

OUR LIBRARY TABLE.

AN ABRIDGED HISTORY OF CANADA. By William H. Withrow, D.D., F.R.S.C. Also, AN OUTLINE HISTORY OF CANADIAN LITERATURE. By G. Mercer Adam. Toronto: William Briggs.

This carefully-abridged addition of one of the best attempts at an impartial and well-sustained History of the Dominion, is just issued in neat and convenient form by a Toronto firm, having appended an excellent treatise on our native literature. The authors, Dr. Withrow and Mr. Mercer Adam, are too well known as prominent *littérateurs* to need more from us than a word of gratitude for the timely and welcome result of their combined efforts. The History is so clear, so abundantly and clearly classified as to deserve a place in our schools, and upon the shelves of our libraries. For Mr. Adam's work we have only admiration, admitting the difficulty there always is in appraising contemporaneous authors, of whom perhaps there are hardly as many of the front rank as the writer in his wide sympathies and national eagerness of feeling would seem to indicate. It is pleasant to observe how little by little an appreciation of the good and graceful work done in Lower Canada is being disseminated among our people here—a knowledge which must ultimately greatly affect the culture of Ontario, despite some widely different opinions frequently expressed in this relation. We cordially commend this text-book on our History and Literature, not alone to Canadians, but to all of whatever nation who are desirous of information on these points.

THE FROZEN PIRATE. By W. Clark Russell. Toronto: William Bryce. Canadian copyright edition.

It is to be feared that many of our novel-reading people do not include the wonderful nautical romances of this fascinating author often enough in their excursions into the charmed land of fiction. No such phrases as the modern Marryat, the Defoe of the sea, the English Verne, and so on, can give us the faintest conception of what his command of nautical knowledge, his graphic descriptive power, and his combined humour and tenderness have already done for English imaginative literature. For it is, of course, among imaginative writers that Clark Russell will take his place and keep it, without doubt, unmolested for many years to come. This latest creation excels in various conflicting, but always truthful and startling, presentations of the scenery of the frozen Antarctic continents and islands. Where before he has introduced us to coral shores, tropical woods, great illimitable stretches of waste ocean and the crowded decks of English merchantmen, he brings us in *The Frozen Pirate* to the vast and silent icy solitudes of the South Pole, discovers, hopelessly jammed into the crevices and chasms of an island of ice, a pirate ship of the year 1740, and for companion the reckless and cunning Frenchman whom he finds frozen, but thaws back to life. This latter incident is certainly rendered very weird and fantastic by the quasi-supernatural nature of the proceeding, but it savours a little of the eccentricity of *She* and similar literary freaks, and will not materially add to Mr. Russell's reputation, though it will no doubt find him many readers—the primary question in these days. It is in describing the storm-swept decks, the floods of icy water that strike the sailor and leave him breathless, the confusion and roar of the tumults, the appearance of the pallid and luminous icebergs, the haze of white light on the horizon, the horrible character of the floating mass of ice on which he finds himself cast away—ephemeral, such as will dissolve with warmth, and yet is solid to the degree of stoniness—the exquisite shapes of the ice-bound coast, displaying delicate spires of frosted elegance, towers, turrets, minarets, and belfries, all tinged with the blue of night or the faint rose of the southern dawn,—it is in these magnificent word-paintings, second only to Ruskin, and assuredly equal to Flaubert, that the individuality of the author is uppermost and his genius most transcendent.

However, he is quite at home in the more ordinary experiences of the wrecked sailor, and recounts the chopping off bits of frozen wine, the thawing out of food, and the final electrifying situation of the discovery of life in the apparent corpse at his side with quite as much homely fidelity to the truth as either Anstey, Stevenson, or Haggard, the writers whom, in some respects, he most resembles. Mr. Russell excels, next to his descriptive powers, in sudden touches of feeling, without which element it is possible to write good novels, but which goes far, all the same, in perpetuating his claim to be read, admired, and loved.

SERMONS FOR CHILDREN. By Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, D.D, late Dean of Westminster. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

These sermons will be found of inestimable value to parents and teachers, and all who have the welfare of children at heart. They are also suited to the reading of the little ones themselves, being rendered attractive and intelligible by reason of the many striking little tales and sketches of life, travel, adventure, and character scattered through their pages. The much lamented Dean has left no more significant record of his singularly gentle and sympathetic nature than this collection of special addresses to the young, over whom he seems to have in a manner yearned with the feelings more of a father than of a pastor. One might not expect to find much literary value in such a volume, and yet even in this respect the preacher seems to have combined the most perfect simplicity and directness of expression with valuable hints of information and indirect richness of suggestion. The "Uses of Children," "St. Christopher," the "Goliath Boys"—a sermon suggested by the events that took place on board a training-ship in the Thames—and four addresses on the "Beatitudes," are among the collection.

