

**PROVINCIAL TALES.** By Gertrude H. Bone. 6s. (Duckworth.)

We put aside Mrs. Bone's "Preface and Apology," in which she contrasts the expressiveness of the words of the ignorant poor in moments of stress or passion, with those of the educated "average person" under like circumstances. In the examples gathered in this volume we feel the force of the peasants' words, but we feel more the beauty of the author's work. The words in themselves are expressive just by reason of their absolute simplicity, and the undeniable power of the author to present them with a moving and natural appeal to the heart. This is no common writing; the quiet leading up to a pitiful tragedy, as in "Poverty," the lighter but subtle rise and fall of interest, despair, hope and charity, as in "The Wedding Dress," the perfect, restrained beauty of "The Sea's Dominion," to mention only a few of these tales, are consummate workmanship without a trace of the working. Strong, absolutely simple, instinct with feeling, art has made these common things wonderful.

**WHOSOEVER SHALL OFFEND.** By F. Marion Crawford. 6s. (Macmillan.)

The mere mention of a novel of Italian life by Mr. Marion Crawford is sufficient to whet the appetite of the most *blasé* reader of fiction. With good reason we take up a new volume of Mr. Crawford's, confident of finding in it a strong situation handled with technical mastery, and set forth with delightful literary skill. This expectation is not balked by "Whosoever Shall Offend." In style and in sustained interest Mr. Crawford still keeps his pre-eminence. The hardest standard by which to try the book is the author's own previous achievement, and we confess that the pleasure with which we have read the story has been tempered with regretful recollections of the splendid *Saracinesca* trilogy. The theme of "Whosoever Shall Offend" is disappointingly theatrical. Folco Corbario out-smiles the most smiling villain of melodrama. He poisons his wife without a tremor; he wastes away with grief over the stepson whom he has treacherously clubbed. But the stepson is saved by Regina, a beautiful peasant girl, and in due time Corbario is to be found in solitary confinement in an Italian prison, and Regina's timely death leaves her lover free to contract a more equal alliance. The plot is obviously a little threadbare. We seem to have heard before of a murder on the shore being detected by the skipper of a passing vessel, although we are grateful to Mr. Crawford for not having illuminated the scene with the familiar flash of lightning. Professor Kalmon, with his terrible lethal pellets, has also many relatives in fiction, and only Mr. Crawford's skill could have endowed him with a passable plausibility. It is not the compliment which we should have liked to pay to say that Mr. Crawford has done wonders with a singularly poor subject. But still it is true.

**THE GARDEN OF ALLAH.** By Robert Hichens. 6s. (Methuen.)

No novel that Mr. Hichens has yet written reaches such a high level as this. He has chosen a great theme and handled it greatly. The first book, admirable as it is, needs some condensing; but that said, nothing but praise remains to say. "The Garden of Allah" is the great desert of the Sahara, and thither travels Domini Enfiliden, who was "thirty-two, unmarried, and in a singularly independent—some might have thought a singularly lonely—situation. Her father, Lord Rens, had recently died, leaving Domini, who was his only child, a large fortune," and a past that was not altogether good to remember. She is yearning to get away from all the world she has known, and looks dimly to finding her soul in the loneliness of the desert. And there her passionate prayer, "O God, renew me. Give me power to feel, keenly, fiercely, even though I suffer. Let me wake. Let me feel . . ." is fully answered. She meets, in the glamorous little desert town, with Boris Androvsky; she had seen him in the train on her way there and been repelled, but her aversion changes to love, and he, putting aside his shrinking shyness, loves and wins her. But there is a shadow between them; he is fretted by a secret that he is hiding from her, and when at last he confesses it, out of her perfect love of him and his of her, they rise to a lofty renunciation of self, and are parted to the end of this life, so that they may not be separated eternally in the next. It is altogether a brilliant piece of work. The central idea of

the story is finely conceived, and it is developed with an imaginative power and emotional intensity that are by way of being rare indeed in modern fiction.

**THE LADY OF LOYALTY HOUSE.** By Justin Huntly McCarthy. 6s. (Methuen.)

Anyone who has read "The Proud Prince," or "If I Were King," knows what an excellent romancist Mr. Justin Huntly McCarthy can be, and will read "The Lady of Loyalty House" with some little disappointment. It is too obviously written with an eye on the theatre, and smacks too much of the stage and too little of life. Brilliana, the Lady of Harby, arms her servants and holds her house for the king against a force of besieging Roundheads. The leader of the enemy comes in under a flag of truce, and while he is demanding surrender, reinforcements arrive for the Cavaliers and he is taken prisoner in a fashion that is not at all characteristic of those gallant gentlemen, but the exigencies of the plot required it. From hating him violently, Brilliana grows to love this man, and before the end he is indebted to her and to the self-sacrifice of his rival for his life. One can imagine that on the boards it would make a rousing melodrama; but here, the arrangement of the events is too mechanical, and the humour is too crudely pantomimical to seem humorous. It is lightly and vivaciously written, and so can be read with interest, but Mr. McCarthy has proved himself, and we have a right to expect better things from him.

