THE novels of George Macdonald have become sermons interrupted with conversations. There was very little art displayed in the best he ever wrote. It was their lofty moral tone which gave them their high favor among thoughtful readers. In those he has lately produced he evinces a decreasing consideration for the merits of a story-writer, devoting his purpose more and more to the inculcation of his religious opinions. In his last book, "Weighed and Wanting" (D. Lothrop & Co.), he has brought forward a series of lay figures simply as a convenience in illustrating his ideas of man's duty to God and his fellow man. Many of these ideas commend themselves to our reason and conscience, while others we reject as sheer nonsense. The doctrine of self-sacrifice, for instance, is carried to a harmful extreme. If selfishness is a sin, so is altruism. We have no right to commit moral suicide to insure greater happiness or comfort to another. There is a sacred duty owing to our own selfhood which must not be overlooked. Mr. Macdonald delivers an occasional trenchant sentence in the course of his preaching, as when he remarks: "Miss Vavasour went to church because it was the right thing to do; God was one of the heads of society, and his drawing-rooms had to be attended."

MONCURE D. CONWAY'S "Travels in South Kensington" (Harper & Brothers) is a beautiful specimen of the book-makers' craft. It comprises three papers treating respectively of the South Kensington Museum, Decorative Art, and Architecture in England and Bedford Park. The first, occupying full one-half the volume, gives a history of the great Art Museum which is the pride of England, together with a description of its most important contents. The second deals in a similar manner with the interiors of some of the mansions of London which have been adorned by the most skilful decorative artists of the period; and also with a few of the famous monuments of architecture which have arisen in the city and its environs within the last quarter of

a century. The third paper makes the reader acquainted with the attractions of Bedford Park, "a Utopia in brick and paint in the suburbs of London." All these papers are lavishly illustrated with wood cuts of the choicest kind, offering to the lovers of art a treat to the eyes as well as the mind.

MR. W. A. WILKINS, editor of the Whitehall (N. Y.) "Times," and author of "The Cleverdale Mystery" (Fords, Howard & Hulbert), betrays his professional habits in various significant features of his book; notably, in the matter-of-fact way in which he presents, at the beginning, a descriptive catalogue of the *dramatis personæ*, and in the familiar and commonplace flow of the narrative. Mr. Wilkins is more effective, undoubtedly, as an editor than as a novelist. He lacks imagination; consequently, when he enters the field of fiction his work is a manufacture instead of a creation. His motive in "The Cleverdale Mystery" is to expose the corruption pervading American politics, or, in other words, the unscrupulous working of "the machine and its wheels"; but the characters he makes use of to accomplish his objects are such feeble counterfeits of humanity that their actions do not strike one as having any relation to the conduct of living men and women. Hence the aim of the work is inevitably defeated.

LIEUTENANT DANENHOWER'S "Narrative of the Jeannette" (James R. Osgood & Co.) is a simple, concise, straightforward, manly account of the expedition of the "Jeannette," from the entrance of the ill-fated vessel into the Arctic sea to the arrival of Lieutenant Danenhower and his companions at Irkoutsk. It was first published in the columns of the New York "Herald," but is now reproduced in cheap pamphlet form, which places it in reach of the whole reading world. It is an impressive narrative, valuable as a bit of the history of our times and as a record of the heroic temper of our kind. There is not the slightest attempt made by the writer at sensational effect, yet more than once the feelings are deeply moved by the quiet statement of hardship and suffering bravely endured. In answer to "the request of many strangers," the portrait and autograph of Lieutenant Danenhower accompany the narrative.

THE anonymous author of "A Transplanted Rose" (Harper & Brothers) appears to have been studying treatises on the social etiquette of New York, and is so intoxicated with her new and momentous knowledge that she has constructed a novel as a means of communicating it to an ignorant world. But the world does not take kindly to instruction put up in this form. When it desires lessons in table manners, for instance, it prefers to consult some manual of established authority, where it will get exactly what it seeks. The "Transplanted Rose" is a crude Western girl, who spends a winter in New York, and creates an unparalleled sensation in fashionable circles by her beauty and ingenuousness. She is subjected to a thorough course of training in the customs of polite society, which the reader is made to share, and, after a career impossible outside of a romance, marries an English nobleman, thereby presumably reaching the acme of social success.

