

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

JOTTINGS FROM THE LIFE OF THEOPHILE GAUTIER.

GAUTIER'S love and understanding of animals, which he shared with the great Dumas, comes out, as in "Le Capitaine Fracasse," constantly in his writings, but specially, of course, in the volume called "Ménagerie Intime," which is a delightful little book on the same lines as Dumas' "Histoire de mes Bêtes." It is true that it contains nothing so exciting as Dumas' account of his fight with his new dog, and it may be not unfairly added that Gautier would never have behaved so badly to a dog as Dumas did on that occasion. Théo's attitude with regard to dogs, however, had its own and characteristic oddity. He did not the least deny the soundness of Charlet's axiom, *Ce qu'il y a de mieux dans l'homme c'est le chien*; but he confessed that his love for dogs always went hand in hand with a terror of hydrophobia—a terror which he never felt with regard to cats. Here his encyclopædic knowledge for once failed him; but then no one is ever so ignorant as a learned man. Nevertheless, Théo knew and loved dogs, although, like many other people, he found something disquieting in the deep and mysterious looks which they fix upon you. But it was to cats that he was specially attached, and as the Swiss painter was called the Cats' Raphael, so might Gautier have been called the Cats' Homer. The history of all his cats, as given in the "Ménagerie Intime," is delightful enough, but perhaps the most interesting of all was the animal known as Madame Théophile. This creature's first introduction to a parrot, which Gautier was taking care of for a friend, took place under his eyes, and his description of it is an instance of his keen observation and sympathy. The parrot, which apparently was an Amazon, perplexed at its new lodging, had climbed to the highest point of its stand, and remained there, rolling its steely eyes and working its nictitating membrane. Madame Théophile, the cat, who had never seen a parrot before, regarded the strange creature with astonishment. Immovable as a mummied Egyptian cat, she looked, lost in thought, at the bird, recalling all the ideas on natural history which she had gathered in the garden and the roof trees. Her shifting eyes alone conveyed her thoughts; and these thoughts were, "Then here is a green chicken." Having arrived at this conclusion, the cat leapt from the table to a corner of the room, where she lay in an attitude like that of Gérôme's black panther watching the gazelles. The parrot followed the cat's movements with a feverish eagerness. He ruffled his feathers, rattled his chain, he lifted one of his hands and examined its nails attentively, and he scrambled his beak on the edge of his food-can. Instinct bade him beware of an enemy on his track. The cat's eyes were fixed on the bird with a deadly charm, and these eyes said, in a language which was probably intelligible to the parrot, "This fowl is green, but all the same it must be good to eat." Gautier, noting all this, watched the animal comedy, ready to intervene if intervention were needed. The cat drew nearer and nearer to the parrot's stand; her pink nose palpitated, her eyes half closed, her claws, like the feet immortalized by Suckling, went in and out. . . . Suddenly she arched her back, and with a feline bound leapt to the foot of the parrot's stand. The parrot met the danger half way, and received the cat with a phrase delivered in a pompous bass voice, "As-tu déjeuner, Jacquot?" This phrase filled the cat with an indescribable terror, and caused it to leap backwards. A flourish of trumpets, an earthquake of broken crockery, a pistol discharged by its ear, could not have caused the cat a more headlong alarm. All the creature's ideas on ornithology were completely upset. The parrot continued its triumphant speech with the words, "Et de quoi? De rôti du roi!" Then the cat's face said as plainly as possible, "This is no bird. This is a gentleman. Listen to his conversation." Then the parrot, pursuing his advantage, burst at the top of his voice into the refrain of a drinking song. On this the cat cast one desperate look of interrogation upon Gautier, and fled in despair under the bed, where it remained for all the rest of the day. The same cat had an extraordinary love of perfumes and of music, as to which latter taste it had one strange peculiarity. It could not endure the note G, and always put a reproving and silencing paw on the mouth of anyone who sang it. A parallel to this oddity was found in the case of Théo's spaniel dog, Zamore, of whom it was written, "Who would have thought that under this dog's calm, independent, philosophic, earnest exterior, there lay hidden an overmastering and amazing passion, which no one could have suspected, and which formed the oddest contrast with the character, physical and moral, of this creature, whose seriousness amounted to sadness?" "You will suppose," Gautier went on, "that the good Zamore was, let us say, a thief? No. He was fond of cherry brandy? No. He was given to biting? Not at all. Zamore was consumed by a passion for dancing!" Gautier in his lightest, or shall we say with the ineffable critic, his most light-minded style, goes on to describe how Zamore met a troop of dancing dogs, and was straightway filled with admiration, which led to emulation, inasmuch that he attempted to join in the show, and was treated with contempt by its proprietor. He returned home dejected and thoughtful, and that night Gautier's sisters, who inhabited the room next to that in which Zamore slept, were awakened by a curious pattering noise, interrupted now and again by the sound of a falling body. Investigation showed that it was Zamore practising steps all by himself. He then became an assiduous spectator at the

