THE MAKERS OF MODERN PROSE. A Popular Handbook to the Greater Prose Writers of the Century. By W. J. Dawson. New York: T. Whittaker. $2.00.

The title of this volume will be misleading to one who expects from it a discussion of how modern prose came to be what it is. The sub-title would express the book's real scope and purpose, except that it is distinctly a misstatement, for the first four authors treated—Johnson, Goldsmith, Burke and Gibbon—all died before the century began. The selection of authors in a volume of this kind is at best arbitrary, but since Mr. Dawson did go back into the eighteenth century we cannot help wondering at the absence of Addison and Steele, whose names are, perhaps, the first suggested by the title; since he deals with Emerson, it seems strange that he should not even mention Hawthorne or Irving; and we have surely a right to expect some treatment of Pater and Matthew Arnold in a volume which devotes a chapter each to Froude and Robertson. Mr. Dawson reserves the *Makers of Modern Fiction* for a future volume, and republishes a former volume, devoted to the *Makers of Modern Poetry.* The parcelling out of such a man as Goldsmith on this threefold plan would seem to involve a treatment of him in all three volumes, or a very meagre estimate in any one. But Mr. Dawson's interest is merely in the man and his message, and he treats whom he pleases in whatever place and manner he pleases. He is essentially a hero-worshipper. His two chief heroes are Johnson and Carlyle; but the lesser lights which surround these two come in for such unqualified praise that it seems as if the author were saying of each in turn that he was the greatest of them all. This wholesome admiration is refreshing in an overcritical age. It does one good to see Mr. Dawson's enthusiasm over Dr. Johnson, faults and all, and then to turn in the next chapter to his sympathetic and delicate appreciation of Goldsmith. After all, the most conspicuous thing about the book is not its limitations, which are many and obvious, but its all-round justice. Mr. Dawson always sees life from the standpoint of his hero, and champions him against all comers. Even Gibbon, for whom he has less enthusiasm than for any of the others, is defended with what reads like a delightful bit of *naïveté:* "It is impossible to grudge Gibbon the two or three thousand pounds which he received from the Government, when we recollect the sort of men who grew wealthy through the lifelong plunder of the public purse."

This love of his heroes is the cause of some fine, suggestive expositions and of one serious blemish. The chapter on Froude is inserted merely for an opportunity to exclaim against his "most mendacious of biographies," and to defend Carlyle again in his relations with his wife, though too many futile pages had already been devoted to that subject. Mr. Dawson is almost pathetic in his reiteration of the statements that the Carlyles lived together "upon the most delightful terms," that "no two persons ever loved each other more tenderly than these two," that "it was simply because these two were so much to each other that the slightest variation of temperature in their affection was so keenly and instantaneously felt by each," and that the "reported infelicities . . . depend on the testimony of one or two witnesses whose word is worthless." After such complete partisanship one almost wonders at Mr. Dawson's daring to admire Macaulay, yet the faults in Macaulay's *History* are as vigourously defended as the same faults in Froude are condemned. In fact, poor Froude is nothing but a scapegoat; his condemnation is as absolute as the appreciation of the others is unqualified. In spite of his partiality and positiveness, indeed largely because of them, Mr. Dawson's book will be found an illuminating and stimulating introduction to the authors treated. *Henry David Gray.*