

virtue, honour and self-respect. Young men are taught by them to be honest, brave and manly; young girls to be modest, unselfish and affectionate. They contain teachings and experiences for persons in every grade of life, young, old, rich and poor. It requires a very slight knowledge of man, at the present day, not to allow that this estimate of the popular writer is in the main correct. That novels are universally read, is certain. That the majority of English novels are healthy in tone will not be denied, except by the prejudiced few. That they exert a strong mental and moral influence on their readers is, therefore, unquestionable. There are two ways of looking at the novel—first, as a work of art, next, as a pastime. If the romance really rises to the standard of a work of art, it is a benefit to the mind, both in form and substance. The reading of "Adam Bede," "Jane Eyre," "The House of the Seven Gables," is as salutary as the study of a statue, a picture, or a poem, emanated from the brain of a master. Unfortunately these works of art are few in number, and most novels must be catalogued as mere pastimes. But even thus, they have their uses. An eminent divine has said that a trashy romance may be advantageous, if it serves to beguile a lonely hour, or soften the agony of a sick bed. It is an amusing coincidence that the novels of Mr. Trollope himself mostly belong to this class. They are dull and homely, but natural withal, and these characteristics have made them favourites with the mediocrity of the average American and British mind. College professors and pulpit orators are in the habit of condemning the novel. But in doing so, they should be careful to temper their criticism. The novel, as a mere form of fiction, is not injurious, any more than the poem or the painting. Like them it addresses itself to the imagination and fosters sensibility, two faculties of the soul whose cultivation is essential to our intellectual life. Of course, abuse has to be avoided in this as in gymnastic exercise for the body, but that every body knows and feels without being told of it. It is best to let the popular taste have its fill in the matter of romance, and reaction will sooner or later set in of itself.

It is some time since the once familiar notes of Freedom's Bird have struck on our listening ears. The bald-headed eagle of the American 'perairie' is not yet dumb however. Once more it has spoken, this time through the medium of the *Sun*—appropriate emblem! This is the tenour of his gentle request:—1. Remove as gently as possible the British flag from the American continent; but remove it. 2. Remove without further delay the hateful Spanish flag from all islands of America. The reason for doing these two things is: "America belongs to Americans." We come from various places, but are all Americans. Spain has been on our farm since 1523. England has been on our farm since 1606. It is high time both had notice to quit." It would be difficult to say which is the most admirable, the delicacy of the request, the accuracy of the facts, or the soundness of the logic.

In these dull times any re-vamped sensation is eagerly snatched up as a godsend. So no one will be surprised at hearing the no-more-hanging cry raised once more. Again we are entreated to abolish this "blot on our civilization," and substitute for the gallows either prussic acid, electricity, chloroform, or some painless death. Just so. Electrify the worst criminals tenderly into the next world, and in minor cases before having recourse to flogging administer powerful anaesthetics. It might be well too, when the new system is thoroughly in working order, to form a society for the promotion among habitual criminals of kindness and gentleness in the treatment of their victims. This, however, is entirely a matter for ulterior consideration.

A Western journal, Government supporter, raises its burden against religious and national representation in the Cabinet. "How often in past days," it cries, "have we in Canada heard these bitter sectarian cries in an election campaign? How often have we seen religious and national prejudices brought to bear on our political contests? Whatever party may have been to blame in the past, we hope our future will be free from this stain." That it will be so free we have no doubt, when our lot is cast in Virile, or Utopia, or the Land of Cockaigne, or one of those delightful Arcadias where all is lovely and men cease to be men.

Admiral Jaures has proposed to the French Assembly the establishment of an international tribunal for the purpose of investigating collisions between vessels on the high seas. Will no benefactor of his kind suggest the propriety of establishing a permanent court of inquiry into the nationality and antecedents of these troublesome beings who are constantly bringing the nations of the earth into hot water by poking their noses where they have no business? A most desirable function of such a court would be the trial and sentencing of such restless spirits.

There is no more flattering unction than a man in bad circumstances can lay to his soul than that his neighbours' plight is worse than his own. Senator Schurz seems to think so too, judging from a recent utterance of his. The Senator, who has just returned from Europe, thinks the United States may well be satisfied with her prosperity and present position

among the nations upon earth. He says that Austria is rotten, France beggared, Spain hopeless, and North Germany debauched with the sudden influx of money.

They seem to have an insatiable desire for curiosities at Washington. The latest additions to the museum of the Natural History Society of that city consist of the head and trunk of Captain Jack, the Modoc chief. The remains were carefully put up in spirits at Fort Klamath and shipped in a whiskey barrel to the capital, where they will doubtless form a delightful subject of contemplation for the curious and scientifically inclined. Note: This is the latest story apropos of 'civilised warfare.'

