

Book Notices.

"An Onlooker's Note-Book." By the author of "Collections and Recollections." New York: Harper & Bros. Toronto: William Briggs. Svo. Pp. ix-310. Price, \$2.25 net.

This is one of the wisest and wittyest books we have read in long time. It abounds in shrewd comment, apt anecdotes, brilliant epigram, and repartee. The clever author of "Collections and Recollections" has gleaned another sheaf from his memories of a busy life. He raises a warning note against the plutocratic tendencies of the age, the growth of luxury, and the passing of the old-time chivalrous courtesies of life. Nevertheless his glimpses of social custom of an earlier date make us feel that there was a good deal then with which we can well dispense. The bluff King William smacked his seafaring comrades on the back, and decorated his conversation with sailor oaths—but the Queen's accession abolished swearing. Superstition was rife. Some people would not live in a house numbered 13, calling it 12a.

Our author deplores the breaking down of the sanctity of the Sabbath by the social engagements of the leaders of fashion and their neglect of public worship. He excoriates the gambling tendencies of the times. The society gossip, the sporting tendency of the age, too, are satirized and denounced with vigour. The growth of luxury and worship of wealth are described as both cause and effect. We hope that few men, however, possess, like one he mentions, £40,000 worth of personal jewels.

The drink curse, which causes the moral ruin of the whole character, must, he says, be faced and fought. The racing and shooting woman inspires his abhorrence. Yet it is not all jeremiad. There are marks of improvement. There is, he says, a vein of manly self-devotion which will prove the salvation of England. The young men seeking holy orders may be fewer, but their quality is better. The British officer is chivalric and brave. University missions and settlements in the slums are manned by Oxford's brightest men. A Prime Minister's son hands round the hymn-books, a young M.P. conducts a Bible-class, a captain of

Hussars teaches gutter boys. A suburban mission is maintained by the young men of a great draper's establishment. "God is drawing," said Dr. Benson, "the public schools of England to Himself." Boys are not ashamed of religion as they used to be. The college men are "the Uhlans of a great advance which has won whole provinces for the Christian cause." Many women of rank are devoted to the service of the poor, the miserable, the helpless. While moral turpitude may be widely spread, yet the forces of good were never so active, so zealous, so enterprising as now. "It was a noble thing," said Beaconsfield, "to see a nation saved by its youth." Just now it is her young men and women who are keeping alive the soul of England, and exercising those qualities which make a nation truly great. While this modern Balaam begins with banning he ends with blessing.

"New France and New England." By John Fiske. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. Toronto: William Briggs. Pp. xxiii-378. Price, \$1.65 net.

This is the latest and last of Mr. Fiske's splendid series of books on the history of this continent. It will be read in Canada with more interest, we think, than any other of the series, because it traces the romantic story of our country during the one hundred and fifty years of conflict for a continent between Great Britain and France. This was a conflict, not merely between hostile peoples, but between democracy and feudalism, between Catholic superstition and Protestant liberty. The issue at stake was whether mediæval institutions, the principles of military absolutism, and the teachings of Gallican clericalism should dominate, or whether the evolution of civil and religious liberty, of free thought, free speech, a free press, and the universal genius of free institutions, should find a field for their development as wide as the continent. The problem was whether, on the banks of the Hudson and the Mississippi, on the shores of the Great Lakes, and amid the vast prairies of the Far West, should grow up a number of free commonwealths,