ILLUSTRATED BOOKS.

SOME ADMIRABLE EXAMPLES.

To praise adequately is ever one of the most delicate of literary obligations, and when the author eulogized happens to be one's own father the task requires to be lifted into the region of fine art. Dumas the younger is an artist, and his letter prefatory to the new holiday edition of "The Three Musketeers" (Appleton & Co.) proves that he is worthy of his illustrious parent. He praises him not timidly, not with apologetic qualifications, but with the fulness and gusto which the creator of the immortal Three demands by right. "Do you believe," said Dumas pere to his son, some twenty-five years ago, "that anything I have written will survive me?" "Much, indeed, will survive you," replied the younger man, and it is in this tone of assurance that he passes from his father's deathbed and the tender recollections surrounding it to the consideration of his father's present fame. That is untouched of time, as fair and as firm founded as it ever was, and the new edition of the great novelist's masterpiece is as timely and acceptable a holiday book as could be desired. Maurice Leloir has provided the illustrations for the two tall volumes, and saying that the paper used is flimsy and transparent, the publishers have given his picturesque designs fair treatment. The blocks are well printed. They deserved to be, for M. Leloir is a capable draughtsman, who knows well the period described in this romance, and he has illustrated it with as much animation of spirit as fidelity to historical facts. It is obviously the seventeenth century he portrays, the century of the great King and the greater Cardinal; and, though the matchless heroes of the book have somehow not quite the faces in these pictures that every reader of Dumas is bound to imagine for himself, the port and carriage of them all are happily caught, and they are entirely convincing in the sketches which show them in action. The distinction between those illustrations and a design like that on page 134, for example, which illustrates an episode of relaxation and quiet, testifies to M. Leloir's keen sympathy with the text. He is aware that the magnificent fighters of Dumas were never so vivid, never so true as when their swords were out of their scabbards. It is the inevitable, the first observation on Dumas, and we wonder that the translator of this edition has not felt its force as deeply as has M. Leloir. Like the latter, he is accurate; but, unlike the latter, he misses the indomitable exuberance of Dumas, the lusty music that rings out from the rapid writer's prose and communicates itself to the reader with such swift sureness. Mr. Robson's equivalent for his author's rhetoric will pass, but he has not caught his author's style—that easy, nervous play of language which is no style at all, if you compare it with classic models, but that is very nearly a classic itself in its sufficiency and warmth. Uninspired as this translation is, it remains a pleasure, and it comes not any too soon after the appearance of the edition already familiar in France.

We have spoken of the beauty of M. Leloir's sketches; the vitality of his personages calls for high praise, and there is much to admire in the backgrounds he has given them. But the text is the thing, and it is hard to leave it even for the artistic embellishments. We have no successor to the genial Hercules of French romance, of romance anywhere. Mr. Weyman's books make him nearer kin to Scott than to Dumas, and no lover of those masters needs to be told that each was unique, that in spite of what the Frenchman owed to the Scot he was a new man, and a solitary, in the heart of his bountiful genius. Scott never lost the fragrant freshness of the wind-swept lochs and hills, even when he went abroad and gave us "Quentin Durward." Dumas was equally natural, but he had in him an intense Southern sympathy for pageantry, for a life that was also a spectacle; and it is one of the prime elements in his spell that he appeals to the eye with a perfect flood of color, of picturesqueness, of an art that would be theatrical were it not so true. That is why this new edition wins instant recognition. With Dumas in the text and Leloir in the pictures, one gets the most haunting glimpses of fairly iridescent romance.

