

The second lecture relates dramatically and picturesquely the extraordinary connection of John Hawkins and the African slave trade.

The third and most interesting lecture in the book tells the story of how Sir John Hawkins bearded and bested Philip II. Diplomacy in those days did not shrink from telling lies on a wholesale scale, and John Hawkins, as well as the other seamen of that time were not squeamish in the matter of truth, but to balance this, their loyalty to comrades left as hostages in Spain was prodigious, as was also their detestation of the Spaniards and their terrible inquisition. Through the social influence of an English lady at the Court of Spain the wily Hawkins was represented "as a faithful Catholic, who was indignant at the progress of heresy in England," and was eager to overthrow Elizabeth, and reinstate the Queen of Scots and her religion in his country. Mr. Froude relates with great archness how king Philip was at first wary, and examined the alluring bait held before him "like an old pike," but ultimately he swallowed it, and this is the end of the letter that Hawkins wrote to Cecil in England:—

"I have sent your lordship the copy of my pardon from the King of Spain, in the order and manner I have it, with my great titles and honours from the King, from which God deliver me. Their practices be very mischievous, and they be never idle, but God, I hope, will confound them and turn their devices on their own necks."

Mr. Froude sums up the conduct of Elizabethan seamen by pointing out that

"We may think as we please of these beggars of the ocean, these Norse corsairs come to life again with the flavour of Geneva theology in them; but for daring, for ingenuity, for obstinate determination to be spiritually free or to die for it, the like of the Protestant privateers of the sixteenth century has been rarely met with in this world."

Lecture IV. deals with Drake's voyage round the world, and of the fearful hardships undergone by that great British Admiral and his wonderful crew in the terrible cold and the fierce gales that they encountered. When Drake returned to England with his ships stuffed with bullion, gold, emeralds and rubies, a great gold crucifix set with emeralds as large as pigeon's eggs, and bales of silk and linen, the heart of Queen Elizabeth yearned to possess the treasure. The Spanish Ambassador was furious, and the timid Councillors of the Queen feared that complications would arise if England were allowed to keep possession of all this wealth. But Froude relates with that very considerable sense of humour that makes his histories so delectable, how "Elizabeth hated paying back," and how, though she was obliged to register the treasure and render an account to Mendoza, yet she took very good care that Drake and his brave crew did not go unrewarded, and in the end very little, if any, of the treasure found its way back to Spain.

All the lectures at the end of the book upon the attack on Cadiz, and the sailing and defeat of the Armada, are equally full of delightful adventure admirably related.

It has been said of Mr. Froude that his accuracy as a historian is not entirely unimpeachable, but though, perhaps, these lectures are too picturesque in their style and matter to admit them in a library of historical archives, yet it is to be suspected that the average British reader will gain a truer appreciation of Elizabethan Seamen and the dramatic times in

which they lived, than they would from a dry-as-dust and severely accurate history.

I cannot find the exact quotation, but somewhere in these pages Froude points out what an admirable Odyssey could be written if only some great future Homer would arise, capable of doing justice to the bold characters of Drake and Hawkins and the glorious soul-inspiring times in which they lived.

A. M. G.

## Bookland.

MESSRS. HUTCHINSON AND CO. have brought out a translation of M. Zola's novel, "Au Bonheur des Dames," under the title "The Ladies' Paradise." The story is one of life in the Paris drapery world, and deals largely with the manners, customs, and grievances of French drapers' assistants. The translation is preceded by an introduction from the pen of Mr. Ernest Vizetelly.

Mr. Stead, in an interview with a representative of the *Westminster Gazette*, expresses himself as delighted with the great success of his "Penny Poets." When he first suggested such an issue his friends predicted utter failure, but he refused to listen to their gloomy prognostications, and it has turned out that his conception of what the British public needs in a literary way is the right one.

"Up to the present time," says Mr. Stead, "fourteen 'Poets' have appeared, and we have printed over a million and a-half copies. Of these 140,000 have gone to Australia; none to America so far as we know."

In point of popularity "Macaulay's Lays" have proved most successful, but this was the first to appear, and the issue contained so many portraits. Next comes "Marmion," of which nearly 125,000 have been sold. Curiously enough, "Romeo and Juliet" has sold least of all. Mr. Stead says—"I attribute the comparatively small sale of 'Romeo and Juliet' chiefly to the fact that few people read plays, whether by Shakespeare or anybody else. I need not say that the reception of 'Romeo and Juliet' does not encourage us to publish many more of Shakespeare's plays."

"Have you had many adverse criticisms?"—"Only two, I think. One came from an indignant parent at Manchester, who had rescued from a young girl's hands a copy of 'Romeo and Juliet,' which was, he said, most improper reading to circulate in cheap form; and the other was from a minister in the South of England, who complained that some of the ladies in 'The Earthly Paradise' had not sufficiently full toilet."

Mr. Stead thinks there is far too little reading done by the average citizen and his wife. When asked how many penny poets he intended to issue he replied—"Fifty in all, and I do not see why they should not go on selling for evermore. I believe that we are now standing on the brink of a new reading age. At present the immense majority of the English-speaking race never read a book at all. If you take from your bookcase the few books that have been most to you and ask the first twenty persons you meet in the street whether they have read them, you will find that they have not. But you will, I think, get people to read if they can get books in penny numbers."

And his view has been endorsed by the large sale of these penny books, which are to be seen everywhere, and among all classes, from the well-to-do in cities to poor cottagers who spend a weekly penny in their purchase. Since they were

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)