Impressions of Italian cities.

Five years ago this journal noticed Mr. Arthur Symons's volume entitled "Cities," and accorded its author the praise of treating with attractive individualism a commonplace theme. In his latest book, that well-known *littérateur* has brought together such of his writings as he hoped would lay open to his readers the souls of some "Cities of Italy" (Dutton). "And as love, or it may be hate, can alone reveal soul to soul, among human beings, so, it seems to me, the soul of a city will reveal itself only to those who love, or, perhaps, hate it, with a far-sighted emotion." In this frame of mind, which is becoming delightfully familiar and has been so daintily voiced by "Vernon Lee" in her "Genius Loci," Mr. Symons deals with the historic centres of Italian life and culture. Not seldom his treatment becomes purely a consideration of the local manifestation of the art spirit, — as in the pages on Brescia; nor are the sections representing this tendency the least attractive in the book to a reader at all interested in Italian painting. Space forbids the recording of mild protests; but the reviewer happened to spend the same winter in Rome that gave Mr. Symons the basis of his chapters on that ever-beloved mistress of the seven hills, and we have one tiny quarrel: in the course of forty pages our author lovingly describes three sunsets, whereas the glorious softly-shifting lights of those wintry mornings are coldly neglected. And this personal subjective difference may serve to indicate pretty adequately the tone of most of the criticisms we should pass upon the book. It is a volume well worth while, and will be enjoyed by many readers; it will be most valuable and most enjoyable for those who have basked long enough in Italy's smile and learned enough of her nature to compare impressions and to enter upon the little, lovable, silent controversies that add so much flavor to literature of this type.

Hunting for stained glass in France.

In these days of universal travel and of the almost universal writing of travel-books, it is unusual to find an author whose point of view is unique or whose subject-matter is unhackneyed. But these difficult requirements seem to be met by Mr. Charles Hitchcock Sherrill, whose "Stained Glass Tours in France" (John Lane Co.) furnishes the jaded traveller with a new fad which, if it suits his taste, will at once add zest to and direct his wanderings. Mr. Sherrill states the purpose of his book tersely in his "foreword": it provides an answer to the question, "Where does one find good stained glass in France, and how can it most conveniently be seen?" Mr. Sherrill modestly adds that he is "not an authority

on glass — just a lawyer on a holiday," who, having enjoyed his own "stained glass tours" thinks that a "simple touring hand-book" may help other travellers to enjoy theirs. In the interests of simplicity, the glass has been divided into three groups: thirteenth century and earlier, fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and sixteenth century; and for each epoch a tour has been arranged, with a map showing the most convenient order to pursue in visiting the various churches and châteaux. Mr. Sherrill's descriptions of the distinctive windows in each town are simple, non-technical, and interesting. The subject of glass is inextricably associated with the more general one of architecture, but Mr. Sherrill displays a nice sense of proportion in making the necessary connection and yet keeping strictly to his chosen field.

Some literary opinions and examinations.

A dozen essays of varying merit make up the volume of Professor Brander Matthews's "Inquiries and Opinions" (Scribner). Some of them might better have been left to the temporary honor of the popular magazine, to be read and enjoyed and forgotten; others deserve the doubtful permanence given to-day by publication in book form. A short piece of biographical criticism on Mark Twain, which has already served as an introduction to a complete edition of that author's works, aims at giving our greatest American humorist a place in literature among writers of high seriousness, such as Molière and Cervantes, Chaucer and Fielding. If he does not equal these mighty ones, our essayist holds, he belongs to their class, though how far down in the class it is for the future to declare. In this belief a good many admirers of Mark Twain will be ready to concur. The superiority of Poe's detective-stories is shown by comparison with the broken-backed productions of Gaboriau, not to mention the "thrillers" of the ten-cent magazines. It is interesting to note that none of these writers has improved in technique upon Poe, though, as Professor Matthews says in another essay in this volume, the followers usually improve upon the master in this respect. It merely means learning the rules of the game. How well Ibsen has learned these rules in the drama is clearly brought out in the essay on "Ibsen the Playwright." He is a consummate craftsman, chief in his own art, however much he may fall short of those great qualities which distinguish Sophocles and Shakespeare and Molière.

An American's impressions of Poland.

"Poland, the Knight among Nations" (Revell), by Mr. Louis E. Van Norman, is a comprehensive first-hand study of the modern Polish nation, with some account of the history that has made her what she is. Mr. Van Norman visited Poland for the "Review of Reviews." He was treated with signal honors on various public occasions, and he stayed long enough to learn the language, enter into the life and the ideals of the people, and pay visits to their great men, including Sienkiewicz. His impressions of the country make interesting reading, because he is full of his subject and treats it from so many points of view. He takes his title from Victor Hugo's phrase for the rôle Poland has played as militant guardian of the western boundary of European civilization and the Christian faith. The relations of dismembered Poland with her three masters — Russia, Austria, and Prussia — are explained in interesting chapters, which have for their substructure a close analysis of the Polish national character, with its splendid virtues and fatal defects. Several Polish cities are described, including Czenstochowa, "the Mecca of the Poles"; while a chapter entitled "A Voyage over the Steppes" gives a vivid impression of the rural scenery. And to round out the picture there is an account of the great patriot Kosciuszko and of the nation's leading artists, musicians, and writers, as well as of some distinguished Polish-Americans.

English domestic architecture and interior decoration.

An interesting study of domestic architecture in England, principally confined to work of the Gothic and Renascent periods, is presented in the second volume of "In English Homes" (Scribner), a lavishly illustrated quarto for which Mr. Charles Latham furnishes the photographs and Mr. H. Avray Tipping the textual comment. This last consists of an introductory account of the characteristics of the four periods of English home-building, with the emphasis on the two earlier ones, and of full descriptions of the fifty houses with whose interior decoration and furnishings and exterior appearance Mr. Latham's pictures make us familiar. In most cases, also, a good deal of the history of successive owners of the castles and estates is interwoven with the account of the additions and restorations that they made to their property; and in a few instances, — for example, Knebworth House, owned by the Lyttons, — the interesting family associations seem to be the chief reason for describing the mansion. Mr. Tipping promises another volume that shall be devoted to buildings of the classic and modern schools, but there are a few wholly modern houses in this collection; notably Clouds, in Salisbury, the crowning labor of Philip Webb, friend of Rossetti and Morris and architect of Morris's "Red House." The fine quality of Mr. Latham's work as artist-photographer is well-known. For the present volume he furnishes two hundred full-page plates and nearly as many smaller ones. The volume is substantially bound in blue buckram.

A belated book of the Jamestown Exposition.

What appears to be a belated Jamestown Exposition book is "The Old South and the New, from the Earliest Times to the Jamestown Exposition" (John C. Winston Co.). It contains over 600 pages, is printed on heavy white smooth paper, and is profusely illustrated with pictures of Southern people, scenes, and buildings. The text, which contains nothing new, gives an account of Southern history

from the beginning to the present time. It is written in easy style, has many good anecdotes, and deals mainly with the personal and picturesque elements in Southern history. The latter part of the book has much about present conditions, — the race problem, of course, the increasing output of staple crops, the development of mineral and forest wealth, the rise of manufactures and the growth of cities, and finally a history of Southern Expositions. In spite of the fact that in make-up it resembles the subscription book, it is better than most works of that kind, and will probably serve a useful purpose in giving some readers a knowledge of the South that they would not get from other accessible authorities. It is to be regretted that the author, Mr. Charles Morris, includes in his volume the classic myths about slavery and the Southern aristocracy.