

LITERATURE.

REVIEW OF NEW BOOKS.

"Fenton's Quest," by M. E. Braddon, is of necessity a highly-spiced novel, in which what might be called the higher original classes of Great Britain are made to figure prominently. The illustrations, which are numerous, represent women with large and liquid eyes and men with huge whiskers and severely aristocratic countenances, and the artist has very accurately hit off the characteristics of the people who are introduced to the readers of the book. These big-whiskered gentlemen and big-eyed ladies, it is true, are apt to become tiresome when one meets with them too frequently; and the peculiar vein of romance which Miss Braddon opened some years ago has since been worked pretty industriously by numerous imitative admirers, so that it is scarcely possible such a novel as "Fenton's Quest" can at this day make quite the same impression it would have done ten years ago. It is an interesting story, however, and it may be read with pleasure by the public outside of kitchen and stable circles, to the exclusive delectation of which Miss Braddon has wrongly been accused of devoting her talents. For sale by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger.

"The Diary of the Besieged Resident in Paris," by H. Labouchere, M. P., is a reprint of a series of letters to the London Daily News written during the siege of Paris, and which attracted much attention when they originally appeared in the columns of that journal. Mr. Labouchere writes in a humorously cynical vein that renders it impossible to tell at times whether he is jesting or in earnest, and the want of seriousness in treating very serious subjects certainly detracts much from the value of the diary, and makes it often far from pleasant reading. The work, however, as a record of the impressions and experiences of a disinterested and unpartisan observer of the sights and sounds inside Paris during the great siege, make, it at once interesting for present perusal and an important contribution to the history of the great Franco-Prussian war of 1870-71. For sale by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger.

"An Oral Method with German," by Jean Gustave Keetels, published by Leypoldt, Holt & Williams, is an attempt to teach German by the natural method, or in the same manner that one learns to speak and read his own language. The method of Mr. Keetels appears to be an eminently practical one, and it is worthy of the attention of teachers and students. For sale by Claxton, Remsen & Haffelfinger.

"Guilt and Innocence," by Madame Sophie Schwartz, translated by Elma Borg and Marie A. Brown, published by Lee & Shepard, is the third of the series of novels by the great Swedish authoress now being issued. It has a well-constructed and highly dramatic plot, some excellent character sketches, and is a graphic picture of certain phases of Swedish life. It is to be regretted that so admirable a novelist as Madame Schwartz should be introduced to the American public through the medium of such bad translations as the one before us and its two predecessors certainly are. Medames Borg and Brown may understand Swedish exceedingly well, but their knowledge of English is limited; and as specimens of literary work the three novels they have translated are not entitled to very hearty praise. For sale by J. B. Lippincott & Co.

"Messrs. Lee & Shepard have also published in a neat pamphlet Mr. Sumner's lecture entitled "The Duel between France and Germany," which our readers will recollect was one of the prominent features of the "Star" course of last winter. For sale by J. B. Lippincott & Co.

"Vera; or, The Russian Princess and the English Earl," published by D. Appleton & Co., is a love story which is clever and entertaining, but not sufficiently remarkable among many thousands of love stories to call for particular comment. For sale by Porter & Coates.

"M, or N," by J. S. Whyte-Melville, published by Leypoldt, Holt & Williams, is a not very successful attempt to treat the same subject that Wilkie Collins did in his "No Name." Mr. Melville is not a very vigorous writer, and he totally lacks the faculty, possessed by Mr. Collins in an eminent degree, of making the extravagantly improbable appear at least not impossible. There is one scene in the novel before us where the heroine, a young lady of majestic presence, absolutely awes a robber who has forced his way into her chamber, and forces him down upon his knees to ask forgiveness, mainly by the power of her splendid black eyes. In the hands of some writers such a scene could be made intensely exciting in spite of its improbability, but as treated by this author it is simply ludicrous, and is a fair sample of the rest of the story. For sale by J. B. Lippincott & Co.

T. B. Peterson & Brothers have published a new cheap edition of "Twenty Years After," by Alexander Dumas. This is the second of the "Three Guardsmen" series, and it is not only a very entertaining story, but it is a highly-colored picture of the times of Mazarin, and with all its extravagance it really possesses a positive historical value.

James H. Osgood & Co. have issued in pamphlet form the first part of Charles Reade's new story, "A Terrible Temptation," now in course of publication in Every Saturday. For sale by T. B. Callender & Co., Third and Chestnut streets.

The April numbers of The Sunday Magazine and Good Words, published by J. B. Lippincott & Co., are as usual handsomely illustrated, and are filled with stories, sketches and poetry from pens of some of the best English writers of the day.

