

The weakness of Mr. Fisher's work at this point is its strident and even harsh assertiveness. His position is often quite as extreme as that which he combats. Doubtless, the demand of the Americans for independence was a logical outcome of political ideas long nurtured, and not easily compatible with a theory of colonial dependence, yet it hardly follows that, in their reiterated protestations of loyalty to the mother country, they were framing specious and ingenious arguments to keep up appearances. It seems not to be realized by Mr. Fisher that men do not always see the end from the beginning; that the desire to make things hang together is strong wherever there is a developing system of law, and that use and wont are quite as powerful influences as logic in political action. It is by no means clear, notwithstanding Mr. Fisher's vehement contention to the contrary, that representation and taxation were not, in the eighteenth century, conjoined in the constitutional law of England, or that the consent of the colonies was necessary to the lawful exercise by Parliament of authority over them. The famous distinction between internal and external taxation, which he thinks never had a leg to stand upon, appealed to Franklin and Otis and to the first Continental Congress; while the English attempts at conciliation did not appear wholly unacceptable until after the declaration of independence.

Dr. Avery traverses the same ground, but his conclusions, though in the main the same as those of Mr. Fisher, are stated with noticeable moderation and restraint. His account of the constitutional dispute is concise and carefully phrased; for the most part, he sticks close to his documents, lets events speak for themselves, and avoids exhibiting motives and influences in a more striking light than they appear to have enjoyed at the time. Unfolding the same scheme of imperial development that engages Mr. Fisher, he can at the same time do justice to Bernard and Otis, Samuel Adams and Hutchinson, patriots and loyalists. From the purely literary point of view, this latest volume is his best; the style has greater evenness and dignity, and less of trivial digression and straining for popular effect, than in any of his earlier work.

To Dr. Avery must be awarded also the credit, no mean one in an historian, of greater carefulness, accuracy, and impartiality of statement; for Mr. Fisher, in spite of his extended citation of authorities, sometimes slips and sometimes appears to use only the facts that sustain his contention. Thus, the statements of Franklin and Washington, in 1774, to the effect that there was at that time no general desire for independence, are evidently regarded by Mr. Fisher as quite equivocal (Vol. I, pp. 208, 209). Otis's pamphlet, "The Rights of the Brit-

ish Colonies Asserted and Proved," which Dr. Avery (p. 49) thinks was intended "not to bring about a revolution, but to avert one," Mr. Fisher elects not to discuss. Of the Hutchinson letters he gives a ten-line summary, together with the single sentence: "There must be an abridgment of what are called English liberties" (Vol. I, p. 158); whereas Dr. Avery gives a fuller abstract and two connected passages.

Of the remaining topics covered by both writers, Mr. Fisher gives extended space to the loyalists, rightly holding the treatment of them by the patriot party as second in importance only to the prosecution of the war itself; and his account of the details of military life is both minute and valuable. Speaking generally, Dr. Avery, once the breach with Great Britain has opened, emphasizes the constitutional and political aspects of the struggle, while Mr. Fisher weaves into his narrative a greater wealth of picturesque incident. For the rest, Mr. Fisher's two volumes give a straightforward account of the war, fuller and better proportioned than that of Fiske, and entertainingly, if not well, written. There is less of novelty in the second volume than in the first, doubtless because the later period has been more carefully studied by others; and we merely note a judicious allotment of space to foreign affairs, the work of Congress, the campaigns in the South, and the negotiations for peace. In describing battles and military manœuvres, Mr. Fisher has some skill, notwithstanding that his imagination at times threatens to predominate over his facts. The wider relation of the war to Europe, India, and Canada also receives attention. The two volumes are fairly indexed, but for the index to Mr. Avery's pages we must, unfortunately, wait until the appearance of the final volume.

CURRENT FICTION.

The White Sister. By F. Marion Crawford. New York: The Macmillan Co.

It was a happy chance, or instinct, which led Mr. Crawford to return, in what was destined to be his last novel, to the field in which he had been most successful. Nearly half of the three dozen and odd romances which have been laid (according to the point of view) to his credit or discredit as the product of a much smaller number of years, deal with romantic episodes of modern Roman life. It is on this ground that his imagination plays most freely. Whether or not these animated figures are veritable Romans, born to the purple, they are animated, have the breath of life. Many of us followed the development of the Saracinesca series, number by number, with an interest almost breathless. "Sant' Ilario," "Don Orsino," "Casa Braccio," are still names to

conjure with; and it is with an undeniable thrill of pleasure that we come upon a venerable member of that storied house playing an important part in "The White Sister." This is a son of Sant' Ilario, Monsignor Saracinesca—the young priest Ippolito of Corleone.

