

bly not fully estimated the responsibilities and dangers connected therewith. In speaking of the desire of Philippine leaders for an independent government, he records this judgment:

I could not discover of what the preparedness [for independence] consisted except faith in the extraordinary fertility of the soil, in the world's insatiable demands for its products, and the stability of the Filipino character.

Mr. Russell is inclined to lay great emphasis upon the "contract" entered into with the Filipinos to grant them independence, but he must be well aware of the extreme uncertainty and complexity of any such argument.

Neither Governor Harrison nor Mr. Russell presents a conclusive and convincing argument on the subject of immediate American policy in the Islands, still less on the question of independence. But every American citizen can fairly establish in his own mind a background of ethical and political theory upon which to base his conclusions. Does he believe in independent government for the various peoples of the world? Does he believe in non-imperialistic government for his own nation? These are questions as to which no amount of discussion or exhortation will probably produce any change of front on his part. If his predisposition is against independence he will therefore be able to find abundant reasons why it should not be granted, but he will need none since his mind will already have been made up.

H. PARKER WILLIS.

## A Delia for a Juliette

*Juliette Récamier, by Delia Austrian. Published by Ralph Fletcher Seymour. Chicago. \$4.00.*

IN the library of a certain bachelor, known for his austere and somewhat rigid qualities, a life-sized portrait of Madame Récamier hangs conspicuously. Her piquant loveliness adds an incongruous radiance to the gloomy and rather monotonous room. She is there, I have suspected, because she represents a world he would have liked to live in, a world of free spirit and intellect, of romance, charm and beauty.

Delia Austrian's new biography, *Juliette Récamier*, makes you feel that to the author she is the same sort of symbol. You appreciate the industry, even enthusiasm that prompted the study. But when you've finished reading it, you know as little about the woman as you did from looking at her portrait. You are conscious that she was a vivid and lovely person, that she lived in stirring literary and political times. You know that she lived intensely, thought deeply and suffered much, yet she remains, after all, an unknown personality.

Her biographer, to be sure, tells repeatedly how she looked, where she went, what she wore and all about the first families, "the smartest of Parisian society" who were in full attendance. It's a good deal like reading the society columns of a newspaper. Juliette's life is presented as one long salon, interspersed with flying trips all over Europe. We might become breathless, trying to follow her rapid and brilliant flights if the author had not developed the simple method of a-line-a-day diary. One of these entries is perhaps the keynote of the narrative. "She spent some time with the Queen of Holland at her lovely chateau, built by her on a high rock. The Duchess of Saint Leu and her son Louis Napoleon were lovely to Juliette."

The fact is, everybody was lovely to Juliette. Her biography is really a compilation of tokens of affection. Since her friends and admirers were legion and, most of them, volatile and expressive people, there is a vast array of burning sentiment in which her beauty, goodness, sweetness and charm are extolled. There seem to be quotations and letters from almost everybody living in France at the time. The burden of them all is adoration. Chateaubriand, who played a major part in the drama, summed it up: "One falls with love at her feet and she holds you there, filled with respect."

The list of Juliette's lovers fills about half a column in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, but we are assured that all her affairs were entirely platonic. There is something almost Freudian in the frequent repetition of the words virtue, innocence and purity—they occur on nearly every page. "She always remained pure. She always guarded her desire for conquest, and her gracious personality, her coquetry was pure, almost angelic." What a blow for the Puritans to learn that this gay French lady was only a glorified little Elsie, despite her apparent indiscretions.

The trouble is, I suppose, that biographies like Lytton Strachey's *Queen Victoria* and Katharine Anthony's *Margaret Fuller* spoil your appetite for the old fashioned variety. Once you've had the thrill of an intimate, inside view, an interpretation of the real self, its thought, spirit, motivation—a mere chronicle of outside events, garlanded with endorsements by contemporaries, seems a trifle flat and meaningless. Delia Austrian has presented Juliette Récamier in such an objective, impersonal way that it serves chiefly to show a need and opportunity for one of those new and human studies of the real person.

FLORENCE GUY WOOLSTON.

## Ascent

*Ascent, by Frances Rumsey. New York: Boni & Liveright. \$2.00.*

A FLUIDITY of prose style as even as Frances Rumsey's may sometimes be rather misleading as an index of artistic workmanship. Crude, hard outlines may throw into relief the most reticent and obscure of motives. But discounting an occasional and minor floridness, the tense continuity of thought and feeling in *Ascent* carries the mind along steadily as on a stream of limpid water, always alive to the poignant, if sometimes vague, stirrings beneath the surface.

The keen mastery of her own technique, the freedom from prejudice, the intense sincerity of *Ascent* set it apart distinctly and finally from the confused welter of American fiction. Without either humor or sentimentality, it is a quiet, searching study of a stormy life. It has the fundamental pathos of irony. Dealing with that minute portion of the population of the United States whose perceptions have been sensitized by subtler influences than either Main Street or the stock market, it studies their lives in a spaciousness unconditioned by either spiritual or material poverty.

*Ascent* treats of a woman who prospers and meets defeat through her own shrewd and never ungraceful calculations. Olive Devon lives by her wits, and within the limits defined by her wits, she lives for a time, exceedingly well. The broadening of her mental horizons at an early age by her cynical grandfather who brings her up from childhood, cramps the horizon of her emotions, however,

until she is utterly incapable of a feeling beyond her quick scrutiny of momentary values. She falls victim easily enough to her own lack of generosity. From her husband she evokes nothing but a clinging loyalty to a cold idealization. Deft beyond most of her sex in extracting from her environment the values which her mind has always sought, she fails miserably because she lends them no warmth. Her brilliance becomes a lifeless curiosity.

