

## BOOK REVIEWS.

FABLES IN SONG. By Robert Lord Lytton, Author of "Poems by Owen Meredith." Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co., 1874.

The present possessor of Knebworth has here sought to revive a species of literature which had fallen somewhat into abeyance. Beasts and birds and inanimate objects are brought on the scene, talking in human strain, in the old familiar way. The matter and style are everywhere apt and simple, but raised a good deal above the level of mere juveniles. Each little story is thoughtfully and ingeniously constructed and made the vehicle of a salutary moral. As a fabulist, Lord Lytton will probably not attain to the popularity of Gay or Lafontaine; but his book will be appreciated by all loving observers of the habits of animals, and the phenomena of nature generally, for the sake of its many graphic touches and descriptions as well as for its formal lessons. Couched in verse, and prefaced in several instances by a pleasant introductory narrative, these fables remind us of Phædrus rather than Æsop. The monotony of Phædrus has however been avoided by the adoption of a variety of metres, some of them curious and unusual. "Eos locutus est" said Prof. Huxley the other day, referring with some bitterness but much humour, in his inaugural address at Aberdeen, to the result of the English elections. "Bull hath spoken!" (and put a stop, the professor intimated, for the present at least, to several contemplated advances in the march of national improvement). At the moment of this remarkable deliverance, Professor Huxley was possibly fresh from the perusal of the work before us. The typography, paper, and external aspect of "Fables in Song" are highly creditable to the spirited printers and publishers, Hunter, Rose & Co. In Canadian schools of both sexes the volume will form an appropriate and acceptable prize. A short Allegory entitled "Contagion," will require no interpretation:—

"A brooklet, born above a mountain moor,  
Down to the level of the world below  
Perforce descending, past a dyer's door  
Foul with pollution thro' the plain did flow.  
The waters of this brooklet from on high,  
Still pure and splendid as the spotless snow,  
Beneath them could their sunken sisters spy  
All soil'd and spoil'd, as when spilt wine doth stain  
A pot-house floor. Whereat they bawl'd out 'Fie!'

"A traveller who had climbed the hill with pain,  
And knew the world beneath it far and wide,  
Smiled at the inexperienced disdain  
Of those immaculate waters, and replied,  
'Wait, pretty fools, until down there you get.  
Had they not passed the dyer's door, undyed  
And white as you would be those waters yet.'"

THE LIFE OF CHARLES DICKENS. By John Forster. Vol. III., 1852-1870. London: Chapman & Hall. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co. 1874.

Mr. Forster has at length completed the arduous task imposed upon him by his departed friend. In our opinion he has performed it faithfully and well. The work, in itself, was no doubt a labour of love; but it has been attended, during its progress, by some unpleasantness, not to say soreness—the result of unfriendly criticism. There was a two-fold objection taken to the biography, as soon as the first volume made its appearance. The character and genius of the novelist, and his proper place in English literature, were made the subject of warm dispute. Nor was this all or even the worst. Mr. Forster himself was charged with desiring to gain personal capital out of the fame of his friend, and with thrusting himself too prominently forward in the course of the biography. We can easily understand that this accusation was exquisitely painful to him. That, in the conscientious endeavour to lay before the public the facts of Dickens' life, as nearly as possible in his own words, the biographer should have met the reproach of vanity and self-seeking, must have touched him nearly. Whatever his censors may say, the great English-speaking peoples on both sides of the Atlantic will, we believe, acquit him without a moment's hesitation. If it be the function of biography to present to the world a faithful portrait of its subject, that is to exhibit him as a living being, with all his merits, all his faults, all his hopes, anxieties and fears, all his triumphs and all his failures—Mr. Forster has succeeded in his undertaking, and offered a fitting tribute to the memory of Charles Dickens. If to this we add that the letters which occupy so prominent a position in the *Life* were consciously and deliberately written that they, or the thoughts and facts contained in them, might fall into their places there—in short, that the novelist