dancing dogs' exhibition, watched them carefully, and practised by himself every night, and finally, when he was satisfied with the result of his studies, he invited fifteen or twenty dogs of his acquaintance to come and see his performance. He died of brain fever, brought on by overwork in learning the schottische, which was then the fashionable dance of the day.—*Longman's Magazine*.

THE GUERDON.

Lily and rose in my garden,
Why are you nodding at me?
Cannot I pass to my lover
But you are watching to see!

Lily and rose—in sweet pity,
Do not keep barring my way;
I was so happy at starting—
Can't I be happy alway?

Jealous rose, clinging and clasping,
Think you such bonds are secure?
Painful may be—but not lasting,
Love hath taught how to endure.

Lily and rose, you are jealous,
Heard you my love, I suppose,
Call me "Of lilies the fairest,
Roses, the sweetest blush rose."

Lily and rose, don't be angry,
Spare this one lover to me;
You have so many—I've watched them,
Butterflies, birds and a bee.

If you'll release me—as guerdon
Promise I just at the least—
Morrow is fixed for my bridal,
You shall be plucked for the feast!

—Argosy.

CURIOSITIES OF POISONS.

UNTIL the past few years poisoning has been a study pretty much confined to savages—not, of course, exclusively the savages in paint and feathers, but to the naturally ferocious and criminal in all communities. Among savages, in the ordinary sense of the word, there has often been found a wonderful knowledge on this subject, and some very curious results have frequently been obtained by them. A very intelligent and trustworthy resident on the borders of a North American Indian tribe, for instance, tells a very singular story. He had a young Indian girl in his kitchen for some years. When she first entered his service, so many of her relatives and friends came to see her that he had to give her peremptory orders to admit nobody. Unfortunately, one of her first visitors after this decree had gone forth was an old medicine man of her tribe, whom she steadfastly refused to admit to her kitchen, and who, consequently, went away furiously angry, and vowing all sorts of vengeance. Some months afterwards, the old doctor met the girl. He had, apparently, quite forgotten the insult he had received, and very heartily shook hands with her. She happened to have a slight wound in her hand, and after the old man had grasped it, she saw, to her dismay, that this wound was covered by a black patch, and she instantly suspected that it was a patch of poison, and she told him so. The old man frankly admitted that her suspicion was correct. She had insulted him when they last met and now he had paid her for it. For one month in every year, as long as she lived, he told her that her skin would break out in black blotches. Twelve months afterwards, the affliction predicted actually befel the girl, and every year, as long as she continued in the service of the narrator of this story, her skin became blotched and patched all over with black marks, which continued to disfigure her for a month, and then disappeared. A Government officer at Winnipeg mentions in one of his official reports a very remarkable poison, which had the effect of paralyzing the muscles of the face. Speaking of a woman to whom it had been administered without her own consent or knowledge, this official says: "Only the eyes moved, and, as they were intensely black and rather sparkling, the ghastly deformity was rendered the more glaring. The most singular effect, however, was produced by her laugh. She was a jolly, good-natured squaw, and laughed upon the slightest provocation. Her eyes sparkled, and her 'ha! ha!' was musical to a degree; but not a muscle moved to denote the merriment on that expressionless face. One felt that some one else laughed behind that rigid integument. No idea could be formed of what she thought at any time." There is nothing incredible in this. Medical science has of late years been turning attention to poisons, and many effects quite as pronounced, if not perhaps, quite so striking, have been observed. "Experiments," says one authority, "have shown that certain poisons are so potent and subtle in their action as to almost equal the wonders in tales told of charms condensed into necromancers' phials. The animal body can be played upon as if it were a machine. The strokes of the central pump, the heart, can be slowed or quickened; the vital heat lowered or increased; the pupil of the eye expanded or narrowed; the limbs paralyzed or convulsed; the blood sent to the surface or withdrawn to the interior; even the natural hue and colour of the body can be changed." One very interesting result of modern study of poisons is the discovery of some ground for believing that certain diseases both of body and mind, may be attributable to poison in the system. Dr. B. W. Richardson, for instance, says that

