

books in these institutions do not do so. The library as a workshop does not appeal to those men and women who might make the most of its advantages. In few schools are books handled as tools, and our librarians generally have not yet awakened to the great possibilities that lie within their reach. Perhaps this explains the curious lack of liberality on the part of the municipal authorities in too many sections of the country toward the local library. They do not think it pays.

In our big business houses, both wholesale and retail, we see that those in charge of them have gradually revolutionized the methods of the past in dealing with the public. Business men—and men of as true genius as is to be found in literature and art—have educated the people to a different system of trading, enabling them to buy a better article for less money and on fairer terms than were ever dreamed of by the merchant of the past. There are those who believe the same revolution will yet be worked out in the library world, when men of sufficient imagination and executive ability take hold of this institution and develop it in the big way that has marked the growth of American commercial life.

JAMES C. MOFFET.

Louisville, Ky., July 18.

WHISTLER'S BIOGRAPHY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: The letter which you published from Mr. Arthur Studd (*Nation*, July 7) is misleading. Whistler, in his lifetime, authorized us to write his biography and, when, later, we were dragged into the law courts by Whistler's executrix, this was completely proven and the authorization was upheld on every point by the British High Court of Chancery. The Metropolitan Museum, in the Introduction to its Catalogue of the Whistler Exhibition, states the facts correctly. Mr. Studd's letter is an endeavor to misrepresent them to your readers.

JOSEPH PENNELL,

ELIZABETH ROBINS PENNELL.

London, July 21.

Literature.

McMASTER'S HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES.

A History of the People of the United States, from the Revolution to the Civil War. Vol. VII. By John Bach McMaster. New York: Appleton. \$2.50 net.

Two subjects of high interest virtually fill the seventh volume of Professor McMaster's "History," the social situation of the country in 1840 and the war with Mexico. Exactly ten years, 1841-1850, are covered in the narrative, and those ten years formed a turning point in the nation's history. The slave power exerted its greatest force of aggression, and seemed to have attained its desire; but in so doing it raised influences that in the end were to conquer by overthrowing that power, and wiping slavery from the land.

The account of the measures leading up to the war with Mexico is admirably told, and gains much by the use of the rich manuscript sources that have come within the reach of the student in recent years. The story is retold with greater detail, and the relations of the leading actors in that political struggle are not a little changed by the new material. The main lines remain as they were, and there is nothing that would alter the generally accepted view of the justice or injustice of the war, and the interested motives of Polk for beginning it. Jackson unwittingly allowed himself to be used as a cover for the annexationists, and on the plea of military necessity came out positively for annexation; in so doing he defeated the Presidential hopes of Van Buren. A little coterie of Southern statesmen succeeded in overthrowing the plans of one of the shrewdest political managers of the day, one supported by all the weight and prestige of the idol of the Democratic party. Not only did they defeat him in a convention that was intended to meet, and as a matter of form nominate him, but they reduced him to an impotence so great that he could not so much as command the nomination of the member of the Cabinet from his own state. Mr. McMaster might have touched upon the exclusion of Van Buren from Polk's confidence, and the very tardy and not entirely sincere peace offering which was made to the ex-President in the form of the English mission. It is unfortunate also that the diplomatic correspondence of the Texan republic was not published in time for use, as there is much in it to modify general statements on the position of Texas and its true relations with European Powers, on which Jackson so largely based his conclusions.

Polk regarded his election as a mandate for annexation, but found that action had already been taken by Tyler looking towards the admission of Texas into the union under a resolution of Congress. Here again some recently published letters of Polk add something to the case as stated by McMaster. Tyler had sent Donelson to Texas to induce her to give up her independence and become one of the United States, electing to act under a resolution passed by the House, and not under another of the Senate. Although the campaign had been fought on the question of annexation, Polk reached Washington and took the oath of office without having come to a decision under which resolution he should act. Having learned what Tyler had done in the matter, he was content to send a messenger to Mexico, but matters had then gone too far for such treatment. Out of Polk's attitude or hesitation on March 4, grew a controversy which he felt keenly, as it involved the charge that he had given pledges that were unwarranted before

taking office. He had no opinion at the time—certainly a singular position for the Executive at such a crisis.

