LITERATURE.

THE BOOK OF THE WEEK.

The Widow's Mite, and Other Psychic Phenomena. By Isaac K. Funk (Funk and Wagnalls Company, London and New York).

In February, 1903, having casually heard of a lady in Brooklyn who, as a "medium," gave spiritualistic "sittings" to her family and a few invited guests, Dr. Isaac Funk, head of the American publishing firm of Funk & Wagnalls Company, secured, through Mr. I. S. Roney, an employe of that firm, an invitation to attend one of the séances. The lady, who is not a professional medium, claim to be subject to three "controls," or spirits, one representing her deceased son, another a niece named Mamie, who died at seven, and a third George Carroll, the departed friend of a member of the circle. On the night of his visit Dr. Funk had his fill of marvels in the shape of strange objects faintly visible in the dark, voices pitched in every key, mysterious rappings, &c. He attended two further sittings, and at the third the incident occurred which is responsible for the production of this voluminous work of upwards of 500 pages. The male "control," George Carroll, abruptly asked through the medium, "Has anybody here got anything that belonged to the Rev. Ward Beecher?" "I am told by a spirit present," continued George, "that Mr. Beecher, who is not present, is concerned about an ancient coin, 'The Widow's Mite,' which is out of its place, and should be returned." Dr. Funk then remembered having, when compiling the Standard Dictionary nine years before, borrowed from a friend of Beecher's, who died several years ago, a valuable ancient coin, worth some hundreds of dollars. A photograph of the coin had been taken for reproduction in the dictionary. Dr. Funk believed that "The Widow's Mite" had been returned, and said so. He was corrected on this point by George, who declared that the coin was in a drawer in a safe under a lot of papers, but where the safe was the control could not make even a guess. The business manager and the employes generally were sure, when the question was put to them, that the coin had been returned. The coin was found in the publishing office in a drawer in a safe under a lot of papers. The owner, Professor Charles West, had died, and Dr. Funk was in some doubt as to what should be done with the article, whose existence was thus strangely recalled to memory and to light. When, at another séance, the question was put to George, the reply came from Ward Beecher himself, who declared that he was not concerned about the return of the coin, but was only desirous of giving Dr. Funk "a test that would prove the certainty of communication between the two worlds, and that since the aim had been achieved, he cared nothing further about the coin." Mr. Roney, for whose truthfulness the author vouches, was the only person in the circle besides Dr. Funk who was likely to know anything about the widow's mite, and Mr. Roney solemnly declared under affidavit that he was unaware of the presence of the coin in the safe—to which, indeed, it was for some of his business ever to have had access—and with the intricacies of the lock of which he had no acquaintance. Dr. Funk's searching enquiries lead him to dismiss as untenable the theory of fraud; telepathy and clairvoyance he thinks no less open to objection, since if the medium could have read Dr. Funk's mind she must have known to be imprinted upon it an overwhelming belief that the coin had been returned, while the remaining alternative of spirit communication fails to account for the medium being controlled on this occasion by Beecher instead of West, who would be more interested in the fate of what was once his property, and who had in the past "spoken through the same medium." Why, too, was not the "test" completed by an explanation as to what should be done with the coin, whose owner's name was never mentioned by the medium? And why, adds Dr. Funk, if Beecher was desirous of giving a test proof of the existence of a spirit world, was not "something far more worth while communicated?" Unable himself to suggest a possible clue to the mystery, Dr. Funk communicated with leading students of psychic phenomena in different parts of the world, and with all respect to the author it must be stated that their replies furnish the most interesting portion of his volume. Thus, Sir William Crookes, the eminent chemist and psychologist, writes:—

"I have taken no active part in the spiritualistic movement for nearly 25 years, and do not feel that I can do justice to this curious incident by giving an opinion. All I can say is that the incident as related does not differ in principle from many other similar incidents which have come under my notice, and in which I have every confidence that fraud did not play a part."

Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, as perhaps might have been expected, is much more decided. He says:—

Fraud is certainly not a probable solution and coincidence is entirely out of the question. Nor do I think the theory of sub-conscious self can explain this incident. Sub-conscious self is a theory only, and not only not proved, but quite as difficult to prove as the action of the spirits, and more improbable. To me the hypothesis of spirit communication is not only possible, but the only probable solution.

