

those of a New York demagogue angling for the Irish vote. Perhaps the piscatorial connection makes Billingsgate appropriate, but one is surprised nevertheless, to find Mr. Ingalls using it. Moreover, the gentleman represents Kansas' interests in the Senate, which makes his ardent championship of the Massachusetts fisherman more astonishing still, unless, indeed, Mr. Ingalls has in view the sympathy of the nation and the chair of the Chief Executive.

In spite of the comparative "inclemency of the weather," as our clerical friends would say, Mrs. Robinson's "At Home" on Monday was a success upon the elaborate scale which usually characterises Government House gatherings. Fashionable Toronto was very well represented indeed, and while the rooms were comfortably filled, there was no crowding, except in the dressing-rooms, where, in the confusion of departure, some fair feminine strife is reported. Mrs. Robinson received in the charming and inimitable fashion that has won her so many golden opinions as hostess of Government House, assisted by Mrs. Grant and Miss Robinson. The splendid drawing-rooms, which have assumed quite a modern and æsthetic air under Mrs. Robinson's tasteful direction, looked their very best, and the bright faces and elegant dresses that filled them made the scene a particularly brilliant one. The band discoursed, as usual, in the conservatory, but there was very little dancing. For once youthful Toronto was conversationally rather than terpsichoreally inclined, and from the changing groups came the sound of laughter and repartee. A general anticipation prevailed of seeing, possibly hearing, the talented young Signora Arturi, which was not, however, for some sad reason, realised.

On dit that the Hon. Edward Blake has said that in case he becomes Canada's premier after the 22nd he will offer the present Lieutenant-Governor a third term of office. The rumour, whether there be any truth in it or not, certainly serves to illustrate His Honor's extreme popularity, and the high appreciation in which his services are held by both parties. The Lieutenant-Governor's successor will, without doubt, be obliged to bestir himself if he would suffer from no disadvantageous comparison; and the same may be said, with emphasis, of Mrs. Robinson's.

GARTH GRAFTON.

RECENT FICTION.

"THE CHAMBER OVER THE GATE," is a well bound and printed volume, published in Indianapolis by Charles A. Bates. This, however, is unhappily the only thing that the most industrious search could find to say in its favour. It is a vulgar and sensational story, drawn out to the extreme limit of tediousness. Its characters would be wholly commonplace but for the capacity for evil which most of them possess: its dialogue is either revoltingly coarse or hopelessly inane, and the only purpose it can possibly have is to exploit the possibilities of wickedness that lie in human nature. Its few redeeming features are the impression it gives of truthful local colour, which, however, we are at a loss to localise—here and there some graphic descriptive writing, and much clever presentation of negro life. Its merits, however, will not sustain the book in the opinion of the reading public, and we would strongly advise the author, Margaret Holmes, to pay some attention to the more presentable phases of humanity before she takes up her really forcible pen again to depict it in fiction.

"A STEP ASIDE," by Charlotte Dunning (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company; Toronto: Williamson and Company), is one of those rare novels that interest us from the first page to the last without recourse to any subtleties of plot, or fascinations of stirring situations. It is a simple story of Monsieur Valrey and his daughter Pauline, who are poor with the poverty that lives in third-rate boarding-houses in New York, and teach painting and French for such living as this and of Hugh Langmuir, a young book-keeper, in the same financial standing and the same boarding-house. He and Pauline fall in love, as might reasonably be expected; *le bon papa* approves, and they are all very happy, and contented to wait the promise of a rather indefinite future propitious enough for matrimony. Meanwhile, Prosper, Hugh's employer, meets Pauline, introduces her to his spinster sister, who is a rich, rather vulgar, and very fanciful Fifth Avenue person, and takes Miss Valrey into her affections, gradually alienating her from her lover's. The "step aside" is Hugh's, when, mad to claim his bride, before she becomes wholly wedded to the pomps and vanities, and possibly Prosper, he speculates with his employer's money, and disastrously. This brings the wavering Pauline back to her allegiance, and, making good the lost thousand dollars from her own little capital, she forgives Hugh, Hugh forgives her, and they are happily married on the last page. The story is extremely slight, but the characters are so thoroughly well thought out, the influence of the tender passion on the varying temperaments so

faithfully shown, and so much art enters into the presentation of every little scene and incident, that it assumes a greater importance than many more pretentious mythical histories.

