

at the studios of a class of artists whose resemblance to his hero is not very remote. He even for a while made a certain stir as an art critic, and his articles on Manet contain theories not at variance with those exposed in the present volume. There is scarcely another work of his; not even excepting his volumes of literary and theatrical criticism, in which his personal theories are more complacently set forth than in this. By the side of the painter is the young writer, Sandoz, Zola himself, or rather the Zola that Zola sees. There is no stronger pleading *pro domo* than the tirades of Sandoz on his new studies "de l'homme physiologique"; his explanations of his audacities of language, of his convictions that everything ought to be expressed in words, that there are hideous and abominable words that are indispensable, "qu'une langue sort enrichie de ces bains de force." Of course the most characteristic part of his utterances cannot be quoted or even hinted at. By the side of the main figures there is a whole band of young artists—Mahoudeau the sculptor, Gagnière, who, while the others dispute, dreams aloud of Berlioz, and Schumann, and Wagner, "le dieu en qui s'incarnent des siècles de musique."

M. Zola feels conscious of being himself, he, the high priest of the Naturalistic school, a product of the Romantic school of Hugo. As a critic, he saw through what was false and factitious in Hugo, and yet he has the very defects of the school, just as his hero, Claude, the painter who wishes to paint only the real, falls at every moment into exaggeration, into a secret symbolism which makes him introduce naked figures into the foreground of a picture which is to reproduce the Paris of to-day. If we are to consider Sandoz as expressing his ideas, he is painfully aware that his generation has been steeped in Romanticism: "Nous en sommes restés imprégnés quand même, et nous avons eu beau nous débarbouiller, prendre des bains de réalité violente, la tache s'entête, toutes les lessives du monde n'en ôteront pas l'odeur." It would take a specialist in painting to criticize M. Zola's pages on the processes employed by his hero. Here, as elsewhere, his vocabulary is inexhaustible, his precision fatiguing, his prolixity of detail annoying when it does not become unintelligible to a reader whose knowledge of the subject is only general. There is at times a perfect orgy of description in 'L'Œuvre.' Victor Hugo and his school have no richer tints with which to bring out the landscape than Zola has when he sees Paris, and the Seine, and the quays at sunset through the eyes of Claude and Christine in their long walks at the time of their first unconscious love. To the many descriptions of Paris that M. Zola has given (there are no less than five in 'Une Page d'amour,' all from the same spot), he has added several in 'L'Œuvre,' most of them as seen from the Pont des Saint-Pères looking toward the island of the Cité, at all hours and all seasons, and in all sorts of weather. It is in these descriptions that the author shows himself a consummate artist and creator in style.

Aside from the inherent repulsiveness of the matter, and the voluntary and even calculated disregard of the proprieties of language, 'L'Œuvre' is not one of the books in which M. Zola most offends the current taste and sense of decorum, though there is enough in it to make the work disagreeable even to readers not over-fastidious. On the whole, the same may be said of 'L'Œuvre' as of the other novels by the same author: they may interest on account of the many subjects they touch upon; they may even attract by the unusual nature of these subjects; but they cannot be said to amuse. They are often tedious reading. Even if we are not repelled by the brutal truth they claim to have, we certainly do not rise from reading them with

our better nature stirred into activity. They depress and sadden by the persistent presentation of what is mean and selfish in man. They show, with entire unconcern, where the evil lies. They dwell on all the hideous and repulsive details of human maladies, and never suggest a remedy or raise a hope of some cure, however distant. The latter part of 'L'Œuvre' recalls forcibly to the mind 'Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu' of Balzac. In that, too, the painter becomes absorbed in his *œuvre* enough to forget all else, and to lose his reason and his sense of the beautiful. Not so, however, with the Claude of M. Zola: he, on the contrary, can never be satisfied; he doubts at times his own genius, his mental equilibrium. Herein is the despairing note of the work—that "fatal powerlessness" which seems to pervade the best creations of the Naturalistic school.

