

of view, the book is coherent and effective. But occasionally there comes in a little piece of fanciful criticism on the text, or a comment on some side-view or transaction, or the suggestion of a probability or a possibility, which remind one of the thin puerilities of the commentators whom Dr. Furness despises more than of the general drift of his own discussion.

Vernon Grove; or Hearts as they are. A Novel. New York: Rudd & Carleton.

THIS volume makes a pleasant addition to the light reading of the day. It is the more welcome as coming from a new field; for we believe that the veil of secrecy with regard to its authorship has been so far blown aside, that we shall be permitted to say, that, although it is written by a lady of New England birth, it may be most properly claimed as a part of the literature of South Carolina. It is a regular novel, although a short one. It is an interesting story, of marked, but not improbable incidents, involving a very few well-distinguished characters, who fall into situations to display which requires nice analysis of the mind and heart,—developed in graceful and flowing narrative, enlivened by natural and spirited conversations. The atmosphere of the book is one of refined taste and high culture. The people in it, with scarce an exception, are people who mean to be good, and who are handsome, polite, accomplished, and rich, or at least surrounded by the conveniences and even luxuries of life. It is a story, too, for the most part, of cultivated enjoyment. There are sufferings and sorrows depicted in it, it is true; without them, it would be no representation of real life, which it does not fail to be. Some tears will undoubtedly be shed over it, but the sufferings and sorrows are such that we feel they are, after all, leading to happiness; and we are not made to dwell upon pictures of unnecessary misery or unavailing misfortune. Let it not be supposed, however, that we are speaking of a namby-pamby tale of the luxuries and successes of what is called “high life,” for this book has nothing of that character. We mean only to point out, as far as we may, without entering upon the story itself, that it tells of pleasant people, in pleasant circumstances,

among whom it is a pleasure to the reader for a time to be. Many a novel “ends well” that keeps us in a shudder or a “worry” from the beginning to the end. Here we see the enjoyment as we go along. Indeed, a leading characteristic of “Vernon Grove” is the extremely good taste with which it is conceived and written; and so we no more meet with offensive descriptions of vulgar show and luxury than we do with those of squalor or moral turpitude. It is a book marked by a high tone of moral and religious as well as artistic and æsthetic culture. Without being made the vehicle of any set theories in philosophy or Art, without (so far as we know) “inculcating” any special moral axiom, it embodies much good teaching and suggestion with regard to music and painting, and many worthy lessons for the mind and heart. This is done, as it should be, by the apparently natural development of the story itself. For, as we have said, the book is really a novel, and will be read as a novel should be, for the story,—and not, in the first instance and with deliberation, with the critical desire to find out what lessons it teaches or what sentiments it inspires.

The narrative covers a space of several years, but is so told that we are furnished with details rather than generalities; and particular scenes, events, and conversations are set forth vividly and minutely. The descriptions of natural scenery, and of works of Art, many of which come naturally into the story, show a cultivated and observant eye and a command of judicious language. The characters are well developed, and, with an unimportant exception, there is nothing introduced into the book that is not necessary to the completion of the story. “Vernon Grove” will commend itself to all readers who like works of fiction that are lively and healthy too; and will give its author a high rank among the lady-novelists of our day and country.

Arabian Days' Entertainments. Translated from the German, by HERBERT PELLHAM CURTIS. Boston: Phillips, Sampson, & Co. 1858.

IN this famous nineteenth century of ours, which prides itself on being practical,

and feeds voraciously on facts, and considers itself almost above being amused, we for our part rejoice to greet such a book as this. Our great-grandfathers, when they were boys, were happy in having wise and good grandfathers who told them pleasant stories of what never happened,—and who loved well to tell them, because they were truly wise men, and knew what the child's mind relished and fattened upon,—nay, and because, like all truly good men, they themselves indulged a fond, secret, half-belief that these child's stories of theirs were, if the truth could be got at, more than half true. We should be sorry to believe that this good old life of story-telling and story-hearing had utterly gone out. It belonged to an age that only very foolish men and very vulgar men laugh at without blushing.

"We of the nineteenth century" have a certain way of our own, however, of enjoying that most rarely fascinating class of literary productions known as *stories*,—a critical, perhaps over-intellectual, way,—but still sufficing, it is comfortable to know, to keep the story at very near its ancient dignity in the realm of letters. Perhaps it is a true sign of the perfect story, that it ministers at once to these two unsympathizing mental appetites, and pleases completely, not only the man, but his—by this side—ever-so-great-grandfather, the child.

Everybody thinks first of the "*Arabian Nights' Entertainments*," when we fall into such remarks as these,—that marvelous treasure, from which the dreams of little boys have been furnished forth, and the pages of great scholars gemmed with elegant illustration, ever since it was first opened to Western eyes. With this book the title which Mr. Curtis has so happily selected for his translation invites us to compare it; and it is not too much praise to say that it can well stand the comparison,—we mean as a selection of stories fascinating to old and young. As to the matter of translation itself, the versions we have of the "*Arabian Nights*" are notoriously bad. These stories, which Mr. Curtis has laid all good children and all right-minded grown people under perpetual obligation by thus collecting and presenting to them, are the productions of a single German writer, and, with the exception of three or four separately published in magazines, have, we believe, never be-

fore been translated into English. They present some very interesting points of contrast with the ever-famous book of Eastern stories,—such as open some very tempting cross-views of the German and the Eastern mind, which, for want of opportunity, we must pass by now.