This element of color comes curiously to the surface in a work the very antithesis of the novel by Dumas. To turn from his echoing pages to the stillness of Omar Khayyam is like passing from noontide into sunset glow. Yet the life-blood of literature, its rich hues and burning vitality, exist as potentially in the "Rubaiyat" as in any work of prose fiction, and more than ever does it seem so in the edition which Houghton, Mifflin & Co. publish, the edition accompanied by Vedder's illustrations. Therein you get the varied glint of Omar's verse, brilliant in itself, as it has always been, and with its many-sided burden expressed subtly in the drawings, though the latter are in monotone. The secret of Vedder's success in putting this feeling of rainbow color into his drawings is that his conception of form, his statuesque outlines, never make him too concise, never land him too fixedly in the concrete when the whole beauty of his poet lies in glorifying the actual with the imaginative and the ideal. Omar was one of the first of the realists, one of the first to question life with eyes wide open. But his realism is all shot through with the golden threads of Eastern fancy and metaphor, it is all suffused with the rosy vapors of Oriental dream. Mr. Vedder's illustrations, faithful to the spirit of the poet, suspend each group of quatrains which they inclose in an atmosphere of as indeterminate significance as their own. His figures interpret vagueness into forms, yet they preserve the illusion which is a full half of Omar. The recurrent swirl alone, that lovely symbol which seems to carry a new meaning every time it appears, yet never to lose its original import, is one of the most exquisite accompaniments to a poet's thought which modern illustration has produced. And its value is that it is not in the least arbitrary. The motive is renewed on every page, and by mere force of repetition conveys the certain definite impression of life and death of which it is emblematical; but, like the Rubaiyat themselves, it never deprives the reader of the privilege of reading his own conception of Omar's philosophy into Omar's lines. It fixes an impression, but the impression itself is subtlety transmogrified, a fragrance, an emotion, the suggestion of a suggestion. The reissue of the "Rubaiyat" with these drawings of Mr. Vedder's ought to contribute generously to the extension of Omar's and Fitzgerald's glory. The original print is too bulky for easy use, and most owners of it let it lie idle on their shelves, only taking it down for special glances at the pictures. This edition gives satisfactory half-tones of the illustrations, and it is of a size and weight that make the reading of the poems a comfort as well as a pleasure. It is in fact a popular edition of a publication that was sure to prove inconvenient in the long-run, and was, for that reason, threatening to become unknown. Now Mr. Vedder's "Omar" is a book to read as well as to look at, and lovers of the Persian poet everywhere will be grateful for the change.

In so far as the tinker of Bedford is read at all to-day—and his students are not as many as they ought to be—he is read for strangely different reasons. Since Mr. Stevenson and Mr. Henley talked about him as a writer some have read him for his style. Others, and they are in the old-fashioned majority, still read him for the moral backbone that runs through and keeps intact the more or less nebulous tissues of his allegory. Still others, whom we hope are increasing in number, go to John Bunyan for the poetry that is locked within his famous book. He had no lyric inspiration, but there is as surely a rhythmic groundswell to his prose, the effortless impetus of the true poet, as there is to the glowing chants of the "Book of Solomon," or to the best pages of Elizabethan prose. Any of the students alluded to above would be delighted with "The Pilgrim's Progress" as it has just been published by Charles Scribner's Sons. The handsome octavo is perfect in type, in paper, in binding, in everything that goes mechanically to make an old writer welcome anew. But it is for the book-lover of peculiarly artistic tastes that this edition was evidently projected, it is the reader who is also an amateur of prints who will covet it most. Thirteen illustrations and a portrait are inserted in the volume, etched by William Strang and printed by Goulding; produced, in short, by two men whose handling of the needle and press respectively is in many ways beyond cavil. Mr. Strang's etched work has appeared in book form before. His "Death and Doctor Hornbook" has for some time been known among collectors as a curious and artistic folio. The plates he has made for Bunyan are technically well worthy of their admirable predecessors. The line is still simple, refined, vigorous; and austere as befits a zealous disciple of Legros.

In one or two of the plates (see that facing page 164, the "Christian Fighting Apollyon") the etcher gets closer than he ever has before to the severe dignity which belongs to the ancient forerunners of Legros, the Italian engravers of Marcantonio's school. But it is in his appreciation and elucidation of the text that Mr. Strang has reached his loftiest level. He has done so paradoxically, by adhering to the least exalted strain in his poet, or rather by expressing as accurately as possible the bald, homely sentiment which is revealed in Bunyan's gengric types and blunt nomenclature. Over and above Bunyan's directness was his uplifting sense of the divinity in man, and Mr. Strang's designs have superadded this same indefinable grace to the elemental structure. Its presence is felt irresistibly in the last of the illustrations, in the "Marriage of Mercy and Matthew," with its almost mean and sordid facts of costume and environment. Consider, first of all, however, in this very plate, in "The Butcher and the Sheep," or in the "Mercy at Her Work," the veracity of the conception, and the key to Bunyan's as well as to Mr. Strang's art is perceived. Millet, more familiar to the public generally than either of these, had the same gift. It is the gift for apprehending the poetry, the God-like in the humblest of types; it is the art of transfiguring the peasant by helping the light of his own soul to shine through his uncouth exterior. Mr. Strang avoids his author's distinctly symbolical, figurative flights. The Apollyon in the plate mentioned above is his sole concession to the Gothic side of Bunyan's mind, and it is only in one other design, in "The Valley of the Shadow of Death," that a touch of pure fancy occurs. The rest is on the solid earth of Bunyan's world, a world impossible to shake, but adorned by a temple erected without hands. Imagination Mr. Strang has, and, in the way of a Burns, for instance, he has poetry. Like Burns his poetry depends wholly upon the depth and sincerity of his feeling, and out of the harmony which exists between Bunyan and himself on that score he has evolved the most satisfactory illustrations of "The Pilgrim's Progress" it has ever been our privilege to see.

