

perfidious study of our tongue, can afford to be without. It cannot be long before the possession of it will be regarded as a necessity by every man of education; and in the confident assurance of the coming of that time, its projectors may rest satisfied that it will be as successful from the financial point of view as it is already honorable from the point of view of scholarship.

RECENT NOVELS.

The Ghost's Touch, and Other Stories. By Wilkie Collins. Harper's Handy Series.

The Sacred Nugget.—Self-Doomed.—Christmas Angel. By B. L. Farjeon. Harper's Handy Series.

Houp-là. By John Strange Winter. Harper's Handy Series.

The Old Factory.—Rolph Norbreck's Trust. By William Westall. Cassell & Co.

Babylon. By Grant Allen. D. Appleton & Co.

The Unforeseen. By Alice O'Hanlon. Harper's Franklin Square Library.

Goblin Gold. By May Crommelin. Harper's Handy Series.

rimus in Indis. By M. J. Colquhoun. Harper's Handy Series.

The Rabbi's Spell. By Stuart C. Cumberland. D. Appleton & Co.

King Solomon's Mines. By H. Rider Haggard. Cassell & Co.

Nuttie's Father. By Charlotte M. Yonge. Macmillan & Co.

Cabin and Gondola. By Charlotte Dunning. Harper's Handy Series.

The Story of Margaret Kent. A Novel. By Henry Hayes. Boston: Ticknor & Co.

Vergebens. Roman von Maria Werkmeister. Chicago: Franz Gindele Printing Co. 1885. 244 pp.

It is written in the signs of the times that unless potential novelists shall have a new revelation, the plain story-teller must soon become a dodo of literature. The evil day is so near at hand that a volume of tales by Wilkie Collins is a boon to the host whose only conviction about the art of fiction is, that it was discovered, or invented, or decreed, by some beneficent being solely for the mental distraction of travellers through this working-day world. To the literary reader, no matter what may be his estimate of the intrinsic worth of Collins's stories, or of their rank as intellectual creations, there is pleasure in contemplating work done by a method clearly perceived and thoroughly mastered. Collins understands his own resources so exactly that scholastic warfare and dilettante counsel are alike impotent to disturb or to confuse him. Among the younger breed of novelists, who take their profession solemnly, the feeling about Collins is that "any fellow could do that if he would." The severe and binding character of his method is contemptuously ignored. There is no eagerness to discern that a mastery of it implies the possession of many unusual qualities, such as a correct sense of selection, accurate knowledge of the force of dramatic surprise and climax, and a nice judgment about the fitness of a word to its place. It demands, too, the power to perceive an inevitable end before the first paragraph is written—a power which the young fry apparently either consciously despise or have developed away from. Collins always proposes to himself a strange and unexpected dénouement, frequently an improbable or unnatural one. He invariably plays upon the inexhaustible reserves of curiosity, and from the beginning imposes upon his reader the obligation to discover the secret he holds, whether

after all his secret be worth revealing or not. He knows, too, how to compel close attention, and is so ingenious in the contrivance of routes to his goal that, though they may be long, winding, and perplexing, they rarely fatigue. Only after the end is reached do we reflect on the lack of grace, polish, atmosphere, and proclaim that our taste has been violated, our sensibility shocked, by the author's pronounced mannerisms and intrusive eccentricities.

In his last volume, "The Ghost's Touch" and "Percy and the Prophet" develop the influence of supernatural agency on worldly affairs. Both have the author's distinguishing merit of method, and the latter has, in addition, two or three interesting characters. Mr. Blowmore, the eloquent advocate of the British citizen's rights, the protector of the unwritten Constitution, is almost a bit of burlesque; he certainly insinuates enough absurdity into the tale to suggest that all the wonderful occurrences narrated presented themselves to the author in a ludicrous light. The third story, "My Lady's Money," is excellent. In a degree it refutes the accusation that Collins in every instance sacrifices character to movement. Here the ten characters, including the terrier, "Tommie," are so distinct that they not only account for what they did and left undone under existing circumstances, but they convey a lively notion of what they would do in a totally different set of emergencies. Though the story is short, this effect is achieved without any evidence of haste or incompleteness.