On the course of negotiation, propositions, and hostilities Mr. McMaster's chapters are crowded with interesting detail, sometimes so full as to be a little confusing. He brings out with admirable force the fact that when war did come, the people were not confused by any moral questions over the rights of Mexico or the extension of the slave power. They took their cue from Polk's message, and thought only of the "aggravated and multiplied wrongs to which our country has been subjected by Mexico during a long series of years." The papers dwelt much upon the faithlessness, falsehood, and insolence of Mexico, and on her refusal to pay claims or negotiate upon the subjects in dispute. From that it was a simple step to assert that Mexico had invaded American territory, and, as the war proceeded in favor of the American arms, to increase the demands for territory and compensation, until it seemed as if no moral issue could possibly have been involved. After peace came the rise of the free soil party, the agency for once more recalling the people to certain dangerous aspects of national tendencies.

The Oregon question and the Clayton-Bulwer treaty were also events of this time, and are treated with great fullness. In seeking to show what opinions the people held on those political questions, Mr. McMaster gives a summary of many newspaper articles, taken from different parts of the country. The result is confusing, because there is no standard for measuring the influence of those respective journals. It is the same with the often long summaries of Congressional speeches. Indeed, it is a characteristic of all of McMaster's volumes that he remains impersonal. The so-called leaders seem to be mere figureheads, convenient for an occasional appearance and utterance, but without life and vitality. It would be difficult to gain any idea from these pages of the manner of man Polk, Van Buren, or Taylor was. No attempt at characterizing is made, and no opinion is given by the author upon the careers of these men. The reader would suppose from the account given on p. 505 that Adams had never been of moment in the nation's history.

While political narration loses by this absence of personality, the description of the moral and social condition of the country gains. Here Mr. McMaster is at his best, and the curious and readable information drawn from many sources, from the very unreliable census of the day to the political philosopher, makes these volumes a veritable treasure-house of good things. The visiting foreigners naturally supply a good part of the more definite pictures, for

they had greater skill in presentation and were more impressed by the novelities. As a whole, they do not seem to have been unjust, or to have departed far from the truth. Even as Mr. McMaster pictures them, the modes of travel and of entertainment were exasperating to any who were acquainted with a certain convenience. A journey from Mobile to the Atlantic seaboard required much endurance, while west of the Mississippi the element of tragedy was ever present. The descriptions of cities like Boston and New Orleans show how far the country had advanced since the War of 1812, and the social movements, like the study of Fourierism, the crusade of Dorothea Dix, and the rise of libraries, are extremely suggestive of the workings of moral forces as yet crudely seeking for an outlet. These chapters are good reminders to the reader of the beginnings of tendencies that have become general, and an essential part of the progress of knowledge. For these alone this history deserves high praise.

CURRENT FICTION.

Morning Star. By H. Rider Haggard. New York: Longmans, Green & Co.

It must be said, with all due sadness, that if it were not for the name upon the title-page of this romance, one would incline to dispose of it in short order as a mediocre performance. But for anything by the author of those gratefully recalled treasures of a vanished boyhood, "King Solomon's Mines" and "She," one naturally has a second glance. To the youthful mind, the present story will no doubt possess its merits. It has the spooky quality peculiar to Mr. Haggard's best romances; and it has enough of mere adventure to appease the juvenile thirst for action. To the ear of middle age it all rings a little thin. The heroine is but another of those miraculous females of whom "She" was the great original. Neter-Tua, "Morning Star of Amen," is of course a Queen; royalty is a fundamental virtue of Mr. Haggard's heroines. Her realm chances to be Old Egypt. She is heir of a usurping dynasty. The older line is represented in the flesh by a young Rames, a mere soldier in the royal army, but foster-brother and beloved of Neter-Tua. The author's task is obviously to seat the pair together, after a proper series of vicissitudes, upon the double throne. The chief adversary is one Prince Abi, uncle to Neter-Tua, and himself aspirant to the throne. He is a very bad man indeed, and only gets his deserts. He brings about the death of the Pharaoh, Neter-Tua's father, and, having made the beautiful princess his prisoner, gives her choice between marriage to himself and starvation. She makes the heroic choice, and seems in a fair way

to pay the penalty, when it suddenly appears that she is not daughter of the great god Amen for nothing. Supernatural presences supply her board, and presently whisk her away altogether beyond the power of wicked old Abi. Remains behind in her dungeon an avenger in the form of her "Ka," or double, which assumes the part of willing bride to Abi, and shortly brings him to confusion. Meantime the real, or bodily, Neter-Tua wanders upon the track of young Rames, and it is not hard to imagine the upshot of the whole affair. It is a little surprising to find that the veteran romancer is as much given to mingling highflown archaisms and modern colloquialisms in his dialogues as the majority of his successors in the esteem of the romance-reading public.

