

Book Reviews.

DAYS OFF.*

WHO does not know the charm and delight of a "day off,"—sailing, fishing, canoeing, what not? It is the butter of the humdrum bread of existence. In his new volume Dr. Van Dyke has philosophised little and preached less,—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say, has philosophised *a* little and preached *a* little less,—but on the whole, he has caught the joyous freedom-from-everything of the day-off, and has brought it to our winter libraries. Keat's fireside cricket "seems to me in drowsiness half-lost, some grasshoppers amid the summer hills," and nowadays, what with our preserved sunlight (nearly done up in wires), our pickled heat in pipes, and our canned summer in flower-pots, we only need a kippered summer-holiday. like this to make a northern winter quite endurable.

In getting at the "true inwardness" of a day off, Uncle Peter brings out the idea that the complete laying aside of every care and every duty for the time being, is a duty in itself. "The wisest of all Masters said to his disciples when they were outworn by the weight of their work and the pressure of the crowd upon them,—'Come ye yourselves apart into a lonely place, and rest a while.' He would never have bidden them do that unless it had been a part of their duty to get away from their task for a while." And when his interlocutor proposes to relate some of his "pleasant and grateful memories, little pictures and stories," that have to do with holidaying of all kinds, and asks him would anyone read it,—what does he think? Uncle Peter stretches his arms above his head, and "I think," he answers, "I reckon, and calculate, and fancy, and guess that a few people, a very few, might browse through such a book in their days off."

But the author modestly allows Uncle Peter to overlook one very important fact, that the name of the gentle reader to whom this sort of book is addressed is not Few but Legion. He himself is the very type of the indoor-bred man who yet loves God out-of-doors, the man of academic training and tradition who would rather spend a day with Baptiste,—at least, a day off—than with the learnedest of his colleagues. This class is a large and increasing one, and Mr. Van Dyke has the exact perspective of his class. It is not that of Baptiste, who never leaves the woods, nor of Herr Professor who never leaves the study, nor even of Baptiste who early takes to school and becomes in time Herr Professor—the latter would be slightly ashamed of his woodcraft and vastly proud of his book-lore, but the Van Dyker artfully conceals his Greek under a coat of tan, and would rather land a trout than discover a papyrus.

The table of contents shows twelve chapters, sketches, whatever you might call them. They vary greatly, and it is something of a surprise to see "Notions about Moods" included among them. Does the author mean to encourage that class of persons who carry moods to camp?—an odious suspicion: more likely he meant that the discussion in itself was a desultory picnicky sort of one. Two of the sketches are in the form of stories, ostensibly love-stories,