The Sunday at Home for April contains a great number of fine illustrations and a variety of entertaining literary contributions suitable for Sunday reading. For sale at the American Sunday School Union.

SOME CURIOSITIES OF LITERARY BLUNDERING.

From the London Saturday Review.

"It was an excellent question," says Selden, "of my Lady Cotton, when Sir Robert Cotton was magnifying of a shoe, which was Moses' or Noah's, and wondering at the strange shape and fashion of it: 'But, Mr. Cotton,' says she, 'are you sure it is a shoe?' If the lesson which Selden drew from this excellent question, 'The reason of a thing is not to be inquired after till you are sure the thing itself is so,' had been always observed, how many conjectures, various, ingenious, and all distant from the truth, like those of which Gibbon tells in mentioning the passages of Longinus that were lost and found, would have been stifled! For example, Dugdale, in the 'Baronage of England,' citing Walsingham, says that Sir John de Montacute, grandson of the first Earl of Salisbury of that name, was the greatest fanatic (fool—finitus in Walsingham's word) among the followers of Wickliffe; being so transported with zeal (falling into such an abyss of folly—qui in tanta lapsus est vesania—says Walsingham) that he caused all the images which were in the chapel at Schenele, there set up by John Aubrey and Sir Alan Buxhull (his wife's former husbands) or any of his predecessors, to be taken down and thrown in obscure places: 'only the image of St. Katherine (in regard that many did affect it) he gave leave that it should stand in his bakehouse.' Dugdale is followed by a train of authors down to Dr. Vaughan, the modern biographer of Wickliffe, who repeat, without comment, this singular enshrining of St. Katherine. It might have been surmised that the statue was of wood, and was doomed to the oven, by the zealous iconoclast, as a special mark of reprobation, because it had been a special object of worship. But this conjecture would seem to be far from the truth, because there was a reason, apart from all controversy on the worship of saints, why De Montacute should revere the image of St. Katherine. The Saint had given a name to his father's mother, the noble Katherine de Grandison, in whose honor Edward III held the great tournament in which the Order of the Garter had its beginning; for Froissart's story is no fable, and no Lord Hailes, the severe annalist, might have learned if he had read his Rymer and the Chronicles more carefully. There was, then, a reason for the exception in favor of the image, yet still a wonder remains. Why should it have been thought an act of affectionate reverence to the memory of Katherine de Grandison to set up the image of her namesake in the bakehouse? Is it a probable conjecture that, the chapel having been built near the oven for warmth, the reformer, though he would not suffer an idol in his house of worship, gave all the honor that conscience allowed, by placing it in the precinct? If, however, we inquire whether Sir John de Montacute really did this wonderful thing, all conjecture about his reasons for doing it may be spared, for indeed he did not do it at all. Dugdale took the tale from Walsingham. It is told in the very same words by another chronicler, the Monk of Evesham, in his 'Life of Richard the Second.' Looking at these authorities, we find that all that is strange in the story is the work of Dugdale, misplacing a single letter. According to the two monks, Sir John did nothing worthy of wonder. He set up the image, not in pistrinum, in the bakehouse, but in pristinum, in its former place in the chapel. Hence, the editor of the 'Life of Richard the Second,' all conceits to corrupt his author's text; but by a foot-note, 'L. pistrinum,' in deference to the translation of the great antiquary, he accepted the bakehouse as the better reading. The Master of the Rolls also has received pistrinum into the text of his edition of 1864, allowing in a note that in Camden the word was pristinum. Henry of Knyghton, who had the advantage over the other two chroniclers of being a contemporary, does not name Sir John de Montacute among the Lollard knights; but, strangely enough, he does relate that at the very same time another image of St. Katherine, a wooden image, was discovered to be the solitary occupant of another chapel, the chapel of St. John the Baptist under Leicester, where the followers of Wickliffe were wont to hold their conventicles, and was chopped up and used as fuel to boil pot-herbs. After telling this tale in prose, Knyghton repeats it in Latin rhymes.

Again, Robert Southey took some pains to give a correct text of the Pilgrim's Progress. In his edition, Hopeful having wondered why Littlefaith had not plucked up a heart, and stood one brush with such a company of cowards as the three brothers, Faithheart, Mistrou, and Guilt, when they robbed and wounded him in Deadman's Lane, Christian replies that he meant to do so, but that he had found it so in the time of trial, that they had made David groan, mourn, and roar, had roughly brushed the coats of Mordecai and Hezekiah, though champions in their days, and had huddled Peter so that they made him afraid of a sorry girl. It seems a thing for wonder that Bunyan should have ranked Mordecai with David, Hezekiah, and Peter; but in truth he did not. He had set in the place which Southey gives to Mordecai one who may be the man celebrated as second in wisdom to Solomon, and certainly was a palmerist who in spiritual darkness and terror cried from the lowest deep as a castaway. This was Haman. Some editor who had never heard Haman's name—like the mere matter-of-fact godfather who, being asked by the child the Bible name, proposed Baal-zebub—the next that came, and changed Haman to Hamac. Then Southey, or the editor from whom he copied, assured that Bunyan could not have numbered Haman among the champions of the faith, concluded that since it was not Haman it must be Mordecai, and Mordecai was exalted accordingly. Mr. Offer has pointed out the progress of this error, which in all probability was overlooked, not invented, by Southey.

