

## READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

## THE ALLEGED INCREASE OF ROMAN CATHOLICS IN ENGLAND.

WE are glad to see that a writer in the *Quarterly Review* has exploded the absurd but widespread impression that Roman Catholicism is increasing in this country. The statistics that are perpetually published mean nothing except a great Irish immigration. The *Catholic Directory* claims 1,350,000 Roman Catholics in England. Of those not less than 800,000 are Irish Roman Catholics. When to these we add the numerous foreign Catholics, it reduces the purely English adherents to about half a million. When we take into account the immense increase of the population, it appears that Roman Catholicism is relatively much weaker in England to-day than it was one hundred years ago. Whatever strength it has is mainly the result of our wicked conduct in Ireland. The Orangemen of Ulster are the best English-speaking friends the Pope has ever had since the reign of Henry VIII. We believe that even in the Church of England the sacerdotal party has now reached the summit of its triumph, and is about to descend into comparative impotence. The new school of clergymen at Cambridge is saturated with the liberal theology of Canon Westcott. Even at Oxford the most gifted of the younger men are beginning to discover that Christianity did not originate in the fourth century. Evangelical Christians have no occasion for the panics in which they sometimes indulge. Let them heartily recognize all that is good, both in Romanism and High Anglicanism. But it is as mischievous to fear as it is wicked to hate either of those sections of Catholic Christians.—*Methodist Times*.

## CHANGED TACTICS OF HOME RULERS.

It is a great thing however, to have got Mr. Gladstone's pledge to facilitate in every way the business of the Session, on condition that reasonable opportunities shall be given to the Parnellite Party and to the Radical Party to air their grievances in Parliament. We are all of us willing to furnish these opportunities. The last thing that any reasonable Unionist wishes for, is to stifle the fair and reasonable discussion in Parliament of any controverted issue. To do so would be to substitute a despotic for a free Constitution, and even true Conservatives do not wish that, much less true Liberals. We want to see the majority fairly ruling, instead of simply paralyzed by the minority. But we do not want to see the minority silenced. It should be confined to the reasonable privileges of minorities, and has no right to wield the power of the majority as well. If we can secure that, we shall be quite satisfied to leave it to the country to judge whether the majority or the minority were in the right in refusing the demand of the Irish majority that the United Kingdom should be broken up. Our opponents have opened the Session in a style of moderation which does them credit. We must not be misled by any suspicions as to the motive of their policy, into any want of proper appreciation of their advances. Nothing could be in better taste than Mr. Gladstone's speech, and if the Parnellite Members do but observe in future the same discipline which they observed on Thursday night, we should have as little right to complain of them as we have to complain of the Scotch Members. Of course, it will not be so. The passions which have been raging so fiercely in the recess will not vanish at a word from Mr. Parnell; and even if they should, we may be sure that some excuse would be found for raising them again, if the policy of stilling them were discovered to be a failure. But every night won from disorder and obstruction is a night gained, and though we cannot augur a fruitful Session from the strange calm of the first night's debate, we can at least recognize and imitate Mr. Gladstone's moderation, and clinch the engagements which he has voluntarily undertaken towards the House of Commons and the country.—*Spectator*.

## OUR LIBRARY TABLE.

THE STORY OF THE EARTH AND MAN. By Sir John W. Dawson, LL.D., F.R.S. New York: John B. Alden.

This is a cheap but neat and substantial cloth-bound edition of Sir J. W. Dawson's work. Of the work itself, little need be said. It has been published for some time, and its merits are well known. The author deals with problems of great interest and difficult, but in such a way as to make them attractive even to unscientific readers. He presents his "subject in the aspect in which it appears to a geologist whose studies have led him to compare with each other the two great continental areas which are the classic ground of the science, and who retains his faith in those unseen realities of which the history of the earth itself is but one of the shadows projected on the field of time."

A CATALOGUE OF CANADIAN BIRDS. With notes on the distribution of the Species. By Montagu Chamberlain. St. John, N.B.: J. & A. McMillan.

