

## A Book of the Week.

DAVID HARUM.\*

This book, which has been attracting a good deal of attention in America, seems to have been unduly neglected in England; we are perhaps too interested in the study of Problems on Decadence to take much interest in so normal and breezy a person as the horse-dealing, State-of-New-York country banker.

But nobody would regret making the acquaintance of David. His aphorisms are quite delightful, one only wishes there were more of them; and his mixture of exceeding sagacity, with real kindness of heart, is quite irresistible.

The first interview between him and his sister, in which he tells her the story of his horse transaction with the "Deakin" is simply delicious.

"Quite a while ago, in fact, not long after I come to enjoy the privilege of the Deakin's acquaintance, we had a deal. I wasn't jest on my guard, knowin' him to be a deakin, and all that, an' he lied to me so splendid that I was took in, clean over my head. He done me so brown I was burnt in places, and you c'd smell smoke round me fer some time."

"Was it a horse?" asked Mrs. Bixbee gratuitously.

"Wa'al," David replied, "mebbe it had been some time, but at that partic'lar time the only thing to determine that fact was that it wa'n't nothin' else."

There are many specially funny bits which make the best of reading; and the scattered aphorisms are some of them really remarkable.

"A certain amount of fleas is good for a dog; keeps him from broodin' on bein' a dog,"—this seems to suggest the reason for the sadness of many a hypochondriac.

Perhaps the best scene in the book is the interview between David Harum and the Widow Cullom, on Christmas day. The gradual way in which the situation is developed, the slow and complete change of feeling on the part of David Harum's clerk, John Lenox; and the subsequent Christmas dinner at the Harums', with David's quite unapproachable after-dinner story of his visit in high society, and his ignorance of the use of an egg-cup, culminating in the story of the man who caught a skunk, and had no powder to shoot him with—"Wa'al, wa'al, wa'al," as the elder said, there has been no such genuine fun in print for many a long day.

The love story of John Lenox runs on somewhat quiet and austere lines, but it is very charming, nevertheless. Mary Blake was quite worthy to make David's acquaintance, and to be on intimate terms with him, and that is saying a very great deal.

It is saddening to reflect that the hand that wrote "David Harum" is already cold in death. Mr. Westcott might have added much to the gaiety of nations, and he also possessed that streak of pathos so essential to the equipment of the humorist. David's account of the birth of his little boy, shows in one fleeting glimpse, the possession of the true quality; and this is perhaps even more apparent in the subsequent account of the child's death.

The man's type, reared in the very harshest school of adversity, not to be tricked or taken advantage of by any, learning the hearts of the men he had to deal with as though they were books, yet never for one moment taking unfair advantage of the widow or the helpless, rich, without culture, despising the kind of religion that he knew—the hypocrisy of the Deakin and his kind—yet living most consistently up to his own stan-

\* By E. Noyes Westcott. Pearsons.

dard of right and justice, this is a type more American than English; but in no branch of the Anglo-Saxon peoples could it fail to awaken the echoes of a deep and true sympathy. G. M. R.

## Science Notes.

The wonders of electricity are yet in their infancy, the latest reported being the assertion by Mr. Peter Stiens, a Russian scientist, of his ability to give artificial sight, whether the person is born without eyes, or whether the sight has been wholly or partially destroyed. His experiments are not yet complete, but sight is already given. The apparatus focusses the rays of light from the object to the brain as in the camera.

A representative of the *Daily News* describes his experiences of the apparatus, after being effectually blindfolded, as follows:—"I could see absolutely nothing. Matches and candles were lighted before me, but I could not see them. Then I was connected with the apparatus. I felt a slight sensation of electrical current passing through my body. Then quickly the darkness passed away, a dull grey took its place, and was succeeded by a light, clear and bright. I saw fingers held up before me, and a disc that looked like a coin. And when I was disconnected from the apparatus I found I was standing just where I was when the eyes were bandaged; Mr. Stiens had been by my side all the time, and there was no one else present. Mr. Stiens appeared to be as delighted as I was surprised at the result. Let it be borne in mind that my eyesight is perfect. At any rate, I believe so; but my eyes had been completely blindfolded, and all was absolute blackness till the connection with the apparatus took place. The inventor would not permit me to examine the apparatus, patents for which have not yet been applied for."

Mr. Stiens also promises an electrical apparatus enabling deaf persons to hear perfectly.

## Poem.

## THE DIGNITY OF WORK.

"Be sure no earnest work  
Of any honest creature, howbeit weak,  
Imperfect, ill-adapted, fails so much,  
It is not gathered as a grain of sand  
To enlarge the sum of human action used  
For carrying out God's ends. No creature works  
So ill, observe, that therefore he's cashiered.  
The honest earnest man must stand and work,  
The woman also—otherwise she drops  
At once below the dignity of man,  
Accepting serfdom. Free men freely work.  
Whoever fears God, fears to sit at ease."

From "*Aurora Leigh*." E. B. BROWNING.

## WHAT TO READ.

- "The Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland." By Lady Wilde.
- "Social England under the Regency." By John Ashton.
- "Admiral Phillip." By Louis Becke and W. Jeffery.
- "Mammon and Co." By E. F. Benson.
- "The Path of a Star." By Sara Jeanette Duncan.
- "Kit Kennedy." By S. R. Crockett.
- "Richard Carvel." By Winston Churchill.
- "In London Town." By Arthur Morrison.
- "The King's Mirror." By Anthony Hope.

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