

open to him, and his three volumes, 1872-75, contain more than 500 new ones, or about a thousand in all.

The abundance of the supply seems the less startling when one comes to know how large a body of archives William Paston, second Earl of Yarmouth and the last of his line, left behind him in 1762. Although he had sold part of his ancestral papers, there were still at Oxnead, the family seat, "some thirty or forty chests of valuable letters and documents," after his death. The Rev. Francis Blomefield, whose 'History of Norfolk' is comparable with Surtees's 'Durham' and Ormerod's 'Cheshire,' worked for a fortnight among these stores in 1735. A passage from one of his letters shows how neglected they had been by recent owners and by historians prior to his time. "There are innumerable letters of good consequence in history still lying among the loose papers, all which I laid up in a corner of the room on a heap which contains several sacks full." Eventually, a part of Lord Yarmouth's ill-cared-for treasures came into the hands of Mr. John Fenn. By printing them and giving some of the originals to George III, he secured the honor of knighthood. This, however, was not all that he did, for his volumes made a new thing of English social life during the Wars of the Roses. The first edition was sold in a week, and, ever since, the Paston Letters have been one of the classics of English history. We know that, in one university at least, a long course of lectures upon them has counted for the master's degree.

We are glad to say that the present edition is once more the work of Mr. Gairdner. He long ago laid claim to possession of the subject by writing a fine series of introductions to his three previous volumes. Therein he not only explained the relation which the Paston Letters bear to the national history, but he sketched the latter part of Henry VI.'s reign with great force and clearness. Henceforth it is unlikely that any one will arise to dispute his rule of this historical province, for no need exists of having the letters in a better form. Mr. Gairdner is modest enough to say that his results are only approximately perfect, but he anticipates that they will satisfy all practical demands.

"An almost perfect edition, no doubt, might conceivably be produced with considerable labor and expense if any one could be induced to devote the necessary time and energy to the task of collating all the letters with the long-lost originals, now that they have been so completely recovered, and supplying all the missing passages. But so great a work, even if the editor succeeded after all in including all the stray Paston Letters of the period, would hardly justify, even in a younger and less occupied man than myself, the sacrifices that it would involve."

The reference to long-lost originals brings in a curious piece of literary gossip. Fenn published four volumes during his lifetime and left another volume ready for the press, which, after some delay, was likewise published. Then it was discovered that all the originals had been lost, including the holographs presented to George III. Suspicions were aroused by such a remarkable disappearance of all the documents upon which Fenn had based his five volumes, and it was even said in print that the Paston Letters were spurious. Fortunately, the originals of Fenn's third volume

came to light in 1865, while the originals of volumes iv. and v. appeared at Roydon Hall in 1875, just as Mr. Gairdner was finishing his former edition. At last, in 1889, the originals of volumes i. and ii. were found at Orwell Park in Suffolk among the books of the late Col. Tomline. It will be remembered that Pitt's tutor and life-long friend was Dr. Pretyman, who changed his name to Tomline and became Bishop of Lincoln. Whether through Pitt or not, Fenn's present to George III. drifted into his hands and lodged there. The authenticity of the Paston Letters is now established beyond chance of dispute.

The special feature of this new edition is the Introduction, an entire volume. Mr. Gairdner's edition of 1872-75, published by Arber, comprised three volumes, each with its separate introduction. In their stead a single long introduction of nearly 400 pages has been placed at the head of a fourth volume, and it is followed by upwards of a hundred unpublished letters. Regarding the introduction, we may say that it remains substantially the same as before, though presented more compactly. It "contains the three former introductions brought together so that they may be read consecutively, with just one or two slight additions and amendments, besides the correction of positive errors wherever they have been detected." Greater changes have been made with the preface, though its general character remains the same.

