

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

THE FRONTIER LINE.

WHAT marks the frontier line?
Thou man of India, say!
Is it the Himalayas sheer,
The rocks and valleys of Cashmere?
Or Indus as she seeks the sea
From Attock south to Kurrachee?
"Not that! Not that!"
Then answer me, I pray,
What marks the frontier line?

What marks the frontier line?
Thou man of Burmah, speak!
Oh, is it traced from Mandalay,
And down the borders of Cathay?
From Bhamo south to Kiang-mai,
And where the buried rubies lie?
"Not that! Not that!"
Then tell me what I seek,
What marks the frontier line?

What marks the frontier line?
Thou Africander, say!
Is it shown by Zulu kraal,
By Drakensberg or winding Vaal,
Or where the Shiré waters seek
Their outlet east at Mozambique?
"Not that! Not that!"
Then once again I pray
What marks the frontier line?

What marks the frontier line?
Thou man of Egypt, tell!
Is it traced on Luxor's sand,
Where Karnak's painted pillars stand,
Or where river runs between
The Ethiop and Bishareen?
"Not that! Not that!"
By neither stream nor well
We mark the frontier line.

"But be it east or west
One common sign we bear;
The tongue may change, the soil, the sky,
But where your English brothers lie
The mouldered cross, the nameless grave,
Still fringe the flowing Saxon wave,
'Tis that! 'Tis where
They lie, the men who traced it there,
That marks the frontier line!"

—A. Conan Doyle, in *The Speaker*.

RECOLLECTIONS OF OXFORD.

My not being at a public school has, I have no doubt, strengthened my love of my university and my college. In my time the "headmasters" had not had everything their own way. It was possible to enter Oxford before the age of nineteen; it was nothing wonderful to get a scholarship before eighteen or even earlier still. And to be scholar and fellow of Trinity from 1841 to 1847 was something to be. It was indeed a circle to look back to of which fifty years ago I was chosen a member, a circle of which a man is much to be blamed if he is not wiser and nobler for having been one. But love of the foundation, the feeling of membership, of brotherhood, in an ancient and honourable body, the feeling of full possession in one's college as a home, the feeling of personal nearness to a benefactor of past times, all that gathers round the scholarship that was something worthier than a mere prize, the fellowship that was something worthier than a crammer's wages—all this, I hope, has not even yet utterly vanished; but, under the hands of one reforming commission after another, such feelings have undoubtedly greatly weakened in the Oxford to which I have come back. In the unreformed university, the unreformed college in which I had the happiness to spend my youth, we had time to learn something, because we were not always being taught. We were not kept through our whole time, vexed by examination after examination, examined in this subject one term, in that subject the next term, all ingeniously combined for the better forgetting of one thing before the next was taken in. We had one examination, and a searching one, the successful passing of which could not seem to any but a fool to be the goal of study, but which, by the reading it required, gave a man the best possible start for study in several branches of knowledge.—*Edward A. Freeman, in the April Forum.*

FUTURE LIFE AND MORALITY IN THE OLYMPIAN RELIGION.

IN two important points the religion was particularly weak. One of these was its relation to a future life. The delineation of the Under-world in the "Odyssey," though it rises at times in poetical excellence, and abounds in characteristic touches, appears to be based entirely upon foreign, and perhaps principally Egyptian, traditions, which it enfeebles in their most essential points. It is gloomy and dreary, hopeless and helpless; but it does not present to us any picture of actual retribution except in the case of two persons, Tantalos, and Sisuphos, of foreign extraction and probably foreign birth. Titos and Orion are also here, but neither of them is to be considered as

akin to the Achæans. Minos administers justice among the dead (*themistuei*) apparently as a judge would in a human community. Heracles appears in sorry plight, but it is his Shade only, and he himself is among the Immortals. Upon the whole, there is not given, for the Achæans, any connection between general conduct and future happiness or misery; and when Menelaos receives the promise of a state of bliss, it is not for his virtues, which seem to have been great, but because he is the husband of Helen, and the son-in-law of Zeus. This doctrine of a future life, feeble in Homer, and without effective sanction, becomes wholly ineffective in historic Greece. But there is one marked exception supplied by the poet in the case of what may be termed political perjury. For here the Powers that ruled below are invited to inflict the vengeance; and on this occasion only our Nature-powers invoked by the Achæans, because their general residence, according to the poet, is in the Under-world. Tartaros itself appears to have been a place for the punishment of gods guilty of rebellion, in conjunction with whom it is particularly named. But although in the case of political perjury the tie between the two worlds is recognized, the poet does not anywhere venture upon applying the doctrine by specifying any person as having suffered, or as being about to suffer, the punishment. Upon the whole, in respect to the doctrine of a future life, the Olympian system takes its place far beneath older religions, especially those exhibited in the Zendavesta and the Egyptian monuments. It can hardly be affirmed, as respects the second point I have to name, that the comparison with Asia, even including the Hebrews, or with Egypt, is similarly disadvantageous to Achæan religion. It is the profoundly important point of sexual morality. In the "Iliad" monogamy is geographically separated from polygamy by the Hellespont; and I suppose it is to be assumed that under this head a monogamous people probably stood higher, in conception and in practice, than one which had polygamy practically exhibited before its eyes as a recognized institution. It is, however, obvious that among the Achæan Greeks there was no fixed restraint upon licentiousness of the ordinary kind, unless it were within the bond of marriage.—*The Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, in North American Review for April.*

IRISH COLLOQUIAL WIT AND HUMOUR.