In his preface, the author of this valuable work deplors the little interest taken in ornithology by our scientific men, especially by those connected with the Geological Survey. Holding the opinion that all that can be learned about our fauna is now known to science, the leading scientific men of the Dominion have taken little interest in the investigations that have been going on and have withheld all encouragement from students of ornithology. This indifference, he says, is the one great reason why ornithology has not made the advances in Canada that it has in other countries. In support of this he quotes freely from prominent American naturalists, who are unanimous in their opinions as to the neglect of this science in Canada. Mr. Brewster, of the Museum of Comparative Zoology, Cambridge, Mass., asks, "What has Canada done for ornithology? Simply

nothing, excepting the little that has resulted from purely private investigations and from work instigated, and in some cases paid for, on this side of the line. . . . Speaking in general terms, Canada—and especially its North-Western provinces—is still a virgin field, about which we are in almost total ignorance." The author, who is, we believe, one of the most prominent and industrious of Canadian ornithologists, has done a very useful and valuable service to the science by compiling this catalogue. It is the first work in which all the birds of Canada have been named; it gives the latest method of naming and classifying the birds, and gives also the geographical distribution, breeding area, relative abundance, and the range in winter of each bird. The author is not himself satisfied with the portion of the work respecting geographical distribution; but with so few workers in so wide a field it was impossible to avoid incompleteness and perhaps inaccuracies. He deserves much praise for the ability and zeal which has enabled him to produce a work which will doubtless "prove of some advantage to all who take an interest in our birds," and of service to students of the science.

SCRIPTURE READINGS for use in the Public and High Schools of Ontario; Revised Edition. Toronto: William Briggs.

This is a second edition of the Selections from Scripture for use in the schools about which there has been so much bitter, unnecessary, and perhaps insincere controversy. It has been revised by the same committee of clergymen and laymen that examined and approved the compilation before it was authorized by the Education Department, and it is now issued with many of the changes and improvements which were suggested throughout the controversy excited by its first publication. The most noticeable and important change is the addition to each selection of a reference to the chapter in the Bible from which it is taken and the verses it comprises. The want of this reference was a serious defect in the first edition; it made a critical examination of the work infinitely more difficult—a circumstance which, perhaps, added some rancour to the criticism it received. The new edition is well printed and substantially bound. It contains the Departmental Regulations respecting religious exercises and instruction in Public and High Schools, and a very full table of contents, setting out the chapter and verses from the Bible and the subject of each lesson.

THE PROGRESS OF LEARNING. A Poem delivered at the celebration of the Centennial of Columbia College, New York, April 13th, 1887. By George Lansing Taylor, S.T.D., L.H.D. New York: John B. Alden.

The delivery of "orations" and addresses in verse at college commencements and on other occasions has become a common custom in the United States. This poem was written for and read at the festivities in celebration of the centennial anniversary of the re-chartering of old King's College, New York, and its change of name to Columbia College by the Legislature of the State of New York. It is an account in rhymed couplets

"Of Learning's progress, Learning's schools and sages,  
And march illustrious down the illumined ages—  
Her trials, her martyrdoms, her triumph's glorious—  
Her away forever widening and glorious."

These, the opening lines, indicate very fairly the style and the subject-matter of the poem. It will not be read for its poetical beauty, but as an essay it contains much to instruct and interest young collegians and other students. The book is neatly printed and bound in ornamented cloth covers, and, like all Alden's books, remarkably cheap.

Scribner's for March is chiefly noticeable for the large number of fine portraits and fac-similes of MSS., etc., which it contains. *A Shelf of Old Books* is an account of some of the books in the private collection made by the late James T. Fields. It is exceedingly interesting, and contains portraits of Leigh Hunt, Shelley, Keats, Barry Cornwall, and the artist Severn. The concluding instalment of *Mendelssohn's Letters to Moscheles* is also rich in portraits and fac-similes. Robert Louis Stevenson continues his essays, this time writing in his own charming way about *Beggars*. The opening article on Waterloo gives, so far as it goes, a clear and interesting account of that eventful campaign.

Harper's for March is a rich number, both in illustration and literary matter. Mr. E. Bowen Prescott gives in the first article interesting sketches of the leading modern painters of Spain. Another article describes the Old Virginian plantation which was once the property of Mrs. Custis, afterwards Mrs. Martha Washington. Charles Dudley Warner begins a series of papers on the Great West, and Mr. W. D. Howells concludes *A Little Swiss Sojourn*. A paper on the Empress Eugénie presents that unfortunate lady in a new light, and gives many new and interesting details of her life. *A New England Vagabond*, by Col. Higginson, gives an entertaining account of a tramp of Revolutionary times. Canadian readers will turn with zest to Mr. Farnham's account of the French voyageurs and lumbermen on the Saguenay, which is richly illustrated by Howard Pyle and other artists.

## LITERARY GOSSIP.

JOHN B. ALDEN has in press a book entitled *The Land of the Pueblos*, by the wife of General Lew Wallace.

A NEW volume of poems by James Russell Lowell, entitled *Heartsease and Rue*, will be published early in March by Houghton, Mifflin, and Company.

THE Tillotson Newspaper Syndicate have arranged to publish the *Reminiscences of J. L. Toole*, the comedian, related by himself and chronicled by Joseph Hatton.