

Our Library Table

"Friendship," by Hugh Black, M.A. Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company; Montreal: F. E. Grafton & Sons.

Friendship is as old as humanity, and has been a favorite theme for poets and philosophers since the very beginning of literature. It filled a large place in the writings of the ancients. The writer of Samuel gives a notable illustration of it in the beautiful story of David and Jonathan; and Pagan writers of high rank such as Plato, Aristotle, Epictetus and Cicero, treated the subject with philosophic seriousness. In modern times, though it inspired the "Lycidas" of Milton, and the "In Memoriam" of Tennyson, it is apparently, but not really, an obsolete sentiment. The author of this charming little work, who is one of the ministers of Free St. George's, Edinburgh, and said to be the most popular preacher in Scotland, holds that, although "the Christian ideal of love, even for one's enemies, has swallowed up the narrower ideal of philosophic friendship," the sentiment is not obsolete. "It is as true now as in Aristotle's time, that no one would care to live without friends, though he had all other good things. It is still necessary to our life in its largest sense." Our author treats the subject from as many points of view in nine most interesting chapters. The book itself is a thing of beauty; and we can conceive of no better gift book, from friend to friend, at Christmastide, or, indeed, at any time, than this beautiful little illuminated volume.

"The False Chevalier, or the Lifeguard of Queen Marie Antoinette," by W. D. Lighthall. Montreal, 1898: F. E. Grafton & Sons. We have no reason to doubt that, as stated in the preface, this story is founded on a packet of worn-out letters and documents found in an old French-Canadian house on the banks of the St. Lawrence." Mr. Lighthall has made the very best use of his meagre material, and has produced a novel which is a really brilliant addition to our Canadian literature. The story is easily outlined; but it is its wealth of incident and its realistic illustrations of French and French-Canadian social life at the close of the eighteenth century—it opens in 1789 and ends in the midst of the Terror—that makes it so intensely interesting. Germain Lecour, the son of a wealthy French-Canadian merchant of very humble origin, but himself handsome, accomplished, well educated and with superior natural abilities, is sent to France in charge of a consignment of furs, but chiefly to see something of the land of his fathers. There he attracts the notice of a wealthy, childless, old nobleman, who has seen service in Canada some thirty years before. He invites the handsome, high-spirited young Canadian to his chateau and ultimately makes him his heir, after learning all the details of his quest's origin and social status, which are unreservedly communicated by him. The old chevalier's introduction of his protégé to some courtiers of high rank as "Monsieur Lecour, of Repentigny in Canada," leads the latter to assume that his name is Lecour de Repentigny, an appellation indicative of noble birth and territorial possessions. This title, which came to him by accident and which love and ambition impelled him to retain, was "destined to bring on all the serious consequences which form the matter of this story and to change a light-hearted young man into a desperate adventurer." It gave him entrance to court, a place in the royal hunts, a commission in the Queen's Bodyguard, and an opportunity to win the love of a Montmorency; but ultimately it brought him to disgrace and the guillotine. We trust we have said enough to induce many of our readers to test for themselves the merits of "The False Chevalier."

"John Black, the Apostle of the Red River: or, How the Blue Banner was Unfurled on Manitoba Prairies," by George Bryce, M. A., LL.D., Professor in Manitoba College, Manitoba. Toronto, 1898: William Briggs. It would be impossible to find anyone better fitted than Dr. Bryce to write the biography of the Apostle of the Red River. He, too, was a pioneer Presbyterian missionary in Manitoba and was intimately associated with Dr. Black from 1871 to the death of the latter in 1882. He had, therefore, every advantage in the way of material, and his experience as a writer has enabled him to produce a most interesting and valuable work. Besides the appreciative biography, he gives us a vivid sketch of the fortunes and misfortunes of

the Selkirk settlement, the rivalries of the old trading companies, the acquisition of Rupert's Land by Canada, the troubles arising therefrom, the material progress of the country and the rapid development of Presbyterianism throughout the whole Northwest after the organization of the Province of Manitoba. It is a book that may be read with interest by any Canadian of any denomination whatsoever. We noticed a couple of errors which escaped the eye of the proofreader. On the very first page it is stated that Dr. Black "had reached the age of sixty-two" when he died, whereas, on page 154, it is correctly stated that "sixty-four years was his allotted span." Again, on page 104, the names "David Gunn" and "Donald Gunn" are given in a single paragraph, where obviously the one person is referred to. The book has portraits of Dr. Black and Rev. James Nisbet, and many other illustrations.

"The Battle of the Strong, a Romance of Two Kingdoms," by Gilbert Parker. Toronto, 1898: The Copp Clark Company, Limited. Mr. Parker's popularity as a novelist must give pleasure to every Canadian who takes an interest in Canada's literary development. It is not so many years since the publication of "Pierre and the People," and every succeeding volume has manifestly enhanced the reputation of this clever Canadian writer, until his works are now as well known in Britain and the United States as in his native land. That reputation will suffer nothing from the present work, which exhibits all the author's skill in character sketching and plot construction, and his fidelity to local color. The scene is laid chiefly in the Island of Jersey, but partly in France and for a short while in Canada. The time extends from about the commencement of the French revolution to the downfall of Napoleon Bonaparte. We cannot tell the story nor even indicate the plot, which, however, hinges largely on a secret marriage. It is enough to say that the book is uniform with the author's previous works; that it has a very necessary glossary of Jersey words and phrases, a map of the island and a reproduction of Ouleux's engraving of Copley's famous painting of the "Battle of Jersey," now in the National Gallery; and that among its 428 pages there is not a single dull one.

