

Minor Notices.

There are few subjects more attractive just now, than those which touch upon the arrangement and decoration of houses. Since Mr. Eastlake's book appeared in England, and Mr. Cook's "The House Beautiful," was published in New York, there has been a great change in household taste. Rugs that were made gay with pictures from natural history have given place to the work of oriental looms, and we are no longer afraid of stepping on the tail of a white Bengal tiger, or crushing the neck of a blue swan. People began to see, some five years ago, that there should be a fitness in household things, and to believe that a display of common-sense in furnishing a dwelling is better in the long run than a display of wealth. Who does not remember with horror the window-curtains of ten years ago that were only fashionable when they lay some two or three feet on the floor? If taste has not improved since those days it is not for want of books on the subject. The last that has appeared* is by Robert W. Edis, an English architect of repute, who delivered the Cantor lectures before the Society of Arts in London last year. These lectures form the groundwork of the present volume, but they have been greatly extended for the purposes of the book. Mr. Edis confines his remarks to town houses, for the reason that "those who live in towns are to a certain extent more dependent on the art work in their houses for any pleasure or charm of eye" than those who live in the country. His hints are, in the main, practical, and he argues that it costs no more to have good furniture and decoration than it does to have bad. In proof of this he quotes the prices of many articles. As his book is English, and the shops to which he directs his readers are in London, this is of little practical use to Americans, except, perhaps, to those who want to send abroad for their furniture—a plan few would adopt when better things can be had here. There are points on which we must question Mr. Edis's taste, such, for instance, as his advice to paint the stone floors of hallways if they are intrinsically ugly. Better ugly stones than paint. Such a thing is as repugnant as the whitewashed tree-trunks that stand guard around farm-houses. The book is illustrated with numerous designs. There is no attempt to make artistic pictures; they aim merely to illustrate the descriptions.

No one who reads Lady Florence Dixie's "Across Patagonia,"† can doubt her ability to serve in South Africa as war correspondent of the London *Morning Post*. She certainly has the courage and the tireless energy necessary for the position, and few trained correspondents wield a brighter pen. Nothing escapes her acquisitive eye, and she knows just what part of her experiences the public will find the most entertaining. The drawbacks most ladies would find in acting as war correspondent would only serve as stimulants to Lady Florence. Out of the material to be found in peaceful Patagonia she has made a delightful book. There were plenty of hardships to be endured, but she bore them like a man, and counted it a luxury to lie on a blanket with a saddle for a pillow. Why should a lady, particularly one of rank and fashion, want to rough it in a strange land? many will ask. Lady Florence answers this question in her first chapter. The duties of rank and fashion palled upon her. She wanted to breathe the air of a new country, and share the excitements of its life. To be sure, she rode to hounds in Scotland; but that was child's play compared to chasing the guanaco and the ostrich across their native pampas. And then, in Scotland, Lady Florence rode in petticoats, while in Patagonia she rode in trousers.

It is long since Dr. Johnson advised whomsoever would perfect his style to study the writings of Addison. No better advice could be given to the essayist of the present day; not that no

later writer has successfully departed from the forms of the *Spectator* but none has designed a model that can be adopted with less harm to the writer's originality. It is the purity of the English, the simplicity of the imagery, the easy elegance of movement that give Addison's style its charm, and one might copy these with sedulous care without sacrificing his own individuality. It is not to the would-be essayist, however, but to the general reader that Dr. Green addresses this handy volume*—the outgrowth of an affection that dates from the author's boyhood, when, with *Spectator* in hand, he lingered beneath the trees that border "Addison's Walk," at Magdalen College. In an introduction that sketches the state of literature in England during the period that followed the Revolution of 1688, he tells why he confined his task to the reproduction of the lighter essays of Addison. His course would seem to need no defence. "My aim," he says, "has been to give what was still living in his work, and whatever their interest may be to readers of tastes like my own, I feel that to the bulk of readers his politics and his criticisms are dead. And for the same reason, but at still greater risk of censure, I have given none of his moral or theological essays." We see nothing to censure in a principle of selection that gives us the best and only the best of the volumes edited.

Mrs. Lamb's bulkier work† is in no sense a rival of Knickerbocker's "History of New York." She views the subject from another standpoint than Washington Irving's; and though her style never suggests that of the genial humorist, it is light enough to recommend her book to readers who take little interest in archæology. In the comparatively short life of the metropolis there have been picturesque scenes and striking incidents enough to brighten the pages of any chronicle; and these have been made the objects of Mrs. Lamb's research. In her labor of love, she has had facilities not enjoyed by all her predecessors for obtaining innumerable facts concerning the rise and fall of New York families; and, however slight the historical importance of such chronicles may be, they belong to a class of literature that wins more readers than are caught by more pretentious treatises. The appearance of these two huge volumes in half the libraries of New York, is only a question of time.

* *Decoration and Furniture of Town Houses. A Series of Cantor Lectures, delivered before the Society of Arts in 1880. Amplified and enlarged. By Robert W. Edis. New York: Scribner & Welford.*
† *Across Patagonia. By Lady Florence Dixie. With Illustrations from Sketches by Julius Beerbohm. New York: R. Worthington.*