

NEW BOOK.

Willis George Emerson, who has been one of *The Conservative's* valued contributors, is the latest addition to the list of fiction-writing business men, and his "Buell Hampton," just issued by Forbes & Company, is no mean annex to current American fiction. It is a story of Kansas, of the present day. It was begun, the author states, twelve years ago; the plot and the mystery may be attributed perhaps to a more youthful time; but the filling, the incident, the local color, are the work of a mature understanding, joined with the observant eye of a man of experience.—It is a story of very respectable bulk, and the lover, the maiden, the plotting woman and the English lord make a web of sufficient interest to the novel reader; the Rosicrucian has not been worked very hard of late, and we submit that a Kansas writer has as good a right to him as Lord Lytton had; and the sketches of Kansas as the writer saw it, written evidently on the spot and by the light of swift glances, are as good as the best.—The writer is fond of music, and shows that he belongs to a certain characteristic school of western writers by using French and German words in their proper places and spelling them in the proper way; but one wonders why an author so scrupulous about accented vowels in foreign words, should see fit to write "cum," "minit," and "speek" for come, minute and speak, in portraying the speech of the men of Kansas.

The local part of the book is genuine and good. The politics, the journalism, the hard times, the devastating calamities, are worthy of becoming a part of our permanent literature. Parts of the book could only have been written by a man of taste and discernment, thoroughly in sympathy with his subject. Such sayings as the following we like very much indeed:

"When the wreck and the ruin had been surveyed in the gray dawn and morning of a new day, these loyal people, with a fortitude unequalled in the history of communities, returned to the burning embers of their dugout homes, and, forgetting the devastation of the hot winds and the calamity of the greatest prairie-fire that had ever swept over the southwest, they went on loving Kansas,—the land of sunshine and of sunflowers."

THE PROMISE OF A MERCHANT MARINE.

[Frederic Emory in the *World's Work*.]

A German economist, Prof. Von Halle, who recently visited our larger

shipbuilding plants, gives them high praise as being in advance of those of Europe in modern technique and "the most perfect apparatus and tools," enabling them to turn out "the very best quality of work," and threatening a serious competition with the German yards. The splendid war vessels they have constructed, not only for our own government, but for foreign powers, would seem to indicate that our superiority as an economical producer of steel, combined with the mechanical ingenuity and efficiency they have shown, should enable our shipwrights to build better and cheaper vessels for the merchant service than can be produced elsewhere. It is to be presumed that they are only awaiting the time when a sufficient demand shall have been created by the removal of the conditions unfavorable to the investment of American capital in the carrying trade. The element of higher wages for labor in the building and operating of ships will probably have less and less weight as a deterrent to such investment, as the fact becomes more widely recognized that highly paid skilled labor, with the aid of machinery, produces more cheaply than the so-called pauper labor of other lands. The number of men employed in operating a ship, moreover, is already being reduced by the introduction of machinery and mechanical appliances, and it may be expected that the inventive faculty which has wrought such wonderful economics in our mills and workshops, will bring about a similar saving in the cost of ocean transportation.

These considerations provide another and a very striking illustration of the value of a highly developed industrialism as the basis of military strength. In the extension of commerce, efficient navies are the surest guarantees of protection and unobstructed growth. If it ever came to a trial between the United States and any other Power as to which should have the greater navy, it would seem to be clear, from the foregoing presentation of our unequalled resources for building vessels of the best type, that in the long run we must win.

WHAT AN UNREAD MAN SHOULD READ.

Among the few general counsels which I venture humbly to offer on this matter, the first and most important for the unread man to remember is this: Beware of literary superstition. Naturally, the timid seeker whom I have in mind is liable to feel a little awed before enthroned literary authority, in a sense, it is the proper attitude for a beginner, but it must be accompanied by a courageous adherence to his own impressions. For example, if some one has advised you to read the "Iliad," and you cannot, for the life of you, see anything in it, while, at the same time, you are shame-

fully conscious that it is a "classic," and that it is your moral duty to enjoy it in spite of yourself,—the thing to do is to be perfectly honest with yourself, and put Homer by,—at all events, for the time. The day may come when, through the changes wrought in your taste by various other reading, you may enjoy Homer after all, and realize why so many generations of men have delighted in him,—why, in short, his works are classic.

Meanwhile, however, there is no use in your trying to feel what you don't feel; for reading is nothing if not sincere, and its profit is not easily separable from pleasure. I have taken the "Iliad" merely as an example of those world-famous books which, gathered from every branch of literature, compose the heterogeneous assemblage of the immortals, and all of which the bewildered unread man, when he takes his first respectful look at their embattled names on the bookshelf, superstitiously feels it his mighty responsibility to digest.—Richard Le Gallienne, in June "Success."

HISTORICAL PLACES.

Some things seem to be accomplished more easily in Kansas than in Nebraska. They have done more, for instance, in the way of marking historic spots down there than we have ever done in our state. We have no reason to think they are any more considerate of recent events, of matters connected with the Civil or Spanish wars; but of the times that lie back of living men's memory they do seem to be more mindful. Last September they dedicated a monument to Lieutenant Pike, on the site of the Indian village or "republic" where he pulled down the last Spanish flag in 1806; and now they are putting up a shaft to mark the kingdom of Quivera. This is a name found in the records of the early Spanish explorers, who heard of such a place and expected to find much gold there. So much moonshine enters into their narratives that Quivera has become a kind of joke of late years; but certain careful students, among whom is Mr. E. E. Blackman, of our state society, claim to have definitely located the habitat of the ancient Indian nation the Spaniards had in mind, and to be erecting this monument at its approximate geographical center.

Now Nebraska has never done anything of this kind. Some day she will have to begin. We of Nebraska City are not very enthusiastic over such things in the abstract; we might not care about any monuments on Blackbird Hill or at old Fort Atkinson; but we can probably all see the propriety of the state's marking the site of the first Fort Kearney with some sort of a construction on the vacant lot west of the Morton House.

With a little effort, this attention could probably be obtained from the next legislature.