

"This is an elementary book," says Mr. H. P. Adams in the preface to his brief sketch of the

French Revolution (McClurg). "It aims, above all, at making the story clear. Its other purpose, no less important, is to indicate the present state of the chief problems associated with the great Revolution." A book which should really do what Mr. Adams aims to do, within the space which he has allowed himself, would be a notable event; it would be such a book as might be written by a man possessed of the learning of Aulard, the insight of Carlyle, and the constructive and literary talent of, let us say, Mignet. In lieu of first-hand knowledge, Mr. Adams has read "Acton, Sorel, Aulard, Kropotkin, Belloc, and the writers of the Cambridge Modern History." These are all very well in their way, but they are so little agreed in their conceptions of the Revolution that however intelligently one may read them (and Mr. Adams appears to have read them attentively enough) a sketch of the subject "based mainly" on them is almost sure to lack precisely that merit which Mr. Adams seeks to attain, namely, clearness. Certainly one must have not only a pretty good first-hand knowledge of the Revolution, but a considerable appreciation of the influences that have given us such varied interpretations of it, before it is possible to reconcile Aulard, Kropotkin, and the "writers of the Cambridge Modern History." To two parts of Kropotkin, Mr. Adams has apparently added one part of Aulard and one of what college students know best as "Mr. Cambridge." The mixture has been well stirred, and spiced with certain generalizations of the author's own brewing. But the trouble is that the ingredients do not combine, and the result is far from clear. Fortunately, it is no crime to write an unsatisfactory book about the French Revolution; and if "the readers for whom [the book] is intended" are such as like to read about the Revolution without going beyond text books and brief manuals, they will find here, as the author expresses a hope that they may, "something essentially differing from what they can get from the excellent hand books of similar size that exist."