

BOOKS

"JOHN PERCYFIELD."

There are love stories and love stories; and those people who enjoy the kind that tell of maidens sighing in lonely castles for their absent knights or brave cavaliers risking their lives to save their beloved from drowning or being dashed over a terrible precipice, might not enjoy "John Percyfield."

C. Hanford Henderson, the author of this most charming book, is a prominent Philadelphia educator. The subtitle of the book, "The Anatomy of Cheerfulness," sounds a little pedantic, as if one would say: "Go to, now let us analyze the quality of cheerfulness, and if the result be satisfactory, we, too, will be cheerful." But the bones of this anatomy are so well covered with living, pulsing flesh, that the name is almost a misnomer.

The book is supposed to be largely autobiographical, and is written in the first person; and while the pride of family, that characteristic trait of the true Philadelphian, is plainly visible, it is a pride which sees the necessity of living up to the high standard set by the grandfather, who was a thorough gentleman, in every sense of the word.

The chapter describing John Percyfield's life in New Orleans when he was a boy, his devotion to his sister Charlotte, and the natural, lovely life they lead, are most charming. Later on, when he is living in the old chateau in Switzerland, one feels the continual atmosphere of sunshine and flowers, and natural, unconventional life that is so idyllic. The whole tone of the book is healthy and unaffected.

In regard to the influence of his grandfather Percyfield, he says: "More severe people said that my Grandfather Percyfield spoiled Charlotte and me by allowing us to live such a joyous, natural life, and by doing so much for our comfort and pleasure. . . . Along with the pleasure he gave us the desire to use it at its highest, and through our great love and admiration for him, he implanted in us a sense of noblesse oblige that would, I verily believe, have taken us through fire and water, had there been any occasion for it. . . . It is not hardships that make men brave and women heroic. It is the ideas which they mix with their daily bread and butter."

The whole tone of the book can be described in this sentence: "On the whole, I think it (happiness), is more useful than mathematics, but this, you must remember, is the opinion of a man who never keeps accounts, and has not tasted the spiritual joy of having them come out to a penny at the end of a week or fortnight."

The plot of the story is so slight as to hardly deserve the name, yet there is not one uninteresting page in the book; and the author weaves in, as side re-

marks, what with many writers would be called "preaching," yet they come so naturally that one hardly realizes at first what is said.

The description of the wedding is most charming, and one instinctively compares it with the society show weddings which have to be rehearsed beforehand. In speaking of the life in London, after his marriage with Margaret, the author says: "Everything new that I bought I had sent home to Mrs. John Percyfield. It was such a joy to say the name and to see it written. It took me some time, though, to get used to the cold-blooded, unemotional way in which the clerks in the different shops put it down in their scrawly, running handwriting. You might have thought that it was just an ordinary name, instead of being brand-new and full of sentiment."

Their stay in England was for the purpose of studying social questions, and here is one false note in the book. The author's remedy for social ills is more paternalism. He sympathizes with suffering and sorrow everywhere, but he is not large enough to see that more freedom, not less, is the cure; yet he says that "private charities are an indictment of inadequate social action," and "essentially undemocratic and undesirable." Yet he adds the most undemocratic statement that the doctrine of equality is a "monstrous lie," thereby showing himself to be undemocratic and ignorant of the natural rights of man. It may be, however, that if he were called upon to explain himself more fully, he would modify that statement.

The great charm of the book lies in its fresh, simple style of telling a natural story, and one feels when he has finished reading it that he has been enjoying green fields and sunny days.

FLORENCE A. BURLEIGH.

THREE PAMPHLETS.

It would be well if every assessor in America could be supplied with a copy of Lawson Purdy's "Taxation of Personal Property," and could be induced to read and ponder it. As previously noted in the Public, it is a revised edition of a magazine article, now handsomely printed in a pamphlet of 37 pp., with index, under the auspices of the New York Tax Reform Association, 52 William street, N. Y. Of course all who have read Professor Ely's valuable book on the subject, or have in even a superficial way looked into the subject of the taxation of personal property, know how utterly absurd are the attempts to assess such property, but there are many who are unfortunately ignorant on the subject. As Mr. Purdy says, "The average intelligent business man who is well-informed on most subjects is usually ill-informed as to what the tax system actually is, and the injury which he suffers from a bad system." This pamphlet is just the thing to open his eyes.

"The Selfishness of Grief" is the title

of a sermon by Jenkin Lloyd Jones, published in neat pamphlet form (Purdy Publishing Co., Chicago, 10 cts.). If the title were the Vanity of Funeral Fashions it would come nearer describing the purport of the eloquent author's earnest discourse. As a plea for sensible reform this pamphlet deserves wide circulation. Whether or not cremation, which the author advocates, be adopted, the suggested changes in the conduct of a funeral are in the line of good form as well as of good sense.

E. T. Weeks, of New Iberia, La., has published a leaflet, entitled, "Tenets of the Single Tax," which shows great power of combining clearness with conciseness. "We assert," says Mr. Weeks, "that a tax on land values would destroy speculation in land by making it unprofitable to hold land out of use; would give capital and labor access to vast quantities of land, including oil, coal, iron and other mineral deposits, and make impossible the monopolizing of the original sources of supply; would derive the revenues of government from the very fund which society itself creates; and since more than ninety per cent. of all land values are in urban lands, franchises, and mineral deposits, it would take off of the farming and the wage-earning population the great burden of taxation, which, as the principal consumers, now falls ultimately upon them. We assert that by abolishing all revenue taxes upon improvements, capital, labor and the products of labor, and giving access to lands now monopolized and idle, it would stimulate investment, promote industry and enterprise, raise wages and bring about general and more equal prosperity."

J. H. DILLARD.

PERIODICALS.

Sound Currency for December, the regular periodical of the "Sound Currency" Committee of the New York Reform Club, describes the present status of the currency reform movement and offers suggestions by various writers, including Charles S. Fairchild, all from the gold standard point of view.

Justin McCarthy, writing in the New York Independent on What We Are Thinking About in England, says of the present state of politics and parties in that country: "The whole situation is intensely interesting and exciting, and I do not remember for many years back any political crisis during which the unexpected may be more likely to come to pass." J. H. D.

President Hadley, of Yale university, in a recent address before Harvard students, is reported to have said that a man "should not enter the political field at all unless rich, for if he does he will have to yield sooner or later to the wrong influence or else get out and starve." It is hard to believe that the president of Yale could have been guilty of uttering before a body of young students a criticism of our democratic republic so utterly scathing and pessimistic. J. H. D.

In answering a question "about ministers that engage in the pursuit of work that tends to prosecute evil doers in the line of intemperance and vice," the Appeal to Reason says: "Ministers who try to make a reputation prosecuting the evil doers you mention are misdirecting their energy. Intemperance and vice are effects, not causes. Remove the causes and you have not only removed these crimes in the