

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

THE LITERARY MOVEMENT IN AUSTRALIA.

The origin of a literature is always a very curious study. Australian literature has had the unusual fortune of stammering its first lines in the abounding nineteenth century, and of thus reminding us, by their similarity, of the beginnings of Indo-European literature during the historic and barbarous periods. It is very curious to see Australian literature making its first appearance with the same stories of legendary brigands which one sees in the beginnings of previous ones. When we reflect that the surface of Australia is almost equal to that of all Europe, we see the importance of all that concerns it. To judge from the writings of Marcus Clarke, of Mrs. Campbell Praed, of Tasma, the Australians affect the short narratives and simple stories, devoid of incident, which characterize their novels. Mariot Watson, Hume Nisbet, Mr. and Mrs. Mannington Caffyn have published delightful stories of that kind, under the title "Under the Gum Tree." An equally peculiar character of that literature is that the drama lies rather in the mind of the artist than in the action; as in the ancient world, the catastrophe often takes place before the end of the drama. The romancers, everywhere in that new country, possess, even more than the poets, a freshness of imagination which is found nowhere else in the same degree. Among them the grand art of simplicity is no secret. To this they add strength, as a result of the education which the free and easy life of the woods and the fields gives them. If one wished it would be easy to divide Australian writers into two groups, which could be readily recognized at sight. On the one side, those who live in the towns; on the other, those to whom the pastoral life offers its inducements. With the first would be connected Henry Clarence Kendall, the exquisite but melancholy poet, who is sick unto death with weariness and mournfulness; with the second, Lindsay Gordon, the equestrian bard, the singing centaur of Australia. At the rate which the world, and Australia in particular, is to-day travelling, a century is a period of infinite length; and one is glad to think that new nations should, in their early days, possess a literature, a faithful mirror of themselves, which will not allow a thankless posterity to forget or despise its ancestors.—*Public Opinion, from La Revue Des Revues.*

ARCHDEACON FARRAR ON ART.

By the Ethics of Art I mean its true relations to Religion and to Morals. We shall best be able to comprehend these if we note what it is that, in the first instance, Art does, or may do, for us. It is the function of Art to teach us to see. No one has expressed this better than Mr. Browning. "For"—such are the words which he puts into the mouth of Fra Lippo Lippi—

For, don't you see, we are made so that we love,
First, when we see them painted, things we have seen,
Perhaps a hundred times, nor cared to see;
And so they are better painted, better to us,
Which is the same thing. Art was given for that;
God uses us to help each other so,
Lending our minds out.

Now it is interesting to observe that, in the fulfilment of this function, Art is closely akin to Poetry. It is marvellous how little we do see. The open eye of admiration for landscape, for instance—what Humboldt calls the romantic love of scenery—is comparatively modern. Long generations of mankind seem to have lived with closed eyes. At any rate their literature, which is the unconscious revelation of their sentiments, shows little or no trace of delight in that autograph of loveliness which God has written so large over the works of His hands. In the Bible indeed we do find this delight in nature, especially in the Psalms which dwell on the works of God's hands, and the lovely description of Spring in the Song of Solomon; and in the New Testament in the discourses of our Lord. But in ancient Greek literature, with the exception of a passage in Plato and another in Sophocles, it is mostly conspicuous by its absence from the days of Homer to those of Theocritus; and in all the voluminous writings of the Fathers and the schoolmen there are but few traces of this romantic love of nature, except in St. Basil and St. Gregory of Nazianzus. And even in these days it is marvellous how non-observant we are. The old story tells of "Eyes and No Eyes," and most of us in most things are still in the condition of "No eyes."

Let me give two illustrations. You may buy for a shilling a little German picture which simply looks to you like that of a pretty young woman. But when you are directed closely to it you see it also to be the picture of an old woman; and when you see that you see nothing else. The old woman is there all along, but our powers of observation are so untrained that we might look at the picture a hundred times and wholly fail to discover it. The other illustration shall be very different. In Tennyson's "Maud" we read:—

I know the way she went
Home with her maiden posy,
For her feet have touched the meadows,
And left the daisies rosy.

