Sir Edward Strachey's “Talk at a Country House” (Houghton, Mifflin & Co.) holds rather a pleasant place among the Dialogues which are now somewhat the fashion. Mr. James's dialogues are clever, of course, but some have found it wearisome to be always guessing at the topic under discussion. Vernon Lee's are full of quickening thought, but the portentously long sentences are a sore trial now and then. Oscar Wilde's are delightful, but one can't go on reading them forever, even though they be preposterous. The conversations between Foster and the Squire make a refreshing patch of neutral tint in all this brilliancy and pyrotechnic. Not at all modern are these talks; in fact, their charm lies largely in their being old-fashioned. An old English country house with pictures and traditions, and an old English country Squire with curious and cultivated interests, and a person named Foster who asks a great many questions, out of these materials Sir Edward Strachey has made his dialogues, some of which, at least, are already known to American readers through “The Atlantic Monthly.” The dialogue is a fascinating form; it has great dangers, but it offers many opportunities. Local color and character, these give an interest, an atmosphere, to the Squire's little critical disquisitions on widely differing subjects, from the Cuneiform Inscriptions down to English Politics, from Sadi and Hafiz down to Tennyson and Maurice; not exciting nor yet brilliant, not up to date in some respects, but interesting in many ways, and, on the whole, very good reading. A little conventional are they, one may urge, as dialogues. Foster is too much like the Question in a scientific quiz-book. But then, that is rather the way that one talks to old gentlemen like the Squire. The object is to get them to talk back; so one asks questions. We should most of us be lucky if our questions were always answered with as much good sense and fine taste as were Foster's.

Mrs. Fields’s “Shell of Old Books.”

Very pleasant reading, and delightful to the eye withal, is the fine volume by Mrs. James T. Fields entitled “A Shelf of Old Books” (Scribner). The books in point are certain notable volumes that came into the possession of Mr. Fields from time to time by gift or purchase. Each of these volumes, or groups of volumes, has for Mrs. Fields its special memories and associations, touching either author or giver; and these furnish the motif and groundwork of the three papers that form the contents of her book. The first paper, on Leigh Hunt, contains some good talk about Hunt, Shelley, Keats, Procter, and their circle; the second, on Edinburgh, introduces Scott, Ramsay, “Kit North,” Dr. John Brown, De Quincey, and other cultivators of literature on a little oatmeal and much glenlivit in Edina's palmy days; the third paper, “From Milton to Thackeray,” is a medley of literary chat and anecdote, much in the vein of Thackeray's gifted daughter, Mrs. Ritchie. A prime favorite with the writer was Leigh Hunt, whom she knew personally, and whose library, containing some precious specimens, finally came into Mr. Fields's possession. Mrs. Fields tells many pleasant stories of Hunt, which serve to offset some not pleasant ones of him afloat. A charming touch is that as to his love of flowers — how in his prison days he papered the walls of his cell with a trellis of painted roses, and had plants set in the dismal windows — like “Tim Linkinwater's” famous mignonette. Among Mr. Fields’s treasures was a copy of “Don Juan” that Byron himself once corrected and sent to Murray to be used in reprinting the poem. On a fly-leaf stands the following sarcastic note to the printer, penned by his lordship: “. . . The Author repeats (as before) that the former impressions (from whatever cause) are full of errors. And he further adds that he doth kindly trust — with all due deference to those superior persons — the publisher and printer — that they will in future — less misspell — misplace — mistake — and mis-everything, the humbled MSS. of their humble servant.” This and other interesting notes and letters are given in fac-simile in the present volume. There are also a number of well-executed portraits and other illustrations, completing and enriching the ensemble of a very attractive book.

