

MEMOIRS OF WILHELMINE, MARGRAVINE OF BAIREUTH. Translated and Edited by Her Royal Highness Princess Christian of Schleswig Holstein, Princess of Great Britain and Ireland. With Portrait. New York: Harper and Bros.

It is not a very ordinary occurrence to be called upon to notice a work of similar interest to these remarkable memoirs, edited and translated by a Royal personage, and especially one who has done her work so well. Princess Christian, who has always been eminent in literature, has in this most important and interesting translation asserted her right to be considered a practised *littérateur*, the introduction being well and concisely written, and the English throughout giving the very nearest and clearest idea of the original. This unfortunate Margravine of Baireuth was born in 1709, the daughter of Frederick William I. of Prussia, and Sophia Dorothea, daughter of George I. of England. She was therefore the Crown Princess of Prussia, and her brother, the Crown Prince, became in after life Frederick the Great, who was often accustomed to say, as we learn from Katt, his reader, that he owed his taste for study, his love of work, and the habit of never being idle, to his sister. Indeed, their devotion was one of the marvels of the eighteenth century, when all loves were fickle and most friendships uncertain; and not even a passionate admiration for Voltaire and the whole cynical school of that day could unsettle the sound and tender regard in which they continued to hold each other for years. These memoirs, as well as the Margravine's correspondence with Voltaire and her brother, furnished Carlyle with much of his political and private material for his *Life of Frederick the Great*, and he describes her style in one place as being always "true, lucid, and charmingly human." She was certainly the latter, and has pictured for us in her irrepressible way the positively frightful state of affairs in that long-vanished Prussian Court. The Queen was a woman of great but unpleasant determination; the King was at times absolutely cruel in enforcing his commands, and seeing that his wishes were fulfilled to the letter; the whole Court was honeycombed with intrigues and *intrigantes*, and the whole atmosphere was false, inhuman, artificial, and unhealthy. Life was carried on under conditions of small tyranny and daily despotism, which are often much more difficult to endure than direct hardships of other kinds. Indeed, to observe the pleasant practice of "nagging" carried to its farthest and pleasantest conclusion, we have only to read what this unhappy Margravine has to tell us of her pinched, impoverished, and wretched daily life. To have to sit down daily at a table where "covers had been laid for twenty-four," and there was in reality not enough pork and cabbage and thick soup to go round one-half that number; to have to consent to be dressed by ten maids on her wedding day, each one undoing what the other one did, and then emerging, looking like "a madwoman;" to have to dance attendance upon insolent foreigners and scheming ladies of the Court; to possess no separate existence; never to be alone, but to be simply made use of; blindfolded, hoodwinked, deceived, cajoled, persecuted, caressed, starved and feasted, adored and maligned, all at the same time—this was for years the Margravine's outward life, and we can only wonder at the calm, reflective intellectual power which permitted her, while broken in health and spirits, to devote what portion of her wasted life she could snatch from the consuming Moloch of Court etiquette to literary pursuits, and chiefly the maintenance of her journal. For a picture of a state of things surely nowhere existent to-day, but which is absolutely faithful to the apparently trivial but historically important details of the eighteenth century in Europe, we are much beholden to the Royal translator, and shall look for her forthcoming edition of the Margravine's letters with much interest. The dedication of the present volume is to the living Crown Prince of the German Empire and of Prussia, Frederick William, brother-in-law of Princess Christian.

NATURE VERITAS. By George M. Minchin, M.A. London and New York: Macmillan and Company. Toronto: Williamson and Company.

The author of this curious conceit is Professor of Applied Mathematics in the Royal Indian Engineering College, Cooper's Hill, and we take it that this attempt at verification of things usually supposed to be not of the earth, earthy, but very much of the upper and perhaps under airs, has been a recreation from heavier duties imposed by his profession. A poem of mystical import, called *The Revelation from Aldebaran*, is nevertheless heavy to the last degree, and were it not for an exceedingly entertaining and amusing preface on the dissipation of energy, and the strange beings with whom the writer has leave to communicate in the other planetary worlds far from this one, we question if his work would find many readers. If the present attempt is a specimen of the scientific poetry we have long been promised, the world can well afford to wait a little longer, and there is not the slightest fear that our older poets may lose their hard-won laurels.

PATRICK HENRY. By Moses Coit Tyler. American Statesmen; edited by John T. Morse, Jun. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company. Toronto: Williamson and Company.

