

Literature.

"The world of books is still the world I write."—MRS. BROWNING.

Written for the LADIES' PICTORIAL WEEKLY.

Thackeray and His Art.

It is presumptuous to suppose that at this, the eleventh hour of the nineteenth century, anything new can be said concerning William Makepeace Thackeray. He has been read and re-read, revised and criticized till his works are familiar in our mouths as household words. But if it is true that we know him intimately, it is also true that "age cannot wither him, nor custom stale his infinite variety." In spite of new claimants for our favor, Rider Haggard and Grant Allan, "Solomon's Mines," "She," *ad infinitum ad nauseum*, back we turn to our Thackeray with a keener intellectual appreciation than ever.

And what a series of paradoxes, what a bundle of contradictions meet us and look out at us from under those bushy eyebrows as we gaze at him! Our tender-hearted cynic, unworldly man of the world, satirist and sentimentalist in one and the same breath. It has sometimes seemed as if the sharp-pointed witticism and mocking jibe, with which he ridicules the foibles of society were his own weapons of protection from the sorrows that pursued him, and that he hid with a sardonic smile the tear of emotion of which he was more than half ashamed. Thackeray paints for us the men and women of society with the pencil of a pre-raphaelite. Not a wrinkle is omitted, not a defect smoothed over. "Paint the mole, sir," said Oliver Cromwell to an artist who was idealizing the great man's portrait, and obliterating the unkind handy-work of nature. Thackeray always "paints the mole," but if the sketch he gives us be a noble one he makes us love it and recognize it mole and all. I suppose that women generally will never forgive him for "Becky Sharpe"; he has insulted the whole sex too deeply in that portrait. But we must remember that some of the sweetest and most womanly of all the heroines of fiction are his creatures too. Madam de Thrac, (poor Colonel Newcome's Leonore), high spirited and noble Ethel Newcome, and especially Lady Castlewood, who seems to me to be one of the loveliest women in the literature of fiction, are inspirations of Thackeray's pen. For clearness of outline and firmness of touch our author is unequalled. Take the Newcomes for instance, how every character stands out like a clear cut cameo on the canvass, no slurring or blurring for a moment permitted. Given the circumstances, and we feel we know beforehand what Cline and Ethel or the grand old Colonel, will be sure to do, so intimately has the author made us acquainted with their hidden springs of thought and feeling.

Thackeray's less known writings are well worthy of perusal. Turning to his "Book of Snobs," in which we all get so many raps and where each one of us finds a cap that fits, while we are in the very act of adorning our neighbor, what can be finer than this for a definition. "He who meanly admires mean things is a snob." If that is not enough to quench the first risings of the spirit of snobbery in the breast of ingenuous youth, I know not where we could find a more complete extinguisher.

His poetry, though perhaps the *jeu d'esprits* of moments of relaxation rather than of serious work, is full of humor, pathos, and wit. He knew London well, and the London policeman, amongst other natives of the soil, he sketches with inimitable humor. Who that has read them can forget the "Lines on a late hospitable event," by a gentleman of the Foot Guards (blue). They tell in true policeman parlance of the birth of a son of the line royal, whom Queen Victoria and Prince Albert have decided shall be called "Arthur" in honor of the Duke of Wellington.

The royal Prince unto
The gallant Duke did say:
"Dear Duke our little son and you
Was born the self-same day.
That offspring of our race
Which yesterday you see,
To show our honor for your Grace
"Prince Arthur" he shall be.
That name it rhymes to fame,
All Europe knows the sound,
And I couldn't find a better name
If you'd give me twenty pound!

The "Canebottomed Chair," is a veritable peep into Thackeray's own study, and he has permitted us to see that a beloved woman's form fills the vacant place in his imagination, and we lift for a moment the curtain of his life, and look into the "world of might-have-been" with the poet's eye.

She comes from the past and revisits my room,
She looks as she did then all beauty and bloom,
So smiling and tender, so fresh and so fair—
And yonder she sits in my cane-bottom chair.

Thackeray's life was shadowed with a great sorrow, the permanent derangement of his wife. He had all the reticence natural to an English gentleman, and his grief was never paraded before the public for sympathy. It adds its own minor key to his reflections however, and one feels from time to time an undertone of pathos which assures us that he too has been in the depths. A verse from the "Ballad of Borillabasse," will illustrate this. The poem begins in a laughter, but as he writes the sunny memories from overcast recollection bring the sigh instead of the smile to his lips and he cries:

"Ah me, how quick the days are flitting!
I mind me of a time that's gone,
When here I'd sit as now I'm sitting,
In the same place, but not alone;
A fair young form was nestled near me,
A dear, dear face looked fondly up,
And sweetly spoke and smiled to cheer me—
There's no one now to share my cup."

