

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

TRUST.

"THE same old baffling questions!" O my friend I cannot answer them. In vain I send My soul into the dark, where never burn The lamps of science, nor the natural light, Of Reason's sun and star! I cannot learn Their great and solemn meaning, nor discern The awful secrets of the eyes which turn Evermore on us through the day and night With silent challenge and a dumb demand.

Proffering the riddles of the dread unknown, Like the calm Sphinxes, with their eyes of stone, Questioning the centuries from their veils of sand! I have no answer for myself or thee, Save that I learned beside my mother's knee; "All is of God that is, and is to be; And God is good." Let this suffice us still, Resting in childlike trust upon His will Who moves to His great ends unthwarted by thee.

JOHN G. WHITTIER.

THE MEYERBEER CENTENARY.

AN article published by the Hamburg *Fremdenblatt* under the title: "Two Prophecies, a Reminiscence on the Occasion of Meyerbeer's Centenary," relates two interesting anecdotes with regard to the great composer. They both refer to Meyerbeer's opera of "Robert the Devil." One of the anecdotes speaks of a visit paid by the *maestro* to Mme. Lenormand, the fortune-teller. Being first asked by her to throw dice, he did so, and the throw resulted in three sixes turning up. She exclaimed "A great success—ay, the greatest success." Meyerbeer then shuffled several times a pack of cards, which Madame afterwards raked with her wand. Finally she said to him: "You are a great artist, you have in hand a great undertaking created by you with the help of God, and for the world's delight. It will be crowned with great success and bring you glory and prestige, but"—and then she turned up a plain black card, "You have sold yourself to the devil, and he will be victorious." Overjoyed at this prophecy, which he of course interpreted as having reference to his opera, the composer was hurrying through the Champs Elysées when he nearly upset a tall man who stopped him with an exclamation of recognition. Meyerbeer shook hands warmly. "My dear Rossini," he said, "my head is so full, you know; the day after to-morrow is the *première* of my piece." "Ah! of 'Robert the Devil,'" retorted Rossini. "They say you have already got the opera on thirty street organs to make it popular before its production. Is that piece of Jesuitism really true?" Meyerbeer, somewhat embarrassed, replied that he had to fight against stubborn animosity to his opera, and that the end justified the means. Before Rossini could answer, a barrel organ near by began playing. Meyerbeer was delighted to see Rossini obviously fascinated by the tune, which was no other than the air of "Robert toi que j'aime." "What is this, and by whom?" ejaculated Rossini. Meyerbeer's eyes sparkled as he triumphantly declared it to be an air from the new opera. Rossini embraced him in the street, saying: "Meyerbeer, you have conquered me, and if your opera had no further brilliant pieces, this air would secure its victory. That is my prophecy." Both prophecies proved true, and the opera was a splendid success when performed for the first time two days later, on November 22, 1831, at the Grand Opéra in Paris.—*The Times*.

SIR BOYLE ROCHE.

THE mention of the name of Sir Boyle Roche will at once bring to mind the Irish bull, for no other man has coined more bulls than the renowned Sir Boyle, and possibly none other has kept the House in such perpetual roars of laughter at his follies. He held the office of Gentleman Usher at the Irish Court, and discharged his duties to the satisfaction of everyone with whom his functions brought him in contact. There is a harvest of drollery to be gleaned from his speeches in the House at various times, and more especially were his *bon mots* entertaining for the reason that he himself was often very earnest and heated in his remarks, and was unconscious of the bathos he was giving utterance to. "What, Mr. Speaker," said he on one occasion, "and so we are to beggar ourselves for fear of vexing posterity! Now, I would ask the honourable gentleman, and this most honourable House, why we should put ourselves out of our way to do anything for posterity, for what has posterity done for us?" The orator after this declaration, expecting loud applause from his own party, was extremely disconcerted to find the whole house in a burst of laughter at his remark, so he began to explain that "he assured the House that by posterity he did not at all mean our ancestors, but those who were to come immediately after them." This explanation convulsed the house, and nothing serious was done for half an hour. Sir Boyle was very indignant at the proceedings of the Parisian Jacobins, and on one occasion he thus aired his indignation and contempt of them: "If we once permitted the villainous French masons to meddle with the buttresses and walls of our ancient constitution, they would never stop nor stay, sir, till they had brought the foundation stones tumbling down about the ears of the nation, If these Gallican villains

should invade us, 'tis on that very table, maybe, these honourable members might see their own destinies lying in a heap atop of one another. Here, perhaps, sir, the Marshallaw (Marseillaise) men would break in, cut us in mince meat, and throw our heads bleeding on that table to stare us in the face." One of his famous Union speeches concluded with this pithy remark, that "this excellent Union will convert our barren hills into fruitful valleys." In another speech, directed against the Jacobins and Jacobin intrigue, Sir Boyle angrily exclaimed: "Sir, I smell a rat, I see him brewing in the air, but mark me, Mr. Speaker, I shall yet nip him in the bud." Hearing that Admiral Howe was in search of the French, he remarked that he trusted that "he would sweep the Gallic fleet off the face of the earth." He expresses his loyalty in one speech by the sublime utterance: "I stood prostrate at the feet of my sovereign." He also held up to the ridicule of the House "the man who had turned his back on himself." He lamented "that single misfortunes never came alone, and that the greatest of all possible misfortunes is generally followed by a greater." Sir Boyle was married to a daughter of Sir Richard Cave; this wife of his evidently seemed bent on schooling her husband, for she compelled him daily to read Gibbons' "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" for style. Sir Boyle was so cruelly punished by this that he often stigmatized the historian as a "low fellow, who ought to have been kicked out of company wherever he was, for turning people's thoughts away from their prayers, and their politics to what the devil himself could make neither head nor tail of."—*Bel-fast Telegraph*.

A PAIR of green whip snakes in the reptile house at a Zoo illustrate very well the remarkable similarity which animals frequently show to their usual surroundings. These snakes are arboreal in habit and green in colour; when the leaves fall they descend to earth and hibernate. Even in the restricted space afforded by the glass case in which they live, it is not always an easy matter to detect the snakes at once, so closely do their colours harmonize with the shrub upon which they generally rest.

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