Until Mr. Farjeon resolved to establish his claim to the title of novelist, by issuing a volume of fiction every two or three months, he was an acceptable story-teller, over-fond of calling on the rains to beat and the winds to blow a significant accompaniment to his drama, but still with something novel to say, and an agreeable way of saying it. He used not to appear so much like Dickens as he does now, or, at all events, he did not appear so much less than Dickens. The longest of his three recent volumes is the romance of 'The Sacred Nugget.' The scene is in Australia when the gold fever was at its height. Mike Patchett, the lucky finder of the cross-shaped nugget and of tons of precious ore, is Boffin reduced to bathos; Mrs. Whitmarsh is a colonial echo of Mrs. Wilfer; Mr. Horace Blakensee recalls Eugene Wrayburn and Mortimer, though neither of those gentlemen, peculiar as were their tricks to emphasize their social position, ever hit upon the distinguished device of incessantly polishing his finger-nails in public. In 'Self-Doomed,' the chief figure, Gideon Wolf, is introduced, labelled by the author, incomparable villain. The record of his uniformly wicked behavior reveals nothing to discredit the label, but is a wholly uninteresting confirmation of its descriptive truth. In 'Christmas Angel,' which is the best of the three because it has some sympathy and purpose, Farjeon expresses the philanthropic spirit of the times, as Dickens, in all his work, gave words to a tempest of humanitarian sentiment in the man. When Scrooge went off with the Christmas ghosts, he was wafted along by the strength of Dickens's personal desire that all the world should have roast-beef and plum-pudding on Christmas Day. When "Charlie's father" is led by the wraith of his son through scenes from which he awakens a sadder and wiser man, one feels that Mr. Farjeon is part of a "movement," and that he is thus contributing his share toward its advancement. If the imitation of Dickens were limited to catching up and carrying on his sympathy for suffering and his charity for sin, no word of adverse criticism could be spoken, but a copy of his melodramatic, sentimental manner is offensive. Dickens's versatility, his superb vitality, his inexhaustible spontaneity, place him beyond the canons of

taste and form. His extravagances were his own, and their brilliant idiosyncrasy condoned their falseness. For that very reason he is the worst sort of a literary model.

The sketch 'Houp-là,' by the author of 'Booties' Baby,' illustrates the best modern method of stimulating compassion for human misery and admiration of heroic qualities. It is a simple, straightforward, dramatic rendering of a bit of real life, in its movement subjecting character to the finest test. Booties, who reappears, establishes himself as a figure in literature, a typical contradiction of the sneer that heroism went out with periwigs and ruffles.

If all the novelists who conceive the expression of a moral meaning, to be the ultimate object of art, could convey their meaning as artistically as the author of 'Houp-là' (who, rumor says, is a woman), much splendid argumentative talent might pine and die for want of an attractive subject of discussion. But the numbers of tentative, uncertain, unskilful efforts bid fair to keep what the "Gamps" call "argufiers" busy for many a day. The utilitarian fiction dedicated to the service of the Lancashire workingman is, in itself, a bonanza of disquisition. Mr. William Westall, in 'The Old Factory' and 'Rolph Norbreck's Trust,' has hesitated between the relative artistic values—or, can it be, relative drawing power?—of stern reality in Lancashire dialect and wild romance in glittering rhetoric. As a consequence, he has produced neither good contributions to social science nor blood-curdling adventure, and he has done nothing at all to relieve harassed inquirers into the mission and meaning of art.

Mr. Grant Allen, in 'Babylon,' has not quailed before the immensity of this problem, as far as it affects or is affected by painting and the plastic arts. The human interest in his novel is soon exhausted. Neither the American landscape painter, nor the Dorset peasant sculptor, nor any one of the more prominent characters, has a breath of the vitality imparted to Cecca, the queen of the Roman models. She is the conventional passionate, revengeful, unscrupulous Italian; but she lives, and in her alone the author shows power as a painter from the life. The curious reader, however, will turn over the pages twice to quarrel or agree with the art criticism, to be amazed and amused by the display of philological prejudice. Though there is no definite confession of faith, the essence of Mr. Allen's artistic creed undoubtedly is, that the highest, and indeed only considerable, object of art is to express beauty, and that that expression has reached perfection when the beauty of the spirit is made visible through the beauty of the form. The artist's moral lesson to humanity is taught through the spiritual elevation which contemplation of his work excites. Hiram Winthrop accomplished this mission by his sensitive paintings of his native woods and weeds and marshes; Colin Churchill, through the spiritualization of noble and heroic form in marble. It is easier to assent to Mr. Allen's creed than to approve his expression of it. The technical, critical phrases, strangely out of place in a novel, would be pedantic if they were not purely journalistic. Their unfitnes is peculiarly noticeable, considering Mr. Allen's sensitiveness about the use and sound of words. What he calls the "Great American Language" has offended him deeply, and through the story runs a strain of peevish comparison between harsh, shrieking American corruptions, and "pretty, melting" Dorset dialect, dignified by the appellation "West Saxon of the Court of King Alfred." Preference of a burr to a twang is a matter of taste, but faithful reproduction of dialect is a matter of close observation and delicate perception of sound, and memory. After reading Mr. Allen's reproduction of the rural dialect of New

York State, one can define the imaginative passages of 'Babylon.' Some of his objections to verbal usages in America, though captious, are valid; but when he disparages *sick*, as an Americanism, one wonders if, for instance, he habitually reads Calphurnia's message to the Senate, "Say he is *ill*."

