

AVERNUS.

AVERNUS fair :

Upon your beauteous breast you bear
 Many a light and laughter-loving soul
 That heed'st not that the waters roll,
 Bearing his craft swiftly to where
 The pulse of pleasure changes to despair ;
 Who measures not the moment, smiles to see
 His face and form in the transparency
 Of your wide wicked waters ; turns once more
 To wave a fond farewell to those on shore—
 "I shall return—I shall return," he cries,
 "To tread with you the path of Paradise."
 He little recks how seldom footsteps take
 Returning tracks from that alluring lake.

Montreal.

MAY AUSTIN.

ANNUS FLAVUS.

It has been a yellow year. The horse-chestnuts along the Avenue and through the Park are half yellow and half green ; even the individual leaves are sometimes diagonally and dually coloured—emerald green brightest where the autumn rain washes them, chrome and saffron yellow most glowing where they join on to the green. It is the exact colouring of the early summer, the green that of July grass, the yellow only a trifle warmer and duller than the dandelion's sheen. A single horse-chestnut, like a bit of brown jasper, only slightly mottled and almost perfectly round, lies on the path in a bed of yellow leaves. The leaves have all fallen on their faces, but with the chestnuts this does not matter ; you can tell perfectly well what they are like on the other side. Further on is one maple, not red,—there are no completely red trees of any kind yet this year,—but delicately tinted all over, ranging from pink, shell and coral and rose pink to warm brown and dark red. Its leaves have fallen on their faces too, but these provoke examination. Here is one minutely reticulated in green and red and yellow ; it looks as if it ought to be beautiful on the right side. Turn it over : it isn't beautiful at all—looks like a section of Scotch plaid cut up into a leaf ; but held up to the light it is like stained glass. Another and another, all glowing and effulgent, held up against the sunlight, each triple-pointed leaf a kind of new Gothic window. Here is one, pale spring-time green in ground, with a bar sinister of purple black on one side. Here is another of almost pure crimson, with the edges curled tightly up, and all tipped with black. If you try to uncurl it you will break up your beautiful red leaf. Here is a third with a rainbow range of colours laid as softly on it as if they were compounded of air, a shadowy rose that passes into a vivid orange, that fades into a tender yellow, that gives way to a russet brown. Here are four, five, six, all exactly alike,—plain, perfect red, with black seams for lines, and exquisitely tapering points. Make the most of them, there are not many others of that colour to pick up. Still the green and yellow chestnuts appear, with their black trunks looking as of jet when the rain runs down their sides, and their delicate black twigs showing like branching algæ against the yellow. To-night, if a frost comes—ever so slight a frost, they will turn gray and brown again, and when you see them to-morrow morning you will wonder how they can be the same trees. But now we leave the chestnuts behind, and come into a new and darker world of elms, oaks, and maples. The last are yellow too, a fine clear glow, that if we could get in as big a mass as we did of the chestnuts would be far warmer and more satisfying. It looks warm though, and no wonder. Stand under this small maple, beautifully domed and built. Every single leaf is of this pure warm yellow, melting into pink at the base, or where it joins the stem. This gives the warmth, like that one solitary tree in the avenue, only here we have about thirty or forty of them at equal distances, so that the effect is lustrous, permeating, magical. Further on is a prize, a graceful ash, every delicately serrated leaf dipped into fire, and every branch laden with the bunches of scarlet fruit. A little way off, the impression is of lace. If Gautier was always sinning in finding analogies of satin and shimmer, and pearls and tissue, we may do the same,—of lace work or fretted copper, more gorgeous than any barbaric red and gold. There is just one more such ash on this road, almost as beautiful, but for the fact that it stands directly in front of a bright, new, red brick mansion, with fashionable orange curtains all over the front windows. It is cruel, exasperating, a piece of folly ! Look out, not in. Leave such colouring to the trees, who never, never will offend you so. Then another prize ! A shed—a ramshackle, tumbledown old thing, inside a worn-out fence. It has a comfortable sloping roof, over which kind, cool, gray expanse a Virginia creeper has braided its tongues of fire. There is colour at last, positive, perfect, superb,—a rich, unadulterated crimson, lying flat under the glare of a still, hot October sun.

Match it if you can ; we shall find nothing else like it at all events to-day. Then here are the oaks, very rich, very varied ; some all dark brown, copper-coloured underneath ; others slightly tinted garnet, ruby, one actually purple, with brown edges and a clear yellow stem. But this one is a *lusus naturæ*. Pick him up and put him with the six red maple leaves and that one branch of copper-coloured ash we took so much trouble to climb over the fence for. Here are the melancholy firs, and the other evergreens, looking so bright and youthful, and of such an intense green. This is their hour of triumph now. In the spring, how black they look, when the new green is expanding, and a thousand fresh and tender tints surround them ! Now however these upstart maples and chestnuts have had their day,—look at their bare branches, their yellowing leaves, their jetty trunks ! And the evergreens come out again quite strong and green and youthful in comparison, and admire each other for the beauty which is not that at least of a *jeunesse dorée*.

