

OUR TABLE.

THE ADOPTED SON; A HISTORICAL NOVEL—BY J.

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Translated from the Dutch by E. D. Hoskin.

THIS is a long and rather a heavy Dutch story of the middle of the 16th century, that stirring period of their mighty and successful struggle for religious freedom and political independence. It is under such circumstances more than in any other that the most ample materials are afforded for a tale of deep and thrilling interest. In this particular instance, if the best possible use has not been made of these materials,—and it required the hand of a master workman to perform the task in so finished and satisfactory a manner as we could have wished,—yet the author has claims, and strong ones too, upon the favourable notice of our readers.

We highly approve of what are generally designated Historical Novels, because, while they interest our feelings, they enlighten our understandings, and thus, combining instruction with amusement, our stock of knowledge is increased without any dry or arduous study, and impressed upon the memory without an effort.

Many people, however, especially the young and inexperienced, in reading such works, are apt to attach too much credit to the statements they contain—to mistake for historical accuracy a plausible and circumstantial detail of events and occurrences distorted and exaggerated, and not unfrequently invented to suit the purpose of the story teller. This is an error to be carefully guarded against, as the following instance, out of many in the work before us, will suffice to shew. Frequently mention is made of the Iconoclasts, and in such a manner as to lead the unwary reader to suppose that the war against idolatry, and the breaking of images, originated in those "troublesome times," whereas it commenced in the early part of the eighth century, and raged with such fury during the reigns of three successive emperors as to cause the dethronement of one, the poisoning of another by his own wife, and the dismemberment of the empire, and it only ended

with the century in which it began. The last, at least that we hear of it, is the condemnation of image worship in 794, by a council of three hundred Iconoclast Bishops, assembled by Charlemagne at Frankfort on the Maine.

It is from the graphic delineation of the manners, habits and customs of ages long gone by—of their mode of acting, speaking, and even of thinking, under the circumstances described, whether real or fictitious it matters not, that we are to derive many useful and important lessons.

As an illustration of our meaning, let any one read as carefully as he may, the best written life of Oliver Cromwell, even his *Life and Times* by Carlyle for instance, and then read Sir Walter Scott's Historical Novel of Woodstock, and he will close the book with a much more perfect knowledge of the real character of that extraordinary and peculiarly talented man than he had before, although no single circumstance in the fictitious tale should be found to correspond with the statements in the authentic history.

The history of the great and triumphant struggle of the Netherlands for their independence, as given by Schiller, perfect and complete though it be, and it is perhaps one of the best ever written, yet is it but a detail of facts in which we have no personal concern; but in the work before us, our finest feelings, our warmest and kindest sympathies are deeply interested and engaged in behalf of every individual in that persecuted and resolute, and at last triumphant band of brothers—from the prince and the noble to the karl and the boer,—and even to his dog.

The work has suffered somewhat from the translation,—what work indeed has not? There is one egregious error, however, which, in our whole course of reading, we never met with before. It consists in the translator's giving the Latin names of authors when speaking of them, in the genitive case, without the sign of the English possessive; for instance he says, "the writings Hugonis Grotii," instead of the writings of Hugo Grotius. This is a pedantic absurdity of very frequent occurrence throughout the work.