To understand Holland without going there it is necessary to know two authors, Motley, the historian, and Edmondo de Amicis, the dilettante. Light in texture as the Italian's writings are, their usefulness to the traveller in one respect is quite unsurpassed. To dip again into the pages of his "Holland," in the beautiful reprint brought out in two volumes by Porter & Coates, is to feel once more the cool wind from the dikes blowing across one's face, to be soothed by the repose and quaintness of the Low-lands. De Amicis follows the ramifications of his theme with an almost affectionate closeness. Certainly he establishes a downright intimacy between his reader and the country he describes. Never in any of his books of travel was he more successful than in his "Holland." It is, as it deserves to be, a classic; and in this latest English edition we have it in an altogether satisfying form. Miss Zimmern has made the translation and has done her work well. The publishers have manufactured the book excellently, and have scattered through the two volumes an ample number of photographic plates made expressly for the edition by Dr. Charles L. Mitchell. These photogravures are of subjects which have been chosen with unusual discretion, and mechanically they are all that they should be. They enhance the interest of a narrative which needs no assistance, but is nevertheless unhurt by a pictorial accompaniment. Plates and text, put between handsome covers, make a holiday book of which it is a pleasure to speak in terms of warm approval.

The scheme of Mr. Karl Karoly's book on "Raphael's Madonnas and Other Great Pictures" (Macmillan & Company) commends itself on sentimental rather than on critical grounds. Once the author has dismissed in his brief memoir the pictures of various kinds which employed Raphael's versatile brush, he attacks the madonnas exclusively, detaching them from the symmetrically developed life out of which they grew and presenting their maker in one peculiar light. It is the light which gives, on the whole, the least insight into Raphael's amazing individuality. His great decorations offer the truest index to his artistic character, revealing him as preeminently the man of culture and classic ideals. In his madonnas his workmanship is equally perfect, his design is equally scientific, but his sentiment is sweeter, it is of a more domestic character than in his "Sibyls" or any of the paintings in the Stanze, and the sum total of the work means less in grandeur and purely artistic beauty. The madonnas, in other words, are masterpieces without representing Raphael at the culminating and most characteristic phase of his career. This is unimportant, however, to the buyers of holiday gift books, who would expect in a publication like the present not art criticism nor history, but a collection of pleasing pictures. Such a collection Mr. Karoly gives them. He has secured Europe for his madonnas, making his gallery quite complete. Each reproduction is printed on a separate page, and is faced by data compiled from authentic sources. Some of the pictures are given in ordinary half-tones and others in first-rate photogravures. It is a pretty Christmas book, apropos and in good taste throughout.

