

Literary and Biographical Essays. A Volume of Papers by the Way. By Charles William Pearson. Boston: Sherman, French & Co. \$1.25.

Literary and Biographical Essays forms a first of three volumes by the same author, all treating in popular manner subjects suited to the lecture platform. While the essays lean a little to the pulpit treatment, they are wholly and wholesomely adapted to the general reader who may happen to take a lively interest in the best literature of our time. Following three topics—"Poetry as It Should Be Defined," "Poetry as It Was a Century Ago in America," and the "Art of Verse-making"—is a treatise on the English language, that language which, in the making, was a form of poetizing. The author thinks the language is yet far from finished, and incidentally he enters the field which Mr. Carnegie has made his own, of putting quite to sleep certain dumb consonants, which, like the dumb, appeal too much to the eye, as he seems to think, and get much in the way of little boys and of foreigners, who, but for these dumb stumbling blocks, would take kindly to English as the universal language. This theme is, however, with him only "by the way." He treats very handsomely and *in extenso* Alexander Pope—"a name never to be pronounced by me," he says, "without reverence," tho many in these days find little to reverence in the little man of Twickenham, and none would think of writing in his manner. Other themes are "Macaulay," "Tennyson," "Browning," "Ruskin," "James Martineau," "Longfellow," "Washington," and our "Lincoln." There is room enough for genuine reverence among these names, and the author does not spare the honors. The poets, particularly—both the art and the heart of them—are considered from all points of view, and the viewpoints illustrated in felicitous quotations in great abundance. The unversed but willing reader will find much to enlighten him as to a successful pursuit of the art of verse-making.

There is here and there an oversight in the proofreading—or was it a malicious moment in the mood of the printer's "devil" that left the following sentence unreconstructed?—"Pope was the favor-

ite poet of the greatest of metaphysicians, Kant, and the eminent Scotch professor of moral philosophy asserts that the 'Essay on Man' is 'the noblest specimen of philosophical poetry which our language affords,'" etc. There is nothing in the context to tell us who that eminent Scotch metaphysician was, if not Kant, and Kant, it is generally supposed, "never in the whole course of his life traveled above seven miles from his beloved Königsberg." John Milton, too, would have shed bitter tears over that unlucky "do" that has crept into the marvelous lines of his "Nativity":

"Apollo from his shrine
Can do no more divine
With hollow shriek the steep of Delphos
leaving."

Mr. Pearson, with his fine sense of true poetry, would, next to Milton himself, have shrunk from the "do"-ings of the "devil."