*Persia, the Land of the Imams. A Narrative of Travel and Residence, 1871-1885. By James Bassett. Scribners. 1886. Map, pp. xvii, 348. 8vo.*

PERSIA is so important a factor in Central Asian politics that a trustworthy account of her present condition has a special interest at this time. Mr. Bassett has the great advantage over some recent writers on this country that he was not a mere traveller, but lived in Persia for eleven years. His first impressions were received when the country was suffering from the effects of the famine of 1871, during which it is estimated two millions of people perished. This fact perhaps unconsciously colors the whole of the book, and induces a more unfavorable tone than might have been the case a few years earlier or later. While in all the tours, with a single exception, which he describes, nearly every town and village presented scenes of suffering and death from starvation, a traveller through Persia in 1881 is able to say, "I saw neither man, woman, nor child in a state of weakness from insufficient food; . . . the physical condition of the peasantry seemed to leave nothing to desire." The author's journeys, of which he gives an account in the first chapters, were confined to the northern provinces, Ispahan being the furthest southern point which he reached. The most interesting of them was that to the sacred city of Mashad on the northeastern frontier, a place familiar to the readers of Vámbéry and O'Donovan. At the time our author visited it, in 1878, about 125 miles of the road from Teheran was known as the "Place of Fear," from the fact that it was exposed to the raids of the Turkomans. It was the custom, therefore, for all pilgrims and travellers, of whom there were always great numbers, to cross this stretch of country in caravans which were despatched twice a month under Government escort. The author's description of a night march with the caravan—the alarm as it approaches one of the "Stations of Terror," the songs of the pilgrims, the long-drawn-out cries of the dervishes, "like the ominous hoot of an owl"—is the best in the book. Though warned that it was not safe for a Christian to enter the city, he went about freely and without the disguise which other travellers have assumed. On this account, however, he was unable to enter the famous sanctuary ornamented with gold-enamelled tiles.

In the closing chapters Mr. Bassett gives the results of his observations on the country, its Government and people. There is much that is encouraging in its present condition: Persia has no debt, and its revenues exceed its expenditures. But, on the other hand, its revenues and, according to the latest returns, its commerce are apparently decreasing, and the cost of living has greatly increased. Consequently, "while a few people are growing richer, the peasants are growing

poorer, if that be possible, and the whole country is falling into a financial stress, the only remedy for which, in the ordinary course of things, is a reduction of the population by war and famine." A principal cause of this is the fact that the means of communication are still of the most primitive character. Though the greater part of the country offers no obstacles to the easy and rapid construction of roads, there are but two of any length which are practicable for wagons. Mr. Bassett states that there is only one—that which connects the capital with Casveen, a hundred miles to the northwest; but the latest accounts say that there is now a second, between Teheran and Koom, which is about the same distance to the south. The cost of transport, therefore, is such as to effectually prevent the development of internal traffic. The Shah has made several attempts to induce foreign capitalists to build railroads, but hitherto without success, from inability to give sufficient security. Of this monarch, who has been on the throne for the period, extraordinary for an Oriental sovereign, of nearly thirty-eight years (not forty-five, as Mr. Benjamin states in the *January Century*), our author says he "is by far the mildest and best disposed prince that has ruled in Persia. He is also the most progressive." Though he has done much for his people, he has made no radical reform, no doubt despairing of overcoming the obstacles to progress common to all Mohammedan countries. To these should be added, according to some recent writers, among whom is the late United States Minister to Persia, the influence of Russia, which is said to be exerted steadily and powerfully to prevent the growth of a country which she intends to conquer. However this may be, that part of Persia which, next to Teheran and its immediate vicinity, seems to show the greatest improvement, is the province of Khorasan, which, thanks to Russia, is nearly freed from the raids of the Turkomans. The statement of the author that "the Turkman as he was, the scourge and terror of Eastern Persia and Central Asia, has ceased to be," is rather a prophecy than an accomplished fact, as Col. Stewart, of the Afghan Boundary Commission, reports their raids as still continuing in 1884 in the territory to the south of Mashad.

Mr. Bassett's work as a missionary naturally led him to make a careful study of the different religions of the people of Persia, and the chapters devoted to this subject are the most valuable in his work. The great mass are Sheah Mohammedans. "The essential and distinguishing tenet of this sect is that, by the command of Mohammed, the right to supreme spiritual and secular rule was possessed by the eldest living representative of Ali, until and including the twelfth generation." This last ruler or Imam is Al Mahdi, who disappeared when a child. He is not dead, however, but is concealed, and will make two revelations of himself. Of the numerous impostors to whom this tradition has given rise, the best known is the Bab, whose followers, called Babees, still exist in considerable numbers, though subjected now for many years to the severest persecutions. The non-Mohammedans are only about one hundred and thirty thousand out of a total population variously estimated at from five to ten millions. These consist principally of Armenians, Nestorians, Jews, and Parsis, or Guebers, as they are contemptuously called in Persia. This sect is rapidly decreasing in numbers under the constant oppression which it has suffered for many years; and though very numerous formerly, according to its recent historian, Dosabhai, "it does not at present exceed seven or eight thousand." It illustrates the difficulty of getting any trustworthy statistics of this country that Mr. Benjamin puts the numbers of the Guebers at 25,000,

while Mr. Basset says they "do not number more than four or five thousand souls." The Jews are, if possible, in a still more degraded condition. "They are all polygamists, either in theory or fact, and the law of divorce is essentially that of the Mohammedans. In every place the Jews follow the most disreputable pursuits." The Armenians alone of the dissenters have acquired any influence in Persia. "Many of them are employed in important positions, and as postmasters, telegraphists, and officers of the army."