Professor William James, who fills the Chair of Psychology at the Harvard University, regards fraud as "an improbable hypothesis not seriously to be considered;" coincidence to be out of the question in view of the "number of details which coincide," and the theory of the "subconscious self" to be the most tenable explanation, the subconscious mind of the medium being in communication with the subconscious mind of the author, which must have known what the conscious mind was unaware of—that the coin had been returned. "The hypothesis of spirit communication," adds the same authority, "is undoubtedly a possible one, and simpler than any other, provided one supposes the spirits in question to have been tremendously inhibited in their communications. This is a necessary inference from the gaps and guesses which the facts they reported exhibited." In a word, while a very large proportion of the proposed psychologists reject the spirit hypothesis, they include a certain number of eminent men, among them Sir Oliver Lodge, and Professor Richet, of Paris, who readily accord it frank countenance. The author himself is anxious to have it known that he is not a spiritist, even by inclination, but his book bristles with citations from unimpeachable authorities, all testifying to the occurrence of phenomena which have their origin in a "supernatural world," or in hitherto unsuspected human faculties. He notes the belief of Sir Oliver Lodge that certain autograph writing is really that of the spirit of Frederic Myers, one of the chief founders of the Society for Psychical Research, who prior to his death arranged for methods by which he should, if possible, communicate with his surviving friends "after he had reached the spirit world." The late Professor Sidgwick, the first president of the society, is believed by his widow (the sister of Mr. Balfour, the British Prime Minister) to be responsible for similar autograph writing. The author attaches great importance to the testimony of Professor J. H. Hyslop, for some years incumbent of the Chair of Logic and Ethics in the Columbian University, New York.

The extreme scientific care taken by Professor Hyslop in these investigations and in the record and publication of them should give his conclusions great weight. He strongly inclines to the belief that the intelligences talking through Mrs. Piper were those of his father and of other deceased relatives. The identity of some of these intelligences he feels has been established. Detailed information was given again and again by intelligences that claimed to be the professor's father and other of his relatives about matters in their earthly lives which were not known to the professor, and which on investigation he found to be facts. He informed me that he asked his father to give him a key or watchword by which he would be able to identify him in any future communication. He did so, and some time afterwards the professor was consulting an intelligence who claimed to be his father through another medium, and this intelligence identified himself by giving him this watchword which the professor had told to no living mortal.

Dr. Funk considers it very probable that, as Professor James suggests, a spirit is "tremendously inhibited" when he subjects himself to earthly conditions. His memory may be confused; there may be a difficulty in keeping separate his own individuality from that of the medium, or the "vibrations" from different personalities may get mixed. A spirit, in attempting to convey a notion of the obstacles in its way, said:—

"Evolutionists tell you that man has come up along the fish pathway of development. His lungs were once his gills, and he lived under water. Now, suppose the thought should come to some of you that it would be well to go down into the sea and help the fish develop to your way of thinking. In order to do this it would be necessary for you to get on the fish's plane of thinking, and on the plane of the fish's physical condition. How would you go about it? How would you live under the water? And how communicate intelligently with the fish? You might easily down under the sea, see concentrated air and remain there for a while, but by-and-by you would be compelled to say that your power to stay any longer was exhausted. Were fish intelligent enough they might reason somewhat as follows: 'It is foolish to believe that these men are what they claim to be, that they are descendants of our ancestors, that they were fish in a previous existence. If they had been once fish, how easy it would be for them to prove it by living down here with us and talking to us in a language that we can understand. Until they do this we will have none of them.'"

Professor James is quoted as saying that he is "as absolutely certain as he is of any fact in the world" that the famous medium, Mrs. Piper, "knows things in her trances which she cannot possibly have heard in her waking state. My mother-in-law, on her return from Europe, spent a morning vainly seeking for a bank-book. Mrs. Piper, on being shortly afterwards asked where the book was, described the place so exactly that it was instantly found." Alfred Russel Wallace tells the following story:—

"Dr. Hadcock, residing at Bolton, had a very remarkable clairvoyante, E, under his care. Sir Walter Trevelyan, Bart., received a letter from a lady in London, in which the loss of a gold watch was mentioned. He sent the letter to Dr. Hadcock, to see if E could trace the watch. She described the lady accurately, and her house and furniture minutely, and described the watch and chain, and described the person who had it, who, she said, was not an habitual thief, and said further that she could tell her housekeeping. The lady, to whom these accounts were sent, acknowledged their perfect accuracy, but said the description of the thief applied to one of her maids, whom she did not suspect, so she sent specimens of handwriting, including that of both lady and maids. The clairvoyante immediately selected that of the one she had described, and said, 'she was thinking of restoring the watch, saying she had found it.' Sir W. Trevelyan wrote with this information, but a letter from the lady crossed his, saying the girl mentioned before by the clairvoyante had restored the watch and said she had found it."

The questions these stories suggest to the author are—"Was it a spirit that told Mrs. Piper where was the lost bank-book of Professor James' mother-in-law? Was it a spirit who revealed to the clairvoyante the whereabouts of the watch? Or was telepathy at work in both cases?" Sir Oliver Lodge believes that there is evidence of trance lucidity and clairvoyance; that is, that "under certain conditions the mouth can speak and the hand write concerning things wholly outside the normal ken of the mind usually controlling them." He also holds that telepathy is the "one ultra-normal human faculty to the reality of which everyone who has engaged in these researches is prepared to assent." Sir William Crookes, as president of the British Association, suggested that all phenomena might ultimately be resolvable into mere vibrations varying from one vibration to 2,000 trillions per second.

