

AMONG OUR BOOKS.



A TRIBUTE to Stanley Weyman comes from the pen of a young American girl at present resident in Paris, who in a personal letter writes:

We have been reading Stanley Weyman since our arrival, and are going, some day soon, to look at the Rue St. Antoine, the Port Neuf, and other places that appear in "House of the Wolf." Our latest admiration is for the Duke de Guise. He wasn't half bad, for a villain. He only avenged his father's death, and was but twenty-one anyway when he assassinated Coligny. And he was the handsomest man in Paris. If

you have "The Red Badge of Courage" do send it to us.

We made mention last month of an article by Dr. O'Hagan on "Canadian Women Writers," published in the *New York Catholic World*. Having mislaid the magazine at the moment of writing, we were unable to give the exact number but commented on the fact that the list was surprisingly large.

Leaving those of the past unreckoned, and considering only the Canadian women writers of today, Dr. O'Hagan gives us a list of nearly forty names, which covers a wide range of literary work, and extend in residence from Atlantic to Pacific; and then as the writer adds,

There are many Canadian women writers worthy of a place in this paper whom space excludes. Yet their sonnets and their songs and their highest creations, nursed out by the gift of heart and brain, will have an abiding place in Canadian life and letters, consecrating it with all the strength of woman's devotion and love.

Our own marvel is, as we glance over the article in question, how the writer managed to find so many nice individual things to say of so large a number.

Miss Alma F. McCollum, whose fanciful autumn verse "Young Mrs. Summer," appeared in our October issue, sends us the following little verse entitled

A MIRROR.

I wished to buy a dainty gift
For her who's love is all my own,
And so I sought mid trifles rare,
Mid shining gold and precious stone,
But all these baubles were not meet
To have their place beside my sweet.

Again I sought and came reward,
I found at last a little thing
With edge of gold bestud with pearl
And there, within that precious ring,
My love's true eyes can always see
A dearer thing than life to me.

The dearest thing in all the world
And beautiful beyond compare;
For when she holds it to her eyes
Her own fair face is smiling there,
Dear heart! Through life my care shall be
That only joy's sweet smile you see.

In October *M. Clark's*, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps writes, in her own fine intense way further "Recollections of a Literary Life," in which she reveals the tragic aspect of insomnia; and pleads for a

closer study of the psychology of invalidism, especially that of nervous disorders.

Speaking of sleeplessness and the entrance into this disorder which has been this high-strung woman's Nemesis, she says:

"One slips into the door of the torture chamber, thinking it to be the entrance to some commonplace apartment, perhaps some pleasant room with broad views and easy exit. One turns to step out on some natural errand then behold the bars, the bolts, the locks. Escape! Try the windows. They seem to hang a million feet above solid earth; their grating is of metal never known before to the prisoner's chemistry, a relentless fibre made from the pillars of the world. Weep, if you will; pray, if you choose. But "God shut the door." You will stay there till He opens it.

She speaks of Robert Louis Stevenson as our latest and most pathetic specimen of the not inconsiderable list of invalid writers who have been important in the world; and quotes one of his last letters.

I am an idler and lumberer of the ground. It may be excused me, perhaps, by twenty years of industry and ill health, which have taken the cream off the milk. I am almost ready to call the world an error. . . . If I could find a place where I could lie down and give up for (say) two years, and allow the sainted public to support me, if it were a lunatic asylum, wouldn't I go. Just! . . . But you men with salaries don't know how a family weighs on a fellow's mind.

"Who is to rate all this in an estimate of the man's value to literature," says Mrs. Ward, later. "No one, absolutely no one who has not fought



REV. E. VON PINCIN.

the lions of physical disease in the cage of a life bolted by the sharp need of daily bread; no one who has not fought them with the sinew and nerve of a creative genius."

A very entertaining book is that entitled "The Courtship of Morrice Buckler: being," as the preface note hath it "A Record of the Growth of an English Gentleman during the years 1685-1687, under strange and difficult circumstances, written some while afterward in his own land, and now edited by A. E. W. Mason."