As a writer Mr. Basset lacks imaginative power, and, while giving many minute details, is rarely able to present to the mind a picture of that which he describes. In spelling Persian words he frequently follows a rule of his own which, so far as we have examined, generally differs from that of other writers. It would have much enhanced the value of his work if he had, in some condensed form, given his readers a clear idea of the changes in Persia either for the better or for the worse during the fourteen years over which his observation extended. Its usefulness, also, as an authority and book of reference would have been greatly increased by an index. We regret this omission the more as the author has evidently taken great pains to be accurate in his statements. We have noticed but a single error, which is in the bibliography at the end: the author of 'Persia during the Famine' was not Buttlebank, but Brittlebank.

*The Epic Songs of Russia.* By Isabel Florence Hapgood. With an Introductory Note by Prof. Francis J. Child. Charles Scribner's Sons. 1886.

*Essays in the Study of Folk-Songs.* By the Countess Evelyn Martinengo-Cesaresco. Scribner & Welford. 1886.

ONE of the most unfortunate results of the movement which we call the Renaissance, was the introduction of a new standard of taste which, for over two centuries, almost entirely closed some of the most interesting and valuable fields of research. All investigation into national history and literature was abandoned for the passionate pursuit of Greek and Roman letters, and every intellectual manifestation of the middle ages, whether in literature or art, was characterized as barbarous. The reaction against the mental despotism of the Renaissance was slow, but never quite suspended, and finally achieved a brilliant victory in the German and French Romantic School. We can measure the immense gain of this victory by considering a single field of study which it has reopened to us—that of popular literature. Before the Renaissance there existed in most countries of Europe a flourishing popular literature, much of which has unfortunately perished by the neglect of later ages, but much more of which has been preserved by oral tradition than we could have believed possible. Almost every department of literature was represented, from the epic to the drama. This literature has suffered no break, but has combined and developed its original elements in the most interesting manner, and the Carolingian epics and the mediæval mystery still survive in many parts of Europe. The immense harvest gleaned during the past few years on this field shows no sign of diminution, and scarcely a month passes that we are not called upon to chronicle some new collection of folk-tales or folk-songs.

The value of this material is twofold: it constitutes no unimportant addition to literature, and it throws much light upon some of the difficult questions regarding the origin of the epic, the drama, etc. This secondary interest, if we may so call it, is just beginning to attract attention. First comes naturally the period of enthusiastic and sometimes indiscriminate collection;

then follow the sifting and comparison of materials and the deduction of general laws and principles. The two volumes before us illustrate these two stages: one is a genuine and delightful addition to literature, and the other is an examination and comparison of materials already collected. We shall examine the two books in the above order.

One of the interesting things about the collection of popular literature is, the surprises it has in store for the collector and reader. When a country has apparently been ransacked by scholars, some outlying territory will suddenly afford a new and extensive branch of literature; or some forms, which, it had been thought, had disappeared forever, will all at once crop out in the most unexpected manner. Both of these cases have been verified in the Russian Folk-Epics so admirably presented to the English reader by Miss Hapgood. In some countries we have epics without epic songs, as in France; in others we have epic songs and no epics, as in Russia; and lastly, as in Spain, we have both epics and epic songs. In none of the southern countries, however, have we one of the most interesting features of the northern epics, the survival of the mythical age. The early introduction of Christianity in the south had so thoroughly destroyed the pagan mythology that we find no trace of it in popular literature, except, of course, as much as the Church absorbed into her ceremonies and legends. In the north, on the other hand, the persistence of pagan mythology communicates a tone elsewhere unknown. Finally, we may notice the absence of that form of chivalry which was developed on the southern soil under the influence of Christianity. It would be impossible, for instance, to find in the epic songs of the south a hero like Ilyá of Múrom, who was a peasant.

