

A Book of the Week.

ON PETER'S ISLAND.*

A novel by this author, that is, by Arthur Ropes, is a new and very interesting departure; though to a different department of the world of fame he is well-known as Adrian Ross. It has been the fortune of the present writer to see some most exceptionally clever work by this versatile gentleman, done during his schooldays; parodies of the manner of various well-known poets, including a most irresistible Browning, on the subject of "Hickory, dickory dock."

Such knowledge of the author's capacity awakes a keen interest in his new venture, and most decidedly there is no cause for disappointment in "On Peter's Island."

It might have been judicious to have selected a more enticing title for a book so full of thrilling incident. To the average Briton, "On Peter's Island" suggests a book on fisheries, and it would be a real surprise to be suddenly hurled into the midst of the fell society of the Odds and Evens, at a secret meeting.

The book is full of Nihilism, and for this the authors more or less apologize in a short preface, saying that the idea of the book was conceived in the time of the Tsar Alexander III., when Secret Societies flourished exceedingly. But no apology was needed. The racy pace of the narrative carries us on breathless from incident to incident—all quite life-like, unstrained, vivid; one feels they would be quite possible, and yet how the heart sickens at the thought of it all!

The interest of the tale centres round two young American oil-refiners, trading in St. Petersburg, Walter Anson and Franz Kaufmann; their acquaintance, the odiously vulgar Mr. Rogers and his appalling son Jim, with whom is staying Constance Marshall, a nice English girl, out for a holiday; Morozof, trade rival of the oil-refiners, ex-convict, libertine, and villain; Major Golovkin of the Police; Stanislaus Lubinski and his sister Sasha; and, lastly, the grim company of the Odds and Evens.

Stanislaus Lubinski is a young Pole, the last of a noble, impoverished race. He is a cowardly, lying traitor, living for luxury, ready to commit even murder to serve his own interests, ready to betray any master who will pay him highest.

Wonderfully horrible, yet fascinating, is the description of how the Secret Society works. The gradual way in which its members are lured into its power, its slowly tightening grip, its relentless spying, its inevitable vengeance. The wretched Stanislaus, after taking part in the assassination of Golovkin at the bidding of the terrible President, "Number Nought," is so maddened by the way in which they squeeze from him the money he likes to have for pleasure, that he betrays them to the police. There is a ghastly, deadly raid; all *save one* are killed and taken; but the sole survivor is the master mind—the President. His vengeance duly descends. The form that it takes is so original and so horrible that it shall not be here divulged.

The lighter parts of the book are not so successful, though manifesting throughout a marvellous knowledge of Russia and the Russians. The characters have a truly exasperated habit of never speaking with-

out using each other's Christian names. At first this was ascribed to Russian peculiarity. In Petersburg, for all this reviewer knows to the contrary, it may be customary in every sentence you utter to address the young lady as Alexandra Borisoonia; they have more leisure there. But among English and Americans this is not so. "Well, Walter, are you going out?" "Yes, Franz, I am going soon." "But, Walter, have you ordered a droschky?" "No, Franz, but I will do so at once." This is really no unfair sample of the conversation of the two partners as recorded. There is also a straining to be funny whenever the Rogers, father and son appear, which is not always successful; and Sasha, the Polish girl, is a very conventional heroine. These, however, are small defects in a book written with so much knowledge, and containing so many fine situations. G. M. R.

Verses.

TOLSTOI.

The voice of one who cries upon the shore
Across an ever-widening human sea,
Whose waves are wistful faces: manfully
Cries a new teaching, urging evermore
A love of man to man unthought before,
A pride of life, a pride of poverty,
A claim to follow nature's liberty
And cast behind the slavery of yore.
The hand of one who 'mid the marching years
A flag of faith in proud unfurling flings
About a weary people, till with breath
New stirring 'neath the shadows of old fears,
They see a fair young hope with outstretched wings,
A spirit rising from the dust of death.

E. TINDALL-ATKINSON.

—From the "Thrush."

What to Read.

- "Lays of Love and Travel." By Nyrae.
- "Five Years of My Life." By Alfred Dreyfus.
Translated from the French by James Mortimer.
- "The Further Memoirs of Marie Bashkirtseff.
Together with a Correspondence between Marie
Bashkirtseff and Guy de Maupassant."
- "The Chinese Crisis from Within." By Ching Wen.
Edited by Rev. G. M. Reith, M.A.
- "Rosa Amorosa: the Love-Letters of a Woman."
By George Egerton.
- "The Aristocrats: Being the Impressions of the
Lady Helen Pole during her sojourn in the Great
North Woods, as spontaneously recorded in her letters
to her friend in North Britain, the Countess of Edge
and Ross."
- "The Second Youth of Theodora Desanges." By
Mrs. Lynn Linton.
- "Her Mountain Lover." By Hamlin Garland.

Coming Events.

May 13th.—Public Meeting of the National British Women's Temperance Association, in the Queen's Hall.

May 21st.—Lord Glenesk presides at the Annual Meeting of Governors of the Chelsea Hospital for women, 4.

* By Arthur and Mary Ropes. John Murray.

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