The most striking merit of Mr. Crawford's work was its directness. His style is simple to ingenuousness, even childishly direct and explicit. He is "the story-teller in the bazaar," determined, as his eye rests with kindly humor upon his motley audience, that every man jack of them shall know what he is driving at. By choice, he uses monosyllables, and one sentence runs into another with the fluidity of good talk. If he digresses now and then, he apologizes for the liberty like a gentleman, explaining the connection between the given comment and the story proper. To get ahead with the story, to make it intelligible, are his chief aims. He knows what happened: it is his business to tell it. He knows what happened!—that is the mark of the natural story-teller. It must have been a surprise to many of us to learn recently that Crawford, during years of hard journalistic service, believed that he had no natural power of invention. When he did begin to write novels, it was with a rush of energy, a direct vision of the events he wished to record, and an eager flow of speech about them, that gave the effect, at least, of improvisation. This seemed to him the right way, and he does not hesitate to express his impatience of other ways. The "white sister" is a Roman girl who becomes a nun after her lover is reported dead. Says Mr. Crawford:

An accomplished psychologist would easily fill a volume with the history of Angela's soul from the day on which she learned the bad news till the morning when she made her confession and took the final vows of her order in the little convent church. But one great objection to psychological analysis in novels seems to be that the writer never gets beyond analyzing what he believes that he himself would have felt if placed in the "situation" he has invented for his hero or heroine. Thus analyzed, Angela Chiaromonte would not have known herself, any more than those who knew her best would have recognized her. I shall not try to "factorize" the result represented by her state of mind from time to time; still less shall I employ a mathematical process to prove that the ratio of dx to dy is twice x , the change in Angela at any moment of her moral growth. What has happened must be logical, just because it has happened; if we do not understand the logic, that may or may not be the worse for us, but the facts remain.

It must be admitted that the less said about the logic of the events in the present narrative, the better. Angela becomes Sister Giovanna, a nursing nun, dedicating her life quite as much to the memory of her lover as to the

service of God. He returns to life, and demands that she break her vows and marry him. She refuses, he kidnaps her, and tries threats as well as arguments to bring her to his purpose; but (although she is tempted) in vain. He finally restores her unharmed to the convent, and she determines to join certain of the sisters who have volunteered (practically suicide) for service in a leper settlement far from Rome. The mother superior of the order turns out to be her flesh and blood mother, and is heartbroken at the thought of her sacrifice. Still, she cannot advise a breach of the sacred vows. But at this moment the lover gets blown up, and refuses to have his life saved by the only possible means, unless the nun consents to petition for a release from the veil. This brings about an apparently final deadlock, which is, however, rather summarily and unexpectedly broken by Monsignor Saracinesca, who says that "there is a limit beyond which fidelity to an obligation may bring ruin and even death on some one whom the promises did not at first concern." He has (to put it vulgarly) a pull with the Cardinal Vicar, and can easily arrange the matter; and so it is arranged.

The finale is disconcerting. After a considerable struggle, the reader has just made up his mind that the heroine being really a good deal of a saint, and the hero more or less of a cad, it is just as well that decency and order should not be annihilated to make two such lovers happy. Monsignor does not consent that the bonds of the church should be broken in the name of humanity and common sense, yet he permits the church to be bullied by what is virtually a threat of suicide. And yet one has somehow the sense that this is what actually happened, and that it was, on the whole, the most human and comfortable way out of a bad matter. In some such mood we have been in the habit of looking up from our periodical Crawford novel. We can but regret the stilling of a voice so manly, so simple, so debonnaire.

Katrine. By Elinor Macartney Lane. New York: Harper & Bros.

