

Writers and their Work

ENGLISHMAN'S VIEWS ABOUT AMERICA.

If we are a bit late with a review of Sir Phillip Burne-Jones' "Dollars and Democracy" it is because we felt it necessary that the sentiments therein expressed be allowed ample time to simmer and effervesce in our understanding before attempting a dispassionate consideration. For, mark you, this is one of those collected opinions of an Englishman upon things American, a sport of the literary muse fraught with danger to the author and the reader since Charles Dickens delivered himself of the biting sarcasm in "Martin Chuzzlewit." Dickens endeavored to make amends by his subsequent "American Notes," with only partial success, for we Americans are thin skinned if nothing else. So, if we are behindhand let it be considered the part of discretion and of all fairness.

After all the English painter came over here, not with any preconceived prejudices, but with a mind clean as a slate and ready to receive impressions. He did receive many; some flattering to ourselves, others distinctly the contrary. Added to the typical conservatism of the British mind were the finical delicacies of the artistic sense—a double handicap, certainly not to be considered auspicious for our fair appearance in his eyes. But even under the astigmatic tendencies of these two lenses of birth and profession, Sir Phillip saw very much as you or I would see were we suddenly introduced into the rush of New York and the tinsel of Newport from a foreign land.

Burne-Jones smelt New York before he came to Fire Island—this was the delicate artistic sense stirring within him. He declares that it was not an unpleasant odor, but one distinctive enough to be recognized, even if encountered in the uttermost ends of the earth. Then, in a little while he heard New York, dining up to the high heavens, and the noise soon became an ever-present irritation to him. Again the artistic, the esthetic. But the pure British of him asserts itself in the author's evident surprise at the uniform cleanliness of New York's denizens. Everybody seemed to be "well tubbed," neatly clothed—and the tubs themselves! First of the three things which Burne-Jones knows he will miss in England is his "beautiful snow-white tub, with its silver fittings and perennial supply of hot water and cold."

Of course, the everlasting talk of dollars which the painter heard on all sides of him and in hours seemingly and otherwise impressed him as worthy of comment, and naturally so. We ourselves are ready to admit that "dollars" comes to the tip of the American tongue more readily than any other word and we are equally ready to deplore the fact did only such acknowledgment of our falling bring anything of betterment with it. Furthermore Burne-Jones seems to see a natural correlation between the craze of money getting and the treatment of our women. Says he:

"The women seem better able to cope with the situation (the amazing of great wealth) and find no difficulty in spending the money their fathers and husbands have spoiled their lives in acquiring. And, as a rule, the men are content that this should be so. There is something very remarkable, something a bit pathetic, about the attitude of the American men to their women folk. They are anxious for them to have a 'good time'—the good time that they cannot and will not arrange for themselves."

At times this genial sightseer lapses into the strictly scientific mood of austere investigation and treats of our idiosyncrasies as if he were adding to a thesis upon anthropoid apes in Sarawak. Witness this, from a deliciously British standpoint:

"The peanut is a very favorite article of light and occasional food among the poorer people, the stalls for its sale presided over by Italians, etc." And again: "It is commonly called 'Peacock Row,' or 'Rubber Neck Row'—a 'rubber neck' being an eager, craning, busy sort of a neck, which is supposed to be possessed to a noticeable extent by the occupants of these chairs."

Newport society came nearer sickening the author than any other of our social phenomena. "Indeed they are like spoiled children," is Burne-Jones' comment upon its members, "surfeited with excitement, yet always hungering for more; there is something pathetic about the incessant unrest of them."

Thus the author-painter's views unwind themselves—some heavy with good, sound sense, some laughable in their childlike ingenuousness. Bitter only once, and that with good cause, and against the yellow journals, ready to gloss our faults rather than pin them with scorn, Sir Phillip Burne-Jones is not an unwelcome commentator.

(D. Appleton & Co., New York; illustrated; price \$1.25.)

A DESERT MIRAGE WHICH LURES TO DEATH.

