

ing—the making it a Christian life. Besides this express advice, there are the “true stories” of the boyish Australian wanderer remembering in the midst of shipwreck a little incident of his English nursery, and the Scotch youth hunting for employment; and there are two pleasant pictures of vacation ramble—one of the author's house-boat on the Thames with her “six girls” for fellow-voyagers, the other of the Killarney lakes, in which glimpses of Irish character and scenery are skilfully made a plea for reconciliation and mutual kindness between races so long united in everything but in heart. In the days of Theophrastus Such, with his intellectuality, and of such fiction as Daudet dedicates to his son, all this is commonplace and may even seem childish to our forward youth; but the spirit which breathes through these old-fashioned themes is the tradition of practical virtue for a boy's ideal, of kind serviceableness for a girl's, and of broad humanity for a nation's, which lies at the base of historic English character. Unambitious and slight as these pages are, their simple, direct moral teaching, their sound reflections on the common things of life, and the gracious womanliness which is felt pervading them, combine to make this volume excellent home-reading.

Romances of Chivalry. Told, and illustrated in facsimile, by John Ashton. G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1887.

THE occupation of a professional book-maker has certainly about it something of the fascination which attends a life of adventure. To be surprised one's self by what one discovers, and then to share that surprise with others, involve two feelings that are productive of special pleasure. There is the individual charm of unexpectedness in learning something which had never before been dreamed of as existing. Then, again, there is the sense of general superiority which arises from communicating to mankind what has previously been confined almost wholly to the generous giver. No wonder that the profession has a fascination which makes it the recreation of many. “In those days,” writes Mr. Ashton in this work, “an idle man in search of a job in the adventure line was never long without meeting with one.” So it is now. Times change, but human nature does not. Our modern knight-errants of the book-making work sally forth, not to succor distressed damsels or hapless prisoners, but to relieve the wants of suffering communities which hunger and thirst for cheap knowledge and omniscience that can be gained without toil.

These men look upon their employment as a beneficent one, and they are not entirely out of the way in so believing. They are occasionally of great use. They are constantly devising schemes for producing new works on novel subjects, and they sometimes hit upon valuable ones. Mr. Ashton himself struck out a method of portraying the social life of the past by consulting its neglected and almost forgotten ephemeral literature. The work he did might probably have been better done; it was a good deal to have originated the idea of doing it at all. He deserved, therefore, all the success with which he met. Other ventures of his, however, have not been so prosperous, and the volume before us is a failure from almost any point of view from which it can be examined. He has, in it, entered into a region of which he clearly knows little, and which, for any satisfactory account of its peculiarities, requires something more than the capacity to seize upon and chronicle the social small beer of life. It is not, in spite of what he says, an easy region to explore satisfactorily, nor an altogether delightful one to explore at all. He who ventures far into it may come back

laden with sheaves; but if he does so, he will surely have to set forth with tears.

The present volume professes to be an attempt to popularize the romances of chivalry. These, Mr. Ashton assures us, are not known at all to the general reader, because no effort has been put forth to make their attractions accessible. Many of them, indeed, have been published by learned societies, but they have rarely got beyond the subscribers' shelves. They are reproduced in their original dress, and in consequence cannot be easily made out save by the special student. To remedy this state of things Mr. Ashton now comes forward with his first list of romances, told and illustrated so as to be readable and entertaining. The list includes a dozen stories such as Sir Bevis of Hampton, Guy of Warwick, The Squire of Low Degree, Valentine and Orson, and others the names of which will be familiar to many who do not know their details. It is evident from the preface that two other collections are to follow, one based upon the Carolingian cycle of romances, the other upon the Arthurian.

If the public is not delighted, it will not be due to any half-heartedness on the part of the compiler in recommending his wares. Mr. Ashton has set about his task with all that enthusiasm which is apt to attend late acquaintance with a subject or limited knowledge of it. There is, indeed, a sort of naïveté in the almost child-like interest he manifests in the supposed treasures he fancies he has dug up. He is in a perpetual state of astonishment that some particular story has not been more popular. He assures us that these romances were not only highly sensational and full of incident, but also surprises us with the information that they were never prolix, never full of long-winded speeches, until they began to wane at the end of the sixteenth century. As belonging to the body of subscribers to some of the learned societies he mentions, it has been our privilege, or rather our duty, to wade through many of the stories of the kind which have been published. It may be that we attach a peculiar meaning to prolixity and long-windedness, but these words, we should say, denoted two most conspicuous characteristics of these romances. It is to their possession of these qualities that we are disposed to attribute largely the fact of their now being little read or of being little likely to be read. They were suited to the taste of the age in which they came into being. Out of deference to Mr. Ashton's new-born zeal in their behalf, we shall not maintain that the taste of our own age is any better; but it is certainly very different. A story about demons and enchantments and fairies in days when men believed in them could be carried along by its incidents and details; but in days when men no longer believe in demons and enchantments and fairies, there must be an unusual charm in the telling to offset the incredulity with which such incidents and details are received. To that must be added, in the superabundance of our existing literature, a decent regard for the brevity of human life. Neither one of these conditions is found in these romances; and on both grounds there is a curious lack of the literary sense in placing them, as is done in this volume, in comparison with the stories from the Norse or with the ‘Arabian Nights.’

