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CONTENTS.

CONTRIBUTIONS :	
A Reverie—A. B.	3
Recent Religious Fiction—Dion	3
The American Canoe Association—Ramona	4
EDITORIALS	5
OBITER DICTA	5
CONVOCAATION	6
COLLEGE NEWS	8
PERSONAL	9
FOOTBALL	9
EXCHANGE	9

A REVERIE.

The sun declining shone midway betwixt
 The bright meridian and his western goal.
 White clouds that showed like giant billows turned
 To mountains by some wizard's mighty spell
 Scarce moved before the southern breeze, that blew
 With breath so light, that in the neighbouring trees
 But now and then leaves rustled, and were still,
 Save when their shades were vocal with the song
 Of tuneful birds. At such a time I stood
 Within the hallowed acre that surrounds
 The ancient church's grey and ivied walls.
 A yew-tree in the centre stood, whose birth
 The veil of centuries unnumbered hides ;
 Whose vigorous life will time perchance outlast ;
 Consoling emblem of eternity
 Where tokens of mortality abound.
 Beneath its hospitable shade was fixed
 A rustic seat, towards which I bent my steps.
 There many an idle boy had carved his name,
 Long since borne thither to another rest.
 The song of children in the village school,
 The voice of greeting in the streets, the tramp
 Of passers-by, the milkman's cheery call,
 The anvil's constant ring, the creaking wain,
 The bells that jangled on the labouring team,
 The stillness broke. Methought I lay afloat
 Upon the waters of the stream that parts
 The shores of life and death. The sombre scene
 Its influence cast upon my soul in lines
 Of deepening shade. Exhilarating thoughts
 Gave gradual way to pensive melancholy.

Upon a pile of fresh-turned earth a skull
 Lay half imbedded. Even in the grave
 Man rests not undisturbed, but, as in life,
 Is rudely pushed by others from his place.
 Within the compass of that narrow dome,
 That now, deserted by the very worm,
 Lies tenantless and mouldering, what hopes,
 What fears, what fantasies, what dreams of fame,
 Perchance of empire, what capacities,
 What longings once—beginning thus to muse,
 "That, Sir, 's the skull," I heard a voice exclaim,
 And turning round beheld a hoary head
 Emerging from a new-made grave hard by,
 "That, sir, 's the skull of one James Robinson,
 A sober and industrious fellow, when
 He hadn't got the money to be drunk.
 By trade he was a tinker, and by night
 He did a bit of poaching. Many a time
 Was he had up before the magistrates,
 And once or twice at quarter-sessions, too.
 Some called him Tipsy, others Swipey, Jim."
 Thus spake the cynic delver, with a leer,
 As having guessed the tenor of my thoughts,
 And to avoid discourse resumed his spade,
 Like goblin vanishing beneath the soil.

A. B.

RECENT RELIGIOUS FICTION.

A marked feature of the literature of the present is, the universality of range enjoyed by the novel. There is no theme too important, no subject too trivial, no heights too lofty, no depths too abysmal, which the modern writer of fiction will not attempt. It was Douglas Jerrold who, speaking of Englishmen's love of dinner-giving, remarked, that if an earthquake were to engulf England to-morrow the English would manage to meet and dine somewhere among the rubbish, just to celebrate the event. Similarly one is led to believe, on seeing the shoals of novels turned out, that, if such an earthquake were to happen, somewhere amid the *débris* would be found a novelist (or at least what was left of him) busying himself in "writing up" the catastrophe in the form of the character and plot of fiction.

But the novel-writers are not alone to be blamed ; for they only supply the demands of the reading-public whose appetite for light literature is omniverous. When one sees the avidity with which current fiction is devoured, he is