Another publication which appears appropriately at this season, clothed in merits similar to those of Mr. Karoly's volume, and marked by the same deficiencies, is the "Life of Christ as Represented in Art" (Macmillan & Company), by Canon Farrar. Here there is frankly no philosophy of art, no scientific treatment of the subject, and this renders the title a kind of stumbling-block. It is confusing to open a book on an artistic theme and find its author disclaiming the functions and responsibilities of an art critic. But it is perhaps as well in this case, for the observations of a capable writer of such a denunciation of Holbein's "Dead Christ" at Bale, as appears on page 426, need to be taken quite outside the bounds of serious criticism. The passage alluded to, in which Holbein's sublime figure is described as revolting and "evidently the corpse of a drowned man," shows how wide of the mark an enthusiast can fly when he has lost his critical bearings. Canon Farrar's strength lies in the direction of religious emotion, of a lively feeling for that which is elevating in Christian art and contributes to bring the spectator nearer to the reality of Christ's life on earth. He has been an assiduous student of the great European galleries and an indefatigable reader. His illustrations do credit to his energetic catholicity. His citations and his bibliography both command respect. As for the text, it is copious, descriptive, anecdotic, and puts loosely together innumerable items of information which will incite the general reader to a possibly deeper interest in the pictures that swell the volume to something over five hundred pages. It is a shapeless book, in which a futile attempt at system has been made, as in the dedication of different sections to sub-divisions of the main theme. It is a small encyclopedia of pictures into which readers may look at random with confidence in finding an apt quotation, a fragment of historical record or ecclesiastical lore, and some individual comment in a strain of reverent sympathy. It is a good discursive survey of the Christ in pictorial art, with the emphasis all thrown on the religious side of the question.

Mr. Laurence Hutton's "Portraits in Plaster" (Harper & Brothers) is a book in which all that is repulsive in a ghastly theme has been dispelled through the tact and good sense of the author. His portraits are really masks, taken for the most part after the death of the individuals represented, and it is hard to look upon them—especially upon such casts as those of Dion Boulicault, Henry Edwards and Thackeray—without an involuntary skrinking from their grim reality. But Mr. Hutton changes all this, writing so pleasantly of his treasures that their chill atmosphere, as of churchyard mould, is forgotten. The collection he possesses is, it seems, the largest of its kind extant. It comprehends princes and painters, statesmen and poets, actors and prize-fighters and ornaments of the Church. Just the mere names in the index—Napoleon, Leopardi, Keats, Cromwell, and so on through a list of undiminishing splendor—touch the imagination and awaken curiosity. Both instincts are amply satisfied in the reproductions.

Mr. Hutton says: "I recognized Mr. Ernest Hartley Coleridge once in the corridor of a London club by his wonderful resemblance in features and the shape of his head to the mask of his grandfather." This we can well believe. By some strange economy of death these masks seem to take from the faces of their originals all the fleeting and perplexing minutiae of ever-changing life, and to give you in their immobile purity the fundamental lines of nature. Lawrence Barrett's image, for example, renews with almost uncanny vividness the impression that always appeared to come from the very roots of his individuality. Paradoxical as it might seem to say so, it is nevertheless true that the mask of Barrett has more of the essential man in it than many excellent photographs taken in life. Mr. Hutton's predilection for dramatic notabilities is well known, and it is not surprising to find him particularly interesting on those of his heroes and heroines who have adorned the stage. Of Booth he gives no death mask, contenting himself, since the actor's family so desired it, with a cast taken so far back as 1864. We can reconstruct readily from this beautiful relic the figure that bewitched the playgoers of thirty years ago. Curtis wrote of him then: "Booth is altogether princely," satisfying "the most fastidious imagination that this is Hamlet as he lived in Shakespeare's time." Recalling another splendid interpreter of Shakespeare, Mrs. Siddons, this volume gives a striking cast and some amusing anecdotes. The mask of that great actress, owned by Mr. Percy Fitzgerald, is not authenticated by any data in that gentleman's possession, but surely no documents were needed to confirm the legend that this represents the Tragic Muse herself. Could any one but the original of this plaster have provoked Garrick-ough's volcanic exclamation: "Damn your nose, madam; there is no end to it!" Thackeray's nose comes in for some comic celebration in Mr. Hutton's text. The novelist was never averse to a joke upon its irregularities of contour, and relished hugely Douglass Jerrold's remark to him when he was to stand as godfather to a friend's son: "Lord, Thackeray, I hope you won't present the child with your own nose."

