

for the reformation of aunts or for their total abolition.

In 'Lord Vanecourt's Daughter' the monster of the hearth is a father, a peer of the realm, a gentleman of great personal beauty and of engaging manner. Lord Vanecourt's daughter is well grown before she makes her father's acquaintance. She has certain instinctive prepossessions in his favor, but when she sees him coolly permit her blind grandmother to walk into a pit and break her neck, she feels that, as a father or a friend, he is neither to be admired nor trusted. So she frankly declares, "No longer shall you be kith or kin of mine"; whereupon he smiles pleasantly, threatens solitary confinement, and mentally reflects that loneliness, grief, and despair will soon "do for" his daughter. The daughter, however, runs away, and Lord Vanecourt sets up a servant in her place, thus acquiring control of her fortune, which he very much needs. When the daughter, hearing of his ruse, returns and claims her own, Lord Vanecourt, still smiling affably, declares her to be a crazy impostor, calls the police, and has her committed to an asylum. The daughter has even a harder time than Aunt Parker's niece before she gets rid of her father, secures her lover, and comes into her own. If it had not been for mystics, Theosophists, and clairvoyants, she undoubtedly would have perished, and the world would never have known how much worse than one of the wicked it is possible for a British father, who is also a nobleman, to be.

In 'Self or Bearer,' a story that begins with a lost heir and ends with a forged check, Mr. Besant draws a picture of English *bonheur de famille* which makes us hope that the country may yet be saved. The Cronans are not absolutely abandoned to plotting each other's destruction, perhaps because they are equally poor, and the doctor can see no pecuniary advantage to be derived from maltreating his children. Then there is one really loving mother, but she is a shady person, a foreigner and an opera singer, who perhaps loved her son to keep her mind from contemplation of her numerous disadvantages. But even in this pleasant tale of innocent people the iniquitous parent finds a place. What but crime and shame can be expected from a boy whose father, a scholar and, in a way, a gentleman, brings him up on such axioms as "Despise common cant about Honor, Friendship, Justice, Charity. The world is full of creatures who live by eating each other. There is no other way to live"?

It is, however, when the British father is a rector that his tyrannical nature is seen in perfection. In 'Until the Day Breaks' there is a very fine specimen. The most amiable remark the Rev. Mr. Marsden can make to his daughter is, "I think you look rather less repulsive, Harriet, when you are sitting still than when you are playing tennis." The kindest act he can conceive of is to enclose to this daughter's husband a letter written in confidence to her mother, the contents of which were calculated to annoy the mildest husband, and to enrage a hot-tempered one. Mr. Marsden's ordinary demeanor in his household is that of a sulky savage. Many of his most disagreeable attributes are common to all the men in the story, excepting an Irish patriot. He is a radiant saint, and the obvious deduction is that the temper and manners of men can best be preserved by giving each one a turbulent nation instead of a well-meaning family to take care of.

Mr. Murray's 'First Person Singular' sustains the deduction. Here there is only one family man—a literary man with an adoring wife; and he behaves very decently. The rest of the men are Polish patriots, Russian patriots, Irish patriots, and Irish-American sympathizers—a live-

ly, interesting, and fairly human set. The doings of these inflammable creatures are necessarily exciting, and are told with great spirit and energy. The novel adds to Mr. Murray's reputation as a vivid delineator of cosmopolitan life, and interpreter of the spirit of the world about him.

In 'Rainbow Gold' and 'Aunt Rachel' he is less successful. Neither is of his own time, or of his own genre. 'Rainbow Gold' is a romance, full of adventure, with many fine touches of humor and pathos, entirely creditable, but not in the author's best manner. Mr. Ezekiel Round is a very bad father indeed, but his temper is an honest, old-fashioned one. He does not abuse his son habitually and out of pure malice, but, when Job defies him, he turns him out of doors, and stamps his foot, and vows nevermore to look upon his ungrateful child. 'Aunt Rachel,' described as a "sentimental rural comedy," is still further from Mr. Murray's natural vein. It has to do with a company of rustics who utter proverbs in dialect, and who are abandoned to playing upon stringed instruments. The character of Aunt Rachel is not a happy one for a pastoral. The whole story lacks the unconsciousness, the spontaneity, without which simplicity in fiction has neither grace, nor charm, nor value.

