

and penetrates it by slow degrees. In Corneille we have the unexpected, the rough sketch; in Racine the natural, the finished."

And thus he goes on for two or three pages, winding up with the words; "Some prefer Corneille; many love Racine better. Both are wrong, both are right." In close connection with these comments there are some excellent remarks on the writers of the Renaissance, which we must be contented merely to indicate.

There is much in the next section, on eloquence and orators, that public speakers will read with interest, and not without profit.

"Before beginning to speak in public," he says, "who has not felt an emotion almost overpowering. It is an agony which takes possession of the flesh, the blood, the mind, the heart. What must we do to subdue this rebellion of the senses, to appease this tumult of the soul? Rail at ourselves, curse ourselves, insult ourselves? Orator, my friend, in this crisis, pray, if thou art a priest; and, if thou art not a priest, still pray." "A preacher of Notre Dame said: 'In order to preach well a man must have the devil in his body.' He ought to have added: 'And God in his heart.'" "If in thy breast there beats a heart warm, loyal, generous, a heroic heart, then speak, oh speak! If not, silence, thou sounding brass, silence, thou tinkling cymbal. . . . Onesimus speaks elegantly, with a chill elegance. He is of ice, and his hearers too."

The remarks on Demosthenes are excellent, and those on Cicero also, whom M. Roux appreciates more highly than is usual in these days—a fashion which, no doubt, will change. "Cicero," he says, "is not an orator alone, like Demosthenes; he is also a philosopher, a literary man, and so forth. I say 'also' (*encore*), I do not say 'moreover' (*de plus*), as this diversity of aptitudes adds but little to his greatness. Ingenious, elegant, delicate, Cicero is generally lacking in the sovereign energy which characterises Demosthenes. In Demosthenes the orator is supreme, in Cicero the advocate. The one has most genius, the other most talent. The native land seems to be speaking by the voice of the Greek orator. . . . Cicero forgets himself less, effaces himself less. . . . *O fortunatam Romam me consule natam!*"

We have often heard the poet and the orator contrasted, and the contrast denied: *Poeta nascitur, non fit; orator fit, non nascitur*. M. Roux seems to us to hit the truth in respect to the latter. "The orator," he says, "is made, but eloquence is born (*L'on devient orateur, l'on naît éloquent*)."

In the third section, on history and historians, there are some admirable thoughts. We might specially refer to those on Joan of Arc. But, indeed, every part of the book abounds in gems. M. Mariéton draws special attention to the eighth section on the "Country and the Peasantry," which he says are perhaps the most interesting in the collection, the most original, and which should secure an enduring name for their author. Certainly he is right when he speaks of their sadness, or even of their bitterness. Here are some specimens:

"The peasant loves nothing and nobody unless for the use he can make of them." "If you do a kindness to a peasant, he will not perhaps love you; but if you do him an injury, he will certainly fear you." "For every peasant to become a great saint, it is necessary only to be by the supernatural what he is by nature, laborious, sober, patient, resigned." "'Can any one tell me what or whom I may have need of?'—here, in short, is the thought, the criterion, and the motive of the peasant." "The creation has not an animal more sober than the peasant in his own house, less sober in the house of another."

The ninth section is on love, friendship, and friends; the tenth on God and religion. We will give a few extracts from both.

"We love in others our own ideas, our tastes, our opinions. And our talents? No." "Have friends, not to receive, but to give." "How many have a strong love for God, so strong that they have no love left for their neighbour!" "What is love? Two souls and one flesh. Friendship? Two bodies and one soul." "There are some who smile to show their fine teeth, who weep to show their good heart."

"O thou who art calumniated, have patience! God knows. Thou who art ignored, have resignation! God sees. Thou who art forgotten, have hope! God remembers." "Man is naturally religious, he is only supernaturally virtuous." "Let us love God—not as much as He deserves; we cannot. Let us love Him as much as we can; He deserves it." "To believe in ourselves is to conquer the world; to believe in God is to conquer heaven." "Who does not love truth—speculatively?" "The same reasons which we feel to be strong when used against others, seem to us weak when turned against ourselves." "What do you mean by your deity *Chance*? This Being of reason has neither being nor reason." "Some philosophers call God 'the Great Unknown.' 'The Great Mis-known' would be nearer the truth."

FRENCH CONTEMPORARY NOVELISTS.

BLACKWOOD has recently treated us to a critique and notice of some French novels which are readable by those who do not wish to neglect the cultivation of that brilliant language in its lighter forms, but yet feel compromised by the perusal of the latest works of the realistic school of Zola and Daudet (who is fast following in his wake), to whom Ohnet, promising as he was, must alas! be added.

