

exceptional provision would, in the British Imperial Federation, be of necessity the rule; and with this great advantage, that it would leave each colony or other member a welcome and a wholesome freedom in the matter. It would minister to contentment, to experience, and to a lasting unity.

A NOCTURNE.

STRANGE are the thoughts with solemn sweetness blending,
Which as I gaze my weary soul invite
Ever to stay and gaze in peace unending
On Thee, oh star-illumined, mysterious Night!
And woo in rhythm'd rhyme, while restless time
For me no longer is—nor takes its flight.

Here at my casement, all in darkness shrouded,
I greet, enrapt, a new mysterious world;
All dim, unreal, unexplored, beclouded,
Where stillness broods with sombre wings unfurled,
Where colourless, and dark, and weirdly grand,
The shadowy outlines of the beeches stand.

Higher I gaze, and far away, away
In the dim, boundless pathways of the sky,
Where myriad stars create eternal day,
Shining in pure and radiant majesty—
Keeping for evermore like angels' eyes
Mute tender watch o'er human destinies.

Life is too short to speculate and dream,
To wonder whence things are—and how, and why;
Poor mortal, fain to grant things as they seem,
Grant but this one thing more—that thou must die;
And granting this, then, all thy searchings free
Must go to seek what shall Hereafter be.

On such a night resistless Thought will burn
And Reason beat itself against its cage,
But evermore dissatisfied return—
Despairing ought of heaven's dark depths to gauge—
How with its wounded wings attempt a flight,
In the dim realms of God's dread Infinite.

Yet what is there to know, but what we know,
And that to which we never may attain?
See dull-eyed Ignorance sublimely go,
In blissful incapacity for pain!
And note the happiest of God's creatures here,
They who can never know—nor, knowing, fear!

The night is dark—oh white-robed angel come!
And bring one passing glimpse of Light divine;
Forsake the realms of your eternal home,
Where loveliness and truth no more decline,
Sweep through the darkening spheres that intervene
And shed your healing love where doubts have been.

ROSEMARY A. COTES.

THE RAMBLER.

THE May days—cold and wet and forbidding—are upon us, yet while to beings like ourselves the air is harsh and damp, it is in no sense inimical to other organisms.

My window—a city one, I need hardly say—looks out upon one ash and two chestnuts; the latter have had their green fingers half pushed out for at least four or five days. The ash still delays to clothe herself in green, but the growth goes on all the same although difficult to follow with the human eye. The republication of "Lyrical Ballads" (I hope no reader of this column will have to turn back at this point to find out who was the author or who the joint authors of that remarkable volume) just at this season does so drive the thoughts back to the great poet who helped to formulate the thought of a century, that these spring reflections will not away. One almost chides the poet for daring to recount, to immortalize for us, that sentiment of frigidity with which middle age, or worse, old age, is apt to regard the material universe.

It is not now as it hath been of yore;
Turn wheresoe'er I may
By night or day,
The things which I have seen,
I now can see no more.

Why must it be so? Why must the most exquisite of all sensations wither and perish year by year with the return of the delicious green and the singing of birds and the knowledge that life, new, abundant, precious and suggestive life is being set in motion on every side? For it *does* perish. Wordsworth was right, although perhaps he himself managed after all to keep the heart of the child through all the life of the man. For myself, I *forget* so much when I view this delightful season.

Flattered with promise of escape
From every hurtful blast,
Spring takes, O sprightly May, thy shape,
Her loveliest and her last.

Yes—her last! For with a few weeks more this violent Canadian climate of ours will have changed and spring be merged in summer. Gather hepaticas while you may, it is not such a very far cry to the nodding blossom of the mandrake or the perfect shell-like petalled sphere of the *nymphaea odorata*.

I have been requested by a correspondent to explain if I can the term "Sloyd." This word, enigmatical at first

sight, is simple enough. It only denotes the Scandinavian word for a system of manual training, greatly in favour at present in England, where teachers in all the provincial centres have been employed for some time in instructing pupils. It is a kind of advance Kindergarten, I understand, and appeals very strongly to all practical and intelligent minds. The knife is, perhaps, the chief tool; other ordinary carpenter's implements are also used. Rulers, brackets, boxes, inkstands, desks—these are some of the articles manufactured in this manner. I should think the introduction of Sloyd would pay very well in our Canadian cities. The teacher is frequently styled a Sloydist and the chief seminary is at Naas, on the shores of Lake Savelangen in Sweden.

