

There is something fascinating and infinitely pathetic about the old age of a great artist. Because of his lawless, volatile nature, "The Last Years of Rodin" (McBride) present a curious view of that strange creature, the artist, hedged about by as queer a host as ever clung to the tottering throne of some mediæval monarch. The author of this really remarkable volume, Marcelle Tirel, was for years Rodin's faithful secretary. She appears to be a sensible, matter of fact person who, though revering deeply the Master as an artist, was fully aware of his weak and erratic character as a man. With a sincerity which we have no reason to question she shows us the string of parasites — mostly feminine — who were able many times to prey upon both the time and the coffers of France's great man. Her portrait of that suspicious, warmhearted, primitive peasant who lived as Rodin's wife till she died at an advanced age, though legally married to him only a short time before her death, is a piece of touching description as graphic as a Flemish painting. This book cannot add much to the critical evaluation of Rodin's work, for the author is confessedly not a critic of art. But her views upon life, as it was lived at Meudon and Paris, are sharp and clear, and full of absorbing detail.

The desire to teach a lesson seems to us to spoil much of the poetry of Isabel Fiske Conant in "Puritan" (Vinal). It nullifies the beauty of a really competent handling of words by obtruding itself upon the lyrical pattern. There are too many poems here, in our opinion, that celebrate the nobility of our Puritan forefathers. When she forgets these sainted ancestors of hers, Mrs. Conant's verse is really delightful. Pictures like those

in "Anesthesia", "Circus Elephant", and "Circus Riders" are delicately drawn and clear. Other pieces, however, seem marred by the author's weakness for involved phraseology.

In her book, "The Nobel Prize Winners in Literature" (Appleton), Annie Russell Marble attempts to explain the works of the authors who have reaped this reward. Her emphasis is upon their literary output; biographical and historical material is used only by way of illustration. Mrs. Marble tells the American reader which books by Nobel prize winners have been translated into English, and where to get them. Her book opens with an account of Alfred Nobel and his remarkable will, describing the manner in which awards are made. The idealistic side of the different authors is stressed, showing that substantially the intentions of Alfred Nobel have been carried out.

The ambition, it seems, to invest children with nice minds still induces adults to stew the "lambs" in a squash of sagely diluted fancies and puerile emotions. Mary Graham Bonner, although she declaims in the critical chapters of "A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading" (Funk, Wagnalls) against the unwise expurgation of literature for the young, and shows a laudable discrimination in numerous instances of her listed choice, yet adheres to certain obnoxious ones of the old juvenile bibliography. For our part, we had hoped to find Dottie Dimple and her ilk relegated to the consuming oblivion of ill judged perpetrations. Alas! We are in candor bound to protest also that never before have we known "Penquin Island" characterized as a tale of "nature and satire for the reader of sixteen and older"!

A book of critical appreciation of Catholic poets from Chaucer to Joyce Kilmer must needs cover well trodden ground. Yet there is a certain freshness of viewpoint in Katherine Brégy's book about "Poets and Pilgrims" (Benziger). Devout Catholics should find her essays admirable, while readers who are not particularly interested in the effect of the Church on the spiritual journey of its adherents will find in this book a considerable amount of interesting information about some poets whose lives and works are too little known to us: namely, Louise Imogen Guiney, Katharine Tynan, Ernest Dowson, and Paul Claudel. If the author seems to overemphasize the influence of Catholicism on such poets as Chaucer, Lodge, and Shakespeare, she has, at least, the advantage of that vagueness of spiritual outline which time lends to these men. Moreover, it is true that the controversies that ranged about the Church in England at that time, and for succeeding ages, must have been reflected to a greater or less degree in the works of contemporary writers.

Happily Robert Haven Schauffler does not write into the first essay a formula for the mood of "Peter Pantheism" (Macmillan). But for the comfort of any who may rely on definitions to spare the imagination exertion, we venture on the author's testimony to describe the state of Peter Pantheism as a sportsmanlike willingness to derive pleasure from contact with external scenes that meet the eye, to draw good humor from the reflections that stroll through one's mind. From a rare savoring of coined words, hard on the trail of charm, to the tickled recollection of infant loves, to companionship with seamen and the morally sensitive guides of the Maine

woods, Mr. Schauffler proceeds with a flow of humor and candid fancy and cordial observation. The volume should content the æsthetic, or the less fastidious, dabblers in moods.

The unadventurous have always found a vicarious thrill in seeing the criminal as hero, and Raymond Postgate has satisfied their taste in his "Murder, Piracy and Treason" (Houghton Mifflin), an account of English and American trials from Katrington's trial by combat in 1380 to the execution of Charles Peace in 1874. The author believes that we live in a very drab and mercenary epoch, and regrets the colorful life of the past. He depicts the happy time when people were put to death for such imaginary crimes as heresy and witchcraft by legal execution more brutal than a lynching. Mr. Postgate has a true narrative gift, avoids the gruesome, and conveys much of the atmosphere of the past.

The light and witty surface of Keith Preston's verse conceals a keen kernel of truth concerning the follies of this age. In his "Top o' the Column" (Covici) you will find rhymes long and short, paraphrasing Horace or Joyce Kilmer, and all blessed with the same delightfully satiric quality that once emanated from a Sabine farm. There are too few writers of light verse today who, without malice, smile a gently cynical smile of tolerance at the foibles of the genus homo. As we chuckle over these newspaper pieces of Keith Preston's, we relish the topical nature of them. In four lines a columnist may dispose of a front page feature that runs into many columns. This is fitting, for otherwise we might take the news seriously — and then where should we be?