

Book Notices.

The Development of English Literature and Language. By PROF. A. H. WELSH, A.M. 2 vols., crown 8vo, 1,100 pages. Chicago : S. C. Griggs & Co.; and Methodist Book Rooms, Toronto, Montreal and Halifax. Price \$4.00.

English literature is a subject so vast and so varied, that it may well be the despair of any one who, without wise guidance, shall attempt a comprehensive acquaintance with it. He will be apt to waste much time over the trivial and unworthy, and may miss altogether that which is best worth knowing. Even the widest reader must be eclectic in his tastes, and in the practice of a wise eclecticism, wise counsel is necessary. The work before us fulfils this function more fully than any that we know. Its classification is logical, its criticism is discriminating, its arrangement comprehensive and natural. The author has exhibited a wise compression where compression is necessary, and an equally wise expansion where that is advantageous. He gives copious citations and judicious connecting links, that enable the reader to comprehend the grounds of the praise or blame meted out. The book has much of the vivacity of Taine's sparkling volumes, and much of the philosophic insight of Hazlitt's thoughtful essays. A striking evidence of its standard character, is that the handsome volumes before us represent the ninth edition of this *magnum opus*. We will venture the assertion that the reader who will carefully study these volumes, and then read a few of the masterpieces to which they refer him, will have a more discriminative and correct appreciation of that complex thing, English literature, as a whole, and of its more essential parts than many a voracious book-worm who has devoured indiscriminately half a library. Prof. Welsh very justly regards English literature as a growth, as a develop-

ment. He goes back to the very fountain head, to the pre-English ages, indicating the elements of the English nation, the controlling qualities of English civilization, showing the sources from which the speech and literature have been derived, and illustrating their development by appropriate and copious examples woven into the text of criticism.

Each pre-eminent or representative author is discussed under the classified heads of biography, writings, style, rank, character and influence.

Each of the periods into which the work is divided is introduced by a sketch of the features which distinguish it, and of the forces which shape it, including Politics, the State of Society, Religion, Learning, Language, Poetry, the Drama, the Novel, the Periodical History, Theology, Ethics, Science, Philosophy. Periods are recreated, the past is resuscitated. The actors are made to reveal themselves in their own words.

Our mentor does not merely talk *about* literature, he quotes typical examples, in which, as in a mirror, the student is taught to recognize the genius of the writer and the character of the period. To the multitudinous novelists and poetlings of the day he gives but scant measure; but the great masters, even of recent prose and verse, receive judicious characterization. We think, however, that Prof. Welsh's estimate of Browning, while probably that of current criticism, does not with sufficient emphasis herald the growing fame of this strongest and most original, even though by no means the smoothest, poet of the closing decades of the nineteenth century.

This masterly book has been put into a single volume, on thinner paper, at \$3, an edition for university students; but for library use, the two-volume edition is well worth the additional cost.