Now an eminent sculptor told me that a still more eminent critic to whom he was talking quoted this line with strong disapproval. "How could the girl's feet make the daisies rosy?" he asked triumphantly. "It is nonsense." "Nonsense?" said the sculptor, "it is an exquisite instance of observation! It means that the light feet of the maiden, bending the stems of the daisies, have shown their rosy

under-surface. Have you never noticed that the underside of the daisy's petal passes by beautiful gradations from rose-colour to deep crimson?" "No!" was the astounding answer of the critic. Well, if any of us have been equally unobservant, that line of Tennyson, or the

Wee modest crimson-tipped flower

of Burns, may have taught us to delight in the exquisite fact; and a beautiful painting might have done the same. Both poets and prose writers have rendered us precious service in this way.—*Good Words.*

AMERICAN CHILDREN.

DR. HENRY LING TAYLOR, in a paper recently read before the New York Academy of Medicine, takes a rather lugubrious view of the way in which American—and especially New York—children are brought up. The city child, instead of soil with its diversified coverings, has, he considers, hard and mostly level floors or pavements; instead of grateful, greenish, bluish or brownish tints, the patchwork surface of our houses and streets; and instead of restful silence or simple, harmonious sounds, the irritating jar of complicated noises. Young city children of the primary-school classes have the most extraordinarily distorted ideas about the commonest natural objects, and much of this mass of mis-information remains in adult life. On the other hand, they are abnormally precocious in their knowledge of men and social relations, and in general "knowingness." That the modern methods of school education produce many bad results, is seen in the nervous condition of many children, in their headaches, and ocular and other troubles. Nature, thinks Dr. Ling, is a good school-mistress, and her lessons are the fundamental ones, no matter how much we may supplement them at school or university. The infant is learning his lesson when he is kicking out his legs, waving his arms, or bumping his head, the child playing tag or batting ball, or the youth working with his carpenter tools, or riding a bicycle, just as truly, perhaps more truly, than the university student burning midnight oil over Greek and calculus. Nature was never systematic in the school sense, and however much we may systematize, we must at the same time cultivate our powers and round our individuality by keeping in close touch with so much of nature as lies within our horizon in a restful, informal way. The system of flat-living, the doctor believes, prevents our city women from being good housewives, and the high-pressure work for the mighty dollar renders the men anything but agreeable fathers; so that children really see but little of what ought to go to make up a home for their training. The physique of the children that are now growing up under our eyes is not, he maintains, on the whole, satisfactory, and it is a difficult matter to bring up wholesome, hearty children in New York. But is New York a worse nursery for children than any other big city? Go into the lower quarters of beautiful Paris and you will find the *gamins* and *gaminettes* as unwholesome-looking as the children on the East Side; in Whitechapel the gutter snipe is as pale as his *confrère* in New York's tenement district.—*Illustrated American.*

THE MCKINLEY TARIFF.

THAT the Canadian farmer suffers from the operation of the so-called McKinley tariff levied upon the various staple productions of the farm which our cousins across the line require and continue to purchase from us, is a most mistaken idea. The duty is paid by the consumer or importer resident in the United States, not by the Canadian exporter. This fact is as well recognized by all intelligent and candid Americans as well as by those of our own people who are not blinded by party feeling or misled by ignorance. A writer in the *Springfield Republican* confirms this view in a most marked manner. He writes: The Toronto (Ont.) *Empire* rises to remark that so far as known by the Canadian farmers who send live stock, hay and general produce to this country, they do not pay the McKinley duty on their exports. The *Empire* confirms its opinion by citing figures and asserting that for the products which the Canadian sends to the United States and on which somebody pays the duty, he receives exactly the same price as for those products which he sends to England, on which nobody pays any duty. In this respect the Canadian farmer is better off than many of our manufacturers this side of the line, who do not get the same price for articles which they export as for the same articles when sold to their fellow-countrymen, but they are no better off than our own farmers, who get the same price for their wheat whether ground in a Minneapolis mill, or shipped to free-trade England or to France or Germany, where a heavy duty is assessed upon it. This fact is a hard one for your thorough-going McKinleyite, who insists that the foreign exporter and not the consumer pays the duties on goods sent by him for sale in this country. If this be true concerning goods from Europe, how does it happen that it is not true concerning farm products and livestock from Canada; and why should our farmers be exempt from this rule in sending grain to Europe? Has anybody ever known of England buying our products any cheaper in New York than France or Germany, and is it not also true that the French or German or Italian consumer usually pays at least the amount of the duty levied by his Government more for American products than his English competitor has? The *Empire's* figures are a little old but are just as good for their purpose for all that, for they cover a long period of years, from 1854 to 1866, when there was practically free trade between Can-

