

BIOGRAPHY AND REMINISCENCES.

On the eighteenth of this month Dr. Lyman Abbott attained the age of eighty, and he looks back upon sixty years' activity as preacher, editor, author, and lecturer. That period, rich in experience and teeming with associations of many kinds, furnishes matter for a goodly volume of five hundred pages, with the little distinctive but always alluring title, "Reminiscences" (Houghton). The son of Jacob Abbott, familiar to our childhood by reason of his "Rollo Books" and his "Lucy Books," and the nephew of John S. C. Abbott, dear to our somewhat later years because of his entrancing "History of Napoleon Bonaparte," the author of these retrospections cannot fail to appeal to our interest, and his chapters are indeed of that anecdotal, genially personal, ripely reflective, and, not least of all, moralizing and sermonizing quality which was looked for with confident expectation. Men and events of importance are introduced in every chapter, and the whole is a thesaurus of variously interesting reading. Portraits and other illustrations abound, and an unusually full index closes the book.

In a "foreword" to his "Memories of India" (David McKay), Sir Robert Baden-Powell, distinguished military officer and head of the Boy Scout Movement, says: "Perhaps the only redeeming point about these 'Memories' is that they are largely extracted from diaries and letters which were not written with the idea of anyone ever seeing them except my mother. To some extent they tell directly against me, since they show me to have been just the ordinary silly young ass who enjoyed senseless ragging, was fond of dogs and horses, and thought very little as he went through the ordinary every-day experience of a subaltern in India. There is nothing very romantic or very exciting about them, and there is much that is silly, but at the same time such things have, I think, seldom been set down in writing just as they occurred to one at the time." But one must not be led astray by this English air of ostentatious irresponsibility; for the young officer was evidently doing a lot of hard working and clear thinking all the time. The topics treated range from "The Afghan War" to "Lemon Pudding and Mustard," through every conceivable intermediary subject. The author has a vivacious pen, and the ubiquitous black-and-white illustrations bear witness to a ready and gifted pencil, as do the eighteen colored plates also.

In her eighty-fifth year Mrs. Amelia E. Barr publishes the reflections and counsels and placid retrospections of her serene old age, under the title, "Three Score and Ten" (Appleton). Why she did not make it "Four Score and Five" she does not explain, but the book supplements her recent autobiography in a manner very acceptable to those interested in her spiritual experiences as distinguished from the more stirring outward events of her busy and fruitful life. That her

faith in the things unseen shows itself here and there in her pages as something akin to spiritualism, need trouble only the carnally minded; it is all beautiful and significant as she puts it before us with a sort of noble unreserve. Should any harsh critic of her book as a whole object that she had given us her best wine first, in her autobiography, and that here we have little more than the rinsings of the bottle, her admirers might fitly retort, "Is not the gleanings of the grapes of Ephraim better than the vintage of Abiezer?"

The "Heroes of the Nations" series (Putnam), a venture which for some time has provided an ever-growing collection of scholarly and readable biographies of the more prominent characters of history, seems to have come to a close. Two recent biographical studies, "Alfred the Truth-teller" by Miss Bertha Lees, and "Isabel of Castile" by Miss Ierne Plunket, which seem to have been originally planned for this series, have been published in a somewhat different form and without the serial title. The new volumes are larger and more attractive, and have no footnotes; otherwise the contents are of the same general type as in the earlier volumes. Miss Plunket's biography of Queen Isabel is in every way worthy of a place in any series that aims to record the achievements of great men and women. Isabel of Castile is a person of great importance not only for the history of Spain but of the modern world as well. Her marriage to Ferdinand of Aragon made possible the creation of the Spanish monarchy, which for a hundred years was the greatest power in the world. The subject of Isabella's career is one that readily lends itself to eulogistic treatment; but the author cannot be charged with having given the strenuous queen greater praise than her deeds have earned for her. Forty-five excellent illustrations, chiefly portraits, and a map of the Spanish peninsula in the fifteenth century, add materially to the interest and value of the work.

Good company and good anecdotes are to be found in plenty between the covers of Mr. Alfred Capper's reminiscent volume, "A Rambler's Recollections and Reflections" (Scribner). For thirty years and more Mr. Capper has been a public entertainer, and has appeared as such before most of the royalties of Europe, not to mention the nobility, gentry, and common people. He is a thought-reader, and though he confesses he does not know how he does them, he has the reputation of doing some very extraordinary things at his entertainments, about which and about the celebrated men and women he has met in his professional journeyings he writes in a manner that few will fail to find interesting. His reminiscences are of the sort that the late Marshall P. Wilder and Mr. Weedon Grossmith have so successfully offered to their willing readers. The author's portrait and other illustrations are inserted.

The reader of Mr. Poultney Bigelow's "Prussian Memories" (Putnam) might be tempted to accuse the author of discursiveness, were it not that the latter has disarmed such criticism by a frank avowal of his intention to be garrulous. His book

is disjointed, gossippy, at times irrelevant, but altogether delightful. Mr. Bigelow has that proper sense of humor which consists in seeing things (including one's self) in their true proportions. Though he is a cosmopolitan globe-trotter, who has lived long in Germany and loved it, he acknowledges that the English-speaking world is his home. Mr. Bigelow's acquaintance with Prussia began in 1864, when at eight years of age he was put into a boarding-school at Bonn. His friendship with William II was formed a little later, when the boys became playmates at Potsdam; it lasted until the publication in 1896 of Mr. Bigelow's "History of the German Struggle for Liberty," which gave offence to the imperial family pride and self-esteem. The sprightly character of these reminiscences is greatly enhanced by the author's pungent style.

Fishing and finance, chasing the elusive dollar in Wall Street and the wild buffalo on the western plains, amassing and losing successive fortunes, and between whiles yielding to the call of the wild—such have been the lifelong activities of Mr. Anthony W. Dimock, as narrated by him with much vivacity in "Wall Street and the Wilds" (Outing Co.). Between a New England boyhood as the son of a country parson, and the vicissitudes of a Wall Street financier dealing in millions and controlling steamship companies and telegraph lines, the contrast is sharp enough to satisfy anybody; and indeed the whole story is one of ups and downs, varied by the wholesome delights of life in the open. It is a remarkable record and an absorbingly interesting one, enlivened to the eye by numerous camera views, some of them the product of the author's own skill as a photographer, in which capacity he is said to have been the first to achieve success in photographing live wild animals.

A distinguished Vermonter, son and grandson of eminent Vermonters, is introduced to the reader in the "Life, Diary, and Letters of Oscar Lovell Shafter, Associate Justice Supreme Court of California, January 1, 1864, to December 31, 1868." The book is further described as "a daughter's tribute to a father's memory," and is "edited for Emma Shafter-Howard by Flora Haines Loughhead." The subject of the biography was born in 1812 and died in 1873, so that to younger readers this chronicle will seem almost like ancient history. But it is related almost wholly in the first person, and hence is not without vitality. A long list of "decisions written by Judge Shafter" is appended. Portraits and other illustrations are interspersed. Mr. John J. Newbegin of San Francisco publishes the book.