I MUST admit that Irish wit is often of the most mordant and even sardonic kind. Was there ever a more sardonic stroke of description than that O'Connell gave of Peel's bloodlessness? "His smile was like the silver-plate on a coffin." Of another and lower quality, but good of its kind, is the following fish-wife's sarcasm: A friend of mine was waiting his turn to be served in a fish-shop, while a little weasened old gentleman priced every fish in the shop. "How much is this—and this—and this—and this?" etc., etc., till the exasperated shop-woman exclaimed, "Ah! Go on out of that wid ye! It isn't fish ye want, but information!" A journalist told me that he once overheard this passage of arms between a coachman and a beggar-man outside the Four Courts, Dublin. As the beggar was whining for alms at the carriage door, the coachman turned round to cry sharply to him: "Come, my man, take your rags out of that!" The beggar, with a withering glance at the coachman's livery, retorted: "Me rags! They're *me own*, me man!" Once more, about a dozen years ago an English fellow-traveller, with whom I was returning from Dublin to Bradford, said to me, "Really those Irish fellows are a queer lot! In Morrison's Hotel, where I was staying, there was a poor waiter, so ill that he could hardly crawl about, and I said of him (as he stood on the steps to see me off) to the carman, 'That poor fellow looks shockingly ill!' 'Och! Ill! Sure, he's dead these two months, only he's too lazy to close his eyes!'" Mrs. Laverty, an Irish lady, who lived thirty miles from the American Richmond, was in the provident habit of laying in a store of groceries to last an entire quarter; since she could not repair to Richmond oftener than four times a year. On one of these provisioning expeditions she laid in a store of matches—a disastrous investment, since not a match would strike. Wild was her fury, which was kept alight and aglow by her recurring daily trouble to get her fire alight and aglow without a match. Her wrath, thus kept at boiling-point for three months, gave the store-keeper a hot quarter of an hour, when she burst at last into his store and thundered down the parcel of match-boxes upon the counter. Having waited with deferential patience till the storm had spent itself, he said suavely, "Allow me, madame." Taking a match-box from the parcel, and a match from the box, he struck it, after the manner of men, upon his trousers. "See, madame!" he exclaimed in smug triumph, holding up the kindled match. "The devil fly away wid ye!" shrieked Mrs. Laverty. "Do ye think that ivry time I've a fire to light, I'll thravel thirty miles to strike a match on the sate of yere breeches?" A friend of my father's had a servant called Jerry Doherty, a handy man, who was of invaluable service to him—until poor Jerry took to drink. His master, as much in his own interests as in Jerry's, was continually trying to reform him; and to this end he would read out to Jerry from the newspapers every story of crime or of trouble traceable to drink, which he could find in them. At last he came upon a story which might have reformed Bardolph. It was a thrilling tale of a drunkard who was so saturated with whiskey that his breath caught fire as he was blowing out a candle, set his inside ablaze as it

would have set any other whiskey cask, and burned him to ashes in five minutes. "Now, Jerry, now, Jerry," urged his master, with the solemnity of an adjuration, "let this be a warning to you!" "Oh, begor, it will so, sir!" groaned the horrified Jerry. "I'll never blow a candle out again the longest day I live!" A famous surgeon told me that he went once to see a lunatic in a private asylum, and that, in passing through a corridor, he was thus accosted by one of the patients: "Take off your hat, sir." "Why should I?" asked my friend. "Because I am the son of the Emperor of the French." "Oh, I beg your Royal Highness' pardon," apologized my friend, taking his hat off. On revisiting the asylum a month or so later, he was again accosted in the same corridor by the son of the Emperor of the French, and in the same words: "Take off your hat, sir." "Why?" again asked my friend. "Because I am the son of the Emperor of Germany." "Of the Emperor of Germany? Surely, when last I had the honour to see your Royal Highness, you were the son of the Emperor of the French?" "Ah, well—yes," he stammered. But recovering at once from his embarrassment, he added brightly, "That was by another mother."—*Richard Ashe King, in "Belgravia."*

It is said that when Verdi was putting the finishing touches to "Il Trovatore," one of the ablest critics of the day called and was permitted to look through the score. "What do you think of that?" asked Verdi pointing to the "Anvil Chorus." "Trash," said the connoisseur. The master rubbed his hands and chuckled. "Now look at this, and this," said he. "Rubbish," reiterated the critic, rolling a cigarette. The composer rose and embraced him joyfully. "What do you mean?" asked the critic. "My dear friend," cried Verdi, "I have been making a popular opera. In it I resolved to please everybody except the great judges, the classicists, as yourself. Had I pleased you, I should have pleased no one else. What you say assures me of success. In three months 'Il Trovatore' will be sung, and roared and whistled all over Italy."

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