

The Bookshelf.

By DELTA.

BOOKSHELF FEUILLETON.

The Victoria League's Prize Essays.

INTERESTING as to subject, and meritorious as to quality, and decidedly encouraging to the promoters of the scheme, are the three essays which have gained the first, second and third prizes offered by the Literature and Educational Committee of the Victoria League, and donated, respectively, by the "Herald," A. M. Myers, M.P., and that well-known writer, Mrs Carr-Rollett. It is interesting to note that over 70 essays were received in response to the League's offer, some of which revealed a correct and a thoughtful knowledge of the subject indicated, and a facility of composition marked by a practical and patriotic sentiment as creditable to the youthful essayists and their teachers as it must have been surprising and gratifying to the judges appointed to adjudicate as to their merits. This section of the Literature and Educational Committee's work is, in our opinion, by far the most important of the many educative schemes that have been devised by this committee for the fostering and spreading of matters and sentiments Imperialistic. This is an age in which education and matters utilitarian take precedence above all things, and this part of the League's work, since these essays are to reappear in the columns of various English and colonial journals of Imperialistic views, must lead to an interchange of Home and intercolonial ideas, highly beneficial from a sentimental and an educative point of view. Of that section of this committee's work which deals with country libraries, we take occasion to refer to the good work that has been done in forming the nuclei of at least six back-block school libraries. In the selection of new books which formed the greater part of this nuclei, immense care was taken to include no book that had not attained the dignity of a classic, so that the youth of those fortunate schools who have availed themselves of the League's generous offer have been given the opportunity to acquire that taste for good literature which, when once acquired, is never lost. The child is father to the man, and we are such a believer in the educative and refining, and also the mischievous influence of books, that we usually gauge a man's character by the books he reads.

A Dickens Stamp

The scheme mooted by the proprietors of the "Strand Magazine," that the Charles Dickens centenary shall be celebrated by the issue of a "Dickens stamp," will commend itself, not only to all Dickens' lovers, but to all lovers of literature. For surely there must be thousands to-day who can remember Dickens, as we can, and who must retain, as we do, a warm corner in their hearts, sacred to the memory of that magnetic personality which still survives in the atmosphere of his pages, and which is felt even by those of his readers who constitute themselves his critics. Those of our readers who keep themselves au courant with Home news will remember that some time ago a small civil pension was granted to Charles Dickens' granddaughters, who had fallen upon evil times, and were living in a state of indigence that should not have been possible to Charles Dickens' descendants had the law of copyright been as comparatively just as it is at the present day. Various schemes have been mooted as to the form the Dickens centenary memorial should take. But a grand sculptured memorial, a Dickens museum in London, or a rich endowment for charitable institutions in which he took a personal interest would be an insult to his memory now that it is known that his family has reverted to that condition of sordid, genteel poverty that made his own life the hell it is depicted in "David Copperfield" and other works, and the never-to-be-effaced memory of which sombrely coloured his outlook at times to the very end of his life. The scheme is an admirable one, and is simplicity itself. Indeed, it is so simple, so inexpensive, and so widely inclusive in its reach, and promises such a magnificent return, that it is almost sure to be adopted. Seventeen of Dickens' descendants are living, and we are sanguine enough to hope that the result will place

them for all time beyond the reach of that poverty which embittered and dwarfed the master's youthful outlook.

Dickens in the Role of an Apostle.

The Dickens lover will appreciate a wonderfully cheap edition of Edwin Pugh's exposition of the master and his works. "Charles Dickens: The Apostle of the People," is issued by Mr. Frank Palmer at half-a-crown net.

New Nelson Reprints.

That very charming book, entitled "My Confidences," by the late Mr. Frederick Locker-Lampson, has been issued in Messrs. Nelson's shilling library. Written for his descendants, it consists of reminiscences of the literary giants of the mid-Victorian period. Anecdotes of Tennyson, Carlyle, George Eliot, Dickens, Trollope, and a host of others, with the writer's own estimate of many of them. Mr. Locker-Lampson's circle of acquaintances was a wide and distinguished one. "The Life of Sir Frank Lockwood," by Mr. Augustine Birrell, is

ent schools of thought." Hinton was deeply devout, and his effort was always directed to combining certain new aspects of thought with orthodox belief; whereas Nietzsche could see no hope for mankind save in an entire reversal of beliefs, moral, social and religious. Iconoclasm and anarchism by nature, the mere fact that by the common consent of mankind certain ideas had become accepted as fundamental was enough to make him regard them as wrong and dangerous. Sandwiched between Hinton and Carpenter, he seems utterly out of place, as they were men whose chief gospel was the value of beauty, and joy and simplicity in life, and the remedial efficacy of suffering. The book, says a writer in "The Literary World," is out of proportion since if Nietzsche was to be introduced at all, his should have been the larger figure, since he is comparably the more original and powerful thinker of the three, and the only one whose teaching is likely to occupy a permanent place in the history of thought! "The more so since, while the doctrines of Hinton and Carpenter have, to a great extent been accepted, Nietzsche will ever be a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence; but as such he will continue to exercise a stimulating and awakening, if not by any means a uniformly healthy influence." Indeed, on this account his influence is greatly to be dreaded for our generation; and no turning aside, as Mrs. Havelock Ellis does, to certain beautiful sayings on

of the outcasts who ought to have his bed, and of the eider-ducks who ought to wear his quilt.