THE first great wave of French fiction—so splendid, so varied and abundant—had not yet washed up against our shores in the beginning of the present age when the century was yet young. Balzac, Victor Hugo, George Sand, Alexandre Dumas had not begun. On the other side of the channel the silence was broken only by such phenomenal utterances as "Corinne" and "Delphine." What a wonderful difference now, both in the absent and the present! How many great names have been added to the list; how many infinitely small. The great school of French writers who arose in the days of Louis Philippe were not moralists; there was no literary tradition among them against the pictorial use of immorality when they found it. But it cannot be said of them that they selected revolting subjects or pretended to find in them the natural incidents of life; neither did they represent to us a society in which everything turns upon unlawful love. Yet with what power, what splendour and wealth and variety that great band of romancers did their work. The impression of boundless resource, of endless variety, of a flood and stream of animation, incident, and interest that never flags, has had a curious effect upon the mind of at least the English reader—an effect which perhaps is the result of a little slowness of national intellect, mingled with that faithfulness to an impression once formed, which is one of the special characteristics of our countrymen. The intellectual classes or those who consider themselves such, the clever people in society and everybody who hopes to be counted among them almost without exception, own an admiration for the French novel, a conviction of its superiority, which is in scientific language a survival of the fittest of the oddest description. Putting aside that section of the community which really enjoys filth, and considers the analysis of passion not much better than bestial to be a triumph of art, this generally expressed and quite honest belief is nothing but a reflection from the good days in which the French novel was in reality a work of genius. That time is past; the skies of France have narrowed—its world has contracted. It is not the cheerful bustling universe of Dumas, any more than it is the great world, seething with a thousand contradictory passions and sentiments as in Balzac—or big with fate and tragic, irresistible pre-ordination, against which man's utmost ingenuity is powerless, as with Victor Hugo. That large existence has shrunk into a monotonous, often repeated, never exhausted tale—the tale so called of love; at its best a thing of guilt and imposture, limiting the mental as well as infecting the moral atmosphere.

And this is life according to the French; and this is what the English reader, slow but sure, having got into his head the conviction of French greatness in fiction from the age of Balzac, Hugo, and George Sand, carried on with faith into the age of Zola and his innumerable imitators. When, however, a writer reaches the position of M. Ohnet, whose latest performance bears upon it the gratifying inscription of fifty-fifth edition, we are at a loss to account for his popularity, to understand the reason of it, or what it means. M. Ohnet, in short, is rather more respectable than most of his compeers, and "Noir et Rose," his latest performance, is as inoffensive as it is futile; it contains two magazine stories, one very *noir*, indeed, entitled, "Le Chant de Cygne," and the other a cheerful medley amusing tale of much the same calibre; "Malheur de Tante Ursule," which is perfectly adapted to be read in any young ladies' school. Perhaps this is the reason why it has reached its fifty-fifth edition. In the absence of respectable light literature, a very small matter which is innocent and decent may thus gain a fictitious acceptance. M. Ohnet besides is not always unexceptionable, and deserves encouragement.

The next in popularity, as in lightness, is a little book by M. Halévy, a collection of short stories such as seem to have become fashionable in France as in England. His book is not so correct as that of his brother author, but it gives us what M. Ohnet does not: an extremely lively and clever portrait of what we may call a new type of young lady, who is highly ambitious to make a good match, yet withal bright and amusing—a thoroughly nice little girl. Such a picture could only be Parisian, or rather Parisienne.

Very different from this pleasant froth is the last work of M. Cherbuliez, which ought to have been placed at the head of the list, not less because of the importance of the author, who is an Academician, one of the Forty Immortals, but also because of the book itself, which is in many respects of a very high class, full of philosophical observations and discussions, which are always clever and interesting, if somewhat above the range, we should suppose, of the ordinary readers of fiction. "La Bête" (the French seem to have taken a fancy to titles of this kind, witness "La Morte," by Octave Feuillet, a lugubrious name quite undescriptive of the book which bears it) is the supposed original foundation of our human nature as discussed in different senses by the philosophers who surround the hero and teller of the tale, whose story as contained in the early part of the book is a miserable one. There are episodes, we must add, which seem quite unnecessary and out of place in such a work, which M. Cherbuliez must surely have put in to please the vulgar among his audience, to whom a spice of immorality is the necessary salt to tempt the palate. He has done ill to adopt this vulgar trick to secure, we suppose, the senseless audience who will not read his book, notwithstanding his bait. M. Hector Malot is one of the best known of French novelists in