

Notices of Books, &c.

PERPLEXITY. 3 Vols. By Sydney Mostyn.—In point of interest there is no uncertainty here. The story runs swiftly; incident follows incident with sufficient perplexing suspense to carry the reader to the end without inclination to pass a page or a line anywhere. The power of this novel thus contrasts remarkably with the wordy weariness of so many that defy the endeavours of the most patient reader. It would be an impertinence to tell the plot of "Perplexity," for which neither reader nor author would forgive us. We shall content ourselves with a comment or two, and a recommendation of its perusal. The difficulty, not to say impropriety, of a lady relating her own troubled experience, when it happens to be as richly embellished with domestic infelicities as the history of Henry VIII., we are bound to view leniently, because in no other way could the story be so successfully unwound. The expedient adopted by some well-known novelists of professing to quote from a diary, making the heroine write as for herself instead of for the public, is at best a clumsy one. Kate Howard, the heroine in "Perplexity," had no leisure for writing a diary. Events of the greatest moment pass with inconceivable velocity. Indeed, that is the one blemish of the tale. If for six weeks we might read two or three years, we should certainly reduce some of the sensational incidents to the region of the probable without sacrificing anything. But this, after all, is a detail those who read novels for recreation—and that means nine hundred and ninety-nine out of a thousand—will care little about. In a few passages, such as the description of the fire, in the third volume, the touch of an experienced hand is wanting, but as the production of a new author the volume contains very few such. That the author has talent of no mean order will be seen in the dramatic interest of the tale, in the bold treatment of embarrassing situations, and in many short meditative pieces similar to the following:—

It was when the night came, when I had sought the silence of my room, the repose of my bed, that my impish nursling, Conscience, whom I had so carefully barred and bolted in my heart during the day, crept forth, squatted at my ear, and commenced its importunate articulations. Yet it did but worry me; it did not cause me to regret the step I had taken; it could not blunt my keen sense of joy at being loved; it could not dislodge the tinted vision of my future, which, pillar-like, moved over me to guide my resolutions. If conscience was garrulous at one ear, love was eloquent at the other.

The fascination of a tale so thickly interwoven with crime as "Perplexity" must remain a mystery. It will not be easy to dispose of that problem until it is satisfactorily explained why excellent people daily read with interest, and with no ulterior object, the record of criminal occurrences in our papers. They read, are entertained, shudder, and find satisfaction in the criminals' fate. With similar feelings will this novel be read, though it must not be supposed the story is all crime. There is both light and darkness in these romantic chapters.

CURRY AND RICE (*John B. Day*).—These forty vigorous sketches of station scenes in India are never-failing sources of amusement; they are as irresistibly funny, because so true to life, on the fortieth inspection as the first. But the volume does not require recommendation, or even to be described, for there are few members of Anglo-Indian society who have not met with Captain George Francklin Atkinson's handsome drawing-room book at one time or other, and desired to possess it. For some years this has not been possible, for the supply has been exhausted; but a fresh issue is announced, and once more the public can procure those eminent portraits of "Our Judge" and "Our Judge's Wife," in contrast to "Our Magistrate" and "Our Magistrate's Wife," of "Our Spins," "Our Band," with "Our Theatricals," and all the other skilfully-delineated phases of Indian society, which have been so generally extolled, and are as humorously representative of the India of to-day as when first issued—except in one or two trifling particulars, as, for instance, in the details of the ladies' dresses. Apart from the illustrations, there is much of interest in the forty little chapters that help to an appreciation of them, and it is the shrewd criticism of English ways in India that lies beneath the crust of humour that is, after all, its chief feature.

DE JUBAINVILLE'S MEROVINGIAN LATIN.*—This is the very latest contribution to French philology; and, although professing to deal with a section only of the subject, nothing of

* La déclinaison latine en Gaule à l'époque mérovingienne, par M. H. D'Arbois de Jubainville. Paris, Dumoulin, 1872.