A joke from the Bench is always good. Judge Davis, whose scathing rebuke of the counsel for the defence in the Tweed case, has been read with satisfaction all over the continent, has made the last. "Remember," said he to the younger of the offending counsel, "that, however good a thing it may be to be known as great and successful lawyers, it is ever a better thing to be known as honest lawyers." Who says now that no good thing can come out of New York?

The Newfoundlanders seem to have queer ideas of what constitutes 'playful eccentricity.' During the recent elections it was considered playfully eccentric to kidnap one of the candidates with the intention of keeping him out of the way until the close of the polls. When the question of annexation to the Dominion comes up once more it will be well to prepare the islanders for the consequences to which such eccentricity is likely to make them liable.

Mr. De Veber, the newly elected member for St. John, N.B., has expressed his intention of urging from his place in Parliament a thorough investigation of the Pacific Scandal. Better late than never. There are those in the country who are of opinion that had that matter been thoroughly investigated Mr. De Veber would not have had a seat to move anything from.

When will all this claptrap about "British valour" come to an end? We know that our troops are brave, but is there any need of being reminded of it by every newspaper we take up? Some of these weary penny-a-liners seem to think that the more frequently they mention British valour the more courage they inspire into the manly British breast.

Large meetings are, we hear, about to be held in London, Dublin, and Edinburgh, to express sympathy with the Protestants of Germany in their struggle with the Ultramontanes. It is only surprising that no one conceived the idea of starting meetings of sympathy for the Germans in their struggle with France.

A white elephant is a sufficiently perplexing legacy. But how are we to express our sympathy for those who have an inheritance of two of these interesting quadrupeds? Especially when they are such ill-tempered dangerous brutes as the Pacific Railway Route and the New Brunswick School Question.

And now it is once more the turn of the unfortunate men. We use the adjective advisedly. A distinguished American philanthropist—female—wants a home for fallen men. It all depends on the kind of home she proposes. Some men have too little of a home, others too many of them.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"I'LL CROSS IT, THOUGH IT BLAST ME."

To the Editor of the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS:

SIR.—What Fechter's readings, many of them original and fanciful, have directly to do with a stage direction to Horatio, I am at a loss to conceive. The "Flaneur" in your last number, says, "Many of Fechter's readings are remarkable." Thus, when Horatio, as the ghost appears on the platform of the castle of Elsinore, exclaims,

"I'll cross it, though it blast me."

Fechter insists that Horatio instead of crossing the path of the ghost ought to make the sign of the cross—forsooth, because Denmark was Catholic in the time of Hamlet, and more, that the sign of the cross was talismanic against spiritual and demoniacal ills.

The scene of the incidents in the original play of Hamlet, or the "Historie of Hamblet," is laid before the introduction of Christianity into Denmark, and when the Danish power held sway in England Denmark could not then have been a Roman Catholic Kingdom, in the sense that Italy and Spain now are; neither is it so at the present time.

The Priest, in Act the fifth, Scene the first, Shakespeare represented as, and probably intended him to be, a Roman Catholic, because the Priest considered he should profane the dead by singing or uttering the words "*Requiem æternam dona eis, Domine*," over the body of the "fair Ophelia." But he did not make Laertes a true son of the Church, or he would not have put these words in his mouth:—

"I tell thee, churlish priest
A ministering angel shall my sister be
When thou liest howling."

Whether the Danes were Roman Catholics at the time of the modern play of Hamlet, A.D. 1595, or Lutherans is a matter of little moment. Horatio, though a soldier, one of the antique Roman type, at the first appearance of the ghost, was "harrowed with fear and wonder, and trembled and looked pale;" then, would have been the time to make the sign of the cross, not at the second appearance when he peremptorily bids the ghost to halt—"Stay illusion! if thou hast any

sound, or use of voice, speak to me;" and again, when he consents to Marcellus "offering it a show of violence" by striking at it with his partisan. At the second appearance, he evidently was emboldened, and in proof of it says:—"I'll cross it though it blast me," not I'll cross it lest it should blast me. The crossing the path of the ghost is congenious to the common traditions of the causes of apparitions, in Shakespeare's time. In Lodge's Illustrations of English History, Vol. III, p. 48, will be found the following:—

The person who crossed the spot on which a spectre was seen, became subject to its malignant (or blasting) influence. Among the reasons for supposing the death of Ferdinand, Earl of Derby (who died young, in 1594) to have been occasioned by witch-craft is the following:—"On Friday there appeared a tall man whose voice crossed him swiftly, and when the Earl came to the place where he saw this man he fell sick."

It is just probable that Shakespeare may have been familiar with the circumstances attendant upon the death of the young Earl of Derby. The play of Hamlet was first published about 1600. The first quarto appearing in 1603.