But there are already far too many things manufactured in the world. The streets (there are too many streets) have too many shops, and the shops have too many things in them. I pass, daily, three or four shops crammed with such ugly things. It seems as if the half of Edgeware Road, and another half of Praed St., had crossed the ocean bodily, and taken up quarters here for good and all. I have long thought that if they would only take Ruskin—poor Ruskin—and put him in lodgings somewhere near the Edgeware Road, he would recover. There would be so much for him to decry, so much to abuse and ridicule and undermine that I am almost certain he would have to recover. What were Ruskin's three grand essentials of labour? (1) Never encourage the manufacture of any article not absolutely necessary, in the production of which Invention has no share; (2) Never demand an exact finish for its own sake, but only for some practical or noble end; (3) Never encourage imitation or copying of any kind, except for the sake of preserving record of great works.

Well, this is perhaps the language of the impassioned visionary—now alas! the unsound visionary, but that was a fine cry which emanated almost in the same passage when he exclaimed "We manufacture everything except Men. We blanch cotton, and strengthen steel, and refine sugar, and shape pottery; but to brighten, to strengthen, to refine, or to form a single living spirit never enters into our estimate of advantages."

Another correspondent (it is quite a gay season just now) sends me a lengthy letter on a subject, which, if he will believe me, I am most grateful to him for bringing up. My notice of the McDowell Company's performance of "Moths" was intended to prove—not that the said Company was notoriously inefficient, but that the novels of "Ouida" are difficult of stage interpretation. However, let my correspondent speak for himself:—"Dear Rambler (pardon the prefix 'dear,' but I bear you no malice), You evidently do not realize that the student of dramatic art, or any art, hails and anticipates with joy the appearance of an unbiassed, consistent and instructive criticism. Under your illustrious *nom de plume*, I recently read a half column referring to the McDowell Company that, granting it to be a bit of literary 'chic' (if I may so express myself), undoubtedly demands derogation in some respects.

"Admitting then, to be brief, that in their presentation of 'Moths' the actors and actresses of Mr. McDowell's company did try to look superbly Russian; that the *Corrèze* did talk to the flies, did look 'pink and white' (a very ideal complexion *entre nous*), etc., etc., etc., I refer to the clause, 'hard working supers scarcely promoted to more than a passing acquaintance with the stage and its traditions.' It is here and only here (with the exception of the jocular interrogation, Would you like 'Lord Jura' to die in his hotel or fall over into the orchestra chairs and expire, instead of 'front centre stage,' which seems to me, unprofessional, to be the very best spot for a dramatic effect?) that I presume to place a stile in your path, dear 'Rambler,' and ask you to pay toll or turn back. With the supposition that you refuse to pay this fine (merely a figure of speech) and that you are retracing your footsteps, let me presume to point out the fact that most of the members of the McDowell company have more, much more than a passing acquaintance with the stage. In these days when young actors and actresses are subjected to the combination system or playing one part the entire season, a company such as Mr. McDowell surrounds himself with, playing a repertoire of some thirty plays and under such an exacting and perfect stage manager as this gentleman undeniably is, affords the only opportunities for research into stage deportment and tradition; and it has always been a pleasure to me, in watching the performances of this company, to exert myself to overlook details and applaud their earnestness, their anxiety, their tendency to overdo.

"How easy it is to destroy with pen and ink in a few minutes the work and thought of weeks and years! It therefore behoves the critic, especially one who is given voice in a representative journal, to be kind, generous and careful, not harsh, illiberal and unjust!

"The performances of the McDowell Company, which I saw night after night at the Academy of Music in Montreal (the bill was changed six times a week), proved them to be anything but supers (in the accepted meaning of the word) but hard, capable, artistic workers.

