

## RED AND BLUE PENCIL.

"S. S." sends us "a delicious *morceau* for our d—paper" (it is modesty that makes us hesitate). Thanks. "Ichabod Crane" is, indeed, a delicious *morceau*, but it has begun to have "a very ancient and"—in fact, as things go in the New World, it belongs very decidedly to antiquity. It was certainly a happy thought to adapt its quaint humour to "modern instances." We fear, nevertheless, that "Ichabod" in the Eastern Townships of to-day, even in "Missisquoi County and other backward places" (as our adapter wickedly interpolates), would find himself very much in the position of that son of the same father, Rip Van Winkle. Again thanks; but, with undiminished admiration for Washington Irving, and the kindest regards for his witty adapter, we would prefer something more hodiernal.

The wrath of some of our contributors when compositor and proofreader have failed to decipher their "copy" is sometimes more than we can bear. If they knew how much we take it to heart, they would spare us. We know too well the shock it is to find that for the very word which one has chosen out of several competitors to express one's meaning has been substituted another which "lacks all common sense," or any sense. But does not the fault sometimes lie with the writer? If those who send manuscript to be printed would just read it over carefully with that wonder-working middleman, the compositor, in their mind's eye, and ask themselves, as they pass from sentence to sentence or from stanza to stanza, whether it is possible for the ordinary typesetter to make it out, they would be doing a service to themselves, to the printer, to the proofreader and to the public.

On the whole, indeed, we cannot complain. We have received some "copy" so fair and clear that we have placed it among our treasures, as well for the sake of the writers as for the pleasure of contemplating work well done. A certain minister of Louis Philippe, through whose hands all kinds of documents were wont to pass, became at last such an expert in handwriting that he could (or claimed that he could) tell at a glance whether any document was of a suspicious nature simply by the character of the manuscript. The printer, in like manner, becomes a graphologist through long practice, and he is inclined to have a very poor opinion of the man or woman who cannot write his or her thoughts legibly. Some are naturally obscure both in thinking and writing. Some think lucidly, but their writing does them injustice. Some, again, write legibly enough, but are confused in the construction of their sentences. There is no person, however, who may not, by taking pains, so write that the printer may read the "copy" without embarrassment and waste of time, and the habit of doing so is one which even the brightest genius should not disdain to acquire. In the last resort, it is, indeed, a question of courtesy, of consideration for others.

Besides, whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well. The notion that slovenly handwriting is associated with great mental endowments is a baneful heresy. If, in some few cases, persons exceptionally gifted have been wont to write rudely or carelessly, the defect or negligence was to be deplored, if willful, as a trait of moral perversity; if involuntary, as so much to be detracted from the sum of their merits. Some of the greatest names in literature belong to writers whose manuscript was as clear as print. Of our own poets, Roberts, Mair, Murray, McLennan, Martin, Duvar, Lesperance, Lighthall, McColl, Sangster, etc., all write fine clear—some of them beautiful—hands.

"George" wants to know how he can improve his style. It is not the first time that we have been asked this question since our hair began to turn grey. Horace's advice—*mutatis mutandis*—is still probably as good as any that could be given: Study the best models. But there the problem becomes vexed and hesitations begin. A couple of years ago Sir John Lubbock raised a storm of controversy with his "hundred best books." A well known reader, writer and thinker of this city made the famous list the subject of an essay, with which he regaled a private literary circle. The members

were, on an average, of more than average culture, and he put the question to them whether several works in the catalogue were familiar to them. They all replied in the negative. Nor did they express any penitence at having lived so long in ignorance of treatises so highly recommended. The fact is that the reading of most persons who read most is necessarily specialized, and beyond certain lines of study or research, they have little leisure for comprehensive courses.

Some time ago the *Forum* devised a plan for getting at the truth as to the kind of literary pabulum on which some of the great minds of our day have been nourished. It asked a number of leading men in letters, education, the professions and other walks of life, to give, in the form of reminiscences, brief accounts of the influences, which, through the medium of books, had most contributed to their intellectual and moral development. The series of papers, written in reply to the invitation, appeared subsequently in a small volume bearing the title of "Books that have helped me." The chief value of this record of various experience is the thorough honesty of the autobiographers. Among them are the Rev. E. E. Hale, Moncure D. Conway, Edward Eggleston, Andrew Lang, Brander Matthews and a single lady, Jeannotte L. Gilder.

