

tant future, would merely be to repeat what has already become an old story. The proprietors of *Cassell's Magazine* would appear to have pondered on the subject until they have become positively desperate. They have offered a prize of \$25 for the best practical paper on "The Domestic Service Difficulty in America," and a condition is imposed that no paper sent in for competition shall contain fewer than 2,000 words. The first idea which presents itself to the mind on reading this announcement is that the prize-money seems ludicrously small, when the importance of the subject-matter is considered. No writer whose opinions count for much—certainly no writer of acknowledged eminence—would deem it worth his while to enter the lists. Several of the great New York dailies pay at a higher rate for editorial matter every day in the week. Messrs. Cassell & Co. should improve on their bid by a cipher or two. Important social reforms, however, are seldom brought about by such means.

APROPOS of the servant-girl question, a distinguished English man of letters has recently been compelled to pass through an ordeal to which we will venture to say no parallel can be found in the annals of literature. Persons who follow literary matters with attention are more or less familiar with the nature of the late controversy between Edmund W. Gosse and Mr. Churton Collins. For the enlightenment of those who are unacquainted with the facts, it may briefly be said that some time ago Mr. Gosse published a series of lectures on English literature, previously delivered by him as Clark Lecturer in Trinity College, Cambridge. His quondam friend and fellow-worker, Mr. Collins, attacked it in the *Quarterly Review* with a malignant ferocity which reminded old stagers of the days of John Wilson Croker. Articles in the *Quarterly* are not signed, and the literary assassin, skulking behind the mask of the anonymous, deemed himself safe from discovery. But the attack was too base and shameful to admit of its being allowed to pass by in quietness. It became the talk of the clubs, the drawing-rooms, the green-rooms and the newspaper offices. Then the authorship came out, and for once a sense of the claims of truth and justice over-rode literary jealousy. All that was respectable in London journalism and periodical literature arrayed itself on Mr. Gosse's side, and administered a pretty effectual quietus to his assailant, who has doubtless learned a lesson which will last him his lifetime. The correspondence published on the subject would make a portly volume, and Mr. Gosse's name was brought more prominently before the public than it had ever been. At the present day he stands several notches higher in public estimation than he did before the onslaught upon him. But his troubles did not end when the public verdict had been pronounced in his favour. He received a shock from an altogether unexpected quarter. Is it not written: "A man's foes shall be they of his own household?" His cook suddenly and solemnly gave notice of her intention to leave his service. She was a good cook, and her mistress had no desire to lose her. Upon instituting an inquiry into the matter Mr. Gosse found, to his intense disgust, that her determination to leave was due to the fact that "master's name had been so much in the papers," and she had been tormented by some of her associates on that score until she really couldn't endure it any longer. It is consoling, on Mr. Gosse's account, to learn that this sensitive female proved amenable to remonstrance, and finally consented to withdraw her notice to quit. The whole story sounds like fiction, but it is simple unadorned fact. It is even worse than the case of the poet Rogers's valet. The latter worthy gave notice of his intention to leave his master's service, and upon being interrogated by the poet as to his reasons, replied, "You are so dull in the buggy."

The writer of *Sibylline Leaves*, in the *London Daily News*—understood to be Mr. Andrew Lang—has been liberating his mind on the subject of Frank Stockton. He is of opinion that Mr. S. is on the whole rather a clever writer; a matter as to which no competent critic ought to be long in making up his mind. He complains, however, that the humour is not sufficiently laughter-provoking, and declares that he got only one very small grin out of the adventures of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine. So accom-

plished a scholar as Mr. Lang ought to know that much of the brightest humour in the English language is provocative of laughter to only a very moderate degree, while some of it is even provocative of tears. Mr. Stockton's humour is fine and delicate. It is far removed from the hilarious horse play that shoots out the tongue. It has a quality which belongs to itself alone, and which is not soon likely to find a successful imitator. But perhaps Mr. Lang is only indulging his own quiet humour, after all, in this little preachment. Certainly one can hardly suppose him to be in serious earnest when he objects that Mrs. Lecks and Mr. Aleshine never refer to "the consolations of religion." When one comes to a phrase like this, used in such a connection, it is clearly time to drop the subject.

WILLIAM BLACK has just been figuring in the courts. He brought an action against John Dicks, the well-known publisher of a number of the cheapest class of books and periodicals, for having published a libel upon him in *Bow Bells*. Mr. Black, like many of his contemporaries, has had to pay the penalty of success, and has been subjected to a large amount of envious tittle-tattle and back-biting. It appears that there has been a good deal of gossip in the clubs about his ancestry and family relations. Some of this gossip found its way into a recent number of *Bow Bells*, where it was alleged that Mr. Black was of very lowly origin, and that he was ashamed of his poor relations. An aunt of his was alleged to be in the poor-house, owing to her nephew's refusal to provide her with half a crown a week. He was declared to be mean and close-fisted, with an eye always open to the main chance. He was charged with having married for money on the two occasions when he has slipped his head within the matrimonial noose. Not one of these statements has any foundation in fact, and Mr. Black determined to put a stop to the slanders in circulation against him. He dragged the wealthy but miserly publisher of *Bow Bells* before a jury of his countrymen, and demanded damages for the injury he had sustained. On the trial he went into the witness box and testified to the facts. It appears that his first wife had no portion whatever, and that his second wife had nothing but the expectation of succeeding to £3,000 upon the death of her father. Mr. Black testified that he never refused to provide his aunt with the weekly half crown, inasmuch as he never had an aunt, who was a purely imaginary personage. The jury gave him a verdict of £100, which will probably be devoted to festivities for himself and his friends at one of the clubs to which he belongs. The writer of these lines had the good fortune to spend several days in Mr. Black's company during last summer, at the Shakespeare Inn, Stratford-upon-Avon; and he can certainly bear testimony to the fact that penuriousness is one of the very last infirmities which can truthfully be laid to the charge of the author of *A Princess of Thule* and *Judith Shakespeare*.

A CITY contemporary had a short article on Henry George's new paper a few days ago, in the course of which it remarked upon the general incapacity of literary men for the editorial chair. Its comments upon Thackeray and Mark Twain were in the main just enough. But "in the main" is a saving clause. Thackeray failed as editor of the *Cornhill* because his heart was larger than his head, in which respect the general run of editors are not in the least like him. Mark Twain, again, failed because he was too well off financially, and too indolent physically, to undertake the laborious drudgery which must perforce fall to the share of every editor who does his work faithfully. But where did our contemporary stumble on its original information about Dickens? It declares that "although Charles Dickens began life as a newspaper reporter he did not make a great success of popular editing, even upon magazines, which approach the book style much more closely than the newspaper does." This is a singular mistake. Dickens was for about two weeks the nominal editor of the *Daily News*. In this rôle he was not a success. He lacked the necessary training to enable him to discharge the duties of editor of a daily newspaper with credit to himself, and he had the good sense to resign his position. Upon no other occasion that we can call to mind did he ever undertake editorial duties in connection with a newspaper. But Dickens was probably the best magazine editor