

NEW BOOKS.

Another of Messrs. Harper & Brothers' very admirable edition of Wilkie Collins' works has made its appearance. The new comer is "Hide and Seek," and in appearance it equals, in every way, its predecessors. We have already more than once drawn our readers' attention to this edition as superior to any that has been issued on this side of the Atlantic. When completed it will make a goodly show on the library shelves.

A story by the author of "Blade-o'-Grass" is a *sin qua non* of the Christmas season. Last Christmas "Bread-and-Cheese and Kisses" made such an impression on the reading public that some speculation was indulged in as to what the Christmas of 1873 would bring from this writer's pen. We are afraid that "Golden Grain" hardly comes up to the expectations of Mr. Farjeon's readers. We find in it, it is true, all the characteristics of his former works; the same power of delineation, the same tenderness and pathos mingled with humour which have earned for him, not undeservedly perhaps, the title of Dickens' successor; but these characteristics are less fully pronounced, are dimmer, fainter than in his former works. The story is of the usual type that Mr. Farjeon impresses on his narratives—essentially a story of low life. His principal characters are taken from the gutter, and in the present instance brought up to respectable life. In "Golden Grain" Mr. Farjeon has a word for Canada, whither he sends his repentant thief. We cannot resist the temptation to quote from a letter that appears in the early part of the book—a letter supposed to be written by a young settler in this country to his friends in London.

"Every thing before me is bright, and I have no doubt of the future. Not a day passes that I am not assured that I was right in coming, and the conviction that I have those in the Old Country who love me, and whom I love with all my heart and soul, strengthens me in a wonderful manner. I can see you all as I write, and my heart overflows toward you. Yes, I was right in coming. The Old Country is overcrowded; there are too many people in it, and every man that goes away gives elbowroom to some one else. When I see the comfortable way in which poor people live here, and compare it with the way they live at home—and above all, when I think of the comfortable future there is before them if they like to be steady—I find myself wishing that hundreds and hundreds of those I used to see in rags, selling matches, begging, and going in and out of the gin-shops, could be sent to this country, where there is room for so many millions. I dare say some of them would turn out bad; but the majority of them, when they saw that by a little steadiness they could make sure of good clothes and good food, would be certain to turn out good. I am making myself well acquainted with the history of this wonderful country, and I mean to try hard to get along in it. You can have no idea what a wonderful place it is; what opportunities there are in it; what room there is in it. Why, you could put our right-little tight-little island in an out-of-the-way corner of it, and the space wouldn't be missed! If I make my fortune here—and I believe I shall—I shall know how to use it, with the example I have had before me all my life."

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

IN MY STUDY.

Among the sage counsels that abound in the writings of Emerson, is one to the effect that we should not despise our own thoughts, or conclude that, because an idea has presented itself to our mind, it must necessarily be trivial or common place. If we do, he says, we shall, on many an occasion, find ourselves accepting, with no little shame, at the hands of others, that which long ago was our own; in other words, we shall see that other men to whom these same thoughts occurred, having placed a higher and truer estimate upon them, have been able to present them to the world in a striking form, or perhaps to deduce from them important consequences. Every man, it is true, cannot be a public writer, even though his thoughts, from time to time, may be sound and original; but it would be well perhaps for every one who feels that he can think for himself, that he has within himself a certain power of originating ideas, to make a habit of recording, for his own private satisfaction, the ideas that seem to have sprung up spontaneously in his mind. Should a little further reading make it manifest that the same ideas have occurred to other men before, there will be no humiliation in the discovery. The truth which at this moment flashes into my mind is none the less mine, because years ago it flashed into some one else's. To reduce one's thoughts to writing is at all times a beneficial exercise. Until you have done so, or until you have expressed your thoughts very clearly in conversation, you cannot be sure what form they really bear. In our musings we sometimes fancy, we have touched upon a valuable principle, when in reality we have done no more than shape out to ourselves some vague, cloudy image. Let us interrupt our musings by taking up a pen, and our grand principle will soon appear the unsubstantial thing it really is. The pen, in fact, is a wand of extraordinary virtue in exorcising all kinds of vague fancies; unless indeed a man's mind is so constituted that he cannot perceive the difference between that which has shape and outline and that which has none. There are people of this kind and some of them unfortunately are very prolific with their pens. They are the kind of whom Locke in one place complains, their very confusion of mind giving them, he says, this advantage that "as in their discourses they are seldom in the right, so they are as seldom to be convinced they are in the wrong; it being all one to go about to draw these men out of their mistakes who have no settled notions as to dispossess a vagrant of his habitation who has no settled abode." Allowing for this class of minds, however, Bacon's dictum still remains true that "writing makes an exact man," and exactness, if not the highest intellectual quality is certainly one of the most useful.