The opening scenes of 'The Unforeseen' are in a *habitan* village in the heart of the Canadian forests. The French Canadians are a comparatively unwritten people, and offer to the novelist a field where reality is almost one with romance and picturesqueness. Miss O'Hanlon, like several other novelists who have attempted it, begins very well, but abandons her fine opportunities for the attraction of conventional background to her figures. Though Mme. Vandeleur very soon loses her distinctive *Canadienne* personality, she is a clever and brilliant adventuress, and her career is logically drawn, from its obscure beginning to its despairing end. She is by no means typical, but she is possible. Claudia Estcourt, the contrasting figure, is typical, and though poetic justice may cry for the punishment of vanity, selfishness, and cruelty, a wide experience of life will commend the author's inflexibility. The novel is overlaid with characters, and spun out, but it is carefully constructed, guided by taste and fine intention, and, moreover, it is interesting and enjoyable.

Such commendation cannot be given to 'Goblin Gold,' by May Crommelin; whose earlier novels promised a fair future. It is the threadbare story of a hypocrite who, attaching himself to a singularly ingenuous and generous man, drags him through a sequence of scrapes in order to oust him from his inheritance. This character is a survival. He is like the leering, hissing, hand-wringing villain still popular in melodrama, and unlike any human being that ever was.

His double appears in 'Primus in Indis.' The hero of this story is introduced burroughing and intriguing for Prince Charlie. The machinations of the villain prevent the hero's being more than a handsome and somewhat noisy supporter of the bonnie Prince; so, as a soldier of fortune, he follows Clive into India. Here the number of his adventures is more striking than their coherency, and, after they are told, Peterkin's interrogation, "What was it all about?" springs naturally to the lips.

The supernatural incidents in the 'Rabbi's Spell' are a concession to Mr. Cumberland's reputation as a wizard. The tale of murder and retribution could have been told as well without them. The real motive is to expose and censure Russian officialism, and, eliminating pages expressive of bitter personal hostility to Russia and the Russians, the motive is successfully realized through the action. Several scenes are skillfully managed, notably those between Count Soltikoff and his subordinate, Nevikoff. In these the author gives a lesson in the diplomatic art of making your desires understood without saying one word compromising to dignity or honor.

'King Solomon's Mines' is a capital boy's book, to which the purely fabulous foundation is no drawback. The marvellous adventures of Captain Good and his friends in the land that lay beyond the "Suliman Mountains" appeal, through devices familiar and novel, to the healthy boy's ardor for fighting savages and coming off victorious, with the spoils of Golconda to boot.

'Nuttie's Father,' by Miss Yonge, is not intended for children only; it may be read at any age with a perfect sense of security that moral bulwarks shall not be assailed. It has all the amiability and sincerity which have endeared Miss Yonge to two generations, but the girl who goes up for the Cambridge examinations is too abnormal a development for her to grapple with. It is very edifying to hear that Nuttie is going in

for "higher education," but we can only feel that she has gone in heart and soul for mild dissipation, sanctified by convictions about the saving grace of the High Anglican ritual, and that the quadrilateral of the tennis ground represents to her consciousness the purest mathematical beauty.

Encouraged, probably, by the reception of her novel, Charlotte Dunning has gathered a few of her short stories together into a volume, which has been issued as one of the numbers of "Harper's Handy Series." It takes eleven tales to fill out the 200 pages, and, as a rule, they are quite short, airy, and light; yet they strike one as being more than sketches, after all. Whatever may be the facts in the case, one feels in reading them that they were not dashed off with recklessness: they seem to show the finishing marks of a careful hand. It is entirely to this finish of form and an engaging delicacy of style that the stories owe their charm, for there is nothing strikingly original, new, or distinctive about them; in fact, there is a flavor of other writers to be detected in one or two of them that is just slight enough to escape the appearance of imitation. "Told Between the Acts" recalls immediately a form in which Balzac liked to cast his sketches. The author's fondness for making a plot of the simplest materials and for turning the story on the very slightest incidents is noticeable throughout, and one finds one's self wondering, when the volume is put aside, what there was in it that interested him; but the interest is there, nevertheless.