**THE BRETHREN.** By H. Rider Haggard. 6s. (Cassell.)

For his latest romance Mr. Rider Haggard has gone back to the time of the Crusaders. His heroine, Rosamund, is the only daughter of old Sir Andrew D'Arcy and the dead Zobeide, a sister of the great Sultan Saladin. Sir Andrew had in his younger days been taken prisoner by the Sultan's father, and escaping, had fled to England with his captor's daughter; and when "The Brethren" starts, the Sultan, because of a strange dream, is resolved to have his niece to live with him in his palace at Damascus, and sends emissaries to fetch her from her father's house. Dwelling with Sir Andrew at this juncture are his two nephews, Godwin and Wulf, and in saving her from the first attempt of the Sultan's agents to carry her off, these two realise that they love her. But their love in no wise lessens their loyalty and affection to each other. By mutual agreement each declares his passion, but asks Rosamund not to reply to him until the following day, so that in the knowledge that they both love her she may be very sure which of them has her whole heart. Unable to make up her mind on this, Rosamund says she will answer neither of them till they return from the wars in two years' time, and that then, if one shall be dead, she will marry the other. Such an accommodating love is not entirely convincing, but it serves to rouse the reader's curiosity and to keep him on the tenterhooks of uncertainty until the very last page. One Christmas night Rosamund is stolen away from under her father's roof, but contrives to leave a message urging her lovers to follow and rescue her. They hasten on her track to the Holy Land, and thereafter the plot thickens more rapidly, and there is no stint of perilous adventure, gallant fighting, supernatural happenings, and picturesque mystery by the way. It is a capital romance of its kind, bristling with sensational incidents, and written with all Mr. Haggard's customary cunning and effectiveness.

**AUNT HULDAH.** By Grace MacGowan Cooke and Alice MacGowan. 6s. (Hodder and Stoughton.)

Aunt Huldah belongs to the same cheery and quaintly sagacious family as Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch, but she is too strongly individual for the resemblance to be more than superficial. She keeps a coffee-house in the wilds of the Far West, and looks tolerantly on the desperadoes and unscrupulous rascals of those parts, regarding them large-heartedly as "pore babies, pore little ign'ant chil'en. Ef they knowed better they'd do better," she considers, and holds that, "Law, yes! they must be punished—a child has ter be spanked sometimes; but they ain't no joy in punishin' 'em." She has been long widowed, and has an old memory of two dead children that were hers, and it has come to be such a matter of course for her to adopt all the deserted and orphaned little ones of the district that her coffee-house is locally known as the Orphan Home. Everybody in trouble

or difficulties turns naturally to her for help, and is always sure of getting it. But she is no mere sentimentalist; a shrewd, practical common-sense underlies all her tender-heartedness, and enables her to awaken what is best and strongest in her many harrassing "orphants" where a firmer and more drastic treatment might have failed. The humour of the stories is delightfully quaint, and every page is full of matter for laughter or for tears. It is a book that will, like Aunt Huldah herself, "scatter sunshine" wherever it is known.

**THE FARM OF THE DAGGER.** By Eden Phillpotts. 3s. 6d. (Newnes.)

There are some fine descriptive passages, some powerfully dramatic situations, and a charmingly idyllic love story in "The Farm of the Dagger," and yet, as a whole, it just fails of being convincing. The things that Eve Newcombe says to her lover, young Quinton Honeywell, would be wholly beautiful in thought, but become mere high falutin' when they are spoken. If Mr. Phillpotts had written them as describing her feeling and the unutterable raptures of her spirit, one could have read them with complete delight, but when one is asked to accept them as the spoken words of a country lass, one cannot do it believably. The long feud between the two neighbour farmers is strikingly developed. The nephew of the one loves the daughter of the other; both set their faces against any such union, and Honeywell goes to villainous lengths to prevent it, with the result that Eve's brain is affected, she attempts suicide, and remains thereafter in a state of pathetically harmless imbecility. The tragic death of the two old enemies is a grim and vivid bit of writing, and the happy ending that comes on the heels of it gains in brightness from the contrast. The book will not rank with its author's best, though its characterisation is often masterly, and the story itself is always interesting.

**MAJOR WEIR.** By K. L. Montgomery. 6s. (Unwin.)

The story of Major Weir is an imaginative blend of fact and fiction. It is crowded with sensational events, and touched with much that is weird and ghastly. Weir, who passes in old Edinburgh for a godly man and is currently known as Angelical Thomas, is drawn with considerable skill. He is a cunning and callous schemer, who practises black magic with the aid of a familiar that is always with him in the shape of a black staff. His grim career of villainy and hypocrisy is played out against a background of the storm and tragedy that darkened the days of the Scottish Covenanters. The book has a strong love interest, no little of intrigue and mystery, and, in spite of some occasional prolixity, will be read with unflagging interest from the opening, where Major Weir's preaching to his followers is interrupted by his sister's strangely hysterical outbreak, to the end, when, being exhorted to repent, the Major answers in his anguish, "I have lived like a beast—I must die like a beast!"

