

The Bookshelf.

By DELTA.

FRUITLETON.

New Publications Received.

We are indebted to the publishers for review copies as under. From Mr. John Murray comes a beautifully bound copy of "The New Life of George Borrow," by Herbert Jenkins. It is based upon new information not accessible elsewhere. Mr. Jenkins' work is sure of a cordial welcome from all Borrowians. 10s 6d is the price of this "New Life," of which we shall give an extended notice in a future issue. Messrs. George Robertson and Co. send three books: "Vagabond City," by Winifred Boggs (which has had a tremendous vogue at "Home"); "The Lady of the Spur," by David Potter; and "Laura," by Caroline Grosvenor. The two first have been issued, respectively, by George Putnam and Sons and Lippincott's. "The Lady of the Spur," which, by the way, is in its third edition, is an exciting story of primitive life in Southern America. From Macmillan and Co. comes a novel, entitled, "Hieronymus Rides," by Anna Coleman Ladd; which narrates interesting episodes in the life of a knight and jester at the court of Maximilian, King of the Romans. The period is that of the fifteenth century, a period seldom exploited by novelists.

Of Topical Interest.

The Poles, North and South, have been a leading topic of late, and it may interest readers to know that Arlen and Co., London, have issued at 12s 6d net Dr. Frederick A. Cook's "My Attainment at the Pole." According to the publishers, "Dr. Cook now, for the first time makes public the scientific data upon which he bases his Polar claim, and the reasons for his own actions, answers in detail all the charges made against him, and explains his long silence." "It is my opinion," said Professor Georges Le Coq, Director of the Royal Observatory, Belgium, and Secretary of the International Bureau of Polar Research, after reading the book, "that Dr. Cook reached the Pole." In any case, Dr. Cook's work should be of interest, though it is unfortunate that it should have been so long in appearing. A goodly portion of the book is devoted to the making of astounding charges against Admiral Peary, which is not good taste. For it is within the realm of possibility that both these men reached the goal of polar ambition. Nevertheless there is a preponderance of opinion in England that Cook did not, comments a writer in the London "Bookman," who further declares that if the book is fiction, it is very good fiction of its kind, but that, as it is as yet uncertain as to whether it is fiction or fact, he prefers to remain neutral. If Dr. Cook is to stand or fall by his book, it is to be hoped that the critics will not come to their work with this bias of "fiction" in their minds. The book contains 50 fine illustrations.

Another Birmingham Book.

Mr. George Birmingham, whose novel "Lalage's Lovers," we have noticed in our review columns this week, has just had a new work, "The Lighter Side of Irish Life," published by Mr. T. M. Foulis. As was to be expected from Mr. Birmingham, the book is a very racy and an amusing one, and besides being these two things it lets new light in upon the Irish character. Until lately, he shows that the Irishman has been looked upon by the Englishman as "constitutionally sentimental and irresponsible"—characteristics which are not the exclusive property of Irishmen. Mr. Birmingham thinks, and which are as foreign to the Irish character, generally, as to the English. The rich Irish-Americans are popularly supposed to be the financial supporters of Home Rule. Yet Mr. Birmingham is convinced that they are as little liked by the common people of Ireland as they are by the homier folk of other nations. To write a book about Ireland in which there was no mention of priests and priestcraft would be almost an impossibility. And Mr. Birmingham does not deal in impossibilities. A story placed an record by the "Irish Primrose," and reproduced in Mr.

Birmingham's book, is here appended. A small boy writing an essay on the subject of wild beasts declared that "there were no wild beasts in Ireland except in the theological gardens." Here is another delightful story worthy of Max O'Reill's Scotchman:—"There is a thoughtful boy in an Antrim village who listened one Sunday to a statement made by his Sunday-school teacher that God had created all things and all men. 'Did God,' he asked at last, 'make the Papists?' He had been taught to reverence the Almighty, and it seemed impossible that He could have been guilty of that. The teacher assured him that God had really made even them. The boy pondered the information for a minute, and then gave his opinion briefly but forcibly: 'He'll rue it yet!' he said."

Another good clerical story, which lovers of light reading will appreciate:—"A certain dignitary was much sought after as a preacher and held in some awe on account of his mordant wit. On one

suited the taste of the ecclesiastic off duty but led to a more cordial relation betwixt the dignitary and his host during the rest of the visit.

As we before indicated, Mr. Birmingham's book deals only with the lighter side of the Irish character. And as an example of how lightly the Irish peasant take their religion we offer the following:—"There were two old women in one parish who were greatly given to quarrelling, and when they fell out with each other they used terribly bad language. It happened that one of them went to confession one day. As she was leaving the church, having received absolution, she met her enemy, who was going in. On the very steps of the sacred edifice a quarrel began. The woman who was entering the church poured out the usual stream of sacrilegious and blasphemous abuse. The other listened to her in silence for some time, and then, no longer able to endure the triumph of her adversary, said bitterly: 'It's easy seeing, Biddy Malone, that you know I'm in a state of grace this minute and can't answer you. But, glory be to God, I won't be so for long.'"

