

which are finely reflected in her *Rime of the Gray Citie*, made a marked impression on her young imagination. Indeed the chief sources of "Seranus" literary inspiration have always lain in Lower Canada, particularly in the romantic, and to her the dearly loved, city of Ottawa, where she lived nearly seven years. In a certain sense Quebec is the Old World of America. Its claims to distinction depend not upon any untrustworthy hopes of future greatness; they rest with a confidence of assurance upon an unforgettable and richly dowered past. Patriotism may be cherished by the ordinary Canadian as a fit and proper sentiment, but for it to thrill his imagination and touch his heart it is necessary that he should dwell in Lower Canada.

This good fortune befell Mrs. Harrison for a season, and the years of her sojourn in Quebec brought forth good fruit in the essentially French tone and spirit of her work. Consider for instance that first sketch in *Crowded Out* which gives its name to this unique and fascinating collection of short stories. How entirely French is its intensity of emotion! Not only is it expressed in a French manner but the thing expressed—the sentiment and feeling of the sketch—is wholly un-English. For in English despair there is always an undertone of defiance—a something that reminds the reader of the philosophical child who, when sounding his mother upon the nature and duration of future punishment, finished his investigations with the enquiry, "Would I be able to bear it?" "Certainly," she replied, "there would be no escape; you would have to bear it." "Oh, well," he said, "so long as I could bear it I wouldn't complain." There is nothing of this spirit in the opening pages of *Crowded Out*. They give the impression in every sentence of absolutely unbearable suffering; along with this there is pleasure in the artistic sense of the writer, but the latter feeling does not dominate the former. It is as if one were inspecting a butterfly pierced but not chloroformed. Admiration of its beauties is too largely mingled with pity of its pain.

There is a general belief that this pathetic chapter is based upon a real experience of the author's in London, whither she went some years ago with her heart full of ambition, and in her hands poems, songs, operas—products of her musical and literary talents—which failed to find a publisher.

This book—*Crowded Out*—contains some very charming bits of literary work, notably *The Idyl of the Island*, and that longest of the short stories which narrates the fortunes of the two Mr. Foxleys. The characters are lifelike and unhackneyed, and they are treated in a picturesque and original fashion. The writer's portraiture of French-Canadian characters and scenes is remarkably fine, and gives the reader a good idea of the value of close study and fidelity to nature in the transcription of human lives and their surroundings. Jaded novel readers will find in these striking little stories the rare charm of the entirely fresh and unfamiliar.

Another volume which bears on its title page the name of "Seranus" (and it may here be said that this name is pronounced with a long a—Serānus, not Seranus) is the *Canadian Birthday Book*, containing in the most attractive of print and binding an extract for every day in the year, from the poetical writings of French and English Canadians. This book admirably exemplifies the range and quality of Canadian verse, and its preparation has evidently involved vast amount of careful and discriminative reading. It surely proves that the field of Canadian poesy is not the uncultivated and barren patch of soil it has been represented to be, when a willing step, a seeing eye, and a receptive hand, are the means of bringing together specimens of native growth as cultivated as the average of these.

Some of the best bits in the book were written by "Seranus," whose first poem appeared, when she was eighteen, in the *Canadian Monthly*. In that magazine were also printed a series of sonnets, entitled *Confessions*, from which, for lack of space, I must content myself with quoting only the fewest possible lines. But with what unapproachably fine and sure touches the picture is presented!

A sky all yellow in the evening west,
But pale and bluish-cold elsewhere. The trees,
Like branching seaweeds under amber seas,
Are traced in clearest, blackest, delicatest
Pencilings against the glow.

Another overwhelming piece of evidence that "Seranus" is a painter in words appears in that prose poem published in this paper last October, called *Annus Flavius*. Surely such gorgeous prodigality of hues was never before lavished upon a column of prose. Over thirty distinct and life-like tints are mentioned, leaving uncounted the rainbow-like combinations of colours. And yet the reader is not oppressed by any sense of exaggeration, but rather rejoices that the glories of the October woods have been successfully caught and imprisoned in half a page of a paper. The effect of the whole is warm, lustrous, dazzling.

But the musician in "Seranus" triumphs over even the painter. Listen to these lines from *Vie de Bohême*—

Paint me the picture the most full of tears—
You will never attain to that wonderful strain.
The musician alone through the hurrying years
Can give us—the wistful, the cry of all souls,
Inarticulate, helpless, abandoned, and blind,
To the *Dieu inconnu*, the unknown that controls
All the joy and the pain of our poor humankind.

