

A HISTORY OF OUR OWN TIMES, by Justin McCarthy. Vol. II. New York: Harper & Bros.; Toronto: James Campbell & Son.

THIS attractive volume covers the quarter century between the Chinese war of 1856 and the general election of 1880,—thus literally bringing the narrative down to our own times, even though we should be yet in our cradles. There is a charming frankness in Mr. McCarthy's treatment of contemporary men and questions. In the older time it was a rare privilege for a public man to read his own obituary; but the new history and the new journalism have changed all that; and, while robbing death of some of its terrors, they have also, alas! withdrawn many of its attractions. Lord Cranbrook (Mr. Gathorne Hardy) will read with interest (p. 305) that he "was a man of ingrained Tory instincts rather than convictions. He was a powerful speaker of the rattling declamatory kind; fluent, as the sand in an hour-glass is fluent; stirring, as the roll of the drum is stirring; sometimes as dry as the sand and empty as the drum." Oh, it may be said, the Radical historian cannot forgive Mr. Hardy for having wrested Oxford University from Mr. Gladstone! But let us hear his appraisement of Mr. Ayrton, Mr. Gladstone's Commissioner of Works (p. 502): "He was blessed with the gift of offence. If a thing could be done either civilly or rudely, Mr. Ayrton was sure to do it rudely. He was impatient with dull people, and did not always remember that those unhappy persons not only have their feelings but sometimes have their votes. He quarrelled with officials; he quarrelled with the newspapers; he seemed to think a civil tongue gave evidence of a feeble intellect. He pushed his way along, trampling on people's prejudices with about as much consideration as a steam roller shows for the gravel it crushes. Even when Mr. Ayrton was in the right, he had a wrong way of shewing it." There may be judicial impartiality in all this, but surely Rhadamanthus is in the judgment seat. We are drifting away from the discussion of public questions to mere personal

attributes and to an inquisition on sins done in the body. In these estimates of contemporaries, the influence of Mr. Frank Hill's "Political Portraits" is discernible. The success of those brilliant contributions to the *Daily News* was so decided, that the literary art of etching with corrosive acids has since been greatly cultivated, and necessarily with a large sacrifice of accuracy.

We regret to observe that Mr. McCarthy tries to extenuate lawlessness wherever possession of the soil is in question. For other forms of lawlessness he has less tenderness. He boldly confronts the outrages of trades-unions, but the outrages of Land Leaguers he regards with an averted eye. This historical squint produces an inevitable distortion of view. Are mutilations and murders more virtuous when used to lower the rent of land than when used to raise the wages of industry? The struggle for life is the plea in each case, and this justification may be used to cover every assault on ownership that has ever been committed. In Mr. McCarthy's political economy, land has some occult properties that take it out of the ordinary laws of supply and demand, and the moral law follows this new economy. The ordinary commandments must not, it seems, be applied to Irish tenants. A change of farm occupants is not in Ireland a commercial transaction; it is construed as a Saxon usurpation. It would be obviously inconvenient to apply these principles to the rather numerous cases in the United States where Irish backwoodsmen take their holdings from the aborigines, and serve a perpetual injunction on the evicted Indian by means of a well-directed bullet. During the recent candidature of Mr. English for the Vice-Presidency, whole newspapers were filled with catalogues of his sheriff's sales and evictions, but we have not yet heard of any remonstrance from European powers. Dennis Kearney tried logically to apply to the United States what our historian calls "Irish ideas." Kearney must now be hopelessly "bothered" to find out why he reached the seclusion of a Californian gaol, while Parnell "is having a fine time entirely."