IN "Frontier Army Sketches" (Jansen, McClurg & Co.) Captain Steele has placed himself conspicuously in the thin ranks of those who have shown ability to handle the rich material existing in the romantic incidents and experiences of border life. To use this material successfully in literature, rare qualities are demanded: at least there must be a fine and pure sense of humor, active and wide-reaching human sympathies, and keen powers of observation and description. These Captain Steele undoubtedly possesses. He has, in addition, a quick eye for artistic effects, and the habit of cultivating his own point of observation, and of saying things in a wholly fresh and independent way. His sketches have thus sprightliness and original force; and some of the more ambitious among them have realistic qualities that rank them high among works of their half-sketch, half-story class—a class of which "Joe's Pocket" in the present volume and "The Outcasts of Poker Flat" are perhaps equally good examples. Of the sketches which lack the story element, that of "Captain Jinks," meaning the regular army officer, is inimitable in its combination of drollery, true appreciation of character, and subtle yet powerful delineation. The descriptive sketches embrace some of the best work in the volume; that of "Coyotes," "A Fight between Buffaloes," and "New Mexican Common Life," are especially happy. The pathetic element is not wanting, and is predominant in the sketch of "The Priest of El Paso" and "A Lonesome Christian." There are, in fact, among the eighteen sketches that comprise the collection few which have not some special claim upon the interest of the reader.

THE beauty of Helen of Troy has inspired a new poem of a strain worthy of the theme. The author, Mr. A. Lang, is an English scholar and poet of no mean gifts, who has before this testified his love for Grecian song and story in a translation of the Odyssey. The woes of the fair Helen who was the undoing of Ilion have so won his sympathies that he has undertaken to clear her fame of the stains which tradition has cast upon it, and to set it before the eyes of mankind in the white light of innocence. In his version of her history, Helen was a guiltless victim of the intriguing Aphrodite, who threw a spell over her mind, in which she forgot her husband, her child, her whole past life, and, meeting Paris, gave him the love of a chaste and maiden heart. She dwelt with him, unconscious of her sin, until the Argives had waged war against Ilion for years; then suddenly memory awoke, and she turned her face steadfastly against the lover who had betrayed her. When Menelaus finally captured Troy, Aphrodite dissipated his wrath and that of the Argive hosts against the hapless cause of their

long and bloody warfare, and she was taken back in perfect forgiveness by her injured husband. It is a more grateful story than that which Homer has made immortal, for it pleases the chivalric instinct to associate woman's loveliness with innocence. The verse in which the tale is told is smooth, stately, and admirably sustained. It is the product of a writer of high culture, of a delicate musical ear, and of rare skill in the use of words. (Published by Charles Scribner's Sons.)

THE "Idyls of Norway," which give their name to a neat little volume by Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen (Charles Scribner's Sons), are bound in with miscellaneous pieces, sonnets, and Norse stories. They are the most interesting pieces in the collection on account of their decided national character, although the sing-song measure in which they are written becomes rather tiresome. The chief interest in the collection is derived from the repute of Mr. Boyesen as a prose writer. Most persons who use the pen try it in the manufacture of verse. Mr. Boyesen is a writer of delightful prose, but judging from these specimens of his verse, he attempts poetry as an experiment, or an occupation, rather than from an exalted inspiration.

ROBERTS BROTHERS answer the call arising from a new and popular fancy, by publishing a "Jean Ingelow Birthday Book." The arrangement of the work is that which has been made generally familiar by previous books of the sort, the left-hand pages being filled with extracts from the prose and poetic writings of the author, and the right-hand with corresponding blanks. A glance at the selected passages shows the treasures of thought and fancy with which Miss Ingelow has enriched her literary work The volume is tastefully issued, pretty designs in landscape marking the beginning of each month, and neat colors and embellishments decorating the exterior.

"MAPLE RANGE," a romance of frontier life in Minnesota, by Mrs. Edna A. Barnard (Henry A. Sumner & Co.), is a medley of rude experiences of the pioneer, exciting adventures of the Indian massacre of 1862, stirring scenes in the war of the Rebellion, and sentimental and domestic passages of varied hue and degree.