Another habit which ought to be more widely adopted than it is amongst those who read more or less systematical-

ly, is making extracts of striking passages in books. Professed students of course do this, but others might advantageously do it as well. Nothing affords a better history of a man's intellectual development than a book in which he has written down during the period of his chief mental growth the passages that struck him from day to day as worthy of attention and preservation. Some of these as he turns over the pages after the lapse of a few years seem to him trite enough, but they bring vividly before him the time when they were not trite, when they fell upon his mind with all the force of originality and stirred in him emotions whose impetus is perhaps not yet wholly spent. Such a book provides a link between a man's present and his past; by its aid he sees not only whither he has now arrived but by what successive steps the journey was accomplished. Some men are apt to forget even their own past entirely, and, having renounced certain opinions which they once cherished, they fail to understand how those opinions can possibly be entertained by any one of ordinary common sense. But let a man who has kept a book of this kind turn back to the period when he held the opinions he now discards, and he will find how many things at that time appeared to harmonize with them, and by what plausible arguments, to say the least, they could be defended.

By this means, too, a man may recover, at an age when but few strong emotions ever quicken the sense of life and power within him, something of the fire and force of his youthful enthusiasms.

"Then we could still enjoy, then neither thought  
Nor outward things were closed and dead to us;  
But we received the shock of mighty thoughts  
On simple minds with a pure natural joy;  
And if the sacred load oppressed our brain,  
We had the power to feel the pressure eased,  
The brow unbound, the thoughts flow free again  
In the delightful commerce of the world.  
We had not lost our balance then, nor grown  
Thought's slaves and dead to every natural joy."

How much younger the world seemed only twelve or fifteen years ago! How full of promise was the future! What might not humanity achieve with such leaders of thought as Carlyle and Tennyson and Kingsley! How we longed to throw ourselves into some great movement, to stand forth as champions of some great principle, to prove to the world by the most triumphant reasoning, and in words of irresistible eloquence, how easy was the path of reform, and how little it would take to turn earth into a paradise! Well do I remember at the age of eighteen reading with intense interest the Olynthiac Orations of Demosthenes. They seemed at once to supply a form for an appeal to the whole world in behalf of righteousness. I saw no longer an outpost of Grecian civilization struggling against the rude force of Macedonian barbarism, but the cause of truth, the cause of humanity assailed by all the powers of evil and calling loudly upon the true-hearted everywhere for help. O! for a Demosthenes, I thought, to deliver such appeals as this nineteenth century requires, not summoning the nations to war, but stirring all hearts with enthusiasm for the right. That the world would not yield to such appeals seemed impossible. What school-boy or college-student ever yet understood or found himself able to frame any excuse for the backwardness of the Athenians in marching against Philip, after listening to the glowing words of their, and the world's, great orator? He reads in commentaries and histories partial explanations of their apathy, but his imagination refuses to take in anything but the par amount, all important duty of the hour. And so, thinks fervid youth, why should not the whole world, if properly summoned, take up arms against its spiritual enemies and achieve a conquest that should usher in the final reign of peace and happiness.

