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ment of one of the supreme tragic episodes in literature, he would deserve sympathy. We have ourselves long stood ready to welcome a Society for the Prevention of the Desiccation of Masterpieces by Prosaic Commentators. And yet, since we have not space for citing the many instances where Mr. Vernon's elucidation is truly pertinent, we would not lay undue stress on his defects. "Leave something to the imagination" is a rule which annotators as well as realistic novelists should follow.

As was to be expected, Mr. Vernon pays close attention to the time references and the distances mentioned in the epic, with the hope of reducing them all to a consistent scheme. To follow Dante watch in one hand and tape-measure in the other has been a favorite amusement with a certain class of his critics. We know that he entered Limbo on Good Friday and emerged at the foot of the Mountain of Purgatory on Easter morning—having traversed a distance of several thousand miles through the interior of the Earth. As much of his journey was made on foot, and was interrupted by conversations with the damned, it is obvious that no rate of speed possible to terrestrial pedestrians can satisfactorily account for the distance traversed. Therefore, the present writer has always regarded the use of time piece and tape-measure as futile. He has also deemed it quite as unimportant whether, at a given point, Dante turned to the right or the left, as whether, when Job sat down on his ash-heap, he faced east or west. Dante has succeeded in making every step of the journey described by him vivid: to dissect the process by which he has produced this illusion, to discover inconsistencies, to warn the reader that it would be humanly impossible to walk six or seven thousand miles in three days—even with an occasional Geryon-flight—seems to us to belong to the province of trivialities. However, in an encyclopedic work, like Mr. Vernon's these matters may properly be mentioned, and he somewhat disarms our criticism by declaring that "the *Divina Commedia* is a vision, and allowance must therefore be made for the marvellous and the impossible."

His volumes are enriched by two steel engravings of the death mask of Dante; by pictures of the font in the Baptistery at Pisa, and of the Torre della Fame in 1507; by plans of the Wheel of Fortune and of the Broken Bridge in the Sixth Bolgia; by three different charts of the Dantesque Hell; by Rossini's music to Francesca's story, and by a map of Italy in Dante's time. The introduction contains short essays on the cosmography of Dante, on the symmetrical plan of the epic, on the data of the "Inferno" and its beauties, and on Dante's itinerary. There are also chronological tables and a bibliography. From all this it will be seen that he has gathered material indispensable to every English-speaking student of the "Divine Comedy." If we have given undue space to criticising the defects of his encyclopedic method, it is because we believe that it would be possible to present the same material much more compactly than he has done, and that, in these days of exorbitant annotation, brevity has become an unheeded virtue. Moreover, as he is engaged on a new edition of the "Purgatorio" and on an edition of the "Paradiso," he may be induced to practise restraint. His modesty, his fairness, his painstaking, and his enthusiasm entitle him to the esteem of every lover of Dante.

*Origins in Williamstown.* By Arthur Latham Perry, Professor of History and Political Economy in Williams College. Scribners.

WILLIAMSTOWN got its name in 1765, and the college that has done most to give the name renown was founded twenty-eight years later; yet in these six hundred substantial pages Prof. Perry gets only in sight of the latter event, and, indeed, devotes the bulk of his book to the time when the northwestern corner of Massachusetts was an Indian pass, then the site of Fort Massachusetts, and first settled as the town of West Hoosac. A treatment at once minute and discursive is required to expand the meagre tale into such ample proportions. All is fish that comes to Prof. Perry's net, and its cast is tremendous. It is only the severest self-restraint which keeps him from narrating the seven years' war at length, as he is fully conscious of its relation to the burning of the first Fort Massachusetts. But into other digressions he plunges, despite frequent apologies, with evident delight. One Indian foray suggests another, the architecture and remains of one fort lead on to comparisons with those of half-a-dozen others, and before one gets through he comes to feel that the history of the colonies and of a good part of Europe was somehow subtly determined in the valley of the Hoosac.

