

THE QUINTESENCE OF IBSENISM. By G. Bernard Shaw.
Boston: Benj. R. Tucker, publisher. 1891.

As a vigorously expressed exposition of certain extremely modern views, this work is by no means devoid of interest. Mr. G. Bernard Shaw likes Ibsen apparently, not because Ibsen is Ibsen, but because, Mr. Shaw thinks, he agrees with G. Bernard Shaw. It is a curious gospel we find preached; curious alike to the Philistine, who is satisfied with the world as he finds it, and does not try to look into the meanings of things, and to him who is content with Matthew Arnold's creed, and thinks himself a cultured man. This last named individual is by no means acceptable to Mr. Shaw, who calls him an Idealist, who waxes scornful over him, and who glories in Ibsen because that author flouts these Idealists most mercilessly. Mr. Shaw has a new higher class—the "Realists." For him, the Philistine is content with things as they seem, the Idealist has some conception of the truth of things, but is frightened and shrinks back to conventionalities, while the Realist sees things as they are, and fearlessly accepts the logical deduction. Such men are, of course, very rare, and Mr. Shaw admits this—nay, he estimates the proportions as 700 Philistines, 299 Idealists and one Realist. History, in our author's conception, is the record of the gradual casting away of encumbrances to right thinking under the name of "duties." The set of duties that "Theology" teaches is, in Mr. Shaw's view of the cultivated world, by this time thoroughly obsolete. The set of "duties" that remains to be combatted by the pioneers of truth is that held by the Idealists, and includes the ideas that marriage is inviolable, and that women should be "womanly" and "self-sacrificing." This new creed is vigorous enough, and it loses none of its vigour from Mr. Shaw's expression of it. It is because Ibsen is a Realist—or at least satirizes Philistine and Idealist alike—that our author likes him. After his preliminary explanations, Mr. Shaw gives a careful, though we think somewhat *ex parte*, review and analysis of Ibsen's plays, and sees in them a completely Realistic point of view, or, to put the matter more plainly, Anarchistic. We may be pardoned for not fully agreeing with Mr. Shaw. He does not write as a disinterested literary critic, but as a partisan, and his book is to a great extent a special plea. Now, we do not think that Ibsen is a partisan of any sect or school. As a man of genius he preserves the full impartiality of genius, and strikes right and left remorselessly. At one time, according to Mr. Shaw, the Idealists fancied him in their camp and rejoiced thereat; but they were soon roughly undeceived. Now, may not Ibsen carry this impartiality a step further? We should not be surprised if his next play were an assault upon Anarchism itself, though we should be much surprised if Mr. Shaw were to acknowledge it as an attack. Certainly on the whole the book is readable. Mr. Shaw has the courage of his convictions, and expresses them with rare candour and plain speech. His position is by no means devoid of truth, but is a position that can be held by few indeed. The mass of those who hold his opinions will fall into the vulgar errors which have made the name of Anarchism ridiculous as well as hateful in our ears.

WHAT IS REALTY? An Inquiry as to the Reasonableness of Natural Religion, and the Naturalness of Revealed Religion. By Francis Howe Johnson. Price \$2.
Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company; Toronto: Williamson and Company. 1891.

We do not know whether the author of this work is a Professor of Philosophy, a Clergyman or merely a Literary man; but he has produced a very able and interesting book on a subject of the highest importance. Our readers are, many of them, aware of the question brought out with the greatest clearness by Hume. Can we know anything, and are we sure that there is anything to know? Hume gave a negative, or at least a sceptical, answer to this question. There may be such a thing as Reality, he answered; but we can have no real knowledge of it. It is this position which is assailed by Kant, and which all the more spiritual philosophy of the last century has endeavoured to overthrow. The present writer has set himself the same task. "Reality," he says, "is the agreement of our thought with that which is external to our thought." In other words, Knowledge is real. Again, "A thing is real when it is capable of fulfilling the promises it makes to us," so that we have a secure basis for action and expectation. To be more explicit, the first and principal question which the author discusses is this: "Is our conception of spirit as spirit the counterpart of a reality, or is it an illusion?"

The writer does not lay claim to a knowledge, at first hand, of all the philosophical systems which he examines, and he makes full and generous recognition of the sources from which he has derived assistance. It is his object, he says, to show that the premises of religion are as real as any part of man's knowledge; and that the methods by which its vital truths are deduced from these premises are no less legitimate than those employed by science. This is quite true, bearing in mind, of course, the caution of Aristotle, that we must expect, in every department of study, that kind of certainty which is suitable to its nature.