Young writers will do well to study Thackeray. The absence of anything that can be called "gush" in his writings, his quiet self-restraint, his English pure and undefiled, his patience, his artistic sense, all make him a model for literary aspirants.

How sadly the news of his death broke upon London and beclouded the Christmas eve festivities! He was only fifty-three, and the end was altogether unexpected. He died in his sleep; the last words he had written on the manuscript of a new story lay upon his desk, "And my heart thrilled with an exquisite bliss." May they not have interpreted his awakening upon a deathless shore? London mourned for him deeply and truly, for he had seemed indeed to belong to her. His empty place remains empty still. As has been justly said of him, "the increase of time only mellows his renown, and each year that passes and brings him no successor does but sharpen the keenness of our sense of loss. In what other novelist since Scott was borne down by the burden of a forlorn endeavor and died for honor's sake, has the world found so many of the fairest gifts combined?"

Our English Letter.

Notes on Some European Sovereigns.

(From our own Correspondent.)

LONDON, March 31 1891.

With the exception of the little King of Spain, Queen Wilhelmine, of Holland, is the youngest sovereign in Europe. She is eleven years of age, and as quiet, simple, and well-behaved a little girl as one would meet anywhere. Owing to the very strict etiquette of the Dutch court which does not allow her to play with any other children, she leads a quieter life than most children of her age. Queen Wilhelmine rises at seven and breakfasts at eight o'clock, she then works in her little garden, which no hand ever touches but her own, feeds her doves, to whom she is very much attached; in the morning she does her studies with her English governess and after luncheon drives out with her mother. Six o'clock is the dinner hour and at eight the Queen retires to rest. Strange as it may seem from the fact of her mother being a German, Queen Wilhelmine cannot speak a word of German, although she already speaks French and English fluently as well as Dutch; the reason of this is that the late King her father had so strong a prejudice against the German nation that he would not allow his daughter to be taught their language. There are two or three pretty little stories told of the little Queen; the following one is sad and touching and shows that her life is not so happy as it should be. One day when playing with her dolls one of them misbehaved itself and the little princess held up her finger and said sternly "If you are so naughty I shall make you into a princess, and then you won't have any other little children to play with, and you'll always have to throw kisses with your hand whenever you go out driving." The first public speech made by the Queen of Holland was extremely short but quite to the point. It was made on the occasion of laying the foundation stone of a new hospital. "I hope that this building will prove a blessing to Amsterdam." Once when receiving a foreign ambassador, the little Queen talked gravely to him for a time, holding a favorite doll in her arms all the while. At length she looked up and said archly. "I wonder that you are not afraid to come near me; all my dolls have had measles you know."

Alfonso XIII is the youngest sovereign in Europe, having been born in May, 1886, six months after the death of his father. He is brought up very simply by his devoted mother the Queen Regent and sometimes it is said he shows decided dislike for the court ceremonies in which he has to take part, and even on some of the first occasions when he was seated on the throne he tried to climb down and sit on his mother's lap. This baby King holds "At Homes" and conducts himself in true kingly fashion for one so young. He has long since given up his rocking-horse and has now a pony, having complained that "on a wooden horse one cannot ride to reviews." There is a story told of King Alfonso as follows. It had been a matter of some difficulty to make his Majesty understand that he must be silent during divine service, at last he grasped the idea and applied it to others besides himself. One Sunday when he was present with his mother at a morning service he was perfectly quiet and well-behaved until the sermon; the preacher happened to be a particularly energetic and excitable man and soon raised his voice considerably and gesticulated violently. The little king listened for some minutes with a wondering expression on his face, then stood up in his seat and in a shrill little voice exclaimed "You naughty man! don't you know you must not make a noise in church?"

The Empress of Germany is a typical German wife and mother; "the mother of many sons" she is sometimes called. Her interests are centered in her household and nursery; she does not take any lead in society and knows nothing of politics. She is exceedingly fond of children and is devoted to her own. The Emperor arranges the system on which his little sons are brought up and the Empress carries it out most carefully. She superintends their studies and is present at their music lessons and when they practise; that she spends much of her time with her children, the following story is a proof. When the Emperor was in Vienna he went to a celebrated modiste to choose some gowns as a present to the Empress. A very elegant morning gown with a train two yards long was shown to his majesty, but he quickly signed for it to be removed and said "Oh! that would be no good to my wife, she always has four or five boys tumbling round her in the house who would make short work of a train like that." There is a charming story illustrative of the generous nature of the German Empress. When her youngest son was born her majesty sent to one of the hospitals to inquire how many babies were born there on the same day as the little prince. There were five children born there and

by the Empress's express orders each received a complete outfit of clothing. In appearance the Empress is a thorough German, tall and fair and although not pretty she has a very pleasing face.