But the volume is by no means an example of pure antiquarian triviality. Antiquarian triviality, and whimsicality, antiquarian or other, it contains in plenty, but withal it yields the peaceable fruits of solid research continued through forty years of enthusiastic devotion to town and college. The note of personal loyalty and championship is, in truth, prominent throughout. The north line of western Massachusetts was ordered by the Privy Council in 1740 to be run "due west" from Pawtucket Falls. But "Hazen's line," run the next year, held really 1° 45' north of west, thus saving to Williamstown about one-third of its area, which would have gone to Vermont. With a turn worthy of Thomas Fuller, Prof. Perry speaks of this as "a blessed error of the compass." So, later on, when a citizen farmer drifted away from the town and out of this history in search of richer fields, the author, with an unwavering loyalty which is enough to put Judge Nott with his abandoned farms to shame, professes to be quite at a loss to account for the man's dissatisfaction with his perpendicular Williamstown acres. On the situation and picturesque glories of the town he wreaks himself in lover-like fashion for sixty-eight pages, and can pay no higher compliment to his dearest friend than to give his name to some unpremeditated rock or point.

The main historical value of the book consists in its full story of the strategic position of the Hoosac Valley in relation to the French and Indians on the north and the Dutch on the west, and in its collection of every scrap of evidence bearing on the personality and family of Col. Ephraim Williams, commander of Fort Massachusetts, leader of the Massachusetts men in the Lake George expedition, and founder (by will) of the college. College-founding seems to have run in the blood, as his cousin, Israel Williams, "the monarch of Hampshire," got a charter from Gov. Bernard in 1762 for "Queen's College," to be located in Northampton, Hatfield, or Hadley. Israel's motives were not unmixt benevolence, as he was miffed at Harvard for having printed his son's name too far down the social scale in the catalogue. But the Harvard lobbyists of the day were too much for him, and

got the Governor to invalidate the charter; all which did not prevent the tradition of there having once been a "Queen's College" in Hatfield. A nonagenarian resident of that town vehemently assured Prof. Perry in 1880: "There used to be a college here, and I have seen it myself." The history of the college that a Williams succeeded in founding, Prof. Perry proposes to write in a volume to follow.

*Basal Concepts in Philosophy.* By Alexander T. Ormond, Professor in Princeton. Scribners. 1894.

THE purpose of this work is to propose a certain modification of the Hegelian system, suggested by studies in philosophical theology. The modification cuts pretty deep, being no less than the identification of Being and Spirit, two of the primary categories of the Hegelian logic. It is to be accomplished by some alteration of the Hegelian dialectic which is not by any means rendered clear, far less justified. In fact, clearness and conclusiveness are the two qualities this book can boast the least. An ordinary person, should he be condemned to read it, might fancy he caught a glimpse of meaning here and there; but one who has devoted a year or two to the study of philosophy, upon a modern method, will find it utterly unprofitable. An accomplished thinker may make some little use of the work, notwithstanding its grievous faults of logic.

Attempts to reform Hegelianism ought to be encouraged and treated benevolently. All things are to be known by their fruits; and certainly never idea had a fairer, fuller trial than the Hegelian system. All Germany went into it for a generation, and the fruit was disappointment and disgust. How could it be fairer? And if any question is ever to be regarded as pretty nearly settled—set at rest until some very unexpected new evidence presents itself—must not this question be so regarded among the first?

At the same time, very few minds that have examined the matter with attention look upon Hegelianism with exactly the same eyes as upon astrology, or even as the majority of the very small number of persons who have conscientiously examined the evidence about ghosts look upon that belief. On the contrary, although historic experience condemns Hegelianism as a method and a ruling tendency, it does go to show that where Hegelianism, while having a certain influence, has not been strong enough to turn men from common-sense humility in regard to external nature, its influence has many a time been beneficial. So it is probably safe to say that the indefinite congeries of minds that partake of the real spirit of investigating science (not mere readers of scientific results), but at the same time are well versed in the world's philosophical thought, are inclined to think that Hegelianism, however wrong on the whole, yet contains something not without value if it could be singled out. It is easy enough to point at elements of the position of Hegelians and other metaphysicians that are quite irreconcilable with the position of scientific men. All scientific men (except some pure mathematicians) have a very unaffected reverence for nature—so genuine, indeed, that it is often subconscious—which causes them to surrender their dearest beliefs at nature's best. But the idealists, as a body, as well as some other metaphysicians, look upon things external with a sort of contemptuous disdain, and regard nature as rather a bore. This self-poise deprives them of the only means whereby they could

