

Everybody is gay, and the majority are hilarious, chaffering is active, and even a casual eye may take note of the rough and ready wooing of some buxom *popolana*. The throngs are dense, and there is a deal of finery in coloured paper and tinted cotton about the stalls. Nor is the meaning of Christmas entirely ignored. The Christ-child is portrayed in manifold little waxen images, clad in rosy tissues, and set out on banks of moss; or again, the scene of the Nativity is represented by groups of tiny figures stuck all over a miniature mountain, which has a sort of cavern in its breast, wherein lies the holy Babe, with His parents and the adoring kings and shepherds around, "a picture in little" of the spectacular shows which are set up in all the churches for the edification of the faithful. Yet, through all the bustle and brightness of the scenes, I cannot help feeling rather saddened than otherwise. There is for one such an unavoidable suggestion of the poor toilers who make up the great bulk of this population of 600,000 souls. The shops speak for the rich, but they speak thus every day; while only at such seasons as Christmas and Easter can one realise, without going out of his daily way, how little constitutes the profit and pleasure of our poor. Here are so many articles whose price is but a few pence, and on which the gain must be scarcely a penny, so many more whose price is but a halfpenny, and which can yield no more than the fraction of a farthing. Purses so thin and weak that one conceives of them as only to be bought by such as have no money to put away; ribbons and scarves so flimsy in their gaudiness that the one holiday of a year must consume them; forks and spoons, cut rudely out of thinnest material, and so gently touched by the silver-counterfeiting tin, that at the second using they must reveal their fundamental iron; soap, of a mottled sternness, that suggests the uncompromising and barren "pudding-stone" of New England; disabled tools and household utensils, that yet find purchasers among those who, perhaps, were utterly destitute of their like before; together with many a nondescript thing, whose almost epigrammatic impossibility of use the vendor would fain justify into a merit by asserting that its origin is English. But the poor little toys for the still poorer little children! It is pathetic to see them, and to think of them in the sunless alleys that split apart the huge high houses of old Naples. A plaything, even when it is fine and strong, lasts so short a time and brings so many tears when it breaks, that it is no wonder that well-to-do parents are always spending money for their darling's delight. But how durable an enjoyment can a halfpenny, or even a penny buy! Yet here are hosts of hideous, abortive dolls, and sheep, and horses, little paint-streaked blocks of ten-pins or villages, tea-sets of softest pewter, and wretched, rickety attempts at mechanical toys, whose prices are incredibly small, and which will scarcely have begun to gladden some pitiful half-starved creature by their existence ere they must needs plunge them into despair by their sudden and irremediable ruin. It is, indeed, melancholy to think how little was earned by the makers of all these trumpery trifles, but it is sadder to think how little their handiwork deserves the pittance it tempts from the lovers of children. Truly, the "Christmas carol" is writ for all the world and no merry Christmas walks abroad, but somewhat in his path must be the shadow of a sorrow.

In Memoriam.—We are loth to trouble our readers with private sorrows, but we cannot refrain from publicly expressing our sense of the severe loss which we have sustained by the death of Mr. William Green, who acted as assistant editor of this journal almost from its commencement. He died on the evening of Thursday, the 4th inst., after a few weeks' illness, of congestion of the lungs, at the age of thirty-three. Mr. Green came of a literary stock, being a nephew of the late John Hamilton Reynolds (of the old *London Magazine*) whose sister married the late Thomas Hood. He was a man of considerable cultivation and ability, many prose articles of interest in these columns have proceeded from his pen, while his occasional verses, under the signatures of "Vert-Vert," "W. G.," &c., have been highly appreciated. Mr. Green was a most painstaking, accurate, and diligent worker, and was so unwilling to yield that he continued to write as long as he could hold a pen, till within a few days of his death. But especially he was valued for his gentleness and good nature, and it is the recollection of these qualities which makes us conscious that we have lost not merely an able fellow-labourer, but an intimate friend.

THE READER

IN the "Drama of Kings" Mr. Robert Buchanan (Strahan and Co.) gives us what he calls a "trilogy," representing the conflicts of France, under Napoleon I. and Napoleon III., with Germany. The first part is called "Bonaparte, or France against the Teuton;" Scene, Erfurt; Time, October, 1808. The second is "Napoleon Fallen;" Scene, Wilhelmshöhe; Time, 1870. In the third we have "The Teuton against Paris;" Scene, the German Camp before Paris; Time, winter, 1871. The form of the drama is Greek, and it is supposed to be represented at "The Heavenly Theatre," before "the Lord, the Archangels, and Celestial Spectators," the part of Napoleon, and afterwards that of Bismark, being supported by Lucifer, who has prepared the entertainment, and made himself stage-manager. We state these particulars without comment, leaving the reader to judge for himself of the audacity of the author's design; merely remarking that the sacred machinery employed is made the more objectionable from its mode of treatment. The drama itself has such excellences as might be expected from the writer's poetical and rhetorical power; but it indicates no insight into the characters and objects of the *dramatis personæ*, and fails to suggest the lofty point of view from which it has professedly been written. In a note upon "Mystic Realism" appended to the poem, the author tells us that "in the present work, and in the works which have preceded it from the same pen, an attempt is made to combine two qualities which the modern mind is accustomed to regard apart—reality and mystery, earthliness and spirituality; and this combination, whether a merit or a fault, is a consequence of natural temperament and perfectly incurable." The remarks in which the author further explains his meaning may be read with advantage; but while thoroughly recognising in Mr. Buchanan the quality of mind which he describes, we fail to see that its possession places him so far apart from other men of intellect and imagination as he seems to suppose. We have always

fancied that his writings were understood and appreciated, and cannot suppose that his readers are so dull as he appears to imply.

