

All but one of Lionel Johnson's "Reviews and Critical Papers" (Dutton) were published in "The Academy" in the years 1891-5. The author died in 1902, not widely known, but respected by many literary persons of ability. It is not slighting to this book to say that it will add little or nothing to the author's considerable reputation; these are well written reviews, but not his best reviews. It was Johnson's practice in reviewing a book to give praise if that were possible, and then by analysis to discover wherein the composition before him fell short of perfection. No one was ever more zealous for the fame of literature than he. He was always courageous, always honest, usually correct; and he always dared to give an opinion.

There is great variety in the poems of "Wild Geese" by Theodore H. Banks, Jr. (Yale), for it contains short lyrics, reflective poems of greater length, and a poetic play. The style is often over-precise, and the quality uneven, but the critical reader must take these as mere signs of immaturity, especially when he comes upon the fine lines of many of the longer poems. Here the poet breaks from his early formalism, and writes with a vividness that is memorable. Four poems of the seasons contain some of the best work in the book, and show descriptive and interpretive power, and a sincerity that promises excellent work to follow. Like many young poets, Mr. Banks writes often of nature and her moods, but he does more than describe; and he shows a deep, though a less experienced interest in all human emotions.

The frankness of childhood is always delightful if one has nothing to fear from it; and when it is safely between the covers of a book, as in Juliet M.

Soskice's "Chapters from Childhood" (Harcourt, Brace), one can revel in it. These are clear-cut impressions of people and places, treated with the unconscious humor and the penetrating wisdom of extreme youth. There are very pleasant chapters on school life in England and the contrast to it in a German convent, with such problems as anarchy and religion firmly solved. Like all children the author was sublimely unconscious of her background which happened to be the famous Rossetti circle, but her portrait of her grandfather, the artist Ford Madox Brown, is a rarely beautiful bit of work.

"The Pleasures of Ignorance" by Robert Lynd (Scribner), a series of essays borrowing its title from the first, is a mixture of keen observations, sprightly humor, and an occasional burst into sheer didacticism. Mr. Lynd is at his best in sketches of everyday events and objects. He finds interesting material about Easter eggs, insects, horse racing, and other commonplace things. "It is said that travelling by train is to be made still more uncomfortable. I doubt if there is a man of sufficient genius in the Government to accomplish this," he observes. Again, "Fortunately, the universe is the creation not of a manufacturer but of an artist." Such quips are food for both entertainment and thought.

Friedrich Nietzsche is much quoted, much discussed, little read, and little understood. Friends and foes alike have made a labyrinth of his work by barring all exits with the title, superman. As a matter of fact, Nietzsche was a typical Prussian with a penchant for thundering into Germany's ears that she had no soul and was going to

the devil. In his relations with the world at large he was a junker, arrogant, inconsiderate, impudent, and dogmatic; in his relations with family and friends he was *ganz bürgerlich*, kindly, fussy, homely and, of course, dogmatic. Oscar Levy has compiled his "Selected Letters of Friedrich Nietzsche" (Doubleday, Page) from the five-volume German edition of Nietzsche's private correspondence with both these attitudes in mind. He seeks to portray not merely the philosopher *en pantoufles* but the intimate life and thoughts of his hero. The reader profits greatly by this method. He is able to follow Nietzsche's ideas from their inception to their final crystallization, and thus by easy stages he arrives at the entire system of philosophy. And it is no small revelation in itself to see this great mind troubled at one and the same time by the probable future of mankind and the reported chilblain of a fellow thinker.

"Flash-lights from the Seven Seas" by Reverend William L. Stidger (Doran) gives graphic and illuminating word pictures of the east,—of scenes and people, of fears and superstitions, of the hopes that can be centred in the Asia of the future.

The unconventionality of "A Virgin Heart" by Remy de Gourmont (N. L. Brown) is its great merit. By avoiding the well worn grooves of fiction and by narrating simply and without description, the author has made his novelette (which is barely more than an incident) real and vivid. It is not the physiological study of a "virgin heart" that he intended but an unaffected story of love in France. The translation is by Aldous Huxley.

Many attempts have been made to explain humor, both on philosophical and physiological grounds. And some progress has been made. Yet humor, *per se*, is just as remote, just as evanescent as ever. Max Eastman's treatise, "The Sense of Humor" (Scribner), is perhaps a trifle less scholarly than that of many philosophers. Just how far the author succeeds in explaining the sense of humor is problematic. Those versed in the lore of Kant, Hegel, Plato, and their ilk, will find Mr. Eastman's disquisition most absorbing. Such persons it will leave with the feeling that they have studied the complicated anatomy of an intricate mental function, and can more fully appreciate it in view of their intimate knowledge of its physiological aspects. As for the rest of us,—well, Mr. Eastman says in his preface, "Although I have tried to make this book enjoyable—my prevailing purpose has been scientific." And who wants to be scientific about humor?

Mr. Chesterton has argued that the difference between the great and the petty, the tremendous and the trifling, lies in the point of view. Thus he brought a microscope to the insignificant things of life and presented them in an inordinate bigness. We doubt not that W. H. Hudson would pronounce this method as untrue to art as it is to life, for this "Traveller in Little Things" (Dutton) is an honest "commercial". He retails his anecdotes; he does not interpret them *à la* Falstaff. He uses no sophistry to make the little seem as important as the great; but he need not argue to convince us that it is no less interesting. The reader, on finishing this book, will be minded of an evening stroll in English meadows.