proceed from falsehood to truth. As long as philosophers are bred in seminaries where any species of infallibilism is taught, or imitate others so bred, such will be the main result. There will be systems founded on egotism, embodying whims of more or less artistic symmetry, but destitute of the power of growth. On the other hand, it is not difficult to indicate general features of Hegelianism in respect to which it harmonizes better with the general principles of science than do most of the other philosophical systems. Here there seem to be ideas of real power. Here is something which in time must grow and choke the parasitical errors of the system. The difficulty is to give the thing the first start. Whether that can be done by any attempt to improve the agreement of Hegelianism with theology (such is the aim of this volume), may very well be doubted. We should be more inclined to look for the first buds of regenerate Hegelian life on such a tree as that of Mr. Ritchie, the author of "Darwin and Hegel."

We shall not advise many of our readers to try to solace their leisure by reading Prof. Ormond's not too perspicacious, nor too vigorous, nor too agreeably written volume. Two things are specially urged in it which may make some persons curious to look over the work—one the idea that personality is essential to being, the other that Nothingness has a sort of reality. We simply mention these, without saying that we think they are skilfully defended.

*Roger Williams: The Pioneer of Religious Liberty.* By Oscar S. Straus, author of "The Origin of the Republican Form of Government in the United States." The Century Co. 1894. Pp. xvii, 257.

THE appearance of this biography of one of the strictest of the New England Independents, from the pen of one who bears a name that links him to another race than that of New England, is a testimony to the wide sympathy characteristic of modern scholarship. Mr. Straus has diligently gathered the biographical facts regarding the founder of Providence, and has presented them in a simple and readable narrative, constituting a small volume of rare excellence of typography, and warmly eulogistic of its subject.

It has been the fate of Williams, beyond that of any other of the founders of New England, to be treated from diametrically opposing points of view, and this contrariety is nowhere more apparent than in the story of the crucial episode of his checkered experience—his banishment from Massachusetts. Though the opposing historians have not always come from the respective States, there has arisen regarding Williams what may be called in general a Massachusetts and a Rhode Island school of interpretation—the one dwelling on the political causes of his banishment, the other representing him as primarily a martyr to freedom of conscience. Mr. Straus belongs to the latter, holding that "the cause of his banishment" lay in his maintenance that the "civil power has no jurisdiction over conscience"; and Mr. Straus finds in this principle the motive of about all that Williams did.

Something of this divided point of view is due to the peculiar combination of qualities in Williams himself—a combination which seems to a modern mind almost a contradiction. Like Robert Browne, whom he in many ways resembled, but who, unlike Williams, became outwardly reconciled to the party he opposed, Williams combined an ultra-Separatist hostility to the Church of England with the

doctrine of the non-interference of the civil powers in matters of conscience. On the one hand, Browne and Williams were narrow in their sympathies to a degree which cost them the good-will of the great Puritan party, and which made their ministry everywhere divisive by reason of its opinionativeness; on the other hand, they were in advance of their times in perceiving the proper line of demarcation between Church and State.

From a modern standpoint, or even from the point of view of the discussions over toleration in England after the Westminster Assembly had begun its work, Williams stands forth most conspicuously for his doctrine of "soul-liberty." But it may well be questioned whether that appeared his most conspicuous tenet to the Massachusetts men of 1631-35, who banished him from their jurisdiction. That trait was indeed recognized; but in the speech, quoted by Mr. Straus, in which Gov. Haynes enumerated Williams's offences and spoke his sentence, and of which Williams, who reported it, affirmed, "I acknowledge the particulars were rightly summed up," the limitation of the authority of magistrates to civil affairs is placed last, and Williams's attack upon the patent, upon the oath, and upon the lawfulness of hearing ministers of the Church of England are all given precedence. There is every reason to believe that the Governor's speech represented the case as it lay in the minds of Massachusetts men at the time of Williams's banishment. Their charter was in danger of English attack, they had tried to strengthen their threatened commonwealth by an oath, they were not willing (in general) to regard their English compatriots as in an anti-Christian state; and Williams's opposition to the views of his fellow-countrymen on these points was, to their thinking, fully as dangerous as his doctrine of soul-liberty. It was quite as much, if not more, the cause of his banishment. The chief fault of Mr. Straus's book is that he fails to give due weight to these facts and others like them. He has judged Williams's relations to the men of his age by what posterity finds most valuable in his teaching, rather than by what actually appeared most conspicuous to his contemporaries of 1635. With all his carefulness of biographic detail, Mr. Straus's book produces the impression of a eulogy of an ideal, rather than of a full-rounded picture of the actual man.

