

conveyance of historical truth, and never leaves the reader in doubt as to the author's meaning. The result of these qualities is that the book presents a large amount of information in a plain and easily understood form; and, though it contains a great many details, they appear in the main as essential parts of the narrative, and not as isolated and insignificant facts.

Mr. Fiske opens his work with an account of the negotiations for peace between Great Britain and the United States, and then goes on to describe the condition of the several States at the time, and the political changes that took place in them after the attainment of their independence. The most important parts of the book, however, are the third and fourth chapters, dealing with the general state of affairs in the years succeeding the peace, the alarming tendency towards anarchy, and the utter inadequacy of the Confederation to furnish a stable government. Mr. Fiske makes it perfectly clear, that, if things had been left to take their own course, the Confederation would in a short time have broken up, and that it was the gradual but sure perception of this fact that paved the way for a stronger central government. The prejudice at first existing against such a government was dissolved by the logic of events, and then the good sense and patriotism of the people came to the rescue. Such a Constitution as ours, however, could not have been framed except by men of the highest political genius, and even the soberest thinkers will not regard Mr. Fiske's encomiums upon them as exaggerated. In his account of the Federal Convention, however, the author seems to us to have given too little attention to what is really the essential feature of our system of government. The most vital and most original part of the Constitution is the division of powers between the State and the Federal governments, and it is also the most perfect part; yet Mr. Fiske has less to say about this part of the scheme than about any other. But there is little to criticise in the book, and we cannot but hope that its author will give us other works of a similar character, and that other historical writers will come more and more to follow the same method of treatment. The American people need all the political instruction they can obtain, and books dealing with history, as this book does, in a philosophical manner, are among the best of political teachers.

Astronomy with an Opera-Glass. By G. P. SERVISS. New York, Appleton. 8°. \$1.50.

THE greater part of the matter composing this volume appeared originally in a series of articles published in *The Popular Science Monthly*. The author points out the interesting phenomena of the heavenly bodies that are visible, with little assistance from optical instruments, and thus gives an interesting and valuable introduction to the study of astronomy. Although nothing has been described as visible that cannot readily be seen by means of an opera-glass or a small field-glass, enough of the discoveries made by means of powerful telescopes has been stated to lend due interest to the subject, and to instigate the observer to further studies. The book has been written for the purpose of being a guidance to the observer. For this reason the matter has been arranged according to objects visible in each season, the stars of spring, summer, autumn, and winter each being treated in one chapter. Observations of the moon, the planets, and the sun are described in the last chapter of the book. In an introduction the requirements of a good opera-glass are set forth. The work is well adapted to exciting interest in astronomy, and imparting such knowledge of the heavenly bodies as must form the foundation of intelligent study of the results obtained by means of powerful telescopes.

American Weather. By A. W. GREELY. New York, Dodd, Mead, & Co. 12°.

THE object of the present work is to give clearly and simply, without the use of mathematics, an idea of meteorology. The introductory chapters treat briefly the methods of measuring atmospheric pressure, temperature, and other meteorological phenomena, while the rest of the book is a detailed climatology of the United States. The various phenomena are fully discussed, and illustrated by numerous maps, which convey a peculiar interest to the book. The vast amount of material collected by means of the Signal Service and the State meteorological services has been made use of,

and makes the book a very complete and comprehensive review of the climatology of the United States. The work is not merely a compilation of the work of other authors, but General Greely frequently takes occasion to put forward his own views, particularly in the chapters on storm-tracks. The principal merit of the book is the concise and clear treatment of the matter, which will enable every one interested in meteorological phenomena to understand the peculiarities and diverse character of American climate in various parts of the country. We hope it will contribute towards creating a greater appreciation of meteorology, and of its importance to the interests of American agriculture and industries. Some of the maps are particularly well adapted to show these applications of meteorology: among them we mention the maps of first and last killing frosts and the maps showing continuance of mean daily temperatures above 32° and 50°. The book forms a handy volume. It is well printed and illustrated, and is an excellent treatise on American weather. In the clearness of its method, it may be compared to Mohn's well-known 'Elements.'

The Writer's Handbook. Philadelphia, Lippincott. 12°. \$2.50.