Mr. Lang, in 'The Mark of Cain,' gives both domestic and rural themes a wide berth. He revels in crime. He scrambles breathlessly from cheating at cards to murder, from murder to abduction, from abduction to attempted assassination and suicide, and he thrusts the burden of almost all the atrocities on the shoulders of one man. All the villains of history and fiction together pale before Mr. Thomas Cranby. If he were in the least interesting, his fame would be assured and eternal; but with all his talent he is not interesting, nor is the chain of destruction of which he is the first and last link. The story is a sequence of extravagances, and the author's consciousness of the extravagance rather aggravates than mitigates the fault. To the crimes of the cheap novelist Mr. Lang has added one only possible to the man-of-letters—the irrelevant display of much reading. He gives us a chapter on the literature of flying machines and several discourses on the *woorali* or arrow poison of the Macoushi Indians of Guiana. His black-leg tells us what Matthew Arnold says, as glibly as he lays down the laws of baccerat. The author is so crammed with quotations that he cannot describe a girl with a big nose in plain phrase. Even the frequenters of the *Hit and Miss* can scarce forbear to quote. And with all his quoting, he is occasionally surprisingly inaccurate. Macaulay did not write the couplet which introduces 'The Mark of Cain,' as it is there written, and we have never before heard the crackling of thorns under a pot compared to the laughter of the wicked.

A Popular History of Astronomy during the Nineteenth Century. By Agnes M. Clerke. Macmillan & Co. 1886.

WHAT manner of woman is this that, unknown in scientific literature, makes her first appearance as authoress of a work which the ablest astronomer would hesitate to undertake? Fifteen years ago we might have taken it for granted that such a writer would know nothing of the subject except what she had gleaned from the writings of Lockyer and Proctor, and from the publications of the Royal Astronomical Society. But the issues of *Nature* have since opened the eyes of England to the fact that other countries are doing work in science, and it has ceased to be a matter of pride with English writers to ignore everything done elsewhere. A very slight examination of Miss Clerke's work shows that

she is no mere compiler, recording impressions at second-hand, but a really thorough student of the original works of the leading astronomers of the world, and, what is yet better, able to enter into the spirit of their labors. It is difficult to see how any one without going through a course of professional training at a German university could have seized upon the ruling idea of modern instrumental astronomy so happily as is done in the following sentences:

"His [Bessel's] introduction of a regular theory of instrumental errors might almost be said to have created a new art of observation. Every instrument, he declared in memorable words, must be twice made—once by the artist, and again by the observer. Knowledge is power. Defects that are ascertained and can be allowed for are as good as non-existent. Thus the truism that the best instrument is worthless in the hands of a careless or clumsy observer, became supplemented by the converse maxim that defective appliances may by skilful use be made to yield valuable results."

Are we, then, dealing with a prodigy who sees everything from the point of view of the trained astronomer? A mere study of scientific researches does not qualify one to write their history. Every investigation must be understood, not only in itself, but in its origin, relations, and surroundings. It originated because the author and his co-workers had reached a certain stage of knowledge; its treatment of the subject is suggested by a multitude of circumstances, and it reflects the personal peculiarities of each writer. Unless the investigation is seen as part of a whole, the view of the historian will be imperfect. Moreover, a large mass of the scientific research of the day is far from being either conclusive or complete, and no one who does not carefully follow it with a professional eye can see it in its true perspective.

