

housemaid away from the gulf. We have all seen the philanthropist urging the idea while ignoring the individual. The spectacle is not, unfortunately, a rare one, especially to those who have studied organisations of women. But it cannot be pointed out too often, and the serving of such strong meat with Mrs. Harrison's social syllabub gives her work new importance.

A WILLING TRANSGRESSOR. By A. G. Plympton. Boston: Roberts Brothers. \$1.25.

The story which gives title to the book is the longest as well as the best of the six composing the collection. It is written with little apparent perception of the artistic effects of which the incidents of the tale are especially susceptible, yet the author has somehow brought her characters before the reader with singular distinctness. Without any striking originality they are nevertheless very real—so real, indeed, that we seem to have met them often before, to have known them intimately a long time. But this being true of the characterisation in the main, there are also bright touches that give freshness to the work, as in the description of the little old maid, who looks in her brown dress with white spots "like a guinea-hen," and who shows her most discreditable thoughts with a naive "you-know-how-it-is air" that forces you to step down from your pedestal of superhuman virtue. The second story, "The Scandal of Scarborough," is notable chiefly in its using the Mind Cure and Christian Science as synonymous terms. The two may seem to the outsider to mean much the same thing, but the initiated knows how indignantly any such suggestion is spurned by both, and how vital are the superiorities urged by each. "A Case of Conscience" has little merit as a story, but it sparkles with bright thought. Most of us have realised the feelings of the girl who suffers from another's idle, eager curiosity, until she thinks she "must have little holes all over her skin, like the bark of a tree that has been bored by a woodpecker." The same charm holds in the last three stories, the epigrammatic quality of the work offsetting the weakness of its structure, so that the book is really more readable than a great deal of much better writing.

A CHANCE CHILD. By Marah Ellis Ryan. Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co. \$1.00.

This volume of four stories, of which the titular tale is the first and the most important—if any may be called important—will add nothing to the reputation which the author has won by other work. *Told in the Hills* especially promised a good deal, and *A Pagan of the Alleghanies* also struck a strong, fresh note, but none of the traits which made these stories notable appear in the new book. The first story deals with a subject that must always appeal to sympathy—the position of those unfortunates who have no legal right to existence; but the pathos with which this subject is necessarily invested becomes bathos under the treatment of the author. Characterisation has never been among the strong points of her most successful work, and the characters figuring in these stories are the merest shadows. There is no distinct impression of this chance child, with her "bronze-ringed head," and indeed the

compound adjective is about the most distinctive feature of the entire tale. And after the titular story there seems to be no purpose in the tales beyond a general tendency toward the morbid, while the effect as a whole is singularly incongruous. It is hard to keep one's bearings, to remember whether one is reading of life in the Old or New World; for it requires a long leap of the imagination to go with the turning of a leaf from Sweden to South Carolina, from an Old World tragedy to a New World farce. But a still greater effort will be required—on the part of Southerners at least—to understand how a "black mammy" could possibly say of a young white lady, "I've nursed her an' tended her sence she was a little pickaninny." Since pickaninnies are small negroes, the only explanation would seem to be that for once an Ethiopian had changed her skin.

PALLADIA. By Mrs. Hugh Fraser. New York: The Macmillan Co. \$1.25.

The charm of *The Brown Ambassador* ensures a hearing for the author's new book, but although it has the anticipated excellence, it is so unlike the foregoing work in motive, manner, and spirit, that it might well be the work of another pen. Whereas *The Brown Ambassador* is a fascinating and rather light portrayal of the adventures of a brilliant cat and an enterprising dog, the human element being entirely subordinated, *Palladia* is a grave and even strenuous presentation of the tragic aspect of human life. It is, indeed, scarcely possible to imagine more tragic literary material than may be found in lives passed within the awful shadow of the White Tsar's throne, and it is here that the scene of the story is laid. The environment and the types are distinctively of the Russian court. The two central figures are a princess and a grand duke, and the wretchedness arising from the reluctant marriage into which they are urged by the obligations of their rank furnishes the motive of the tale. The work is firm and intimate in tone, thus producing a realistic effect, especially in the descriptive portions; and the feeling of the story throughout is of the profoundest pessimism, which faith does not brighten.

"Each day's journey is as the walking of a narrow plank in great darkness over chasms that sink out of sight, and the heart is like to sink there, too, out of loneliness on that deathly way, and there is no warm hand-clasp at the slippery places, no dear companion trying the hard steps first, and calling cheerily that all is well and the lights are in sight. A bitter march from dawn to night, with no tried mate to share the rough shanty and the traveller's bread when the day's march is done. Only far away beyond the jagged peaks and the cruel passes and the mist-blind moorland, so far that thousands of days of wayfaring lie between us and it—the still, white radiance that dies not in the sunlight nor strengthens in the starlight, shows where the beloved left the door open into peace when he passed through. And the foolish ones playing on the southern slopes warm with the fires beneath, they who seek new sins and sell them dear to one another in their hunger for hell, look up to us on the cold passes and cry mocking, 'Behold such an one, he believes there is a light over the hills! That he will find his dead beyond! Hi! Poor fool! Thy heaven is space, thy hope is a lie! Self is real and sin is sweet. Come down and be warm with us!'"

