

THE BOOK SHELF.

(Conducted by ALBERT LEE, '91.)

I don't know how it has been with others, but so far as I am concerned, most of my knowledge of French history, especially of the times of Louis XVI. and the Revolution, was originally obtained from the novels of Alexander Dumas. They awoke in me an interest in that exciting period, and I afterward read a number of books that treated of the terror and of the last days of the King, but in none of these histories did I find any contradictions of Dumas's narrative and none of them were half so interesting. If I had it to do over again I should tackle my French history through Dumas, and I would advise every other man to do the same.

In reading the essay on the "Club of the Jacobins" in "Essays on French History" by J. E. Farmer, '91, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons) I was constantly reminded of Billot and Ange Pitou, and all the rest of those bold fellows of Dumas's, who were wandering about Paris in those famous days, and I found that I could understand Mr. Farmer's discourse as well, and was almost as familiar with his topic, as if I had read the long list of "Authorities Consulted" with which he prefaces his essay. I felt almost a sense of personal injury, too, at not finding Dumas's name upon this list of authorities.

Of the two essays in Mr. Farmer's book, this one about the Jacobins is undoubtedly the more interesting and will surely prove the more popular with the general reader. It gives a very clear idea of the original "Tammany Hall," and explains fully the many motives and accidents that led up to the awful events of 1793. Mr. Farmer's essays ought to be welcomed by students of French history, too, because aside from the information they contain, they are full of suggestions for further reading, that one might not receive in other ways. For instance, in his brief description of the membership of the club, he gives about two pages of names of some of the leading lights, qualifying each one, and many of these qualifying sentences are sufficient to

awaken an interest in the individuals, that will fall nowhere short of a perusal of their biographies. That sort of thing is valuable. The historical essay in itself, being of necessity brief, can be of small use unless it is suggestive, and Mr. Farmer has certainly succeeded in making his papers such.

In the first essay, on "The Rise of the Reformation in France," the field was not so rich in men and deeds, but the paper shows careful study, and to the man who wishes to work along that line it will afford a basis for much additional investigation, pointing out, as it does, the main lines along which the movement developed and touching elaborately upon the pivotal periods

It is surprising, in these days of the renaissance of book making, that any publisher in so large a city as Reading should turn out such a brochure as "While your Coffee is Cooling," recently published by William McCormick, '87. The book is of an inconvenient shape and is bound in a sort of crinkly paper that looks like a piece of white-washed frizzled beef, and it is tied at the back with a bit of red ribbon like a schoolgirl's prize essay. I have not seen anything so badly gotten up in a long while. The text is a collection of short essays by "George Gordon." As the author prints his name on the title page in quotation marks, it is to be presumed that this is but a pseudonym. It is also so to be hoped. The essays are reprinted from the Reading "Morning Herald,"—"exactly as they were written and not in one phrase or syllable revised or emended." The man who wishes to do anything in literature, and does not "revise" and "emend" almost until the plates are cast, will not succeed to any very great extent in his ambition. There are very few books that jump from their author's brain, full panoplied, like a certain goddess that we used to read about in Freshman year,—and who would be responsible for giving me a condition in Mythology now, if anybody asked me her name. But probably Mr. "Gordon" had no such desire and no doubt satisfied at seeing his "unemended" essays set upon the market nicely bedecked with red ribbon.

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