

Talks about Books.

Other things being equal, the Talker, as a loyal man, gives the first place to Canadian books. Last month he reviewed four such, and the month before, three. This is a very creditable showing for Canada. His leading book on this occasion is not very new, but it has not been noticed in the JOURNAL, and it is very good. It is History, Prophecy, and the Monuments, by James Frederic McCurdy, Ph. D., LL.D., Professor of Oriental Languages in University College, Toronto. The Macmillans are the publishers of this handsome large octavo of 425 pages and an illustrative map. Dr. McCurdy presents in his book a history of the Semitic peoples, from the earliest period to the downfall of the kingdom of Israel. His first three chapters on the general characteristics of the Semites are as valuable as they are interesting, and his subsequent pages that deal with the monuments of Assyria and Babylonia and with the Bible record are worthy of a scholar of Dr. McCurdy's reputation. The source of the learned professor's strength, and also of his weakness, is in the fact that, like Professor Sayce, he is an ardent Semitist. He knows Assyrian, Chaldee, Arabic, Hebrew, and other Semitic languages, and gives the Semite the first place in antiquity. Every man explains things by what he knows best. That is why Max Muller brings all language and thought to the bar of the Sanscrit, and why the gallant General Vallancey translated the Punic passage in the *Pœnulus* of Plautus by Irish. There is no doubt that the prevailing tongue of ancient days, their *lingua franca* was, as Professor McCurdy asserts, a Semitic one: Chaldeans, Elamites, Assyrians, Amorites, as well as Arabs and Hebrews, knew the Semitic language. So did the learned Egyptians, whose own speech was sub-Semitic. But the Accadian dialect of Chaldea, the native tongue of Elam, and the Hittite of Arabia Petraea, were Turanian languages akin to the Japanese; and that of the Sumerians of Babylonia and the Mitanni of Mesopotamia was archaic Gaelic; while the Philistine was of Aryan speech. Apart from the Arabs and the Hebrews, including among the former the Ethiopians, the Semites were a ground race and unhistorical, in spite of the Semitic-like names of Babylonian and Elamite, Syrian and Assyrian monarchs. The Amorites and the Phenicians were purely Hamitic peoples who adopted Semitic speech. These facts Dr. McCurdy does not set forth, probably because he does not believe them, but they are the truth all the same, and must be reckoned with in all attempts to draw a faithful picture of early ages. With the