

Man must work and man must play; he that gains must spend; and there are both method and advantage in the separation of the contrasted functions. Washington is not ready to be a Pompeii of the twentieth century, but she does not shrink from a fate that would make her a Rome and Pompeii in one.

WAITING.

*Warte nur, balde
Ruhst du auch.*—Goethe.

GERMANIAN seer, thou spakest well,
E'en as thy length of days had taught;
And sage experience bade thee tell
The load wherewith our lives are fraught.

What can life give? I hear thee cry,
What its hoarse song each 'wakening morn,
Save that 'twill every wish deny,
Each upward aspiration scorn?

Our early fancy plumed her wings
For flight to which there seemed no bound,
Vanished her fair imaginings,
How poor at last her little round!

Thou biddest me in patience wait
The one blest certainty, and gaze
Calm, as the evening hour grows late,
Upon his kind and awful face.

South Kensington.

T. C.

SAUNTERINGS.

THERE is nobody at all like Miss Elizabeth Stuart Phelps in American literature. It is impossible that there should be in the literature of any other country. As Miss Phelps is a distinct type among the very many and various literary individualities of her native land, so she may be discerned, with equal distinctness, to be the product of the peculiar conditions it imposes upon literary development. Her work is full of the daring skimming of all matters in the heavens above, or the earth beneath, or the waters under the earth, that may be said to be directly encouraged by the scope which feminine brain-growth finds in America, the matter upon which it is commonly nourished, and the ready applause which greets its least effort along an unaccustomed line. One would suppose of Miss Phelps that she knows somewhat of matters that range all the way from the profoundest mystery of the creed of the Theosophists to the veritable germ of practicable reason in the theories of Henry George. And while one would not jump at a possibly unwarrantable conclusion that she is mistress of all the facts, and able to seal the death-warrant of a false deduction from them, it is very evident that she feels first and understands afterward the general trend of things, that she has absorbed the vital spirit of the Present in all its most important manifestations. This impression is communicated to us by a certain largeness of view in Miss Phelps's books, a notable self-poise as well, and a subtle, electric thrill of tone and feeling that we surely know to be drawn from the overcharged atmosphere the world moves in.

That the quaint humour of this author is also the gift of her native soil, few will gainsay. Calm self-ridicule, or ridicule of one's sex, which amounts to the same thing, is a quality of mind that seems to be foreign to other than to American women. Lady writers, as a rule, take their half of humanity *au sérieux*. But in literary women of Miss Phelps's country her point of view is not rare. It is part of the national self-consciousness, perhaps, that the lady *littérateurs* of the republic should be so happily aware of the follies of their sex, and their value as targets for such arrows as Miss Phelps's, that scintillate as they fly.

And Miss Phelps's conscience, her ever-present, all-pervading, beautiful conscience, surely the most delicately-wrought and highly sensitive ethical organ ever evolved out of the old Puritan faith and Unitarianism and Transcendental thought and east winds and more modern influences—That is, in very truth, a New England product. And the best part of Miss Phelps's work is her conscience, transcribed with a noble art, and illuminated with imagination, that it is not extravagance to call prismatic.

No, you will not find all this in "The Madonna of the Tubs,"* but a great deal of it is there, and a great deal other than I have even hinted at.

"The Madonna of the Tubs," as you will perhaps remember, was the strong feature of *Harper's* Christmas number last year—another sketch of Miss Phelps's beloved Fairharbor, where the sea-waves have beaten out for us so many a gay, irresponsible conceit, so many a thought, heavy and troubled with the shadows beyond the dark line of the horizon. It is the story of Miss Helen Ritter, of "Beacon Street, Boston, twenty-eight years old, an orphan, a Brahmin (rich, if one stopped to think of that), and a beauty, member of Trinity Church and the Brain Club, subscriber to the Provident Association, and stock-holder in the Athenæum, fond of her maid, her relatives, her *bric-à-brac*, and her way." A summer visitor at Fairharbor, where the "Madonna of the Tubs" is a permanent resident and her washerwoman. Miss Ritter has had a love affair and a quarrel, and is given to moods. The "Madonna" is the loving wife of a fisherman, with whom she also quarrels, as loving wives sometimes will, on the eve of his departure for the "Banks." They have a lame boy, Rafè, among their brood of six, and his is possibly the most exquisitely-drawn character in the book.

Henry Salt is lost (according to the *Boston Advertiser*) off the Banks in a fog, and Helen Ritter comes from Boston to comfort his widow on Christmas Eve. Her gentle ministry is interrupted by the arrival of the mourned-for fisherman, and the joy of that reconciliation prepares her somewhat for her own, which occurs by a happy chance almost simultaneously. A simple little story, and bare enough even in its details, but holding and showing, beside all its merely technical skill, a passionate comprehension of and sympathy for the ills that human hearts endure—even the hearts that beat in so insignificant a species as Fairharbor fisher-folk. We do not believe much in Miss Ritter, she is rather an artificial young woman, and we are disposed to distrust the "kind of splendour—distant, uncomprehending, accidental"—with which this Boston maiden filled Mrs. Salt's small kitchen as she stood by the stove to dry the skirt of her white flannel dress. But it is long since our heart-strings have answered to so thrilling a touch as this of Miss Phelps's, when she tells us of the tender womanly soul that bore the wifehood, motherhood, and widowhood of "The Madonna of the Tubs."

OF Frank Stockton's "Casting Away of Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine"* there is little to say that has not been said already. The place Miss Phelps holds among American book-makers is not more individual, not more solitary, than Mr. Stockton's. So many, indeed, are these cases of development of special literary virtue among the fraternity of the pen across the line as to warrant us in believing that the jostling sort of education the great republic gives its children is the best for developing original wit after all. From the very beginning, Mr. Stockton has been recognised as *sui generis*—from the beginning, that is, of his acquaintance with the public. His infancy, unfortunately, was not watched for remarkable traits by an unsuspecting father and mother, and so has passed into semi-obscurity. Those who know him best, however, seem to find a difficulty in dating the earliest appearance in him of an unusual personality, so we may rest upon the conviction that he took even his colic with philosophy, and propounded insoluble questions while he sucked his juvenile thumb.

"Be that as it may," as the romancers say, Mr. Stockton's contemporaries, quite tired of the convulsive cachinnatory methods in vogue with some of his fellow-country humorists, are more than delighted that his new and engaging process shows no sign of failing him,—that Mrs. Lecks and Mrs. Aleshine are quite as amusing as any of their predecessors.

When you have added to a thorough understanding of the homelier phases of human nature, a keen appreciation of ludicrous situations, vast ingenuity, and a close and accurate knowledge of the "curious" faculty of the human mind, you have summoned up the chief elements of Mr. Stockton's immense popularity. From these elements we cannot tell what a day or an hour may bring forth; we know only one thing—that it will wear a countenance exclusively funny in the gravest of masks, and that we shall not be forced to penetrate it, but will do so unawares. After one's first slow smile, which seldom breaks into noisy mirth, the disguise is of none effect, and we are certain Mr. Stockton's own face is broadly illuminated. Yet, and perhaps this is another proof of his genius, there are many estimable people for whom his solemn manner is but the foolish cloak of incomprehensible twaddle, and the mirth it occasions but as the crackling of thorns under a pot. Indeed, I know such an one, who loved *Punch* alone, and his own vain conceits, and was a person whom in his insular training had despoiled of his sense of the truly ridiculous.

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* Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company. Toronto: Williamson and Company.

* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Toronto: Standard Publishing Company.