Ascent has one serious defect, and that is its excessive length. It is a lesser work than Mrs. Rumsey's first novel, Mr. Cushing and Mlle. du Chastel, where length is rigidly proportioned to the demands of character development. There is some excuse in that Mrs. Rumsey deals always in the twilight of the subtler emotions, that everything is made subject to an intense scrutiny of minute reactions and emotional discords. But in her first novel, as in her remarkable short story, Cash, which appeared in the Century two years ago, the boundaries are more precise, the note of finality is clearer, the sense of accomplishment more marked.

It is, in fact, to the shorter prose narrative that Mrs. Rumsey's method of indirect treatment lends itself best. A more consistent development of the tenacity of purpose that moves beneath the surface of some rather obscure lives than was brought out in Cash is very difficult to imagine. There is a tendency toward monotony in Ascent.

But the book is the work of a keen, unhurried intellect. It has the beauty of a rounded, if somewhat tenuous view of life. It requires time and thought to read. Since we have little time for thought, it will probably be overlooked.

E. W. LOHRKE.

## Dr. Foulke's Table-Talk

*A Hoosier Autobiography, by William Dudley Foulke, L.L.D. New York: The Oxford University Press. \$2.00.*

THE only claim which this volume has on more than local interest is a fairly full length picture of Theodore Roosevelt. There is nothing unexpected about the picture but one marvels anew at his reckless energy, at his buoyancy, at his capacity for work, at his being the only man that Hay thought had read the ten volumes of the Life of Lincoln, at his romping with his children, at his joy at vanquishing Tammany and the reformers both at once, at his amazing self-assurance, mixed with an open-mindedness and faith in human instinct, which made him willing to lead without seeing the goal, at his partisanship, at his belligerency toward Colombia for the sake of the Canal, at his flair for the practical, at his blessed absence of Phariseism. Perhaps this authentic portrait of the man whom John Morley bracketed with the Niagara Rapids as the noteworthy objects in America will justify the book.

Speaking of Mr. Morley, there seems to be a comical slip of Dr. Foulke's memory, natural enough in a man who has so much to remember. In commenting on Roosevelt's estimate of Emperor William, "a very forceful man but superficial," he notes, "It is much the same estimate that John Morley gives in his reminiscences on the occasion of the Kaiser's visit to England." He must have forgotten all that John Morley said. I quote from the

Recollections: "How much of his [William's] undoubted attractiveness is due to the fact of his being the most important man in Europe who can tell? I had the same sort of feeling about one who was at the moment the most important man in the United States when I stayed with him at the White House."

A. W. VERNON.

## Victorian Bibliography

*Excursions in Victorian Bibliography, by Michael Sadleir. London: Chaundy & Cox.*

MR. MICHAEL SADLEIR, like Paul on the road to Damascus, has seen a great light; and Excursions in Victorian Bibliography testifies to his change of heart. Mr. Sadleir informs us in the preface how before the war, he departed from the faith of his fathers and worshipped strange gods. He confesses that when an undergraduate at Oxford, he "sought disreputable refuge among fleshly symbolists," and that Baudelaire occupied the place of honor upon his bookshelves. Mr. Sadleir has since atoned for these errors, and shown his repentance, by collecting first editions of Anthony Trollope. And his imagination, which in his unregenerate days he tells us "floated on the dim tide of decadence," now has found safe anchorage on the mill-pond of the minor Victorian novelists.

The greater part of Excursions in Victorian Bibliography consists of minute descriptions of the first editions of the works of the eight novelists with whom the book is concerned. In order to appreciate these properly, it is necessary to possess Mr. Sadleir's peculiar enthusiasm for the subject. Failing this, one is not inclined to accord to the information that the frontispiece of one of the first editions of a novel by Wilkie Collins was tinted differently from that of the second edition the importance that it doubtless deserves, and one overlooks the significance of many facts of the same nature.

Mr. Sadleir, however, does not proceed solely from the standpoint of the collector. He has attempted some critical estimates and has written essays on the work of five of the authors, among them, Herman Melville, whose inclusion in the book is certainly its most extraordinary feature. "Que diable fait-il dans cette galère-là?" one is irresistibly impelled to inquire. And Mr. Sadleir himself, is constrained to admit "that he has little in common with the other writers." The sombre author of Moby Dick in the company of Trollope, Disraeli and Mrs. Gaskell, is surely the last word in incongruity. It is as though some image hewn out of granite were set down among Dresden china figures.

Mr. Sadleir's literary criticism does not pretend to be more than perfunctory and it does not succeed in being particularly illuminating. Indeed the principal significance of the book, apart from the interest it might have for collectors, lies in the fact that Mr. Sadleir obviously regards it as being a pious commemoration of his conversion from intellectual heresies. The book bears witness that Mr. Sadleir, purged at last of all tendencies to decadence, all admiration for Baudelaire, Verlaine and Mallarmé, has found the refuge he sought so long in the grandiloquence of Disraeli, the intricate mystifications of Wilkie Collins, and the infinite discretion of Trollope.

ESTHER MURPHY.