

## OUR LIBRARY TABLE.

**THE CASE OF DR. PLEMEN.** By René de Pont-Jest. Canadian Copyright Edition. Toronto: William Bryce.

This is a novel of considerable interest. The scene is principally in France, and the story has a decidedly French flavour, but not in an objectionable sense. Its moral, if it has any, is the danger of relying too much on medical expert evidence in criminal cases, especially in cases of alleged poisoning—experts “who refuse to recognize anything outside their own theories, whose professional pride does not permit them for one moment to doubt their own infallibility.” A trial in which expert evidence of this kind was used is one of the most interesting episodes in the story.

**THE RESIDUARY LEGATEE; Or, the Posthumous Jest of the Late John Austin.** By F. J. Stimson (J. S., of Dale). New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

This is a very clever little book. It is ingenious in plot and admirable in literary form. Old John Austin by his last will and testament gave the bulk of his fortune to his nephew, Austin May, but with a proviso that if he married before the age of thirty-five, or within eleven years after the date of the testator's death, the estate should go to his residuary legatee, whose name was enclosed in a sealed envelope, which was to remain unopened until his nephew married, or reached the age of thirty-five, or until eleven years after the testator's death, whichever should happen first. Austin May went abroad for eleven years, and the record of these years is most delightful reading. J. S., of Dale's reputation should be enhanced by this book.

**MUSKOKA ILLUSTRATED.** With Descriptive Narrative. By G. Mercer Adam. Toronto: William Bryce.

Every visitor to the Muskoka Lakes should provide himself with this exceedingly pretty and useful little book. Its size and shape are such that it can be conveniently carried in the pocket. The first of the illustrations—thirty-four in all—gives an excellent view of Toronto, and the last, of Parry Sound. The others indicate, for the most part the characteristic scenery of Muskoka. There are two maps, one a railway map of Ontario, showing Buffalo, Rochester, and New York; the other, a map of the Muskoka District, on which the roads and the routes of the steamers are indicated. Mr. Adam's descriptive narrative will be helpful to the tourist who visits the District for the first time, and of interest to all. He not only graphically describes the country, but gives many interesting historical reminiscences connected with it.

**BY A WAY SHE KNEW NOT.** The story of Allison Bain. New York: Anson D. F. Randolph. 482 pp., \$1.50.

Miss Robertson has written several stories, none of which we have read, but if they have anything like the merit which characterizes the one before us, she has no reason to be dissatisfied with her work. It is a strongly written story of Scotch life, the scene being laid in Aberdeenshire. Allison Bain, the heroine, is a character of unusual strength and beauty; and indeed all the characters are drawn with singular distinctness, as if from life, by a skilled artist. Miss Robertson has evidently lived among the scenes she describes so graphically, and known such people as she has so faithfully portrayed. We do not intend to even outline the story. We need only say that it is an exceedingly touching story of patient suffering, unselfish devotion, and almost sublime submission to duty. We can commend it, not only for its literary merit, but for the purity of its tone, and the nobility of character which it inculcates.

**WORD PORTRAITS OF FAMOUS WRITERS.** Edited by Mabel E. Wotton. London: Richard Bentley and Son.

In her introduction to this work the editor quotes the words of Lord Beaconsfield: “The world has always been fond of personal details respecting men who have been celebrated.” The editor has endeavoured to gratify this very natural feeling by collecting personal sketches, for the most part by contemporaries, of the best known English writers “ranging from Geoffrey Chaucer to Mrs. Henry Wood.” There is nothing biographical in the book. It gives “an account of the face, figure, dress, voice, and manner” of those who have a place in it. Of a good many there are several portraits by different pens, but all are brief, and four or five pages are the most accorded to any writer. The portraits are arranged alphabetically, beginning with Addison and ending with Sir Henry Wotton; but we cannot help thinking a chronological arrangement would have been preferable. “What is there,” asks the Boston *Literary World*, “about a book made in England or Scotland that sets it apart with an indefinable beauty and elegance of its own, and stamps it at once to the eye as not of American manufacture? Is it the paper, or the type, or the ink—or what is it?” This book, with its fine, white paper, bold, clear type, wide margins, and chaste binding, possesses that indefinable charm which characterizes the publications of old country houses.