We cannot, of course, attempt to give a *resumé* of what these distinguished persons say of themselves, and of the books that went to the making of them. It is worth mentioning that, while Mr. Hale found it possible to go to sleep over John Locke's "Essay on the Human Understanding," he derived benefit from "Robinson Crusoe," "Jane Eyre," "The Heir of Redclyffe," "Coningsby," "Pendennis" and "The Christmas Carol." Of "Sartor Resartus" his first knowledge was not agreeable. He was, in fact, posed by an uncle, who was reading it in *Fraser*, inopportunistically demanding its meaning, and he was, to his chagrin, obliged to put in an "ignoramus." But, whether he knew Latin or not, he soon became intimately acquainted with Carlyle. "It is not one man or two in that generation," he writes, "it is every one who wrote or read English, who was under his power." A benefaction of one of the Hopkinses, still existing in Cambridge, is expended for prizes in the freshman year, mostly books, known from the formula pasted on the cover, as "Deturs." Some good angel so guarded the purchaser of the "Deturs" in Mr. Hale's freshman year as to make him include in the list a copy of Dr. Aikin's "British Poets." Another good angel wrote his name on the "Detur" paper that was pasted on its cover. It was an elegant book—none more tasteful has he since seen, and to him especially valuable as containing what is best in English poetry from Cowley to Cowper. "And," says Mr. Hale, "it is astonishing and useful to consider that, on the whole, pretty much all the good poetry in English between the year 1600 and 1799 can be printed in a volume as big as the Bible." This book was a great comfort to him. "Many a long evening, many a stormy day, have I sat and read 'Paradise Lost,' Pope's 'Essay,' even Somerville's 'Chase,' and the 'Castle of Indolence,' just as one reads the only paper in a country railway station, because I had nothing else to read, and was too lazy to go in quest of anything else."

The following passage contains the moral of Mr. Hale's article: "As to the choice of books to possess, I am sure that Mr. Emerson is right when he says, 'Buy in the line of your genius.' The misfortune is that so few of us know what the line of our genius is. For these persons, if they live in the neighbourhood of public libraries, I think the best rule is to buy few books, except books of reference: as many of *them* as you will. Let the few be of the best."

After all, it is somewhat vague counsel for those who most need counsel—that is, beginners in life and literature who desire to be definitely guided towards the right path. It is, however, impossible to read Mr. Hale's essay throughout, and the other essays (there are twelve altogether) in the volume, without deriving some practical benefit. What helped the contributors to the series ought, we should think, to be helpful to other aspirants

after excellence. If we were to add anything of our own, it would be that a great deal depends on the habit of attention in reading, and of painstaking in writing. If a book is worth reading at all, it should be read carefully. If one undertakes to write on any subject, whether briefly or at length, he should bring whatever he has of knowledge and judgment and taste to bear upon the task.

Some time ago we were asked the origin of the syllables used in music for solmization. They were taken from the first stanza of a Latin hymn in honour of John the Baptist, written by Paul Warnefrid, of Aquileia, generally known as Paulus Diaconus, or Paul the Deacon. This is the verse in question, with the syllables marked in italics:

*U*queant laxis resonare fibris  
*M*ira gestorum famuli tuorum,  
*S*olve polluti labii reatum,  
Sancte Joannes.

To facilitate the intonation of the notes of the scale various expedients had already been devised, when Guido d'Arezzo, in the eleventh century, bethought him of these syllables, which soon became popular. The syllable *si* was added at a much later date. The Italians substituted *do* for *ut*, which is still used by French musicians. In the tonic sol-fa method these syllables are modified into doh, rah, me, fah, soh, la, te.

We love to hear good things of the *Canadien errant*, though, of course, we would prefer, when he is every way estimable and especially when he does us credit, to have retained him amongst us. But the question sometimes arises: Had he stayed on with us, would he have risen to such eminence as he has since attained? Here, for instance, is a book that was put into our hands not long since, through the kind remembrance, on the author's part, of old scenes and acquaintances—a very worthy book—"William Shakespeare Portrayed by himself"—the author of which was known in Montreal as a compositor many years ago. He must be well on in years now, for, although he was young when he migrated, there are only two or three of the craft who can recall his personality. Robert Waters has been all his life a student. Some time ago he published a life of William Cobbett (in whom Canada has also some share), and it was the means of our introduction to him through the mediation of a common friend. We take this opportunity of mentioning him as one of our Canadian authors (for he has no more forgotten us than his right hand has forgotten its cunning), and of recommending his last book to students of Shakespeare.

Mr. Grant Allen, who is (ah! quel dommage!) another of those wandering Canadians, in one of his delightful essays on the pedigrees of flowers and other growths, gives a piece of botanical genealogy which may be said to figure forth his own career. In one of the chapters of "Colin Clout's Calendar" he speaks of a small creeping wood-sorrel, with yellow blossoms, instead of the lilac-veined petals of the familiar English species, as being the commonest weed in a certain little English garden. "It is," he adds, "an interesting little plant in its own way, for, contrary to all natural traditions of emigration, it has moved eastward, against the way of the sun, and has come to us across the Atlantic from the broad central plains of the American Continent. There is something strange in the notion of a weed from the new world overrunning the fields of the old, and living down the native inhabitants of more anciently civilized Europe." Perhaps a still better parallel would be "the Canadian Michaelmas daisy . . . now beginning to push its way boldly along the grassy margin of Southern English roadsides." Then there is the Canadian pondweed, introduced as a botanical specimen in 1847, which has spread all over Britain, and whose conquering progress no European rival can check. "Colin Clout's Calendar—the Record of a Summer" is in the author's happiest vein, as entertaining as it is instructive.

A good collection of water colours by New York artists is shown in Baltimore, under the auspices of the Charcoal Club. It contains work by Carroll Beckwith, Wiles, T. Moran, William Chase, Charles Baker, F. H. Smith, Hamilton Gibson, W. H. Drake, Swain Gifford and G. W. Maynard. The artists represented belong to what is called the Artists' Guild of New York.