing to a large degree: A reflection of the customs, social traditions and thought of the times. Had Dr. Jones given this phase of the task more attention he would have added to his book's value by just that much.

(George Barrie & Sons, Philadelphia; illustrated; sold on subscription only.)

An Old Problem Shown in New Light

A STRANGE book is Morley Roberts' "Rachel Marr"—a strange book and a forceful. Though it is cast without fear into an atmosphere that is decreed by society to be unwholesome, though it breathes a dangerous iconoclasm for all accepted creeds of morality, yet has Mr. Roberts' story a tremendous moving quality such as very few novels of this day and generation possess. As with those who read D'Annunzio's poems of passionate paganism and condemn and read again, so it is with him who pursues the love of Rachel Marr and Anthony to the tragic end. Herein indeed is the spirit of the modern French school of the decadent pushed to its uttermost. Yet does one find himself caught in the swirl of this frankly avowed exaltation of the body over the soul and held fascinated until the final line.

Rachel Marr is the embodiment of the elemental, the fundamental in the scheme of living things—a girl tingling to the finger tips with the raw wine of life. As unashamed in the promptings of her flesh as any Dryad of Pan's train, still of the sweetness of the seed bearing flower is she. For her the mating of all living creatures in happiness and the bringing forth of their kind is the supreme law of life; love is sanctified. Loving Rachel and loved by her is Anthony Perran, the man of reined passions, the religious zealot in whose eyes mortification of the flesh is the only sacrifice acceptable to God. Here, then, the author has for his motive the clash between the law of Rhea, great earth mother of us all, and the law of the Twelve Tables.

At the very outset of his story Roberts gives a picture of the strange heart that is in this woman:

"Yet how she adored the fullness of the earth and the ripe increase of the flocks and herds. The very cackle of the hens and the full murmur of their brooding; the mares and their foals; a litter of tumbling, yelping pups, excited her as greatly as the sound of the sea, though to a softer, more inexplicable emotion. Little children she adored; those who were childless she hardly knew; she rarely crossed their over-quiet thresholds; she did not pity them; they did not exist. A woman of the village only became a living creature when she bore life; when she renewed it. A baby was a miracle to her. * * * Her disdain or hatred of the aged, which indeed marked her strongly, seemed even at its greatest something foreign to her mind. It was rather an indifference than disdain, rather a fear than a dislike; she was so young that the old were aliens of another race."

So it is that to this young hedonist, this worshiper with the Sybarites, there comes the overwhelming love for the ascetic, the man of iron will, conquering the lusts of the flesh. Rachel, inheritor of a mother's passion, as she is of it the fruit, grows from innocence to knowledge, from girlhood to womanhood in the strength of her love for this man of unbending puritanism. Out of sheer fanatical love of flagellation this Anthony—tempted beyond the limit apportioned to his sainted namesake even—marries a woman of shriveled soul and thus sets barriers up against the great desire that is in him. How this causes Rachel to lose every grip on religious belief, on honor for the soul's high province—this is the most dramatic portion of the story. Loving to madness, knowing that she is loved in return, yearning for the consummation of her passions, this woman, now woman only in body with soul dead, breaks down the barriers only after wild battling and finds her reward linked with death.

Roberts has given a broad, vital background to his story, commensurate with the fierce play of passions therein. With the careful attention to detail of a Hardy he has put the little fishing village on the Cornish coast vividly before us, its people living and full of the hard, raw elements of sky and sea. Pictures of crackling storms, of the swish and turmoil of the waters and the changing cycle of the seasons along rocky headlands make shifting scenery for the dramatic action. The homely life of the fisherfolk, with their rugged sternness of precept and laxness of practice, gives color to the central plot of the tale.

In one respect does the author show lack of taste and in another a weakness of style. A higher sense of restraint than that he has exerted would have prevented his bringing the spirit of his book dangerously near to the typical Hall Caine quintessence of sublimated tragedy. In his passages wherein the souls of Rachel and Anthony are seared by passion unrequited Roberts "piles on the agony"—to use a trite term—with too relentless a hand. We see the two kept too long on the saw edge of despair. This same lack of restraint also permits the author indulgence in a style at times flowered and furbelowed as Columbine's crinoline. Exaggerations, colorations, constant alliterations mar the strength of the style not a little. In one instance the author's fancy even carries him so far as to depict Sigurd, the dog, with tears of sympathy rolling down his face!

Yes, a good book to read is this "Rachel Marr," provided one is not foolishly weak enough to permit of its distinctly unhealthy philosophy's finding root in his heart.

(L. C. Page & Co., Boston; price $1 50.)