There are in astronomy a few tests, varying from time to time, by which the popular writer can be easily gauged. Ten to twenty years ago the value of the solar parallax which he preferred afforded an extremely easy and simple test. If he knew nothing he assigned it a high figure, and the more thoroughly he was acquainted with astronomical research, the better he knew that it was probably overestimated, and that every improvement was reducing it toward the older value of Encke. But after the publication of a careful history of the subject by Dr. Daniel Gill, about 1879, there was no longer any excuse for the ignorance which English writers universally displayed, and we are not surprised to find Miss Clerke's history accurate in all essential points. But other tests of her quality, now available, show her to be human. She thinks "there can be no question" that Dr. Huggins has photographed the solar corona without an eclipse. She thinks the rotation of the planets Mercury and Venus on their axes was determined by Cassini and others, that Di Vico in 1841 identified the markings on Venus drawn by Bianchini 113 years earlier, and that something is known of the period of rotation of these planets. She deems "Baily's beads" worth a page of mention, and finds that no satisfactory explanation of these beads and of the related "black ligament" in transits of Mercury and Venus has yet been offered. She considers the occasional visibility of the dark hemisphere of Venus to be established. She even supposes that Mr. Pogson saw Biela's comet or some fragment of it in his noted observation of December 2, 1872. All these are examples of certain ill-founded ideas more or less current in astronomy, but understood to be ill-founded only by those most thoroughly familiar with the probabilities as well as with the facts of the case. That the authoress admits them does not seriously detract from the character of her work; it only shows that her powers of judgment are not superhuman. It is only fair to add that

there are plenty of other tests which she passes well; for example, she does not claim that Watson and Swift saw from two to four intra-Mercurial planets during the solar eclipse of 1878.

Altogether, we have here one of the best-written scientific books now in the market, clear in style, virile in expression, and accurate in statement. We have scarcely been able to find an important branch of research overlooked, which should have taken the place of any admitted. Slips of the pen must be rare, as the only one we have noticed is that the singular variable star η Argus has recently regained much of its lost light. The most important improvement of which the book seems susceptible would be the insertion of important numerical results in tabular form, such, for example, as a little table showing the values of the parallaxes of stars and masses of the planets recently obtained. We shall hope to hear further from an author who has started with so noteworthy a production.

Hap-Hazard Personalities: Chiefly of Noted Americans. By Charles Lanman. Boston: Lee & Shepard. 1886.

MR. LANMAN has had a wide acquaintance with men—poets, artists, clergymen, journalists, statesmen, all kinds; and he has a taste for minute biography, and much experience therein. His present contribution is likely to be of most use in the case of those personages great in their own day and circle, but now rapidly passing from men's memories; and compilers of dictionaries of biography may gather at last what wheat there is in this volume. Of the famous men whom he had connections with he tells us nothing new, and the many letters he prints would never have been missed. But the accounts of such men as Joseph Gales and William W. Seaton, Peter Force, Charles Heavyside, and Clark Mills have a greater value, as knowledge of them is not easily accessible, supposing there should be any occasion for extended information regarding their careers. The history of American journalism and art may hereafter be indebted to these reminiscences for some details; but, as a whole, the volume contains the sort of facts that

ought to be submitted to hydraulic pressure to be of any available use.

Consular Reminiscences. By G. Henry Horstmann. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1886.

MR. HORSTMANN was Consul at Munich for over ten years, and at Nuremberg for nearly five years, and he can therefore speak with authority in respect to the trials, pleasures, and business of the office. His reminiscences contain the most heterogeneous mass of disconnected matter that it has been our lot to peruse. All that unites it is the flow of anecdote about the affairs of his multifarious clients. He finds opportunities to discuss fiddles and beer, Lola Montez, the King, the celebration of our Centennial at Munich, the Passion Play, and General Grant, at some length; the rest is a helter-skelter of personal experiences. He is, of course, a civil-service reformer, and puts in a word for that cause with the conviction of an official; but if the view of the consular duties he gives will not deter the ambitious, it is to be feared his political philosophy will be of no avail. If he had called his volume a consular scrap-bag, he would have hit it better; it is the waste-paper of his memory.