There is no sovereign in Europe more beloved than Queen Margherita of Italy. She possesses unusual charms of both mind and body, is deeply religious, and full of goodness and kindness. In person she is small but carries herself well and has much dignity. Her face is a perfect oval and her complexion a peculiar creamy white with little or no color, her features are regular and her hair a light chestnut. Queen Margherita is acknowledged to be the best-dressed woman in Europe, she possesses the rare gift of knowing how to dress becomingly. She has quite a passion for pearls and is said to always wear one particular string, which her only child the Prince of Naples, when a little boy saved up his money to buy for her. The Queen of Italy's mental acquirements are very great. She not only speaks Italian, German, French, English, Greek, Spanish and Latin perfectly but is thoroughly acquainted with their literature. She is devoted to reading and has a most retentive memory, she is also deeply interested in science, art and music and greatest of all, whatever she does she does thoroughly.

The Queen of Roumania better known under the literary name "Carmen Sylva" is another gifted royal lady, her poems and romances are known all over the world. Her first book written soon after her marriage (Les Pensees d'une Reine) to Prince Charles of Roumania, at once charmed all Europe. The beautiful land of Roumania with its legends and folk-lore were a constant source of inspiration to her and formed the subject of some of her most lovely poems. Her name is a household word in her own country, and what wonder that her people love her?

ANNIE VAUGHAN.

Written for the LADIES' PICTORIAL WEEKLY.

Outdoor Sports for Women.

BY GRACE E. DENISON.

Of late years the emancipation of women has proceeded by leaps and bounds. Machinery has shortened the tiresome hours of needlework and other slow-going occupations. The woman who knits her own stockings now-a-days is a *rara avis*; the plain seam and dainty hem are things unknown to the girls of to-day, and life hurries on and on, each year faster, and with more of a drag on the nervous system. Therefore woman must have lots of fresh air and plenty of exercise. In the tennis court, on the wheel, on horse back, or in the boat or canoe she can rest her brain and strengthen her body. Perhaps a short talk on such of the outdoor sports as are open to her may find interest for the woman who reads our paper. The sport just coming into season now among us is cycling. The road ways are flattening down into passability, soon will come the smell of the green things growing and now is the time of all times for the girl who rides to enjoy herself. She has her safety, bright and shining and ready to bear her wherever her lightly guiding hand wills. She has her neat serge suit and her trim gauntlets, her pretty gaiters and soft shoes, her cap or hat and veil, for the April winds are rude and April dust is insinuating.

She has leaden weights sewn securely just near the edge of her skirt's front hem, to balk the rude gusts that would unduly bare her gaitered ankles, and that skirt is just wide enough to hang prettily, and just long enough not to catch. She wears no corset, though no one guesses it, as she sits slim and erect, with chest proudly raised and arms gracefully supple, her skirt is divided under her serge dress. There isn't a band nor a brace on her. She sits erect, dignified and easy, supported by her able and well-trained muscles, and she breathes naturally and deeply, filling her healthy lungs with the sweet bracing oxygen and sending rosy flushes of pulsing blood to lips and cheeks. Laughter ripples in her voice, and good fellowship beams in her eye, as she deftly skims past some fellow tourist, and when she reaches her terminus, she hops to the pavement as lightly as the sparrow who watches her from the eaves. Every errand is a pleasure trip. Every run to town is pastime, her silent steed needs no provender, nor does he shy, or balk, or rear or jibe. Out in the merry sunshine she glides by like a dream, all of a piece with the springtime and the already whispering life awakening from its winter sleep. Hurrah for the cycling girl! Long may she wheel and laugh, and pluckily climb the stiff hills of life and merrily coast down the easy ones. She is a creature of flesh and blood, a bonny, healthy, happy creature, who learns to take the rough with the smooth, and make her way over both.

A Bad Day for Shopping.

The superstition that Friday is an unlucky day, so prevalent of late among women, seems to have died out. That is, it hasn't died out exactly, but Friday has given way to Monday. The following conversation between young ladies overheard in a street car has some bearing on the subject: "I'll never go shopping on Monday again." "You don't mean to say you ever did; it's awfully unlucky." "Yes, I went last Monday; I positively had to. Well, a wagon load of watermelons broke down, and the cars were blocked for an hour, and another wagon with a boiler on it, the boiler rolled off into the street, and a clothesline full of clean clothes broke and the clothes got all dirty, and the cat in grandmother's had a fit and two cross-eyed men ran into each other on the street." "Wasn't that dreadful! Supposing one had followed you home."

Special Hunger.

Jimmie (catching sight of a piece of cake) "Mamma, I'm awful hungry."
Mamma: "Very well deary. Dinner will be ready shortly."
Jimmie: "I'm not hungry for dinner. I'm hungry for cake."