THIS book consists of three distinct parts, written apparently by three different writers. All the writers are evidently British; but who they are, nothing on the titlepage, or elsewhere in the book, enables us to say. The first part of the volume is an elementary treatise on composition and rhetoric, with a series of extracts illustrating the history of English style. The matter of this part is in the main good; though the author, like most rhetoricians, dwells too much on the merely mechanical qualities of style, and too little on the moral and intellectual ones. The subject of figurative language, too, is insufficiently treated, the important figures metonymy and synecdoche being wholly neglected. But the author's remarks on style, though covering but a portion of the ground, are pretty good as far as they go. They will not help the young writer much in acquiring the good qualities of style; but they will, if heeded, enable him to guard against many defects. The author's own style is not in all respects a model; for, though it is correct and clear, it has a certain mechanical character, and some paragraphs read like a succession of aphorisms. The samples of English prose are not always such as we should have chosen; for, though they illustrate fairly well the history of style, some of them are by no means models of good style, and for learners this latter consideration is the more important. The second part of the book is another treatise on composition, only one-third as long as the first, but superior in quality. It covers but a portion of the ground usually occupied by such works; the subject of figures, for instance, being omitted altogether. But it sketches in plain though brief terms the leading qualities of style, and gives some useful hints as to the best mode of acquiring them. The third and concluding part of the book is confined to the subject of letter-writing; and it seems rather out of place in this collection, for, though it may be useful to those who write nothing else than letters, it can hardly be of much service to those who have read the other parts of this book.

The Death-Blow to Spiritualism: being the True Story of the Fox Sisters as revealed by the Authority of Margaret Fox Kane and Catherine Fox Jencken. By REUBEN BRIGGS DAVENPORT. New York, G. W. Dillingham. 16°. 50 cents.

THE last phase in the sad but ridiculous story which this volume tells is perhaps the pleasantest, or, better, the least displeasing. Forty years after two mischievous girls in a lonely country house undertook to frighten their mother by a series of midnight tricks, the same girls, now as mature women, confess to the world that the unparalleled psychic epidemic to which their pranks gave rise is all a fraud. The raps interpreted by credulous folk as the answers of inquiries to departed spirits are nothing less homely than the dislocations of the great toe. Beginning these raps as children innocent of the uses to which they were put, spurred on to deeper and deeper mischief by the marked attention given to them by weak-willed believers and the money-making proclivities of an elder sister, they soon found themselves the centre of an ever-increasing throng of enthusiasts, and in a position where it was dif-

ficult to retract. From such slight beginnings arose this stupendous movement of Spiritualism, developing one after another of alleged communications with forbidden spirits; adding cabinet *stances*, materializations, second-sight, and a host of modified conjuring-tricks, as proofs of supernatural agency, — a complete systematization, in which mediums and phenomena were explained with an insane logic and a morbid imagination; and, worse than all, the pitiable deception of countless simple-minded folk upon matters nearest and dearest to them. To this tale of constant opposition between fanaticism and science, the many investigations showing the groundlessness of these claims, we can now add the free and full confession of fraud on the part of the originators. The two heroines of the story are certainly to be praised for this avowal; and their romantic but hardly admirable career contains no better action than this. But whether this is really "the death-blow to Spiritualism" must be questioned. Such movements die slowly. Its adherents will claim an evidence independent of the Fox sisters, and ascribe to the latter mean and suspicious motives. As a writer on such topics has well said, men go mad in crowds, but they return to their senses only slowly and one by one.

AMONG THE PUBLISHERS.

THE *Century* for December contains a number of full-page engravings of sacred pictures by the old and little-known Italian master, Duccio. A striking feature is furnished by two articles on Henry Ward Beecher's appearance in England in 1863, in advocacy of the cause of the American Union. But the two contributions having perhaps the highest importance are the instalment of the life of Lincoln, entitled 'First Plans for Emancipation,' and the paper by Mr. Kennan in which he graphically describes 'Life on the Great Siberian Road.' In this number are the first of the stories of Irish-American life, by Mr. George H. Jessop, and one of Mr. Cable's literary 'finds' in the way of strange true stories under the title of 'Françoise in Louisiana.' In the same number is a timely paper on 'The Re-organization of the British Empire,' by Mr. George R. Parkin. In connection with Mr. Parkin's article is an Open Letter entitled 'Home Rule and Culture,' on the Irish aspect of re-organization, by Mrs. Margaret F. Sullivan. Henry James writes with full knowledge and critical enthusiasm a paper of which the pregnant title is 'London,' which paper has a running accompaniment of drawings by the well-known artist, Joseph Pennell. Edward L. Wilson gives his personal observations on the route 'From Sinai to Shechem,' accompanied by fifteen illustrations drawn mainly from his photographs. The 'Topics of the Time' are 'Christmas,' 'Progress of Ballot Reform,' 'Should there be an Aristocracy of Criminals,' and 'A Confusion in American Party Names.' In 'Open Letters' Mr. Ernest H. Crosby, of the New York Legislature, writes on 'Political Corruption,' suggesting the "formation of an American society for the promotion of political honesty;" and others of the 'Open Letters' deal with the 'Woman's Work' question, 'The Holt Method of Teaching Music,' and 'Herbert Spencer.' — On Dec. 6 the *Independent* celebrated the completion of its fortieth year. Articles were printed from Dr. Richard S. Storrs, the only one of the original editors now living; by Henry C. Bowen, who is one of the two original proprietors now living; and by Dr. Samuel T. Spear, who was a contributor to the first number. — The supplement in *Harper's Weekly* of Dec. 1 contains an article on 'Blizzards, Cyclones, and Tornadoes,' with illustrations by W. H. Gibson and others. — The International News Company of Beekman Street have ready the Christmas numbers of the London *Chatterbox* and the London *Graphic*, the latter having two large-page colored supplements. Neither of these celebrated publications will disappoint the expectations of their great throngs of readers in all parts of the world. They are as good this year as ever. — *The Book Lover* is the title of an attractive monthly journal published by William Evarts Benjamin, 6 Astor Place, New York, of which the first issue is dated November. — *The Publishers' Weekly* says that a new feature in periodical magazines is announced in the *Magazine of Poetry*, a quarterly review, whose first number will be issued in January, 1889, — a magazine to be devoted exclusively to poetry and the study of poetry. Among the poets to be discussed in early numbers are