Dr. Lingard, in his "History of England," telling of the unfortunate little army that Jean de Vienna, Admiral of France, brought over to Edinburgh in the year 1356, to aid the Scots in a projected raid across the border, says:— "It is amusing to read in Froissart the complaints of the Frenchmen after their arrival. When they were at last introduced to the King, they were shocked with his red beard, his eyes of sandal-wood, which convinced them that he was a warrior."

Here is an opening into a wilderness of conjectures. Passing over the stumbling-block that the complexion of no sandal-wood of modern days can vie with the fiery red of an inflamed eye, we must wonder, like Sir Robert Cotton magnifying of a shoe, by what process the red eyes of King Robert assumed his allies that he could be no warrior. Froissart, above all men, knew the points of good knight. What reasons, looking either to cause or consequence, persuaded him that a red-eye king might be a valiant man-at-arms? But before we ask the reason of the thing, we are to inquire whether the thing itself were so; and, again, it was not. It does

not appear that the French were at all shocked with the King's eyes, which seemed as though they were made up of sandal-wood—not sandal-wood, but a fabric of scarlet silk interwoven with some coarser material of the same color; and, far from finding in the red eyes an excuse for Edward's cloth, they deemed it fool's errand, the "good tall fellow" who had them did not lead his army to the fight. They were, indeed, convinced that he was no soldier, yet not from the color of his eyes, but because they saw that it was dearer to him to sit by the fireside in Edinburgh than to ride forth to battle with his nine sons whose delight was in arms. This is what Froissart says:— "Or vint le roi Robert d'Escosse, un grand bon homme a une robe rouge retractive; sa contenance fourre de soie; et de ses manieres n'estoit pas aux armes tout vaillant homme et que il ent plus en le jouer que le chevanier; mais il avoit jusques a neuf filz, et ceuz almeint les armes."

After relating the departure of the army from Edinburgh, Froissart continues:— "A cette echeance n'estoit point le roi, mais estoit demeure en Handebourch, et estoient tous ses enfans en l'armee."

The Froissart in whose chronicles Dr. Lingard found amusement was not the Canon of Chichester himself, nor Lord Cochrane, whose translation was preferred by Walter Scott and who, in this place as in others, has given a true, though a free, interpretation. Mr. Johnes, of Hsfod, was the blind guide whom Dr. Lingard blindly followed.

Once more. The elder Disraeli, of whom it has been said that he never rested satisfied until he had consulted original authorities, tells us in a chapter on "Literary Blunders:"— "Lord Bolingbroke imagined that in those famous verses beginning with Excudent alii, etc., Virgil attributed to the Romans the conquest of Greece; the Greeks in historical composition; according to his idea, those Roman historians whom Virgil preferred to the Excerpti etc., Sallustius, and Tacitus. But Virgil died before Livy had written his history, or Tacitus was born."

Here is cause enough to wonder at the strange fashion of Bolingbroke's understanding. How could he imagine that Virgil attributed any such glory to his countrymen when the famous verses—

Excudent alii spirantia mollius aera, Cuius est inventrix tabulae in manore vitulae; Orantibus causas, melius, acieque mentis, Iscriptis radiis, et surgente sidera dicent: Tu regere impero populos, Romana, memento; His, ut arduas, et siculae imponere moras, Parsere subjectis, et debellare superbo—

do not contain the faintest allusion to historians Roman or Grecian, and, while they give to the Greeks superiority in the fine arts, expressly limit the province of the Romans to the arts of dominion? How, if he meant to say that Tacitus, who was born some eighty years after the death of Virgil, flourished with him in the Augustan age, could he add immediately to this elegant contradiction, "when Tacitus wrote taste was grown corrupt as well as manners?" But as regards Bolingbroke, there is no cause for wonder. In the plainest possible words, he expressed surprise that Virgil did not give the glory to his countrymen. The wonder is how Disraeli could fall into so preposterous an error. It happened in this way. He did not look at the "Aeneid;" he did not look at the "Letters on the Study of History," where Virgil's verses are copied at the foot of the page. He looked at a book in which they are not copied and which he does not name—

