

# The Bookshelf.

By DELTA.

## BOOKSHELF FEUILLETON.

### Interesting to Government Civil Servants.

SEELY'S have published at 12, 6 net, Sir Andrew Fraser's exceedingly interesting work entitled "Among Indian Rajahs and Ryots." In a review of this book, says a writer in the "Literary World," the "Times" takes the opportunity to give a kick to certain ex-Indian civilians who have entered the House of Commons and ventured to criticise the Government of India, of which they happen to be pensioners. Sir Andrew had quoted in his book a remark said to have been made by an Indian nobleman to an ex-civilian M.P., in which the Oriental hinted that the M.P. was violating that excellent rule of the East of being faithful to one's salt. "The Times" endorses the censure by saying: "A great many Englishmen have, in that particular case, felt the same difficulty of comprehension." It may assist any Englishman who is so troubled to be told, first, that the bulk of an Indian civilian's pension is derived from compulsory contributions in the shape of deduction from his salary, and that for the Government to forfeit it would be almost as great a breach of faith as for an Insurance Company to default in paying policy monies when due. Then, as regards the duty of a Member of Parliament who happens to have served his country in India and draws a pension, it is difficult to distinguish between such a case and that of an ex-Cabinet Minister who is in Opposition and draws a pension from the State as he usually does. Such an ex-Minister-pensioner often finds himself in the position described by the Indian nobleman of "doing all he can to make the Government impossible." Yet we never heard the suggestion made that these political pensions were given on condition of helping the Government that happened to be in power.

### A Libel Action Interesting to the Writers of Contemporary History.

All those whose business it is to write or publish or print history will be glad that Mr. Amery, editor of "The Times" "History of the War in South

Africa," was found not guilty in what some of the newspapers term the "Cowardice" libel action. At the same time, Mr. Amery merits compassion in having been made the object of attack in a law suit of which the costs must have been very heavy, some part of which at the best, must fall on himself. It may be answered that Mr. Amery deliberately courted the action by sending a letter to a newspaper practically repeating what was said in "The Times" history, and that had he not done so, the plaintiff would probably not have ventured to bring his action. That, however, does not dispel the anxiety that every man must feel who remembers this action, and is called upon to write contemporary history.

### Interesting to Imperialists.

Differing greatly are the opinions of the critics on Mr. Putnam Weale's new book which deals with, and is entitled "The Conflict of Colour" (Macmillan). The work, we are told, is of a distinctly controversial nature, and the questions he raises are questions which only time can answer, and that in spite of the book's interest, its subject matter borders so closely on the sensational that its issue will hardly enhance his reputation as a writer of merit, and an authority on matters concerning the East. "His ideas," says an eminent Home critic, "are unfortunately so buried in a mass of historic introduction—that does not introduce—and general conclusions—which lead to no conclusions—that it is with the greatest difficulty that his reader can unearth his meanings and discover the remedies which he has to offer." "Mr. Weale," continues this writer, "has some ground for the double fear on which, in his book, he lays special emphasis, the fear that soon some combination of Asiatic Powers will overshadow Asia, and with it Europe, and the fear that modern diplomatists do not know their business." This threatened combination would, Mr. Weale thinks, be brought about by the increasing population of the East, the advance in education and consequently in efficiency, all of which are the result of European influence. The Anglo-Japanese treaty has also put a stop for ever to any combined European endeavour to arrest the encroachment of Asiatic Powers on West-

ern spheres of influence. General readers may look upon Mr. Weale in the light of an alarmist. But the minority, who think, will welcome this book, and will not let it lack consideration, "because its logical conclusion is sensational." The charge of obscurity levelled against the author of "The Forbidden Boundary," and "The Human Cobweb," seems to us strange. But it is not at all strange that Mr. Weale, intine as he is with Eastern affairs and conditions, can predict with any certainty the result of European influence upon the East. For you never can tell. Eastern cruelty and subtlety grafted on to Western knowledge, is a force that is not easily to be reckoned with, and can only be met with a superior diplomacy that has for its force majeure a superior morale.

### My Confidences.

Here is a capital Dickens's story which appears in Mr. Locker Lamson's "Confidences," of which we gave a notice some short time ago.—Mr. Laman Blanchard sent Dickens a metrical contribution for "Household Words," entitled "Orient Pearls at Random Strung," but Dickens returned them with: "Dear Blanchard, too much string.—Yours C.D." Another amusing story is that of the Admiral who, having been given an appointment as Governor of the Virgin Islands, presented the opportunity to his many friends of discovering in what portion of the globe they were situated. Crowding round an atlas, their search was broken up for all useful purposes by the remark of one of the searchers that he was sure they were not near the Isle of Man. In short, "My Confidences" is packed with good things, grave and gay, and is easily within the reach of every reader, as it is now published in the Nelson Library at 1/3 net.