somnambulism, he has not the slightest doubt, "is produced by the formation in the body of a peculiar substance, which may be derived from the starchy parts of the body, and has the effect of the chemical substance known as amylen. I believe that," says Dr. Richardson, "because you produce artificial somnambulism by the use of that substance. Under its influence persons can be made to walk about unconsciously in the same way as the somnambulist does." The same respected authority affirms that there are substances known capable of producing extreme melancholy. "There is a peculiar offensive sulphur compound called mercaptan. A little of that administered to any one produces the intensest melancholy, tending almost to suicide. We can sometimes detect a similar offensive substance in the breath of patients who are suffering from melancholia." Similarly, there is a well-known poison which produces all the effects of scarlet fever. There is another, a large dose of which brings about all the symptoms of cholera; and there appear to be several poisons which produce idiocy or actual madness. The Hindoos are said to know a drug which, as Mr. Wynter Blyth tells us, has, in Indian history, often played the part of a State agent, and has been used to produce imbecility in persons of high rank whose mental integrity was considered dangerous to the despot in power. Among the most curious poisons of which there is any record in the past, or of which we have any knowledge at the present time, is that which Shakespeare makes Friar Laurence give to Juliet as a means of enabling her to escape the proposed marriage with Paris. It would, he assured her, produce temporarily all the symptoms of death—

Each part, deprived of supple government,
Shall, stiff and stark and cold, appear like death;
And in this borrowed likeness of shrunk death
Thou shalt continue two and forty hours,
And then awake as from a pleasant sleep.

Juliet takes the draught, and the effect is precisely as the friar has predicted, and it might be supposed that so convenient a poison was purely the invention of a dramatist, and had no sort of equivalent in the drugs of the toxicologist. Modern science, however, has recognised in the contents of Juliet's phial a well-known medicine of ancient Greece (*Atropa mandragora*) which really possesses the remarkable power attributed to it in Shakespeare's tragedy. Dr. Richardson tells us that it was actually used by Greek physicians very much as we use chloroform, and that under its influence operations were performed. It was known as "death wine," and was in common use till about the fifteenth century, but old medical works are still extant containing descriptions of it, and, a few years ago, this gentleman tells us that a friend of his brought him some of the root from Greece, and, by the help of these old prescriptions, he was able to concoct some of this death wine, and to make such experiments with it as to entirely confirm Friar Laurence's account of its action. We are further told that, when the Jews were under the Romans, and a good many of them were crucified, the Jewish women were in the habit of giving them this same mandragora in order to alleviate their sufferings, and it is suggested that, as some of the victims were known to have recovered from their apparent death, the practice of breaking the legs was adopted.—*Cassell's Saturday Journal*.

EUGENE SCHUYLER.

WHEN Eugene Schuyler entered Yale College, he was the smallest and, with one exception possibly, the youngest of the undergraduates. Few who knew him at that time will forget the gentle, rosy-cheeked, large-eyed boy, who seemed so out of place among the somewhat rude and noisy members of the class of '59. Naturally he never kicked football nor played "wicket" (a kind of bastard cricket much in vogue in those days), and very rarely did he venture into a boat. I am not sure that he ever climbed to the top of either East or West Rock. To this disinclination to all outdoor sports or exercise was joined a real timidity and shrinking from anything involving hardship or danger. More than once have I guarded him to his room in the evening during our periodic hostilities with the New Haven firemen. Even still more marked was a feminine sensitiveness to a rough word or hostile criticism. In these respects he remained unchanged to the end of his college course, though in other ways he matured. In our last years he took the women's role in the college theatricals, and looked his part to perfection. After graduation our paths separated, and I knew almost nothing of him for years beyond the mere fact that he had gone to Russia. Great was my surprise, therefore, to have him brought suddenly to mind one day, when reading the opening chapters of MacGahan's "Campaigning on the Oxus." In these I found Schuyler on the threshold of one of the most adventurous and perilous journeys which a man could undertake in 1873. The least that it demanded was the greatest powers of endurance. One might almost say that the easiest, certainly the safest, part was the beginning, the four weeks of travel, day and night, in a tarantass, across the Siberian plains, with the thermometer from thirty to fifty degrees below zero. But to penetrate into farthest Turkestan, almost alone, at the very time that Russia was advancing upon Khiva and intensifying every Turkoman's hatred of the Christian, demanded a perfect fearlessness of danger joined with the ability to compel unwilling men to perform one's will, and an inflexibility of purpose overcome by no obstacle, which only few men have possessed. The courage which, to recall a single instance, enabled him to face unflinchingly the mob of Bokhariot pilgrims whom a fanatic was incit-