

# The Bookshelf.

By DELTA.

## FRUILLETON.

### A Remarkable Memoir.

**M**ESSRS. GEORGE BELL AND SONS have announced the publication of the Colonial edition of Madame Steinheil's Memoirs. For those who remember the trial for murder of Madame Steinheil, these "Memoirs" will have a peculiar interest, especially when it is discovered that in France determined efforts were made by those most interested to prevent Madame Steinheil's revelations from seeing light in the country of her birth. This, of course, is natural, since these "Memoirs" reveal a state of things not particularly creditable to those concerned in her trial. Indeed, for candour, Madame Steinheil's book would be difficult to emulate. The happier side of Madame Steinheil's life is extensively dealt with in the first portion of her "Memoirs," in which she is seen presiding over her brilliant salon, which included among its frequenters such noted men as Bonnat (the painter), Zola, Massenet (the composer), and Francois Coppee. In the narration of her friendship with President Faure; the reader is taken behind the scenes of the political world and shown Felix Faure, in company with all the leading French statesmen of the time, among whom were Declasse, Clemenceau, and Haoutaux, engaged in the government of France during the critical and exciting times of the Dreyfus affair and the Pashoda incident. We are not fond of memoirs that raise the veil of bygone misdeeds. Madame Steinheil was acquitted by her country of the crime with which she was charged. And we fail to see any good that can be served by these "Memoirs," except the titillating of the popular appetite for sensation and scandal.

### The Spring "Bookman."

The April number of the London "Bookman" is a Robert Louis Stevenson number, and surely the most devoted Stevensonian cannot but be satisfied both with Mr. Neil Munro's article on Stevenson, and by the very numerous illustrations that depict Stevenson at different stages in his career, the houses he lived in, the schools he was educated at, the various frontispages of his early works, and, in short, every illustration that might be of pleasurable or pathetic interest to his lovers and admirers. "Save in the great gift

of health," says Mr. Munro, "the stars that shone on Stevenson's nativity were all propitious. He had genius, sanity, gaiety, and an abiding charm of humanity, which ensured him many ardent friendships. He was happy in his parentage, his opportunities, and the circumstances of his folk, which were such that at no time, save very briefly in California, and then only for the sake of pride, had he any cause to apprehend the calls of Byles the Butcher. Fate never drove him to the necessity of banking down his fires periodically to boil a domestic pot; he could afford to be deliberate and fastidious in the selection and in the execution of his tasks. No other writer of our time had his artistic reputation so carefully fostered and guarded by friends, themselves accomplished and discerning. They nursed it like a flower. They would have nothing from him but his best, even if he were prepared to give them otherwise, which consciously, he never was." Knowing that the best was expected of him, and in spite of bodily weakness, Stevenson always rose to the occasion, and "saw to it that no inferior performance should be permitted to discount his merits. He was not of triple brass, to embark on a comédie humaine with superb indifference to mortal limitation or the hope of making up in bulk what he might sacrifice to finish," continues Mr. Munro. "That 'something not ourselves' knows what a man is fit for, and dictates what he shall attempt, with a finger ever on the pulse, withdrawing nervous granules from the brain, and so creating weariness when weariness is best." And so Stevenson confined himself, in the main, to work that could be accomplished in the impetus of a single inspiration, fastidious revision taking place at his leisure. "Out of five-and-twenty volumes of his works," says Mr. Munro, "there are only six or seven wherein—unaided by collaboration—he embarked on epic voyages—to wit, "Kidnapped" and "Treasure Island." The bulk of his work, Mr. Munro continues, and possibly what shall last longest, is brief and altogether lyrical. For Stevenson to plunge like Dickens or Scott into great uncharted seas with no land visible on the other side, or toil with the imperative printer at his heels, was a physical impossibility. He was essentially an inland voyager, leisurely sailing single-banded, pulling up to the bank at nightfall, each day by itself a trip completed. It was well, then

