

HEAVY READING in more senses than one was the famous collection of all extant cuneiform literature in the royal library of Asurbanipal, king of Assyria. Baked clay took the place of paper in that formidable assemblage of books, and the total tonnage of the library must have been tremendous. But it represented the golden age of Assyrian literature, and so must have possessed other virtues besides mere weight. A similar collection, though of much smaller proportions, is that which now has its abode in a room of the New York Public Library under the careful guardianship of Mr. Victor Hugo Paltsits, known of old to many obliged readers as the assistant librarian of the now vanished Lenox Library in upper Fifth Avenue. In a recent number of the "Library Bulletin" Mr. Paltsits gives some description of the precious collection in his keeping. "The earliest records in the Library," he says, "are baked-clay tablets, cylinders, slabs, etc., in the Sumerian language, dating from the time of Naram-Sin, son of Sargon, about 2600 B. C.; Gimil-Sin, King of Ur, about 2200 B. C., and other reigns in Babylonia. There are also cuneiform inscriptions in the Assyrian language of the reign of Ashur-nasir-pal, King of Assyria, 885-860 B. C., and of Nebuchadrezzar II., King of Babylon, 604-561 B. C., in the Babylonian language."

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AN EXILED REVIEW, sharing courageously the lot of many of its former writers and readers, will presently resume its activities under the protection of the University of Cambridge. "Le Muséon," a long-established quarterly publication devoted to Oriental studies, edited of late by Professor Philippe Colinet of Louvain University and Professor L. de la Vallée Poussin of Ghent University, and published by the former institution, has been taken in charge by the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, which is about to issue the delayed first number of the current year. Both Cambridge and Oxford have shown generous

hospitality to the expatriated academicians of devastated Belgium, so that this fortunate rescue of the "Muséon" from extinction or indefinite suspension is but an extension of previous good offices. Whether the future continuation of the review will be possible must depend upon those who give their interest and support to its department of learning. Among the announced contributors to the next two issues are such recognized authorities in their several departments as Professor J. B. Bury, Professor James Hope Moulton, Professor E. G. Browne, Dr. F. W. Thomas, Librarian to the India Office, Dr. Reynold A. Nicholson, Lecturer in Persian at Cambridge, and Mr. A. A. Bevan, Lady Almoner's Reader in Arabic at the same university.

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CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO POLITE LITERATURE is greater than is commonly suspected outside of Canada, or perhaps inside. The Department of Education of the Province of Ontario issues quarterly "A Selected List of Books Recommended by the Ontario Library Association for Purchase by the Public Libraries of the Province," and the current number contains bibliographies, not aiming at completeness but nevertheless impressive, of Canadian fiction, poetry, and biography, with a list of Canadian magazines. These bibliographies, in which "titles have been chosen chiefly on the grounds of availability and value," fill twenty-two large pages, and are of a nature to commend themselves as aids to librarians beyond as well as within the borders of the Dominion. The pamphlet is obtainable from Mr. Walter R. Nursey, Inspector of Public Libraries, Toronto, though to what extent and on what terms it will be supplied to applicants outside of Ontario, we cannot say.

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A RENAISSANCE IN YIDDISH LITERATURE seems to be taking place in the Ghetto of New York. Present hard conditions in Europe have caused a sort of Jewish exodus that may be found to have some points of resemblance, however remote, to the emigration of the Moors from Spain in the sixteenth century, and of the Huguenots from France in the seventeenth. At any rate, the sum of literary and artistic talent on the Continent has been diminished by the self-expatriation of not a few men and women unusually gifted and accomplished, and of these there are some marked instances now attracting attention among the Semitic population of our chief city. This incoming tide of talent includes such names, real or pseudonymous, as Scholem Aleichem, Abraham Raisin, Scholem Aleichem, and Perez Hirschbein. Of the "Yiddish Mark

Twain" (Scholem Aleichem) appreciative mention has already been made in these columns, and the others here enumerated have shown themselves no less skilled in their several departments of prose and verse, of fiction and drama and well-turned poem. Increased means of approach to their readers have been provided for these and other new writers by the starting of additional magazines and other periodical publications in the Yiddish tongue, together with a monthly magazine in English for the publishing of translations from these Jewish authors. One of the most interesting figures in this new school of Yiddish writers is Mr. Perez Hirschbein, the "poet-wanderer," as he has been styled, whose unmetrical medium of expression seems well adapted to his thought, and ought not to be summarily dismissed with the ridicule so often visited upon this form of literature. On the whole, it appears not unlikely that in the accession here noted of fresh talent, perhaps even genius, among our writing folk, it may turn out that American literature has been appreciably the gainer, and European literature correspondingly the loser.

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AFTER FORTY YEARS OF NOVEL-WRITING, or nearly that, with a record, according to her own account, of sixty novels to her credit, Mrs. Amelia E. Barr passes into her eighty-fifth year with feelings of calm content as she looks back upon the road her feet have travelled. It was not until after the death of her husband and three sons from yellow fever at Galveston, in 1867, that she, with three daughters dependent on her, turned her energies to literature as a means of support. Those thirty-six years of her earlier life had certainly not been lacking in variety of experience on which to draw in the writing of fiction. Born in Lancashire, marrying early, and emigrating to this country with her husband, Robert Barr, she gained an acquaintance with the ups and downs, the comedy and the tragedy of existence, such as can be claimed by few of our romancers. Two years ago, in her notable autobiographic volume, "All the Days of My Life," she said of herself, what she would doubtless now repeat with no change except in the statement of her age: "I have lived, I have loved, I have worked, and at eighty-two I only ask that the love and the work continue while I live. What I must do, I will love to do. It is a noble chemistry that turns necessity into pleasure."

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ILLINOIS PUBLIC LIBRARIES now number 222, of which 161 are maintained by taxation, and eleven are endowed but are free to the public. This we learn from the current Report of the

Illinois Library Extension Commission, which leaves unelucidated the exact nature of the fifty libraries unaccounted for in the foregoing. Comparison, not unfavorable, is drawn with the library equipment of neighboring states, Wisconsin having 167 public libraries, Indiana 145, Missouri 39, Iowa 152. Yet the undisputed fact remains, laments the statistician, that there are still seventeen counties in Illinois with no public library, and fifty-two cities, of two thousand or more inhabitants, also lacking in this important respect.