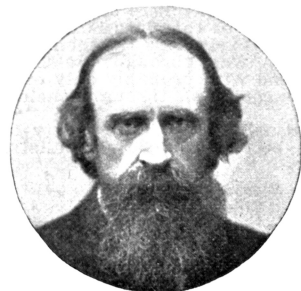


From World-Famed Minds.

CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER'S NEW LIBRARY IS THE
CREATION OF THE MOST BRILLIANT
INTELLECTS OF THIS AGE.



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PROF. E. RAY LANKESTER.



CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.

We have given such unstinted commendation to Charles Dudley Warner's new library that it is almost impossible to say more. But as we take up the succeeding volumes, as they come from the press—there are eight of them so far—there seems to us a side to this really wonderful publication which may easily be lost sight of in the vastness and variety of its contents. This is that the new Library will form the most perfect and exhaustive History of Literature that has yet been written.

There was high need for such a history. One may search the book-stores and libraries in vain to find a single broadly popular work which gives within convenient compass a comprehensive survey of literature in all ages and in all countries. True, we have such a history in detached and scattered chapters. There are many admirable studies in English or American, or French or German, or Greek and Classical literature. But these are so numerous, several of them comprising a number of volumes in themselves, that taken together they would alone make up a small library.

And this is only half the story. The other side of the matter is that most "histories of literatures" are hopelessly dull and uninteresting. With a very few exceptions they have been written by dreary pedants, and have utterly lacked that rare power to alike illuminate and instruct and charm.

But in the new Library, now in course of publication under Mr. Warner's finely competent editorial direction, we have not only just such a broad and universal history of books that we stood in so much need—books the most ancient and the most modern, and those of our own and of the most distant peoples—but it is history in a new and most delightful form.

In this happy solution of a complicated problem, we deem that Mr. Warner has performed a service of unusual felicity and value. In one fine stroke he has given us at once such a history of the literature of all the world and monographs on its greatest writers; and with all this he has given that which is most truly representative and most enduring of the greatest writers' works, or to state the matter conversely, in the new Library we have not alone a splendid storehouse of real literature, gathering up the best that has been written in every age and by every people that ever engaged in the production of books; we find this vast treasury of learning made exemplary and, as it were, a work of reference to what is undoubtedly the finest general and biographical history that has ever been prepared.

This in itself would be a superb undertaking. But Mr. Warner has—and it was thoroughly characteristic of him—accomplished this task in a way that, while authoritative in the highest degree, seems yet to possess that same subtle charm and deep human interest which pervades his individual works. For each of the greater writers and the more important topics he has pressed into service the one man who among all men living is most competent, upon this man or that topic, to speak; and from these foremost authorities he has obtained a series of critical and interpretative essays which say the wisest, and most interesting word it is possible to say upon each subject treated.

These are strong terms, and yet it seems to us that they are justified by the most cursory glance at Mr. Warner's splendid list of contributors. If, for example, we were asked to name who among all living writers would be most likely to give, for English-speaking people, the clearest insight into the purpose and mission of Russia's greatest novelist, we should inevitably say Mr. Howells. And it is Mr. Howells who writes the article upon Tolstoi for the Library. So, too, if we were asked the same question in regard to the man who, now that Froude is dead, would be likely to present a thoroughly fresh view of Carlyle, we would most likely answer Leslie Stephen. And it is Leslie Stephen whom Mr. Warner has appointed to write the Carlyle article for the Library.

Nothing, again, could be more appropriate than that ex-President Andrew D. White, who has lately been returned to his former post as Ambassador to Germany, should treat of Erasmus. To our day at least, the name of the great Dutch scholar is not one to excite profound interest; but those who have been privileged to read President White's latest work, "The Warfare of Theology with Science," know well his genial power to make the dry bones

and mummies of history live. And under the strokes of his pen Erasmus does live, and has for us a meaning and a personality.

We have spoken of Gibbon and the "Decline and Fall." Who could be better fitted to estimate for us, now, the value of Gibbon's monumental history than the historian Lecky, who has delved so deeply and written so learnedly of those very times covered by the "Decline and Fall?" And where could we find a man better equipped to write of the great tragic poet of the Greek Sophocles, than the greatest of living Greek historians, Prof. Mahaffy, of Dublin?

Then, to come down to our own time and our own country, we note Henry James contributing a critical monograph upon Hawthorne, and yet another upon Russell Lowell. Opinion may vary as to the quality, or rather interest, of Henry James' novels, but we shall never have a surfeit of those keen, delicate character studies and analytical essays of his, of which these two last seem among the best. Much the same might be said of that Henry James of the French, Paul Bourget. He is at his best in his "Portraits," and it is easy to see that he would be especially inspired in writing, as he has for this Library, of that incomparable master of French fiction, Flaubert.

It is the unique distinction of Prof. Edward Dowden, of Dublin, to be perhaps the greatest Shakespearian authority, and the most deeply versed in the work of Goethe, of any man now alive; so that not in the whole world could any one be found more capable of saying a new and illuminative word upon these two topics than he. Prof. Dowden is not only a great scholar, but a writer of very great power; and his two articles upon Shakespeare and Goethe, are among the finest contributions of this distinguished company.

It is further illustrative of the broad range of this remarkable work that we should find Archdeacon Farrar writing of the "Literary Grandeur of the New Testament," and Professor Crawford H. Toy of Harvard of the Old Testament in the light of modern criticism; and then again Professor E. Ray Lankester of Oxford making an exposition of Darwinism and the Darwinian theory, and likewise writing a critical article upon Huxley, who had so much to say regarding Darwinism and the New and Old Testament as well.

Not to unduly extend the exhibit, it is with the same pervading sense of fitness and authority that we find Dumas treated by Andrew Lang, and Dumas fils by M. Sarcey, the most celebrated of dramatic critics; Macaulay and Freeman by John Bach McMaster; Taine and Renan by the great French critic, Brunetiere; Burns by the poet Stoddard; John Stuart Mill by Professor Ely; Henry Ward Beecher by Lyman Abbott; Dante by Charles Eliot Norton, and Byron by Charles Dudley Warner himself.

We select these names at random from a list of several hundred of the foremost of living critics and writers, not only of this country but of England and the Continent as well. Never before, we are convinced, has there ever been gathered together such an imposing array of famous names to do so fine and lasting a work. Volume after volume is filled with critical and historical essays of so high a literary quality that, taken together, they comprise such a history of literature as has never before been written, and the like of which will in all probability not again appear for generations to come.

But when the thousand chiefest names of the makers of books have all been passed in review in this new and interesting way, there are yet hundreds of others, more or less known, who at some time or other of their lives have done some notable thing. The fame of many rests upon some single achievement, which has rescued its author from oblivion. It would have been easy enough to pass these by; but not one has been lost to the Library. They have every one been included in a department of deep and curious value to the Famous Books of the World. Within this volume some 2,500 graphic analyses have been made of celebrated novels and poems and rare and ancient books. We know of nothing in all the range of critical writing which exceeds the worth and merit of this department.

But we are not yet done with the noteworthy features of this truly epochal publication. Besides books and the writers of books, there yet remain the distinctive literatures of different ages and different countries, which are



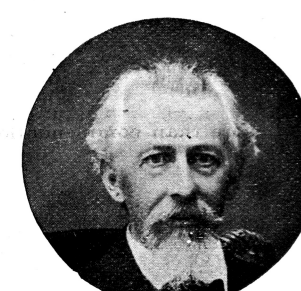
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