At 32 vibrations per second we reach the region where atmospheric vibration reveals itself as sound. At 32,768 per second to the average human ear the region of sound ends, but certain more highly-endowed animals probably hear sounds too acute for our organs, that is sounds which vibrate at a higher rate. After the third stop, vibrations increase rapidly giving us electric waves, light waves at an unthinkable number of vibrations per second, until we reach the radiumray. The rays of radium are the results of quintillions of vibrations per second, and are so subtile that they pass through solids. It may be that the x-waves and the radium waves are only at the threshold of the wonders of the unseen universe. May it not be that thought waves, waves by which spirits communicate, are connected with the waves that begin with sound, and light and radium, and that the spirit body is but continuous with the physical bodies which we live in this world raised to an undescribable number of vibrations? If communications of spirits are through vibrations in ether, or in some still more subtile substance, we should have in this a possible explanation of telepathy.

Acting on Sir William Crookes' suggestion, Dr. Funk proposes, with the aid of such of his readers as may care to co-operate, to ascertain by experiment whether in these rays we have a means of transmitting intelligence. He writes:—

On each Sunday afternoon in the months of July and October, 1904, at 2 o'clock, New York time, I will write down and publish aloud some one definite maxim or thought. The co-operating persons are at this hour to make themselves as "receptive," or "negative," as possible, and write down any impressions entering their minds, and which they may think to come from me. They are to write to me these impressions. It is understood that I will make my part of the experiments in my study, 195, Washington Park, Brooklyn, New York. Care must be taken to make allowance for the difference in time between New York and the locations where these other experimentalists are. Solar time is to be observed, not standard time.

It is another question whether the intelligence which presumably can utilise the vibrations of the ether for the transmission of thought persists after death, but Dr. Funk does not despair of something being done by experiment towards elucidating even this stupendous problem. Both Crookes and Lodge have signified their belief in "materialisations," which the former indeed testifies to having witnessed. By way of setting all doubt at rest, if not as to the reality of apparitions, at least as to whether the dead can communicate with the living, Dr. Funk entreats such readers as have the nerve to attempt the experiment to send him a promise that after their death they will, if possible, communicate to him their names, and a certain watchword or sentence:—

This certain watchword or sentence the reader is now to think out, and tell to no living person, but to write and sign, seal, seal it in an envelope, and this envelope he is to send to me in a larger envelope. In this larger envelope his name and address, with date, are to be given, but not the watchword or sentence. The name of the sender should also be written on the outside of the inner envelope. Should I at any time receive any communication from what purports to be a spirit giving the same contained in any one of this class of envelopes which I have received, and also giving a watchword or sentence which the intelligence will say is in the envelope corresponding with this name, I will then open the envelope and see if the communication is true. In case of my own death I will leave provision to have all of this class of unopened envelopes turned over to the secretary of the Society for Psychical Research at Boston, with the request that he take my place in receiving and verifying communications in harmony with this plan.

FICTION.

Those who have a penchant for the gruesome may find unlimited enjoyment in "Croppies, Lie Down" (Duckworth), but others might prefer to have been spared some of the horrors of the Irish Rebellion of '98, which Mr. William Buckley has furnished with no sparing hand. It is curious to remember that the outbreak, which was finally suppressed at Vinegar Hill, lasted only for a month. The King's troops went about hanging and shooting, and the rebels retorted by burning and murdering. The most terrible events were the massacre at Scullabogue and the execution at Wexford. Over 200 prisoners, besides women and children, were massacred at Scullabogue, being either burned in a barn or cut down and shot outside. At Wexford a large body of insurgents met together in order to surrender. One foolishly fired off his gun in the air before delivering it up. The result was the slaughter of 350 rebels. Among the cruelties which characterised the suppression of the revolt was the "pitch-cap" torture, invented by the Northampton Regiment. When a "croppy" was found, he was immediately brought to the guardhouse, where caps of coarse linen, smeared inside with pitch, were kept ready for service. One of these was well heated and pressed upon the head of the unhappy wretch, and when it was too cool to be easily pulled off he was turned out, amidst the laughter of his tormentors. This little illustrative anecdote is perhaps a better indication of the prevalent spirit than even the record of hangings, with the obsolete mutilations appropriate to treason, and of the shootings, house-burnings, and dragoonings of the unhappy peasantry. It may seem from what we have said that Mr. Buckley's work savors too much of reality and little of fiction; and it is right to add that the story, of which the events of Arklow, Vinegar Hill, New Ross, Wexford, and other places, furnish a sombre background, is one of an appropriately exciting character. It relates to the love affairs of Devereaux, the rebel leader, and Irene, the daughter of a Protestant squire, and it introduces an estimable character in Major Heathcote, an English officer, whose justice and humanity relieve the prevalent gloom, as the unspeakable doings of Gash, the spy, intensify it. The author has gone to trustworthy sources for his information, though anything might be credited after the recital (the truth of which is vouched for by Sir Jonah Barrington) of the exploit of a certain bloodthirsty "Lieutenant B——," a tall, powerful man, who, not content with acting as amateur hangman, actually on one occasion stood for the gallows himself, using his own cravat in place of a rope.