The story of Margaret Kent is neither a new nor a pleasant one. It is told with a certain degree of facility, however, that gives it the air of a commonplace, clever piece of fiction-writing. There is no lack of incidents or situations, nor of characters not well enough drawn to be worthy of praise, nor yet poorly enough drawn to deserve unqualified censure. The novel, in a word, is commonplace throughout; it is not quite sensational, nor is it quite simple and natural. It has violent contrasts, a brisk movement, and excites an interest of a sort; but it is not an elevating or worthy interest. One is at a loss to see what Mrs. Kent finds in Dr. Walton to make her love him; and her faithfulness to her worthless husband, who returns from South America just as she is on the point of asking for a divorce, is rather too much forced upon her by circumstances for us to give her any great credit—for Dr. Walton's disgusted and almost brutally passionate attitude when he discovers that she is not a widow, as he had thought her, leaves her no alternative. The final complication, when Dr. Walton's mistake is reversed—when she is really a widow and he thinks it is not her husband but the latter's cousin who is dead—is a needless piling up of improbabilities. From the character of the book as a whole, however, one is inclined to think that the author has tolerably succeeded in what he set out to do, and one remembers that

"Not failure, but low aim is crime."

'Vergebens' is a pretty story, of the quiet or domestic order, which contrives to be interesting and to leave a pleasant impression in spite of its familiar plot and incidents and the melancholy character of many of the scenes. From its being written and printed in Chicago, the reader might suppose that it dealt with phases of German-American life, which would have given the work a unique interest; but this merit the author by no means claims. It deals, in fact, with life in a small South-German town fifty years ago; the characters, the author explains, being described partly from memory, but partly also from tradition. That, with scenes so distant and incidents which, though neither realistic nor commonplace, have long been common property with writers of fiction, the author should have been able to in-

fuse vividness and vitality into her characters, argues considerable powers of sympathy and discernment.

LAUGHLIN'S BIMETALLISM.

The History of Bimetallism in the United States. By J. Laurence Laughlin, Assistant Professor of Political Economy in Harvard University. D. Appleton & Co. 1886.

It was very important that, with the beginning of the silver controversy as a live issue in politics, there should be put within easy reach a collection of all the stores needed for such a campaign. Nobody can have failed to notice how, since the assembling of Congress, this question has gone to the front, passing by easy stages the civil-service and the tariff and all other questions in its claims upon public attention. Yet it has been a momentous question ever since the 28th of February, 1878, when the Bland-Allison bill was passed over President Hayes's veto. Indeed, the controversy started two or three years earlier, as soon as the decline of silver below our old ratio of sixteen to one was recognized as a permanent change in the relative values of silver and gold. The public mind, however, appeared to take a rest after the passage of the silver-coinage law; and although nearly all instructed persons saw that great mischief was impending, and many used their best efforts to arouse public opinion to a sense of the coming danger, they were not able to gain attention. Now, however, the ball is opened. Masses of people are for the first time really taking sides. All the signs point to a protracted struggle, at the end of which most assuredly the silver men will be worsted, although they may prevent any action adverse to the Bland dollar in the present Congress. The conditions are such that the opponents of the arbitrary coinage of silver must continue to fight, however often they may be worsted, and must fight all the harder the oftener they are worsted. No such stress is imposed upon the other side. On the contrary, the larger the accumulation of Bland dollars in the Treasury, the less reason is there for continuing to coin.

Professor Laughlin's work is an extremely painstaking collection and methodical arrangement of all the facts needed by the student, the statesman, or the editor to fit him for taking part in this battle. Along with the collocation of material we have a clear and dispassionate argument, not of the controversial sort, maintaining the views held by nearly all economists of the present day on the subject of monetary standards. It is worth mention that prior to 1876, when the extraordinary decline in the price of silver began, the subject of bimetallism had not been much considered by English or American writers. The old discussions which antedated the adoption by England of the single gold standard were forgotten. So also were the debates of our own statesmen, in their gropings after the truth, which they eventually reached in practice in the year 1853, but did not embody in the law until 1873. In the former year it was found that true "metallism" consisted of a gold standard with a silver subsidiary coinage, the bullion value of the latter being sufficiently below the money value to prevent its being melted and exported and the country thus left without any small change. The settlement reached in 1853 was the acme of human wisdom simply because it was the embodiment of human experience carefully noted, and noted, too, by the evidence of no little suffering.

Professor Laughlin supplies us with the history of this long pursuit after truth in all its details. Nothing more instructive can be found in the history of any country. Indeed, all countries go through a like experience at one time or another. The laws of political economy are laws because