

CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE.

MR. EDWARD ARBER'S ENGLISH REPRINTS.
London: Edward Arber. Toronto: Willing & Williamson.

Few individuals have done so much for the English scholar as Mr. Arber, Lecturer in English Literature etc., London, England. The residents of the colonies are, in particular, indebted to him; for, by his efforts, they are enabled to provide themselves, at a trifling cost, with reprints of works the originals of which are as valuable for their intrinsic merits as for their rarity, even in England. To be worth anything, English literature must be studied from the originals; no second-hand knowledge can replace the effect of immediate soul-contact; and, even had Mr. Arber not laid us under a debt of gratitude by his scholarly prefaces and general commentaries, he deserves more, probably, than most editors, the thanks of all students of "our wells of English undefiled." Mr. Arber has published at his own risk, and at a surprisingly low rate, the less known or less easily obtainable works of from forty to fifty authors, extending over a period of more than five centuries—from the reign of Richard I. to that of Queen Anne. Amongst these we may mention *The Monk of Evesham*, *The Paston Letters*, *Ascham's Toxophilus*, *Latimer's The Ploughers*, and *Seven Sermons*, *Ralph Roister Doister*, *Tottle's Miscellany*, *Ascham's Scholemaster*, *Gascoigne's Steele Glass*, *Gosson's School of Abuse*, *Lyly's Euphues*, *Sidney's Astrophel* and *Stella* and *Sonnets*, *Selden's Table Talk*, *Raleigh's Last Fight of the Revenge*, *Earle's Microcosmography*, etc., etc. A few of the publications are of interest possibly to the literary antiquarian only, but no man who professes to be an English scholar can afford to be without a set of the reprints, the whole fourteen volumes of which may be bought, post paid, for £2 6s. sterling. The *English Scholar's Library*, of which eight numbers have already been published—price 13s. 6d.

—is also an invaluable contribution to our editions of early English classics; and *An English Garner*, intended for general readers, contains matter of inestimable importance to the student of English literature. The writer of this notice, who has studied with delight most of Mr. Arber's publications, heartily recommends the series to the English masters of the Dominion who desire to have an intimate acquaintance with the many phases of our national development.

The most expensive and, to the general reader, the least interesting of the Reprints, is *A Transcript of the Company of Stationers of London, England*, which contains all entries relating to books, the careers of individual printers, binders, publishers, and other members of the company, and items affording data towards the history of wages, prices of food, etc., in London. The *Transcript Reprint* ends with the opening of the Long Parliament, as this date is a distinct and definite turning point in our printed literature, and the period selected comprehends the culmination of English action and thought. To quote from Mr. Arber's prospectus, "Of many books—still lost to us—these Registers are the *only* record. They are also, and ever will be, the foundation of English Bibliography; and besides, are the chief authority, for their period, in the history of English Printing. They are therefore especially valuable to book-collectors and the administrators of public libraries. They chiefly enregister FIRST EDITIONS, but there are also occasionally TRANSFERS from one publisher to another. Most of the Poems, Interludes, and Plays are recorded in them: together with the earliest Voyages to the East Indies, and the publications relating to the foundation of our American colonies. In fact, there is nothing like them anywhere extant in any foreign language; so early, so precise, so voluminous, so certain, and therefore so authoritative." While