

MISCELLANEOUS.

BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTES.

DIE BRIEFE DER FRAU RATH GOETHE. Gesammelt und herausgegeben von
Albert Köster. 2 vols. Leipsic: Poeschel, 1905.

The editor, Herr Köster, has written a short introduction of only fourteen printed pages, but enough to characterize the significance of this rich correspondence which contains documents of a noble life, shaping itself into a worthy autobiography. The great poet owes to his mother more than is generally known. He has not only inherited her poetic disposition and buoyancy of spirit, but she has also surrounded him with her motherly love, removing from his life even in later years, everything that could worry him or cause him solicitude. It is for instance not commonly known how much she did for him in pecuniary sacrifices at the time when her illustrious son was well able to take care of his own accounts. We learn from the introduction to this book that during the Napoleonic war Frankfort had to pay a heavy contribution, and Goethe not being a citizen of the free city, was directly affected, but his mother, Frau Aga, paid every cent of it without ever making reference to her son, simply to spare him the worry of making these increased payments. Herr Köster tells us that there is preserved in Weimar, a little sheet on which a few figures are written in Frau Aga's own handwriting, which tells us how much the poet's mother still cared for the comfort of her son, and continued to spoil him with her motherly love. They read as follows:

1778.	700
1782.	888
1782.	1000
1785.	1000
1794.	1000
1801.	1000
	<hr/>
	f 5588
	600
	<hr/>
	f 6188

We cannot here enter into a discussion of the correspondence itself, but we need not add that the letters are important to every one who takes an interest in Goethe. At the end of Volume II, the editor has added a list of references where the originals of the letters are to be found, and also a number of notes, which, however, are all distinguished by terseness and are just suf-

ficient for the reader to understand the letters and their personalities. An index to the names mentioned in the letters concludes the volume.

VERITAS. Verleger und Schriftleiter, *Prof. Robert Wihan*. Trautenau, Bohemia. 40 h. per number.

The publisher desires to make this little periodical an organ for the establishment of truth in the most important questions of mankind and for bringing about an intellectual contact among all thinkers. Most of the contents of the periodical is written by the editor. In addition to his editorials it contains practically nothing but correspondence to which he makes reply.

Professor Wihan regrets that the most important ideas are either wrongly defined or differently understood by different authors. Such ideas are spirit, things, forces, space, time, causation, God, duty, virtue, sin, wrong, etc., and it seems as if there prevailed nowhere any agreement. Almost every proposition of one thinker is doubted by another, and so the result of philosophy seems to be pure negativism. Nothing is unshakable and hence he proposes to have a series of questions answered positively and unobjectionably for the first time in the development of science. He begins with ethical questions. The first one is as follows: "What must be the most important duty of life for mankind?" Answer: "There can be no higher nor more important task than the aspiration to become as happy as possible." By happiness is meant something more than a mere continued feeling of pleasure. It includes also contentedness and he insists that the higher happiness is preferable to lower ones. The chief command of morality is stated in proposition 10 which declares: "Thou shalt enoble thyself as much as possible, and especially hate and avoid with thy whole soul everything vulgar, because otherwise thou couldst never be contented and happy, and because in this way thou makest not only for thyself in all conditions of thy life a higher contentedness, but wilt also contribute much to the general welfare and to the realization of the higher goal of mankind." Further propositions discuss intellectual and esthetic culture and kindred topics.

As to religion Professor Wihan deems it obvious (page 35) that man can be nobler without religion and religious education than has heretofore been accomplished, because the teachings of an incontestable ethics of reason would be established only on the convincing foundation of experience, and such an education without religion has been begun at an early age with the children.

Later numbers contain also articles concerning the fundamental ideas of philosophy, the purpose and use of philosophy, Buddhism and theosophy, and kindred topics.

MAN CONSIDERED IN RELATION TO GOD AND A CHURCH. By *W. Carew Hazlitt*. London: Reeves & Turner. 1905. Pp. vi, 389.

The author states plainly that he does not seek to pose as a skeptic and has no bias toward infidelity; but that his book is the result of an endeavor on his part since the age of fifteen to "reconcile the reputed facts about ourselves, our origin, and our prospects, with the testimony afforded by history, science, analogy, and instinct." His desire is for all thinking people to ascertain the relationship of aspirations, professions and doctrines of bygone centuries to those prevalent to-day. He claims that the Church and the world

have a common starting-point, and that the carefully considered views of an educated and earnest layman are as valuable toward an advancement in knowledge as those of a clergyman "who entertains certain ideas *ex officio*."

The author is an Englishman prominent in the literary world, and writes from a distinctly English point of view of distinctly English conditions. Still many of these conditions are typical of those which are more universal, and the book will be of interest to thinking people everywhere who are grappling with the same doubts and inconsistencies of which Mr. Hazlitt writes. Of the many vital subjects treated we mention: Revelation, Free Will, Evolution, The Brain, The Soul, Heaven and Hell, and Lessons of Science.

NEW THOUGHTS. Philadelphia: George S. Ferguson Company. 1898. Pp. 191.

Charles Henry Fittler, an inventor and a man of interesting personality, publishes anonymously a book called *New Thoughts*, which may be called rhapsodies on great authors and historical figures such as Shakespeare, Napoleon, Kant, Goethe, Dante, Hugo, Milton, etc. The book is very peculiar. Though written in prose it may easily be resolved into blank verse which produces a peculiar effect on the listener if those essays are read aloud. If critically analyzed the book contains nothing that will be of value to the historian or litterateur, for it is not based upon a study of these characters, and the author does not pretend to give any solution to historical events connected with these names. His words gush from his heart in prophet-like rapture and this poetic tenor of the several essays should be considered as its characteristic feature.

PROBLEMS OF THE FUTURE. By S. Laing. London: Watts, 1905. Pp. 158.

This is a collection of essays on scientific, social and religious subjects, written, as the author states, "to give definiteness and precision to the ideas of some of the educated public who are not specialists, upon various questions which are now pressing forward and waiting for solution." Some of these ideas which Mr. Laing treats in popular fashion in this little book are: Solar Heat, Climate, Tertiary Man, The Missing Link, The Religion of the Future, The Historical Element in the Gospels, and Creeds of Great Poets.

BUDDHIST MEDITATIONS. From Japanese Sources. By Rev. Arthur Lloyd. Tokyo: Rikkyo Gakuin. 1905. Pp. 130.

Rev. Arthur Lloyd, a clergyman who has resided for many years in Japan, publishes a pamphlet, *Buddhist Meditations, from Japanese Sources*, in which he gives a general description of Buddhism as it is in Japan.

He contrasts Buddhism with Christianity, showing corresponding doctrines and phases of Buddhism so that we may readily see where and in what respect a Buddhist differs from a Christian. The author sometimes identifies too rashly the views of Buddhist priests he met, with Buddhism, but upon the whole he is fair in the treatment of his subject.

Watts & Co. have republished Mr. W. M. Salter's *Ethical Religion*, and have thus made the ideas and aspirations of this prominent leader of the Ethical Culture Society more accessible to the English public.