When I say that this is what passed through my head and stirred my emotions as a boy, while I dwelt upon the words of the last great statesman of Athens—that statesman of whom she was all unworthy—I do not exaggerate one iota. The main idea alone remains in my memory to-day, but around that idea there clustered, at the time I speak of, such a host of fancies, illustrations and arguments as would have filled a volume, could they have been reduced to written speech. For some two or three years the idea haunted me, and then, vanishing by insensible degrees, was replaced by other conceptions truer, perhaps, to the nature of things, but surely not one half so inspiring, so elevating, or so fruitful of intellectual and moral nourishment. The enthusiast of twenty or twenty-one has yet to learn the fatal force of *interest* in all worldly affairs. He knows that individual men have various ugly moral qualities, but these he attributes to want of light; it is because they have never been made to see things as they ought that their lives are so unlovely. But that any body should hate the light; that *interest* should blind a man to ideas, and make him choose in the most deliberate manner, inferior moral standards and the most contracted conditions of intellectual existence, is something that experience alone will bring home to his mind.

The experience when it does come is apt to give a somewhat rude shock to a sensitive nature, and the youth will do well who does not, as his illusions are one by one dispelled, make a rapid descent from an overstrung enthusiasm to an unreasoning and indiscriminating cynicism. Perhaps the best thing is for him to find out that not only are men very impracticable and old abuses very unyielding, but that it is in the very nature of things that they should be so. How vast a distance, however, has one traversed who, starting from an unbounded faith in the power of personal influence and exertion, finds himself after the lapse of a few years calmly, or perhaps despondingly, calculating, with Herbert Spencer, and writers of his school, how many generations it will take before, through the operation of natural causes, there can be any marked improvement in the morality or the happiness of the human race. Whole nations, we formerly expected, would be born in a day; great truths were to flash their illumination into whole communities at once; a great preacher would go forth and multitudes would gladly reform their lives in accordance with his teaching; the fountains of human sympathy and love were to be unsealed, and the brotherhood of the human race, so long merely a doctrine or a dream, was to be gloriously realised in fact. Now we see things very differently. Personal influence has doubtless its own limited range, but even the greatest and most influential of men can do little to hasten or retard the great secular movements of humanity. We echo the words

• Matthew Arnold, "Empedocles on Etna."

of a great French critic when he says: "Quand une fois un principe dominateur s'est emparé de la société, il semble qu'il faille que ce principe sorte tous ses effets, et se produise bon gré mal gré, jusqu'au bout: on ne le déjoue pas." In the same way we see that it is impossible to give vitality to a principle before its time. Had the times been ripe for the foundation of a sound philosophy, Roger Bacon could have sought the world much that it learned, more than four centuries later, from Francis Bacon; as it is, the light shed by the old Franciscan monk, persecuted in his day as a heretic and a wizard, serves only to make more manifest the surrounding gloom. The individual is but as a wave on the bosom of an ocean whose heavings are controlled from afar, in accordance with laws old as the universe itself. We may rebel against these conclusions, but how are we to avoid them? There they are at the end of a line of reasoning every previous stage of which seems to be confirmed by facts and proofs beyond question. That such opinions are unfavorable to enthusiasm, and may have upon certain minds some of the effects of mere fatalism, cannot be denied; but to discard them because we do not like them, would be to take refuge in that most unsafe of all retreats, a fool's paradise. Let us at least know where we are; let us keep our eyes open; let us realise our situation. If indeed we have taken a false path, we shall, in this way, soonest know it, and be able to retrace our steps with clear intelligent purpose.