As for the newly published letters, they number 105, and are to be found detached from the rest at the end of the introduction. Most of them were known to Mr. Gairdner in 1875, and an appendix to the edition of that date gives a brief inventory of their contents. They form part of the originals which were rediscovered by Mr. George Frere at Roydon Hall. After having been bought at Christie's by a dealer, they were sold five years ago to the British Museum and are thus public property. They are catalogued under the "Additional" MSS. They are, of course, interesting, but we can see nothing in them which will have the effect of changing our estimate of the Paston family or of the Paston letters. Sir John Fastolf still seems the hardfisted landlord, entrenched at Calster Castle. John Paston is still quarrelling with Tuddenham and Heydon, is still having endless lawsuits, and is still immersed in troubles arising out of Fastolf's will. Margaret Paston is still the faithful wife and skilful manager. Almost all the new letters are records of business transactions, and the reader will hit upon little which lies outside the hard work of the world. The story of the younger Paston's marriage negotiation with Margery Brews, so entertaining an episode of the older volumes, has no parallel in this aftermath of correspondence. The fortunes of the Pastons, which had improved under Henry VI., receded a setback under Edward IV. After the death of her husband in 1466, Margaret Paston was sore pressed by family foes and by the follies of her sons. Living amid much chicanery and sharp dealing, she is the most attractive of the Pastons, and the best letters of the supplement relate to her care for the preservation of her house after its evil days have set in. It has now come to selling the plate and cutting the timber. Her sons are thriftless and her foes are violent. Yet

she proves as loyal in her age as she had been in her prime, and shows that even in the Middle Ages the will of a determined woman was not to be neglected.

Bibliotics; or the Study of Documents, Determination of the Individual Character of Handwriting, and Detection of Fraud and Forgery: New Methods of Research. By Persifor Frazer. Third ed. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1901. 8vo, pp. 266.

Here we find ourselves plunged into a corner of the fray that has so long been raging all over the field of historical criticism between instinct and systematic logic. "Your instinctive judgments are subjective," cry the logical party, "and your pretensions to detecting what common men cannot detect, or to applying what you call the principles of common sense to history, are proved to be charlatanry by your all coming to different conclusions, without any accord but that of fashion." "Your wooden rules never penetrate the facts," the lauders of instinct retort, "and your notion that one can form any just judgment concerning human conduct, in any department, without the exercise of tact and of subtle feeling, is worthy of the savans of Laputa." Dr. Frazer adds his weight to the logician's side in the discussion of that branch of the science of diplomatics which seeks to identify individual handwritings.

The old-fashioned experts in chirography, the Chabots and the like, set out from the fact that we all of us learn to recognize at a glance, we scarce know how, yet with entire confidence, almost as many handwritings as faces. The real certainty of our identifications, even of faces, falls short of our confidence in them. In the case of writing, the expert often meets with doubt, either his own or on the part of others whom he wishes to convince; and in such a case, the old practice is to observe closely what appear to be salient features, such as the ways of forming single letters. Jurists might sometimes be convinced in that way, but it is a somewhat dubious proceeding. There is all the difference in the world between the trustworthiness of an emphatic instinctive judgment, made unreflectively, and an alloy of instinct with semi-scientific, semi-instinctive testing. When it comes to applying tests at all, the only security lies in making the testing process thoroughly scientific. Now the first rule of scientific induction is that it ought to be planned and performed under the guidance of mathematical considerations, and to that end it ought to be rendered quantitative wherever it can be so rendered. Now, as Dr. Frazer shows, quantitative tests can be applied to handwriting in such profusion that it ought to be possible to develop a method which should hopelessly distance every attempt at imitation.

But to develop such a method will require an arduous scientific investigation. It is by no means a thing which can be got up for any case that may occur; though cases may happen to arise in which, owing to peculiar circumstances, mathematical tests may readily be devised. Even after the scientific method shall have been developed, another serious study must be made of the art of presenting the proofs so that a jury can fairly weigh them. Dr. Frazer has broken ground for the road which

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ought to be built. He himself cannot regard, and we think does not pretend, that what he has accomplished is anything more than a promising beginning. But even the comparatively modest claims which he does make somewhat outrun what can be granted. For example, taking Twissleton's book on the comparison of the handwriting of Junius with that of Sir Philip Francis, he measures the ratio of height to length of the word "more" as written thirty-six times by each penman, and also certain parts of the word "Woodfall" as written once by each; and, having made the comparisons, he heedlessly remarks: "The conclusion from the results of the last as well as from the preceding is that the same penman wrote the letters of Sir Philip Francis and of Junius." But even granting the methods of comparison to be unexceptionable, this is a very rosy sort of conclusion. All that is proved is that the general shape of the word "more" was the same as either wrote it, and that, as each of the two once wrote "Woodfall" four different proportions were considerably alike. We should want to know what percentage of other contemporary handwritings had the same characters before pushing our inference further.

