

Book Notices.

"Seven Supreme Poets." By Robert P. Downes, LL.D. Author of "Pillars of Our Faith," etc., etc. London: Chas. H. Kelly. Toronto: William Briggs. Pp. xi-336.

Readers of Dr. Downes' previous volumes will be glad to greet a new work from his pen. This book exhibits the same high thought, the same noble expression, and the same keen sympathies. In this volume he employs these for the study and interpretation of the world's great masters of verse. He exhibits wide scholarship, and what is more, for scholarship may be dry as dust, a vivid sympathy with the great sages and seers of all the ages. Old Homer, whose *Iliad* and *Odyssey* have moulded the thoughts of successive generations, is first discussed, then Aeschylus, the father of tragic poetry, as Homer was of epic verse. "If Homer speaks to us as the sea speaks, the voice of Aeschylus," says our author, "is as that of the storm among the mountains." Out of his ninety plays only seven have been spared by the ruthless hand of time. The greatest of these, Prometheus Bound, and the story of Orestes, are here described. Our college experience in grappling with the difficulties of the Greek Chorus rather marred the enjoyment of their lofty poetry; but that is all far behind us now, and in this sympathetic interpretation of Aeschylus and Socrates we find a fresh delight.

Virgil has been described as sweetest, purest, gentlest, best beloved of the poets since the dawn of civilization, yet in our judgment, he falls far below the mighty three of the Greek poets. Sublimier than any of them, in our judgment, is the great Tuscan, who wandered through the realms of gloom. John Ruskin says, "The central man in all the world, as representing in perfect balance the imaginative, moral, and intellectual faculties, all at their highest, is Dante." His cruel and unmerited exile contributed in large degree to that bitterness of spirit in Dante, "the hate of hate and scorn of scorn," from which we sometimes recoil; but in moral dignity and sublimity he surpasses, we think, every other writer.

Shakespeare, the myriad-minded, "the greatest intellect who, in our recorded world, has left a record of himself in the way of literature," to use the phrase of Carlyle, receives a keen and sympathetic interpretation. It is the glory of our language and literature that an English writer, John Munton, was found worthy to walk step by step with Dante through the regions of eternal gloom, and with an even loftier insight and expression.

"Primitive Traits in Religious Revivals." A Study in Mental and Social Evolution. By Frederick Morgan Davenport. New York and London: The Macmillan Company. Toronto: George Morang Co. Pp. xii-323. Price, \$1.50 net.

This is a clever, ingenious, and unsatisfactory book. It is the expansion of the author's thesis for the degree of Ph.D. at Columbia University. He describes religious revival as essentially a form of impulsive social action, analyzes the character of primitive man, and describes the mental traits of a psychological "crowd," which follows a leader for good or ill like a flock of sheep. He describes religious revivals of the old-fashioned, tumultuous sort, as in essence akin to the ghost dance of the North American Indian, or to the morbid enthusiasm of a primitive race emerging from barbarism like the American negro, an emotional, but not ethical, movement. He finds analogies to this in the Scotch-Irish revivals in 1800, in Kentucky and in Ulster in 1859, and in the New England awakening under Jonathan Edwards, largely caused by the tremendous and menacing preaching of the revivalists. He even finds much of this in the English revival under John Wesley, and in the great revivals of Finney and Moody. The emotion aroused by these great leaders he describes as a sort of hypnotism—the people followed in spite of themselves. Wesley was saved from fanaticism by his sturdy English common sense, so was Moody.

The effect of rhythmical sounds and motions conduce, he explains, to this emotional revival, as does the power of