The epic songs of Russia were unknown until a few years ago, and the story of their survival and collection is engagingly told by Miss Hapgood in her introduction. The songs themselves are cyclical in their nature, and cluster about the exploits of heroes who had their homes at Kiev, Novgorod, and Moscow. There are, besides, separate songs upon the elder heroes. The contents are of the most fascinating description, and, with the exception of an occasional trait found in all folk-songs, will prove entirely new to the reader; while the admirable form in which the translator has clothed her text gives the book the value of an original literary work. Around the half-mythical figures of the peasant-hero Ilyá of Múrom and the Prince Fair Sun Vladmír gather the heroic shapes of their companions, who quaff the aurochs' horn of mead and wield the mace six tons in weight. Nor are fair ladies absent from these pages, where the imaginations of the Orient and Occident meet and fuse, but Vladmír's wife, the Princess Apráxia and her sister Nastálya woo their husbands or meet death at their hands like their sisters in the ballads of other nations. A world of romance is revealed to the reader in these pages, and the translator has our gratitude for bringing it within our ken.

The 'Essays in the Study of Folk-Songs,' by the Countess Martinengo-Cesaresco, offers a somewhat different interest. It is, as we have said above, an examination and comparison of folk-songs already collected, chiefly in the south of Europe, and parts of the book have already appeared in various periodicals. In spite of the desultory character of the work, it displays wide reading and excellent taste, and cannot fail to awaken curiosity. The contents may be divided into four classes: that in which the writer gives a comprehensive account of the folk-songs of some country or province, as in the chapters on Armenian Folk-Songs, Venetian Folk-Songs, etc.; that in which are examined the various modes of

treatment of certain themes, as, Nature in Folk-Songs, the Idea of Fate in Southern Traditions, the Inspiration of Death in Folk-Poetry; or in which the author discusses such general questions as the Diffusion of Ballads; or, finally, the class treating of some of the divisions of folk-songs, such as Folk-Lullabies, Folk-Dirges, and Songs for the Rite of May. These essays are all entertaining and valuable, and will serve to show the reader what a rich mine is that of popular literature, and how little known in this country, notwithstanding the labors of Prof. Child and Mr. Newell. It is to be regretted, that no references, except in the most general way, are given to the sources; and, as the texts are presented in translations only, it is impossible to trace them, in spite of the list of authorities given at the end of the book.

*Whom God Hath Joined.* By Elizabeth Gilbert Martin. [Leisure Hour Series.] Henry Holt & Co.

THERE is pleasure in the opportunity to describe as able, a novel written by a woman. The author of 'Whom God hath Joined' provides that opportunity. The chief, but by no means the only interest of the novel lies in the spiritual development of Katherine Danforth, a girl born of Methodist parents and bred in an American town, where every tenth man has an infallible creed of his own for which he is ready to be uncompromisingly disagreeable until a new revelation compels him to readjust the definition of infallible. The girl, sensitive, impressionable, with unusual intellectual keenness, is tormented by doctrinal hair-splitting; she drifts through doubt to unbelief, and at last finds peace in the absolutism of the Church of Rome. The author's conclusions and the wisdom or folly of Katherine's behavior in the great crisis of her life involve questions of religious dogma. Centuries of theological strife and oceans of human blood have not settled them. Mrs. Martin has not undertaken to decide them for the universe, but she has discussed them through her characters very cleverly. The delineation of Katherine is fine and complete. The sketches of Mark Norton, who felt that Methodist fervor was, in some way, incompatible with slaveholding; of White, the chilly Unitarian; of Maria Rawson, the fanatical convert to Romanism, and of the Jesuit father, are all vivid and impartial. In Katherine the tendency towards Romanism is indicated from the first, and at the end the reader shares the author's conviction that her conversion is a logical and natural finality.

It is to the author's conviction that the book owes much of its power, and this is additional proof of a fact already pretty firmly established, that the woman in literature is strongest when she is "writing up" a personal feeling or conviction. In Mrs. Martin's case the gain of power more than compensates for any loss of literary beauty. She has managed her plot, too, almost as well as her motive and characters. It is coherent and ingenious, though the movement of the second part is so rapid that the reader cannot feel the tragedy of the dénouement. In natural connection with the narrative she has contrived to make shrewd and entertaining comments on life, and has occasionally achieved an epigram that bears examination.

*Hamlet's Note-Book.* By William D. O'Connor. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1886.

"HAMLET'S NOTE-BOOK" is 'Promus,' and the little essay it gives a title to is a reply to Richard Grant White's destroying criticism on the latter, when it was edited and issued to be the capstone of that monumental folly called the argument for Bacon's authorship of Shakspeare. The writer