Mr. Stedman, Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton, T. B. Aldrich, Mr. Stoddard, Lowell, Holmes, Whittier, Boyle O'Reilly, Edgar Fawcett, and Edith Thomas. — The *Political Science Quarterly* for December contains among its leading articles, 'A Study of the Influence of Socialism upon English Politics,' by William Clarke, an Oxford graduate and a London journalist; 'An Argument for Private Enterprise *versus* Public Business Management,' by Prof. Arthur T. Hadley; 'A Discussion of the Legality of Trusts,' by Prof. Theodore W. Dwight; 'An Analysis and Criticism of the Law of 1887, regulating the Electoral Count,' by Prof. John W. Burgess; 'An Account of the Practical Operation of the Official or State Ballot System in England,' by Mr. Edwin Goodby, a prominent Liberal politician; and 'A Summary of the Legal Questions which have arisen under the English Ballot Act,' by Mr. H. H. Asquith, M.P.

— The sixth and seventh instalments of Proctor's 'Old and New Astronomy' have been issued. The work continues to be full of interest. It is beautifully illustrated and printed. The present instalments treat of the phenomena of the sun, its corrugated surface, faculæ and spots, and the sun's surroundings. The last-mentioned part contains particularly illustrations of phenomena observed during total eclipses. In the latter half of the seventh instalment the description of the inferior planets is begun. We call particular attention to the beautiful plates, appended to the last instalment, showing a typical sunspot, a photograph of the sun, and of a total eclipse. — Hartleben's great atlas, 'Die Erde in Karten und Bildern,' is almost complete. Forty instalments have been issued, and only ten more remain to be published. The last numbers contain an interesting colonial map, and another of the whole continent of America. The maps are very clearly engraved, and the topography is very good. The accompanying text, which is profusely illustrated, treats of the geography of Africa. In the following instalments the Arctic regions will be treated. — Ticknor & Co. will publish Dec. 10 a work that will challenge the attention of the entire Christian world, Catholic or Protestant. This is the autobiography of the famous 'Nun of Kenmare' (Ireland), Sister M. Francis Clare (Cusack), whose services in the great Irish famine of 1879 are world-famous, and who is equally known and beloved for her long service of devotion and charity for the aid and elevation of working-girls. — There has recently been published a work entitled 'Handbook of Stenotypy, or Shorthand for the Type-writer,' being a formulated system of abbreviated orthography for the use of type-writers and others. By the use of the Roman letters and the numerals, with which all are familiar, and without any occasion whatever of possessing a knowledge of any system of shorthand writing, any operator, on any type-writing machine, may, by the use of stenotypy, systematized in this work, with but trifling study, practice only being requisite, become sufficiently competent to print from dictation directly on the machine, with a speed exceeding their ability at ordinary type-writing by thirty to fifty per cent. George Lane, 150 South Portland Avenue, Brooklyn, N.Y., is the address of the publisher. — Prof. Henry Allen Hazen has published a useful 'Hand-Book of Meteorological Tables,' which will be welcome to all meteorologists, being a collection of the best tables, in compact form, convenient for use, and at small cost. All tables relating to the same subject are placed together so far as possible. Thus the matter is divided into tables relating to temperature, pressure, humidity, and wind. Linear tables for converting measures form the next part of the book, while the last part contains miscellaneous tables. Among these, those for dividing by 29, 28, and 31, will be found particularly useful. In an appendix meteorological normals for the United States are given. The handiness of the volume will make it a welcome help to the working meteorologist. Unfortunately there are a number of misprints, which, however, will doubtlessly be corrected in a second edition. — Gen. C. W. Darling, corresponding secretary of the Oneida Historical Society at Utica, has compiled from manuscripts of public records a work which he entitles 'New Amsterdam, New Orange, New York.' It may be expected early next year, states the *Publishers' Weekly*. — Thomas Whittaker will publish shortly 'Stray Leaves of Literature,' by Frederick Saunders of the Astor Library. — The Forest and Stream Publishing Company announces