

# The Book-Buyer's Guide

*The reviews in this department of THE CRITIC, though short, are not perfunctory. They are as carefully written as though they appeared in the body of the magazine. Books on special subjects are sent to specialists, and often as many as a dozen different writers review the various books. Among those who contribute regularly are Cornelia Atwood Pratt, Rev. Charles James Wood, Prof. N. S. Shaler, Admiral S. B. Luce, Fennette Barbour Perry, Gerald Stanley Lee, Christian Brinton, Ruth Putnam, P. G. Hubert, Jr., Carolyn Shipman, Edith M. Thomas, Dr. William Elliot Griffiths, and the editors.*

## ART

**Baldry—Hubert von Herkomer, R.A.** A Study and a Biography. By A. L. Baldry. Illustrated. Bell, London; Macmillan, New York. \$15.00.

There seems at first thought to be a shade of discrepancy between the art of Professor von Herkomer and the splendor of this volume wherein his æsthetic effort finds record. Yet few men of his age, or of any age, have touched creative art at so many points. Professor von Herkomer has painted in oils and water-colors and on enamel, has devoted considerable energy to etching and lithography, has modelled in relief friezes and panels, and has designed decorative ornaments. Besides being a teacher of painting and drawing and a lecturer on art, he has figured as composer, playwright, and amateur actor. In certain of his portraits and in much of his work in black and white Professor von Herkomer displays qualities of which the main body of his production contains few hints. Throughout his life he seems, however, to have been the victim of a universality which has helped him to do many things well but none supremely well, and Mr. Baldry's volume reflects admirably this many-sided mediocrity. While the text of the book is not illuminative, Mr. Baldry writes with discretion of his subject, and in point of letter-press and illustration the volume is an enduring joy. None, indeed, can but agree that German romantic sentimentality grafted on British soil here receives its due.

**Gibson—A Widow and her Friends.** Drawn by Charles Dana Gibson. Russell. \$5.00. It need only be said of "A Widow and her Friends" that she has already made many friends among the admirers of Mr. Gibson's manner. This is the sixth in Mr. Gibson's regular series of collected drawings, and it differs from its predecessors, at least—numerically.

## BIOGRAPHY

**Brown—Biographical Dictionary of the United States.** Edited by John Howard Brown. In six volumes. Vols. I-IV. Illustrated. Lamb & Co. \$7.00 per vol.

Not the least merits of the present work are that it records facts, and not opinions, and that, while it covers every figure of national importance in the past, it also treats men and women of contemporaneous moment. The biographical sketches are short and concise, and, though errors are inevitable, their proportion is comparatively slight. While making no pretence of doing for America what the late George M. Smith accomplished for English biography, these volumes perhaps foreshadow a

similar work, and unquestionably are, in themselves, an advance upon previous undertakings.

**Lee—Dictionary of National Biography.** Edited by Sidney Lee. Supplement. Vol. I, Abbott—Childers. Vol. II, Chippendale—Hoste. Macmillan. \$3.75.

The initial volume of this supplement is notable through the inclusion of a Memoir of George M. Smith, the founder and projector of the Dictionary of National Biography, from the pen of its present editor, Mr. Sidney Lee. The general contents of the two volumes are of particular interest, covering, of course, men who have only recently passed away—diverse and absorbing spirits, such as John Bright, Robert Browning, Aubrey Beardsley, Bishop Creighton, Freeman, Froude, Gladstone, and others. These supplementary volumes are uniform with the body of the work and reflect the same admirable qualities and minor defects so ably pointed out in Mr. Havelock Ellis's paper on the Dictionary as a whole in a recent number of this magazine.

**Leonard—Who's Who in America.** A Biographical Dictionary of Notable Living Men and Women of the United States. 1901-1902. Edited by John W. Leonard. Marquis & Co., \$2.75.

The current edition of "Who's Who in America" is, in many essentials, a new work. It is nearly twice the size of its predecessor and includes revisions which greatly increase its scope and purpose.

**Michie—General McClellan.** By Gen. Riter S. Michie. Appleton. \$1.50 net.

This new volume of the "Great Commanders" series was finished by its author, with the exception of the preface and index, only two months before his death in February, 1901. The task was a difficult and delicate one, but in our opinion it has been performed with singular discretion and impartiality. The book may not escape criticism from those who take extreme views on either side of the widely divergent estimates of McClellan's military ability and operations; but the general verdict of unprejudiced readers is likely to accord with that of an accomplished army officer who saw the proof-sheets and pronounces it "absolutely so impartial and just as to possess almost the quality of finality, so far as McClellan's qualities as a commander are concerned."

## FICTION

**Boothby—My Strangest Case.** By Guy Boothby. Page & Co., \$1.50.

Every one knows that all good detective stories are written backwards. Of course the author has casu-

ally to select his crime first, but second, of course, and most important, he selects his dénouement, and the complications which lead up to it, and then he goes back and picks out the antepenultimate complications, and so on back to the theft or murder.

It is to be feared that the author of "My Strangest Case" did not observe the rules of the game. The story reads as though, after selecting his plot, he had failed to begin at the other end, but had instead tried to write forward toward his dénouement. At all events, it is certain that his best attention is centred on the crime, which is both picturesque and weighty, but the rest of the story hangs out in the air like the graduated arm of an old-fashioned pair of hand-scales.