"Bishop Newton on the Prophecies"—and he looked with an eye that, with perfect innocence of intention, he converted a mere controversial misrepresentation into downright assertion of a thing that was not. Bishop Newton, who, rebuking Bolingbroke for his imaginary blunder, has been followed by the author of "Tremaine," had written:— "His Lordship is of opinion that 'Virgil, in those famous verses, Excudent alii, etc., might have justly ascribed to a countryman of his, a writer of history better than the Grecians.' But which are the Roman historians that are to be preferred to the Grecians? Where the precise remains, says his Lordship, of Sallust, of Livy, and of Tacitus? But it happened that Virgil died before Livy had written his history, and Tacitus was born, and is not this an excellent chronology, now, to correct ancient history and chronology sacred and profane?"

There is no blunder here; but there is something less pleasant—a want of care to repeat, with perfect good faith, the words of history. Those to whom the Essay on History was known only by the Bishop's report were led to believe that Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus were the only historians named by Bolingbroke, and that he named them expressly as the historians whom Virgil ought to have preferred. Yet he named altogether eight, alluding also to "others" unnamed, and he did not name any one of the eight until Virgil had passed out of his thought. In his letter to Lord Cornbury, after distinguishing antiquaries and annalists from historians, and telling how, as nations grew into manhood, history, at first intended only to record great names and remarkable events, was raised to answer the purposes of the poet, he says, "The history, he spoke of the growth of annals into true history among the Greeks and Romans:—

"Thus (he says) it happened among the Greeks, but much more among the Romans, notwithstanding the prejudice in favor of the former, even among the Livy and the Tacitus, who thought that they might have justly ascribed to a countryman of their own, a writer of history better than the Grecians. But which are the Roman historians that are to be preferred to the Grecians? Where the precise remains, says his Lordship, of Sallust, of Livy, and of Tacitus? But it happened that Virgil died before Livy had written his history, and Tacitus was born, and is not this an excellent chronology, now, to correct ancient history and chronology sacred and profane?"

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do not contain the faintest allusion to historians Roman or Grecian, and, while they give to the Greeks superiority in the fine arts, expressly limit the province of the Romans to the arts of dominion? How, if he meant to say that Tacitus, who was born some eighty years after the death of Virgil, flourished with him in the Augustan age, could he add immediately to this elegant contradiction, "when Tacitus wrote taste was grown corrupt as well as manners?" But as regards Bolingbroke, there is no cause for wonder. In the plainest possible words, he expressed surprise that Virgil did not give the glory to his countrymen. The wonder is how Disraeli could fall into so preposterous an error. It happened in this way. He did not look at the "Aeneid;" he did not look at the "Letters on the Study of History," where Virgil's verses are copied at the foot of the page. He looked at a book in which they are not copied and which he does not name—

"Bishop Newton on the Prophecies"—and he looked with an eye that, with perfect innocence of intention, he converted a mere controversial misrepresentation into downright assertion of a thing that was not. Bishop Newton, who, rebuking Bolingbroke for his imaginary blunder, has been followed by the author of "Tremaine," had written:— "His Lordship is of opinion that 'Virgil, in those famous verses, Excudent alii, etc., might have justly ascribed to a countryman of his, a writer of history better than the Grecians.' But which are the Roman historians that are to be preferred to the Grecians? Where the precise remains, says his Lordship, of Sallust, of Livy, and of Tacitus? But it happened that Virgil died before Livy had written his history, and Tacitus was born, and is not this an excellent chronology, now, to correct ancient history and chronology sacred and profane?"

There is no blunder here; but there is something less pleasant—a want of care to repeat, with perfect good faith, the words of history. Those to whom the Essay on History was known only by the Bishop's report were led to believe that Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus were the only historians named by Bolingbroke, and that he named them expressly as the historians whom Virgil ought to have preferred. Yet he named altogether eight, alluding also to "others" unnamed, and he did not name any one of the eight until Virgil had passed out of his thought. In his letter to Lord Cornbury, after distinguishing antiquaries and annalists from historians, and telling how, as nations grew into manhood, history, at first intended only to record great names and remarkable events, was raised to answer the purposes of the poet, he says, "The history, he spoke of the growth of annals into true history among the Greeks and Romans:—

"Thus (he says) it happened among the Greeks, but much more among the Romans, notwithstanding the prejudice in favor of the former, even among the Livy and the Tacitus, who thought that they might have justly ascribed to a countryman of their own, a writer of history better than the Grecians. But which are the Roman historians that are to be preferred to the Grecians? Where the precise remains, says his Lordship, of Sallust, of Livy, and of Tacitus? But it happened that Virgil died before Livy had written his history, and Tacitus was born, and is not this an excellent chronology, now, to correct ancient history and chronology sacred and profane?"

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