**BODEN'S BOY.** By Tom Gallon. 6s. (Hutchinson and Co.)

Boden is the real centre and hero of this capital story. He is a common drapery assistant, who suddenly comes into a large fortune, which he gently tries to use on behalf of others, including David Wayne, his "boy," or adopted ward, and Miss Barbara Pilgrim, his typist. Both Boden and his boy are in love with the latter, whose father takes advantage of Boden's chivalrous affection and manages to fleece him of his money. But the tale ends happily. Its prevailing note is an unforced sympathy with half-educated human nature, and there is plenty of good humour and movement in every chapter. Tickner, the valet, is a great success, and so is Mr. Swaddell, a Pumblechook indeed. Mr. Gallon is to be heartily congratulated on his skill in drawing them, and in his whole management of the plot. Alike in tone and action, the novel is a sincere delight.

**DAVENTRY'S DAUGHTER.** By Harold Bindloss. 6s. (Chatto.)

Mr. Harold Bindloss always writes carefully and well, but if anything he is a little too restrained, too rigidly deliberate. His work would gain considerably in force and virility if he would but occasionally "let himself go." The story of "Daventry's Daughter" is chiefly that of John Everard, a young man who, after running away to sea and roughing it generally, comes into a fortune, falls in love with Beatrice

Hesseldine, who proves as shallow as she is beautiful, and would settle down, only that Beatrice's mother is against her marrying in any such hurry. Before the end of his probation, he suddenly loses his fortune, and with his fortune goes Beatrice. Having to begin life anew, he sets out with Colonel Daventry, one of the company embarking on the great Sahara Exploration Expedition, and so enters upon adventures that make capital reading. In the end, he is in a fair way of earning another fortune, and wins again the love of a woman, but the woman is not Beatrice. A capably constructed and very readable romance.

**THE CHRONICLES OF DON Q.** By K. and Hesketh Prichard. 6s. (Chapman and Hall.)

"Don Q." is a contraction for a name which by interpretation means "bone-smasher," the sobriquet of a local vulture. But the Spanish brigand, who bears it, is by no means a common cut-throat. He is a mixture of chivalry, impudence, and rapacity, a cigarette smoking descendant of Rob Roy, whose adventures have been told, with occasional lapses into melodrama and extravagance, in this strong, exciting volume. The tales read well in serial form, and they will furnish some thrilling moments in their new collected and illustrated shape. Besides, unlike Sherlock Holmes, Don Q. does not wantonly fling away his life at the close. He arranges for his memoirs to be published by an English firm. O prudent Don Q.! And he still lives—O prudent authors!

## The Bookman's Table.

**LONDON IN THE TIME OF THE TUDORS.** By Sir Walter Besant. 30s. net. (Black.)

This splendid volume is the third member of the series intended by the late Sir Walter Besant to form a complete survey of London. The literary and the historical student, the antiquary, and the general reader will all rejoice that Sir Walter Besant's great project was sufficiently far advanced to cover, as it now does, the history of London from the reign of Henry VII. to the end of the eighteenth century. The volumes all proceed on so carefully calculated a plan, and all are of such excellence, that it were rash to give any one the pre-eminence. But very many will find this the most interesting of the three, for it affords a most complete and very delightful picture of every side of Elizabethan London. With literary attractiveness it combines the results of detailed research. The book is a mine of information, and, unlike most of its kind, it conveys that information in the form of a coherent and attractive narrative. Like its predecessors, the volume is splendidly produced. It is a worthy addition to Sir Walter Besant's most enduring monument.

**JOHN OF GAUNT.** By Sydney Armitage Smith. 18s. net. (Constable.)

Mr. Armitage Smith states unquestionable truths when he asks, "What name on the roll of English princes is more familiar? What actor in the great drama of English history has been watched with less attention?" To the first he himself supplies the obvious answer. That John of Gaunt is a household name is due almost entirely to Chaucer and Spenser—the clearest case in English history of the superiority of the pen to the sword. (We should be inclined to add as a reason the conservatism of matriculation examiners.) In spite of his proved personal courage, John of Gaunt never carved out fame with his sword. His expeditions to France were mostly failures, and Mr. Armitage Smith, who is too good a historian ever to be an apologist, is constrained to admit that John of Gaunt owed vastly more to his tact, to his poet friend, and to his matrimonial successes than he did to his own abilities either as a soldier or as a statesman. Frankly, there seems considerable justification for the inattention hitherto paid him, for greatness was thrust upon him, not achieved. That our two greatest poets should have immortalised him is an honour for which Mr. Armitage Smith, in a careful and very elaborate study, adduces no very satisfactory reasons. John of Gaunt, so far from suffering from want of attention, is one of the luckiest figures in history. Without any very pressing reasons he is a "household name"; two poets have done him honour; he founded a great dynasty; and now he has been made the