

RECENT WORKS OF TRAVEL.

The World's Paradises. By S. G. W. Benjamin. [D. Appleton & Co. 30 cents.]

The Alpenstock. Edited by W. H. Rideing. [D. Appleton & Co. 30 cents.]

Camps in the Caribbees. By Frederick A. Ober. [Lee & Shepard. \$2.50.]

Brazil. By Herbert H. Smith. [Charles Scribner's Sons. \$5.00.]

We Four. By Miss L. L. Rees. [J. B. Lippincott & Co. \$1.25.]

Mr. S. G. W. Benjamin is a genuine traveler, not without readiness for adventure, and even for excitement, but with more of a fancy for the picturesque, and with an eye that skillfully takes in the salient points of a striking landscape, and a hand that pleasantly combines the impressions of extended observation into artistic effects. His latest book can hardly be called a fresh one, since it takes us, in part at least, into scenes which we have previously visited under his guidance. The first third of it is the newest and best, dealing as it does with Damascus, the Bosphorus, Smyrna, and Scio; but the remainder of the book is occupied with those regions of Europe and those islands of the sea of which Mr. Benjamin has already had something to say in other forms. With the Channel Islands, the Azores, the Bermudas, Madeira, and so on, Mr. Benjamin seems as familiar as if every spot severally had been his home. Toward the first-named localities the average reader will feel more of a stranger, and it is at these that the book will be found the more valuable and interesting. It is not a large one, being one of the "Handy Volumes," and may serve to while away a half hour pleasantly and instructively.

Mr. Rideing, with whose peculiar literary gifts our readers have already been made familiar, has made up his book, *The Alpenstock*, out of a variety of narratives of Alpine travel, with an eye always to the dangers and excitements of mountain climbing, in this its boldest and most thrilling form. The essence of many and costly volumes is here compressed into a 16mo of two hundred pages. There are few more thrilling narratives than those of the daring — shall we not say reckless — men who have scaled Mont Blanc, and the Matterhorn, and the Aguille Verte, and it is impossible to read some of the transcribed passages even of this volume without a shudder. With Mr. Rideing, we see now, and never can forget the heroic pertinacity of Whymper, and his associates forcing their way against every obstacle; we hear the last cry of the unfortunate Croz, as he flies over the precipice with Lord Douglas and the others; we again share with Tyndal that marvelous sunset seen under the lee of the Weisshorn; we hear brave Bennen's voice, and are thrilled with pity as his apparition flings its arms out to meet the ill-timed end.

We do not recommend this modest little volume to people of weak nerves, or to those who think there is a point where courage and resolution border closely on

foolhardiness and spendthriftness of human life.

Exciting as such narratives as the foregoing are, we confess to a heartier relish for a book like Mr. Ober's *Camps in the Caribbees*, which is the straightforward and intelligent story, told by a young New England naturalist, of a winter excursion to the Caribbee Islands in the interests of the Smithsonian Institution, in 1876. Mr. Ober, we should say, was own brother, at least true mate, to Mr. Nathaniel H. Bishop; directed, however, in his adventures by a little more manly purpose, with less of a mere love of novelty and romance, and with a scientist's definite and serious aim behind all his efforts. Mr. Ober's special object was the exploration of the Antilles with reference to their ornithological treasures, few of which have ever been brought to light. Avoiding the beaten paths of travel, he plunged into the forests with the appetite of a true son of nature, carrying his camera with him, and probably penetrating depths which have never been reached before for a similar purpose. In his descriptions Mr. Ober reminds us of Mr. Wallace, and they are full of interest for the student of a virgin nature. The features of camp-life in the tropics, the peculiarities of the islands, and of the people, the mysteries of the trackless woods, and above all the mass and variety of bird-life, visits to a great sugar estate and to the birthplace of the Empress Josephine, these are the topics which give character to the volume. It has illustrations, but they are not commensurate in quality with the text, though taken from photographs or drawings made on the spot. We wish we had room to give some extracts, but we cannot print a thirty-two page paper every time; no, nor one of twenty, as we should have to do if we did actual justice to every good book before us. It must suffice to say that while the work is not without interest as a journal of adventure, its chief importance consists in its careful study, from the naturalist's point of view, of a remote and infrequently visited region.

Mr. Smith's work on *Brazil* is large, authoritative, and important, being wrought out of materials gathered during a series of visits to the country, directed by a specific purpose of investigation. The articles by Mr. Smith which have been appearing the past year in *Scribner's Monthly* form the basis of the volume, but these have been much amplified for their present and final use, and a large amount of additional matter has been added, making the book practically new and fresh. Mr. Smith first went to Brazil in 1870, as a student with Prof. Hartt, returning in 1874; he spent two years or more in scientific exploration. Then followed further visits, at the instance of the Messrs. Scribner, in one of which he was accompanied by the artist Champney, who made the very beautiful drawings which in

the first place embellished the magazine, and are now transferred to this volume. Mr. Smith is something more than a mere descriptive traveler, good as he is in laying before us the great features and more minute details of the landscape; for his mind is interested in the scientific aspect of things, and particularly in the social, political, and economic questions which are inevitably started by an intelligent inspection of such a country as Brazil. The land of the Amazons has too often been painted in rose-color, and we are glad to find that this author has not "lost his head" in the midst of the luxuriance of the Southern Continent. He does full justice to the wonderful richness of the country, but he speaks very temperately of it as a field for North American enterprise. It is evident, we think, from the general tenor of Mr. Smith's observations and report, that there is a greater and grander opening in Brazil for the capital and enterprise of the United States, than has yet been fully realized; but it is an opportunity that is to be improved with the utmost prudence, and with a strict regard to the inflexible laws which regulate the production and interchange of commodities. We are sorry we have not the space to enter more fully into the contents of this volume, which we regard as not inferior in interest and value to Mr. Fletcher's, heretofore the acknowledged authority on the subject. A map, an index, and careful studies of the majestic water system of Brazil, with much strictly scientific information, add to the solid and enduring qualities of the work.

The "we four," whose adventures on a European trip form the staple of the remaining volume on our present list, are four Philadelphia ladies, who, languishing for something to do, after the exhibition of 1876 had exhausted its power to entertain them, set out for England and the continent by themselves, on an independent expedition. They visited England, Scotland, and Ireland, France, Switzerland, and Germany, and one of them now tells the story of their adventures and observations in a measurably entertaining way, but without any great departure from the method and quality of the traditional book of travels.

A Ride in Egypt. By W. J. Loftie. [Macmillan & Co. \$2.50.] Mr. Loftie's very pleasant book relates, strictly speaking, to an excursion from Siout to Luxor, undertaken by the author and three friends in the January of last year, but it includes as well some entertaining notes en route from England to the East, and a number of instructive chapters on Cairo and its environs. The "Ride" proper, which was taken mostly on donkey-back, conducted the party a little aside from the hackneyed track, and to some of the less well-known points of archaeological interest, notably to the ruins of This, or Thinis, claimed by modern Egyptologists as the cradle of ancient monarchy. Nothing

fresher or more entertaining on the subject of Egypt has appeared for a long time back than this lightly touched but well-considered volume. Mr. Loftie gives us much that is curious as well as entertaining with regard to antiquities, history, and the humors of the road; and makes a little gentle fun of the school, headed by Mr. Piazza Smith, which professes to have discovered so much of the secret of the great Pyramid; and he deserves special credit for his forcible and manly exposure of the misdoings and misgovernment of the Khedive, who was at that time still the shielded pet of English stockholders, and of the terrible results of his mal-administration as evidenced by the Felah famine.