The author first examines the answers given from the opposed schools of idealism and realism, and decides against both. In his partial refutation of Hegel, we think, he does not quite remember how much all recent spiritual philosophers owe to the profound and difficult German. His own answer he calls the Answer of Life, and declares that the realities of life are to be decided by an appeal to

life. He asserts his conclusions in the following terms: (1) The external world, known to us through our senses, is a world of real agencies that act and react upon us. (2) The human mind is a real originating cause, which to some extent modifies and directs itself and external agencies. If there is not absolute novelty, there is considerable freshness in the working out of these results. Here is a good point against the sceptical attitude of certain philosophers. "They," he says, "though deeply attached to their special scepticisms, are yet more fond of life, and therefore withdraw in time to demonstrate the necessity of living the affirmative of that which they theoretically deny."

In regard to the relativity of knowledge, he accepts the post-Kantian position, holding that knowledge of relations is knowledge of reality. Passing on, we come to an interesting chapter on Immanency and Transcendancy, in which he adopts, in our judgment, the right conclusion, avoiding pantheism on the one hand and deism on the other. The remaining portions of the volume are given to the further discussion of religion, revelation, the church and the Bible. It is a book which few will read without profit.

SONGS OF THE HUMAN. By William P. McKenzie.
Toronto: Hart and Company. 1892.

This is a volume whose attractive blue and white covers, fine paper and excellent workmanship does great credit to the publishers, Messrs. Hart and Company, who have won distinction as artistic and skilful publishers. It is a book whose workmanship entitles it to a place on the library shelf with any first edition; but its attractiveness does not stop with the cover, for there is much genuine poetic work in it. In his best moments Mr. McKenzie shows not only a command of melody, but an independent force of thought; witness such a stanza as the following:—

Though hither and thitherward blown,
The petals on earth scatter white,
The real that lay under the known
Shall ripen at last into sight.

—A Friend Indeed.

Or as this:—

And yet I too beneath some mausoleum,—
Of great earth, hopes that cover o'er the soul,
Might hear the ransomed chanting their *Te Deum*,
A spirit lost that gained an earthly goal.

—An Influence.

The latter, with its noble spiritual strain, is suggestive of Browning's teaching; but it is yet Mr. McKenzie's own.

The volume has several headings: "Of Places and Men," "Of Loving," "Of Losing" and "Of Living." Of these, we have found most pleasure in "Of Losing." The third of the "Epistles Unto a Maid,"—"Reunion," with its solemn concluding quotation, *Dominus dedit, Dominus abstulit, sit nomen Domini benedictum* is very touching. It is too long for quotation, but we may excerpt a stanza from the Conclusion of this section; a stanza which breathes the high, almost mystic, faith which makes good all losses:—

I am only a child, who is lying
On the bosom of Infinite Love;
I speak not of living or dying,
I know not of sorrow or crying
My thoughts are dwelling above.

—Conclusion.

But we by no means intend to confine our approbation to this portion of Mr. McKenzie's work. We have already given extracts from other sections,—*"A Friend Indeed"* is from "Of Places and Men," and *"An Influence"* is from "Of Loving." Probably the best complete poem in the latter part is "Covered Wings." We may present the last stanzas of this to our readers:—

On a shining stem, mark, a beetle crawls;
As he sways in the wind I shrink with a dread,
Man venturing so at some cliff-foot sprawls,
But its wing-case lifts and the gauze vans spread.

There is one I know who has clambered out
On a daring hope to its utmost end,
Over death he sways, and I hope,—yet I doubt,
If wings be the gift that his God will send.

And the poem immediately following this, "A Twilight Flower," is very good. Passing to "Of Living," we may note "Misconceptions," with its curious, yet all too true, idea. This section contains one piece however that we regret to see included, "The Yielding of Pilate." It is, we should say, the weakest work in the volume. The treatment is slight, for one thing; and, dealing with the most awful and sternly realistic scene known to man, the movement is distinctly lyrical. For example, let us take the following passage:—

PILATE. What is truth?

[Rising abruptly, he goes out with Jesus to the Jews, muttering petulantly.]

I cannot bide these wranglers
Who seek with words to daze,
Trident—and—net entanglers
Who spear with three-pronged phrase;
For priests and women let them babble,
For me the sword best suits the rabble;
A man of action, I, a Roman,
Your babbling Greek, I count him no man,
Buzzing about for something "new,"—
And better be a dog than be a Jew!

In the first place, this challenges comparison with Beacons's concise and weighty sentence, "What is truth? said jesting Pilate, and stayed not for an answer." And in the second place the speech with its double rhyme of "Roman" and "no man" is not in keeping with the tragic issues at stake.

But it is ungrateful work seizing on the weak points of a work that contains so much good matter. Mr. McKenzie's ability and mastery of his art is on the increase; the book before us is we hope an earnest of

much to come. He possesses a true poetic insight, wedded to a pure and spiritual way of looking at life; and his command of melody is proved by more than one of the selections we have made, and by much more that is in a volume, which we trust will meet with the favourable reception it so well deserves.