It would appear that the administration of the Old Age Pension Act in Ireland is responsible for not a few scenes in which comedy is uppermost. Mr. Birmingham has many anecdotes on this

sonal charms, are matters to gaggle over and so much, figuratively speaking, is written off a girl's chance if she by any ill-luck has a personal defect. Here is an example:—"See her walk," he said. "See her walk before you say you'll love her. It was only last week that I was very nearly had me married to a girl. If it hadn't been that they differed after about the price of a cow, I'd have been married to her. They had her set on a chair facing me, as nice a looking girl as you'd wish to see. It wasn't till the week after, when the marriage was off, that I found that she'd only one leg on her."

In "the spirit of the veterinary surgeon," another Adonis refused to ratify an engagement until it was sworn that there was no truth in a rumour he had heard to the effect that "the prospective bride had a varicose vein."

The gift for apt repartee has never, we think, been denied the Irishman. Here is a case in point furnished by Mr. Birmingham:—"A glazier was at work on a broken window near at hand. An Irish scientist pointed this out. 'Go up to that man,' he said, 'make some criticism of the way he is doing his work, and see what answer you'll get.' The English scientist acted on the advice. 'My good man,' he said, 'if you don't use more



MARGINAL NOTES ON HISTORY.

Once more King Alfred tells his favourite story of the burnt cakes. (From "Punch.")

occasion he subent unexpectedly, rather to the embarrassment of his host. He was preaching a charity sermon in a church a long way from his home, and it was arranged that he should be entertained by the principal gentleman in the parish. This gentleman, though an excellent man, was unaccustomed to ecclesiastics, being himself an officer in the army. He made elaborate and conscientious preparations for his guest. He turned his smoking room into a 'study' for the time being and collected all the books bearing on religion which he could find in the house. There were not many. Round the smoking room table, when the eminent preacher arrived, were arranged 'Paley's Evidences,' 'Hervey's Meditations Among the Tombs,' a work called 'The Olive Leaf of Bethany,' and two volumes of sermons by forgotten Puritan divines. The great preacher, led to the 'study,' that he might rest awhile after his journey, took these books up one by one and looked at them. He laid each volume down with a sniff. His host became more and more uncomfortable. 'Are there,' said the clergyman at last, 'no other books of any kind in the house?' His host, conscious of many novels stored carefully out of sight, admitted that there were other books. 'Then,' said the clergyman, 'bring me another, and let it be frothy, if possible, the frothiest of the frothiest!' The 'frothiest' proved to be "The Visits of Elizabeth," a book which not only

subject, but none that suit the space at our disposal, so well as the two following:—"A middle-aged man, who had perhaps reached the age of fifty, was supposed to be in receipt of an old-age pension. Asked how he managed to secure it, he replied: "Sure, I knew the day that the pensions officer was coming round to look at me, and I had a real old Alibi down from the mountains ready waiting for him in my bed." The other story is as follows:—"There was an old man who, in sending in his claim for the pension, asserted that he was seventy years of age. After a prolonged search in the papers of the 1841 census it was found that he was 80. 'You must have known,' said the pension officer, 'that you were a good bit over seventy. Why didn't you say so? You'd have got the pension just the same.' 'Your honour,' said the old man, 'I'll not be telling you any lies about it. I had my mind made up to get married as soon as ever I got the pension; but there isn't a girl in the parish would look at me if it got out on me that I was eighty.'"

Out of sheer vanity some of the older Irishwomen risked the loss of their pensions by understating their age at the date of their marriage to men younger than themselves. Love matches in Ireland are rarer than in England, it seems. Marriages in Ireland, as in France, are arranged, or are a matter of hush-holding. Personal possessions, as well as per-

putty, you'll not be able to put in that pane. 'If you don't get away out of that,' replied the man, 'I'll put a pain into you that won't need any putty at all!'

A Recent Travel Book.

Mr. Roosevelt writes enthusiastically of Mr. Charles Sheldon's "The Wilderness of the Upper Yukon." "Mr. Sheldon," he says, "has now for many years hunted in the wilderness, and most carefully studied in a state of nature at first hand the wild animals of this continent which are best worth studying. He is a hardy and adventurous hunter and a trained naturalist. What he has to say is of high value, and he has the power so to say it as to bring out this value to the full. This is only the first of the books which we have a right to expect from him. His experiences in Alaska, and indeed in the entire North-West, are such as no other man has had; and no other writer on the subject has ever possessed both his power of observation and his power of recording vividly and accurately what he has seen. The present volume is fascinating reading from every standpoint. It is all good, from the dedication to the illustrations, which are 74 in number, four in colour from paintings by Carl Rungius, and seventy illustrations from photographs." Mr. T. Fisher Unwin is the publisher of the volume, and 12/6 net is the price.