Der Korrektor. Szenen aus dem Schattenspiele des Lebens, vorgeführt von Heinrich Steinhäusen. Leipzig: J. Lehmann; New York: Westermann.

CHRISTMAS literature—for this volume was published at the close of last year—is apt to be like imitation champagne: the original wine may be good enough, regarded as a simple every-day beverage, but the artificial infusion of the gas necessary to give it the proper Christmas sparkle spoils the good material it acts upon, as well as fails to produce a happy combination. But when the effect aimed at is cheerfulness and joviality, together with the passive good will, if not active charity, engendered by the Christmas dinner, with no attempt to excite any deeper feeling, there is no consciousness on the reader's part of being trifled with, such as is caused by made-up emotion and artificial pathos. 'Der Korrektor'

is prettily printed and bound, and as it is already in its fourth edition, it may be supposed to suit the German taste. But it is only a very middle-class taste that could be pleased with so commonplace sentiments illustrated by a story consisting of hackneyed incidents, only connected by a preposterous series of coincidences. We suppose it is intended for ingenuous youth, but healthier food, even in contemporary German literature, might be put before them than is a tale whose pathos consists in the betrayal of the hero's trust by the friend whom he reveres as well as loves, aggravated by the latter's ruining his sweetheart; the whole ending in a reconciliation scene at the hero's deathbed, where the villain (who, naturally enough, is a materialistic philosopher) is converted from his wicked views and becomes the head of a united family; his should-be wife and unknown child having been providentially rescued by the hero so as to effect this happy transformation.

BOOKS OF THE WEEK.

Badeau, A. Aristocracy in England. Harper & Brothers. "Bielheim." Funk & Wagnalls. 50 cents.
Bout-Walpole. Extracts from Lucian. Edited for the Use of Schools. Macmillan & Co. 40 cents.
Carnegie, A. An American Four-in-Hand in Britain. Charles Scribner's Sons. 25 cents.
Collins, J. C. Bollingbroke; an Historical Study. Voltaire in England. Harper & Brothers.
De Beauchamp, Viscount H. A Misalliance in the House of Brunswick. Scribner & Welford.
Frery, Raoul. La Question du Latin. Boston: Schoenhof.
Gontcharoff, I. Marc le Nihiliste. Boston: Schoenhof.
Hale, W. Shore Life in Song. Biddeford, Me.: Journal Office.
Harris, Amanda B. Old School Days. Illustrated. Boston: Interstate Publishing Co.
Harrison, H. Life of Rev. John Barrett Kerfoot, First Bishop of Pittsburgh. Vol. I. 1816-64. Vol. II. 1864-81. James Pott & Co.
Hollis, E. B. Cecil's Cousins. Thomas Y. Crowell. \$1.25.
Hutchinson, P. O. The Diary and Letters of His Excellency Thomas Hutchinson, Esq., Compiled from the Original Documents still remaining in the possession of his Descendants. Vol. II. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$5.
Larkin, H. Carlyle, and the Open Secret of his Life. Scribner & Welford.
Le Row, Caroline B. Practical Recitations. Selections for Literary Exercises, appropriate for Reception-Days, Holidays, etc. Clark & Maynard. 90 cents.
Lille, Lucy C. Rolf House. Illustrated. Harper & Brothers.
Lodge, H. C. The Works of Alexander Hamilton. Vol. VII. G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$5.
Macfarlane, A. R. Children of the Earth. Henry Holt & Co. \$1.
Maugras, Gaston. Querelles de philosophes: Voltaire et J. J. Rousseau. Boston: Schoenhof.
McCosh, Pres. J. Psychology: The Cognitive Powers. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.50.
Pisemsky, A. T. Mille âmes. Boston: Schoenhof.

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