

fessorial squad — Bradley, Herford, Dowden, Walter Raleigh, Elton, and Saintsbury." The critical gods of Mr. Bennett's idolatry, it is conveyed, are Pierre Bayle, Sainte-Beuve, and Taine, and we are to infer that his dissatisfaction with their English brethren of the craft is the fruit of exquisitely laborious hours devoted by him to "the voluminous and consistently admirable works" of these astonishing Frenchmen. The author of "Literary Taste and How to Acquire It" unhesitatingly shutting the gates of mercy on Hazlitt, Coleridge, Arnold, and Company—what a theme for the pencil of Max!

Mr. Bennett gravely disapproves of Professor Saintsbury. Indeed he pronounces a major excommunication against him because of his style. George Saintsbury's prose, to be sure, is no more impeccable than Arnold Bennett's. On the whole, it would be unwise to prescribe the Saintsbury style as a model for youthful aspirants to distinction in the other harmony. One must accustom oneself to the Saintsbury weakness for parentheses and for the piling of clause upon clause. And the neophyte will have difficulty at first in appreciating his author's indulgence in remote and obscure allusion. Yet, in the mass, this prose convinces, and a prolonged attention to Professor Saintsbury's writing will make it clear that his style is a unique personal instrument of expression, extraordinarily animated and persuasive. Indeed in the best pages of these volumes his English overflows with life and not seldom rises to a height of glowing imaginative eloquence.

Almost everything here has already appeared in print. This collection, however, harvests and renders easily accessible nearly all the significant

THE COLLECTED SAINTSBURY

By Henry A. Lappin

FIFTEEN years ago Arnold Bennett, in one of his vivacious "Jacob Tonson" notes in "The New Age", expressed a yearning "to have a large homogeneous body of English literary criticism to read at." "I should be obliged", he wrote, "to anyone who would point out to me where such a body of first-rate literary criticism is to be found." Hazlitt, he declared, "didn't know enough." Coleridge? "Well, Coleridge has his comprehensible moments, but they are few." With Lamb, intimates Mr. Bennett, the trouble was that he gave up to the India House what was meant for mankind. Matthew Arnold "with study and discipline might perhaps have been a great critic"; unhappily, poor Matthew was "provincial". Turning to survey with baleful eye the ranks of contemporary practitioners of the art, the commentator observes with frigid finality that he has "no hesitation in declassing the whole pro-

minor criticism which has come from the veteran's pen in the last five and forty years. We miss the brilliant and comprehensive Britannica article on Madame de Sévigné, quite the best general introduction in English to its subject. May we hope for its inclusion in the volume of French essays at the forthcoming publication of which the preface hints? And where is the delightful essay on Longfellow—of all brief treatments of this poet the freshest and most discriminating—which was originally published as an introduction to the "Selections" in the "Golden Poets" series?

There is hardly space here to do more than indicate the contents of this collected edition. The first volume contains appreciations and criticisms of Crabbe, Hogg, Sydney Smith, Jeffreys, Hazlitt, Moore, Leigh Hunt, De Quincey, Southey, Cobbett, Susan Ferrier, and Fanny Burney; of Lockhart, Praed, Borrow, Peacock, Landor, Hood, and his half forgotten fellow humorists Hook, Barham, and Maginn. In the second volume are reprinted the contents of "Corrected Impressions", which contains the critic's ultimate verdicts upon the major Victorians. Here also is reprinted the remarkable study of Trollope's entire work, recently contributed to an English Association volume. This division of the collection provides the advocate of the Victorians with a veritable arsenal of weapons for their defense. Volume the third assembles a variety of discourses upon such subjects as "The Historical Novel", "Modern English Prose", and "The Cookery of Grouse and Partridge". The two jewels of this volume are the papers on "The Permanent and the Temporary in Literature" and "Twenty Years of Reviewing". The latter should pro-

vide the jaded reviewer with a new lease of vitality for the prosecution of his uneasy trade. If Mr. Bennett still hungers and thirsts after "a large homogeneous body etc.", here it is, Saintsbury's Plenty!

The man whose splendid passion for his art and unremitting industry in the practice of it has filled these twelve hundred pages, written, as it were, "in the intervals of business", is as English as one of Trollope's or Marshall's clayey squires. One must therefore make lenient and good humored allowance for his John Bullish prejudices. His spiritual independence is as resolute and sturdy as that of Cobbett or Hazlitt; and more than any English critic he resembles Hazlitt in pertinacity of judgment and decisive insight. Behind every sentence from his pen, as from Hazlitt's, we feel the throb of a personal energy. Yet his critical range is wider than that of any English book taster past or present. His massive learning and manysided sensibility compel our veneration hardly less than the intellectual vigor of appreciation which has constantly urged him to draw out the soul and truth from book after book throughout the whole territory of half a dozen literatures, ancient and modern. As far removed from pedantry as far from dilettantism, he has concerned himself for fifty years with the details of literary investigation, and his accuracy has never once degenerated into pettiness. In truth no living critic has communicated a more contagious enthusiasm for what is noble in great literature and great men.

In the essay on Lockhart our author has set forth, as follows, the characteristics which are most wanting in criticism, biographical and literary, at the present day: ". . . sobriety of

style and reserve of feeling, coupled with delicacy of intellectual appreciation and æsthetic sympathy, a strong and firm creed in matters political and literary, not excluding that catholicity of judgment which men of strong belief frequently lack, and, above all the faculty of writing like a gentleman without writing like a mere gentleman." As an enumeration of the merits of George Saintsbury himself this could not be bettered.

The Collected Essays and Papers of George Saintsbury, 1875—1920. Three volumes.
E. P. Dutton and Co.