country to the summit of its power and influence, and under which began and progressed far the baneful march of national decay.

As the title foreshadows, the book may be described as a tale of conflict between Church and State—of that subtly woven web of intrigue by which the priestly caste seek to bind the young Pharaoh to their will, as his father had been bound before him, and of the fierce resentment and vain revolt of the nigh-spirited youth. This is the burden of the narrative. As an accurate rescript of Egyptian history, I fear it can hardly be praised. Perhaps the mist that thickens here and grows thin there, but which ever hangs over the annals of those far-away times, may have seemed to the author a justification for liberties and for the free moulding of probable facts to meet the exigencies of his fiction. One hesitates to accept such a defence. That the last of the Ramesid line was succeeded by the priest Her-hor is unquestioned, but the overwhelming probability is that this change of dynasty took place after a peaceful reign of nearly thirty years by a weak and insignificant ruler, rather than through a violent revolution occurring shortly after the accession of a strong and well-meaning, if inexperienced, prince.

On the other hand, with the exception of this violation of the historical verities and its attendant distortion of the character of Rameses XIII., the picture of the manners and customs of ancient Egypt is the most elaborate and truthful ever shown in fiction. Ebers's novels merely graze the surface of old Nile life beside the rich detail of this romance. All the races that dwelt in and clustered about that marvellous valley pass before us, Egyptians and Phœnicians, Greeks and Hebrews, Assyrians and Libyans, each with their characters and dress and manners set forth with the spirit of the true archæologist. A stupendous course of painstaking and exhaustive study must surely have led up to such a work, and therein does its value lie. The feeling, too, of the story is Egyptian to a wonderful degree. A mere student may tell us many true things about scenes and customs, but to infuse the spirit of the setting, to preserve what we call the local colour, an author must not only know ancient Egypt; he must become, for the

X.—XI.

I.—Alexander Glovatski's "The Pharaoh and the Priest."*
II.—Felix Dahn's "A Captive of the Roman Eagles."†

The Pharaoh and the Priest is a book notable from several points of view. In the first place, it is the introduction of its author to the English-speaking public, Alexander Glovatski, the most prolific and, with the exception of Sienkiewicz, the most prominent of Polish novelists.

Certainly they do not incline to the novelette habit, these Poles. The old-fashioned three-volume novel is more in their line, and the present volume fills its seven hundred rather closely printed pages with its story of ancient Egypt during the closing years of the twentieth dynasty, the Ramesid, which brought the

*The Pharaoh and the Priest. Translated from the Polish of Alexander Glovatski, by Jeremiah Curtin. Boston: Little, Brown and Company. $1.50.

†A Captive of the Roman Eagles. Translated from the German of Felix Dahn by Mary J. Safford. Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Company. $1.50.

time being, an ancient Egyptian. Naturally the farther back the historical romanticist goes for his plot, the more difficult is this avatar, and therefore I say that what Glovatski has accomplished is a thing notable. In the face of such a task it may seem like hypercriticism to say that he fails at times. Still, it is most suspicious to find ancient Egyptians "seizing their heads with both hands" in moments of agitation, precisely as do Sienkiewicz's mediæval Polish heroes. Possibly certain pas ges that we might criticise in this connection owe their faults to a translation certainly far from ideal. Such expressions as "His hands hopped a couple of times," "balling his fists" and "a wig as large as a headdress" are doubtless taken literally from the Polish, and may perhaps add colour to a Polish story, but they are neither felicitous nor rational English, and have no place in the translation of a tale of Egyptian life. Reading them, one is disposed to attribute also to the translator many such questionable modernities as "His Holiness" (used in speaking of the Pharaoh), and "the late Mefres," together with such clumsy narrative sentences as "Anger boiled up in the Prince, it is unknown why, but he calmed himself," and such crude descriptive ones as "She was a tall person of rather full habit" (Queen Nitokris).

There is a more serious criticism, however, than these; the most serious that can be made on a book as a romance. Despite the spirited, and at times even poetic or dramatic, picturing of scenes and incidents, there is that inevitable drag to the narrative which description of every kind necessarily implies. Aggressive erudition may add to the value of a text-book, but it certainly hurts the interests in a novel, and there is just about so much of such material that can be introduced naturally or artistically. Beyond this point it is simply lugged in, and the story is deliberately suspended for the purpose. This is the charge that must be made against *The Pharaoh and the Priest*. It is a remarkable work, well worth reading, but likely to be more read for the information its pages contain than for its grasp upon our sympathies and interest.

Quite different in treatment and general attitude is Felix Dahn's *Bissula*, translated by Mary J. Safford under the title of *A Captive of the Roman Eagles*. In this tale of the Roman campaign against the Alemanni on the shores of what is now Lake Constance the story is indeed everything, and its author, realising the complications that arise from taking for the heroes and heroines of romance those individuals upon whom history turns, has, unlike Glovatski, left himself free to fashion his plot without violating the verities. No literary canon seems more justified than the one which prescribes that the imaginary plot in such stories must be built about imaginary people, while the men and women who have lived to fame appear merely to furnish setting, colour and verisimilitude.

When I say that in this book the story is everything I do not mean that its author fails in the accuracy of his antiquarian lore, but that what there is of it is distinctly subordinate to a very stirring narrative. The fighting is especially good. It is only the local colour that halts somewhat, and furnishes new evidence of the fact that it is difficult for the German of to-day, above all men, to cease effectively to be a German of to-day for the purpose of his fiction. Such a lack may offend the reader who looks for the historical romance to transport him in spirit to the time and place of its choice. To the less learned and less critical it will hardly be apparent.

As a fitting summary, *A Captive of the Roman Eagles* surpasses as a tale the Pole's romance by so much as it seems almost frivolous and trivial compared with his scholarly and erudite picture of the dead past, its deeds, its thoughts and its dreams.

Duffield Osborne.