

THE SATURDAY READER.

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By MRS. J. V. NOEL.

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR.

We are about to tread on delicate ground. To lay ourself open to the charge of egotism by parading our Editorial trials before the eyes of our readers. And this in spite of our inherent modesty, which urges us to shrink from directing public attention to our Editorial self. We have, nevertheless, determined to do violence to our feelings, more especially as we are inclined to believe that not one reader in a thousand has given a moment's thought to the difficulties which beset the Editor of a periodical like the SATURDAY READER.

"Why," says the constant reader, whose eyes have scanned these lines thus far, "why, what would Mr. Editor have? Does he not sit secure and omnipotent in the seclusion of his *sanctum*—shut out from the bustle of the world, with the not very difficult task before him of simply providing us our weekly READER. Surely he cannot have any claim upon our sympathy in this pleasant occupation; and as for difficulty, why I am even vain enough to think myself equal to that task." Possibly friend; and yet there are difficulties to be encountered, and delicate points to be determined, as you would find were you to undertake the task.

We need not do more than hint at the great variety of tastes to be catered for. Possibly you are of the sterner sex, and have a decided opinion as to what ought to be the character of the READER. You possess a taste for metaphysical disquisitions—for essays on abstruse themes—for philosophical enquiries into the origin of species, and so forth. All good, very good in their place, but a word in your ear, friend. Were the pages of the READER loaded with articles for your especial delectation, we should soon number our subscribers by hundreds where we are now able to count thousands. Again: perchance, you have not dipped so deeply into learned themes. You could tolerate an occasional article upon a scientific subject, if popularly treated, but say you, "why fill your paper with dry, uninteresting

matter that no one cares to read? It is pleasant tales and sketches that we want. We take up the READER in our hours of relaxation, and do not care to be bored with either abstruse philosophy or metaphysics." Perhaps you are right: but if we please you what is to become of your neighbour, whose tastes are so totally opposed to yours? Again: you may be an ardent politician and cannot understand how the conductors of any journal should eschew politics. "Why, politics are the life-blood of the nation, and how, so far as you are concerned, can you expect the people to discuss intelligently the various questions which are brought before them, and which all bear more or less intimately upon the public good? or, indeed, how can you expect right principles of government to prevail if you refuse to discuss those principles with your readers?" We are prepared to admit that what you have said, good sir, has some weight with us; but do you know that your three opposite neighbours repeatedly begged that we would discontinue the political articles which appeared in the early issues of the READER, and devote the space to other topics? You are probably unaware of the fact, but such was the case nevertheless.

Again: perhaps you are a lady. Your fine sensitive nature delights in poetry. You would not object to meet with flowing stanzas upon every second page of our paper. You adore music, and properly so. You would even look with an indulgent eye upon a whole page devoted to the Fashions. You can relish a column or two of sprightly gossip even if there be "nothing in't." But do you know that we meet not unfrequently with less imaginative minds, inhabiting bodies of a sterner mould than yours, who irreverently term all this sort of thing "Poor stuff!" Of course you are shocked to find your tastes thus characterized; but, Mademoiselle, the fact remains.

If the constant reader who thought our task so simple has followed us thus far, we should like to ask him whether he still believes our path to be strewn with flowers. We think we have written enough to convince him that it is not so easy a matter to cater for tastes so varied; and that after all the Editor of a journal like this, has some difficulties to contend with. But we have as yet only indicated one aspect of these difficulties; there are others which, perhaps, task more severely our Editorial equanimity.

We have a letter box.

We are in constant receipt of contributions from all parts of Canada, which are offered for insertion in the READER, and are pleased that such is the case; for we delight to regard it as one part of our mission to stimulate into activity the literary talent which lies dormant in our midst. We believe the SATURDAY READER has effected some good in this direction, and hope, it is destined to effect more. But, nevertheless, our letter box is one of our trials. Let us select from its contents at random.

On the charmingest of rose-tinted paper, we have first a note, appealing to the Editor's well-

known indulgence to ladies, and requesting the favour of the insertion of the accompanying lines in the next issue of the READER. We turn to the lines—perhaps they are not very, very bad; and we hesitate between our natural desire to oblige the fair writer, and our sense of duty to the public, until finally, with something like a pang, we consign this contribution to the waste basket. Next we have a manuscript of unconscionable length, with the author's request that the Editor will at least read it through before rejecting it. Two hours are wearily occupied in this task, and the waste basket becomes heavier. Here is a letter, indignantly demanding why a former contribution of the writer's was rejected; and hinting strongly that the Editor's judgment must be at fault. Next is an intimation that a certain article, in the previous week's issue of the READER, had better have been left out; and following quickly, here is a pleasant letter of commendation, singularly enough referring specially to the very article which gave offence to the writer of the previous letter. Next we have several gratuitous hints thrown out for what the writer conceives to be the better editorial management of the READER. Here is an angry request to know why a certain manuscript had not been returned, coupled with the intimation that the writer intends to forward it to some other Editor who would act in a more gentlemanly manner. (The writer of this letter chooses to forget our well-understood rule.) Next is a well-written article, accompanied by a few modest lines from the author, really pleasant to read; and to crown all, here is a letter from a small town in Upper Canada, suggesting that the READER be transferred into a decided temperance journal, and that then the writer would devote his valuable energies to the extension of its circulation.

We might continue to quote *ad libitum* from our letter-box, but think from what we have written above, our constant reader will perceive that its contents frequently make considerable demands upon our patience. We imagine, also, that he will be prepared to admit that in a paper intended for general circulation it is not so easy—nay it is impossible, absolutely to meet the taste of any particular class. The publisher of a literary or any other journal must place his venture upon a commercial basis; and to do that his Editor must meet the wants (as best he can) of the many. Bearing in mind always, that it is his duty to endeavour to elevate the public taste, he must pursue the tenor of his way, prepared to encounter objectors, and to meet with difficulties in his course.

It has been found that the process by which crystals may be produced on plates of glass, and their designs then etched into that substance, so elaborately studied by Kuhlman, affords beautiful objects for the magic lantern, the difference between the roughened and smooth portions producing on the screen all the distinction between black and white, with every variety of half tone and gradation.