THOSE who cherish among the memories of a year's reading a high regard for Mrs. Mary Austin's delicate pastel of desert life "The Land of Little Rain," will welcome as the companion piece to that book the little volume that comes, pri-

vately printed, from the pen of Idah Meacham Strobridge; its name, "In Miners' Mirage Land." Encroaching in no way upon Mrs. Austin's province—desert still life and the creatures of the sandy wastes—this last volume of wilderness lore but broadens the field by its more detailed treatment of the humankind of sagebrush land. The mystery of the great unwatered reaches of the West is in each the fundamental motive. The lady who wrote about the little town of the grapevine down on the edge of the Mohave shows us the men of the desert steeped in the subtle influence of the barrens until quiescence wraps them in a mantle of something almost akin to fatalism; Idah Meacham Strobridge follows the mad striving, the restless battling of desert dwellers, trying ever to wreak fortune from the veiled genius of their parched abiding places.

This writer, whose name is not an unfamiliar one to old readers of The Call, is a true daughter of Nevada—she has the typical Nevada love for the land that seems all too wearisome from the coaches of the train. To her the desert is as the Cumaean Sibyl whose books are only to be read by the elect. Here is its charm:

"If you love the desert and live in it, and lie awake at night under its low-hanging stars, you know you are a part of the pulse-beat of the universe, and you feel the swing of the spheres through space and you hear through the silence the voice of God speaking."

"In Miners' Mirage Land"—that means to the author the land of visions, the land of wild dreams wherein men's minds are clouded with the aura of golden imaginings. Just as the thirst ridden traveler may vainly pursue the vision of lapping waters across miles of shifting wastes so do these seekers of the glittering promise make of their lives but the record of ceaseless grasping at the skirts of a fortune always ahead but always smiling. The writer finds that the desert trick of the mirage manifests itself as surely in the minds of men as in the actual phenomena of the quivering heat waves.

The best thing in the book is the sketch of "Old Man Berry." Here the author gives a breathing picture of one who had reached his four-score years but who was still on a feverish hunt for that lure that had been so many times just within the fancied reach of his hand. This indomitable old prospector—crazy, some would call him—who is as willing to bend his withered hands to the taming of a fractious colt as he is to court death in the desert, is a type that should live in a piece of fiction, so virile is he made in the few sketch lines blocked out by Mrs. Strobridge.

For those who have a sense quickened to the possibilities of fiction the recital of the myths concerning the Hardin silver, "Forman's Find" or "Three Little Lakes of Gold" brings instant response. These tales of lost treasure, each with its grisly record of death and privation and year-long despair, have in them strong possibilities for more serious treatment, which the author should embrace. Her manner of telling is dramatic; the narratives themselves are intensely fascinating.

Though marred occasionally by a straining after effect. Mrs. Strobridge's style is quite commensurate with the charm of the subject she has elected to portray. When she has to reproduce before us some of the weird beauty of sculptured hills and purpled skyline she makes a choice of phrase and metaphor at times impressive.

Briefly, in subject matter, in diction and even in artistic handwork of blinding, Idah Meacham Strobridge's collection of sketches is one of the most entertaining books that have been written in the West this year.

(The Artemesia Bindery, Los Angeles; price \$1.50.)

FOR TEACHERS, THESE NEW TEXTS.

WILLIAM C. DOUB of Stanford University has brought out two little manuals which should find ready recognition at the hands of teachers. In "Topical Discussion of American History" he has prepared a manual for the use of teachers of history and civics in the seventh and eighth year work, designed to lighten the burdens of instruction by pointing the way to a rational and consecutive line of topical study. Each period of American history is treated in detail, first with brief summaries of leading points for the use of the instructor in explanations to classes, then with questions covering the material thus elucidated. This, with a corresponding outline of the history for the pupil, seems eminently practical.

(Whittaker & Ray Company, San Francisco; price \$1.10.)

For the work of the evening schools William E. Chancellor, a practical worker in this branch of pedagogic activity, has prepared primary lessons in arithmetic, reading and language and English literature. In scope the texts are sufficiently broad to convey the scholar over the field usually covered by night school education, while the manner of exposition employed in them is so simple as to bring ready apprehension to the scholar.

(American Book Company, New York; price 30 cents.)

