THE "SCIENTIFIC IMAGINATION" OF SIMON NEWCOMB made the pursuit of astronomy and mathematics as fascinating to him, and to many of his readers, as a romance — if that comparison be not too absurdly feeble. Compared with the stupendous mysteries of the stellar universe, what romance is worthy of a moment's wonder? His death, July 11, at the age of seventy-four, deprives the world of an inspired and inspiring scientist and writer. Of his Nova-Scotian birth, his early coming to this country, his school-teaching in Maryland, his course at the Lawrence Scientific School, his subsequent educational and astronomical employments, and his long list of honors from American and foreign universities and learned societies, any biographical dictionary or "Who's Who" will inform those interested in his personal history. Also his "Reminiscences of an Astronomer," published in 1903, will be found to contain a most readable account of what he looked back upon as the leading events of his life. That book and his novel (written somewhat in the manner of Jules Verne's and Mr. H. G. Wells's pseudo-scientific imaginings) entitled "His Wisdom the Defender" are his chief contributions to general literature, although some of his severer studies — for example, his "Popular Astronomy" and "Astronomy for Everybody" — are of a nature to interest any intelligent reader. Political economy, sociology, and finance also engaged his busy pen, and his researches in the construction and use of the telescope made him an authority in that department of applied optics. What is perhaps his most lasting monument is indicated in the opening sentence of his "Reminiscences," — "I date my birth into the world of sweetness and light on one frosty morning in January, 1857, when I took my seat between two well-known mathematicians in the office of the 'Nautical Almanac' at Cambridge, Mass."

THE PENDULUM OF POPULARITY has a curious way of swinging backward and forward, now toward glory, and again about as far toward depreciation or even vilification. Dickens's fame, effulgent in his lifetime and for some years thereafter, suffered something like eclipse for a period, but is again radiant as of old. Byron's vogue has had similar alternations. Even Shakespeare suffered at the hands of Voltaire a scornful severity of judgment that

tended to dim his lustre in the polite world for a season. George Sand appears at this moment to be one who, after excessive adulation and almost as excessive abuse, is again enjoying the changeable world's favor. Zola and the realists would have it that she was lacking in truthfulness, others that she wanted originality, and the "Parnassiens" that she was faulty in form. Then came the reaction against this reaction, and critics like Taine, Brunetière, Faguet, Bourget, and Lemaitre chose to speak in her praise. M. René Doumic, who may be remembered as the first Hyde lecturer at Harvard (1898), and who has recently been elected to the Academy, has issued in book form a series of lectures delivered last winter on the author of "Consuelo." One paragraph from his closing chapter will indicate the writer's high opinion of her. He says: "George Sand's vocabulary is often uncertain, her expression lacks precision and relief; but she has the gift of imagery, and her images are of an adorable freshness, because, having always kept the rare faculty of wonder, she has not ceased to view things with the eyes of youth. She has the movement that captivates and the rhythm that lulls. She unrolls, with a certain slowness, but without embarrassment, the ample period characteristic of French prose at its best. It is impossible not to liken her to a broad river whose waters flow, limpid and abundant, between flowery banks and oases where the wayfarer loves to tarry and dream deliciously."

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A CHILDREN'S LIBRARY IN ITS OWN BUILDING is probably nowhere to be seen except in Cleveland, where the kindly generosity of a rich man has helped to provide the little ones with a Day Nursery, a Free Kindergarten, and a Public Library. Years ago Joseph Perkins, of Cleveland, built and equipped the nursery and kindergarten, and last year a son gave an adjoining lot of land to the city, half of the lot to be used as a playground and half to be devoted by the Public Library Board to the purposes of a children's library. The building was opened last September, and in its very attractive reading-room are to be seen shelves on all sides filled with books suitable for young readers and (an important detail) all within their reach. The purpose of the institution declares itself in every item of its equipment and ornamentation, and if the little ones fail to find happiness there they will hardly find it in heaven itself. But evidently they are not unappreciative. With a registered membership of six hundred and ninety, the library now circulates more than four thousand books a month.

A CIVIL-SERVICE CONTEST FOR A LIBRARIANSHIP is a novelty soon to be witnessed in Chicago. The public library board of the city has determined, after conference with other authorities, to throw open to all librarians in the country the contest for the very desirable position of librarian of the Chicago Public Library. The office is one of large possibilities for usefulness and distinguished service, and incidentally assures its holder of a very good salary. The examination will be held August 10, and unsuccessful candidates will not be mortified by the publication of their names. The exact nature of the test appears from the following announcement: "There will be no supervised or assembled examinations. On the day set for the test candidates will be furnished with a full statement of the conditions surrounding the Chicago Public Library, its resources, equipment, and field to be covered; also a statement of the local conditions as to population, character of the same, and similar information calculated to place before the candidate the problem which confronts Chicago in the development of its public library. With this information before them, candidates will be requested to reduce to writing a professional judgment of the proper administration of the Chicago Public Library. A paper thus prepared must be filed with the Commission on or before September 10, and must be the original work of the applicant. A full statement of education, training, and experience will also be required, subject to careful verification by examiners."

THE SHAMELESS "FAKES" OF BOOK-AGENTS, and their success in fleecing people who ought to know better, have often been referred to in these columns. The case of a wealthy New York woman who was induced to pay $85,000 for an "extra-illustrated" copy of a rejuvenated "plug" that any reputable dealer could have told her was worth at most but a few hundreds, is fresh in mind through the notoriety given it by some sensational court proceedings. But such exposures seem to do little to stop the traffic,—it may be, rather, that they encourage it by showing how easily the game may be tried by an operator sufficiently bold and adroit, and the enormous profits that come from it when successful. The whole dependence of the dishonest agent is of course upon the gullibility of human nature and the almost supernatural splendor of the "proposition" which he is able to present to the dazzled vision of his victims. "Fake" gold-mines or "fake" book-schemes, the game is much the same.

A BIT OF BOSTON-MADE SLANG, fresh from the innocent lips of a little Boston girl, will interest the curious student of colloquialisms and their origin. It appears that our little maiden of Beacon Hill was looking forward with extreme pleasure to a promised outing, and she expressed herself as expecting that when the day arrived she and her companions would "startle the pigeons from their perch." Naturally enough, her elders were struck by the strange expression and asked her whence she had got it. "Why, it's in 'Paul Revere's Ride,'" was the ready reply, in a tone of surprise at such ignorance. The picturesque phrase was adopted by the

family circle, whence it soon began to spread, and one may expect to hear it before many months in Galveston and Tacoma. The parentage of much of our slang, and even of many exclamations considered profane or vulgar, or both, might prove to be no less respectable than this latest example of vigorous and expressive English.

ENGLAND'S GREATEST LIVING NOVELIST, since the death of George Meredith, is by common consent Mr. Thomas Hardy, who has recently entered on his seventieth year. Like Meredith, he waited long for full recognition, and, like Johnson in his reproachful letter to Chesterfield, he could probably tell the public that its homage and its bounty are now too late to serve the end which, if bestowed years ago, they would have so acceptably met. But the great public is in this respect like the gods: to those who scorn its charities its arms fly open wide. It is gratifying to recall that Mr. Hardy's fame in America is of rather earlier date than his recognition in his own country — another of the many proofs we have given of a certain intellectual alertness and a warm-hearted readiness to acknowledge literary ability wherever manifested, even if we do sometimes pirate the products of foreign genius.