Of very especial interest to Canadian book-buyers will be a certain small, paper-covered volume recently from the press of the *Evening Journal* office, Ottawa. "Crowded Out" is written boldly across one cover, the title of the first of the series of sketches we read before we come to the other. Its author is "Seranus," a lady already well-known to the readers of THE WEEK, through the poems, reviews, and other articles which she has contributed to their pleasure. "Crowded Out," however, is the first of her literary efforts that has attained the dignity of book form.

Few Canadians will read Mrs. Harrison's little volume without being obliged to struggle against the temptation to say too much about it. It is only, we must tell ourselves again and again, a volume of sketches, and can by no means be set up as the measure of our general possibilities as a people, or our particular possibilities as the author. Yet it is so full of a spirit that is strange to Canadian literature that we may easily pardon ourselves if in our pleasure in apprehending it we rejoice more than beseemeth us. It is the true spirit of art that we find informing these pages of Mrs. Harrison's. They are fraught with poetic instinct, and they have an aim beyond the mere presentation of certain more or less picturesque facts. And they are conventional only in so far as conventionality forms the most effective method of expression.

The sketches are very Canadian in tone and atmosphere, very French-Canadian in local colour. French-Canadian, too, one fancies, in a certain poise and piquancy that they have, in their *bonhomie*, and in their occasional shrug. Their individuality is very marked, and there is not a dull line among them. But their construction is, for the most part, too slender. The author has erected in some of them charming unsubstantial fabrics upon foundations hardly sufficiently well considered. This gives an unequal value to her work, which is to be deprecated. One speculates, for instance, upon the *raison d'être* of "The Bishop of Saskabasquia," and does not quite find in it the graphic little pastel it presents of a colonial Church dignitary's life in the North-West. This vivid quality in the stories, however, is very admirable, and none the less so because it lights up even their faults. We predict that the book will be read from beginning to end with a keen, fresh sensation of pleasure, and closed in the very general hope that the fruit of its promise will not fail.

In "Næra, a Tale of Ancient Rome" (London: Macmillan and Co.; Toronto: Williamson and Company), Mr. John H. Graham has given us a thoroughly enjoyable novel. He has written with passion, grace, and, in the main, with accuracy. His characters are admirable studies, and but that they lack a certain rugged sternness that we have learned to look for in the Roman, would reflect almost every trait familiar to us through his legacy of letters. The plot unfolds not too many complexities, and is brought with no ordinary skill to a capital climax. The book is singularly free from the sins of affectation and strained dialogue, that do so easily beset the classical romance. There is no false colour in its descriptive chapters, no insincere ranting in its dialogue. The language flows softly and pleasantly, yet with a dignity and a reserved force that makes itself agreeably felt on every page. Here and there, in the comportment of his people, we feel that Mr. Graham has taken somewhat of a liberty with Roman verities in his desire to entertain us in our own way—we suspect his translation of being a little too free. And this, for the pleasure it gives us, we find easier to forgive, perhaps, than we should.

OUR LIBRARY TABLE.

HEATHER BELLES. A Modern Highland Story. By Sigma. (Edinburgh: Nimmo, Hay, and Mitchell.)

William Black has popularised the West Highlands of Scotland in several of his works. The author of this book has presented another phase of the Highland life of to-day, giving prominence to its religious side. The character of the people and the rugged and grand scenery of the Scottish Highlands are faithfully and graphically portrayed.

THE STORY OF MANON LESCAUT AND OF THE CHEVALIER DES GRIEUX. Translated from the French of l'Abbé Prévost, by Arthur W. Gundry, of Ottawa. 4to Illustrated. New York: F. T. Jones and Company.

We cannot commend the morality of this fictional masterpiece of French literature, though it is doubtless a true picture of Parisian social life in the early part of the last century, and in some degree it no doubt remains a true picture of the Paris of to-day. It has its counterpart in English contemporary fiction, though we doubt if the novels of Richardson.