

Books and Authors

Recent Text-Books of English Literature¹

It is clearly evident that the deductive and the biographical methods of teaching English literature have gone, for the moment at least, into disuse. Only a little time since, instruction in literature was carried on solely by the giving of descriptive and narrative summaries of the personalities and surroundings of men and women who were writers. There was a morning or academic lecture, in which, with steady seriousness, the professor gave the date at which, the place in which, and the circumstances under which the writer wrote. And there was an evening or lyceum lecture, in which, with diverting anecdote and humorous comment, the professor told the student to whom the author was married, what the author ate and drank, and what in general the author did when he was not writing. At this second lecture it was usual to read a few bits of the lighter utterances of the writer under consideration, which selections represented for most of the audience their entire basis for appreciation of this particular writer's work and genius. Modern scientific activity has changed all this. The method in vogue at the moment is clearly borrowed from the laboratory investigations of scientific workers. A set of writings is given to a student, and to him is propounded a problem—usually a problem concerning the relationship, origin, or nature of the literary matter under investigation. The student certainly reads the books, probably gets discipline and knowledge of method, possibly solves the problem. Such a method has its advantages and its defects. Its main advantage is that the discipline afforded by it makes stable the uncertain status of certain cultural studies; its main disadvantage is that it dehumanizes the humanities and tends to substitute logical analysis for appreciative acceptance.

Criticise them how we will, however, the new methods are in vogue; and we have chosen the three text-books here reviewed as good examples of modern usage. Mr. Pancoast's work consists in great part of fifty-three selections from English authors, beginning with Chaucer and ending with Tennyson. These selections are classified into four historical groups: the first, which Mr. Pancoast calls the "Period of Preparation," extending from 670 to 1400; the second, called the "Period of Italian Influence," extending from 1400 to 1660; the third, here called the "Period of French Influence," extending from 1660 to 1750; and the fourth, called the "Modern English Period," continuing from 1750 to the present time. Each section is prefaced with a brief discussion upon the influences from without which have helped to form the literature, and upon the characteristics peculiar to the period. There is a map of literary England; and there are helps in the form of tables, indexes, and bibliographical notes and references. All this apparatus has a suggestion of modernness, and the plan of the book is certainly conceived in the modern spirit. But the work is not really modern. It has the traditional characteristics of the Lyceum lecture, with illustrating poetical selections out of which it has apparently been developed. It purports to give a study of the historical development of the literature; but it covers the entire period anterior to Chaucer in a few pages; and on page 7 gives a table of the entire four periods which is so absurdly inadequate as to be humorous. Among the writers contributing to the "formation of the English language" are gravely set down, as "Early Bards, about 500-600," the "Britons or Celts" Llynarch Hen, Taliesin, Aneurin, and Merlin. It is a pity that Mr. Pancoast did not find room to print the original texts of these English poems of the sixth century, that the debt of the English language to them might be mathematically computed in the modern manner, for we greatly fear that no one but

Mr. Pancoast has ever seen them. And, coming down to events concerning which information is accessible, we find a singular desultoriness, as of an illustrated lecture, in the accounts given. Of the fifty-three selections, forty-six are bits of poetry of the afternoon sort; and the whole range of prose literature is represented by seven essays—three from Addison, one each from Bacon, Lamb, Carlyle, and Macaulay. It appears that "considerations of space" have determined for Mr. Pancoast the representative character of an author. Hardly more than a score of authors are illustrated, and most of these very meagerly. The book is not really modern. The hands are the hands of the inductive worker, but the voice is the voice of the Lyceum lecturer.

A more scholarly though less pretentious work is the second on our list, the "Outlines of English Literature," by William Renton. It is a philosophized conspectus of the entire English literature, under a chronological group system, with headings expressive of the characteristics of each group. The divisions are:

- I. The Old English Metric and Chronicle (600-1600).
- II. The Renaissance (1350-1500).
- III. The Reformation (1500-1600).
- IV. The Romantic Drama (1550-1650).
- V. The Serious Age (1600-1700).
- VI. The Age of Gayety (1650-1750).
- VII. The Sententious Age (1700-1800).
- VIII. The Sympathetic Age (1800-1900).

Under these general divisions the authors and works are discussed in reference to their relation to each other and to the central literary movement of the age; and the statements made are illustrated with citations of moderate length from a large number of authors. All this seems customary in a text-book.

Yet this handbook is a modern one, as is shown in two ways in the treatment. In the first place, the manual is written from start to finish as a companion for students working in the modern fashion in a large library. The citations are not an anthology of elegant extracts, but are examples and illustrations of the propositions in the text; and the book assumes that the student has access to the literature here discussed. This is a modern attitude. In the second place, a scientific atmosphere pervades the book. There are specifications, divisions, analyses, distinctions. And there are diagrams and graphic presentations of many sorts. Some of these diagrams are simple, and some are rather complex—for instance, the one of the Romantic Drama; but all of them are very scientific, very convincing, very end-of-the-century. To send a youth to the board to do a sum in English literature is a process calculated to impress him with the notion that there is such a subject, and that something must be done about it. With or without the diagrams, however, the manual is certainly a good one.

