

all, his wildest perversities boil down to the obvious. Like Swift, he can write well about a broomstick. I wish he wrote oftener about rods that blossom, but his broomstick impromptus are fun to reread. All he means in commanding authors to write for money or go to pot is, that artistic conscience and performance really are not incompatible with a knowledge of money's value. (As if anyone but a cracked near-genius or an art-struck gosling had ever supposed they were!) His common sense about reviewers who give themselves the airs of critics is uncommonly well put forward; he would rather call us "book reporters", and I for one would infinitely rather be so called. He can now talk publishers' shop as fluently and incisively as his own shop, and proves it in the essay called "What Every Publisher Knows". Personally, I would rather hear from a literary editor on the things many publishers don't know, and should—but that is a matter of taste.

As for the man behind the supplement, he looks like the waxing half-moon with a golden ring; murmurs all his conversation; takes a literary interest in gold and a Myopia golfer's interest in letters; talks, breathes, eats, and dreams his work; and writes picaresque yarns in vacations when he ought to be resting up.

Why Authors Go Wrong. Grant M. Overton. Moffat, Yard and Co.

MR. ELLSWORTH'S AGE OF GOLD

By William Lyon Phelps

THREE hundred pages of brilliant book-talk by a real bookman. Is it by reading thousands of rejected manuscripts that Mr. Ellsworth has become so thorough a master of the

divine art of omitting? Has the melancholy monotony of failure in others shown him one sure road to success? If so, we have to thank an army of writers whose names will never be known. For it would have been so easy to spoil this book. Most authors are like fond parents, and think that others must feel the same interest in their offspring as that felt at home. Out of the bales of material at Mr. Ellsworth's disposal, his all but infallible choice in selection is the most impressive thing after the last page of this work is turned. There is not one dull or one superfluous paragraph; and in the long list of humorous anecdotes, we find only two shop-worn after dinner stories.

Mr. Ellsworth is in the real tradition. He is the old-fashioned publisher, and not the commercial manufacturer of books. With him the production of books is an art—an art used toward beneficent world-education—and he is worthy of the company he keeps. During page after page of this autobiography, we are conscious of a certain responsibility and a certain idealism, as though our author felt that he was a trustee for the public. If one needed it, one would feel an increased respect and regard for the whole race of publishers, even as our author's esteem for Mr. Gilder grew stronger with growing intimacy.

American authors come to life again—not as authors, but as men and women. One gets a vivid portrait of them all, between the two extremes represented by Lydia Sigourney and Mark Twain. Bret Harte, Walt Whitman, Edward Eggleston, Jack London, and many others who are gone, return to us again, while their living successors and contemporaries are by no means neglected. One good anecdote

after another is the only "method" employed by the narrator, but it is employed with a skill that must be conscious—once more, it is an exhibition of the art of leaving out what is stale, trivial, pointless.

Although the method is conscious, there is a magnificent bit of irony in the chapter-analysis, that I fear is accidental. In the summary of Chapter XI, which, after discussing the cost of publishing a book, takes up Harold Bell Wright in detail, the first sentence is—Can novels be cheaper?

Stories, literally at the publisher's expense, are frankly told—stories of how a subsequently successful book was rejected. I am glad that Gilder "never got over" his regret at having rejected the manuscript of Richard Harding Davis's "Gallegher", for that mistake ought to have galled him to his last day. On the other hand, it is pleasant to hear of the faith of the publisher in a previously unknown man, Charles D. Stewart. The account of his discovery in Chicago is romantic. Alas, I fear that in spite of his being the author of two masterpieces in fiction, and one first-rate book on Shakespeare's text, Stewart is unknown still. For Mr. Ellsworth and I are the only two men in America who believe that "The Fugitive Blacksmith" and "Partners of Providence" are masterpieces, and that the latter book is worthy to stand on the same shelf with the works of Mark Twain. However, we know these books are good, and that the world in neglecting them is wrong.

The style in which Mr. Ellsworth writes is the style of good firelight conversation; and every listener will be grateful, and ready for more.

A NEW AMERICAN POET

By Henry A. Lappin

SHINING FIELDS AND DARK TOWERS" is a first book of extraordinary merit and promise. The author, John Bunker, has for the last two years and more been unobtrusively winning an increasingly faithful constituency of readers for his essays and contributions to critical literature in the periodicals. In prose, his work has no small measure of sturdy shrewdness, keen penetration, and wide sympathy. With this fine volume of verse Mr. Bunker comes quite definitely into his own as a poet.

Of the many studies that have so far been made of "the movement called Vers Libre", one of the most informative was the article contributed by Mr. Bunker to "America", under that caption, about three years ago. Though the section of "Dark Fields and Shining Towers" entitled "New York Sketches", and the study called "Complainte D'Amour", contain some of the cleverest and most interesting vers libre that the present reviewer has ever seen, Mr. Bunker is no disciple of the new school. He is essentially in the great tradition, and it is in the familiar forms, the recognized types of English verse, that he does his most ample and satisfying work. Like every poet worth his salt, he has given his days and nights to the study of the masters; the best of these poems bear traces of their author's reading of Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. It would, however, be untrue to suggest that he is the imitator of any one poet in particular. He does not build his style upon Spenser more than upon Milton, or upon Milton more than upon Francis Thompson, the one recent poet whom Mr. Bunker has obviously

A Golden Age of Authors. A Publisher's Recollections. By William Webster Ellsworth. Houghton Mifflin Co.