

VISIONS.

I.

VISIONS come and go again,
Leaving in their airy train
Just a rhythm, soft and low,
Of their movement to and fro—
Something like an old refrain.

II.

'Tis the way with summer rain ;
'Tis the way with joy and pain ;
'Tis the way with all we ken
Of the lives of mortal men ;
Just to come, then go again.

—W. N. Roundy, in *Harper's Weekly*.

THE ALLOWABLE IN FICTION.

AT one time, they remind us, the Anglo-Saxon novelist did deal with such problems—De Foe in his spirit, Richardson in his, Goldsmith in his. At what moment did our fiction lose this privilege? In what fatal hour did the Young Girl arise and seal the lips of Fiction with a touch of her finger, to some of the most vital interests of life? Whether I wished to oppose them in their aspiration for greater freedom, or whether I wished to encourage them, I should begin to answer them by saying that the Young Girl had never done anything of the kind. The manners of the novel have been improving with those of its readers; that is all. Gentlemen no longer swear or fall drunk under the table, or abduct young ladies and shut them up in lonely country houses, or so habitually set about the ruin of their neighbours' wives, as they once did. Generally people now call a spade an agricultural implement; they have not grown decent without having also grown a little squeamish, but they have grown comparatively decent; there is no doubt about that. They require of a novelist whom they respect unquestionable proof of his seriousness, if he proposes to deal with certain phases of life; they require a sort of scientific decorum. He can no longer expect to be received on the ground of entertainment only; he assumes a higher function, something like that of a physician or a priest, and they expect him to be bound by laws as sacred as those of such professions; they hold him solemnly pledged not to betray them or abuse their confidence. If he will accept the conditions, they give him their confidence, and he may then treat to his greater honour, and not at all to his disadvantage, of such experiences, such relations of men and women as George Eliot treats in "Adam Bede," in "Daniel Deronda," in "Romola," in almost all her books; such as Hawthorne treats in the "Scarlet Letter"; such as Dickens treats in "David Copperfield"; such as Thackeray treats in "Pendennis," and glances at in every one of his fictions; such as most of the masters of English fiction have, at some time, treated more or less openly. It is quite false or quite mistaken to suppose that our novels have left untouched these most important realities of life. They have only not made them their stock in trade; they have kept a true perspective in regard to them; they have relegated them in their pictures of life to the space and place they occupy in life itself, as we know it in England and America. They have kept a correct proportion, knowing perfectly well that unless the novel is to be a map, with everything scrupulously laid down in it, a faithful record of life in far the greater extent could be made to the exclusion of guilty love, and all its circumstances and consequences.—*Criticism and Fiction*, by W. D. Howells.

A FIREMAN'S LIFE.

MUCH has been written about the lives of sailors at sea; so much that everybody, I should think, knows something about them, and the so-called jolly tars are great favourites with the public. But the firemen, an equally useful, and even more hard-worked, class of men, are nothing like so well known. The editor of *Seafaring* had a spell in the stokehole on the equator when the sun was crossing the line, and as his experience has, therefore, included more than sailorizing he can feel for us, as he "knows what it is to be there," but I don't know anybody else that ever tried to expose or enquire into the state of slavery that these men are placed in. The much vaunted "floating palaces" of luxury for the moneyed classes are nothing more than "floating hells" for the firemen. If the owners could see the state these men are in when coming off watch on one of the Atlantic liners in the month of July (no doubt some owners have seen them), I think the sight should touch their hearts—that is if they had a spark of human kindness within them. Black as the poor men are—in fact, as the coal itself—with perspiration teeming out of every pore of their body, they are hardly able to drag their legs after them along the deck, to what people are pleased to call the "firemen's room," a room that the shipowners would not allow their dogs to be kept in, yet they will tell you that the firemen have grand quarters laid out for them aboard these ships. Now the scene changes. Take a peep down into the stokehole and what do you see of the men that just went down there on duty? You see a ghastly sight, men half-naked standing in front of furnaces hauling out red-hot fire—what is called cleaning fires—trimmers standing by throwing water on the deck so as to keep the heat down as much as possible, others flying along the passages with barrows of coal ready to be thrown into the furnaces as soon as they are cleaned out, and engineers of the slave-driving type hurrying them on with their work, especially if the steam