Professor Sherman's "Analytics of Literature" is a series of essays on style and literary art, reasonably well co-ordinated, so that, as a whole, they make a very suggestive and stimulating, though slightly disjointed and crude, manual of criticism. The work is probably intended as a text-book, but we doubt if many instructors can make use of such a compound of ponderously worded German æsthetic philosophy and American mathematical diagrams as this in ordinary collegiate instruction. To propound to a college class as a principle of poetic interpretation that "the 'Ego' in the activity of appropriating poetic delight must be kept, as far as possible, from every occasion of employing itself in conscious intellectual perception or judgment" tends to soothe rather than to excite a craving for further information. But to the private reader, or to the instructor in private, the work will prove, we think, very useful. The essays are not all reminiscent of decasyllabetic Teutonic æsthetics. Most of them are inductive studies—called "objective" studies by Mr. Sherman, for some reason not quite clear to us—into some of the details of style, such as meters, phrases, figures, tone-quality, and force in poetry; sentence-length, predication in sentences, clause co-ordination, suppression, and articulation in prose. Beside these are put a few chapters not very closely related

¹ *Representative English Literature from Chaucer to Tennyson*. Selected and Supplemented with Historical Connections and a Map. By Henry S. Pancoast. Henry Holt & Co., New York.
Outlines of English Literature. With Diagrams. By William Renton. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York.
Analytics of Literature. A Manual for the Objective Study of English Prose and Poetry. By L. A. Sherman. Ginn & Co., Boston.

to the rest, on the art of Browning and Shakespeare and the larger values of style. But the strength of the book is in the studies which would seem to have been made by the author at a later period than that in which he discoursed concerning the "Ego" in his activity. Two of these studies—that on sentence-length in prose and that on the coincidence of thought-stress and metric-stress in poetry—are real contributions. Both of these studies are illustrated with very modern diagrams, that of the force-stress in Browning's "Count Gismond" being almost as perfect as an architect's plan. "Note," says Professor Sherman, "what an ideal scheme of force it is. It could scarcely be improved if the author had drafted it for his poem in advance. Yet Browning was almost certainly unaware, in this respect, of what he did." We suppose his "Ego" was otherwise occupied at the moment.

It is a real sign of the times that such excellent books as these are getting themselves written. We have seemed, perhaps, not very enthusiastic in speaking of the very conscious activity set forth in them. But consciousness precedes unconsciousness, and we are hopeful. It is a proof of real interest in English literature that these books are written. We are glad to welcome them.



Novels and Tales

Mr. Marion Crawford's latest novel, *Pietro Ghisleri*, is in the main a study of modern Roman society. As such it is very far from flattering to that society; petty malignity, vulgar gossip, childish superstition, moral decay, are everywhere prevalent, if the book is a true picture. That it is, at least as far as it goes, one cannot doubt; this novel and others by Mr. Crawford prove abundantly his intimate knowledge. The one character which stands out in bright contrast is the half-English, half-Italian Laura Arden. She reminds one, in her simple honesty and true-heartedness, of Mr. Crawford's best creation—Corona, in "Saracinesca"—although she is in some other respects of quite a distinct type. Several of our old friends of the "Saracinesca" series, by the way, wander into "Pietro Ghisleri," incidentally as it were. As to Pietro himself, the reader feels that the mild cynicism and self-disapprobation of the man are a little bit affected. His past has not been worse—rather, if anything, better—than that of his fellow men of the world, and he does not seem to regret his sins in detail, but to have a general morbid idea of his own character, which idea he really enjoys thinking about. To that extent he poses. In all other ways he is lovable, witty, and high-minded. The villainy of the book is furnished by an insanely jealous and vindictive Italian woman, Donna Adele, who at a dinner manages to bring Laura's husband in contact with scarlet fever infection. He falls ill the next day—improbably suddenly, but not impossibly so, physicians say. This is certainly original, but also horrible. There is a lack of adequate motive, and, the deed once suspected by Pietro, the exposure is held too long in suspense and the possibilities of the situation are too much discussed and soliloquized over by the characters. The scene of exposure, when it at last comes, is capital in its dramatic effect. (Macmillan & Co., New York.)

Victor Cherbuliez is an author whose quality is more easily transferred into a foreign tongue than that of most French novelists. The English translation of *The Tutor's Secret* renders his easy wit and smooth flow of story-telling very well indeed. There is a facile humor in the conversation that is really quite English in manner—something like W. E. Norris's best work. The plot is, however, not at all English; it develops slowly until near the close of the book, and then becomes absolutely repellent. The most astonishing thing is that neither author nor characters seem to see anything *peculiarly* atrocious in the attempt of a scoundrel—a typical stage "bad man"—who has persuaded a mother to elope with him, and has discarded her, to afterwards urge her married daughter to the same crime. Such a fault as this goes far to spoil what is otherwise a well-written story. (D. Appleton & Co., New York.)