SERANUS.

THE THACKERAY LETTERS.*

TOUCHING these valuable reprints of a series of epistles marked by more or less charm and originality, the chief impression their perusal leaves is one of extreme simplicity. In fact, the man Thackeray as revealed in these pages—and that it is a fair measure of revelation no one will doubt—is as far removed from the men of to-day as the writer Thackeray, creator of Becky and Dobbin, Phil Firmin, and Colonel Newcome, is removed from the authors of farcical romances and analytical novels, the reigning successes of the hour. And it is by reason of his simplicity, his naturalness, one might almost say his childishness, that he stands so distinguished. As seen through the medium of these letters he is always sweet-tempered, brave, hopeful, ardent, easily pleased and impressed, indulgent, gently bantering, mildly teasing, appreciative of his fellow men, and most appreciative of one woman—the Mrs. Brookfield to whom most of these letters are addressed. If he is cynical, he is sorrowfully a cynic ; we feel it is against his inner nature. "Pray God to keep us simple !" he cries in a letter from Paris. The touches like this last—quick, violent, spontaneous, irrepressible emotion, are everywhere. He hears that an old friend is dead, and before his mother. "An awful, awful, sudden, sudden summons ! There go wit, fame, friend-ship, ambition, high repute ! Ah ! *aimons nous bien*. It seems to me that is the only thing we can carry away. When we go, let us have some who love us wherever we are." The fate of this same friend affected him again. "We are taught to be ashamed of our best feelings all our life. I don't want to blubber upon everybody's shoulders, but to have a good will for all, and a strong, very strong regard for a few, which I shall not be ashamed to own to them." This is the Thackeray that heedless reviewers and indolent critics have stigmatised as narrow, morbid, unfeeling, with little trust in human nature and no hope for the human race. This is the Thackeray who, without ever being mawkish, can affect us as few writers can, can summon the tears as effectually as Dickens, arouse our anger, our sense of the just, the ludicrous, the vain, the pitiful, the unfortunate. Only a man of inordinate sensibilities could have such power, and these letters prove that he was endowed with extraordinarily rare gifts of sympathy and sentiment. Many of these epistles were written from Paris, and they thus afford more than glimpses of famous places and people, but from Thackeray's incapacity for generalisation it is impossible to glean much direct knowledge of what he saw and felt. It is all delightful reading, fragmentary, hurried, enhanced with the wildest looking drawings and sketches, and sometimes a stray poem or line of doggerel, but all exquisitely natural and unforced, and all written unaffectedly in the same vein as *Vanity Fair*.

Jeffrey, speaking to Macaulay, said : "The more I think of it, the less I gather where you picked up that style." In the case of Macaulay, who owed a good deal to Burke, there was undoubtedly the genius of manner, and so with Thackeray. These letters sound and read and look just like *Vanity Fair*. "We have met ; it is forgotten. . . . Poor soul, she performed beautifully. 'What, William, not the least changed, just the same as ever, in spite of all your fame !' Fame be hanged, thought I, *pardonnez-moi le mot*, 'Just the same simple creature.' O what a hypocrite I felt. I like her, too, but she, poor, poor soul—. Well, she did her comedy exceeding well. I could only say : 'My dear, you have grown older ;' that was the only bit of truth that passed, and she didn't like it." Writing still from Paris, with his heart and head full of England and a certain lady in Portman Street, he says : "I fancy the old street-sweeper at the corner is holding the cob, I take my hat and stick, I say good-bye again, the door bangs finally. 'Here's a shilling for you, old street-sweeper ;' the cob trots solitary into the Park. *Je fais de la littérature ma parole d'honneur !—du style—du Sterne tout par—. O vanitas vanitatum !* God bless all."

Glimpses of his literary friends are fewer than might be expected, for he accepted many invitations out and dined people himself in after life. Of Dickens the speeches are characteristic. "Get David Copperfield. By Jingo, it's beautiful !" Henry Taylor, the Carlyles, the "wise old Miss Berrys," Adelaide Procter and her parents, Rogers, the Hallams, who were cousins of Mrs. Brookfield, Crowe the artist, Harrison Ainsworth, Jules Janin, D'Orsay, Lady Waldegrave, Lord Holland, Jenny Lind, and Dr. Trench are all touched upon in these pages with a kindly and uncritical

* A Collection of Letters of Thackeray, 1847-1855. With portraits and reproductions of letters and drawings. New York : Charles Scribner's Sons.