is below the mark, which it nearly always is when cleaning fires, for what do they care for a fireman's "life" as long as they can make a quick passage with the ship, now that speed is all the go? Then comes the watch that's just gone off for ashes. During the time the ashes are being sent up, the lives of the men are in danger, either of a bag of ashes or an empty ash-bucket falling on them and killing them. Many a poor fellow has met his death in the past in the same way. Then when the ashes are up the engineer comes on the warpath with such well-known words to firemen as "shake her up," "put your rake through," "slice them fires," "why don't you prick her?" etc. After he has exhausted his stokehole vocabulary (which is of a very extensive nature), if a man has the courage to answer him in his defence the engineer reports him for using threatening language towards him, and the result is that the man who has been so unfortunate as to bring the engineer's wrath down upon him is taken before the "purser" (never before the captain, for these men would not allow a fireman to be brought within their majestic presence), and logged two days' pay, because he had the manliness to assert the freedom of speech! This is only an outline of what the work-sleep-and-eat-slaves of the sea have to put up with from the officers of their own department. If the firemen have half-an-hour to spare after they get washed—God knows how they wash, as there is little or no convenience for them to do so—and come on deck, they are sure to be in the wrong place. For a deck officer will come along and order them to the other side of the ship, or else tell them to get forward to their room. Even landsmen like the cooks and bakers are down on the firemen, for if some half-starved Italian or German emigrant makes a raid on the galley or baker's shop, it is put down at once to the firemen, so they are hardly ever out of trouble on board ship. To conclude, I believe the marine firemen receive more inhuman treatment than any other class of toilers afloat or ashore.—*By a Fireman, in Seafaring*.

THE sea-serpent story recently reported from the East coast of New Zealand has now been verified from more than one source. Mr. Alfred Ford Matthews, a well-known surveyor, of Gisborne, states that while on board the *Manapouri*, going from Auckland to Gisborne, on Friday, July 24, he and several others distinctly saw a sea serpent resembling the one seen from the *Rotomahana* off Portland Island. The serpent, when seen from the *Manapouri*, was a few miles north of the East Cape, so, evidently, it had been travelling south. The monster was also seen by the ship's officer in charge. It was watched for over ten minutes and was travelling slowly, raising itself twenty or thirty feet out of the water every two or three minutes. It would from time to time lift its head and part of its body to a great height perpendicularly, and when in that position turn its body round in a most peculiar manner, displaying a black back, white belly and two arm-like appendages of great length, which appeared to dangle about like a broken limb on a human being. It would then suddenly drop back into the water, scattering it in all directions. It had a flat head, and was about half a mile distant from the ship. The other passengers confirm the statement. The Maoris are greatly excited over the affair, as they, of course, put the monster down for a *taniwha*.—*The Colonies and India*.

THE Earl of Selborne has replied as follows to a correspondent who requested his opinion on the subject of the Greek question in the universities: "As you wish to know my opinion as to the study of Greek in the universities, I have no difficulty in saying that it ought, in my opinion, to be as much encouraged there now as at any former time; and that the universities are, of all places of education in the kingdom, those in which the duty of cultivating and promoting it is most incumbent. Apart from all other considerations, the fact that the New Testament is written in Greek would alone appear to me to be a sufficient reason for that opinion. It is, I consider, a great misfortune that the Hebrew language is known to so few persons as it is. I think some serious evils have resulted from it, which would be vastly increased if the Greek language also were understood only by a small number of qualified scholars. As to the cases in which the requirement of Greek may properly be dispensed with in favour of students whose special aptitude is for other subjects of study, and who may be trusted to pursue those other subjects in earnest, I am perfectly content to rely on the judgment of the university authorities."—*The Times*.

THE following trait shows Mascagni's character in the way of modesty. For the time of his sojourn in Rome during the première week of "L'Amigo Fritz" arrangements had been made for his staying at the Quirinal Hotel, and everybody who is anybody left his card there for the celebrated composer. Mascagni, however, could not be found there, and it was only after considerable search that he was detected at a modest "albergo." When asked about his predilection for the small hostelry he said: "Oh, I didn't want to change. I stayed here when I was poor in hopes and needy, and now when I am doing well should I be ungrateful? No, no; I am going to remain where I am!" Isn't that a nice answer?—*Musical Courier*.

WHERE the sun does not come, the doctor does.—*Italian Proverb*.

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