Some Books of Merit and Others

SINCE some politician or keen-brained newspaper man coined that terse phrase "with the lid off" it has done service overtime in reference to everything from Tammany down to a picnic of the journeymen street sweepers. In its latest application we see it advanced as characteristic of the contents of "Tattlings of a Retired Politician," by Forrest Crissey. "This is politics with the lid off," reads the publishers' announcement. Accepting this on faith as regards the thought in Mr. Crissey's work the reader may well qualify the style with the conviction that it is indeed literature "with the lid off." If the old Governor, State solon and United States Senator William Bradley, who delivers himself of the wisdom constituting "Tattlings of a Retired Politician," is to be taken as a type of American illiteracy in high places then may we well fear for the future of the Queen's English in the high councils of the land.

As a reflection of the pure white light of honesty and righteousness that clothes things political, whether in city councils or the halls of Congress, Crissey's book is instructive. With delightful ingenuousness Governor Bill Bradley recites tales of "holding up" city corporations for franchises, of "buying" legislation in State assemblies and handing Governors a "sack" on "the way low down." These little anecdotes, which we are led to believe are most of them closer to fact than fiction, cannot but prove to be of real practical value to our respectable gentry of the lobby. Here, for example, is a saw which serves the double purpose of pointing a moral and illustrating the graceful rhetoric of this ex-Senator, old Bill Bradley:

"The man who lies down and goes to sleep on the soft side of a political cinch stands a good chance of waking up just in time to see his hide nailed to the barn door by the fellow who couldn't sleep because he had to whistle in the face of expected defeat in order to keep his courage up."

(Thompson & Thomas, Chicago; illustrated by McCutcheon.)

"Uncle Bob and Aunt Becky's Strange Adventures at the World's Exposition"—this is the crisp, terse title of a typical "Aunt Samantha" book with the Aunt Samantha spirit left out. Upon its blue cover the publishers announce that Uncle Bob and Aunt Becky are "rural characters true to life." A perusal of the first chapter only is sufficient to convince the fair-minded reader that this is a libel upon any and all of our rural brethren. This book should sell well in the day coaches of railroad trains, but it will hardly appear among the list of six best sellers for the month.

(Laird & Lee, Chicago; illustrated.)

"In Assyrian Tents," by Louis Pendleton, is a very readable little story of the great captivity of Israel in Babylon. Interspersing many scenes of Oriental magnificence in the palaces of Sennacherib are bits of spirited action, culminating, of course, in the great miracle done by God and the release from bondage of the Jews.

(Jewish Publication Society; Philadelphia; illustrated.)

"We cannot recall any book that contains so many new jokes as "Comical Confessions of Clever Comedians.'"

Thus reads the ready-to-run review sent out with this paragon of humor by publishers indulgent toward the critical faculties of the downtrodden book reviewers. Follows one of the specimen jokes, already set up in agate type:

"I plowed the land and planted every kind of seed I could think of—potato seed, pumpkin seed, bird seed, flax seed and sow forth. I planted two kinds of aggplants—hard boiled and fried; but they had hardly peeped out of the ground when my chickens got into the patch and scrambled them."

No, strive as he may, this reviewer is utterly unable to recall any book—save the first bound volume of Punch possibly—that contains so many new and really scintillating gems of humor as does "Comical Confessions."

(Street & Smith, New York; illustrated; price 75 cents.)

In "Connectives of English Speech" James C. Fernald has made a worthy try at defining the indefinable. To explain the uses of prepositions, conjunctions, relative pronouns and adverbs as connectives the author has entered into extensive investigation, even philosophic analysis in some instances, with the result that he is able to give us the correct usages if not always the idiomatic.

Mr. Fernald does not accept the split infinitive, though he seems ready to. He states that it is a very popular idiom and therefore may become approved, and draws an analogy with the split indicative "It will greatly increase," which is to some perhaps not so void of offense as the author thinks. We have never been able to see the use of lists of classes of verbs with the prepositions that go with them; the idiomatic use of prepositions in that form is knowledge to be acquired from reading or from the dictionary, not from categories.

(Funk & Wagnalls Company, New York.)

Some Sidelights on Literary Topics

JOSEPH CONRAD has achieved what is probably the most noteworthy descriptive style of any author writing in English. He has recently allowed himself to be quoted in regard to his literary creed as follows: "It is only through complete, unswerving devotion to the perfect blending of form and substance; it is only through an unremitting, never-discouraged care for the shape and the ring of sentences that an approach can be made to plasticity, to color; and the light of magic suggestiveness may be brought to play for an evanescent instant over the commonplace surface of words; of the old, old words, worn thin, defaced by ages of careless usage. The sincere endeavor to accomplish that creative task, to go as far on that road as his strength will carry him, to go undeterred by faltering, weariness or reproach, is the only valid justification for the worker in prose. And if his conscience is clear, his answer to those who, in the fulness of a wisdom which looks for immediate profit, demand specifically to be edified, consoled, amused; who demand to be promptly improved, or encouraged or frightened, or shocked, or charmed, must run thus: My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see. That—and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find there, according to your deserts, encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand; and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask."