for he and his friends to be scrupulous about the nature of the freightage. Speaking of the Swanston edition of the works of Stevenson, which comprise twenty-five volumes, and which have been issued by Chatto and Windus, in association with Cassell and Co., W. Heinemann, and Longmans, Green and Co., Mr. Munro thinks the freight amazing, taking into consideration that it is a picked one. Seldom, indeed, he says, does the work show the slightest indication of the invalid. On the contrary, the spirit that emanates from it is "hardy, self-assured, and joyful." Yet Stevenson never grew old, or lost his illusions. For in the drab of life he saw only a social distemper, no more general than his own poor lungs, to be regarded like his hemorrhages, or the monsters of "The Dynamiter," with that ironic humour which is "the gentlemanly antagonist of terror." There is much more that is deeply interesting in Mr. Munro's article about the beloved R.L.S., he has surely inspired more affection than any other masculine writer, but we shall content ourselves with one or two more fragments from the "Bookman" article. To impress by art is great, but where power and individuality are combined, as in Stevenson, the combination is irresistible. "His Key to Our Hearts" is a fine Horatian urbanity, a grace for the moment lost among practitioners of letters, who, perched on a pedestal of self-approval, preach at us fanatically, and rudely criticise the things we love. We rejoice in him, not only as in him range the perfect artist who has given glad hours and the example of glad intrepidity to a host of people widely set apart in islands of the sea, and in the depths of continents, and in their circumstances, but also as another indication of a racial spirit capable of flowering into beauty even where "the bells clash of a Sunday, and the wind squalls, and the salt showers fly and beat." From the loins of those cyclopean men who fought on coast and skerry with the monstrous obstacles of nature—this gentle being, with a hand to fashion genius! From a long heredity of Puritan austerity the elegant and debonair!

### Another Book on Lafcadio Hearn.

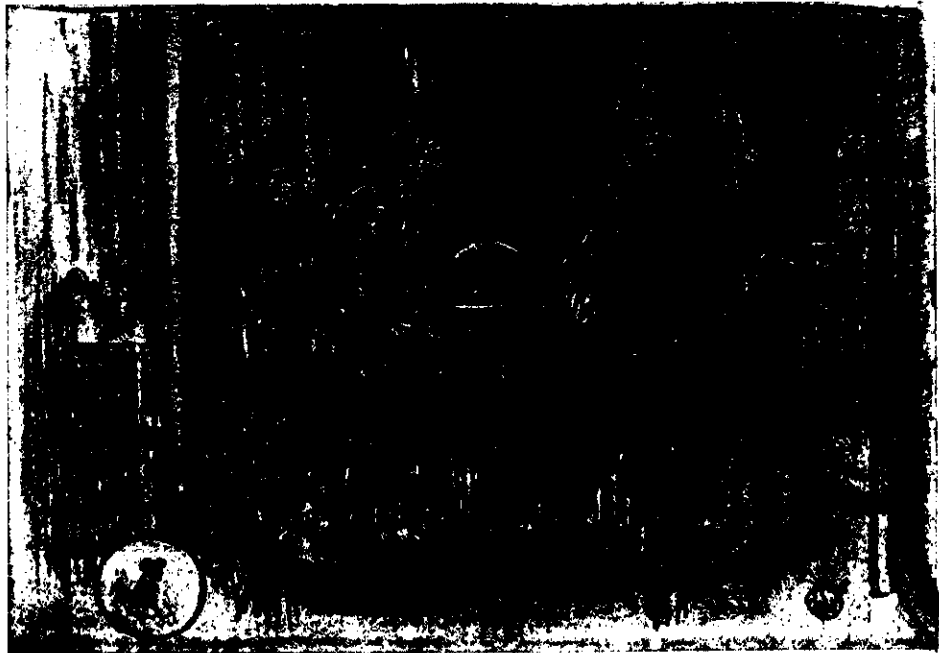
Mrs. N. H. Kennard has written, and Eveleigh Nash has published, a new biography of this curious man and as yet unplaced writer. Mr. Francis Bickley, in a fine criticism of this work, refers to the excessive eulogy that has been poured upon Hearn, crying a halt while he examines the pretensions of the eulogists as to Lafcadio Hearn being reckoned a writer of first-class importance. Mr. Bickley cites the case of Stevenson, both by its similarities and its differences, as suitable for comparison. "Stevenson,"