“The Yellow Book” always contains such a variety of things that it would go hard were there not a few of considerable merit among them all. Indeed, one can hardly look over the contents of one of these starting octavos, without a dim sense of wonder that the editors should have unearthed so many acceptable writers and artists hitherto unknown to the public, for familiar names are by no means the rule. The October issue, which is the third of the series, impresses us as not quite equal to the preceding two, although there are some striking features. Of the art, Mr. Philip Broughton's “Mantegna” is by far the best example. Mr. Beardsley's imagination riots as before, but one quickly weary of his grotesque drawings. The poetry is “below par,” the only really fine thing being “The Ballad of a Nun,” by Mr. John Davidson. We may say a word for Mr. Morton Fullerton's strong sonnet on “George Meredith,” without accepting that perverse novelist as Shakespeare's only rival “in our English tongue.” The most conspicuous piece of prose is Mr. Hubert Crackanthorpe's “A Study in Sentimentality,” and the best is “The Headswoman,” by Mr. Kenneth Grahame. Mr. Henry Harland contributes a pa-
"The Gospel of Buddha according to Old Records" is the title of a compilation made by Dr. Paul Carus, and issued by the Open Court Publishing Co. It is a selection from the Buddhist scriptures, taken from the best English translations, and so arranged as to exhibit the life and teachings of Buddha in systematic and consecutive presentation. The editor tells us that he has treated his material much as the author of the Fourth Gospel used the accounts of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. In a few chapters, the editor appears as author; but he assures us that these original chapters "contain nothing but ideas for which prototypes can be found somewhere among the traditions of Buddhism, and have been added as elucidations of its main principles." The distinctive features of this book are the way in which the material has been arranged, and the valuable "Table of Reference," which refers us to the sources of the text, and also supplies us with parallels from the Christian Scriptures. Dr. Carus has done in prose very much what was done by Sir Edwin Arnold in the verse of his "Light of Asia." These popular expositions have their place and their value, and it is the part of pedantry to scorn them or to refuse them a hearing.—We note at the same time the appearance of "A Buddhist Catechism" (Putnam), compiled from the holy writings of the Southern Buddhists, with explanatory notes for the use of Europeans. Mr. Subadra Biikshu is the author of this little book, which was first written in German, "in the year 2438 after the Nirvana of the Tathāgato," and now appears in an English version. The catechetical form is employed throughout the book, and the exposition of doctrine is made both intelligible and attractive.

A recent volume with the familiar Dent imprint contains a selection of "Essays by Joseph Mazzini" (Macmillan), translated by Mr. Thomas Okey, and provided with an introduction by Mr. Bolton King. A photogravure portrait of Mazzini faces the title-page of the book—a good portrait, the saintlike character of the prophet of Italian unity reflected from the noble ascetic visage. Mr. King's introduction is mainly biographical, and recapitulates with marked sympathy the leading facts of that devoted life. The essays comprise "The Power and Principles" (1836), "Faith and the Future" (1835), "The Patriots and the Clergy" (1835), the Programme "To the Italians" and the "Thoughts on the French Revolution of 1789" from "Roma del Popolo" (1871), "The Question of the Exiles" from "La Jeune Suisse" (1836), and a beautiful "Unpublished Letter" of consolation, addressed by Mazzini to a father sorrowing for the loss of his only son. Let it not be thought that these essays are of local and temporary interest only. They are far more than that, as are nearly all of the writings of their author. As long as noble ideals of patriotism, or of conduct in the other aspects of life, shall be cherished among men, the message of that great soul will have both meaning and force. As the name of the historical Mazzini recedes farther and farther into the past, his fame grows brighter and brighter. In the words of his most eloquent panegyrist:

"Life and the clouds are vanished: hate and fear
Have had their span
Of time to avert, and are not: he is here,
The saint-like man."

It is with real gratitude that we welcome a volume that cannot fail to widen the circle of those to whom Mazzini's message makes its appeal.

"Blank Verse," by John Addington Symonds (imported by Charles Scribner's Sons), is a reprint of three essays which have been already published as an appendix to a previous work. It is excellent to have them in a volume by themselves, for though rather slight, and by no means digested into a single treatise, they have in them a good deal that is very useful to the student of the technique of poetry. The first essay is general in character, the second is a review of English blank verse from Surrey to Tennyson, and the third is on Milton's blank verse. The study of blank verse is chiefly of Rhythm; and here, though we nowhere have a full and accurate statement of the principles at bottom, we do get a good deal which suggests the right idea—the necessity of subordinating the mere prosody to a consideration of the meaning—which Professor Corson worked out so successfully in the treatment of blank verse in his "Primer of English Verse." Mr. Symonds's remarks on Quantity and Rhythm (p. 10), and on Quantity in Latin and English (p. 4), are good. When he says of "Hyperion" that the decasyllable beat maintains an uninterrupted undercurrent of regular pulsation (p. 64), he gets closest to the basis of rhythm in general. But Mr. Symonds's book, though written some time ago, has much that seems to show that he had divined, as it were, a good deal as to the nature of rhythm in poetry.