

LITERATURE.

REVIEW OF NEW BOOKS.

ST. ELMO. By Augusta J. Evans. New York: Carlton. Miss Evans has a very perceptible penchant for ragged little girls who are picked up in the streets, adopted by wealthy, childless ladies, and win the hearts of all the gentlemen with whom they come in contact.

Edna Earl, an orphan, and grandchild of a blacksmith, starts on an expedition to make her living, at the mature age of twelve. She is peacefully going along in a railroad car, when the customary whistle, flash, crash occur, and—! it is darkness. When she comes to, she finds herself at Le Bocage, a stately country-seat, whose mistress has conveyed her mysteriously from the scene of the accident.

The "Flag at Home" is also a good essay, while we must place "School Influence" among the lowest in the scale of merit. The work, however, taking it altogether, is well worth perusal. It is pleasant, familiar, and inculcates nothing but recognized truth.

Notwithstanding the mal-apropos title given to the little work before us, it is possessed of considerable merit. It recommends itself solely because of the taste displayed in its compilation, for it makes no pretension to originality. A number of fugitive pieces, tales, poems, and the like, are thrown together, and made decidedly interesting reading.

St. Elmo and Edna are surrounded with a multitude of characters, who are introduced to spread the story out, but are withdrawn every few chapters to make way for new arrivals. This continued changing of dramatis personae is a grave fault, and shows want of confidence in the delineative powers of the writer, and certainly disgusts the reader.

Again, it is strange that St. Elmo is everywhere where he should not be. Edna never seems to open a book but he is behind a curtain or lying beside a mummy watching her. Speaking of mummies reminds us that Miss Evans' ideas of a luxurious study are about the best things in the book. One more remark. It certainly does not add to the attractions of woman to see her take a lively interest in philology and Coptic literature; and to have some hundred pages of the novel devoted with didactic discussion, offers a premium to what the boys call "skipping" a dozen pages at a time.

To sum up our judgment, "St. Elmo" is far beneath "Beulah" in literary ability. It is the old conventional novel of Sir Roberto de Traveaux style of hero, in which the central figure makes his crimes and his principles fascinating. The conversion of St. Elmo, and his acceptance of sacerdotal robes, is simply an absurdity, after his character is delineated as it is.

AMERICAN LEAVES: NOTES OF THOUGHT AND LIFE. By Samuel Osgood. New York: Harper & Brothers, Philadelphia Agents: J. B. Lippincott & Co.

We confess a partiality for the essay. Under the form of a treatise can be imparted more real information, in a more pleasant style and with greater effect, than can be attempted either in the historical or romantic style of composition. A good essayist brings himself down as it were into a familiar friendship with his reader, which does away with all attempts at superiority, and opens the mind to receive what he has to say, without keeping up its fortifications of self-esteem against pedantry.

The work before us consists of a series of rambling thoughts too loosely scattered around, and touching on such every-day topics as "Our Old Pew," "School Influences," "American Boys," "Fertilities," "Learning Statesmanship," "Off-Hand Speaking," and the like. The longest of these essays is on "Off-Hand Speaking," and it is probably the best contribution in the book. It impresses on the young reader the necessity of being a fluent extempore orator, but while giving sound advice as to its importance, deals in glittering generalities in regard to the means.

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—Cardinal Gousset, Archbishop of Rheims, The French papers announce the death of this distinguished divine, in the Archdiocese of Rheims, France, on the 23d of December, 1866.

—Another new poet, named A. Gordon Middleton, has appeared. We quote at second-hand a specimen taken, we believe, from "The Pilgrim Poet":

"In day's golden stream the cackling scream Beyond through the wooded glade, The bright parrot, and the cry, black jet, For covert wing far to the shade."

—Mr. Hatley Frere, the venerable expositor of prophecy, died on the 8th of December, at the vicarage of Shillington, Bedfordshire. It was about 1812 that Mr. Frere first commenced the study of prophecy, and although the death of interpretation, he adhered to it through all adverse appearances, and continued even to the last to look on the present Emperor of France as destined to fulfil his explanations as to the downfall of the temporal power of the papacy and the brief reign of anti-Christ, as preparatory to the restitution of all things.

—A book is about to be published by Didier, Paris, which cannot fail to attract the attention of the political and literary worlds. It is the "Political Correspondence of the former President of the Council at Turin, who, after Novaro, saved at the same time the national independence and the constitutional liberty of his country, and who, with Count Cavour, was the chief author of the emancipation of Italy—the Marquis Massimo d'Azeglio. His correspondence, written in French, embraces the important period of Italian regeneration, from 1847 to 1865.

—Widett has nearly ready, to appear in January, "Philip II," by Charles Gayarre, with care and vivacity, with a mind superior to the influences of superstition, and comprehensive in its study of the causes and consequences of events." Mr. Gayarre, Senator from Louisiana, is well known as the author of the history of that State—a new volume of which, embracing the American Domination to 1861, is to appear at the same time as "Philip II."

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