BOOKS AND AUTHORS — REVIEWS AND COMMENT

LITERARY CRITICISM AND BOOK NEWS

Fridtjof Nansen on Siberia and Its Riches—A Canadian Paradise for Mountaineers—Pan-American Big Game.

TRAVEL AND SPORT.

THROUGH SIBERIA, THE LAND OF THE FUTURE. By Fridtjof Nansen. Illustrated. Large 8vo, pp. xvi, 478. D. Appleton & Co.

MOUNTAINEERING AND EXPLORATION IN THE SELKIRKS. A Record of Pioneer Work Among the Canadian Alps, 1908-'12. By Howard Palmer. With two new maps and 219 illustrations. 8vo, pp. xviii, 419. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

AMONG THE CANADIAN ALPS. By Lawrence J. Burpee, F. R. G. S. With four illustrations in color, forty-five reproductions from photographs and five maps. 8vo, pp. 259. The John Lane Company.

BIG GAME FIELDS OF AMERICA, NORTH AND SOUTH. By Daniel J. Singer. Illustrated from photographs by the author, and with three drawings by Charles Livingston Bull. 8vo, pp. 368. The George H. Doran Company.

The expedition whose results are set down in Nansen's large volume was sent out by business men for a business reason, an inquiry, namely, into the possibility of establishing a trade route by sea between Europe and Siberia—the solution, in other words, of the old problem of the Northeast Passage, at least as far as the mouth of the Yenisei River, whose territory promises to become one of the great granaries of the future. Freight by rail, whether westward to Russia, or eastward to Vladivostok and the Pacific, will be prohibitive on account of the enormous distances, even when the railroads shall have been built. Hence this voyage of discovery, which has yielded promising results. Navigation of the frozen waters to the north of Russia and Siberia is possible, at least in late summer.

Nansen was invited to head the expedition on account of his familiarity with Arctic ice and conditions in Arctic waters. He declares explicitly that he is not a business man, yet this account of his observations and the conclusions he reaches is of the utmost practical value to the Russian government, to Siberian settlers and merchants, and to the commerce of Europe and America, for, with the Kara Sea declared possible as a trade route, the approach to Northern Siberia by water from the west may yet become a reality as well. It is, indeed, a country of the future, which the great explorer describes, a country of illimitable stretches of fruitful soil awaiting development, of almost inexhaustible mineral riches.

Gold is present in great quantities. Thus far it is extracted only by the most primitive means. Then there are iron, copper, silver, lead, precious stones, coal and oil. Cattle raising is still in its infancy; in fact, so is everything in Siberia, fostered, however, by the government, which is fully awake to the potential wealth of the country.

But, while much practical information of this kind is found in these pages, their wider interest lies in Nansen's descriptions of the primitive races that inhabit the country. His voyage, it may be explained, was extended by land almost to Vladivostok, and back by the Siberian Railroad. An indefatigable observer is this exceptional man, blessed with an intellectual curiosity that overlooks nothing. Hence the tensely interesting quality of this book, which, in this regard, deserves to rank with its author's earlier works. Of course, he deals still another blow to the gradually crumbling conception of Siberia as a land of groaning political prisoners and exiles, fainting and dying under the knout. The Russian government sent them there, not to kill them, but to make them profitable to the nation as settlers. Nansen speculates upon that puzzling phenomenon, the mammoth found intact—hair, skin, flesh, bones and all—in the frozen ground. How did these prehistoric monsters come there? How did they meet their death? Above all, how can they have been frozen in such a short time that their gigantic bodies have been preserved? "These are riddles that many clever men have discussed for nearly a century and a half, since the first well-preserved woolly rhinoceros was found in Siberia in 1781. But I have never seen an explanation that seemed to me entirely satisfactory." Of course, so far as education and the application of modern inventions to their soil and its riches are concerned, the Siberian settlers still live in the Middle Ages. At Yeniseisk Nansen found not a single sawmill. All planks were being sawn by hand!

The Canadian Alps are a comparatively recent discovery as a new paradise for mountain climbers. The sport has not yet been organized there as it has been in Europe; porters and guides are still hard to obtain; the hardships and the delights of the amateur explorer are still to be found there. Mr. Palmer is one of these pioneers, his book a guide for those anxious to follow in his footsteps. He spent five summers in the Selkirks, ascending some thirty-five peaks theretofore unclimbed, and crowning his work by conquering the highest summit in the chain, Mount Sir Sandford, 11,590 feet. While the author and his companions did considerable topographical work in the region, and for the first time mapped some three hundred square miles of the northern Selkirks, where they discovered a glacial system of vast extent, the book is intended first of all for lovers of the sport of mountaineering. The illustrations are all that can be desired; the maps a real contribution to our knowledge of the region.

Mr. Burpee's luxuriously illustrated volume is a sort of glorified guidebook to the Canadian Alps. It revels in descriptions of the beauties of Banff, Lake Louise, etc.; gives a brief history of the mountains since French explorers first reached them in the middle of the eighteenth century; deals with the Canadian national parks; tells of ascents that have established landmarks in the story of Canadian mountaineering, and concludes with a bibliography of the subject.

