RECENT FICTION.*

With the exception of two or three "sports," Mr. Harold Bindloss has written upwards of a score of novels having substantially the same thematic material, and it is surprising to note how successfully he contrives to invest this material with fresh interest upon each new venture. The scene is always Western Canada; the hero is always a man of simple integrity and self-reliant character; the heroine is always something of a patrician, slow to reach an appreciation of the hero's genuine human worth. Inimical social influences always work to delay the romantic consummation; there is always a villain or two occupied in thwarting the hero's activities; and there is always a fierce battle with nature, in which the fury of the elements is met and overcome by sheer pluck and dogged perseverance. This is the story of "Harding

---

* HARDING OF ALLENWOOD. By Harold Bindloss. New York: F. A. Stokes Co.

THE LANDLOPER. A Romance of the Woods. By Holman Day. New York: Harper & Brothers.

THE SEA-HAWK. By Rafael Sabatini. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co.

of Allenwood," as it is of most of its predecessors. We note that Mr. Bindloss's heroes are more convincing than his heroines. The charms of the latter are made known to us inferentially rather than by clear portraiture. The author is singularly chary in the matter of their personal description, and gives us no more than hints on the physical side. His heroes are much better done, and all in all he is a man's writer rather than a caterer to the tastes of his feminine readers. But in his plodding prosaic way he does it all remarkably well, and it is a marvel that he can thus continue doing the same thing over and over again without making the monotony of the proceeding too wearisome. One thing we know for certain — that whatever the tragic complications of the romance, the difficulties will all be cleared away, and the ending made happy.

"The Landloper," Mr. Holman Day's new novel, hardly justifies its sub-title, "A Romance of the Woods." It is true that it opens in the woods, with its vagabond hero on the tramp. But it soon takes us to the city, and keeps us there. Walker Farr (which is not his real name) has taken to the road as a fugitive from the law, owing to a situation created by his quixotic self-sacrifice to save his father's reputation. He has also sought to divest himself of human sympathies that he may escape active participation in the affairs of men. But the social claim proves too strong for him when he comes face to face with the conditions created by the unholy alliance of business and politics in the New England State which is the scene of his adventures. An unscrupulous syndicate has got control of the municipal water-supply systems of the Commonwealth, and is supplying typhoid-infected drinking water to its customers. Farr feels constrained to make himself "an enemy of the people" by an attack upon this criminal conspiracy, and sets himself to work with such effect that he destroys the power of the syndicate, and causes the election of a new governor honest and courageous enough to overthrow the whole corrupt system. Along with this civic crusade goes Farr's own personal romance, in which the villain is duly thwarted, and the girl securely won. Farr makes a very engaging hero for this complication of sentiment and pathos and political intrigue, and his procedure has a quality of originality which does credit to the author's invention, and does not permit the reader's interest to lapse for a moment.

From the imagined memoirs of one Lord Henry Goade, in eighteen manuscript folio volumes, Mr. Rafael Sabatini has pretended to gather the material for a romance entitled "The Sea-Hawk." Without the aid of this ponderous autobiography, he tells us, "it were impossible to reconstruct the life of that Cornish gentleman who became a renegade and a Barbary Corsair and might have become Basha of Algiers but for certain matters which are to be set forth." Adopting the fiction, then, we express our heartfelt gratitude to the mythical Sir Henry for preserving his record of the deeds of Sir Oliver Tressilian, the mighty-thewed and fiery-tempered hero of this stirring tale of the spacious times of Queen Bess. It is one of the most exciting yarns of its good old-fashioned sort that we have encountered for many years. Sir Oliver became a corsair because the treachery of his half-brother caused him to be trepanned and sold into slavery, and because the fair Rosamund believed him to have been the murderer of her own brother. When the whirligig of time eventually brought into his power both the treacherous half-brother and the faithless maiden, he was enabled to have his revenge upon the one, and so to enlighten the other as to regain her love. How he rescued her from Moorish captivity, and how he cleared his own name in the eyes of the English judges who would have hanged him incontinently, is recounted for us in a thrilling tale which rises steadily to a dramatic climax, and comes out in a way to satisfy all our romantic instincts. Mr. Sabatini is a wonder-worker in the narrative of adventure, and we are especially grateful to him for sparing us the fustian of the artificial archaism in language with which practitioners in this kind are wont to clothe the products of their invention.

WILLIAM MORTON PAYNE.