

**IN *Conspiracy: A Cuban Romance*, General Adam Badeau has written a simple story, with a decided historical coloring, and one to which much more than the diversion of reading a novel attaches. The circumstances on which the book is based General Badeau recites in a brief Prologue of painful truth—the shocking massacre, by the Spanish Government, in 1871, of the young medical students concerned in the supposed insult to the tomb of Gonzalo Castaion in Havana. Turning from sad fact to imaginary characters and incidents, there is next woven a slender but artistic little romance, in which sisterly devotion, the patriotism of an Insurgent lover and the gallant sacrifice of his rival are mingled together. The plot is quaintly old-fashioned, as are some elements of aristocratic life in Cuba at this day. The local coloring could not fail to be picturesque. In the political portions of the**

story General Badeau has been less happy than in the pages which turn upon other interests. The diplomacy and intrigues of his state-people tend to make the narrative drag, and do not possess sufficient importance to hold our attention. The characters are drawn with grace, rather than force. The purely descriptive in the novel is the better portion of it, in style; such vistas of domestic life, plantation management and religious pageantry in Holy Week as occur in the course of the tale, can be caught with much clearness and pleasure. It is more in the originality of material than narrative brilliancy, that *Conspiracy* merits recommendation. (New York: Worthington.)

We thank the Messrs. Roberts for their happy idea of putting Balzac forth in a thoroughly good English dress. It is surprising how many American men and women, of otherwise equivocal literary cultivation, know Balzac either by the merest fragment or not at all; and it is not less remarkable that so often such unfortunate readers profess active interest in "realistic" fiction, and imply their acquaintance with the best types of such a development of literature. We may appreciate and praise the realists—French, English and American—of our day as cordially as we conscientiously can; but to open the *Comedie Humaine* at once reminds us of the truth that there is nothing that they can do which Balzac did not do years ago in a fashion to dwarf forever the labors and talents of all successors. Where is there a mind to originate, a hand to trace the conceptions of the wonderful Frenchman; to rival his delicate truth to human nature in all the moods and phases which he studied and has fixed forevermore as his witness? On the present occasion the publishers of the series send us *The Duchess de Langeais*, one of Balzac's shorter but most powerful works; including in the same volume the sketches: "An Episode Under the Terror," "The Illustrious Gaudissart," "A Passion in the Desert," and "The Hidden Masterpiece." Perhaps in the entire range of psychological fiction, possessing any amatory complexion, there never was a more perfect novelette than *The Duchess de Langeais*. It opens with a situation of unexcelled pathos and power; and, reverting to the incident which brought it to pass, its author tells a tale of wonderful dramatic vigor. The gift of dwelling upon detail, of analyzing and sub-analyzing, yet without weariness to the reader, appears less distinctly in the *Duchess de Langeais* than many another of the Balzac library; but whatever there is is unmistakably and inimitably his. This translation is excellent; and those who can only read Balzac through such a medium have little to lose. We wish this literary enterprise especial success. It is needed just now, as perhaps never before. (Boston: Roberts Bros.)

Our only criticism of *Roses of Shadow*, by T. R. Sullivan, is its flimsy title, which is apt to mislead one about the decided merits of the novel. It is a short, clean-cut, powerful little-story—distinctly a "novel of plot," and with the plot well-handled. The scene is chiefly Boston; the characters Bostonian. There is a certain finish in the literary style which pleases one, and by its general superiority, even in certain melodramatic episodes, to the society novel even of the better class, *Roses of Shadow* is above the average.

We have also received, and must pass by with only an acknowledgment, *Sweet Cicely*, by the author of "Betsey Bobbett," *High Lights* and *Hyperaesthesia*, by Mary Cruger, among the current fiction to hand.