

It may be interesting to our readers to be told that the history is brought down to the present day. We have not merely the Tractarian movement and the Hampden Controversy, and the Essays and Reviews. But we have Mansel and Maurice and Herbert Spencer and Huxley, and the higher criticism. The last chapter of all is a very able statement of the present state of the educated mind on the subject of Theism.

The book will be valuable in two ways. For those who wish to go no further, it will give a sufficient outline of the progress of thought in the Christian Church. For students of Divinity, it will supply an excellent guide to the examination of the great religious writers of the successive ages—a study much to be commended to our religious teachers.

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Max Beerbohm.\*

THIS entertaining volume contains seven interesting papers. The first one, "Dandies and Dandies," we confess does not give a reader a favourable impression of what the book contains; the next and the succeeding papers are very clever and sprightly. That on King George IV. deals with a subject which we have often wondered has not been taken up. It is a defence of a man whose reputation has suffered from contumely, which in some points was unmerited. Thackeray is greatly responsible for the modern low opinion of George IV. Hear what Mr. Beerbohm says:

"It seems to me that, as in his novels, so in his history of the four Georges, Thackeray made no attempt at psychology. He dealt simply with types. One George he insisted upon regarding as a buffoon, another as a yokel. The Fourth George he chose to hold up for reprobation as a drunken, vapid cad. Every action, every phase of his life that went to disprove this view, he either suppressed or distorted utterly. 'History,' he would seem to have chuckled, 'has nothing to do with the First Gentleman. But I will give him a niche in Natural History. He shall be King of the Beasts.' He made no allowance for the extraordinary conditions under which all monarchs live, none for the unfortunate circumstances by which George, especially, was from the first hampered. He judged him as he judged Barnes Newcome and all the scoundrels he created. Moreover, he judged him by the moral standard of the Victorian Age. In fact, he applied to his subject the wrong method, in the wrong manner, and at the wrong time. And yet every one has taken him at his word. I feel that my essay may be scouted as a paradox; but I hope that many may recognize that I am not, out of mere boredom, endeavouring to stop my ears against popular platitudes, but rather, in a spirit of real earnestness, to point out to the mob how it has been cruel to George. I do not despair of success. I think I shall make converts. The mob is really very fickle and sometimes cheers the truth."

We recommend our readers to see what defence Mr. Beerbohm makes. The sixth paper, "Poor Romeo," deals with one of those oddities who are found in every city. On page 93, Romeo Coates had been previously mentioned. He is the person described as "Poor Romeo" in Paper VI. The letter disinterred and reprinted on page 142 is an example of a woman's revenge. The paper on 1880 shows how fast the world moves. That ancient date—sixteen long years ago—requires a vocabulary to explain the terms used by the ancients of those days. Why, it seems but yesterday that 1880 was here, and Mr. Beerbohm finds it necessary to supply a glossary. We knew what "Jersey Lily" and "Masher" meant. We honestly confess that "Cromwell House" and "The Master" were allusions which did require explanation. *Sic transit gloria mundi.*

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### Stevenson's Unfinished Novel.†

AN editorial note by Mr. Sidney Colvin, at the end of the volume containing Stevenson's last story, states that the last words appearing on the last page were dictated on the very morning of the writer's sudden seizure and death. Weir of Hermiston thus remains in the work of Stevenson what Edwin Drood is in the work of Dickens and Denis Duval in that of Thackeray. While we do not think that Stevenson can be classed as being in the same rank as Dickens or Thackeray, his books have been remarkable. He took this generation back sixty years to the days when Scott

delighted our grandfathers and grandmothers. The world had got tired of maudlin self-doubters and unsexed feminines and was glad to breathe once more the bracing atmosphere of healthy romance. In this last book there is a stronger flavour of Scott than in the earlier books of Stevenson. As it is unfinished it cannot justly be criticized. As far as it goes it is strong and forcible, full of character, and it promises to develop individualized creations. There are some acute reflections by Mr. Colvin that the tone of the book is anachronistic. The characters could not have lived at the period they are said to have lived. They are portraits of people who might have lived half a century before the date assigned to them. This criticism applies specially to the Lord Justice Clerk and the Elliott family. The end of the story, as Stevenson probably intended it to end, is disclosed by hints given by the author himself. We select a passage in which the hero defends himself to a friend of his father's, which is a fair example of the style of the book.

"I will be very quiet," replied Archie. "And I will be baldy frank. I do not love my father; I wonder sometimes if I do not hate him. There's my shame; perhaps my sin; at least, and in the sight of God not my fault. How was I to love him? He has never spoken to me, never smiled upon me; I do not think he ever touched me. You know the way he talks? You do not talk so, yet you can sit and hear him without shuddering, and I cannot. My soul is sick when he begins with it; I could smite him in the mouth. And all that's nothing. I was at the trial of this Jopp. You were not there, but you must have heard him often; the man's notorious for it, for being—look at my position! he's my father and this is how I have to speak of him—notorious for being a brute and cruel and a coward. Lord Glenalmond, I give you my word, when I came out of that Court, I longed to die—the shame of it was beyond my strength; but I—I—" he rose from his seat and began to pace the room in a disorder. "Well, who am I? A boy, who have never been tried, have never done anything except this twopenny impotent folly with my father. But I tell you, my lord, and I know myself, I am at least that kind of a man—or that kind of a boy, if you prefer it—that I could die in torments rather than that anyone should suffer as that scoundrel suffered. Well, and what have I done? I see it now. I have made a fool of myself, as I said in the beginning; and I have gone back, and asked my father's pardon, and placed myself wholly in his hands—and he has sent me to Hermiston," with a wretched smile, "for life, I suppose—and what can I say? he strikes me as having done quite right, and let me off better than I had deserved."

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### BRIEFER NOTICES.

*La Grande Breteche.* By H. de Balzac. (London and New York: Macmillan & Co., Ltd. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co., Ltd.)—This volume of the *Comedie Humaine*, by the great French writer, has been reprinted directly translated from the original in Macmillan's Colonial Library series, edited by the eminent English scholar, George Saintsbury. The volume contains six brief but powerful stories. The tales are unequal to one another in strength and style, principally because they were written at different times, and in a manner and under circumstances varying at times. The story "La Grande Breteche" itself is one of the best known of Balzac's short stories, and able critics claim for it a first place among his works. Certain it is, it has few superiors. So brief is it—less than 25 pages—that it is its own best comment and explanation. "Albert Savarus," the concluding tale, shows many of its author's opinions on politics and society. The book is well printed, and as a mechanical effort is a credit to its publishers.

*A Laodicean.* By Thos. Hardy. (London and New York: Macmillan & Co., Ltd. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co., Ltd.)—The famed and brilliant author of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" and many other novels in the Macmillan Colonial Library series has written no book of more interest to the ordinary reader than "A Laodicean." It is a romance of English country life, although it would be more accurate to say that it is an open view of a few memorable chapters in the history of a life which has felt and thought. Many incidental topics are introduced, the aim of the author being to aid in some degree in educating that great world of readers which learns its wisdom through the pages of a novel. The reader of Hardy's stories always gathers incidental information, not otherwise attainable, and for this reason his works are read by all classes of men. The present volume is powerfully written; and, while furnished cheaply to the public, is printed on expensive and durable paper, a testimonial to the publishers who, in giving these books to the public, are certainly benefiting humanity.

\* "The Works of Max Beerbohm." New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1896.

† "Weir of Hermiston." An Unfinished Romance by Robert Louis Stevenson. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1896.