**A MODERN JACOB.** By Hester Stuart. Boston: D. Lothrop Company.

This is an unusually good story of its kind. It pictures phases of both country and city life, but the scene is laid chiefly in the country. The story opens on the farm of Reuben Balcome, whose household consists of himself, his wife, and their twin sons, Jacob and Joel, who are as unlike each other in appearance, character, and temperament, as the Jacob and Esau of old are represented to have been. Nearly all the characters in the story are good, honest, likeable people—indeed, the only exceptions of importance are Jacob and his wife, and an inquisitive old maid who goes from house to house and gossip. Jacob is a sneak, a liar, and a hypocrite. He can pray as though his lips had been touched with a coal from the altar, and go directly from “meeting” to oppress some poor man who may have fallen into his clutches, “for he is a money lender in a small way.” His wife is clever, but mean, sly, and a skinflint. Jacob slanders his brother and the girl his brother wishes to marry, and succeeds at last in making home-life intolerable for Joel, who goes away, marries the girl of his choice, and lives happily, save for his estrangement from his father and mother. Jacob soon has the sole management of the farm, and ultimately secures a deed of it, to the entire seclusion of his brother. This much to justify the title. Many readers will be more interested in Mr. Berkeley, Dr. Grant, and Margaret Lennox than in the Balcomes and the Ropers.

**FOUR OXFORD LECTURES. 1887.** By Edward A. Freeman, D.C.L. London and New York: Macmillan and Company.

These lectures of the Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford deal with two distinct topics—the first two with a retrospect, called forth by the Queen's Jubilee, of the last fifty years of European history; the second two with a dissertation on the Teutonic Conquest in Gaul and Britain, arising out of a discussion over some papers contributed by the author of *Macmillan's Magazine*, on “The Origin of the English Nation,” and “The Alleged Permanence of Roman Civilization in Britain.” The latter part of the present

volume, being both abstruse and controversial, will not be found very inviting to the general reader; its study may therefore be relegated to the philologist and antiquary. The review of modern European history, on the contrary, is important, and to all readers will be found full of interest. It dates from the Queen's accession, and rapidly reviews the changes on the political map of Europe during the past fifty years. A perusal of the lectures will impress on the mind how rapidly the age has been making history, and what changes even a generation has brought about among European Commonwealths, with the coming and going of rulers and the disturbed movements of political diplomacy and revolutionary unrest. The retrospect is both instructive and suggestive; instructive in regard to what has already happened, and suggestive of much that may yet be.

**THE REVERBERATOR.** By Henry James. London and New York: Macmillan and Company. Toronto: Williamson and Company.

Mr. Henry James is not seen at his best in this slight and unpleasant story. It is a clever character study, but the characters do not interest, while much of the book is frivolous and almost vulgar. Its *motif* is to represent some commonplace and *gauche* Americans in contact with Parisian life, and under the restless and reckless influence of some phases of the gay European capital. The principal characters are a “well-fixed” old American, his two characterless daughters, a vulgar, hare-brained American journalist, correspondent of *The Reverberator*, a slangy western society newspaper, and a French educated American gentleman and his aristocratic family connections. All there is of plot in the story is the engagement of the latter gentleman to one of the Dosson girls and the counterplot of the western journalist to break the engagement, by some foolish correspondence about the girl and her lover's family in his paper, and thus to win the young lady for himself. The effort is made to create interest for the heroine by her frank manners and unconventionality, with what success we must leave our readers, if they take up the story, to find out. The best parts of the book, to our thinking, are those devoted to the description of Dosson père, “a man of the simplest composition, a character as cipherable as the sum of two figures.” This amiable, purposeless old man is capably sketched, drifting on the tide of Parisian hotel life and serenely happy in the fact that his silly daughters are being shown “the lions” of the French capital by a plausible but crafty Yankee journalist, whose gushing emotions and inane folly lead one of the girls into a delicate scrape. There is more than a suspicion of satire in the author's handling of this society journalist, as well as in his sketch of the Gallicised American family resident in Paris.