In *Lucia, Hugh, and Another*, by Mrs. J. H. Needell, we are not surprised to find that "Another" is the most important personage of the three. A crudely villainous papa has separated Lucia and Hugh, and has tried to force her to marry this wealthy third person. "Another" proves, however, to be a man of such noble instincts and self-sacrificing spirit (to say nothing of his somewhat overloaded gifts of talents, wealth, and brilliant mind) that he ultimately brings Hugh and Lucia together, but only after Lucia has lost her heart to "Another." Here is a pretty state of things to untangle. We leave the reader to find out how it is

done. If the book were "boiled down" about one-half, it would be better. (D. Appleton & Co., New York.)

Mrs. Amelia E. Barr's stories are always clear and fresh in tone. *A Singer from the Sea* deals with Cornwall and its fisher-people. The pretty singer, Denas, daughter of a fisher, follows her good-for-little husband to London and America, and, after a stage life of hardship, returns to her native Cornish village, where (her husband being now dead) there is happiness still in store for her. The tale makes a direct appeal to the sympathies; it will rank well among Mrs. Barr's productions. (Dodd, Mead & Co., New York.)

Mr. Howard Seely's *A Border Leander* is an amusing story of a Southern vendetta, a rustic love affair between son and daughter of the opposing houses, an adventurous reporter, and a strange elopement. The whole is high-colored and frankly farcical. (D. Appleton & Co., New York.)

The *Harvard Stories* which Mr. Waldron K. Post has published have the usual accounts of ball-game, football-game, and boat-race, and, as is also usual with such "undergraduate sketches," end in a love story lugged in as an afterthought or conventional necessity of fiction. The talk and jokes of the boys are often sprightly, and the local tone is well rendered. We fear that the characters are chosen too exclusively among the "fast set" to make the sketches truly representative. (G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York.)



Literary Notes

—After completing the novel on which he is now engaged, a story of life in New York, Edward Eggleston will confine himself to historical writing.

—Mr. Walter Pater has been chosen to fill the vacancy created in the Committee of the London Library by the election of Mr. Leslie Stephen to succeed Lord Tennyson as President of that institution.

—It is stated that the two books which have been translated into more languages than any other volume except the Bible are Dr. Smiles's "Self-Help" and Samuel Warren's "Passages from the Diary of a Late Physician."

—The series of the "Story of the Nations," published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, of this city, is being translated into the Marathi and Gujarati languages, the volumes on "Egypt," "Persia," and "Turkey" having already been published. The work has been undertaken by the tutor to H. R. H. the Prince Gaikwar of Baroda, British India, at the national expense.

—It is announced that the social side of the German Reformation will be described by the well-known English writer on philosophy and socialism, Mr. Ernest Belfort Bax, in three volumes, the first of which is to appear early in October. These volumes are expected to be an important addition to the English literature of the Reformation; for no book has hitherto been published in English which treats the Peasants' War and its causes adequately.

—Bret Harte, says the London "Literary World," cannot work except in seclusion, and when he is busy on a story he will hide himself away in some suburban retreat known only to his closest friends. Here he will rise just after dawn, be at his desk several hours before breakfast, and remain there, with an interval of an hour for a walk, the whole day. When he finishes his book, whatever it may be, he hands it to his publisher, and considers his work at an end, for he dislikes the reading of proofs as much as Byron disliked punctuating his verses.



Books Received

- AMERICAN BOOK CO., NEW YORK
Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *The American Scholar*. 20 cts.
Arnold, Matthew. *Sohrab and Rustum*. 20 cts.
Harper, William R., Ph.D., LL.D., and Castle, Clarence F., Ph.D. *Exercises in Greek Prose Composition*. 75 cts.
Swinton, William. *A School History of the United States*. 90 cts.
- A. S. BARNES & CO., NEW YORK
Roberts, J. W. *Looking Within*. \$1.
Klein, Margaret A. *The Step-Ladder*. 75 cts.
- THE F. A. DAVIS CO., PHILADELPHIA
Vought, Walter, Ph.B., M.D. *A Chapter on Cholera*. 75 cts.
- GINN & CO., BOSTON
Merrill, Elmer Truesdell. *Catullus*. \$1.50.
- THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS CO., NEW YORK
Warden, Florence. *A Terrible Family*. 50 cts.
- MACMILLAN & CO., NEW YORK
Tout, Prof. T. F. *Edward the First*. 60 cts.
Four Friends. *The Golden Treasury Psalter*. \$1.75.
Ritchie, David G., M.A. *Darwin and Hegel*. \$2.50.
Smith, Vance G., B.A. *The Bible and its Theology*. \$1.75.
Hawkins, C. C., M.A., A.I.E.E., and Wallis, F., A.I.E.E. *The Dynamo*. \$3.
Le Gallienne, Richard. *The Poems of Arthur Henry Hallam*. \$1.50.
- F. H. REVELL CO., NEW YORK
Ogden, Robert C. *Pew-Rents and the New Testament*.
- CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS, NEW YORK
Stories from Scribner. *Stories of the Sea*.