

NEW BOOKS AND THEIR PUBLISHERS

"THE RED CITY" by Dr. Weir Mitchell.—By its quiet, stately dignity the fiction of Dr. Mitchell reminds one strongly of Thackeray. While in some characteristics these two authors—one old, the other of the new dispensation—differ materially, in others they are strikingly alike. This resemblance is most noticeable in character portrayal, where both draw in such bold lines, yet conform so closely to nature. But in so they diverge when it comes to presenting the smaller traits of human nature. Dr. Mitchell could paint his figures in large and black, but he never could have created a Becky Sharp. It is between the Emersons and the other Virgilians and Hugh Wynne, Aunt Gaius and all that host of the old regime that Dr. Mitchell has brought to life. He finds the points of resemblance between these two great writers of fiction.

As "Hugh Wynne" has stood out for more than a decade as the best historical novel America has ever produced, so is "The Red City" destined to take its place, on equal footing, and remain one of the permanent literary works of the country.

In point of time it begins its story shortly after "Hugh Wynne" is closed, and deals almost exclusively with the second administration of Washington, and while many of the characters who are still in the prime of life, and are able to contribute interest and strength to the second.

While the story of "The Red City" is complete enough of itself to be read and enjoyed, to read it with real pleasure and appreciation "Hugh Wynne" should first be read.

This story is that of a young French vicomte who, with his mother, emigrates to this country after his father had been killed by the Jacobins. Arriving in Philadelphia on one of Hugh Wynne's ships, poor and friendless, but with an abundance of pride and the stamp of aristocracy that even in these piping times of democracy commanded respectful attention.

Hugh Wynne, who had had experience regarding the De Courvals, found the mother and son, who had been gathering experience at various boarding houses for a day or two, and the mother being an invalid he secured them a boarding place in the house of a friend, Mary Swanswick, who, with her pretty daughter, Margaret, and another boarder, Schmidt, made up a most interesting household. Soon Aunt Gaius, the French emigrant in the Quaker city. It established what was more than we mean by society today, for then it meant business as well as while to young vicomte could at first command nothing better to begin with than a very unimportant place in the way of a fortune. Wynne it gave him a footing in the new world to climb from, and from which to begin to make a place in history for himself.

Into the history of this young man come the characters of Washington, Hamilton, Jefferson, and many others who were familiar figures on the streets of Philadelphia in those days. Dr. Mitchell does not pick up and add to these great historic characters to give his story the semblance of a historical novel, as we find in most of the so-called historical fiction, but he has studied his characters with the artist's attention to detail, and when they appear in his stories they are not mere names, but living, breathing, and feeling that he is learning some traits, or characteristics, or facts of history that have escaped the ordinary historian. As the author has written his noted people, so has he given his minor characters, making his men and women consistent, fresh and blood-folks.

The plot of the story is exceedingly interesting, but intense might more properly be described as a story of the kind the reader will go galloping through, coming in breathless at the finish, but in one or two places it is absorbed slowly and with plenty of time given for digesting.

In style the book is as vigorous and forceful as any ever came from the pen of Dr. Mitchell, which is saying much in commendation of the work, and much to be wondered at when one looks at the list of books to his credit and lower service to the public is considered. The book is dedicated to William D. Howells and is well illustrated by J. K. Gill. The Century Co. Price \$1.50.

"By the Christmas Fire," by Samuel M. Crothers.—Coming at this season of the year the title would lead one to believe this was a holiday book, and it is, in fact, a holiday book if we allow the author to attain our ears to the cheer, more up to the spirit of life, and we are renewing the Christ spirit within us, rather than the holiday festivities from which we have again the book may be read and enjoyed fully as much as any other season, though somehow good words always sink deeper if we can absorb them around the cozy hearth.

The book is composed of five essays—not essays, in the Emersonian sense, but rather of the preachment order, dealing with some subjects that are ever present with us, and yet are always considered by us, and all tending to point to a simpler, less artificial life. We do not mean to imply that the book is in any sense of the sanctimonious sort. It is the reverse, for in many of the incidents cited there is a strong flavor of humor, and the whole book has the air of the worldly wise rather than of the religiously restricted. It is a book that would be a valuable and suitable gift to any one.

It is nicely bound with a quaint sketch of the philosopher for frontispiece. Houghton Mifflin & Co. Price \$1.25.

"By Right of Purchase," by Harold Bindloss.—The hero, a Canadian rancher, while spending a holiday in Scotland with Lieutenant Denham, an acquaintance he had made out on the great western prairie, marries the daughter of the house by purchasing her hand from her father and brother, who were in financial difficulties. She gives him to understand she will be his wife in name only, which arrangement very well satisfies the Canadian, who has married her more out of sympathy from another emotion, thereby saving her from a more undesirable marriage.

They return to their home in western Canada, where misunderstandings between them occur, which grow worse as she gives him to understand she thinks him beneath her. The husband treated her with every consideration and brought her out from the old country to keep her company—the aunt who largely negotiated the purchase, and who was a fine old character. After some months had gone by without any improvement in their relations, a man from her own set, and whom she at one time imagined herself in love with, appeared on the scene and at about the time trouble was breaking out between the rancher and his wife, the latter had an opportunity to draw a contrast between her husband and her old lover, with the result that when the latter tried to press his attentions upon her, while telling her at the same time "it was plain to be seen that she was not his ploughman husband," she turned on him with the answer that "she would sooner be her husband's slave or mistress than his wife."

"and if it is any consolation, I think it was partly you who taught me so." Her feelings could not long be concealed from her husband, but the story does not end, and they lived happily ever after for while they did, in one way, much of the interest and the action of the story comes afterward, when together they fight the desperadoes and defend themselves from their depredations.

Mr. Bindloss is a prolific writer, finding the scenes for his work in many climes and among many different races and kinds of people. Much of his work has been good, a very little mediocre, and a portion excellent, and the present book comes distinctly within the latter class, for it is among the very best of his work.

The book has a rich colored frontispiece by A. J. Dewey. Frederick A. Stokes Co. Price \$1.50.

"Strongheart," by Frederick B. Rowton; founded on William C. de Mille's play.—This is an interesting story of savagery and civilization in which two Columbia students start out to spend their holidays on Lakes Hopewell and Superior and on the land of the Ojibways. Livingston, one of the students, is carried over the falls in a canoe and is saved from drowning by Strongheart—Strongheart—son of Chief Kiwethin of the Ojibways. A great friendship springs up between Livingston and his chum Frank Nelson and Strongheart, which leads to the latter, who has already had some schooling, returning with them to college where he leads his class and is also a shining light on the gridiron, and is socially recognized by all the students and their families.

Eventually, as is inevitable, he falls in love with the maiden of civilization and that maiden happens to be Nelson's sister, who is also loved by Livingston. It wouldn't be a story if the maiden did as she should and properly fell in love with the man of her own race, for then there would have been no occasion for the denouement that Strongheart developed not only from the girl's friends, but from the royal house of the Ojibways, and a very good story would have been spoiled.

It is a story of deep feeling and strong action, and has a lot of exceptional interest. The book has some good illustrations by Clarence Rowe. Geo. W. Dillingham Co. Price \$1.50.

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