Of the excellence of "Seranus's" poetical work no reader of THE WEEK needs to be reminded. But they are possibly unacquainted with the homesick longing of her poetical response to Maurice Thompson, whose poem, *In Exile*, thrilled a responsive chord in the heart of every lover of England. "I know not anything as fair," says "Seranus"—

I know not anything as fair,
In this new land of clearer skies,
As English mists that shyly rise
From off shy streams or ivied walls,
Or cling about fair ruined halls.

On Durdham Down breathes the same poetic love of the Mother Country and her charms. "Seranus" is a personal friend of Mrs. Emily Pfeiffer, the English poet, of whose rose-garden at Putney she has, in common with Oliver Wendell Holmes, the most charming remembrances. She is a member of the London Literary Society, is a lover of the English classics, and was a devoted admirer, at the age of thirteen, of Sir Thomas Browne.

"Seranus" reads largely of the best literature, and is *au courant* with all that is going on in the literary, musical, and dramatic world. She will not fail of some measure of success even in this country, though the limits of that success could not easily be fixed, were the conditions of intellectual work other than they are in Canada. A. ETHELWYN WETHERALD.

OUR LIBRARY TABLE.

FLEUR DE LYS AND OTHER POEMS. By Arthur Weir, B.A.Sc. Montreal: E. M. Reneouf.

This well-printed, neatly bound little volume—altogether prepossessing in its external appearance—has been too long on our table without receiving that formal recognition which book-makers and book publishers eagerly look forward to. In the modest preface to this volume the author informs us that some of these poems were written at "twenty," and the latest at "twenty-three." The plea of youth is an effective excuse for many sins, and notably for the sin of premature publication. There is little in these poems to merit serious criticism. Those on French-Canadian subjects should be the best, and they are, on the whole, the worst. Mr. Weir should have done much better with the material at his hand. Among the "Red Roses" may be found some good, and promises of better, things. "In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love," and Mr. Weir's love lays are not without some youth-suggested merit. *The Spirit Wife* is probably the piece that Mr. Weir will have the least hesitation in reproducing in his next edition.

ROBERT EMMET: A Tragedy of Irish History. By Joseph J. C. Clark. New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"This tragedy is presented as an earnest effort to tell in dramatic form the story of a young man of gentle blood who, in our own century, laid down his life for his native land." So the author announces in his preface. We cannot say that he has added much to the story of a very interesting and pathetic episode in the troubled history of Ireland, and we are quite sure he has done nothing towards mitigating that hatred of England which is too sedulously cultivated among certain classes of Irishmen in the United States. Ample justice has already been done to Emmet's memory. Able pens have portrayed his nobleness of character and singleness of purpose. If those who admired him and believed in his cause did him more than justice, those who appreciated his character but deplored the madness of his dreams have done him no less than justice. No prose drama or drama of any kind was required to vindicate his character or perpetuate the memory of his fate. History has taught on many a pathetic page that the emotional patriot is seldom a great man; and in almost every instance his fate should be a warning to deter, not an example to allure. But if the hysterical Irish patriot wants a powerful stimulant, he will not, we think, get it in this volume. The book has no special literary merit. It adds nothing to what is already known of Emmet's character. It gives us no higher conception than we already have of his mental and moral fibre. We do not think the book will achieve very great popularity; but it will doubtless have many readers. The photogravure reproductions of old portraits and manuscripts give it exceptional interest.

LITERARY GOSSIP.

RENAN'S *History of the People of Israel* will be published by Roberts Brothers.

MISS ALCOCK directed by her will that all her documents, manuscripts, and letters should be burned.

THE University of Bologna will celebrate, on the 12th of June next, the 800th anniversary of its foundation.

MISS AMELIA RIVES's short stories will be collected in a volume presently, to be published by Harpers.

ARCHIBALD FORBES, the famous war correspondent, has prepared a life of the late Emperor of Germany, which will be issued immediately by Cassell and Company.

A PAINTING by Rembrandt, "The Nativity," has been purchased in Vienna by a Parisian lady for \$23,000, and is to be offered, with several other important works, to the Louvre.

A BIOGRAPHY of Commodore Maury, compiled from his letters and writings, by his daughter, Mrs. S. W. Corbin, of Virginia, is in process of publication in England, by Sampson Low and Company.

IT is announced that Mr. Sidney Colvin is to follow up his recent biography of Keats in the *English Men of Letters* series with an edition of the poet's letters to his family and friends. The collection is not to include, however, the unhappy love letters.

MR. HALLIWELL-PHILLIPS, the chief authority in England on Shakespearean subjects, puts a damper on the Stratford-on-Avon discovery of MSS. He declares that he examined the documents in question some time ago, and found they contained nothing of interest.