

illustrated by photographs? The hastiest scrawl of a traveller with good eyes and clever fingers is better than the best reproduced photograph. But here Miss Bates and her publishers sin with so many others that they deserve no individual blame. Miss Bates modestly describes her book as only a record of impressions, yet you will ransack many volumes on the subject without gaining half the substantial or the out-of-the-way information she gives in unpretending and most readable fashion. The secret of the worth of her book, apart from her extraordinary interest in Spain and her general desire to be pleased with it, lies in the fact that she got near the people, had opportunities of mingling with all classes, and had the gift of making them talk. We are not given guide-book descriptions of the great monuments, but charming talk about the Carnival, Passion Week in Seville, Corpus Christi in Toledo, children's games, the pilgrims of Santiago, the dwellers in the Basque provinces, gypsies and their ways, and a great deal else. There are no wild adventures on the road, but the portraits of characters, pictures of household ways, and reflections of the Spanish point of view are excellently vivid. Here is an old impression of our Sunday in London, but painted with fresh feeling: "It was always colder Sunday, and there was not even a café. There was nowhere to go. There was nothing to do. Why is that good? At the bull-fight one feels the joy of life. Is it more religious to sit dull and dismal by the fire? I had no use for the churches. Walking is not amusing, unless the sun shines and there is something gay to see. I do not like tea, and I do not like reading." Here is a peep at family life in Madrid: "The slightest neighbourhood incident . . . takes on a poetic vividness and a dramatic intensity, and when it is all told over again at the dinner-table, excitement waxes so high that long after the dishes and the cloth have been removed the family may still be found seated around the board, flashing a thousand lights of suggestion and surmise on that dull bit of scandal. The husband cannot cease from discussion long enough to read the evening paper, nor the wife to send the little ones to bed, and midnight may find the three generations, from grandfather to four-year-old, still talking with might and main." The infinite leisure, the brilliant colour of the country, as reflected by Miss Bates, must act as mighty magnets to many North-erners. She has much to tell of misery, of political incapacity, of discontent. But her conclusion is that "Spain is far from unhappy.

It is beautiful to see out of what scant allowance of that which we call well-being, may be evolved wisdom and joy, poetry and religion."

MEY AND LETTERS. By Herbert Paul. New York: John Lane. \$1 50.

From Mr. Paul we get the expected. Not many people are competent to write comprehensive common-sense judgments on men and letters, though most critics can repeat commonplaces. What saves Mr. Paul's criticisms from the charge of commonplace is that he sees his subjects in perspective, and not as flat surfaces to be checked and measured. With great energy Mr. Paul addresses himself to giving a fair, comprehensive summary of the whole figure before him; and his essays, if they do not show much original insight, by their catholic acceptance of the "general view," have a certain breadth which is pleasing. That Mr. Paul's sympathies are not limited can be judged by his sympathetic papers on Swift, Macaulay and Matthew Arnold. That Mr. Paul's thought is at times acute may be seen by his paper on the Philosophical Radicals—Roebuck, Mill, Place, Molesworth and Grote—a paper in which the characteristic defects of the Radical temperament of the fifties is hit off with some niceness. There is a very sensible criticism of Sterne, and an able, if slightly acidulated, summary of Gibbon's *Life and Letters*; moreover, the essay on the Victorian Novel is eminently suited to the English taste. And greater praise no English critic will require. We would, however, expound this praise by adding that Mr. Paul, though qualified by his alert and well-trained intelligence for critical work, shows some deficiencies in æsthetic taste. What a curious bluntness of taste is revealed by the following pronouncements of Mr. Paul:

"Cæsar," says Mommsen, "is the entire and perfect man." Such a judgment lacks distinction, and might, by an unfavourable critic, be called crude. Mr. Mackail says with more effect, because with less violence, that "the combination of literary power of the very first order with his unparalleled military and political genius is, perhaps, unique in history."—p. 55.