WHITE SAND. By M. C. Balfour. New York: The Merrimac Co. \$1.25.

The central idea of this story is that everlasting thesis which appears entirely tenable to most men, and absolutely untenable to most

women—the complete divisibility and the coexistence of a man's love for a good woman and for a bad woman. It cannot be claimed that the author, whom the point of view seems to reveal as a woman, offers any solution of this heretofore insoluble problem, nor can it be conceded that she has grasped the situation with even the average firmness and power. Yet the subject, however clumsily approached, catches and fixes the attention, holding, as it always has held and doubtless always must hold, a place of vital importance in a reasonably complete knowledge and understanding of human nature.

"Yes," he sighed hopelessly; "and I love you in spite of it. I love you; but it's no use telling you that, it's an insult—from me. . . . Perhaps you might not have guessed, and I need not have told you. . . . But I could not bear that there should be anything between us, even the smallest lie—and, at least, I have told you the truth."

He does not see—man rarely sees—that it is this very truth-telling that she most bitterly resents, because it forces her to a decision which she would rather ignore—a decision which either way must be a fatal blow to her happiness, since forgiveness she knows will lower her in the estimation of the transgressor. And this woman voices the feeling that most women are afraid to put into words.

"I think," she said aloud, "that there is much to be said for a well-dressed lie. Truth is so—disgustingly—naked."

And then, driving her to the wall, he goes blindly on to say that he cannot promise that he will not fall again.

"It disgusts me to look back on it. But at the same time—I—it amuses me—abominably. Don't misunderstand that. I want you to know my utter degradation. It amuses me—damnably."

Turning at bay, she flashes out the secret thought that has often lain silent in the heart of the purest of women:

"I don't see why I shouldn't be damnably amusing too."

Another love-story of a more conventional kind runs through the book, and it was apparently the intention of the author to make it the leading one, but this thesis soon becomes the central idea.

MR. BILLY BUTTONS. By Walter Lecky. New York: Benziger Bros. \$1.25.

Mr. Lecky has evidently not as yet become completely conscious of the importance of the title of a book, for otherwise he would never have made doubtful the commercial success of the present volume by giving it a name which instantly arouses prejudice in the mind of the prospective buyer. When *Mr. Billy Buttons* came to us we refrained from opening it for several weeks, being certain that it must be just another mess of cheap mechanical wit such as one finds, for example, in the productions of Mr. Hayden Carruth; and in this way we unconsciously did the book a great injustice; but Mr. Lecky has himself to blame in having handicapped his really admirable volume when he named it. *Mr. Billy Buttons* is a collection of stories linked together by the fact that they are told by a single narrator, and by the fact that, taken as a whole, they give a compact and

sympathetic picture of a little Adirondack village near the Canadian border. Mr. Lecky knows his ground very thoroughly; he has keen observation, a quick eye for the picturesque, and an exceptional command of the sources alike of pathos and of humour; and hence the book is thoroughly good reading from end to end. The odd types in so isolated a community are well and truly sketched—some of them, such as the good Père Monnier, the weird little Jenny Sauvé, and Mr. Billy Buttons himself, a typical Adirondack guide, being persons to remember. We rather regret that the publishers have thought fit to style the series in which this book appears "The Catholic Series;" for what have "Catholic" and "Protestant" to do with literature as such? And even more than the title of the volume itself, this label, smacking as it does of the *odium theologicum*, must limit the circulation of a book that deserves from every lover of good writing a cordial welcome.

A SINGER'S HEART. By Anna Farquhar. Boston: Roberts Bros. \$1.25.

This story seems to have the value that attaches to an actual human experience aside from any artistic considerations. The very absence of art may have something to do with the autobiographical feeling of the work. And, since a book should as nearly as possible be judged for what it is, not for what it might or ought to be, this must be called good of its kind. The awkward earnestness of the opening pages carries conviction. The first awakening of an artist soul imprisoned within domestic environment has been less vividly described by many better writers. The ruthless haste with which every fettering obstacle, no matter how sacred, is thrust aside is true to the cruelty of genius, if false to literary art. The instinctive rush of the artistic temperament toward erotic experience—not so much for love's sake as in the desire for the power that passion is assumed to give art—makes an apparently unconscious revelation of an aspect of genius that the ungifted would rather not see. The singer too readily takes it for granted that the fiddler is unmarried, and becomes too promptly conscious that the atmosphere surrounding them thrills with the "feeling of a day when electrical storm clouds are looming." Perhaps it is true, as the singer says, that the artist must feel to be great. But it can hardly be true that real love, such as moves the deep nature of the soul, comes or goes by invitation, either on or off the stage. By proving such a possibility the author would become a great benefactor of the human race, greater far than the greatest writer or the greatest singer that has ever lived. The sidelights thrown on the artistic point of view by this phase of the story are not edifying. They arouse suspicion of the integrity of feeling which is regarded as stock in trade. Nor does the early and easy transfer of the singer's affections in any wise lessen this impression. On the contrary, it gathers strength to the end of the story up to the very last paragraph, in which the tragic death of this latest lover is casually commented upon mainly as having "developed the tears and the dramatic quality" of the singer's voice. The cruelty of genius and its faithlessness to everything but itself has rarely had such a merciless showing as in this crude work.