This most recent instalment of interesting biographical material is quite up to the mark of the previous volumes. Patrick Henry, six times elected Governor of Virginia, was the leading radical orator of the American Revolution, and rose from a planter, a small tradesman, and general illiterate and seedy beginnings, to almost the very highest position conferrable in his native country. Taking to the law, which his biographer characterises as a "superb profession," he rapidly made a name and circle for himself, and

his eloquence did much all through those stormy years of retaliation and wrath to strengthen the position and arguments of the outraged colonists. It may not be generally known that Patrick Henry's father was a cousin of a certain beautiful Eleanor Syme, of Edinburgh, who married in 1777 the wife of Henry Brougham, of Brougham Hall, Westmoreland. Their eldest son was Lord Brougham, who thus became third cousin to Patrick Henry. Another relative of his was Robertson the historian, author of *The Reign of the Emperor Charles V.* Whatever may have been his own shortcomings due to residence in so young a country as the Virginia of that day, it seems that his lineage on both sides was in itself a remarkable inheritance of brains and superior force of character. The value of these memoirs would be much enhanced by suitable illustrations; otherwise the volumes are perfection.

#### MR. HENRY BLACKBURN'S ART TALKS.

IN the fine public hall of Upper Canada College, which had generously been placed at the disposal of the Ontario Society of Artists, lovers of art in Toronto had last week the privilege of listening to two interesting and instructive lectures on "Modern Painters" and on "The Value of a Line," by Mr. Henry Blackburn, editor of the well-known London *Academy Notes*. Mr. Blackburn, though an enthusiast in his subject, cannot be said to have many of the qualities that go to make a first-rate lecturer; and in his first evening's talk on art particularly there was a lack of breadth in the scientific and professional treatment of his subject, and a failure to bring out in any clear and comprehensive way just what were the characteristics of modern art, especially among English painters, which, we fear, occasioned a little disappointment to his large and select audience, and detracted in some measure from the profit of the evening. This perhaps arose, however, from a too sanguine expectation, or from misapprehension of the scope and character of the lecture Mr. Blackburn was to present to his audience. His lecture was not a formal address on Art, but an evening's quiet talk about recent pictures and their artists—all the better perhaps for a popular audience, and no doubt the thing best suited as a running commentary on pictures exhibited on a screen through the medium of the stereopticon. Nevertheless there was much, as we have said, that was both instructive and interesting in what Mr. Blackburn had to tell us. Few men of the time, we presume, have had such opportunities as Mr. Blackburn has had for studying modern art and artists, and it would be strange indeed if in his intercourse with the latter he could not speak to us effectively and alluringly of not only the characteristics of the English school of painters, but of what manner of men are its chief representatives, both professionally and socially. In a desultory way we did learn not a little of the former, but this, as we think, was gathered, save in the matter of colour, as much from the pictures thrown on the wall as from the lecturer's comments. The gain, however, was not the less important from this fact, as it served to inform those not so familiar with the work of British artists of the distinctive subjects of their study, and graphically realised to the mind of the audience the characteristics and treatment of the artists' work. The range of subjects exhibited was wide, striking, and on the whole fairly representative; and the lecturer did well to introduce at the close a few choice specimens of the modern school of France. Much of the lecturer's prefatory discourse, though informal, was apt and pointed, particularly in his counsel to Canadian artists not to strive after Old World models and subjects of inspiration, but by observation, travel, and the study of Nature in their own field of labour, to endeavour to found a school and a distinctive character of work of their own. Equally timely, as well as sound, were his remarks on dress and house-furnishing, on the value of picturesqueness in the former, and in the latter on the importance of a favourable environment in the hanging of a picture or in the decoration and upholstering of a room. In this matter, as had been remarked, the world is poorer from the want of the work which only a sense of sympathy between the artist and his public inspires.

The theme of Mr. Blackburn's second lecture was "The Value of a Line," and in our judgment it was the better and more instructive lecture of the two. It had the merit of being eminently practical, even if some of his illustrations and arguments were rather forced, and likely to create dissent. The *motif* of the lecture was to impress upon the public mind the advantage derived from pictorial expression through the pencil of the artist rather than through the pen of the *littérateur* or newspaper correspondent in words. Here, however, the lecturer is in danger, particularly in a busy, material age, such as this, of cutting off the reader from word-painting, one of the great delights and chief beauties of literature. In regard to newspaper work, is he not also in danger in substituting a few crude and sketchy drawings for those finished and charming pictures which art, aided by the taste and enterprise of magazine publishers, has of late given us in such periodicals as *Harper's Magazine* and *The Century*? But we have no space to discuss this matter, and though on some topics we are at issue with the lecturer, we are at one with him as to the general advantage of an education which shall enable us all to use the pencil as freely and effectively as all should be able to use the pen. We also agree with him that more use should be made of the many modern facilities for newspaper, magazine, and book illustration, now that "process printing" and reproductions are not only cheap, but artistic and pleasing. Mr. Blackburn's coming among us, even for a little, will be productive of much good if, in addition to the stimulus he will give to native art and the development of art culture, he succeeds in creating a demand for a higher style of pictorial embellishment than our newspapers afford, and in gratifying in a wholesome way the increasing art taste of the people.

G. M. A.