Some Pett Ridge Humour.

Some amusement was caused at the annual dinner of the Associated Booksellers at Birmingham by some of Mr. Pett Ridge's remarks in his humorous speech. Mr. Max Pemberton, who had preceded Mr. Pett Ridge, had referred to his own first visit to Birmingham in terms somewhat cryptic, but intended to imply that he was born in that town. Mr. Pett Ridge, while deeply regretting that he could not claim to have been born in Birmingham, said that he threw no doubt on the statement of Mr. Max Pemberton; he ought to believe it for he had heard him make the same sort of statement in many provincial towns where his books were selling well. We have not heard that any writ for libel has yet been served on Mr. Pett Ridge, and probably as a chartered humorist he doesn't expect one.

Mr. A. C. Benson on Paucity of Plot.

Mr. A. C. Benson, in the introduction to "The Thread of Gold" (of which Mr. Murray has just issued a popular edition), tells us that "one of the difficulties under which literary art seems to labour is that it feels bound to run in certain channels, to adopt stereotyped and conventional media of expression." He asks if anything more conventional can be found than the average play or the average novel, and he further boldly declares that "life as a rule has no plot and very few dramatic situations." Whatever we may think of the average play or novel, this view of life is not our experience. May it not be that Mr. Benson, like Mr. A. J. Balfour, has no leisure to read daily papers—especially the half-penny ones? To us, who have to read them, modern life presents a plethora of plots and numberless dramatic situations. What, for instance, could be more sensational than the man-woman romance, the mystery of the double identities of Harry Lloyd and Marie Le Roy, of Enfield, of which the editor of "Lloyd's News" has just made a journalistic scoop? Here, then, is an unconventional plot ready to the hand of the novelist, for we cannot recall any previous case in fiction of the "man-woman" romance.

REVIEWS.

Married and Other Poems: By Mary Gilmore. (Melbourne: George Robertson and Co. New Zealand: All booksellers. Price 3/6.)

There is something curious in the fact that while Australasia has produced so few prose writers of great merit, she has been unusually prolific in writers of meritorious verse. Of these, Mrs. Gilmore, whose book of verse entitled "Married," has just reached us from George Robertson and Co., is a notable and a felicitous example. With few exceptions, which could be read with equal pleasure by both sexes alike, Mrs. Gilmore's verse is essentially feminine, and shows her keenly observant, sympathetically tender, and strongly maternal in her attitude towards her own sex in every phase of domestic life, and, indeed, in anything affecting the happiness of femininity—an attitude highly to be commended in an era which has earned the reproach of being almost destitute of home life, and all that it stands for. In dubbing Mrs. Gilmore's work as pure womanly, we do not mean to infer that her work lacks strength or depth, for it extends both, coupled with grace, high sentiment, and a beauty and a facility and a sincerity of thought, style and expression that should place her high in the list of household poets. In the poem entitled "Married" is compressed with rare understanding the meaning of marriage. Though limited as to space, we cannot forbear quoting it in full. Here it is:—

"MARRIED."

It's singin' in an out,
An' feelin' full of grace,
Here 'n' there, up an' down,
An' round about th' place.

It's rollin' up your sleeves,
An' whittin' up the hearth,
An' scrubbin' out th' floors,
An' sweepin' down the path.



FINAL EXAMINATION.

The only subject in which he didn't "flunk."

a still later addition to the same series. It has a speaking likeness of the famous witty K.C., as frontispiece. The biography was originally issued by Messrs. Smith, Elder and Co., and this reprint is made with their co-operation. Other editions to the same series are: Colonel Durand's "The Making of a Frontier" (with maps and pictures illustrating work and travel in the Himalayas); Boulger's "Life of Gordon" (originally published in 1891); and Miss Wynne's stirring French romance, "For Faith and Navarre."

Three Modern Seers.

There is no mistaking the cosmopolitan flavour of Mrs. Havelock Ellis' taste. From a trenchant satire on the strange experiences of furnished lodging-house keepers, she turns to a discussion of James Hinton, Nietzsche, and Edward Carpenter. Exactly which of these modern seers she favours is not clear from this book of essays, which has been issued by Stanley Paul, at three and sixpence net. Each of these seers belong to differ-

ent issues ought to be allowed to obscure this fact. Nietzsche's doctrine, in short, unbalanced by a high morality is as destructive as dynamite. Mrs. Ellis' failure to grasp the fundamental doctrines, together with her too easy assimilation of what may be termed the ornamental part of their work, makes her book both ill-proportioned and unrelatable as to the exact value of the place each thinker should with benefit occupy in the thinking world.

The Modern Puritan.

Every age has the Puritan it deserves, and the scientific one of to-day is ten degrees worse than the sour-visaged, long-haired Knave in the Grey Jerkin with his sword of the Lord, and a swinging prayer to back it up with. Nowadays the little finger of the scientist is thicker than the loin of the theologian, and the physical science that cuts living animals to pieces is matched by the political science that makes it difficult for man to sleep o' night's, for dreams