IMAGINARY PORTRAITS. By Walter Pater, M.A. London and New York: Macmillan and Company. Toronto: Williamson and Company.

Master of a fine and original though involved English style, a phrase-builder of uncommon elegance, and an apostle of the modern renaissance or æsthetic school, Walter Pater gives us in his latest volume all that we should expect to find in it of beauty, of vivid sensuous description, of keen insight into the mediæval period. His style is to literature what his subjects are to art—warp and woof of refined English, with here and there an archaism or anachronism of thought—the native Saxon cast out in favour of Gothic or Roman expressions. His subjects, the figures on a faded piece of tapestry, in a stained glass window, carved over the doors of an old seigniorial mansion, found in the silken panels of an oval *à la Watteau*. Watteau himself is graphically described to us under the head of "A Prince of Court Painters" as a large-eyed, serious, consumptive genius, who painted the exquisite follies of an ephemeral period better than any one else, because he saw through them. As we read, our scientific century disappears, and we are won by the innate beauty of the style to consider aspects of life, people, and scenery in the picturesque Italy and France of the Middle Ages in a new light, not unlike the hazy, illusive, but always alluring atmosphere that the author describes for us in the Watteau sketches. As we read, we remember bits of Ruskin, *motifs* in the Grosvenor Gallery, stray lines of verse from Rossetti and Morris, pictures by Whistler and Burne-Jones; and we have a fancy that this kind of writing is hardly literature at all, it is so close upon the borderland of art. In fact, it appears to hold the same place in literature as the ornate, metal-decked elaborated work of Burne-Jones does in art. Yet it serves a purpose quite as historic as æsthetic.

ALDEN'S CYCLOPEDIA OF UNIVERSAL LITERATURE. Vol. VII. New York: John B. Alden.

The latest volume of this excellent publication, which must surely prove of inestimable value to teachers and literary men, is before us. The biographical notices are as usual concise and to the point, and the specimens of prose and poetry skilfully chosen. Beginning with Edward Dowden, author of many well-known poems and a work on Shakespeare, the longest articles are those on John Dryden, Paul du Chaillu, Emerson, Euripides, and M^{me}. Dudevant. It is pleasant and significant to note the name of Henry Drummond in a prominent position, also that of Eliza Farnham, one of the most fearless original and cultivated minds America ever produced. Considerable space is allotted to the *Federalist*, under which name were published eighty-five political essays, between October, 1787, and August, 1788, in two New York newspapers. It is popularly supposed that the authorship of these letters was divided among John Jay, Alexander Hamilton, and James Madison. The last edition was issued in 1886 by Mr. Henry Cabot Lodge. The price of this marvelously convenient work is only fifty cents a volume, and as all authors, of all languages, in all ages of the world, are represented in its pages, the reader will gather that a most useful and important book is within everybody's reach, at an extremely low price. The paper, printing, binding, and arrangement are all excellent, and reflect the highest credit upon Mr. Alden's publishing house.

WAYS FOR BOYS TO MAKE AND DO THINGS. Illustrated. Boston: D. Lothrop Company.

This little book of eight chapters, by as many different writers, is just what is wanted by the handy boy who loves outdoor sport, but cannot afford to buy everything he may require. It teaches how to make a kite, how to make and pitch a tent, how to build a safe—if somewhat rude—boat, and how to manufacture snow-shoes as useful as "store" ones, if not quite so stylish, from materials to be found on almost any premises. It gives directions for plain and fancy skating, and tells the young pedestrian how to equip himself for a summer walking tour, and how to make it healthful, instructive, and enjoyable. A chapter on tree culture is full of practical suggestions which may be of value to the grown-up readers.

HANDBOOK OF REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. Based upon Federal and State Laws and other reliable sources of information. By D. J. Bannatyne. London and Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons. New York: The Author.

Those who make themselves acquainted with this book and get to use it regularly, as they are sure to do, will wonder how they got along without it. The amount of information which it contains is simply wonderful. The author says he wishes (after a residence of twenty-two years in Canada and the States) to assist his countrymen in an effort to overcome the dead-weight "ignorance" by which so many are hindered on coming into a new country. The book is "founded upon the statute law of the United States and of the several States of the Union—the State of New York being especially stated as illustrative of the others." It is impossible to criticise this book; it is hardly possible to give even the most general account of its contents. It is perhaps best to say that it tells us all about "the United States generally, and the State of New York in particular." In the first place, we get the fundamental documents, the Declaration of Rights, the Articles of Federation, the Constitution of the United States. Then we are told of the qualifications required for suffrage in the particular States; and this is followed by every kind of information concerning population, immigration, crime, education, religion, and everything else. As far as we have tested the contents their accuracy is remarkable.