

Recent Fiction.

MISS PHELPS is well fitted to write a novel with a purpose ; she has the enthusiasm of her opinions, but the keen humor which balances her tendency to sentiment makes her willing to give her enemy points. In 'Doctor Zay'† her purpose is to show that a young woman may be a physician and still be womanly ; she would prefer to have the young woman a homœopathist, but she is quite willing to dwell for amusement on the apparent little absurdities of that branch of the profession. It goes without saying that 'Doctor Zay' is delightful reading, and it is unusually free from Miss Phelps's mannerism. Its one great mistake is the abruptness of its close. We all knew what was to be done with the patronizing young man who wrote home to his mother of the pleasant young lady he had found in Maine, 'Remind me to tell you about her when I come home' ; and we all knew what would eventually become of the professional young woman ; what we do *not* know, and what we wanted to know, is how the problem was solved after marriage. Many of us are already convinced that a woman may be womanly and be a physician, but some of us still wonder whether she can be a wife and mother and a physician, too. In 'The Story of Avis' Miss Phelps treated similar complexities with a skill and sympathy that made the story, with all

* (1) A Study of Maria Edgeworth. By Grace A. Oliver. Boston : A. Williams & Co. (2) Letters of L. Maria Child. \$1.50. Boston : Houghton, Mifflin & Co.
† Doctor Zay. By E. S. Phelps. \$1.25. Boston : Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

its faults of style, one of the remarkable novels of our generation; but the problem of medicine after marriage is a deeper one than that of painting, and if Miss Phelps believes in it, she ought not to tacitly confess its solution beyond her power. When Yorke goes back to the Maine wilderness to see Dr. Zay again, his belief in her womanliness he thinks beautifully justified by finding her sheltered from the whirling snow-storm in an 'office' and parlor, bright with fire and lights, full of blossoming plants and fragrance, in the midst of which his lady-love, a gracious, exquisite presence, moves about in a lovely dress trimmed with fur. We are perfectly willing to believe that, provided she was there, Dr. Zay would have made the scene a womanly one; but the chances being nine out of ten, in such a very sickly town as Sherman is represented to be, that she would have been occupied with a 'case' some five miles from the parlor, which would then have been unlighted and unwarmed, and the certainty being that this would happen more than once after the office was removed to Beacon Street, we should be glad to know what the effect would then have been on the young man's affections. No woman should be prevented from adopting any profession that she may like, and it is not singular that medicine should offer great attractions to an earnest and helpful woman; but that any woman should wish after marriage to continue the profession, in any but that benevolent practice which in itself would offer a wide field, is hard to understand.

MRS. SPOFFORD, in her delightful story of 'Hester Stanley,'* has given us a surprise in demonstrating her ability to do without bric-à-brac, under stern necessity. The story is one for girls about fifteen years of age, and the dormitories of the boarding-school where the scene is laid are as bare as they would probably have been in real life; not a single mother-of-pearl bedstead dares to raise a silken canopy; and the garden is an actual old-fashioned garden, instead of the literary conservatory, only adapted to the movements of a Tennyson's Maud, into which Mrs. Spofford usually leads us. She surprises us again by showing a decided gift for humor. We recommend the book to everybody.

GOOD WINE needs no bush, and Miss Alcott needs no reviewer.† It is true that her style has changed a little since the publication of 'Little Women;' her little people incline more to a style of thought and conversation suggestive of the Sunday-school, and the present volume of 'Aunt Jo's Scrap-Bag' (1) has much to do with fairies. But everything of hers is sure to be entertaining, and if in the 'Proverb Stories' (2), many of which are already familiar to her readers, she has included a somewhat sensational tale, called 'The Baron's Gloves,' she confesses in her preface that it is only done to gratify the curiosity of those who have wondered just how 'Jo' began her literary work, and to show other beginners what *not* to write.

IN HER STORY of 'Robin,'‡ Mrs. Parr delineates neither the typically perfect nor the typically wicked heroine, but simply a young girl with what George Eliot would call 'bits of commonness.' She only disapproves of gambling because of possible losses; she not only listens to her father's doubtful stories, but helps his memory with names and dates; and she asks her husband innocently when they are leaving lodgings, 'Shall we be able to pay the people before we go?' The wonderful success of the delineation is in the fact that the author never allows us to despise the poor girl, and in the manner in which we are made to feel that her faults were wholly those of education, in being brought up by a Bohemian father; while, with admirable truth to nature, Mrs. Parr does not wholly cure Robin of her 'commonness,' even after her association with higher interests and nobler people. The story is extremely interesting, and the literary style excellent.

'THOSE CHILDREN'§ is a story about schools, intended to illustrate the advantages of the kindergarten and Quincy methods of teaching, mingled with a good deal of domesticity of the 'Helen's Babies' order, and a quite unnecessary melodramatic love story among the elders. What the author says about teaching is very true in a way: a good many of us believe that grammars should exist only for the philologist, and that spelling-books should not exist at all; and the majority are ready to condemn the ancient methods of 'grading,' associated as they are with competition and 'marks;' but Mr. Brooks's ideal school has its objections, and would only be possible, indeed, in a small country village, with a 'select' number of pupils. It is entirely true that teachers should expect to *teach*, not merely to hear lessons; but we also think that pupils should expect to study, not merely to listen. If the old systems were a terrible strain upon the brains of the pupils, we should think Mr. Brooks's method would be fatal to the brains and strength of the teachers. To make study interesting *as study*, not to disguise it as a game, is the true problem; and we are far from sharing the lugubrious feelings of the author. The new methods are creeping in as fast as can be expected of any

reform; text-books are daily improving, and teachers are fast learning to do without text-books, and to include the newspapers as a factor in education. There is certainly need enough for reform, for the proof of the inadequacy of the old method is sufficient from the results,

'DIDDIE, DUMPS, AND TOT,' by Louise-Clarke Pyrnelle (Harper: \$1), should be purchased for every household and read aloud to the entire family. To the children it will be a rich treat; for Diddie and Dumps are infinitely more entertaining than 'Helen's Babies,' whether they are frolicking as 'Injuns,' or making earnest attempts to write a book, or remarking sorrowfully, when reproved for being very bad children, 'We're a heap mo' *better'n* we're *bad*.' Nothing could be more delicious in its way than their confession of badness to their father. To their elders, the book will be even more interesting, as a study of plantation life, keeping alive the old stories, legends, traditions, games, hymns and superstitions of the Southern slaves.

* Hester Stanley at St. Mark's. By Harriet Prescott Spofford. (Illustrated), \$1.25. Boston: Roberts Brothers.
† (1) Proverb Stories. \$1.25. (2) Aunt Jo's Scrap-Bag. \$1. By Louisa M. Alcott. Boston: Roberts Brothers.
‡ Robin. By Mrs. Parr. \$1. Holt's Leisure Hour Series.
§ Those Children. By Byron A. Brooks. \$1. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons.