

## Literature.

—"The Russian Empire," by John Geddie, author of "Lake Regions of Central Africa," is a volume of unique interest. Russia is so bulky, colossal, complicated, it has such a diversity of race, scenery, climate, civilization, and yet such a massive uniformity and immobility, and it is approaching such a crisis in its history! Tourists may travel all over it. Explorers have penetrated its remotest corners. There are signs in it of a national literature. But the tillers of its soil until a few years ago were serfs, and are far behind the peasantry of the other Christian countries of Europe. Its people generally are only half conscious of their rights or grievances. Its military bureaucracy is fearfully corrupt. Its wild political dreamers are desperately bent on the destruction of law and order. What will be the issue? As a Frenchman says, there rises here an immense note of interrogation. This book attempts to show, especially from the history of the last two centuries, how the dominions of the Czar have reached their present vast proportions. It goes back to the province of Novgorod, the cradle of Russian nationality ten centuries ago, and to the old city of Smolensk with its "ruinous tempests of war." It finds in Kiev the birthplace of Russian religion and literature—still beautiful Kiev with its modern University, though not so modern in aspect as go-ahead Kharkov. It describes Poland and its dismemberment in 1795, thinking that we have not heard the last of the Polish question, Warsaw, the third city in population, in spite of its misfortunes, the Jews of Russia, numbering about three millions, the vanishing Lithuanians, the once Jesuit now Jewish University of Vilna. It takes us along the mighty river Volga with its bewildering channels—a thousand miles greater than the Danube, showing how it molded the commercial and political development of Russia, until Peter the Great by his herculean struggles dragged it away from its "moping seclusion" in the Volga forests into the light of modern progress. It takes Moscow to be the most remarkable and interesting of the cities of Russia, and describes this ancient capital of the Czars as now rebuilt around the Kremlin. Passing to country towns it gives the following portents:

Great political and economic movements—war, emancipation, the development of trade, the spread of education, the propagation of revolutionary ideas, have been long working like a strong ferment below the seemingly rigid forms of Russian society. \* \* \* Socialist theories under various disguises, especially that negation of all religious belief and denial of the individual right of property, known as Nihilism, have spread, by some law of contraries, with amazing swiftness and secrecy through all ranks of a society heretofore distinguished for the blind intensity of its faith, and its deep reverence for the traditions of the past. The people are becoming infected by a suspicion that their temporal and spiritual guides have been misleading them. No class of society seems free of the taint of disaffection. The army and the clergy, the nobles and the peasantry, the women more audaciously than the men, even officers of the imperial household and members of the body-guard of the Czar, have been shown, or at least suspected, to have taken part in the desperate and determined conspiracies against the life of the Sovereign and the order of Russian society.

Of the ill-paid White priests and their Black brethren, the strong monastic orders, with whom it is "still the age of miracles;" of the Cossacks and Kalmuks, and poor ugly Finns with their quaint costumes; of Russian mines, fish, furs, timber, leather; of the Arctic Paradise at Archangel in Lapland, with the myriads of acute mosquitoes that smell the blood of an Englishman with keen delight and are intolerable pests during the brief hot season of almost perpetual day; of the magic of the Lapps; of St. Petersburg, magnificent city of palaces and bridges on the wide stream of the Neva, with Isaac's Place and the statue of Peter the Great as its center, or rather Admiralty Square and the Winter Palace, with the new cathedral of St. Isaac as the great fane of the orthodox Greek faith, though not so high or venerable as that of St. Peter and St. Paul; its bazars, markets, promenades and streets "a world too wide" if the city has already reached its meridian; of the Baltic provinces whose most important seats are at Reval and Riga; of new Russia in the Crimea around Sevastopol; of the great mountain range between Europe and Asia; the marvelous Caucasus, with its capital Tiflis and the twin-mountain Ararat as the point of junction of Russia, Turkey and Persia; of Russia in Asia; sublime, winter-ridden Siberia, with scarcely one inhabitant to a square mile, yet larger than all Australia or Europe, and with the richest products, its free settlers strangely mixed with exiled convicts, its famous "north-east passage" to India, the secret of its "frozen sea," never discovered until 1878, when the little steamer *Vega* from Gothenberg was frozen in, near the open water of Behring Strait, and Nordenskiöld the Finlander solved the prob-

lem of three hundred years; of the undefined frontier between Russia and China along which there are so many insurrections; of the Siberian winter for the trapper and hunter; its swamps, thaws, birds, bears, seals, reindeer, sturgeons, mammoths, its outdoor sports and wigwam interiors and impenetrable forests, its *shamanism* or belief in the black arts of magic; of Kamschatka and the Pacific shores, where the ill-fated "*Jeannette*" was sent in 1879; of Russian Turkestan and the shores of the Sea of Aral, of which we have had only glimpses since the days of Alexander of Macedon; of the latest conquests of Russia in Central Asia, the new town of Tashkend, the old city of Samarcand, with the tomb of the Tartar conqueror Timur, and the mosque of the "Living King," and the new Russian outpost of Askabad, a stupendous fastness, the best available strategic base, if Russia ever intends to invade Hindustan—our author makes fitting mention. He hopes that Britain will never have a hostile meeting with the young Czar in that "Key of India." His book is well supplied with maps. It has, too, a good Index. (London and New York: T. Nelson & Sons.)

—"Helen of Troy," by A. Lang, tells the story of the unhappy queen in six books. It is emphatically the history of Helen herself. She is represented as a pure woman, faithful wife, and loving mother; and as the unwilling tool of the wanton Aphrodite. By her will she is forced to leave her loved husband, child and home, to follow the fortunes of Paris. One boon is granted her—that of oblivion. The knowledge of her sin, and the memory of all she is leaving behind are buried in a deep forgetfulness. For ten long years she lived the wife of the shepherd prince, knowing naught of former ties. At the end of this time memory returns, and all the horrors of remorse and self-abasement are hers. The object of the story-teller is evidently to do justice to the character of the much-maligned queen,—to show that her sinful life was not of her own choosing. The versification is smooth, the language euphonious and the style marred by few of those forced rhymes which of late have been far too much the fashion. "Helen of Troy" is not a great poem; but it is a very pleasing one. Its thoughts are clean, its language pure, and its whole tendency good. Its descriptions of nature are often beautiful, and its delineation of human feeling sometimes extremely touching. (New York: Scribners. Chicago: Jansen & McClurg.)

—"The Idyls of Norway and Other Poems" is a collection of the pleasant verses of Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, consisting of the simple and spirited idyls, a number of graceful sonnets, several memorial poems, Calpurnia, a tale of the Christians under Maxentius Cæsar, and some other poems. The ease with which Mr. Boyesen uses his English, an acquired language, is certainly remarkable, but the success is hardly so complete in his verse as in his prose writings. This volume has the same charms that we find in the stories, marred, however, by some faults of rhyme and rhythm. (New York: Scribners. Chicago: Jansen & McClurg.)

—We have received "The Cambridge Book of Poetry," compiled by Charlotte Fiske Bates, of Cambridge. The volume has a fine steel portrait of Longfellow, and sixteen full-page illustrations from original designs by Fredericks, Church, Dielman, Taylor, Harry Fenn and others, engraved by Geo. T. Andrews. In many respects it is as fine a collection of poems as we have ever seen issued from any press. Miss Bates has proved herself possessed of a sensitive and admirable judgment in her selection. The indices are full and complete in every respect, leaving nothing to be desired in this particular. The authors are placed alphabetically, and all the extracts from each author are to be found in one section. The press-work is almost perfect, and the binding handsome. (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell.)

—Rev. Wm. Salter, D.D., pastor of the Congregational church in Burlington, Iowa, has prepared a little manual of the "Words of the Lord Jesus" for responsive reading in the home, the school and the church. The arrangement is chronological, the text is from the revisions of 1611 and 1881, except in a few places where the sense can be more clearly conveyed by other language; and a few of the "Words" of local and personal allusion are omitted. As the Psalms are so almost exclusively used in responsive worship, this little manual will introduce a pleasant and profitable variety. (Chicago: F. H. Revell.)

—"How to Succeed," is the title of a series of essays edited, with an introduction, by Rev. Lyman Abbott, D.D. They take up such callings as those of a minister, physician, civil-engineer, artist, merchant, farmer, writer, politi-

cian, etc., and are written by such men as Senators Edmunds and Bayard, Rev. John Hall, D.D., Dr. Willard Parker, W. H. Gibson, G. B. Loring, T. A. Edison, E. P. Roe, and Dr. Lyman Abbott. The suggestions given are valuable, and the book is a good one for young men. (New York: Putnams. Chicago: Jansen & McClurg.)

—In "The Little Pilgrim," a reprint from *Macmillan's Magazine*, the author attempts to lift the veil of the future and picture the scenes of the spirit life. The little maiden enters by death into the spirit realm, and learns from conversation with the citizens what are the joys and duties of their life. It opens with an interest not sustained, partly from the inherent difficulty of the subject, partly from the author's inability to handle it. Still the treatment from first to last is exquisitely delicate and sensitive, marked by an earnest and reverent spirit. (Boston: Roberts Bros.)

—"Fifteen Decisive Battles of the World," a new edition of an old and valuable work, is an account of those marked conflicts which constituted crises in history, beginning with Marathon, and ending with Waterloo. It gives a concise synopsis of each battle, with many concurrent historical facts. The paragraphs are numbered to accord with the "World's Index of Knowledge." (Chicago: Standard Book Company.)

—"The Cleverdale Mystery, or the Machine and its Wheels," by W. A. Wilkins, is, as the name suggests, a political novel. Its aim is to reveal the moral rottenness characterizing political circles in the Empire State. We wish we could speak as warmly of the details of the work as of its general purpose, but its excellence begins and ends there. (New York: Fords, Howard & Hulbert.)

—"The very Words of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," is the title of a little book, in which the words of our Savior are grouped together according to subjects, King James's Version being used generally, although the Revised Version is also used whenever it throws fresh or stronger light upon the words. (London: Henry Frowde.)

—"The Grammar of the Modern Spanish Language," by Wm. I. Knapp, professor in Yale College, is a book the plan of which is so simple that it is claimed the learner can master all the essentials in a little more than eight weeks, at five recitations each. The lessons are arranged for an ordinary college class, and the book every way is a great improvement over any Spanish grammar we have seen. (Boston: Ginn, Heath & Co.)

—"Unforgiven," by Miss Anna Ellis, seems to be a first literary effort. The description of the heroine gives one the impression of an indistinctly-imagined character, overloaded with gifts and graces of mind and person. There is nothing harmful in the book, and the author may, probably, in the future, do something better. (St. Louis: R. P. Studley & Co.)

—The numbers of *St. Nicholas* for the year make the usual two volumes, tastefully bound in red and black and gold, and filled to the brim with good things in pictures, stories, poems, articles in history, science, biography, art, literature, and many other things both grave and gay. The successive volumes of this magazine will form a young folks's library in themselves. (New York: Scribners. Chicago: Jansen & McClurg.)

—Two more of Putnam's Art Hand-Books, edited by Susan N. Carter, are "Sketching in Water Colors from Nature," by Thomas Hutton, and "Drawing in Black and White" by Mrs. Carter. Both teach the elementary principles, and will be very helpful to beginners, or to those who are attempting to work without a teacher. (Chicago: Jansen & McClurg.)

—The tenth of Appleton's Home Books is "Home Occupations," by Janet E. Ruutz-Rees, and gives directions for working in leather, tissue-paper, wax, card-board, beads, etc., how to preserve flowers, grasses and sea-weeds; how to do spatter-work, make picture frames, scrap-books, and many other things which will help to beautify the home. (Chicago: Jansen & McClurg.)

—"New Games for Parlor and Lawn," by Geo. B. Bartlett, is a book which every family of children will want. All of the games are not new, a few of the old favorites appearing in a new dress. There is material enough in the book to make the pleasure of many a winter evening. (New York: Harpers. Chicago: Jansen & McClurg.)

—In "The Knock About Club Along-Shore," by C. A. Stevens, we have the account of a trip from Boston to Nova Scotia, Labrador and Greenland, with the adventures by the way; bear-hunting, seal-fishing, and the like. There

are too many gaps in the narrative filled with attempted jollity, which is merely tiresome. Still the incidents of the voyage may interest the boys, who will find the abundant illustrations a pleasing feature. (Boston: Estes & Lauriat.)

—"Three Vassar Girls Abroad," by Lizzie W. Champney, is a bright, entertaining description of a summer vacation spent in France, Spain and Portugal. One wishes Mrs. Arnold and the gallants she discovers were less prominent, but the girls are intelligent and agreeable. The book is profusely illustrated. (Boston: Estes & Lauriat.)