"Pathfinding on Plain and Prairie: Stirring Scenes of Life in the Canadian Northwest," by John McDougall, with illustrations by J. E. Laughlin. Toronto: William Briggs; Montreal: C. W. Coates; Halifax: S. F. Huestis; 1898. The adventures related in this most interesting book have the somewhat unusual merit of being true. The author was a pioneer missionary in the Northwest, long before Confederation, when the Hudson Bay Company ruled the land; when vast herds of buffalo roamed the plains, and the Indian tribes constantly sent out war parties for plunder or revenge. The period covered is from 1865 to the autumn of 1868, and it is supplemental to the author's previous work, "Saddle, Sled and Snowshoe." Books like this are not only interesting on account of the stirring incidents they relate, but valuable for their faithful representations of conditions which have passed away forever, and the like of which can nowhere be seen the wide world over. The buffalo is extinct, the Indian is corralled in reservations, the rule of the Hudson Bay Company is abrogated, and Canadian law prevails from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

"The Little Lame Lord, or The Child of Cloverlea," by Theodora C. Elmslie. Philadelphia: The Union Press. This is a book of the Little Lord Fauntleroy type, though hardly in the same class as its model. Indeed, it will scarcely stand serious criticism. The little Lord Carnegie, who from his cradle is not only irreproachable, but aggressively good, upsets all our modern theories of heredity. His father, a descendant of an impoverished race, is a careless, imprudent man of the world; his mother, the beautiful daughter of a wealthy soap-maker, is selfish, without any affection for her daughters, and with a defective, or only selfish, love for her son. The maternal grandfather is pompous, egotistical and purse-proud, with a heart hardened against his own only son, while the maternal grandmother is a good-natured, submissive old lady, without any distinctive qualities. The motive of the nurse, Rhoda Grange, too for abducting the child, seems inadequate.

Notwithstanding all this, the story is interesting and well-told, and cannot fail to have a wholesome and helpful effect on the youthful reader. It is embellished with a number of excellent half-tone illustrations.

"John Splendid," by Neil Munro, (Copp, Clark & Co.), is a good piece of work, and will give the writer a first place among Scotch storytellers. This is not a sensational novel, with a complicated plot, that keeps the reader in breathless suspense. It is rather a well-told tale, a piece of real life. The Highlanders have found in Mr. Munro one who knows their home, their language and their spirit, and who can interpret it so that those who do not know the Gaelic can feel the warm pulsations of the Celtic life. John Splendid, if not exactly a "hero," is a living man, in whom the reader can take an interest, and who represents a certain human goodness which is disposed to think lightly of theology. The theological side of things is, however, well maintained by Gordon, the lowland Puritan parson, who shows that he can suffer as well as preach, and that behind his stern theology is some recognition of love, human and divine. The "Apsley" of this story is a tragic figure; in him "the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," and he is quite out of harmony with his rude surroundings. Sufficient, however, to say now that this tale of the "Little Wars of Lorn" is really a piece of good literature, and besides being an interesting story, reflects in a subtle way the strife of human passions, and the development of character. Is not this for ever the highest theme?

"The Pilgrim's Progress," Quarto, 204 pages. New York: The Century Co. \$1.30. Edition de luxe, \$5. Seldom has a famous book been so adequately illustrated as the new edition of "The Pilgrim's Progress," with illustrations and decorations by the brothers George, Louis and Frederick Rhead. The original drawings, exhibited first in London and afterwards in New York, attracted unusual attention in both cities, and a general desire was expressed to see them reproduced in connection with the text of Bunyan's classic—the most popular single book ever written in the English language. They are not only highly decorative, but they reflect with remarkable fidelity the spirit of the book itself. There are thirty-six full-page illustrations, and twice as many smaller ones, with headbands, initials, etc. The type in which the work is printed has been carefully chosen to harmonize with the style of the pictures and decorative borders. Perhaps, after all, the most striking thing about the book is the very low price at which the regular edition, printed in brown ink on heavy paper, is sold—a price that puts it within the reach of all.

"The Psalms and Their Story," by William E. Barton, D.D., the Pilgrim Press, Boston: (two vols.) Interested in questions of the highest criticism without feeling that that interest requires him to adopt all the conclusions of the most radical critics, Dr. Barton has endeavored in this book to set forth the conclusions to which careful and conservative men have come regarding the date of the Psalms, the historical circumstances under which they were written. With the frank acknowledgment that in the case of very many Psalms it is utterly impossible to fix a date that is more than barely probable, he, nevertheless, has placed every Psalm in the circumstances in which it appears most likely that it was written. The result is a book which, while entirely popular in style and enlivened here and there with Dr. Barton's characteristic humor, will be of very great value to everyone who loves the Psalms and desires to make them most profitable to himself.

"The Day's Work," by Rudyard Kipling. Toronto: George H. Morant; New York: Doubleday & McClure Co., 1898. Most, if not all, of the dozen short stories in this volume have already appeared in various periodicals, and require no special criticism. They are all good, if we except the first, which we can only find rather tiresome; and the best is probably "The Tomb of His Ancestors," which is full of humor, and quite in the Kipling style. The book is well printed, well bound, and has a number of illustrations.

"Chatterbox," (Dana, Estes & Co., Boston), for 1898, is, as usual, full of interesting tales of adventure and home life, anecdotes of well-known people, and riddles upon which the children may try their ingenuity. Six colored plates are added to the many illustrations. This book will make an appropriate Christmas gift.

"The Princess and John Porter," (Dana, Estes & Co., Boston), is another charming story of life among the boot-black society of New York, by James Otis, who always writes attractively for the young. The book is beautifully gotten up, bound in grey linen, contains many illustrations, making it a dainty gift for a child.