Coleridge characteristically remarks on this passage that Horatio and the others display much more courage after he has in line 114 "translated the late individual spectre into a thing known to history and experience."

THOMAS D. KING.

NEW BOOKS.

It is a pretty generally accepted maxim that the interest taken by a reader in his book increases in direct ratio with his acquaintance with the persons, localities or subjects on which the author treats. It is in great measure to this fact that we may trace the great popularity which Mr. Howells's new book has attained. In Canada this is especially the case, and it is almost equally true with regard to the United States. The Lower St. Lawrence is now one of the established resorts for the well-to-do classes of the United States, and the ground lying between Quebec and Kamouraska is almost as familiar to New Yorkers and Bostonians as their own more fashionable and expensive watering places. "A Chance Acquaintance" first appeared as a serial in the *Atlantic Monthly* at the time when the influx of summer visitors was setting in for the resorts, and, as might have been expected, it was very generally and very eagerly read. We confess we are unable to share in the ardent admiration the book appears to have excited in some quarters. But we willingly allow that it possesses attractions wholly its own. In its pages the professed novel reader will find little to gratify his tastes; indeed the writer has, apparently, aimed but little at an appeal to this class of readers. The main charm of the book lies in the charming descriptions of scenery and *mœurs*, and the delicious naïvetés and characteristics with which it abounds. To use a gastronome's simile it may be likened, in more than one point, to the pre-pandial half dozen on the shell. It is succulent, piquant, and appetizing, but very far from satisfying. Yet a *bonne bouche* it undeniably is. The edition before us is a duodecimo, printed on toned paper and neatly bound in green cloth lettered. The illustrations, of which there are over a dozen full page size and a number of vignettes, are fair, but remarkable, the latter especially, for vigour and character, rather than elegance and finish. In a book of this kind, however, this is no imperfection.

Every one has heard of Marjorie Daw. We do not refer to the mythical young person so intimately connected with the lullabies of childhood, but to the no less mythical young lady whose charms have interested every reader of the *Atlantic* in her favour. The series of short stories contained in Mr. Aldrich's last volume fall partake of the quaintness and racy humour which characterize "Marjorie Daw," and, like that production, they all more or less terminate in surprises—"solis" perhaps would be the more appropriate though less elegant term. The genius that inspires them is essentially American. Yet the author's humour entirely lacks the coarseness that too frequently mars the productions of many American humourists. In the path he has chosen, he and a few kindred souls such as Charles Dudley Warner, and Charles Warren Stoddard, stand alone. "Marjorie Daw and Other People" is a book that cannot but prove a favourite. It is original, fresh, varied, and at times startling; essentially a book to put the dullest reader in a good humour. It would scarcely be fair to give the reader even a glimpse of its rich contents, so we prefer to dismiss it with a full recognition of its merits and a hearty recommendation as a quaint, jovial companion whose kindness and good-humour will not fail to be contagious. In outward appearance it gives good promise for the attractiveness of its contents.

We confess to an innate distrust of a book with a high sounding and startling title. We have almost invariably found, and our experience is doubtless that of many others, that the expectations raised by an ornate or *bizarre* appellation are very seldom justified on perusal. General Wallace's book has not proved an exception to this rule. "The Fair God" is a historical romance, possessing undoubtedly a large amount of power and originality, but for which it would be unsafe to predict any great measure of success. People do not as a rule care to look up their stores of reading to understand every new romance that makes its appearance. To a student just fresh from his Prescott, the book would perhaps have its attractions, but for the general public, and we presume it is for the general public that the author writes, it possesses few points of interest. For what it pretends to be, viz: a romance, it is infinitely tedious, and the frequent repetition of jaw-breaking proper names and titles, which are dragged in with all the self-satisfaction and gusto of the true pedant, are sufficient to disgust the most patient reader. Nor will the strained, "highfalutin" style of the dialogue and the unpardonable over-indulgence in local terms, frequently without the courtesy of an explanation, in any degree contribute to its success. The volume is handsomely and substantially got up, and presents a goodly outside, which only contrasts the more with the poor quality of the contents.

* A Chance Acquaintance. By W. D. Howells. Illustrated. Boston: Osgood & Co. Montreal: F. E. Grafton.

* Marjorie Daw and Other People. By Thomas Bailey Aldrich. Cloth. 12mo. pp. 272. \$1.50. Boston: Osgood & Co. Montreal: F. E. Grafton.

* The Fair God, or The Last of the Trains. A Tale of the Conquest of Mexico. By Lew Wallace. Cloth. 12mo. pp. 356. \$2.00. Boston: Osgood & Co. Montreal: F. E. Grafton.