Anne of Tréboul. By Marie Louise Goetchius. New York: The Century Co.

The besotted self-sacrifice is one of the subjects with which novel readers have ample chance to lose patience. When the father of Anne's unborn child besought her to marry him, when mother and curé added their entreaties, there is pitiful lack of pretext for Anne's making martyrs of herself and family. The knowledge that Yvon loved Aimée was the excuse she offered, but in the face of facts and of her acute maternal instinct the mistake was wholly unnatural, and makes of the story a vain show. The Breton coast, the traditions of the fisher-folk in their work, their play, their dangers, their penances, are not without the familiar Breton picturesqueness. No story of the sea by one who knows the sea can be entirely uninteresting. But the strained and motiveless motive is enwrapped in so much verbiage of an awkwardly Gallic English that the manner does not redeem the matter. What is meant to be a pathetic-tragico-idyl is in fact a bit of rococo sentiment overloaded with nondescript language.

The Godparents. By Grace Sartwell Mason. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

A very pleasant little story; slight of its kind, but excellent in that kind. It has been recently declared that the reign of the short story is nearing its end: that the new form of fiction is to be neither the tale nor the extended novel, but the three-part story—a story, that is, of such length and quality as to enable it to appear in three consecutive numbers of a popular magazine. "The Godparents," though we do not know that it has found that form of publication, appears to be of about the right length and type to fit this new measure. It is rather an expanded short story than a condensed novel. Some ten years before the story opens, two young people have rather carelessly stood godfather and godmother to the child of a friend. The

friend has died, and the boy is growing up neglected and unruly. He is nominally in the care of his grandmother, but she has not long to live, and, like the boy, is under the virtual rule of a designing housekeeper. Almost on her death-bed, she summons the godparents to do their duty by the boy. The man gives up his work, and fairly browbeats the woman into giving up her pleasure, in order that the boy's life may be saved. Needless to say, the godparents are both unmarried, and destined to be brought together on the field of duty. To tell the truth, the author herself is so much interested in their progressive philandering as to find difficulty in keeping the boy in the foreground. To begin with, he does not seem to be in such a fatally bad way. He refuses to have anything to do with the reforming pair, so that the ease of their task may not part them. He takes to the woods so that they may pursue him and carry on their acquaintance among the romantic surroundings of the camp and the trail. He becomes amenable just as soon as it is desirable to wind up the whole episode. But let us not bruise the butterfly, which is, as we have said, a pretty example of its species.

A Disciple of Chance. By Sara Dean. New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co.

"Travers" may be recalled as a story laid in San Francisco at the time of the earthquake—a story in some ways crude, but with a vigor belonging to its direct conception of a modern action in a modern scene. We half suspect that "A Disciple of Chance," by the same author, is an earlier book. Its origin is literary, its structure artificial. The curtain rises upon a company of elegant eighteenth-century gamblers amusing themselves with hazard in White's Coffee-house. Horace Walpole and George Selwyn are among the number. The host is a certain Earl of Yerington, who shows, one by one, all the qualifications of the romantic hero. He is one of the finest gentlemen of his time, and a good fellow besides; a favorite with both sexes, master of the smallsword, and quondam conqueror of the greatest of England's professional bruisers. Add that his blood is of the oldest, his face of the handsomest, and his fortune being gallantly flung away at the gaming-table and elsewhere, and you have the finished type. His crowning folly is to wager his life against the guess of a titled enemy that he will be a ruined man within a specified time. After a good deal of rather stagey and artificial adventure, he is saved from ruin and the ensuing duty of suicide by the always acceptable expedient of marriage with an heiress. But, of course, the expedient is the novelist's, not the hero's. We must hope for another "Travers" rather than another story of this conventional and merely tolerable cast.