"St. Abe and his Seven Wives, a Tale of Salt Lake City" (Strahan and Co.) belongs to a very different class of poetry. The author has one advantage over Mr. Buchanan, that his muse deals in realism unmixed, and that nobody need be in any doubt as to what he means. Here is a satire upon Mormonism—with especial reference to its "peculiar institution"—which is well calculated to complete the work already commenced by United States law. Such vigorous, racy, determined satire has not been met with for many a long day, certainly not in verse. It is at once fresh and salt as the sea. In the story of Cissy, who forsakes her lover Joe Wilson for the Apostle Hiram Higginson, we have a glorious onslaught on Mormon hypocrisy from a flesh-and-blood point of view; and surely Joe lays on the lash on the saints even more severely than he lays it on to his horse when he passes the scene of his wooing. But the hitting is scarcely so hard as that of St. Abe when he tells home truths from his vantage ground of knowledge. St. Abe has tried polygamy like the good Mormon he has endeavoured to be, and has striven to manage with his six wives in orthodox style; but when he "seals" Sister Anne he finds that, however willing the spirit, the flesh is weak, and he falls in love with her. As he tells Brigham Young in his last epistle to his superior, every mortal is not a saint, and people like himself,

Instead of keeping well apart the flesh and spirit, brother,
And making one with cunning art the nigger of the other,
They muddle and confuse the two, they mix and twist and mingle,
So that it takes a cunning view to make out either single.

The consequence is that he cannot love all his wives from an eminence, and crush and keep them under according to rule, but is constrained by his human feelings to give himself up to one, and so he elopes with sweet sister Anne. This "last epistle," in which he describes the saintly demands made upon him, and compares them with his own short-comings, is exquisite for its satire and humour, and the manner in which it embodies the boldest things in the most vigorous versification. His is an ironical lash, unlike that of Joe Wilson, and he lays his subject bare in order that it may be felt. The result is a ruthless exposure; but plain though the words be, the moral is still plainer, and there is no more need to object to the author's candour than there is to complain of the candour of a sermon. As regards literary execution, the work is masterly.

IN "The Life and Death of the Sublime Society of Beefsteaks," by Bro. Walter Arnold (Bradbury, Evans, and Co.), we are upon very different ground. This celebrated society was founded in the year 1735, by John Rich, harlequin and machinist at Covent Garden, and after a great career, during which it included among its members the picked men of wit and pleasure of its period, including Royal dukes, it died a natural death only the other day, when its effects were sold off. In the present volume, "Brother Walter Arnold" has preserved the photographs of the material accessories of the society—the great gridiron, the chair, the insignia, and some artistic remembrances, as well as its songs by various members, including the celebrated Captain Charles Morris; and he has, besides, placed upon record the rules and other formal matters concerning its constitution and proceedings. Manners have changed in these days, and men are no longer found to eat steaks upon principle, to associate beef with liberty, and to write songs in its glorification; but many will delight in this loving memento, which could not have been more completely executed. The songs alone are well worth preserving, notwithstanding that Captain Morris, who takes the lead in this department, has been just a little over-rated as a poet. Perhaps we want the steaks, and the port, and the spirit of past conviviality, to give them their true relish. But the author of "The Sweet, Shady Side of Pall Mall" is always welcome; and here we have him in some of his gayest moments. This little book might be a text for many social sermons, and in more appropriate columns than ours the opportunity will probably be found.

Mr. Samuel Smiles has given us an admirable book upon "Character" (John Murray). A more fitting companion to "Self Help" could not be found. Its design has the advantage of not pretending to deal with new material, and nothing could be better than the way in which he treats the old. The book is like an addition to the works of the elder Disraeli, *plus* a purpose. It will be especially read by the young for its facts; but its scope is sufficient for readers of all ages.

Mr. Smiles has a son, who made "A Boy's Voyage Round the World" (John Murray). The result is given in a pleasant volume, edited by the father. The young writer tells his own tale, and tells it in a manner which will commend itself to the public. He gives us the latest accounts of Australia, and of what he saw on his return by the Pacific route, *via* Honolulu and San Francisco, proceeding thence by railway across the Rocky Mountains to New York. His experiences are detailed with modesty and intelligence; they are amusing, besides, and embrace much useful information. They were not written for publication: hence much of their interest. It would be well if many travellers would persuade themselves, when writing, that publication was not their object.

Sir Baldwin Leighton, Bart., has collected and edited the "Letters and Other Writings of the late Edward Denison, M.P. for Newark" (Bentley). This book will have a special attraction for the friends of the author; and all readers will welcome these memorials of a life too short for the good work to which it was devoted. Mr. Denison died early in 1870, in his thirtieth year—at Melbourne, whither he had gone as a last chance for health; but for years before he had devoted himself to solving the problem of pauperism, and arousing the poor to a sense