Sitting one evening in my study, and letting a wayward fancy guide a too idle pen, I wrote what, haply, the reader has just perused. There is in it, probably, just about that *enchainement* of ideas usually found in similar productions. It does sometimes happen that, in my study, reflections occur to me that I would gladly have some one to share, and perchance there are readers of the CANADIAN ILLUSTRATED NEWS, to whom they would not be wholly unwelcome. I propose, therefore, *Dis faventibus*, to shake out upon paper a few random thoughts on things in general. *Nihil humanum a me alienum puto*. Sometimes I have a word to say on politics, sometimes on poetry, sometimes I like to dwell on and enlarge a thought that has struck me in a book I am reading. I have no set speeches to make or treatises to compose and those who call upon me, "In My Study" will, at least, never be detained long. With these explanations and promises, I bid my readers, for to-day, farewell.

COUGHING TIME.

The *Tablet* relates a story of a priest who had a coughing congregation, and who cured them thus: No sooner had he cessed to speak than, singular to relate, one cough after another died out until soon there was absolute silence in the church. Whereupon the father said something to the following effect: "My friends, I know that in this weather colds abound, and therefore it is difficult for you to refrain from coughing. Still it is impossible for me to preach and for you to cough at the same time. Let us come, then, to a mutual agreement, so that you may cough and I may preach without disturbing each other. I will speak say for five or ten minutes at a time; when I raise my handkerchief there will be an interval allowed for coughing. As soon as I let it fall I will resume my sermon, and you your silence." The plan succeeded admirably.

WHO PUFFS PAYS.

A funny suit against an editor has been decided in the Circuit Court at Waukesha, Iowa. The Fays, proprietors of the La Belle House at Oconomowoc, brought an action before a justice to recover \$97.04 for meals and cigars for fished Ashley D. Harger, editor of the Oconomowoc *Times*. Harger set up a counter claim of \$160 for "puffing" the La Belle House. Judgment was rendered for the plaintiff, and Mr. Harger appealed to a jury. The case excited much interest, Harger being well liked, and having a solemn, earnest manner of making very witty remarks. He testified that Fay would say to him: "Harger, I've got a nice dinner to-day—come in." "No, I thank you, I'm going home." Fay would prevail on him to stay, and after dinner the following colloquy: "Everything is there all right, Harger?" "Everything excellent." "Dessert all right?" "Excellent." "Ice-cream all right?" "Delicious, Mr. Fay." "Very well, remember this in your paper next week." In return for dinners and cigars, Harger says that he told a great many lies—editorially—worth more than a thousand dollars. He would never have presented a bill for lies had not Fay fallen out with him and wanted pay for the dinners. Harger pleaded his own case, and the jury found a verdict for him, which threw the costs upon the hotel-keeper.

SCRAPS.

Prince Arthur has asked, ineffectually, for permission to proceed to the Gold Coast.

The noxious effects of mercury on the health of workmen in factories where this metal is used, are being discussed with a view to a remedy.

It is proposed in England to establish a national school in cookery, in connection with the annual international exhibition at South Kensington.

Mr. Goldwin Smith, who is now in England, proposes remaining in London for two months, from January, before returning. He was to have spent Christmas at Oxford.

The natives of certain districts in West Africa are in the habit of pawning each other all round: husbands pawn their wives, wives their husbands, and parents their children.

A New York court has decided that when a man loses his trunk, and in it there are presents for his family, the latter are not personal baggage, and suit for their recovery cannot be made.

From Osborne, in the Isle of Wight, Her Majesty's marine residence, a large cask of fresh sea water, taken from the Solent, is despatched every day to Buckingham Palace or Windsor Castle for the Queen's morning bath during her residence at those palaces.

The late Rev. Baron Stowe had a correct idea of "the eternal fitness of things" when he said, "Sermons are like guns, long or short, new or old, bright or rusty, loaded or empty. Some shoot too high, some too low. They teach, arouse, or exasperate, according as they are managed."

\* Hide and Seek. By Wilkie Collins. 12mo. Cloth, illustrated. Price, \$1.50. New York: Harper & Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

† Golden Grain. By B. L. Farjeon, author of "Blade-o'-Grass," etc. 8vo. Paper, illustrated. Price, 35 cents. New York: Harper & Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

‡ Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Book III. Chap. X.—4.