THE *Dominion Illustrated*, December 19, 1891, is a very fair issue of this well known journal. H. Frederick Brande publishes a sonnet on "Ireland's Uncrowned King," the force and beauty of which is, in our opinion at least, marred by the feebleness of the last two lines. "Old Gabriel" is a lively description of an ineffectual bear-hunt. The illustrations are good, some of them exceptionally so, and the whole issue is quite up to its usual form.

THE *University Monthly*, Fredericton, N. B., issues a very fair number for December. Miss Gertrude T. Gregory contributes a carefully-written paper entitled "Molière on the Education of Women." Miss Gregory has quoted

De son étude, enfin, je, veux qu'elle se cache,
Et qu'elle ait du savoir, sans vouloir qu'on le sache
Sans citer les auteurs, sans dire de grands mots
Et clouer de l'esprit à ses moindres propos.

Would all University ladies have the same courage? And yet the grand old philosopher was right after all. The magazine is well got up, and, on the whole, does the University credit.

THE *Ladies' Home Journal* issues a charming New Year number. Amongst a great deal that is pretty and much that is interesting may be mentioned the continuation of "The Staircase of Fairlawn Manor" (part II.), by Mamie Dickens. Miss Ethel Ingalls, one of the series of "Clever Daughters of Clever Men," is aptly described by Jean Mallory as "not a short haired reformer," but—

A perfect woman, nobly planned.

Ella Wheeler Wilcox contributes a poem entitled "Duty's Path." The "Greetings 'Cross the Sea," coming as they do at the Christmas season, add to the attractiveness of a most agreeable issue.

THE *Quiver*, January, 1892, contains much interesting matter. "Common Lodging Houses and Their Patrons" is a vigorously drawn picture of London misery, illustrated by J. H. Bacon. "Below the Sea-Level" represents Holland with all its physical disadvantages, disadvantages which have at once modified and strengthened the characteristics of its people. "The First Work for God," by the author of "How to be Happy, though Married," is well and earnestly written. The serial stories, "The Heiress of Aberstone" and "Through Devious Ways," are continued. Our space will not permit mention of all that is valuable in this number, and our advice to all is to read it for themselves.

THE *Westminster Review* for December, 1891, opens with a carefully-written paper entitled "Effects of the Doctrines of Evolution on Religious Ideas," from the pen of R. C. Crosbie. Mr. Crosbie points out the effects which the doctrine of evolution produces upon the thinker, the religious (in the ordinary sense of the word) and the superficial mind. "Outcasts of Paris," by E. R. Spearman, gives a terrible description of the misery in the heart of that pleasure-loving capital. Captain J. A. Skene Thomson contributes an article entitled "Military Enthusiasm as a Means of Recruiting." The Captain ends his interesting paper with this remark which we heartily echo: "For the regular army we are apt to forget that here also we are dealing with volunteers, and that honest enthusiasm and love of soldiering, and not recruiting-traps are our best and natural agencies." Mr. Edwin Johnson, M.A., writes on "Gothic and Saracen Architecture." The number is a decidedly good one.

Harper's New Monthly Magazine, January, 1892, opens with "De Litt' Modder," a story by Mr. William McLennan. "Canada's El Dorado" should be perused by all Canadian readers. "The Sorrow of Rohab," by Arlo Bates, contains some very fine passages.

Rohab the king
Delights to honour thee. Rohab the man
Avenge Leutra's death, and SMILES!

This is really dramatic and in its force of expression contrasts strangely with that soft sensuous lay of Leutra commencing with—

Sweetheart, thy lips are touched with flame.

Wilhelm Singer in his brightly written paper, "Popular Life in the Austro-Hungarian Capitals," describes himself as belonging to the class of "harmless loafers" who only write about "things that you can touch and see" as the old Latin Grammar puts it, and who are not anxious about legends or anything which has been already "beautifully described by others." Can anything be more encouraging to start with? Read this article and you will see that he is true to his principles. "London of Charles the Second," by Walter Besant, should be read by all who feel either interest or curiosity for old London. "Two events—two disasters—give special importance to this period. I mean the Plague and the Fire." Mr. Besant alludes to both of these at some length. "A Letter of Introduction," by W. T. Smedly, is very amusing and we regret that we have not space to comment upon much more that is pleasant reading in this issue.

THE *Nineteenth Century* for December is a number which requires some careful reading. Mr. Charles Lowe contributes an article on "The German Newspaper Press," in which he contrasts the German under the step-motherly influence of his Government, and the English *πολιτικὸν ζῶον*.