Still, there is a certain interest attaching to these romances, and, if sufficiently condensed, their substance might be worth retelling. In this form they might then become popular to a limited extent. In spite of his assurances that they are never prolix, Mr. Ashton does set out to perform the task of condensation, but he has hardly done it in a way to make the tales read by the class for which he has designed them. Let us take, for illustration, the first romance entitled “Melusine.” Every now and then Mr.

Ashton abandons his own method of recounting the details of the adventures recorded, and says that the story would suffer if it were not told in the very words of the original. These he then proceeds to reproduce, like any editor belonging to the learned societies he mentions. But if there was any desirability of retaining the ancient words, there was certainly no necessity for preserving the ancient spelling in works which are primarily designed to popularize what has been forgotten. Even he who may have been hungering for the knowledge of these romances, can hardly be expected to have his enjoyment heightened by finding “their” spelled “theyr,” “each” spelled “eche,” “build” spelled “bylde,” and by deciphering a hundred similar variations of orthography. Slight modernizations of the inflections also would not affect the literary quality or the interest of the tale to the unlearned reader, for whom the work has been specially prepared. “Madam, I have been somewhat ill at ease, and have had an ague,” is a statement that, in its modern English form, may perhaps lose in quaintness, but certainly gains in clearness, as contrasted with the following form in this book, “Madame, I have be [en] somewhat evyl at ease & have had an ager.” The adding of the *en* in brackets shows, moreover, a wobbling in the mind of the editor, and would be pretty sure to puzzle the average reader. Mr. Ashton's ambition, also, to tell things he knows as soon as he knows them, is attended with the not uncommon result of his sometimes telling things before he knows them. The vocabulary of the fifteenth century presents no special difficulties, but it is evident that the editor has not invariably mastered the few that exist. There are some passages likewise in the selections reproduced in their original form, in which the early scribe or the modern transcriber must have been at fault. The grammar of no period of the English language can cope successfully with their construction, and if they are of a sort to puzzle the students of our early speech, the outlook for the masses waiting for this work is certainly gloomy. Altogether, we are unable to believe that the early English romances are destined to become absorbingly popular through the well-intentioned efforts of Mr. Ashton.

Ancient Cities, from the Dawn to the Daylight. By William Burnet Wright. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1886.

THE “ancient cities” which form the subject of Mr. Wright's little volume are selected for their relation to the Bible or to early Christianity, and all belong to the Orient except Rome and Athens. The work consists of fifteen sketches, apparently lectures, but some of them are very short for lectures; and, as the subject of the last two is the “New Jerusalem,” there are thirteen cities treated. These are all designated by some characteristic epithet—“Ur, the City of Saints,” “Nineveh, the City of Soldiers,” “Babylon, the City of Sensualists,” etc. The scholarship is adequate, although the preface disclaims all pretence to erudition, the style is animated, and the point of view (that of the minister of religion) is serious and orthodox, without being narrow. A better comment could hardly be made upon the atrocious conduct of the crusaders upon entering Jerusalem than this—“that no other sentiment has ever made men so devilish as religious zeal without the spirit of Christ.” The book may be heartily commended for what it has aimed to do and for what it has accomplished. We will only make one criticism, that more unity and clearness of view would perhaps have been obtained by selecting a fewer number of cities and treating each with greater fulness.

BOOKS OF THE WEEK.

