

The Coign of Vantage

or not at all; and others of pure amusement or fascinating narrative that beguile a weary hour. It would be too severe a rule to pass by every book that cannot become a possession forever. "The crowds and centuries of books," says Emerson, "are only commentary and elucidation, echoes and weakeners of the few great voices of time." Even so, if any one prefers his reading diluted, he should be allowed perfect freedom to complete the process of mental assimilation in his own way. The immortals take such giant strides that few have the vigour to be always keeping step with them. Many a pleasing echo, with an individuality of its own, would be silenced by the perpetual thunder of the Olympians. Publishers, as well as "the public," can afford to take a genial view of a writer who, though he does not make his home on the topmost heights, has something to the purpose to say from a quiet nook in a lower altitude. The