For primary nature studies M. H. Carter of the New York Training School for Teachers has supplied a primer under the title "Nature



Studies With Common Things." The object of this book is to teach young pupils how to observe nature, to learn to answer the question "What is it?" as a preparation for the future question, "Why is it?" The subjects of the lessons are fruits and vegetables, which can be readily and economically obtained for study. The lessons are so arranged and of such length that

sectional prejudice. The book is more than an ordinary biography, as it embraces much of the most important parts of the history of our country from the close of the Revolution to the end of the Civil War. Considerable space is given to Lincoln's boyhood, in

of some distinction in the middle of the Victorian era of English literature, and best known to his contemporaries

Three Women Hold High Rank Among Writers

AMONG the books of the year that have been counted good by common consent of the best critics stand three, written by women; these are "The Deliverance," Ellen Glasgow's novel of the tobacco fields; "Sir Mortimer," by Mary Johnston, and Gertrude Atherton's "Rulers of Kings." Some have been moved to comment upon the fact that a constantly increasing class of women writers has begun to usurp the honors of the literary laurel, heretofore so closely guarded by men, claiming that the feminine mind is better capable of grasping and portraying the significant facts of life in their many manifestations. For such the circumstance of these three authors' successes probably comes as evidence indisputable.

By some Ellen Glasgow's novel, "The Deliverance," has been styled the novel par excellence of the whole year; none have denied to it a fair share of distinction. In England, where a book by an American author has to be very good to be read, extended comment has been made upon its power in the delineation of elemental impulses of human life. Truly, no book of recent years has had a wider reading.

Mary Johnston, the disciple of the historical romance, has been open to less unanimous commendation in the writing of "Sir Mortimer." On both sides of the water there have been sharp flings at what the critics termed the "stage play" of its romantic incident. According to the list of "best sellers," however, "Sir Mortimer" has kept well in the lead of the season's books.

By the vigorous expression of her views upon the "bourgeois" character of American literature in a recent number of the North American Review Gertrude Atherton has at least defined what the failings are inherent in our fiction. Pettiness of theme—one of the faults she picks out—"Rulers of Kings" certainly has not. English comment finds in it too much rampant Americanism to jump with the Briton's pride. It is considered Miss Atherton's most pretentious work.

they can be handled each in a single recitation, even in classes where the teacher has had no special training in science. They are planned to set forth what the child can learn for himself in one hour about the subject of the day's study. Each illustration tells a story, and is a model of arrangement and description, to be followed by the pupils, who are, however, to make their own drawings direct from the object itself. These lessons have been tested in the school-room and will solve successfully the problem of an adequate elementary laboratory training for the lower grades.

(American Book Company, New York; price 60 cents.)

order to bring out the conditions of pioneer life in the West. The illustrations are numerous and attractive. The volume is dedicated "To the Schoolboys of America," and will prove of service in inspiring in them, by the power of such an example adequately portrayed, an ardent and unselfish patriotism.

OLD DAY AND NEW REFLECTED IN ROMANCE.

OUR fathers used to read "Brakespeare; or the Romance of a Free Lance," with as much avidity as they did "Ivanhoe" or "Woodstock"; to-day it would probably be safe in the limbo of forgotten things were it not that some enterprising publishers have seen in it the qualities that make the historical novel of the hour so attractive and brought it out for the new generation of readers. George A. Lawrence, a writer

by his "Guy Livingstone," was the author.

With a questionable alacrity in imputing the charge of plagiarism, the publishers have seen fit to open the book with a little note, calling attention to the fact—as they view it—of the sponsorship of "Brakespeare" to the works of several living novelists. After reviewing all of the recent romances that have the middle ages for a background we can find but one that in any way carries about it the taint of the suspicion thus cast—that one, Sir Conan Doyle's "White Company." True that Sir John Hawkwood, the historic captain of free companies, figures both in "Brakespeare" and "The White Company," as do also Bertrand du Guesclin and Lord Audley, famous fighters in their day. But it is plain to be seen that Froissart, the standard contemporary historian of the time, was the well spring of both the romances and to lay the charge of plagiarism at the door of the one last availing himself of the sources is rash at least, if not unfair.

Be that as it may, Lawrence did

BY ROBERT W. DITCHIE

not make half so living a tale out of his Froissart as did Doyle. Though in the recital of Brakespeare's adventures as a wandering mercenary, we are pined with battle, siege and sudden death quite to the fill, the hero is always trailing his crest in gloom, always rebelling against hard, hard fate by giving over to a discord with the tune of things. As we remember "The White Company" from a reading of many years ago, a much more exhilarating spirit of diablerie and reckless good humor characterized the doings of Doyle's hardy bowmen. They fought with a laugh.

Though the then lately fashionable Childe Harold pessimism must have had its influence upon this author of the late fifties, guiding his pen to strokes invariably of the darkest, "Brakespeare" shows an erudition in things antiquarian scarcely possessed by so-called historical novelists of the day. The word of the ancient chronicles is strictly adhered to throughout the tale and the spirit of those far off times of Potlitters and Crecy vividly reproduced.