Professor Brander Matthews has been at work on his "Recreations of an Anthologist," which will be issued in the fall by Dodd, Mead & Co. This volume contains all that the author has been able to collect of certain interesting literary subjects, no one of which, however, is important enough to deserve a separate volume. There is a chapter on unwritten books, of which "Edwin Drood" and "Dennis Duval" are examples; there is another chapter on the undeveloped plots of great story-tellers, "American Epigrams," "Carols of Cookery," etc., etc.

Stewart Edward White has not yet heard that his latest book, "The Silent Places," is the best selling novel in the United States, for he is now enjoying a three months' honeymoon camping trip, alone with his bride, in the Santa Clara Mountains, California. Mrs. White, who was Miss Elizabeth Grant of Newport, is a tenderfoot compared to her experienced outdoor husband. It follows that bookish affairs are just now of less interest to Mr. White than the dramatic possibilities of burnt flapjacks and the art of expression while tightening a "diamond hitch."

Perhaps the most important historical book of the year will be "Recollections and Letters of General Lee," to be published in September by Doubleday, Page & Co. It is edited by Captain Robert E. Lee, the oldest son of the distinguished Confederate soldier. The book presents for the first time General Lee's correspondence with his family and friends before and during the Civil War. They not only reveal intimately a noble and chivalrous character, but show his opinions on subjects on which his views heretofore have not been known. Particularly is this true of the trying times near the close of the war and after, when he had become a private citizen. Captain Lee has written some biographical chapters of intense interest, telling many new stories of his father's home life. The "Recollections and Letters of General Lee" begin with General Lee's return from the Mexican war and close with Mrs. Lee's account of his death. Thus, his whole active military career is spanned. The book will be bound in Confederate gray, stamped with the Confederate flag in colors.

The dramatic possibilities of the results of the mysterious potion described in J. A. Mitchell's "Villa Claudia" have suggested themselves to several playwrights, who have sought permission to put the book into stage form. Mr. Mitchell, who has successfully tried his hand at a great many things, including architecture, painting, illustrating, publishing and editing, has a mind, however, to see what he can do as a dramatist, and it is likely that the coming season will see "The Villa Claudia" on the stage in a dramatic version made by the author of the book. The experiment will be at least interesting as a further argument in the discussion of whether the successful writer can possibly be a successful dramatist.

Among the books on Doubleday, Page & Co.'s list for late summer and early fall are "Confessions of a Club Woman," by Agnes Surbridge, an "autobiography" that is arousing keen interest; "The Interloper," by Mrs. Violet Jacob, announced by foremost British reviewers as a remarkable novel; "The Seeker," by the author of "The Spenders," Harry Leon Wilson; "A Belle of the Fifties," being the memoirs of Mrs. Clay of Alabama; "Letters of Robert E. Lee," edited by his son, and, notably, Rudyard Kipling's new volume of stories, "Traffics and Discoveries," and George H. Lorimer's "Old Gorgon Graham," which as a serial is now even more popular than the very successful "Letters of a Self-Made Merchant to His Son." The same house also publishes a large and beautiful handbook to the Louisiana Purchase Exposition, a volume of 400 pages, issued as a double number of the World's Work for August. An unusual feature for a magazine is that three special editions are bound in cloth and leather.

An interesting announcement is made by Herbert B. Turner & Co. of the early publication of "Professor Lovedahl," a novel translated from the Norwegian of Alexander Kielland by Rebecca Blair Flandrau. Kielland, who is not so well known in this country and in Great Britain as he should be, is 55 years of age. He was educated for the law, engaged in the brickmaking business for a while, and in 1879 appeared for the first time before the public as a writer of short stories. His published works now number twenty or more volumes, and in all of them he shows the radical spirit revealed the most strongly through his own countryman, Ibsen, and a wide knowledge of foreign literatures, especially of the French. In "Professor Lovedahl" he handles without gloves a man of social and political power, who has made his way to success through hypocrisy, love of money and influence.

Will Irwin, co-author with Gelett Burgess of "The Picaroons" (McClure-Phillips), before taking up journalism, which is now his profession, had a most variegated life-experience. He lived in almost every State in the West, and earned his daily bread at a variety of professions. By turns he was cowpuncher, waiter, coachman, librarian, actor and many other things for which there is no specific title. He rubbed shoulders with all kinds of people in the under-world, and "The Picaroons" indicates how broad his knowledge is of the rough West.

Richard Le Gallienne's new book, "Painted Shadows," will be published in the autumn by Little, Brown & Company, who brought out his "Love Letters of the King" a few years ago.