Mr. Hutton is not chary of fragments of personalia like those just quoted, but his best quotations are those which he makes in a serious vein from contemporaneous authorities. Read, beside the cast of Cavour, the notes on him by George Eliot, who found his head "full of power, mingled with bonhomie," and said he looked as though "he thought of many matters, but thanked Heaven and made no boast of them." How exactly the words and the plaster tally! There is a description of Rossetti, taken from an anonymous article in "Blackwood's Magazine," which is also so felicitous, and withal so new, that it ought to be quoted: "He was short, squat, bull-dogish; he belonged to the Cavour type, but the sallow face was massive and powerful. The impression of solidity is somewhat toned down in Watts's portrait, and the fate is thinner and more worn than when I knew him. Sleepless nights and protracted pain may have changed him in later years and made the ideal Rossetti more manifest. Except for the meditative, tranquil eye (one thought of the ox-eyed Janus), there was nothing ideal about him. He was intensely Italian, indeed, but it was the sleek and well-fed citizen of Milan or Genoa that he recalled; not the slim and romantic hero of Verdi or Donizetti." That last sentence is just what is needed to counteract the sickly idealization through which Rossetti's personality has been passing of recent years. He is not the only celebrity whom Mr. Hutton's book presents in clear, refreshingly sharp outlines. The wraiths he summons from the tomb with his silent masks are after all eloquent, and he revives their more familiar traits through a most judicious appeal to those who knew the men as they lived. It is a book of necrology, but a reality pervades it which makes it anything but mournful reading. It is novel in subject and in scheme, and it has been ably carried out. As a book of reference as well as a source of quiet entertainment, hero worshippers will seek it with eagerness.

The new edition of Mr. Joseph Pennell's "Pen Drawing and Pen Draughtsmen" (Macmillan & Co.), an extremely well made and useful book, is very welcome and deserves more attention than is ordinarily bestowed upon the reissue of a work of its class. Interest in the subject it treats has increased tenfold since the book first appeared in 1889, and numberless amateurs as well as students now form Mr. Pennell's audience. He himself speaks of the bringing out of the present edition as "a delight and a pleasure," and hints that it implies the acceptance of his point, the vindication of his argument. If he means by this that his first readers have won over others to an approval of his peevish attacks upon every one so daring as to disagree with him, it must be said that he is mistaken. Mr. Pennell's text is permanently vitiated by his assumption of omniscience and his splenetic criticisms of those who refuse to acknowledge his papacy. But the text of this work was never its chief claim to consideration. It will be valued for its illustrations and there the estimate to be placed upon it is very high. The pictures prove that the art of pen drawing in its modern development has placed this century on a level with the past in the distinction of giving a new and potent form of beauty to the world. The collection of drawings reproduced by Mr. Pennell also proves that the art is pre-eminently one of technical felicities.

There were superb pen drawings made by the old masters, but they were made with no special enthusiasm for the medium employed, and, on the whole, with no conception of what it was possible to achieve within the limits of that medium. As Mr. Pennell indicates, it was left for men like Menzel, in Germany; Fortuny and Vierge, in Spain, and Meissonier, in France, to elevate pen drawing to a sphere of its own and there to produce designs which rival oils in the solidity and compass of their effects. It is not necessary to seek for elements of fancy, of imagination, of any emotional nature whatever, in the illustrations of this book, to identify the source of their charm. They are artistic primarily by virtue of their concise and characteristic line, their subtle suggestions of color and light and shade, and, above all, the distinction of style which many of the best draughtsmen can impart as definitely into a black-and-white trifle as though they were working with every possible means of artistic expression. Mr. Pennell's gallery is larger than it was in the earlier print, and he gives a splendid survey of the whole field. He has widened his scope to take in Scandinavian artists, of whom his first edition gave no account at all. He has added to the representation of every other Continental school and has increased the number of English and American drawings. Never was there so valuable a picture book. For the practical illustrator its stimulus must be very great, and the mere lover of fine art will find unending pleasure in turning over its pages. Mr. Pennell's selections have not always been of the best; we have seen more interesting work by Willette, Gorguet, Bernard Partridge and J. D. Batten, to name only a handful, than he has chosen for reproduction. And mechanically the book is somewhat below Mr. Pennell's own standard. In the blocks he now gives, the beautiful decoration by Mr. Parsons and the portrait of Jefferson as Bob Acres, by Mr. Blum, are not anything like as perfect as they are in the photogravures of the first edition. Nor do we submit without murmur to the substitution on page 60 of the sketch by Cazanova for the masterly production by the same hand which he was content to publish in 1889. Why was that withdrawn? In the photogravure which Mr. Pennell says the artist considers the only fair reproduction of his work, the former illustration was much more impressive than that now used. But criticisms like these could not affect the general verdict on Mr. Pennell's labors, which have been praiseworthy to a degree. To have assembled between two covers the work of as many men as he illustrates, to have gathered Grasset and Carloz Schwabe, Klinger and Stuck, Beardsley and Anning Bell, Church Brennan and Abbey, and scores more of brilliant artists, all into one portfolio, is to have rendered an immense service to the student.