But, looking in detail at the comparisons, we find other equally statements. Thus, in regard to the word "more," Dr. Fraser says: "It appears that in Francis's own writing nineteen, in Junius's sixteen, of these ratios differ by less than eight per cent. from the standard." But Dr. Fraser's measures do not prove in the least how uniformly either writer wrote. It can be shown mathematically that the discrepancies between the ratios of the height to the length of the word "more" in the single instances measured are almost entirely due to the fact that the measures of height were only made to half divisions of a scale of fortieths of an inch, and the average height measured was in one case only 4, in the other 5, divisions of the scale. Of the remainder of the discrepancy, how much is attributable to error of measurement and how much to irregularities of writing, there is not sufficient evidence to show. We may add that no modern theory of probabilities has been employed, and that there are a number of small errors of computation.

We have referred to but a single part of the book, a part of extreme importance, not for what it accomplishes, but for what it shows reason to believe may ultimately be accomplished. One of the earliest applications of mathematical methods to a question of handwriting was made by Benjamin Peirce. In a certain trial a paper was put in as evidence of which the signature appeared to be a tracing of another signature in the case. Enlarged photographs were made of all the signatures of the same person that were in evidence, some thirty. There were twenty down strokes in the signature. A comparison of all possible pairs showed the probability that any signature would, by mere chance, be superposable in all its down strokes upon another, as the two signatures in question were. The case was decided as Professor Peirce's probability would infer that it should be decided, but upon other grounds. The argument seemed at that time a strange one, and courts ought to be reluctant to deal with modes of argumentation which the judges and the lawyers are not in condition intelligently to criticize.

Several other methods of great interest are described by Dr. Fraser. In the present state of the subject, it seems to the writer of this notice to be too hazardous to convict a man of crime on the evidence of handwriting mainly unless the identification be such as every bank teller would be perfectly confident of, or unless there were other exceptional features in the writing. Circumstantial evidence may, no doubt, be stronger than any direct testimony can be; but to trust to the judgment of an average jury on circumstantial evidence is quite another thing.

BOOKS OF THE WEEK.

- Appleton, George. A Narragansett Peer. Abbey Press.
- Ashton, Mark. She Stands Alone. Boston: L. O. Page & Co. \$1.50.
- Bramer, F. P. Jurisprudential Antiquarianism. One Superscript. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner. 5 marks.
- Eyton, Lord. The Works of. Vol. IV. Poetry. London: John Murray; New York: Scribner. \$2.
- Castle, Ames and Egerton. The House of Howland. Frederick A. Stokes Co. \$1.50.
- Cook, E. T. Gardening for Beginners. Scribner. \$2.75.
- Crusius, Otto. Heerwagen Minisamb. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner. 2 marks 40.
- David, Walter. John Bull's Crime. Abbey Press.
- Dickens, Charles. Authentic Edition: (1) Sketches by Bos; (2) Hard Times. Reprinted Pieces; (3) American Notes; Pictures from Italy; (4) The Uncommercial Traveller, etc. Scribner.

