

NOTES ON CURRENT LITERATURE.

IN THE CENTURY for January all sections of the country are represented, and appeal is made to many tastes. Politics, biography, travel, fiction of four kinds, art, architecture, astronomy, public questions, war reminiscences, unwritten history, poetry, and humor furnish topics of vital and present interest. The drawings, by Winslow Homer, Pennell, Blum, Kemble, Alexander, &c beautifully printed engravings of astronomical subjects (including a novel one of "A Flash of Lightning," from a photograph), the reproductions of the newly-discovered Roman bronze statues, and the portraits of American statesmen and divines, show no willingness to subordinate the excellence of the pictures to the excellence of the text. The Life of Lincoln is occupied with Lincoln's first term in Congress and his life as a lawyer, this instalment concluding the first portion of the biography and carrying its subject to his fortieth year. Mr. Atkinson's second paper on "The Strength and Weakness of Nations" (this one on their weakness) is like its predecessor in presenting graphically an array of facts which will long be referred to by writers and be of much standard usefulness. "The Bailing of Jefferson Davis," as recounted by one of the chief actors in the affair, Hon. George Shea, of New York, is the subject of a paper by George P. Lathrop. Mr. Shea's interviews with Horace Greeley, Garrison, Henry Wilson, F. P. Blair, Chief-Justice Chase, and President Johnson, in bringing about the release of Davis, form an interesting, connected narrative which has not before been given to the public. Col. W. C. Church, in "A Midwinter Resort," describes the Bahamas in a sparkling style, quite in keeping with the illustrations by Mr. Winslow Homer. "The Oldest Church in London" (St. Bartholomew the Great) is the subject of an article by Dr. Norman Moore, which is accompanied by beautifully drawn and reproduced pictures, by Pennell, of the different parts of this little-visited building. Robert Burns Wilson contributes a touching poem, of which the following is the first stanza.

Would we return

If once the gates which close upon the past
Were opened wide for us and if the dear

Remembered pathway stretched before us
clear

To lead us back to youth's lost land at
last,

Whereon life's April shadows lightly cast
Recalled the old sweet days of childish fear
With all their faded hopes and brought anear

The far-off streams in which our skies were
glassed;

Did these lost dreams which wake the soul's
sad yearning

But live once more and waited our returning,
Would we return?

SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE started with the unprecedented initial sale of 140,000 copies, a second edition having been required. In the January number, besides a fair variety of papers, is one by the Hon. Francis A. Walker, on Socialism, in which we find the following in support of the advanced theory of municipal sanitary powers:—"Have we now exhausted the catalogue of things which may be claimed to be covered by the police powers of the State? I answer, No. One of the most important remains; yet one of the last—indeed, the very latest—to be recognized as possibly belonging to the State under any theory of government. I refer to what is embraced under the term of sanitary inspection and regulation. That it was not earlier recognized as the duty of the State to protect the common air and the common water from pollution and poisoning was due, not to any logical difficulty or to any troublesome theory regarding governmental action, but solely to the fact that the chemistry of common life and the causation of zymotic diseases were of such late discovery. We now know that there is a far heavier assault than can be made with a bludgeon; and that men may, in the broad daylight, deal each other typhus, diphtheria, or small-pox, more murderously than ever a bravo dealt blows with a dagger under cover of darkness. I do not mean to say that I should hesitate to approve of sanitary inspection and regulation, carried to their extremes, if they were as socialistic as anything ever dreamed of by Marx or Lasalle. For such good as I see coming from this source, in the reduction of vicious instincts and appetites, in the purification of the blood of the race, in the elimination of disease, I would, were it needful, join one of Fourier's