Mr. Singer's is a companionable book of big game shooting on this continent, all the way from the jungle of British Guiana to the domain of caribou and moose. He is a faunal naturalist in an incidental, entertaining chat-by-the-campfire sort of way, but his real subject is the sport of stalking and bringing down the quarry. At the very outset he matches Colonel Roosevelt's Brazilian man-eating fish, the peiranha, with the caribi or peral of Guiana, a fish about fifteen inches long, resembling our black bass, armed with large, razor-cutting teeth, not unlike the front teeth of a human being. "When the perai scents a wounded animal, or even man, they will crowd around in shoals and devour the object alive." Mr. Singer went to Guiana for jaguars, however, and got several. His pictures of these large cats are, by the way, among the best we have ever seen; and Mr. Bull furnishes a colored picture of another in his best manner. The naturalist comes to the fore again in a chapter on the black bear. It will be news to many that there are cinnamon, brown, and even white black bears, all characterized, however, by the amiable, happy-go-lucky disposition of the genus, which makes it one of the most amusing animals to study in its daily life. Mr. Singer, who is one of our mighty Nimrods, tells also of peccari hunts in Mexico, and of his adventures in search of cougars, moose, mountain sheep and grizzly bears.

WASHINGTON AND HIS BRIDE ON THE WAY TO THE WHITE HOUSE. (DRAWING BY J. O. DE BRÉVILLE FROM "WASHINGTON THE MAN OF ACTION." D. APPLETON AND CO.)

ST. PETER'S HILL, STAMFORD (FROM "HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN LINCOLNSHIRE." MACMILLAN CO.)

A STREET IN BRUGES (ILLUSTRATION FROM "BRUGES" CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS)

"JOB."

Count J. O. de Bréville ("Job"), one of whose illustrations for Frederick Trevor Hill's "Washington the Man of Action" is reproduced on this page to-day, is a French artist whom many of his countrymen consider the successor of Neuville and Detaille as the exponent of French military life and history. He has already to his credit a number of large illustrated works, among them "Louis XI," "Jeanne d'Arc" and "Napoleon." The Washington book, which was reviewed in these columns a few weeks ago, and which is one of the most successful of this season's holiday publications, is the first work of foreign history undertaken by the French illustrator. Of the thoroughness of his preliminary studies, or of his unqualified success in making his large colored plates American in every detail, there can be no doubt. M. de Bréville began his career as a newspaper illustrator, using from the very first his initials, contracted into a single word. He lives in Paris, in a house whose gigantic studio is a veritable museum of armor, arms, uniforms and models of warships of all periods.

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AN OLD-WORLD CITY.

BRUGES. A Record and an Impression. By Mary Stratton. Illustrated by Charles Wade. 8vo, pp. xiv, 163. Charles Scribner's Sons.

The storm which has swept over Belgium and scarred Louvain has left Bruges unmarred in its quiet mediæval beauty. The ancient city remains for the delight of future tourists, who, one imagines, will give it more than the usual superficial two or three days' visit oftenest devoted to it heretofore. This slender volume will prepare them for the pilgrimage; it is, morever, a delight in itself, thanks to Mr. Wade's numerous pen-drawings with their old wood-cut effect. They have a certain literal quality which, for some reason or other, seems to fit the places depicted to perfection. This is the atmosphere of the Low Countries on one of their all too rare sunshiny days.

Miss Stratton's text is partly descriptive, partly historical, and of necessity both most of the way. Bruges's past, like that of all Belgium—a liberty loving, hard fighting, enterprising past—ended with the Middle Ages. It is only in the last century that it had a sequel after ages of submergence and submission to foreign yokes and helpless tolerance of alien armies settling the fate of Europe on its soil. To-day it is again the cockpit of the great powers, but this time it has with its own indomitable hand—the hand of its fifteenth-century ancestry—written the most glorious page of the struggle.

Belated holiday shoppers will do well to take this enchanting little volume under consideration.

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS

A New Volume of a Popular Series.

HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS IN LINCOLNSHIRE. By William Franklin Rawnsley. Illustrations by Frederick L. Griggs. 12mo, pp. xviii, 319. The Macmillan Company.

With this book the English Highways and Byways series reaches its twenty-sixth volume, a notable record. Its merits are many, for, without exception, the writers of its successive issues have been men who, knowing the section with which they deal, and loving its beauties and associations, have also controlled trained pens. The numerous illustrations are invariably excellent. The author and illustrator of "Lincolnshire" prove to be no exceptions to this rule. Mr. Rawnsley follows the highways mostly, in deference to the present custom of touring by motor car, but he in no way neglects the byways when they are of interest. The footpaths do not tempt him, because Lincolnshire "is not, as a whole, a pedestrian's county." It is, however, a country of wide views, wonderful sunsets, laughing hills and tempting hollows; a country, also, rich in historic associations and in architectural monuments of a long past. The author is alike at home in the chronicles of the old village churches, some of them dating from the earliest middle ages, and in the rich literary associations of the county, whose legends and surviving customs also come within the scope of his book. There is a useful tourists' map.

THE HUMANISTS' LIBRARY

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Continued on page 11, column 1

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