he says, "was the subject of much post-humous panegyric. Like Hearn, his reputation was enhanced by the publication of his letters. Less to the point, but none the less interesting to note, he was, like Hearn, both a stylist and a wanderer. There, however, the resemblances end. The differences are innumerable; those are to the purpose here which concern not his art so much as its acceptance. Stevenson acquired fame during his life. His death was a national event. Remembering his unfinished "Weir of Hermiston," one boldly calls it a national calamity. Since that event, though the first clouds of incense have happily dispersed, his popularity has not waned. His works are for ever being reprinted, both in rich men's and in poor men's editions." Hearn, on the other hand, is absolutely unknown except to a very small circle of readers, and this in spite of the American Miss Bland's undoubtedly interesting "Life and Letters." And, though immediate popularity is not an infallible sign of greatness, yet, argues Mr. Bickley, in all genuine cases of genius a reasonable popularity invariably follows, after some interval, "the appreciation of the discerning few." Stevenson, Meredith, and others, are cases that may be cited in proof. "The voice of authoritative criticism has been ominously silent as regards Lafcadio Hearn. 'It is fitting,' continues Mr. Bickley, "that friends should write the biography, that friends should edit the letters, but the appraising of the achievement should not be left to friends."

## REVIEWS.

**Reptiles, Amphibians, and Fishes** Edited by J. T. Cunningham, M.A., Oxon. (London: Methuen and Co. Auckland: Wildman and Arey. 10/6.)

This work is the result of the collaboration of Mr. J. T. Cunningham, M.A. and Zoologist; Mr. Richard Lydeker, B.A., F.R.S., F.A.S., F.Z.S.; Mr. G. A. Boulenger, D.Sc., F.R.S.; and Mr. J. Arthur Thompson, M.A.—each eminent specialists and writers of distinction on the various subjects they are responsible for in this exceedingly comprehensive, yet erudite work. "Reptiles, Amphibians and Fishes" is the third of a series of works planned by Mr. W. J. Pyecraft, author of "The History of Birds," which deal with animal life on "evolutionary natural history" lines, and which are being issued by the Messrs. Methuen. "The kindly reception accorded to 'A History of Birds'—the second in the order of final sequence of this series—encourages one to believe," says Mr. Pyecraft, in the admirable preface to the book, "that these volumes on vertebrate animal life which I projected, really supplied a need felt by that increasing body of men and women who profess themselves 'Nature lovers.' Having conceived the plan of recording, at any rate in broad outline, the history of the vertebrates from the evolutionist's point of view, I allotted to myself, as many already know, the task of writing the volume on birds, and proposed to edit the remaining volumes rather than attempt to write them. And this because the day is now past when any single writer can hope to achieve such a task with even tolerable success, for this is the day of specialists." The result of these gentlemen's collaboration is "that for the first time in the annals of natural history the complete life story of the reptiles, amphibians, and fishes, and those primitive creatures which lie at the foundations, so to speak, of the great house of the vertebrates, is told as only specialists can tell it. The very existence of these primitive animals is unsuspected by most of us, but as Professor Thompson shows, they present us with some most interesting and most important problems. The student of zoology will find in his chapters, no less than in those concerning more familiar creatures, much food for reflection, bearing on the subjects of adaptation to environment, degeneration, and so on. Those who seek to discover the subtle and mysterious factors which govern the transformation of animals, will find much food for thought in Mr. Lydeker's account of the reptiles, and in the chapters on the nursing habits of amphibians and fishes by Mr. G. A. Boulenger and Mr. J. T. Cunningham; and to these we would add the weird and fascinating chapter on the fish life of the abysses of the ocean—a world wherein the light of day never penetrates, and where the pall of night is broken only by the pale phosphorescence



THE CAUSE—

THE EFFECT.