- Dillard, J. H. Fifty Letters of Oliver Wendell Holmes. Boston: The Complete Tribune Press. 50 cts.
- Field, Eugene. The Complete Tribune Press. Boston: Mutual Book Co. 50 cts.
- Fraser, Dr. F. W. The Science of Handwriting. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott. 2 vols. per. 60 cts.
- Francis, M. E. The Widow. Longmans, Green & Co. \$1.50.
- Fulton, General. The Butler Family. Abbey Press.
- Gilliat-Smith, Ernest. The Story of Bruce. (Old Naval Town). London: J. M. Dent & Co.; New York: Macmillan. 32.
- Goodhue, E. R. Cat of the Figeon-Holes. Also (Mich.). The George F. Butler Pub. Co.
- Gray, Maxwell. Four-Leaved Clover. (Town and Country Library.) D. Appleton & Co. \$1.
- Gofford, A. E., and Lovell, Aaron. The Gullible Speller. Boston: Ginn & Co.
- Hargreaves, R. Arithmetic. Henry Frowde. 6d.
- Harrison, Mrs. Burton. A Princess of the Hills. Boston: Lothrop Pub. Co. \$1.50.
- Hawitt, F. W. Anæsthetics and their Administration. Macmillan. \$4.
- Hewlett, Maurice. The Life and Death of Richard Ice-and-Nay. New ed. Macmillan.
- Hofmann, Max. Astruc's Book. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner. 12 marks.
- Howard, L. O. The Insect Book. Doubleday, Page & Co.
- Hobbes, G. G. Fact and Fancy in Spiritualism. Theosophy and Psychical Research. Cincinnati: The Robert Clarke Co. \$1.25.
- Kearney, Belle. A Slaveholder's Daughter. Abbey Press. \$1.
- Koster, Vaughan. The Manager of the B. & O. Harpers. \$1.50.
- Larmor, Alexander. Geometrical Exercises from Nixon's "Euclid Revised." Henry Frowde. 6 cts.
- Lawyer, Nellie T. The Egyptian Ring. Abbey Press.
- Layman, A. In Yellowest Jaunia. F. Tennyson. Neely Co.
- Lea, Friedrich. Die Griechisch-Römische Graphie nach ihrer Literarischen Form. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner. 7 marks.
- Lewis, A. H. Richard Croker. Life Pub. Co.
- Lindsay, Mary. The Whirligig. Longmans, Green & Co. \$1.50.
- Lucas, C. P. Canada. Part I. Vol. V. of the Historical Geography of the British Colonies. Henry Frowde. \$1.50.
- Lucas, Morton. Travels. (Gump's Primers.) 400: J. M. Dent & Co.; New York: Macmillan. 40 cents.
- MacLaughlin, John. The Divine Plan of the Church. London: Burns & Oates; New York: Grosset and Dunlap. 75 cts.
- Mathews, F. S. Familiar Flowers of Field and Garden. D. Appleton & Co. \$1.40.
- Meisterbilder oder Bleistift-Mappe. Munich: G. B. W. Callwey. 5 pt. each.
- Moore, George. Sunset. Philadelphia: B. Lippincott Co.
- Mott, L. F. The Evangelical Lyric. W. E. Fielding. 75 cents.
- Murray, Dr. J. A. H. The Oxford English Dictionary. Vol. V. New Edition. Oxford: Clarendon Press; New York: Henry Frowde.
- Northrup, A. J. Beacon Cottage Life. Syracuse: G. W. Benson. \$1.
- Pellissier, Georges. Le Mouvement Littéraire Contemporain. Paris: Plon-Nourrit & Co.
- Seltzer, C. A. The Council of Three. Abbey Press. \$1.
- Spalding, J. L. Apocryphs and Ecclesiastical History. A. C. McClurg & Co. 50 cents.
- Sturges, Seth. Sunset Rhymes. The Bradlee Press Co.
- Suspense, Van Tassel. The Nineteenth Hour. New York: The Century Co.
- Weise, O. Deutsche Sprach- und Stillehre. Leipzig: B. G. Teubner. 3 marks.
- Williams, F. C. J. Devil's Horn. Boston: Lothrop Pub. Co. \$1.50.
- Wolpert, Frederick. From Whence, What, and What Ahd? Peter Eckler. 25 cents.
- Works of Thophile Gautier. Vols. 12 and 13. George D. Sproul.

Nation readers will perhaps find a work of fiction more to their taste than the usual "five leading books" of the dealers' and librarians' reports in Gissing's "Our Friend the Charlatan." The Providence Journal says it is "worth a dozen of the futile stories that are 'boomed' into the hundred thousands." The Brooklyn Eagle calls the author one of "the greatest three living artists in fiction." The London Spectator says: "It holds the reader by its engrossing and sustained interest" (but that probably depends on the kind of reader); and the New York Tribune says: "We advise the reader to buy it."

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