"When one recollects the treat it was to see a round of good plays intelligently played and staged, and the general satisfaction elicited from the audience that filled the theatre nightly, I feel it necessary to check you in an assertion that you must readily see when placidly smoking

your morning pipe, or quietly sipping your five o'clock tea, will bear considerable revision."

My correspondent makes the common mistake of thinking that a few lines of good-natured and discriminating criticism can "destroy the work of years." Not if it be real and lasting work. We have all got to be criticised and must learn to take the rod gracefully. THE WEEK has, I am certain, ever borne witness to the power of Fanny Reeves' acting, to the indefatigable industry of Mr. E. A. McDowell and his inimitable "Shaughraun" and other impersonations. In comedy there is no stronger combination annually visiting Canada where they number many friends, among whom must henceforth be classed the crusty but not altogether soured and *blasé* "Rambler."

Talking of criticism, who has seen a recent number of the N. Y. Theatre, edited by Deshler Welch, in which Mdlle. Rhea is simply hanged, drawn, quartered, served up hot, and carved—into a million pieces? The play was the cause. "Josephine" did not go down.

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE STRIKES IN THE LABOUR MARKET.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—The report of the recent Labour Commission in England was important. From the summary of the London Times it appears that but few strikes have been settled through arbitration, i.e., through courts authorized to pronounce a verdict *suo motu*, but that, on the other hand, great success has attended the action of courts of conciliation, formed of delegates from each contesting party, which, instead of treating the masters' combines and the men's unions as nullities, referred the questions that arose to each with their own suggestions and recommendations, acting, in fact, as mediators. As a mode of settlement nothing can be more wasteful than a strike, and we trust all parties in Toronto will be reasonable in the existing difficulties.

April 26th, 1890.

GOVERNMENT CONFORMABLY TO REASON.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—In one of your September numbers of last year you kindly inserted a translation by me of a small portion of a book, written by Courcelle-Seneuil, one of the ablest living political economists of France. I mailed this number (of the 20th September) to the author in Paris; and received from him a very courteous and flattering acknowledgment, accompanied by a copy of his latest production entitled, "Esquisse d'une Politique Rationnelle." The former translation met with so much sympathy from your readers that you will, I think, be doing no unpardonable violence to your other contributors by giving space to the following translations, which I have made, of parts of the last mentioned brilliant essay. My pardon will be the easier obtained when regard is had to the character of the extracts, which treat of subjects which are now in everybody's mouth and ears,—without, perhaps, coming from or reaching to everybody's brain.

RELIGION.—Religion, says Bacon, is within the domain of public law, and, in this way, comes within the functions of government. This idea, which has held sway for ages, is not correct. Every religion is a mode of thought, and what connection is there between the functions of government and a manner of thinking? None whatsoever. No person can possibly commit by the thought, nor even by the expression of a religious opinion, any injustice against anyone whomsoever. So that the government has not the right to meddle in this matter. If it interferes it must necessarily become an arbiter between religious beliefs, a function for which it has no aptitude, or else it delegates this arbitration to persons of its own selection, whom it has no fitness for choosing. If these persons were placed outside its jurisdiction they might become subservient to foreign interests, to those of the State's enemies, without themselves incurring any responsibility. This prerogative of the State, which might have a reason for its exercise in pagan countries, where religion possessed a national character and confined itself to the observance of a few outward observances, becomes oppressive in a Christian State, where religion is not national but universal, where, besides, it seeks to exercise over private life a sway of great extent, and has for its aim, not the preservation or prosperity of the State, but the salvation of the individual in the next life. Religion has thus a character purely individual, and has merely the right, like all other individual opinions, to freedom and respect. The experience of history elsewhere has taught us that the action of the government in religious matters has always been a source of oppression and injustice, that it has invariably disturbed the peace instead of assisting in keeping it.

INSTRUCTION.—Should the government provide instruction? Has it any special qualification for this? We do not think it. Should it keep aloof from education? We equally think not. It should watch over education. Why? Because those who teach can injure the State by "making-up" wrong-headed, uncurbed citizens, enemies to the laws of their country, or of depraved habits. The child and the youth possesses no discernment; they accept at once the information which is supplied them and do not