"The Web" (Heinemann), by Mr. F. Trevor Hill, is a clever American story. Its purpose is to show the faults of the judicial system of the United States, which admits of endless delays, prevarication, legal hindrances, and technical entanglements. In fact there is no end to the resources of the highly-placed and influential criminals who are struggling to prevent the case of Fraser versus the Placento Company from reaching an end, which must be disastrous to themselves. Murder and divorce play a conspicuous part in this exciting drama, the denouement of which is so skilfully worked out as to seem quite natural.

Miss Beatrice Harraden, in the "Disagreeable Man," set the fashion, which Messrs. Hugh Sterningham and Nevil Meakin have followed in the "Court of Sacharissa" (Heinemann), of leaving their characters to be identified by their traits or pursuits. Names are eschewed, and the members of the Irresponsible Club are known by such designations as the Exotic, the Scribe, the Ambassador, the Poet, the Man of Truth, &c. They make weekly excursions into the country, and their smallest experiences are detailed with photographic minuteness. One day they come upon a rustic bridge:—"The Exotic refused to go any further. 'I have,' said he, 'walked enough, and now I shall sit under that willow and smoke.' The Ambassador smiled a little, and gazed across the stream. 'I wonder if we would be justified—,' he began. 'A bridge,' remarked the Poet, who was apt, in his less inspired moments, to begin at the beginning, 'is meant to be crossed.' 'It looks like a garden,' continued the Ambassador; 'yew hedges and gravel paths imply, at least, a gardener.' 'Well, who's afraid of gardeners?' said the Man of Truth, and who was young and frank. 'I am not afraid,' returned the Ambassador mildly, 'but I have a delicacy.' 'False delicacy,' interjected the Man of Truth, setting one foot on the bridge. 'Whether this kind of thing is appreciated depends very much upon some one definite maxim or thought. The co-operating persons are at this hour to make themselves as "receptive," or "negative," as possible, and write down any impressions entering their minds, and which they may think to come from me. They are to write to me these impressions. It is understood that I will make my part of the experiments in my study, 195, Washington Park, Brooklyn, New York. Care must be taken to make allowance for the difference in time between New York and the locations where these other experimentalists are. Solar time is to be observed, not standard time.

It is another question whether the intelligence which presumably can utilise the vibrations of the ether for the transmission of thought persists after death, but Dr. Funk does not despair of something being done by experiment towards elucidating even this stupendous problem. Both Crookes and Lodge have signified their belief in "materialisations," which the former indeed testifies to having witnessed. By way of setting all doubt at rest, if not as to the reality of apparitions, at least as to whether the dead can communicate with the living, Dr. Funk entreats such readers as have the nerve to attempt the experiment to send him a promise that after their death they will, if possible, communicate to him their names, and a certain watchword or sentence:—

This certain watchword or sentence the reader is now to think out, and tell to no living person, but to write and sign, seal, seal it in an envelope, and this envelope he is to send to me in a larger envelope. In this larger envelope his name and address, with date, are to be given, but not the watchword or sentence. The name of the sender should also be written on the outside of the inner envelope. Should I at any time receive any communication from what purports to be a spirit giving the same contained in any one of this class of envelopes which I have received, and also giving a watchword or sentence which the intelligence will say is in the envelope corresponding with this name, I will then open the envelope and see if the communication is true. In case of my own death I will leave provision to have all of this class of unopened envelopes turned over to the secretary of the Society for Psychical Research at Boston, with the request that he take my place in receiving and verifying communications in harmony with this plan.

FICTION.

Those who have a penchant for the gruesome may find unlimited enjoyment in "Croppies, Lie Down" (Duckworth), but others might prefer to have been spared some of the horrors of the Irish Rebellion of '98, which Mr. William Buckley has furnished with no sparing hand. It is curious to remember that the outbreak, which was finally suppressed at Vinegar Hill, lasted only for a month. The King's troops went about hanging and shooting, and the rebels retorted by burning and murdering. The most terrible events were the massacre at Scullabogue and the execution at Wexford. Over 200 prisoners, besides women and children, were massacred at Scullabogue, being either burned in a barn or cut down and shot outside. At Wexford a large body of insurgents met together in order to surrender. One foolishly fired off his gun in the air before delivering it up. The result was the slaughter of 350 rebels. Among the cruelties which characterised the suppression of the revolt was the "pitch-cap" torture, invented by the Northampton Regiment. When a "croppy" was found, he was immediately brought to the guardhouse, where caps of coarse linen, smeared inside with pitch, were kept ready for service. One of these was well heated and pressed upon the head of the unhappy wretch, and when it was too cool to be easily pulled off he was turned out, amidst the laughter of his tormentors. This little illustrative anecdote is perhaps a better indication of the prevalent spirit than even the record of hangings, with the obsolete mutilations appropriate to treason, and of the shootings, house-burnings, and dragoonings of the unhappy peasantry. It may seem from what we have said that Mr. Buckley's work savors too much of reality and little of fiction; and it is right to add that the story, of which the events of Arklow, Vinegar Hill, New Ross, Wexford, and other places, furnish a sombre background, is one of an appropriately exciting character. It relates to the love affairs of Devereaux, the rebel leader, and Irene, the daughter of a Protestant squire, and it introduces an estimable character in Major Heathcote, an English officer, whose justice and humanity relieve the prevalent gloom, as the unspeakable doings of Gash, the spy, intensify it. The author has gone to trustworthy sources for his information, though anything might be credited after the recital (the truth of which is vouched for by Sir Jonah Barrington) of the exploit of a certain bloodthirsty "Lieutenant B——," a tall, powerful man, who, not content with acting as amateur hangman, actually on one occasion stood for the gallows himself, using his own cravat in place of a rope.

