

ANOTHER new book, which can be confidently recommended, is *The Helmet of Navarre*, by Bertha Runkle, an authoress whose name is comparatively yet unknown to fame, but to judge from the work under review it will not long remain so. It ran as a serial in the *Century*, and created great interest. It is now published in Macmillan's Colonial Library, and was forwarded by Messrs. Upton and Co. As its title indicates, it is a historical novel, a story of old France, "in that bloody time when the King of Navarre and the two Leagues were tearing our poor France asunder." The story purports to be told by Félix Broux, and he introduces himself in these words:—"I am a Broux, of St. Quentin. The great world has never heard of the Broux? No matter; they have existed these hundreds of years, Masters of the Forest, and faithful servants of the Duke of St. Quentin. The great world has heard of St. Quentin? I warrant you! As loudly as it has of Sully and Villeroi, Trémouille and Birou. That is enough for the Bronx.' M. le Duc, who naturally is a prominent figure in the book, finds himself at this disastrous time "between the devil and the deep sea. He decided, however, to join the King of Navarre who was just moving to St. Denis to the siege of Paris, the hotbed of the League. M. le Duc rode calmly into Paris and opened his hôtel. This was regarded as "madness—madness sheer and stark." His son, the Comte de Mar, did not share his father's previous retirement, but spent his time gaily in Paris despite the sieges. Young Broux is sent up to Paris by his father to serve M. le Duc. From the day of his arrival he plunges into most thrilling adventures and hair-breadth escapes. Circumstances lead him into the service of Étienne, the Comte de Mar, whose fortunes he follows through plot and counterplot with the fidelity of his family for generations of Quentins. Here is a description of Mlle. de Montluc, the lady who, although she was a ward of the Duke of Mayenne, the Comte de Mars has determined to win:—"She was clad in amber satin. She was tall, and

carried herself with stately grace. Her black hair shadowed a cheek as purely white and pink as that of any yellow-locked Frisian girl, while her eyes under their sooty lashes shone blue as cornflowers." Mayonne had made the Comte offers to join the League, but he would have none of it. The fair lady for whom the Comte risks so much, the noble Duke of Le Quentin, "a hotspur—a man who acted quickly and seldom counted the cost," the burly Comte, determined, but not quick witted, Félix Broux, faithful, alert, and always ready at an emergency, the villainous spy and traitor Lucas, who is responsible for much of the trouble, and the many other actors in the scene are all sketched with the masterly pen of one who has not only a thorough knowledge of the period, but has the art of presenting it to the reader in vivid word pictures.

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MISS OLIVE TILLY, a pupil of Miss Moor's, has just completed a nicely illustrated *New Zealand Birthday Record and Calendar for 1902*. The designs, which are exclusively New Zealand subjects, such as floral sprays, delightful bits of scenery, and Maori carvings are artistically executed in black and white. Maori proverbs have been chosen as mottoes for each month, and the translation is given below. The young artist is certainly to be congratulated on her tasteful and typical work, which should command a ready sale, both for home use and also to send to friends at a distance in place of the hackneyed Christmas card.

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HIS EXCELLENCY, LORD RANFURLY, the Patron of the New Zealand Literary and Historical Association, has notified the Council that he offers a Special Prize of five guineas for their series of Literary Competitions. The subject which His Excellency has suggested, a historical one, will be duly announced by advertisement.

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I AM still expecting to receive lists of names of three favourite books, from readers of these pages, as mentioned last month.