

TALKS ON BOOKS.

I have not read many books during the past summer. The weather was too fine for reading. I have done more preaching and talking, the latter, I trust, not too like the former. 'Did you ever hear me preach, Lamb?' asked Coleridge. 'Never heard you do anything else,' replied the gentle Elia. Fortunate in having about me men who had plenty good things to talk about and abundant ability to speak them forth, I have not felt the need of books. You can get more out of a man who is a specialist or an enthusiast, than out of most books, and get it more easily. If my subject were only 'Talks about Talks,' I could take my readers to shady nooks beneath the trees, to festive boards, to lotus eater's boat driftings on the lake, and to cheerful camp-fires, at which the wit and wisdom of many a Canadian and American city and town become common property. There would be a danger, however, of violating confidence, such as one can never incur in talking about a mute book. I have dipped into magazines, journals, and newspapers from all ends of the earth, and have wondered how they all manage to live on one small planet. Magazines I have reviewed in these columns when hard up for material to write about, but it is as unsatisfactory work as writing a treatise on the geometry of a crazy quilt. Fancy any sane man reviewing the 'Review of Reviews'! His next review would be passed under the kindly eye of the medical superintendent of Verdun, and serve him right.

There are some things in light literature one has to read, and I read them, but the books are gone. Neighborly cottagers act like the wicked in Psalm xxxvii., 21, and, whether we like it or not, we are constrained to act as the

righteous. It is to be feared that there is not much merit in compulsory righteousness. Then the parting guest is inconsolable if he or she, as the case may be, cannot carry off a memento, something to beguile the tedious hours on boat and train. Finally, there are settlers, boat hands, shanty men out in lumber camps, people with a long dreary winter before them, who claim the remains of our thinned-out book shelves, and leave the talker destitute of all but pleasant memories which he cannot refresh. Should he therefore halt at a name, the charitable reader will consider extenuating circumstances in his verdict.

Macmillan's colonial library contains some good books, foremost among which is 'Marcella,' by Mrs. Humphrey Ward, the author of 'Robert Elsmere.' Marcella is a young lady of good birth, but the daughter of a dishonored and poor father. Though compelled to live on his estate and in county society, she is at heart a Venturist, one prepared to work for socialism by degrees: yet, after many ups and downs between her and Lord Maxwell, she marries that amiable young peer, and prepares to live a happy life of well-doing without further romance. Mrs. Oliphant, who always writes well, if at times a little prosily, gives us 'Lady William.' She, not Mrs. Oliphant but lady William, is the widow of a disreputable lord, although only a rector's daughter, and brings up their stout but kind-hearted progeny, nicknamed Mab, in the way that she should go. Lady William's life is a burden for a time, through the machinations of the next-of-kin and other plotters, who call in question the validity of her marriage contract: but truth and she are vindicated, and all ends satisfactorily. 'Katharine Lauder-