

## Recent Fiction.\*

THE imagination of the author of "The Time Machine" soars beyond the wildest dreams of Jules Verne in the marvellous tales of adventure on earth, in the sky, or under the ocean which he has given us. The very name of this strange book at once arrests the attention as we wonder what it is unless it be only a clock. When we begin to realize what the author is driving at, we are carried along irresistibly to find out what on earth, or else where, the "Time Traveller" is going to do. The basis of the book is an invention of a machine to travel through time as if it were the fourth dimension of space, and to carry a person down the ages to see what the world will come to. The Time Traveller relates his experiences when he comes back from his first excursion. The first station at which he stopped was about 800,000 A.D., and after some experiences there, or, we should say, then, he went a million years or so further on, all in a few minutes, and found that the earth had ceased to rotate on its axis. His return from a second trip is not chronicled, but in some subsequent volume the author may bring him back with still more marvellous tales from this time-journey. While we by no means agree with the author in his estimate of the direction in which the world's affairs are progressing, and the way in which the social problem, for instance, is to be worked out, still his speculations in this respect naturally excite our interest. We venture to quote a vivid description of an eclipse in the future ages:

The darkness grew apace, a cold wind began to blow in threatening guests from the east, and then the white flakes that were falling out of the air increased. The tide was creeping in with a ripple and a whisper. Beyond these lifeless sounds the world was silent—silent! It would be hard to convey to you the stillness of it. All the sounds of man, the bleating of sheep, the cries of birds, the hum of insects, the stir that makes the back-ground of our lives, were over. As the darkness thickened the eddying flakes became more abundant, dancing before my eyes; and the cold of the air more intense. At last swiftly, one after the other, the white peaks of the distant hills vanished into blackness. The breeze grew to a moaning wind. I saw the black central shadow of the eclipse sweeping towards me. In another moment the pale stars alone were visible, all else was rayless obscurity. The sky was absolutely black.

Pieces such as this send a shiver through one like passages from Poe's work.

The second book before us brings us back to the nineteenth century. It is a series of pictures of life in New York among the extreme poor, and the criminal classes. These deal with a lower strata of life in New York than Dickens usually did in his panoramic views of old London, now so rapidly passing away. They are drawn with considerable power, but, from the nature of the case, are not very refined reading. One we liked best is called "Leather's Banishment," which describes a game of hide-and-seek with the detectives on the part of Leather, "wanted" for stealing and which culminates in his hiding in bed with a sick chum while the very room is searched. "A Young Desperado" describes how a child of wealthy parents got lost in the city, and fleeced right and left until taken in hand by a good-hearted gamin. His difficulty in understanding the language is shown in the following dialogue with his new friend:

"One day me uncle got drunk an' chucked me out into de street. I sells papers. In fine wetter I sleep out o' doors. When its wet or cold, I go an' put up in de newsboys' cage. And so yer old man's well fixed?" he said.

"Wh-a-at?"

"Yer daddy's heeled?"

"What?"

"Yeaw, wot's de matter wid ye? Is yer pop a banker wid a wad?"

"My father is wealthy."

\* "The Time Machine. An Invention." By H. S. Wells. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1895. Price 75c.

"Tenement Tales of New York." By J. W. Sullivan. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 1895. Price 75c.

"Forward House. A Romance." By Wm. Scoville Case. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Toronto: Copp, Clark Co. 1895. Price \$1.00.

"Melting Snows." By Prince Jchoenach-Carolath. Translated by Margaret Symonds. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co. 1895.

"Beatrice." By H. Rider Haggard. Longmans' Colonial Library Series. London and New York: Longmans, Green & Co. 1895.

"Almayer's Folly. A story of an Eastern River." By Joseph Conrad. New York: Macmillan & Co. Toronto: The Copp, Clark Co. 1895.

"M—m—m. I kin 'member my fader. His fader was a king in Ireland an' wore a crown o' glittering gold, like in de t'eyter. . . . Dey downed de landlords. But—I'm hungry."

"So am I, very hungry."

"Got any sugar?" "Any what?"

"Any tin, any money?" "Yes, one cent."

"Dat'll fill de bothem us. Take a kerridge wid me, an' we'll go down to the Astor House and feed our mout's."

A well told story and one which the publishers have presented in an attractive form is "Forward House." The movements in it for some time are very mysterious, and we are anxious for their unravelment, but as the mystery is part of the author's plan to excite our interest, we acquiesce. "Mister John Hunt" tells the story. He had for years lived a hermit's life, but his curiosity was aroused one night by strange actions, and stranger conversation, on the part of some passers by, and he became entangled in the disputes of his neighbours. Colonel Forward is the country magnate, and it is with the quarrels of his sons that he gets entangled. In one or two bits we were reminded of the master of Ballantrae, since the quarrel of the brothers is chiefly due to their attentions to the same woman, and it culminates in a duel. The description of this, and of the departure of the successful duelist from the field of action is finely and dramatically told.

"Melting Snows" is decidedly an up-to-date novel. It is a translation of a German work. The chief character is a student at a university there. He has never had a thought outside his books—very like some German scholars—but gets drawn from his shell by a young lady studying for the opera next door. His love ends unhappily enough for him, while the girl in question, after giving him her heart, marries an older and richer man. The book has no divisions for chapters, and the title is chosen from the way people melt out of the lives of others. The story is not long but is a trifle wearisome in parts. There are a couple of amusing bits in it, when the student is making love by explaining mathematical formulas, and when he attempts to write poetry in Horatian metre and wonders at his inability to fit words into the form of an ode.

In "Beatrice," Rider Haggard has left the wild regions of Africa and marvellous adventures in the land till lately always marked as unexplored, and has laid the scene on the coast of Wales. Beatrice is a very exceptional girl, daughter of a Welsh clergyman, whose interests are wrapped up in the tithes of his parishioners. She saves the life of Geoffrey Bingham, who has contracted a loveless marriage with the daughter of a peer, and presently they fall in love. The story is taken up with the play of their feelings and the intrigues of the sister of Beatrice, who is madly jealous because a Welsh squire whom she wishes for herself is passionately in love with Beatrice, though the latter cares not a jot for him. Geoffrey flings himself for distraction into work and rapidly attains distinction. The issue of the story, it would not be fair to disclose, but the reader's interest is excited and maintained throughout by the various dealings of these diverse characters. Although it is not to works of this kind that Rider Haggard owes his reputation, still "Beatrice" gives scope to the vivid imagination which he has proved himself to possess by stories of adventures in very different scenes.

The striking motto from Amiel on the front page of "Almayer's Folly" gives the key to the story. "Qui de nous n'a en sa terre promise, son jour d'extase et sa fin en exil?" We wish it had been told in a more straightforward manner instead of our having to pick up the threads as we go on. At times we did not know whether the author was speaking of Almayer's present or past. Almayer, a European in the far East, is taken into the service of a wealthy trader, and married by him to a Malay princess whom he had adopted after killing all her relations. This girl has kept her racial instincts, and they come out in her daughter Mina in spite of an education with the Dutch. This marriage proves the ruin of Almayer's life. He spends his days idly at the mouth of a river in Borneo, the only white man there, and one by one sees everything taken from him. The final stroke is when his daughter goes off with a Malay leader. The name of the book is taken from a house begun but left half-finished. We feel that Almayer deserves the ruin which comes upon him, though we cannot help sympathizing with him at times, when the savage traits of his wife are exposed, and he finds that he does not possess the full love and confidence of his daughter. We may quote in conclusion a passage showing the attraction of the sea for a Malay: