

LITERATURE AND EDUCATION IN ICELAND.

In a well-lighted apartment, under the roof of the church, is kept the public library of Reikiavik, consisting of two or three thousand books, Danish, Icelandic, and English, many of them being presents sent from a distance. I could not find any remarkable old books or manuscripts in this establishment; it seemed to be chiefly designed for popular use. The inhabitants of the town are allowed to have books from it for a dollar (2s. 3d.) each per annum, and about sixty take advantage of the privilege. I observed several of Mr. Dicken's novels, some of Marryatt's; a copy of Hume and Smollet. —Two of Goldsmith's Animated Nature, and some of the publications of the United States' government.

We next went to see the school, which is a long goodly building, situate on a slope to the east of the town. To find, in an island of 200 miles in linear extent, and containing 60,000 inhabitants, strictly speaking, but one public seat of education of any kind, is some what startling to a stranger. Such is the fact. There is not and never has been, one juvenile seminary in Iceland, and this simply because the population is too scattered to admit of any such arrangement. The father teaches his children by the winter fireside; they teach their children again; and such is the only education which the bulk of the people obtain. Stranger to say, they all read, and have, generally speaking, a taste for reading; and few English or Scotchmen write so neatly as these islanders do. The school at Reikiavik is an establishment for advancing the education of a select number of the youth of Iceland. About sixty lads between the ages of fourteen and eighteen attend it, most of them having a view to the learned professions. It is, however, only a kind of gymnasium or academy; and those who desire the special instructions fitting them to be priests, lawyers, or medical men, must pass to the university of Copenhagen. I found a suit of good class-rooms for the various branches, the Danish, French, and English languages, mathematics, natural philosophy, natural history, &c.; a set of dormitories for a certain number of the pupils—the rest living with friends in the town—and cabinets containing minerals and zoological specimens. The whole establishment seemed to be satisfactory in every respect but that of ventilation. The superintending rector, Mr. Jonson, is obviously a man of vigorous intellect and good acquirements. As the establishment is supported by the Danish government, no fees are charged; and it of course becomes necessary to admit to it only such youth as can give assurance of turning its instructions to good account.

The zealous cultivation of literature in Iceland during the last six centuries, and the remarkable productions, the sagas and eddas—historical and romantic poems—have excited the interest of all visitors. I am free to own that I can form no image of literary life more touching, more calculated to call forth respect and veneration, than that of such a man as the Icelandic priest Thordakson, who produced a beautiful translation of Paradise Lost, and many original works of distinguished merit, in the small inner room of a mere cottage which formed his parsonage, while his family, concerns were going on in an equally small outer apartment, and his entire annual income did not exceed what is often given in England for the writing of an article in a magazine. Inquiry regarding the present state of literature in Iceland was a matter of course. So far as I could learn, the love of letters is still a more vivid passion in Iceland than the

circumstances of the country would lead one to expect. I had much pleasure in looking over Mr. Thordakson's printing office in Reikiavik, where I found two presses of improved construction, and saw in progress an Icelandic translation of the Odyssey by Mr. Egilsson, late president of the college, whose son, I was told, is also giving promise of being a good poet. The list of books printed and published by Mr. Thordakson would surprise any one who thinks only of Iceland as a rude country, half buried in arctic snows. He is also the publisher of two out of the three native newspapers produced in Iceland—the Ingolfr, and Thiodotfur. An Icelandic newspaper, I may remark, is a small quarto sheet, like the English newspapers of the seventeenth century, produced at irregular intervals, and sometimes consisting of two, sometimes of four leaves according as the abundance of intelligence may determine. In a country, where there are no roads and no posts, that there should be newspapers of any kind is gratifying. I regret, however, to say that they are described as of a violent, malcontent complexion.—Chambers' Journal.

ALLIGATORS IN AMERICA.—At daylight we found ourselves in the Red River—a sullen, sluggish, red-chre-coloured stream; floods from the Rocky Mountains had occasioned it to overflow its banks, through somewhere about one hundred miles, which we ascended; which gave us the appearance of steering right through the forest. The effect was grand and novel; the stream was rapid; and the great red flood rushed through the trees as far as the eye could reach. On every log or uncovered bank lay numbers of alligators; we fired our rifles at many of them, and although close to them, the ball had no effect, except in the instances of a very small one, which a Yankee killed. They seldom prove the attacking party, but such instances have occurred; it is said that the best means of escape is for the attacked to get to a tree, and run constantly round it. The alligators cannot turn quickly; all their strength, when on land, is in the tail, with which they sweep their prey into their mouth; from their extreme length the year only move in an angular direction, and find it impossible to turn quickly enough to catch a man describing a small circle round a tree.—Captain Levisque.

The London Daily Telegraph was the subject of an action in the Bail Court on Friday, when Mr. Cole, barrister, recovered from Colonel Sleigh, the proprietor, £30, as engaged editor for three months. He claimed £48, at £4 a-week; but it appearing that, instead of being editor, he had only written articles, the sum was reduced by the Jury.

The Steamship Unicorn, which used to play between Halifax and Newfoundland, has been destroyed by fire near Yazor City. The passengers, among whom were several ladies, barely escaped with their lives, but all their baggage was destroyed. The books and papers of the boat were totally destroyed. There was a considerable amount of money in the safe which was also lost. The total loss is estimated to amount to \$75,000.

APPLICATION AND SUCCESS.—Application is one of the great secrets of perfection.—Success is the offspring of cheerfulness and courage.

UNWILLING TROOPS.—The Emperor of Russia is setting the whole of his militia in motion. Doubtless it may be a forced march with most, if not all of them.

Query.—When a lady writes a novel, can her copy be legitimately called manuscript?



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THE BRITISH ARMY IN THE CRIMEA.

A Correspondent of the London Times in a letter, dated October 22nd, gives a fearful account of the intemperance prevailing among our soldiers in the Crimea, showing that the love of intoxicating liquors has become a passion absolutely uncontrollable by discipline—it is subjecting its victims to corporeal and other degrading punishments—and is preparing the way for disease and pestilence.

Fourth Division Camp Monday, Oct. 22nd.

Is the British army in the Crimea to become, or rather to continue, a model of Drunkenness for all nations? I certainly am not giving too much importance to this question by insisting upon it very strongly. Yesterday was Sunday. I rode into Balaklava at one P.M., through Kadikoi Major, and returned, towards dusk, through Kadikoi Minor. The sights I saw, both going and returning, were enough to make an Englishman despair of his countrymen. All along the road were men—not only privates, but non-commissioned officers—in every stage of drunkenness. Sobriety was really the exception, intoxication the rule. Noisy groups, flushed and unsteady with drink, were interspersed with staggering sots who could not keep on their legs.

The Times and other newspapers condemn in the strongest possible terms the disgraceful state of things reported by their correspondents in the Crimea. In one of its powerful leaders, the Times observes:—

“The regimental officers are at their wits' end for means to stop the evil, and the colonel of a regiment in the Third Division sent to the Commissary-general to request that plum-puddings might be made for sale, that the privates might have the alternative of eating some of their money. When this is the only thing that can be imagined, it does indeed show, what a pass the army has come to. What are the infallible results? When winter sets in these men will be the first to sink under its sudden ebills, and catch the lurking epidemic. Should the retreat of the Russians compel a movement into the interior, with lagging supplies, the first day's forced abstinence from the now needful stimulants will be followed by prostration, collapse, and their inevitable consequences. The least irregularity of diet, the first night's bivouac, the marsh, and the trenchwork, which in a war of earthworks and a game of position must always be expected, will tell fatally on the shaken nerves, weakened digestions, irregular circulation, and agriable surface of habitual drunkards. The horrors of last winter will be repeated over the Crimea, with the lamentable difference between the noble self-sacrifice of a Thermopylae and the inglorious penalty of a Capua.”

“We should ill discharge our mission of plain speaking, if we did not out with this shame! . . . But is there really no help for it. Cannot the common sense, which has extricated England from so many political difficulties, and from still more inveterate social ills, be invoked to cure this weakness of our nation and stigma of our age? No Englishman can read without grief, that our soldiers are degrading themselves as the Helots were made to do for the warning of the Spartan children. Before the evil gets to such a head as our correspondent describes, surely it were worth while to keep the soldiers within camp, or to suppress the drinking booths. Anything is better than a license which ruins the health of the soldier, the strength of the army, and the credit of this country.”

THE WESTMINSTER REVIEW.

The July number of the above named periodical contained a most specious article entitled “Physiological errors of Teetotalism” which instead of injuring has rendered the Temperance Cause essential Service, by the Elaborate replies it has called forth from Dr Lees and Dr Carpenter. The Westminster for October contains another article on Temperance headed “Drunkenness not curable by Legislation;” in allusion to which The Weekly Alliance observes:—

“1st. That the issue is incorrectly stated, the real question being whether unwise legislation may not greatly promote, and wise legislation greatly diminish drunkenness. 2nd. That the writer is extremely ignorant of the real history of the Temperance movement and of the Maine law. And, 3rd. He presents no argument against a Maine law which does not hold good equally against all law.” The following is the Westminster's own graphic delineation of England's intemperance;—

It is impossible to exaggerate the evils of drunkenness. The more we examine its effects, the deeper is our impression of the frightful misery it causes, of the degradation, the waste of life, the waste of money it entails. Nineteenth of the crimes committed in the British Isles may be traced to the public house. Family life is cut up by the roots—men become worse than brutes—women so lose themselves as to be little better than fiends, under the fatal influence of the glass of ale or gin. The money spent every year in intoxicating drink exceeds the whole amount of the national revenue. Schools, churches, meeting-houses, clubs, reading rooms, libraries, are robbed of half their good fruit, by the passion for stimulants which stifles the love of wisdom, of piety, and duty. Drunkenness is the curse of England—a curse so great that it far eclipses every other calamity under which we suffer. We cannot too often set the awful truth before us in all its stern reality. To study the statistics of drunkenness, or if we prefer trusting our own eyes, to enter in the early morning a London gin-palace, is the best practical lesson we can have at once in the necessity and the difficulty of social reform. It is a lesson which will teach us to admire and to sympathise with the many good and enthusiastic men, who have in recent years devoted themselves to the one task of extirpating this deplorable vice.

TRIUMPH OF THE MAINE LAW IN NEW YORK.

The Liquor Men taken in.—The Maine Law men have secured a marked and unexpected triumph in New-York. It is well known that the creed of the Democrats is adamantine of the most solid kind. Its organ in this city, the Daily News, is ably edited, and takes the rankest ground against the present National Administration—against the Maine Law—Abolitionism—Soft Democracy—and Know Nothingism in particular. The Democrats went into the campaign last fall and carried all these principles through. No man was nominated who was not known to be sound on all these questions. Among the nominations made by the Adamantines was a candidate for the high office of Judge of Appeals. They put in nomination Hon. Samuel L. Selden of Rochester. Six weeks ago 150,000 voters made Mr. Seldon Judge. He had long been a Hard Democrat and a party man.—He was known to be opposed to the Maine Law.—He was nominated by the “Liquor Dealers' Convention,” as well as by the Hard Democrats. He accepted both nominations; and yet one of his first acts as a Judge is to declare the Maine Law of New York constitutional in one of its most offensive sections—that of summary trial, without bail. Of course those who elected Judge Seldon are not stunted in their wrath. The News says:

“That a decision to this effect should have been given in that portion of the State west of the Cayuga Bridge—where one species of fanaticism after another, Anti-Missionary, Abolitionism, Maine Lawism and Nativism, has run wild among the people—is scarcely to be considered surprising. But that Hon. Samuel L. Seldon should have concurred in it, is calculated to strike some one hundred and fifty thousand voters of this State, who only six weeks since cast their votes for him for the high office of Appeal Judge, with blank astonishment. We confess to a deeper and cheaper feeling of having been humbugged than we have had occasion to entertain since the Softs cheated us for the last time in 1852.”

There is another side to this matter. Men often say as politicians what they are not willing to ratify as Judges. And if Judge Seldon, with such antecedents, finds himself compelled as a Judge to decide in favor of the new Liquor Law of this State, it affords strong proof that the law is constitutional, and gives the public great confidence that men elected even as partisan politicians will be true to their convictions when law or the case they are called upon to decide really passes before them. The case must be considered to be a Maine Law triumph of no small magnitude. As a politician, Judge Seldon's days are numbered;—will the people sustain him?—Correspondence of Boston Journal 26th.

FRIENDSHIP.—A virtuous friendship is the sweetest charm of life; the source of everything that is good and excellent on earth.

The man who imagined himself wise because he detected some typographical errors in a newspaper, has gone east to get perpendicular view of a rainbow.