ada and the United States in live stock, wool, barley, rye, peas, oats and other farm products; and another period from 1866 to 1875, when reciprocity had been repealed and Congress had put a duty on these articles. In the first period, Canadian horses, for instance, sold under free trade for shipment to the United States at from \$65 to \$85 each, while in the last period, when our tariff was in force, the Canadians received in Canada for their horses which we bought from \$92 to \$104 each, showing that our tariff did not force the Canadian breeders to lower their prices in order to pay the duty which we exacted. The same rule applies to these other products as to horses, and the figures show that in no case did the imposition of our duty reduce the price paid to the Canadian farmer for his products. These are very commonplace, very familiar and very convincing facts which ought to silence all this talk about the foreign exporter or anybody else but the consumer paying the duty; but it is not at all probable that they will, because this is one of the pet delusions which the enthusiastic McKinleyite hugs to his bosom as the alliance man does the cheap-money idea. It would not do to give up this delusion and stop trying to humbug the people with it, for let that go and there is no escape from admitting that the tariff is really a tax, and that is an admission that cannot be drawn from the disciple of the Chinese wall doctrine by wild horses.

WINDSOR'S (N. S.) LOVE OF TREES.

THE inhabitants of Windsor, N. S., are evidently not afraid of the old traditional and erroneous idea that the planting of trees in close proximity to a house is injurious. In that pretty town we find wooden houses completely overhung by masses of foliage, while the porches and sides are often partially covered with honeysuckle, rose or Virginian creeper. It is to this appreciation of arbourculture that the place owes nearly all its beauty. No one is afraid of trees, and they are placed where the greatest effect is produced upon an artistic eye. There are few things more beautiful than a pretty house peeping shyly from masses of leaves or glancing with well-bred reserve from among tree-stems and shrubs. There is something so refined, so genteel and retiring, about such a place, so different from the glaring show which pleases a mind to which the charms of nature are less plainly interpreted. In the town in question the houses are seldom built on the street, but placed a little back, and nearly shut from view by elms, locusts, chestnuts and other trees, which lend an air of loveliness to the plainest building. It is a pity people do not more generally recognize this. A large house erected just on a public way has a flashy appearance, and is not in such good taste as the same building situated somewhat back and set off by foliage, which acts as a foil. The former reminds us of a face without eyebrows—the other features are beautiful in themselves, but the general effect is unfinished, displeasing. It is argued that trees, by keeping off the sun, produce dampness in a house—so, for the matter of that, does the roof. It is said that water drips from them and injures the woodwork—but water can only come from trees when rain is falling or the air is saturated with moisture, therefore the house is damp at such times anyway, and the trees need not be blamed. Everyone thought once that ivy produced dampness and decay, but it has been scientifically shown that the very opposite is the result. The old fashioned and mistaken aversion to being surrounded by trees is known to be a popular fallacy, and it is to an adherence to this belief that Halifax owes much of its dinginess and want of beauty. When our people acknowledge its incorrectness, or are willing to accept a little fancied inconvenience in order to obtain good results, they will begin to be worthy to hold a candle to Windsor in the present matter, but not before. We have often heard people admire the latter place, but beyond vaguely saying it was owing to the trees they did not seem to know exactly where the beauty lay.—*The Halifax Critic.*

ITALY AND THE CHURCH.

To the Italian statesman of to-day the Catholic Church is not an abstract theological faith, it is a concrete organized inveterate enemy which he must fight, and must put under his feet before he can carry out his great schemes for human welfare. And here he labours under a great practical difficulty, for the very principles for which he is contending prevent his using those measures of attack and defence which the Papal Church has not hesitated to employ on its own behalf. The state exists to secure freedom of speech, freedom of religious thought and expression, the sacred rights of the individual conscience, the equality of every man before the law. The Church is the unscrupulous opponent of every one of these principles, and yet she claims their shelter against any infringement of her privileges. For instance, the measure of Crispi, which forbids the appointment of any Catholic priest on the committees of administration of charitable funds, seems a very arbitrary step, and yet it is enforced and claimed to be absolutely necessary to prevent the arbitrary exercise of authority on the part of the higher order of priests over the lower, and the misuse and misappropriation of funds.—*E. D. Cheney, in the Open Court.*

FAME like a broken mirror,
With twenty fragments of a truth,
Gives twenty shapes of error.

—J. S. Blackie.