equal importance has appeared since the publication of Brachet's "Dictionnaire étymologique," in 1868. By the careful, almost painful, study of the minutest details the illustrious author of this most conscientious and laborious work arrives at the grandest generalisations. Throughout the whole of the Merovingian period—that is, from the fifth to the eighth century—vulgar Latin, as opposed to the classic standard, was still the language of Gaul. But it was a language in a state of rapid decomposition; and contemporary literature, such as it was, is but a faithful reflex of its chaotic condition. Merovingian documents, thus reflecting the transitional stage, must be of paramount importance for the study of modern French forms. Yet these records of a semi-barbarous period, owing chiefly to the inaccessible and generally repulsive nature of such MSS., have been hitherto little utilised, and are in the work under notice submitted for the first time to a systematic analysis. Chartularies, diplomas, formularies, glosses, local inscriptions, medals, coins, all available monuments of the Latin of the Frankish kings, are passed under review, duly classified, and arranged under three distinct heads. These three divisions, which the writer describes as—1. Classical; 2. Vulgar in the first degree; 3. Vulgar in the second degree; constitute the main feature and chief value of his work. Under the first heading he arranges all forms of speech that are still in accordance with the correct models of good Latin. Under the second he reduces all forms that exhibit a first departure from the classic standard—the first stage of corruption, so to say—and which he correctly designates as merely phonetic. Under the third he embraces all other forms, which imply a final deviation from the grammatical laws of correct Latin, and the first steps towards a new syntax, that is, towards modern French. It is as if a botanist were to submit to microscopic inspection the process of decay through which the germ passes to fresh life, and were to lay down the laws of such life in death. Thus the word *eleemosyna*, for instance, occurs in the first stage of corruption as *elemosina*, a mere phonetic variation, and in the third stage as *elemosena* for *elemosynam*, ablative for accusative change of case combined with phonetic deviation, that is, confusion of case endings necessitating the substitution of particles, a new syntax, modern French. The very form *elemosena*, quoted at p. 15 from Tardif's "Monuments historiques," supplies us with the last connecting link by which the word of six syllables, *eleemosyna*, is finally reduced to the monosyllabic *alms*, thus: *eleemosyna, elemosina, elemosena, elemosna, elmosna, almosna, almosne, almesne, almes, alms*. All these forms occur successively in Merovingian Latin, old and Norman French, and old English, and they account for the gradual change or modification of every single letter in the original word. It is by the careful observation of such minute facts as these that the study of language itself has been at last raised to the dignity of a science, and it is as a contribution to the study of the French language in this higher sense that the value of M. de Jubainville's admirable treatise will be duly appreciated by the public.

LIST OF NEW BOOKS.

(From April 8 to April 26, 1872.)

Brougham's (Lord) Works, Vol. I., new edition, 12mo. cloth	4s. 6d.
Brown's (Robert) Poseidon, a Link between Semite, Hamite, and Aryan	3 6
Cambridge University Calendar, 1872, 12mo. cloth	6 6
Carlyle's Works, People's edition, Vol. XIV., "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol. II.," 12mo. cloth	2 0
CORNHILL LIBRARY OF FICTION, Vol. I. Robin Gray, by Charles Gibbon	3 6
Country Gentleman's Magazine, Vol. VII., royal 8vo. cloth	7 6
Culture of Pleasure, by Author of "Mirage of Life," new edition	6 0
Fénelon's Christian Counsels, translated by A. M. James, cloth	5 0
Field's (Horace) Glitter and Gold, crown 8vo.	7 6
Figuiet's (L.) The Day after Death, crown 8vo. cloth	7 6
Gemmel's (Rev. J.) Gospel in Isaiah, 12mo. cloth	5 0
Green's (Rev. T. L.) Indulgences, Sacramental Absolutions, and the Tax Tables of the Roman Chancery and Penitentiary Considered in Reply to the Charge of Venality	4 6
Gurnall's (W.) Christian in Complete Armour, new edition, by Rev. J. Campbell, 8vo. cloth	9 0
Hall's Elements of Plane and Spherical Trigonometry, 12mo.	2 0
Johnston's (R.) Competitive Geography, crown 8vo. cloth	6 0
King's (C.) Mountaineering in the Sierra Nevada, 8vo. cloth	10 6
Lennox's (Lord W. P.) Sport at Home and Abroad, 2 vols.	21 0
Letters of an Officer from the British Army in Holland, &c., from 1813 to 1816, 12mo. cloth	2 6
Life of Christ, by a Member of the Church of England, Vol. I.	6 0
Lyttelton's (Hon. and Rev. W. H.) Aids to Christian Education, Vol. I., 12mo. cloth	2 6
Mair's (J. A.) Book of Modern Scotch Anecdotes, 12mo. boards	1 0
M'Crie's (T.) Annals of English Presbytery, crown 8vo. cloth	5 0
Medical Register, 1872, royal 8vo. cloth	4 0