Good heavens! "Combination—literary power—first order—unparalleled military and political genius—unique—history"—that this string of commonplaces should rank above that deep and pregnant criticism, "Cæsar is the entire and perfect man," shows that Mr. Paul can never have grasped Cæsar's greatness, or, indeed, have looked at Cæsar's head,

in any sculpture gallery, with the seeing eye, or he would have "apprehended" Mommsen's meaning. Similarly, Mr. Paul gives us a curiously blunt dictum on Swift's poetical powers:

But those who deny the title of poet to Swift must deny it also to Pope. They stand and fall together. Pope was Swift's avowed model. He never, he said, could read a line of Pope's without wishing it were his own.—p. 281.

Swift and Pope as poets "stand and fall together"! Surely, this is the naivest criticism. No doubt, Swift and Pope both held the eighteenth-century ideal of poetry; and, no doubt, Swift tried to attain to Pope's rank; but that we must deny the title of poet to Pope because Swift failed utterly to elaborate for himself a style that was not essentially prosaic, this is a most arbitrary decision. We pass on, however, to another point of critical taste, which is, perhaps, more debatable. Speaking of the classical poems of Tennyson, Mr. Paul says:

"Heap'd over with a mound of grass,
Two handfuls of white dust, shut in an urn
of brass."

This is surely one of Tennyson's most magical feats of poetical compression. Far more finely and completely than Horace's *pulvis et umbra sumus*, it expresses the idea of death common to Horace and Homer.—p. 8.

Now, to us Tennyson's lines, beautiful lines as they are, seem essentially *modern*. It is only the modern brain looking back at antique life, and striving to make it living by the picturesque faculty, that could prefer the picture contained in Tennyson's eighteen words to the idea in Horace's four words. Yet Mr. Paul assures us that Tennyson's "idea of death" is "more fine and complete" than Horace's. Truly, this is the age of modernity. Mr. Paul, indeed, is "modern," in the sense of not wishing the actual life of his own age to be recorded, except in the terms of the literary recipes that please him. We have some girding at Ibsen, and Mr. Gissing is commended thus: "A little more romance, a little more poetry, a little more humour, and Mr. Gissing would be a very great writer indeed" (p. 155). Well, well; no doubt, this is criticism, for the judges

are many, and criticism, we know, may be judgment of any sort.

A HISTORY OF THE FOUR GEORGES AND OF WILLIAM IV. By Justin McCarthy and Justin Huntly McCarthy. Vols. III, and IV.

Mr. Justin, and Mr. Justin Huntly, McCarthy appear to dissent widely from Lord Beaconsfield's dictum that "England is a great Asiatic Power." At first sight this may appear otherwise; the reader may even be dismayed at observing forty pages of Vol. III. devoted to the history, principally the trial, of Warren Hastings. But should he refer to the index to ascertain how much more information of the same nature he will be required to absorb, he will be relieved, if amazed, to discover that in Vol. IV. there is no reference to India whatsoever; that, save for an occasional and casual allusion, Indian history after Warren Hastings is for the writers and readers of this history a total blank. The colonisation of Australia has been deemed an event of some importance; but Australia is as entirely absent from the index as India is. Napoleon at first seems about to fare better. Chapter LXII. is actually headed "Napoleon Bonaparte," but after five pages, save for the most casual allusions, Napoleon is as much out of sight as though he had never existed. Clever and intelligent men like the Messrs. McCarthy must be aware that this is not the way to write history. They must know that their work is not really history, but is a series of disquisitions upon such historical episodes as happened to strike their fancy. From this point of view it deserves praise; the style is easy and graphic; the general fairness and moderation, the author's political opinions considered, most creditable. It is well adapted to beget or foster curiosity respecting the extensive domains of history, upon which the writers have not thought proper to enter. As a stimulus to the study of more complete and exact histories, the book may be of service; in so far as it may be accepted as a substitute for such works, it can only be mischievous. It has too much history to pass as biography, and too little to pass as history. It is something in its favour that it is remote from the crammer's point of view, and for merely examination purposes will be found a mockery, a delusion and a snare.