"The Web" (Heinemann), by Mr. F. Trevor Hill, is a clever American story. Its purpose is to show the faults of the judicial system of the United States, which admits of endless delays, prevarication, legal hindrances, and technical entanglements. In fact there is no end to the resources of the highly-placed and influential criminals who are struggling to prevent the case of Fraser versus the Placento Company from reaching an end, which must be disastrous to themselves. Murder and divorce play a conspicuous part in this exciting drama, the denouement of which is so skilfully worked out as to seem quite natural.

Miss Beatrice Harraden, in the "Disagreeable Man," set the fashion, which Messrs. Hugh Sterningham and Nevil Meakin have followed in the "Court of Sacharissa" (Heinemann), of leaving their characters to be identified by their traits or pursuits. Names are eschewed, and the members of the Irresponsible Club are known by such designations as the Exotic, the Scribe, the Ambassador, the Poet, the Man of Truth, &c. They make weekly excursions into the country, and their smallest experiences are detailed with photographic minuteness. One day they come upon a rustic bridge:—"The Exotic refused to go any further. 'I have,' said he, 'walked enough, and now I shall sit under that willow and smoke.' The Ambassador smiled a little, and gazed across the stream. 'I wonder if we would be justified—,' he began. 'A bridge,' remarked the Poet, who was apt, in his less inspired moments, to begin at the beginning, 'is meant to be crossed.' 'It looks like a garden,' continued the Ambassador; 'yew hedges and gravel paths imply, at least, a gardener.' 'Well, who's afraid of gardeners?' said the Man of Truth, and who was young and frank. 'I am not afraid,' returned the Ambassador mildly, 'but I have a delicacy.' 'False delicacy,' interjected the Man of Truth, setting one foot on the bridge.' Whether this kind of thing is appreciated depends very much upon some definite maxim or thought. Readers will be charmed by the airy, amusing, and occasionally witty dialogue. Others will see in it nothing but the apotheosis of the Trivial.

The central figure of "The Yeoman" (Lane's Colonial Library), C. K. Burrow's new novel, is a type which finds no parallel in the newer, freer life of the colonies. Richard Winstone was a yeoman farmer of the West Country, descendant of a family which for generations past had owned the farm on which they had been born, the farm on which they had lived. "The land was in their blood and bones," and the land, always the land, moved this rugged, stern, west countryman far more deeply than any intimate human feeling. So when his cousin David sold his own farm and went off to Australia, old Richard never forgave him. The return of the wanderer after many years, to settle down as a wealthy landowner near the old home, only reopened the wound. "I am a yeoman farmer," he declared, "David is one of the biggest landowners in the country, and farms for pleasure. The Winstones are divided." Hard, bitter, unforgiving, it was not surprising that his enmities should develop into unrelenting feuds. In these the author finds the background for his romance, the heroine of which is Dorcas, the yeoman's daughter. Here is a fine character, womanly, self-sacrificing, courageous, and Mr. Burrow has drawn his heroine with sympathy and skill. But the whole picture is painted in very sombre tones; a dull grey atmosphere pervades it. Strife and gloom lead on to tragedy, and although the story has a happy ending, not even this dispels the air of sadness from the closing page.

It is good to get something in lighter vein from South Africa after the grim realities of the past few years, and there is humor in plenty in "Old Hendrik's Tales" (Longman's Colonial Library), by Captain A. O. Vaughan. The tales are supposed to be told by an old Hottentot to the children of the farm, and what Kipling did with the animals of the jungle is here achieved with those of the veldt. Captain Vaughan shows the same happy skill in giving his animals those ludicrously human attributes which are the charm of the heroes of "Jungle Books." Old Hendrik's natural history may be open to question, but there is no doubt about his humor. His explanation of why Old Baboon has the kink in his tail, of why the tortoise has no hair on, and why Old Jackal slinks his tail, and so on, will be accepted with delight by children and grown-ups alike. The spirit of the humor is caught with consummate skill by Mr. J. A. Sheppard in his illustrations. When that clever artist puts a jackal into pantaloons you may be sure that the result is irresistably comic. Old Hendrik tells his tales in broken English, though he does so with a sigh. "It don't sound de same in you' Englis' somehow," he says plaintively. English is not fond enough, nor has diminutives enough, for a kitchen tale as a native Kaffir loves to tell it. Nevertheless the old Hottentot's homely diction and his quaint smiles are likely to amuse, rather than weary the reader.