Mr. Straus agrees with Mr. Waters in holding that Williams was a Londoner by birth, but the year of his nativity he would fix as 1607, on the ground that Williams could not have become a scholar of the Charterhouse School, as he did in June, 1621, if over fourteen years of age at that time. To sustain this view, Mr. Straus gives what certainly seems a strained interpretation to Williams's own statements regarding his age; and while his theory may be correct, the query may properly be raised whether the rules of the Charterhouse were so strict as to prevent the admission of a protégé of its powerful benefactor, Sir Edward Coke, even if over the customary age. Certainly he was an exceedingly youthful reporter if the short-hand notes of "Sermons and Speeches in the Star Chamber" which won him Coke's attention were taken before he was fourteen.

*Suicide and Insanity: A Physiological and Sociological Study.* By S. A. K. Strahan, M.D., Barrister-at-Law. London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co.

UNLESS bound very closely to the world of

matter, a man wakeful in the stillness of the night is apt to ponder upon Sleep's elder sister. One listening to the first wail of life has a curious longing to know more of the other world from which the spark of vitality has floated. When a full flame goes out as the new spark kindles, it is a double mystery. Who sees a strong man transformed into insensitive flesh, as in his responsible and responsive capacity he disappears from our association before the point of a dagger, or a few grains of poison, and who watches the helpless and hopeless invalid keep his own flickering ray unextinguished, must ache, if he has any thought, to solve the principles, if there be such, underlying this paradox. What is beyond, and how it comes into relation with us, whether an abyss of gloom, a cloudless realm of happiness, or the negative repose of nirvana, has both attraction and repulsion, like the qualities of electricity, for the incorporeal element that believes itself immortal. But this possible immortality is reached only through the portal of a positive death. May a man from curiosity, from principle, or from despair, lay aside at his own pleasure the mortal robe that at once masks and gives identity to the lighter essence? The robe being drawn aside by necessity, or thrown off by caprice, is the spirit volatilized, or may its individuality be preserved? Does a Higher Power resent the intrusion of the immortal part unsummoned by an agent foreign to itself? Does voluntary departure from this life place the soul in jeopardy? May a man in the full exercise of his reason close upon himself the irrevocable door that shuts out the light of this world? Does not suicide, *ipso facto*, proclaim mental unsoundness? Queries dense as a Norway forest at once receive and bewilder the inquirer who steps out of the beaten path worn by the unreasoning multitude.

Every suicidal act is rational or irrational in its essence. It is begging the question to stamp suicide with the seal of insanity. To soothe the feelings of survivors to whom suicide is equivalent to murder, or because in their eyes life is so precious that its voluntary renunciation is inconceivable, juries of inquest almost invariably append "while temporarily insane" to a verdict of suicide. This may be a relic of the age when self-destruction carried with it spiritual and temporal penalties. It is a nice question how far sound judgment may overcome instinctive love of life, how far that love may be set aside by reason. "The first law of nature" is a phrase, not a fact; or, if a fact, it may receive its justification in its apparent violation. The man who evades the torture of fatal fire by leaping to certain death a hundred feet below, is not called a suicide. Would it be more suicidal to drive a dagger into his own heart as the flames seize his final refuge in the burning tower? Does the white man who uses his last shot to avoid the deadly torture that a savage foe invariably inflicts, commit suicide any more really than in expending that shot to reduce those swarming enemies by one? Abruptness is no necessary element of self-destruction. Is Father Damien giving up his life by a continuous surrender to the claims of leprosy; is the martyr who obstinately, or heroically, refuses allegiance to a heterodox doctrine while judicial death lies awaiting his decision; is any saviour of a helpless individual or of a race, who, by a sudden impulse or by deliberate principle, sacrifices himself that others may live, a suicide? That the suicidal act is not literally self-inflicted does not destroy its essential character. He who plots