The author's name is not a familiar one, but he writes with an ease and style that proclaims him a practised litterateur. The book is a romance of the type which Stanley Weyman in his "Gentleman of France," and Gilbert Parker in "The Seats of the Mighty," has made so popular; yet in the courtship of Morrice Buckler there is nothing of historic incident, only an historic setting, and by way, we are given realistic glimpses of English life in the seventeenth century.

Morrice Buckler, is represented, not as a soldier, but as a student at Oxford, who at the summons of a friend in prison and under sentence of death, sets out to aid him; and if possible obtain his release. Failing this, he takes upon himself the task of avenging him, by seeking and slaying in duel, the man whose treachery caused his death. The sequel, which involves, of course, a beautiful

woman, might seem repellant to twentieth century perceptions; but in those days, might was greater than right; and the sword above silken speech. Men fought for honor or for love alike fiercely, and woman loved best the victor.

Here is a picturesque descriptive bit of the "Vanity Fair" of the day.

One afternoon Elmscott carried me with him to see a famous comedy by a Mr. Farquhar which was that day repeated by the Duke's players. The second act was begun by the time we got to the theatre, and the house was very crowded. For awhile I watched with some interest the pack company in the pit, the orange girls hawking their baskets amongst them, the masked women in the upper boxes, and the crowds of bloods upon the stage, who were continually shifting their positions, bowing to ladies in the side boxes, ogling the actresses and airing their persons and dress to the great detriment of the spectacle. Among these latter gentlemen I observed Lord Culverton combing the curls of his periwig with a little ivory comb, so that a white cloud of powder hung about his head.

The literary strength of the book lies largely in the splendid command of Saxon, and an avoidance of all attempt at fine writing.

There is always a bewitchment about these romances, of which Blackmore was the precursor in "Lorna Doon," and in which, granting the merit of Weyman and Parker, we may give first place to the former and say that none have equalled him. And the charm is that we who are of a material, and intellectual present, find admiration for the men, who being full of the power of physical might, lived with the sword in one hand, the love cup in the other.

One wonders impatiently sometimes what purpose is served in many of the books turned out from the publishing presses, books which have nothing in them either to praise or strongly condemn, which are utterly devoid of strength or beauty; mere waste paper, not worth even an idle moment.

Such a book is "Four Women in the Case," by Annie Thomas. One sentence will be sufficient to illustrate the inferior style of the book which indeed verges upon absurdity.

The tears were in her eyes, but she spoke steadily, and would not allow the feeling of faintness which was creeping over her to master her. Presently she felt that she could control her tears and her tears, so she hastily wiped away all traces of the latter, and set the former in walking order.

A companion volume to it is entitled "Vignette Stories," by "Rita," a collection of half a dozen short stories of the "Family Herald" type, not devoid of interest, but somewhat hackneyed in plot, and sensational rather than artistic or strong. Neither of these volumes are to be commended, although they may serve to pass away an hour of enforced idleness.

An attractive little volume, bound in cloth of the Gordon plaid is "What is My Tartan?" by Frank Adam. The fine quality of paper and type is especially to be commended.

The title gives a fair understanding of the contents, which indeed is a brief history of the Highland garb, from earliest days, together with tabulated lists of clans, their coat-of-arms, badges and distinctive pipe music.

The study of clans should be of great interest to Highlanders and descendants; and there are sufficient of these staunch and thrifty folk in the Dominion to give "What is my Tartan?" a wide interest.

As Lord Archibald Campbell says in "The Children of The Mist."

May we Highlanders be careful never to let our own picturesque dress be among the things of the past.

REVIEWER.

"The Courtship of Morrice Buckler," by A. E. W. Mason—Tyrell & Co., Toronto.

"What is My Tartan?" by F. Adam—Bain, Toronto.

"Four Women in the Case," by Annie Thomas. And "Vignettes," by Rita—Copp, Clark & Co., Toronto.