Of all the new men Carloz Schwabe seems to us to be the most remarkable and most worth studying, for he, more than any other recent draughtsman, seems to possess unblemished artistic rectitude. Pen-drawing has its limitations. On the principle that "whatever is, is right," a beautiful effect gained by all sorts of trickiness and clever expedients justifies the style of any draughtsman who elects to be his own law. But pen-drawing, as much as etching, is, on its own confession, a linear art, and such an art must of necessity be jealous of the purity of its line. The great men all prove this. Vierge, the greatest of them all, greater even than Menzel, in the last resort, never degrades his line. With many of the younger men the tendency is to wreak any caprice upon it that seems "fetching." Carloz Schwabe, working in Paris under the banner of the Rose Croix group, has been reviving with authority the very best style known to the history of his art. The first plate from him which Mr. Pennell gives is a peculiarly happy demonstration of Schwabe's fine character as a workman. It is the design made by him for the cover of Flammarion's edition of Zola's "Le Rêve." The original is in the Luxembourg, and figures the more beautifully there because it bears the washes of color which Schwabe applied with a view to the decorative enhancement of the cover. But here, shorn of such aid as the color might give it, the drawing fascinates by the strength and integrity of its line, by the perfection of pure technique which it exemplifies. It is mediaeval work in feeling; archaic, almost, in sentiment. But as draughtsmanship in the strict sense, it is among the great achievements of the century. And it ought to be more and more effective in winning converts to the belief that pen-drawing has possibilities as dignified, as monumental, as anything in art.

There is danger, it may also be added, in the very mastery of line which Schwabe possesses and must lead other men to seek. With him there is nothing to fear. His abundant work proves the sanity of his temperament and the soundness of his ideas. But take, on the other hand, Mr. Aubrey Beardsley, the most striking addition in some ways to the English section of Mr. Pennell's book. Beardsley is an extraordinarily capable draughtsman. In the first heat of the irritation that his silly eccentricities and affectations inspire, that fact runs the risk of being forgotten. His technique is brilliant; in his purely decorative borders and initial pieces he is one of the first illustrators living. In them he handles pure line in a way that might almost be called magnificent. He could have been developed into a really unique and desirable artist if he had come into the world with as much intelligence and balance as he has manual facility. But he has chosen to be a mountebank instead of an artist; to produce trash for the applause of a band of young men as conceited and as feather-brained as himself, instead of appealing to cultivated people by adhering to the lofty standard reached in his "Morte d'Arthur" work. He illustrates the decadence of linear art, the period at which its practitioners play with their material and their tools and reduce themselves to the functions of a momentary fool. It is encouraging to note in the American pages of this book that no equivalent of the redoubtable Mr. Beardsley has as yet appeared. Our own draughtsmen are doing excellent work, and doing it on healthy lines. Mr. Pennell can turn to no more satisfying monument to the honor of his art than that formed by his countrymen. We make no pretence of reviewing individually the hundreds of draughtsmen represented in his book. Our purpose is to signalize only those who possess a special significance at this time. Carloz Schwabe and Beardsley call for express comment, as perhaps Forain does also. But Forain, as we are glad to see Mr. Pennell admit, employs an imperfect line; moreover, he is one of the most intensely personal of modern draughtsmen and less rich in technical suggestion than in mere delight.

In not one of his recent novels has Mr. Howell's surpassed (we might even say equalled) the humor and charm of his earliest books. The reappearance of one of those is an event full of pleasure. The holiday edition of "Their Wedding Journey," illustrated by Mr. Clifford Carleton and published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., brings back the freshness and sparkle of the novelist's literary art at its best. The sunshiny fun in the book, its delicate and always kindly satire, its vivid pictures of a perfect tour, endear the work to many a reader who does not follow Mr. Howells in his later moods. The new edition is well made, and Mr. Carleton's drawings, though sometimes crude, are satisfactory on the whole.

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