

to men so widely differing in opinion as Thomas Chalmers and Thomas Carlyle, Gausson and Colenso, Maurice and Vinet, Monod and Dean Stanley, is evidence of his remarkable power of attracting widely differing classes of minds. His hospitality was as catholic as his correspondence, so much so, indeed, that at last he gave up the idea of "sorting" his guests, and let them "mingle as they might" in the genial Christian atmosphere of Linlathen. Carlyle, Stanley, Maurice, Kingsley, and many others were welcome guests, and some of Carlyle's own letters given in this volume show how warmly he reciprocated and appreciated Mr. Erskine's friendship.

Of the various books and pamphlets that he wrote, the best known are his "Internal Evidence of the Truth of Revealed Religion;" his "Unconditional Freeness of the Gospel," first published in 1828, and reprinted, with slight additions, in 1873; "The Brazen Serpent;" and "The Spiritual Order," published after his death. In this, as well as in some of his letters, he declares his belief in the Scriptural basis of the "restitution of all things." Mr. Erskine's writings were all characterised by much grace and clearness of diction, and Dr. Chalmers declared the second of the works mentioned to be one of the most charming books he had ever read. A good many of his smaller publications were written in defence of the teaching of his most intimate and like-minded friend, the Rev. J. McLeod Campbell, whose life and letters have been almost simultaneously published, and whose lamented expulsion from the Church of Scotland half a century ago has been since admitted to be one of the gravest mistakes it ever made. But Mr. Erskine's life work was not so much in the books he has left as in the spiritual influence of his living personality. The charming biographical sketches by Principal Shairp and Dean Stanley, with which the "Letters" are enriched, show—what could be testified by every one who knew him personally, as the present writer was privileged to do—that he was a man of strong spiritual power. Whether as regards the winning purity and beauty of his life, itself a "living epistle," or the spiritual depth of his conversation, literally "among things heavenly," all who knew and could appreciate him will endorse the remark of one of his most honoured and like-minded friends, that "ever after he knew Mr. Erskine he never thought of God but the thought of Mr. Erskine was not far away."

BY CELIA'S ARBOUR. By Walter Besant and James Rice. Rose-Belford Publishing Co. : Toronto. 1878.

Mr. Besant and Mr. Rice enjoy a very enviable position among novel writers; their works being usually looked forward to, as the

readers of the CANADIAN MONTHLY will readily admit, with more than ordinary expectation.

But we may be permitted to doubt if this particular specimen will much increase their reputation. It is true that the tale is interesting, especially towards the close, and that the narrator of the tale, one Ladislas Pulaski, his comrade and the hero of the work, Leonard Coplestone, and Celia, who enjoys the title rôle of heroine, are all charmingly perfect characters, only to be surpassed for self-denial, courage, and charity by the aged sea-captain who acts as guardian and protector to the two boys. Besides these almost *too* good people, the canvass is well filled up with other leading figures—Wassielewski, the old Polish patriot, frenzied with the hope of revenge upon the Muscovite oppressors of his country; Herr Räumler, a singularly well-drawn likeness of a Russian spy, so good a likeness, in fact, as to make us regret the one or two fatal slips on the part of the authors, which mar it as a work of art; and half a dozen minor characters, all well individualized and helping on the tale.

Still, in spite of all this, the story is in several points unsatisfactory. We like the *mise en scène*, and the general conduct of the tale is well managed, but on the whole it lacks originality. The comparatively aged suitor, who holds a mysterious secret hanging over the head of the heroine's papa, by means of which he expects to obtain the lovely daughter's hand in marriage; the distress of the lovely daughter herself, racked, Iphigenia-like, between regard for her father and love for another;—all this is *very* stale.

Certainly we must remember that skeletons of plots are few in number, and that almost all we can expect from novelists now-a-days is to dish us up our cold mutton with the most modern sauce, and to hash it and curry it in some tolerably original and unexpected manner. Perhaps Herr Räumler, the German lover, with short white hair, heavy moustache, a rasp in his voice, and a disbelief of everything good in his heart, is a fairly original conception in this rôle. But all we can say is that the reader will be disappointed at the tame way in which he meets his inevitable rebuff, and allows the mysterious secret to fizzle off as harmlessly as a damp squib.

The want of originality complained of extends to the details of the work. Whole passages are paraphrases of Dickens, that is, certain of the characters are framed entirely on the model of Dickens's work—are made to talk as he would have made them, and live in just such an atmosphere as he would have planted them in. The imitation is good. If we came across it in a volume of parodies, such as Bret Harte's "Sensation Novels," or the "Rejected Addresses," we should smile and praise the faithful rendering which never degenerated into