This posthumous book, graceful and charming as it is, will hardly add perceptibly to Mrs. Lane's literary reputation, which must henceforth rest upon "Nancy Stair," as it has done since the publication of that skilful bit of pseudo-history. The story, situations, and persons of "Katrine" are all well-worn. She is the beautiful and gifted daughter of a well-born Irishman afflicted with more or less intermittent alcoholism; and she loves and is loved by Francis Ravenel, a young Southerner, whose pride of race forbids him the thought of marriage with her. When he warns her of this, Katrine's love and pride are both out-

raged, and she goes abroad, after the death of her father, to forget Frank, and study singing with the great teacher Josef. We have also the familiar spectacle of another suitor, twice as worthy as Frank of the girl's heart, but utterly unable to obtain it. Of course, Katrine's ultimate capitulation at her lover's sick-bed has been a foregone conclusion since their first parting. We must repeat, that if Mrs. Lane's name is to live among the modern story-writers, it must be for the sake of Nancy Stair, not for that of Katrine Dulany.

The Hands of Compulsion. By Amelia E. Barr. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co.

The persistent love of a lass of the Isle of Arran for a handsome, unsound-hearted lad, with her bitterly achieved cure, forms the nucleus of this story. But its best entertainment and workmanship lie in the surrounding circumstance of earth, air, sky, sea, and Scotch humanity. Annie's love is provokingly tenacious. The man she loves is exasperatingly inferior and motivelessly mean. But Annie's walk and talk, and Annie's father, with his Scotch austerities and mortal vanities, and Aunt Sarah's very human eccentricities and searching phrases are full of savor, breathing northern airs. There are other oddly fashioned characters, too, who weave in and out, more or less loosely, producing the effect of a fabric spun out by the yard rather than made into a garment of any particular shape. But it is a book of wholesome reading, breezy out-of-doors, and cosy within.

A Canyon Voyage. By Frederick S. Dellenbaugh. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. \$3.50 net.

Sunset Playgrounds. By F. G. Aflalo. New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons. \$2.25 net.

Next to the voyage of Columbus across the unknown seas, perhaps the most amazing feat of daring on record was Major Powell's first expedition down the Colorado River, in 1869; a journey on frail boats through a thousand miles of cañons created by a turbulent, foaming stream which, for long stretches, had carved its way more than a mile below the level of the surrounding land and was reported to disappear underground at some places. A graphic account of this thrilling ride was written by Powell and published by the government; but unforeseen obstacles had prevented the acquisition of the scientific data desired. To secure these in the light of the former experiences, Major Powell undertook a second expedition, better equipped, in 1871. Of this exploring party, Mr. Dellenbaugh became a member, "by great good luck," as he puts it. scores of

men being turned away disappointed; and, in the present volume, which is none the less valuable for being so belated, the author gives a vivid account of the experiences and hair-breadth escapes on this second voyage. A synopsis of the trip was printed in his "Romance of the Colorado River," but the complete story is now told for the first time. Major Powell himself exhorted him, several years ago, to write this fuller account, and in complying with this request, the author had the privilege of using, not only his own notes, but the diaries of several other members of the party.

It was decidedly worth writing, this detailed record; a more absorbing, and at times stirring, story of adventure has not seen the light in a long time, and the author's unadorned, yet vivid, style enables the reader to share all the emotions of the explorers. When they started, at Green River City, Wyoming, not a single settler lived on or near the river for a distance of more than a thousand miles. The whole region was a howling wilderness, peopled here and there by a band of Indians, whose intentions might or might not be friendly. The cliffs that walled in the river were unscalable almost the entire way; and what made the situation particularly hazardous—even more so than the voyage of Columbus—was that once the trip was begun, there was no possibility of returning. For that the river was too swift, the rapids too frequent. There were days when, after Herculean labors in lifting boats, climbing over gigantic boulders, tugging, pulling, shoving every minute, only a mile or two of progress was made. There were places where a successful run of the rapids would take two minutes, while a "let-down" would occupy as many hours. But was the run safe to risk? That question confronted them almost constantly, and the decision usually had to be instantaneous. The major was always on the outlook, but because of incessant changes in the bed of the stream, his memory of the first trip was not of much service. Once the major exclaimed "By God, boys, we are gone," but they pulled through. Another time, they were all spilled in the foaming water, and what happened then, it takes the author several pages to tell.

These men had big appetites, with little to eat; they slept on sandbanks, glad if they could find a few willow twigs to put under their backs; they had adventures with Indians, Mormons, rattlers, scorpions, wolves; they hunted deer and mountain sheep; they heard wonderful echoes and uncanny noises; they came across relics of cave dwellers and the wreckage of luckless boatmen; they saw cañon cliffs simulating every known style of architecture; and they took a large number of photographs,