"I don't think he had it in him to care to the extent which is really indispensable about anything or anybody; not even about himself. But let us do him justice; he was a great comedian—a great comedian up to the very last." In these words Mr. W. E. Norris makes one of the characters in "Nature's Comedian" (Longman's Colonial Library) sum up the hero of this, his latest novel. As the epitaph suggests, Harold Dunville was a man of many parts, but little depth of character. He could act the role of an ardent lover almost to perfection; but the ring of sincerity was lacking in his well-turned speeches. He could play politician, and harangue the electors with much ease and fluency; but it was only acting. Even at the end, when he dashed into a burning house, and lost his life in the attempt to save another's, his friends could not be sure that he had not posed to the last, "ambrimally appreciative of a heaven-sent opportunity" to escape from all his troubles in a blaze of glory. The misgivings of Harold Dunville's friends will be shared by the reader. It is a character which fails to command much interest, and the interest in it is apt to pall when the study is spread over some 300 pages. Some of the other characters are interesting, notably a wealthy young woman who affects unconventionality, male friends, and cigarettes, and the comedian's clergyman brother, who writes a brilliant play, for which Harold gets all the credit. On the whole, it is a readable story, but scarcely one of striking merit.

Mr. Percy White writes in a cynical vein, which he finds no difficulty in justifying. Against vice, with which all his books are more or less concerned, there is no double but cynism is a powerful ally. In a certain sense, the most appropriate antidote. It is not wholly popular, because it is often employed to strip off the illusions from virtue; but it should be credited with the possibility of being used, as it is by Mr. Percy White, to strip off the illusions of vice. In "Mr. Bailey-Martin," in "Park Lane," and in "The West End," it was so employed, as it is in his latest story, "The Triumph of Mrs. St. George" (John Long). People speak of the romance of vice, but there was very little romance in the wretched life depicted in these pages. Mrs. Jervis abandons her husband for another man, only to find, as so frequently the woman finds, that she can no more live with her paramour than she could with her husband. When will women of the kind learn to combine with their emotions a little common-sense? When will they cease to mistake for the real nature of their betrayers the superficial amenities of speech and manner which are put on for the occasion, only to be abandoned when they have served their purpose? However bad a husband may be, there is always this to be said—that his wife sees him at his worst. But the worst side of such gentlemen as Mr. St. George is carefully hidden till too late, and terrible is the lot of the woman who finds that she has exchanged her husband for a man who is no better, and cannot even give her what her husband had done—an honest name. Mrs. Jervis—or Mrs. St. George, to give her the name she assumes—strives indeed, after her husband's death, to retrieve the past by marriage with a third man, who is ignorant that there is any past to retrieve. It is in such situations that the blackmailer finds his harvest, and the luckless woman, who would have given worlds to keep her guilt from the man whom she has made her husband, finds it an impossibility, and in despair takes poison. Under the powerful, if cynical, touch of Mr. White the edifice of a golden future which Evelyn had built for herself crumbles into nothing. He depicts vice reduced to its skeleton shape, and in holding up the mirror to "fast society" he shows that, however alluring it may be in its outward aspect, rottenness and hideousness too often lie beneath.

MISCELLANEOUS WORKS.

We have received Part X. of "The Forest Flora of New South Wales," by J. H. Maiden (Government botanist of New South Wales), being the latest contribution to the series of 12 numbers published by authority of the Government of the senior State of the Commonwealth. The volume deals with "a grey gum," "a stinkwood," "the leopard tree," and "the Queensland nut." The illustrations are clearly printed, and the descriptions and information will be valuable to those interested in the subject.

We have received a copy of the new weekly published in Sydney, and called "The Shearer," being the official organ of the Machine Shearers' and Shed Employes' Union. The sheet includes political news, a serial, a ladies' column, sporting reports, and items of interest to its patrons.

LITERARY NOTES.

One of Mr. W. H. Mallock's witty ladies, in his latest theological romance, pertinaciously, the following tasteful simile:—"Yes," said Mrs. Vernon of somebody, "no doubt she was naturally witty, but she's been spoilt by living amongst a little set of admirers who, whenever she opened her mouth, said, 'Listen to Mary's last—till the poor girl, if she could, would have tried to blow her nose in an epigram."

Maxim Gorky, the Russian novelist, was 36 the other day. It is just 14 years ago that a young Russian laborer on the railway entered the office of a newspaper at Tiflis and offered the editor the neatly-written manuscript of a story. The editor agreed to publish it. "But there is no signature to it," he said. "Put Maxim Gorky," said the laborer. When nine years old young "Gorky"—his real name is Alexei Maximovitch Pieshkov—began to earn his living as footmaker's errand boy. His destiny came to him a few months later, when he had run away to become cook's boy on a steamer. The cook had a box of books, which the boy read ravenously. At 20, starving and hopeless, he tried to end his life with a bullet. Then, after a spell of work as a railway watchman, he became clerk to a lawyer named Lanin, in whom for the first time he found a friend.