(F. M. Buckles & Co., New York; illustrated; price \$1.)

"Crecy," by Edith Lawrence, is a pretty little tale of the Revolution, rather stereotyped, to be sure, but capable of providing a good two hours' pleasure. The author, realizing no doubt that the story of the winsome colonial lassie and her British lover has been told many times, seeks to furnish up the old type stock by a change in the manner of the telling. In the form of a series of letters between the various characters of her story Miss Lawrence finds conveyance for the romance a bit cumbersome at times and prolific of a certain lack of continuity.

Crecy, whose bona fide portrait from the brush of Stuart graces the front page, is as wild a blade as one would meet in a month of Sundays. The first of her letters shows her berating her Quaker cousin and affianced husband, Nathaniel Darrach, for his policy of non-resistance, pursued steadfastly in the face of the invasion of the British. Then we find her confiding in Cousin Peace Darrach the details of a little affair of the heart with a young redcoat cornet of the English forces who presses his suit with far more steadfastness than the cause of his country.

With all of the characters introduced thus through their own written words the tale proceeds to unravel its length through mingled cloud and sunshine of war and frolicking. Crecy gets into the net pretty deeply with her young Britisher, her Quaker cousin turns fighter and her own brother has the bad grace to turn traitor and spy. At the midnight revel of the Hessians at Trenton Crecy's father, resolute Friend though he is, acts as the one to signal when the Continentals should fall to the slaughter. Then enters Washington upon the scene and remains to the fore throughout the rest of the story as arbiter both of life and love. At the end Crecy's rampant patriotism so far adjusts itself as to admit of her marrying her British lover and presumably "living happy ever after."

Like nearly all of the colonial stories this book attempts a near view of Washington, with results not altogether satisfying. It is hard to believe that with the manifold vexing him without cease the great general could devote hours of his time to the settlement of the love affairs of a girl, even of a Crecy.

(F. M. Buckles & Co., New York; price \$1.)

TEACUP GOSSIP ON WRITERS' DOINGS.

THE best of the bon mots, or witty sayings, contributed to Irish literature by Sheridan, O'Leary, the anecdotes and good stories of O'Connell, O'Keefe and others have been collected and brought together in "Irish Literature," a work in ten handsome, full illustrated volumes which will shortly be published by John D. Morris & Co. of Philadelphia. The world has no finer specimens of song and story, of legend and anecdote, of play and romance than some of the best which the Emerald Isle can claim as its own. The editor-in-chief is Hon. Justin McCarthy, M. P., assisted by Dr. Douglas Hyde, Lady Gregory, James Jeffrey Roche, editor of the Pilot, Boston; Maurice Francis Egan, professor of literature at Washington University, with Charles Welsh, the biographer of John Newbery, friend and publisher of Goldsmith, as managing editor.

Burton E. Stevenson, author of "The Holladay Case" (which Messrs. Henry Holt & Co. have printed five times here, which has been reprinted in England and is being translated in Germany), has had an amusing experience. He has received letters from several widely separated members of the Holladay family in this country. The first letter came to the author from a young lady in Chicago, who expressed surprise that a name so unusual as hers should have been used for the heroine of the story, and begged to know whether the author had ever known any one of that name. Next came a letter from a prominent lawyer of Tennessee, who made the same query, stating that his family was the only one in America spelling their name in just that way. Still another branch of the family was heard from in California, and now it looks as though there might be a reunion of the Holladays, if this sort of thing keeps on. Mr. Stevenson was not aware that the name was an especially peculiar one, although he never knew any one named Holladay, but evolved it, after some experimenting, as attractive and easily pronounced. The story, of which Miss Frances Holla-

day is the heroine, deals, it will be remembered, with a Wall street mystery, the scenes shifting afterward to an ocean steamer and to France.

Harry Leon Wilson, whose new novel, "The Seeker," is published by Doubleday, Page & Co., has had a varied career since his boyhood on an Illinois farm. He was a printer, a newspaper reporter in California with an ambition to write a history, and a western railroad man when he was beginning to be recognized as a literary writer. He became associate editor and later editor of Puck. His first novel, "The Spenders," was an immediate success and gave promise of an even greater achievement. "The Seeker" deals in a most forceful way with some exceedingly vital problems of modern life and thought. Now Mr. Wilson has a summer home in New Hampshire and a winter home in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, forty miles from a railroad.