A Child of the Revolution: A Novel. Harper's Handy Series. 25 cents.
 Adams, B. The Emancipation of Massachusetts. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.50.
 A Question of Identity. (No Name Series.) Boston: A. Roberts Brothers.
 Avery, Dr. E. M. As Correctly Spoken, Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Co. 15 cents.
 Barrows, Isabel C. Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Correction. Thirteenth Annual session, 1886. Boston: Press of George H. Ellis.
 Baker, W. S. Character Portraits of Washington, as delineated by Historians, Orators, and Divines, with Biographical Notes and References. Philadelphia: Robert M. Lindsay. \$5.
 Besant, W. Dorothy Forster: A Novel. Harper's Franklin Square Library. 20 cents.
 Bishop, W. H. The Golden Justice. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. \$1.25.
 Browne, Francis F. Life of Abraham Lincoln. N. D. Thompson Publishing Co.
 Caswell-Ryan. The Barcarolle. Time and Tune. Book II. 70 songs. Boston: Ginn & Co. \$1.
 Clark, Prof. J. S. A Practical Rhetoric, for Instruction in English Composition and Revision in Colleges and Intermediate Schools. Henry Holt & Co. \$1.25.
 Coleridge, A. D. Goethe's Letters to Zelter. Scribner & Welford.
 Curtis, G. T. Creation or Evolution? A Philosophical Inquiry. D. Appleton & Co. \$2.
 Ireland, Dr. J. B. The Republic: or a History of the United States of America, in the Administrations, from the Monarchic Colonial Days to the Present Times. In 18 volumes. Vols. I. and II. Chicago: Fairbanks and Palmer Publishing Co. \$2.50 per vol.

Keigwin, H. W. Principles of Elementary Algebra. Boston: Ginn & Co.
 Lawyer's Code of Ethics: A Satire. St. Louis: F. H. Thomas Law Book Co.
 Martin, G. Marguerite; or the Isle of Demons. Montreal: Dawson Brothers.
 Martineau, Harriet. The Peasant and the Prince: A Story of the French Revolution. Boston: Ginn & Co. 40 cents.
 Martin-Wetzler. The Electric Motor and Its Applications. Illustrated. W. J. Johnston.
 Melmont, W. G. The Dogaresa. Scribner & Welford. \$2.
 Nichols, S. H. Monte Rosa: The Epic of an Alp. Second edition. Belford, Clarke & Co.
 O'Shea, J. A. Romantic Spain: A Record of Personal Experiences. 2 vols. Scribner & Welford.
 Peabody, Elizabeth P. Last Evening with Washington Alston, and Other Papers. Boston: D. Lothrop & Co. \$1.50.
 Pfeiffer, Emily. Sonnets. Revised and enlarged edition. Scribner & Welford.
 Philbrick, Prof. P. H. Beams and Girders: Practical Formulas for their Resistance. D. Van Nostrand. 50c.
 Plimpton, E. E. Poems. Illustrated. Cincinnati: Mrs. F. B. Plimpton.
 Popular Synonyms. Twenty-five Thousand Words in Ordinary Use. Cleveland: The Burrows Brothers Co. 12 cents.
 Preston, H. W. A Year in Eden. Boston: Roberts Brothers. \$1.50.
 Rice, B. Modern Architectural Practice. No. 1. A Large Copying House. W. T. Comstock. \$5.
 Salts, E. The Anatomy of Negation. Scribner & Welford.
 Scottish Metaphysics Reconstructed in accordance with the Principles of Physical Science. Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons. 40 cents.

Ségur, Mme. la Comtesse de. Les Malheurs de Sophie. W. R. Jenkins.
 Sinnett, A. P. Karma: A Novel. Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co. 75 cents.
 Temple, G. Britta: A Shetland Romance. Harper & Brothers. 25 cents.
 Tolstol, L. Mes Mémoires: Enfance-Adolescence-Jeunesse. Traduit par E. Halperine. New York: Christern.
 Towne, E. O. Aphorisms of the Three Trees. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co.
 Van Karlestein, H. O. Gotham and the Gothamites. Eng. lished by F. C. Valentine. Chicago: Latrd & Lee.
 Washburn, Prof. E. A Treatise on the American Law of Real Property. Fifth Edition, by Joseph Willard and Simon G. Crosswell. 3 vols. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.
 Werner, F. L. Z. The Templars in Cyprus: A Dramatic Poem. Translated by E. A. M. Lewis. Scribner & Welford.
 Wharton, Dr. F. A Digest of the International Law of the United States, Taken from Documents Issued by Presidents and Secretaries of State, and from Decisions of Federal Courts and Opinions of Attorneys-General. In 3 vols. Washington: State Department.
 Whitney, W. D. A Practical French Grammar. Henry Holt & Co. \$1.60.
 Worthington's Annual, for the Young. Worthington Co. \$1.50.
 Wright, F. A. Architectural Studies. Vol. I. Low Cost Houses; Store Fronts and Interiors; Details; Stables; Seaside and Southern Houses; Out-Buildings. W. T. Comstock. \$5.
 Wright, Henrietta Christian. Children's Stories of American Progress. Charles Scribner's Sons. \$1.50.
 Yonge, Charlotte M. A Modern Telemachus. London: Macmillan & Co.; New York: Harpers.

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