Mr. Robert Barr—otherwise known as "Luke Sharp"—had an eventful career before he took up book work. By birth a Scotsman, he spent his early years in Canada, and received his training as a journalist in the United States. He soon became one of the smartest men on the Detroit Free Press, and he had some exciting experiences during this period of his career. One of his adventures some years ago, in an interview, by Mr. Raymond Blathwayt, as follows:—"A man had been condemned to be hanged on the Canadian frontier. There were certain circumstances in the case which greatly extenuated the heinousness of his crime, and Barr left no stone unturned to secure his reprieve. The man, therefore, was reprieved, but his friends and the public were ignorant that this was the case, and the news had to be conveyed to Detroit. It was mid-winter; the thermometer had fallen far below zero, the great river was frozen, and the ice had torn away the telegraph cable. Barr's paper must publish the news. What was to be done? Many men would have let it go. Not so our journalist. Hiring a fellow with a crowbar to make a passage across the river, which was a mile and a half wide, and in the teeth of a terrific blizzard, he set out. The man flung the crowbar ahead, and when it rang on the ice they knew there was no air hole in front of them. Thus they slowly progressed across the river. Half way over the man gave out, said he wouldn't go any further; he wouldn't risk certain death; so he turned back, and left Barr, quite undaunted, to struggle grimly on, against wind, and ice, and snow. Suddenly he seemed to see the distant lights of Detroit swinging around him, and for a moment stood helpless in the middle of the river, not knowing which side was which. He pushed on in blind and grim despair; he reached the wall of the railway line. Hands, face, legs frozen, he could do nothing; it was impossible to climb from the surface of the river to the top of the wharf. In his despair he shouted for help, which came in the shape of the railway men, who pulled him up, stripped him, rolled and rubbed him in the snow, and restored feeling to his limbs, and, in fact, saved his life. But the Detroit Free Press published the account of the reprieve, so what could it matter what the journalist had gone through!"

PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED.

"He That Had Received Five Talents," by J. Clark Murray. T. Fisher Unwin, London.
"The Fool Killer," by Lucas Cleeve. T. Fisher Unwin, London.
"Spindle and Plough," by Mrs. Henry Dudeney. William Heinemann, London.
"Spendthrift Summer," by Margery Williams. William Heinemann, London.
"Thoroughbreds," a sporting novel, by W. A. Fraser. William Heinemann, London.
"The Red Pagan," by A. G. Stephens. The Bulletin Newspaper Company, Sydney.
"The Church Hymnary," abridged edition for the young.
"The National Review" for July.
"The Hibbert Journal."

PLUMPTON COURSING.

The following nominations were received for the Eileen Challenge Cup, at Maghettville Stakes, to be run at the Plumpton on August 18 and 19:—

Eileen Challenge Cup.—Messrs. Hodgson and Thompson, H. Thorpe, E. Coleman, J. Tibey, Dowling & Braham, Langrehr & Auckland, Beadon and Lee (2), E. W. Pearce, M. Shanahan, J. S. Nicholls, J. H. Johnson, F. A. Gillen, John Cresswell, P. Roey, E. Hayward, J. Hodgett, Vicary and Goldsmith, A. J. Clay, A. V. Brown, R. H. Vickery, T. J. Barrett (2) Kilmartin Bros., J. M. Heddle (2), T. R. Wickham, and Master R. H. Grey.

Morphettville Stakes.—Messrs. Jno. Cresswell, B. Burnett, S. Brice, Walter & Stephens, T. R. Wickham, and R. Smith.

It has been decided to leave these stakes open until August 16, when further nominations will be received. Two other eighteen-dog stakes will also be run, an all-aged maiden at £1 1/ each and a stake for all-aged greyhounds who have not won more than two courses in any one stake.

ROWING.

The annual meeting of the Torrens Boating Club was held on Tuesday at the Norfolk Arms Hotel. Mr. C. Kellett occupied the chair. The secretary (Mr. O. Payton) read the annual report, which showed that the club had a membership of 35. The treasurer's report showed that the club's income for the year amounted to £64, the expenditure not quite balancing that amount. The following officers were elected:—Patron, Mr. L. Cohen, M.P.; president, Mr. C. Ferrors; captain, Mr. C. Kellett; vice-captain, Mr. J. B. Fahey; secretary, Mr. E. C. W. Martin; treasurer, Mr. A. Broadbent; committee, Messrs. S. C. Stenning, S. Fisher, W. Kennedy, H. Yson, and W. Noblett; steward, Mr. R. Morgan; delegates to the association, Messrs. C. Kellett and E. C. W. Martin; auditors, Messrs. S. C. Stenning and Goslin.

United States telephone systems absorb nearly 5,000,000 miles of single wire.

STOLEN NELSON RELICS.

ARE SOME IN AUSTRALIA?

A ROMANTIC STORY.