### A Further Instalment of the Biography of Marie Claire.

It is pleasing to learn that Marie Claire's biography is to be continued, and that her friends think the latter instalment better than the first. It is also exceedingly refreshing, as well as interesting to find at least one critic that does not find "Marie Claire" in its English form irresistible. Mr. Champion of the Melbourne Book-Lover, says: "After all this praise one requires a great deal of boldness to set forth our reluctant criticism. Of course in such a case all depends upon the translator. In his hands it lies either to make the translation merely a feeble and unconvincing story or by a divine impulse to render it even finer vreation than the original. My own verdict is that the book in its

English garb contains very little to attract the English reader. However, it is satisfactory to learn that the poor authoress, whose eyesight is failing, has been awarded a prize of two hundred pounds by the committee of the Vie Heureuse." We confess to enjoying Arnold Bennett's introduction to the book, better than the book itself, though we, in common with most reviewers, thought it a marvellous production for one so entirely unlettered as the author was said to be. But we certainly thought the translation a felicitous one, as there was about the book that naked unreserved, so to speak, atmosphere that is so essentially French, and which would render it distasteful to those English readers, who, like myself, abominate the detail and suggestion that characterises French literature in general, and French fiction in particular.

### The May "Life."

A notable article in current "Life," is that which describes the "Brilliant career of Mr. John Longstaff," an Australian artist of no mean repute, who has just been paying a flying visit to his home in Shepparton, Victoria. The title "From Studio to Salon," is a felicitous one, clearly indicating that Mr. Longstaff's career has been a successful one. The article is profusely illustrated with two portraits, and several photographic reproductions of those pictures of Mr. Longstaff's that have found a home in Australia. "Life's" fiction, too, for May, is above the average. Newton Adam's "Story of the Secret Ikon," and "Her Greek God," by Juliet Wilber Tompkins, constitutes eclectic fictional reading. "Science versus Death," by Earl Mayo, is a reprint of an admirable article in "The Outlook," and discusses the battle that is being waged by medical and surgical science against disease. This is deeply interesting, if somewhat serious reading, and has been written especially for the laity. A short account is given of the greatest medical and surgical discoveries of modern times, and includes mention of the transmission of blood, the latest anaesthetics, vivisection, nerve surgery, etc. As usual, the difficulty is to enumerate the manifold attractions of "Life," but most tastes are catered for, with, we should say, signal endeavour and success.

### Books Worth Reading.

A capital book is Commander E. Hamilton Currey's "Sea Wolves of the Mediterranean." The "sea wolves" are, of course, the old corsairs or pirates of the Mediterranean, who were really the first overseas traders. The book is compiled from the numerous histories of the Mediterranean of Commander Currey's time, which, together with some excellent writing of his own, makes both instructive and exciting reading. There are portraits of the Emperor Charles, and of Barbarossa, and a picture of the death of Dragut at the siege of Malta, of the Grand Master of the Knights of Malta, at the siege of that island by the Turks in 1563, and a presentation of Soliman the Magnificent. Another book that is of unusual interest is Mr. Phillip Jourdan's "Life of Cecil Rhodes." Mr. Jourdan was private secretary to the late Cecil Rhodes during the last octave of that distinguished Imperialist's life, and the relation would seem to have been a felicitous one. So many wild surmises have been made about the late Cecil Rhodes' private life and odd tastes, that Mr. Jourdan's book, which is written with fine feeling, and a proper reserve, should be of particular interest and enlightenment as far as an outside public may be allowed to glimpse. "More Leaves," from Lady Dorothy Nevill's notebooks, have been published, and should not be passed over. For anything from this sprightly lady's pen is well worth reading. In fiction we have not for a long time experienced such sober pleasure as that which was afforded by a perusal of Mr. A. F. Benson's "Account Rendered." It is best described as a novel of uncommon characterisation, and a rather pathetic excursion into the back waters of life. But we sincerely regret the denouement of the story. For to our way of thinking, Lord Tenby was worth half a dozen Frank Winthrop's. And suicide is a poor way out, and absolutely wrong under any circumstances. It seems to us, though we think Mr. Benson has meant to infer that Violet and Frank would eventually marry, that the sheer nobility of character shown by Lord Tenby when explanations took place between himself and his wife, together with his mistaken sacrifice, would for



THE IMPROPER GUEST.

"Beautiful, is it? Well, I can tell you this, George Emerson Peabody, that thing and I can't live in the same house, you have your choice!"