The scenes of most of them are laid in the East,—of a few in Germany; but the robust *method* of the German story-writer is apparent in each. We wish we could quote from one or two which have particularly charmed us; but though this is impossible within any decent limits, we can at least provoke the appetite of readers of all ages by the mere displaying of such titles as these:—"The History of Caliph Stork"; "The Story of the Severed Hand"; "The Story of Little Muck"; "Nosey the Dwarf"; "The Young Englishman"; "The Prophecy of the Silver Florin"; "The Cold Heart," etc. What prospects for winter evenings are here! And while we can assure the adult reader that the promise which these titles give of burlesque or humorous description, and bold, romantic narrative, shall be more than kept, it may be well also to say, for the comfort of those whom we hope to see buy the book for their children's sake, that the stories in it are entirely free from certain objections which may be fairly urged against the "*Arabian Nights*" as reading for young people. The "*Arabian Days*" have nothing to be ashamed of in the nature of their entertainments.

The translation itself is a performance in a high degree creditable, not only to the German, but to the English, scholarship of Mr. Curtis. We perceive scarcely any of that peculiar stiffness of style which makes so many otherwise excellent translations painful to read,—the stiffness as of one walking in new boots,—the result of dressing the words of one language in the grammatical construction of another. Mr. Curtis gives us the sentiment and wit and fancy and humor and oddity of the German's stories, but in an English way. Indeed, his is manly and graceful English, such as we hope we are not now by any means seeing the last of.

To the right sort of reader, as we consider him, of the "*Arabian Days*," a word about the pictures (for observe, that the proper name for the illustrations of a story-book is *pictures*) may be fitly spoken.

There are no less than sixteen very nice pictures to this story-book, — well done, even for Mr. Hoppin, artistically, and well conceived for the refreshing of the inner eye of him, her, or *it* that reads. And we must be permitted, also, who have read this book by candle-light, as only such a book should be read, to congratulate the readers who come after us upon the good type and good paper in which the publishers have very properly produced it.

We hope and believe this publication will before long be given as a boon to the rising generation, our second-cousins, across the water. They, however, cannot have it (as we fully intend that certain small bodies, but huge feeders on fiction, among our acquaintance, shall have it) on Christmas morning,—the dear old festival, that, as we write, is already near enough to warm our hearts with anticipation.

The Stratford Gallery: or the Shakespeare Sisterhood. Comprising Forty-five Ideal Portraits, described by HENRIETTA LEE PALMER. Illustrated. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

THIS book is what it purports to be,—not a collection of elaborate essays devoted to metaphysical analysis or to conjectural emendations of doubtful lines,—but a series of ideal portraits of the women of Shakespeare's plays. The reader may fancy himself led by an intelligent cicerone who pauses before each picture and with well-chosen words tells enough of the story to present the heroine, and then gives her own conception of the character, with such hints concerning manners and personal peculiarities as a careful study of the play may furnish. The narrations are models of neatness and brevity, yet full enough to give a clear understanding of the situation to any one unacquainted with it. The creations of Shakespeare have a wonderful completeness and vitality; and yet the elements of character are often mingled so subtly that the sharpest critics differ widely in their estimates. Nothing can be more fascinating than to follow closely the great dramatist, picking out from the dialogue a trait of form here, a whim of color there, and at last combining them into an harmonious whole, with the truth of outline, hue, and bearing pre-

served. Often as this has been done, there is room still for new observers, provided they bring their own eyes to the task, and do not depend upon the dim and warped lenses of the commentators.

It is very rarely that we meet with so fresh, so acute, and so entertaining a student of Shakespeare as the author of this volume. Her observations, whether invariably just or not, are generally taken from a new standpoint. She is led to her conclusions rather by instinct than by reason. She makes no apology for her judgments.

"I have no reason but a woman's reason;
I think her so because I think her so."

And it would not be strange, if womanly instinct were to prove oftentimes a truer guide in following the waywardness or the apparent contradictions of a woman's nature than the cold logical processes of merely intellectual men.

To the heroines who are most truly *women* the author's loyalty is pure and intense. Imogen, the "chaste, ardent, devoted, beautiful" wife, — Juliet, whose "ingenuousness and almost infantile simplicity" endear her to all hearts, — Miranda, that most ethereal creation, type of virgin innocence, — Cordelia, with her pure, filial devotion, — are painted with loving, sympathetic tenderness.

Altogether, this is a book which any admirer of the poet may read with pleasure; and especially to those who have not ventured to think wholly for themselves it will prove a most useful and agreeable companion.

It is a matter of regret that the characters of the greatest of dramatists should not have been embodied by the greatest of painters. But no Michel Angelo, or Raphael, or Correggio, has illustrated these wonderful creations; and the man who is capable of appreciating Miranda, or Ophelia, or Desdemona, finds the ideal heads of the painters, of our day at least, tame, vapid, and unsatisfactory. The heroine, as imaged in his mind, is arrayed in a loveliness which limner never compassed. We cannot promise our readers that the engravings in this beautifully printed and richly bound volume will prove to be exceptions to the usual rule. They are from designs by English artists, — "Eminent Hands," in the popular phrase; the faces