**TILTING AT A WINDMILL.** A Story of the Blue Grass Country. By Emma M. Connelly. Boston: D. Lothrop Company.

We do not think the title of this story is particularly apt, for although George Atherton's work in the Blue Grass Country had no immediate effect, and only seemed to arouse the prejudices and hostility of the people, yet, as the last chapter declares, it ultimately overcame prejudice, disarmed hostility, and produced gratifying results. But the title is “taking,” and its aptness is of little consequence.

George Atherton, a native of cultured Boston, a graduate of Harvard, a young man of excellent parts and character, though somewhat of a prig, had, during the war, rescued and nursed a wounded Confederate colonel. A few years later he was, to his intense surprise, formally notified that the colonel had left him his estate in Kentucky, with the stipulation, however, that he was to live on it for at least ten years. Atherton took possession of his property, and succeeded from the first in making himself unpopular with most of his neighbours, though a very few approved his plans and gave him what encouragement they could. But the great majority were bitter in their opposition to his negro school and his temperance society, and they reluctantly tolerated his public library. A mob burned his school-house and set fire to his dwelling. In the midst of all his troubles he found himself in love with more favoured rivals in the field.

The book, which is written by “a Kentucky girl born and bred,” no doubt gives a faithful picture of social life in the Blue Grass State, and for a first novel it is a remarkably good one. The characters seem life-like, though we find it difficult to conceive of Corinne as the daughter of good Mr. Ingram. Portia, the heroine of the story, is perfectly natural, but we think there is more art in the portraiture of “Prince Irwin” than in that of any of the other characters.

**OLIVER CROMWELL.** By Frederic Harrison. Twelve English Statesmen Series. London and New York: Macmillan and Company; Toronto: Williamson and Company.

From a series of English statesmen, who have left an abiding mark on their country's history, the great hero of the Commonwealth can never be left out. Had his life been spared, how long the Protectorate might have lasted, is to-day an interesting speculation. “It is perhaps not an idle dream,” says Mr. Harrison, “that, in some way, it might have handed on to a peaceful and reformed State to a constitutional Monarchy, without the debasing interlude of the Restoration.” But, as Fate willed it, however England fared under the restored Stuarts, Cromwell's work did not go for naught, either in the religious or in the political sphere; and the nation has never lost that which it gained in the contest of the Civil War. If the larger histories of the period, like those of Carlyle, Bisschop, and Gardiner, are not read, such monographs as this of Mr. Harrison, and we would add to it Mr. Goldwin Smith's *Three English Statesmen* and Forster's *Statesmen of the Commonwealth* should be familiar to every Briton, and to all who wish to have a lively sense of what they owe to the grand figures in history whose work it was to secure to humanity the inestimable blessings of civil and religious liberty. Did this remark need emphasizing, we might ask the incredulous to consider how changed is the history of the English nation from the year 1640, and to endeavour to forecast the trend of events during the Civil War without the aid of a Cromwell. Mr. Harrison, in brief space, gives all the essential facts in the life of the Protector, both as a soldier and an administrator, and outlines a striking picture of the man and his time, which many more ambitious works fail to supply. Nor is Mr. Harrison lacking in sympathy with the religious characteristics of Cromwell and his fellow Puritans, but on the contrary does ample justice to the temper of the times and to the type of manhood which the times produced. The chapter on the domestic life of Cromwell, in this respect, is a most valuable one, and it should be read by every one who wants to understand and to do justice to Puritanism.

**HISTORY OF PRUSSIA UNDER FREDERICK THE GREAT.** By Herbert Tuttle, Professor in Cornell University. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company; Toronto: Williamson and Company.

These two compact volumes are a further instalment of an ambitious, historical work, by an American Professor, dealing with an important period in modern European history, from the rise of Prussia as an independent State to the death of Frederick the Great. The present instalment covers the first fifteen years of Frederick's reign, viz., from 1740 to 1756. It is a period largely dealt with by Carlyle in his monumental work; but though the field may thus be said to be occupied, it is not altogether satisfactorily occupied, for Carlyle's work can hardly be called a true and adequate study of the period, nor were all the sources open to him as they have since become to later writers on the subject. There