

BOOKS AND BOOKMEN.

It is said that Mr. Rudyard Kipling now receives £200 for the English serial right of a short story.

Dr. Grosart's volume on "Robert Ferguson," for the "Famous Scots" series was published recently.

Mme. Darmsteter in her "Life of Ernest Renan," gives the following as the last words of the great writer:—"Let us accept the laws of the universe. The heavens and the earth remain."

Mrs. Charles Bray, the close friend and literary associate of George Eliot, in whose house the novelist lived for some time before removing from Warwickshire to London, is reported to be lying dangerously ill at Coventry.

Many hitherto unpublished letters of Robert Burns are promised in a work entitled "The Correspondence between Burns and Mrs. Dunlop," which Messrs. Hodder & Stoughton will publish shortly. The book has been prepared by Mr. William Wallace, editor of the last edition of Chambers' "Life and Works of Robert Burns."

Mr. Aeneas Mackay, Stirling, has in the press, to be shortly published by subscription, "The Battle of Sheriffmuir." The story is compiled from original sources, and illustrated by original pen and ink drawings, taken on the ground, and of arms, relics of 1715, with a map showing the positions of the respective armies on the battlefield, and a view of Sheriffmuir.

In the course of an interview, Mr. Coulson Kernahan said that his first book, "A Dead Man's Diary," was published anonymously, and this anonymity was made use of by an unprincipled writer. This man went to a firm of publishers, and on the understanding that he was the author of "A Dead Man's Diary," gained acceptance for a manuscript which he called "The Confessions of a Dying Man," and for which he actually received payment.

Mr. Payn tells a story of his first meeting with Thackeray. The meeting took place at the house of Mr. Payn's brother-in-law, and our author sat next to Thackeray, who, after dinner, whispered that he had a most particular engagement, and was about to wish good-night to his host. "But will you not even smoke a cigar first?" asked Mr. Payn, whereupon Thackeray remarked, "Oh, they smoke here, do they?"

Well, to tell you the truth, that was my engagement." He remained many hours after that.

In Mr. Milne's new book on the "Gay Gordons" there is a story of a certain Hanoverian King, who requested that the regiment might give an exhibition of their exercises of the claymore and dirk in his presence. On leaving, the men were given a sovereign apiece. "The Highlanders," we read, "retorted by tipping the coins to the porters on duty at the palace gates."

At Westminster Abbey the thirty-fourth anniversary of the death of William Makepeace Thackeray was not forgotten, his bust in the Poet's Corner being adorned with floral offerings. It will be remembered that the novelist was found dead in his bed on Christmas morning 1896, at his residence in Kensington, and by his bedside was found written in pencil on a slip of paper, "And his heart throbbled with an infinite peace," these being the last words written by the author, and intended for his unfinished work, "Dennis Duval." The grave of Charles Dickens which is situated directly beneath the bust of his fellow-novelist, was profusely decorated with wreaths. The tomb of the late Lord Tennyson also bore a wreath.

Mr. William Black, the novelist, writes to the "Scotsman":—"At this pacific season of the year, would you allow a perfectly obscure person to endeavor to calm the perturbed spirit of Mr. A. J. Balfour? He appears to be agitated about the probable future of the novel. At Edinburgh the other day he spoke of 'the obvious difficulty which novelists now find in getting hold of appropriate subjects for their art to deal with,' and again, he said, with doubtful grammar, 'Where, gentlemen, is the novelist to find a new vein? Every country has been ransacked to obtain theatres on which their imaginary characters are to show themselves off,' and so forth. Mr. Balfour may reassure himself. So long as the world holds two men and a maid, or two maids and a man, the novelist has abundance of material, and there is no need to search for a 'theatre' while we have around us the imperishable theatre of the sea and the sky and the hills. If Mr. Balfour cannot master these simple and elementary propositions, then it would be well for him to remain altogether outside the domain of literature, and to busy himself (when not engaged in party politics,) with some more recondite subject—say, bimetalism.