(From our Special Correspondent.)

London, July 8, 1904.

On the night of December 8, 1900, some conscienceless scoundrel stole from the famous Painted Hall at Greenwich Hospital a number of articles which visitors were wont to gloat over in all reverence, for they were mementos of England's greatest sailor. The Nelson relics stolen included a gold watch, an enamel portrait, two gold sword hilts, seven medals, and other less valuable trifles. For a long time the police were quite unable to discover even the slenderest clue to the perpetrator of the outrage, and, indeed, they could never even satisfactorily explain how the robbery had been committed. The most plausible surmise was that the miscreant had concealed himself in the hall just before it was closed, had broken open the cases in which the relics were exhibited during the night, and had made his escape when the pensioners in charge of the hall opened it early next morning. But nobody connected with the hospital had noticed any strange person about the building, and it was not until the hall had been opened some little time that the robbery was noticed. Then there were "alarums and excursions" with a vengeance; detectives by the dozen were put on the trail, and the London "fences" had an unhappy time of it, owing to police vigilance. But Scotland Yard's best efforts were all to no purpose; the chief actors in this precious bout had vanished into thin air, and it was not until last March that anything more was heard of the relics. In that month the head of the British Museum was surprised to receive a letter dated from the Sailors' Home at Melbourne, and signed "Eucalyptus," which ran as follows:—

"Sir—I believe you were relieved some years ago of the custody of Lord Nelson's relics. Among the relics was Nelson's watch. I am led to believe that I have the identical watch in my possession. I will tell you how I came by it. Some time ago a sailor accosted me in Flinders-street. He appeared to be in an intoxicated state, and I offered to see him to his ship. He had his hand on his chip, and was in a penniless condition. I gave him a shilling and bade him good-bye. Three days after I saw him loafing round the docks. I asked him if he had any idea of the time. He said he had a watch, but it was not in working order. He produced the watch, and I asked him if he wished to dispose of it. He said he would not part with it under any consideration. I was determined to get it, and plied him freely with liquor. He began telling me some of his experiences, and admitted that he had been connected with thefts in England and America, and that he was known as Nelson's relics. I asked him if the watch was one of them. Seeing that he was committing himself he said 'No.' I shall not describe how I obtained the watch. It will now describe the watch. It was rather larger than a lady's, but bulkier. On the back of the outside case is inscribed the stern of an old man-o'-war. It had written across the stern, 'San Josef.' The hours are marked in ordinary figures. It has attached to it a small gold slip ring, with a seal of some description, and attached to the seal portrays a woman holding a snake in her right hand extended. If all the above should tally with the lost relics you will kindly let me know. You will address communications to Eucalyptus, G.P.O., Melbourne. I believe I have a fair reward if it should be the right one. I might add that it would be very foolish to communicate this to the police, as I would have it destroyed. Should you feel inclined to act without undue publicity and fuss the best way is through the curator of the Melbourne Museum. By sending a full description of the relics and a promise not to prosecute, with £100 to the director of the Museum, he will probably get the relics."

Appended to the letter was an excellent pencil drawing of the watch.

The letter was handed over to Scotland Yard, but what steps were taken in connection with it I do not know. A few days ago, however, a seaman named William Carter visited Scotland Yard and acknowledged himself to be the writer of the letter. He had, he said, come to give information likely to lead to the recovery of the relics, and professed to have in his possession the watch and seal referred to. They were, he said, in his luggage at his rooms in Woolwich. But when Inspector Arrow visited and searched his rooms no trace of the watch or seal could be found. In his statement to the police Carter confirmed all the facts related in the "Eucalyptus" letter, and added:—"Besides what I have got (the watch and seal) I have seen a medal which was in the possession of the man from whom I got the watch and seal. He said he said it was one of the Nelson relics. I have also seen a snuffbox—a gold one—in the possession of a man at Melbourne who has befriended me, and I won't give him away. He is a receiver out there, who keeps a tobacconist's shop as a blind. I refuse to say what his name is. The man that I took the watch and seal from told me that he was one of a crowd that got some stuff away here, and that was his share. I met him in Flinders-street, and I believe he left on the Borealis three days after I left, and that was February 18. I don't know his name. I won't describe him. I have seen nothing else except the watch and seal which I have, and the snuffbox and medal, which I believe are in Melbourne. I was staying in Woolwich about five years ago, but I have never been in Greenwich Hospital, and did not know the Nelson relics were stolen from there. I thought they were stolen from the British Museum."

Inspector Arrow being unable to persuade Carter to show him the watch and seal except under a promise not to prosecute, which the inspector could not give, arrested the fellow and charged him with theft. Carter protested that he could prove an alibi, and that he had left England in 1899 for Australia, and had not been in England again till he landed on Monday week last. The police, however, fancy they can prove that Carter's real name is McCarthy, that he has "antecedents" which have caused a record of his finger prints to be kept at Scotland Yard, and that he was certainly in London at the time of the robbery, and soon afterwards. To enable them to substantiate their allegations Carter is now on remand in