The first installments of two serials mark the September number of the Critic; the one dealing with "The Literary Life," by Laurence Hutton, and the other beginning a series on the cost of living in Europe, by Mrs. Alfred Sidgwick, with a review of German domestic conditions. Mrs. Sidgwick's work was prepared with special reference to the English reader and appears in the Cornhill Magazine of London as well as in the Critic. Coming to the Critic shortly after the author's death the seven Laurence Hutton papers form a gossiping narration of his connection with literary persons and places from the time of his first report of "The Readings of Charles Dickens," published in 1883 in the Red Hook Journal.

The Macmillan Company's autumn announcement list, just out this week, contains accounts of the chief books which that firm will publish between now and Christmas, including the following books of special interest: Jack London's first long novel, "The Sea Wolf," which has been the most widely read and discussed serial of the year; Marion Crawford's new novel of modern Rome and Sicily, whose title is taken from the well-known biblical quotation beginning, "Whosoever shall offend"; Miss Gwendolen Overton's new novel, "Captains of the World," the first of a series of unconnected studies of modern American life and conditions; Robert Herrick's story about the architect who tried to escape "The Common Lot" of mankind and to enjoy the special privileges of wealth; "Sabrina Warham," by Laurence Housman, the author of "An English Woman's Love Letters"; "Traitor and Loyalist," a stirring blockade runner story by Henry K. Webster; James Barnes' account of "The Unpardonable War" between England and the United States some years hence, and other new novels by William Stearns Davis, Ouida, Mark Lee Luther, Upton Sinclair, Foxcroft Davis and Dr. John Williams Streeter, who wrote "The Fat of the Land," as well as a volume of short stories of the American stage entitled "Players and Vagabonds," by Miss Viola Roseboro.

The Century Company announces a goodly list of fiction for this autumn. There will be a novel by Andre Castaigne, and an unusual story, "The Gray World," by Evelyn Underhill, an English writer. Anne Douglas Sedgwick, known through "The Rescue," has written another piece of character study, "Paths of Judgment." "The Madigans" is by Miriam Michelson, whose "In the Bishop's Carriage" has been one of the season's successes; and Gouverneur Morris' new novel is entitled "Ellen and Mr. Man." Carolyn Wells' "The Staying Guest" is the story of a little girl, quaint, startling and lovable. A new book by Ruth McEnery Stuart is also announced, "The River's Children"; and "A Transplanted Nursery" is by Martha Kean, the tale, from personal experience, of an American family summering in Britain.

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BOOKS RECEIVED.

- IN MINERS' MIRAGE LAND—Idah Meacham Strobridge; Artemesia Book Bindery, Los Angeles; price, \$1.50.
- THE BOY COURIER OF NAPOLEON—William C. Sprague; Lee & Shepard, Boston; illustrated; price, \$1.50.
- AMERICAN BOYS' LIFE OF THEODORE ROOSEVELT—Edward Stratemeyer; Lee & Shepard, Boston; illustrated; price, \$1.50.
- GATEWAY SERIES OF ENGLISH CLASSICS—Milton's "Minor Poems," Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," Addison's "De Coverley Papers," Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," Shakespeare's "Macbeth"; edited by Henry Van Dyke; The American Book Company, New York.
- ROLFE'S SHAKESPEARE—"King Richard the Third," "Romeo and Juliet," "King Henry the Fifth"; edited by W. J. Rolfe; The American Book Company, New York.
- MAXWELL'S ELEMENTARY GRAMMAR—William H. Maxwell; The American Book Company, New York; price, 40 cents.
- ABRAHAM LINCOLN—James Baldwin; The American Book Company, New York; price, 60 cents.
- FIRST LATIN WRITER—Mather A. Abbott; The American Book Company, New York; price, 60 cents.
- HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL NARRATIVE—Isabel E. Wallach; The American Book Company, New York; price, 35 cents.
- NATURE STUDY WITH COMMON THINGS—M. H. Carter; The American Book Company, New York; illustrated; price, 60 cents.
- COLLEGE ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS IN ENGLISH, 1906-1908—Compiled and published by American Book Company, New York; price, 30 cents.
- EVENING SCHOOL TEXTS—Studies in English, arithmetic, reading and language lessons; William E. Chancellor; American Book Company, New York; price, 30 cents each.