

ulously as they read such a marvel of modest expression. Then Brown makes another of his characters say, in all earnestness, after venturing into Philadelphia during the plague. "Some will regard my conduct as the last degree of temerity, or of heroism." An egotistic expression will be more apt to cause merriment than regard.

Brown's works are almost entirely an account of what "I" did—the "I" varying to suit the occasion. As a rule, too, there is about as much life in one of his scenes as in the average review. I don't remember when I have read anything which reminded me so much of a talking machine or of automatic figures. Perhaps this criticism is unjust and due to my particular state of mind at the time. I had been reading Tolstoi and the descent may have specially impressed itself.

There is one other criticism—but whether of the author or publisher I am uncertain. The paragraphing is abominable. Continually, in the conversational parts, one starts a different paragraph; supposing another character is speaking but finds when half through that it should be a continuation of the former paragraph.

* * *

The *March Forum* contains an article on "The Profitable Reading of Fiction," which is well worth reading. The author shows a lingering preference for Richardson, and refuses to see the merits of "Tom Jones"—a position savoring of the inconsistent, but perhaps we have no right to criticise his personal likings. He says, too "It must always be borne in mind, despite the claims of realism, that the best fiction, like the highest artistic expression in other modes, is more true, so to put it, than history or nature can be." This proposition will hardly be accepted unquestioned. Just in this connection there is an article entitled "The Present State of the Novel," in the January *Fortnightly*, which is especially valuable in its criticism of Zola, Daudet and Ohnet. The tendency is to make the term "French Novel" entirely too general in its condemnation, and we should be careful not to confuse in any way the school of Balzac or Hugo with that of Zola or Daudet. Even in France the opinion is growing that the style of the latter is unwarranted.

ASA GRAY.

Asa Gray was born in the village of Sanquoit, Oneida county, New York, November 18, 1810, and died January 30, 1888 in Cambridge, Mass.

He received a common school education, and graduated at the Fairfield Medical College in 1831. He, however, abandoned the practice of medicine and devoted himself to the study of botany, in which branch of science he had no equal in America.

He early made the acquaintance of many eminent botanists, and the contact with them, no doubt, did much to stimulate him to the utmost effort in his work.

He came forward at a time when the Linnæian artificial system of botany was being replaced by the natural system. Dr. Gray was among the first to arrange the heterogeneous assemblage of species upon the natural basis of affinity. He was an independent investigator, and a most critical observer. The results of his investigation, which have been published in the form of text books, pamphlets, and articles in the different magazines and papers, make up a good sized library, very valuable to any student in botany. His first publication was on a set of grasses and sedges; his first printed paper was "A Monograph of North American *Ry-chosperæ*." In 1834 he was appointed botanist to the U. S. Exploring expedition; but, as the time of departure was delayed, he resigned that situation. For a number of years he

was engaged as teacher of chemistry, botany, geology, and mineralogy in a private school in Utica. In 1838 he was elected Professor of Natural History in the just organized University of Michigan; but he never filled the position, as the institution was in a very chaotic state, and not prepared for his services. In 1842 he was elected Fisher Professor of Natural History at Harvard, and remained in connection with that institution until his death. In 1873 he retired from active service as teacher, and devoted himself to the charge of the herbarium of Harvard College, and to scientific work. Four times he had the degree of LL. D. conferred upon him,—the last time, in the presence of the most learned and renowned men of Europe at Edinburg in 1887. He was a member of a number of societies, both in America and Europe, and did honor to them all.

It has been said that the worth of a man is seldom appreciated until his death, at which time all that was true and beautiful in his life is dwelt upon, and his achievements praised as much as his short comings had been condemned during his life. If this be the rule, Asa Gray was certainly an exception to it. For many years he enjoyed the distinction he holds after death; and unlike most men, he wore this honor gracefully, without conceit or egotism. He early showed qualities that were bound to make him succeed in life. He was possessed of a bright intellect; an investigating turn of mind; a great degree of perseverance; and a desire to excel. With these traits of character he was well qualified to grapple with so fragmentary and incomplete a branch of science as botany was when he first studied it. By applying himself diligently, he made rapid strides in his work. Each year brought to him some fresh laurel, and it was not long before he was the guest, companion, and even equal of world renowned botanists.

He did not devote himself to the subject of botany until after he had taken his M. D. degree; and the habits acquired in the study of medicine, together with the practical experience received while at work at home, one, no doubt, invaluable to him, and laid a firm foundation for the arduous labor of his later years.

There are few at the present time who realize the condition of botany when Asa Gray first studied it. The little which had been contributed was unscientific and ill arranged, and the study which is now so attractive and inviting, was then very different. One of Dr. Gray's contemporaries says, "Those who now take up the study of botany can have little idea of the difficulties that beset those of a generation or so ago. Where they groped and guessed, doubtful whether they were in the right path or wrong one, the way is now made clear. The old rubbish is brushed aside, and the student now can walk in pleasant paths, guided by the clearest light of modern science." And for this wonderful transformation Asa Gray above all others deserves the credit. Out of chaos, by unceasing labor, he brought botany, so systematized and classified that even a child can understand it, while before it puzzled the brightest minds.

An idea exists among a certain class of people that a difficult subject must be abstrusely dealt with. Asa Gray believed in expressing things in the plainest and simplest way possible. In this lay the secret of his success. He handles the most difficult and perplexing subjects in such a plain and lucid manner that it seemed more like reading an interesting tale than a scientific treatise.

He was an indefatigable worker, a just and searching critic, a man of penetrating intellect, of determined spirit, and of a self-sacrificing disposition. His manner was genial and served to reflect the beauty and sweetness of the flowers of