

But this legend has taken many forms, like all such, and is of great antiquity; and the Knight of the Swan, a sort of Proteus, was already a legendary character among the earliest Angles and Danes and Guelphs; and a monument to the Lohengrin of our story, with his helmet bearing the wings and neck of a swan, is to be seen to-day in the Market Place at Cleves, that fine old city on the Rhine.

H. R.

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

A MORNING THOUGHT.

WHAT if some morning, when the stars were paling,
And the dawn whitened, and the East was clear,
Strange peace and rest fell on me from the presence
Of a benignant Spirit standing near.

And I should tell him, as he stood beside me,
"This is our Earth—most friendly Earth, and fair;
Daily its sea and shore through sun and shadow
Faithful it turns, robed in its azure air.

"There is blest living here, loving and serving,
And quest of truth, and serene friendships dear;
But stay not Spirit! Earth has one destroyer—
His name is Death: flee, lest he find thee here!"

And what if then, while the still morning brightened,
And freshened in the elm the Summer's breath,
Should gravely smile on me the gentle angel
And take my hand and say, "My name is Death."

—Edward R. Sill.

THE HANGING OF PICTURES.

THOSE who have had some experience of the difficulties which attend the arrangement of a private collection will best appreciate the care and attention required in executing the same task for a public gallery containing about 1,200 works, many being of exceptionally large size. It is generally admitted that a symmetrical disposition of pictures, when practicable, is more agreeable to the eye than when they are hung in a haphazard fashion, and if mathematical uniformity of grouping were the only object in view, that object, in dealing with a miscellaneous collection, might easily be secured. But when ever pictures are classified under "Schools," the possibility of ranging them according to size is at once greatly restricted. Nor is this all. When two or more of similar dimensions have been selected for a group, it not unfrequently happens that the nature of the subjects treated, the chromatic quality of the works, or the style of their execution, is such as to render their juxtaposition incongruous. A brilliant and gaily-coloured picture hung near one which is painted in a sober key will sometimes take all life out of the latter, and reduce it to the level of a work in monochrome. On the other hand, to group together a series of sombre-toned pictures is apt to produce a gloomy effect, and the hanger has therefore to steer between two extremes. Again, for the purpose of study, it is no doubt convenient that the works of a particular master should hang side by side. But the varying scale of such works, their dissimilarity of shape—horizontal, upright, square, circular, oblong, or arch-headed, for instance—will often present obstacles to such a plan. And even where conditions of size, colour, and subject are favourable to the close association of certain pictures, it may happen that while some of them deserve the best place that can be found on the walls, one at least is of inferior quality, and cannot be allowed to occupy space which may justly be claimed for a work of higher merit though less consonant in style.—*Nineteenth Century*.

MISTLETOE.

Of the many Norse legends none is more beautiful than that of the "Death of Balder," which is associated with the mystic plant, the mistletoe. "Edda," our first mother, tells how Frigga, wife of Odin, frightened by a dream of her son Balder, the Sun-God, takes an oath "from everything that springs from fire, air, and water," not to hurt Balder. But all is unavailing against the malice of Loki, who, though beautiful in form, is the Spirit of Evil. Loki, disguised as a lovely woman, questions Frigga as to the means she has used to guard her son. "Have you sworn all things?" asked Loki. "All things," replied the fond mother, "except one little shrub that grows on the eastern side of Valhalla, and is called mistletoe, and which I thought too young and feeble to crave an oath from." Knowing Frigga's secret, Loki makes an arrow of mistletoe, and by deceit persuades the blind God Hodür to shoot the loved Balder, who dies, and thus Loki, the mischief-maker, the adversary of the Anses (Gods of the country), the thief of Brisney's girdle, the wolf that stole Töwinn, kills Balder, the Sun-God, the son of Odin, the husband of Nand. The triumph of evil is short-lived, the beautiful Nand implores the Anses to restore her husband to life, her prayer is granted, and the "baleful" mistletoe that Tamora dreaded is given to the care of Freyja, the Goddess of Love, who is aided in her charge by her brother Frey, the God of Sunshine, Rain, and Harvest, and from being emblematic of death, and "baleful" in women, the mistletoe has become the symbol of love, resurrection, and life. Under the white berries lovers vow a love pure and

fond as that of Nand and Balder, and ask of Freyja her kindly aid. So it was in that long distant past when all the harvest being gathered, and the twelfth moon was six days old, the Druids in white robes and armed with golden sickle, with many ceremonies and sacrificial offerings, brought the sacred plant to the keeping of Freyja, lest the ever-watchful Loki should find any unguarded stem. So carefully did they search that the ac-mistle (oak mistletoe) had almost disappeared from England. And had not the Pontiff Gregory had a keen desire to Christianize England, and therefore seized on the opportunity of Æthelberht's marriage with Bercta, the daughter of King Charibert, of Paris, to send Augustine, who landed in 597, the lovely parasite which finds a place in every home at Christmas would probably have been exterminated. But the ecclesiastic invaders were bound to stamp out heathenism, and the eloquence of Augustine had a powerful ally in the beauty of Bercta. Æthelberht became a Christian, and the oak ceased to be despoiled, and religious rites that had been carried on amidst Roman, Dane, and Saxon were now forbidden. But the love of the beautiful outlived the censure of the priest, and, as a symbol of immortality, the mistletoe is entwined round the Gothic arches of the cruciform churches of Christendom; wreathed on the pulpit and reading desk, it reminds both priests and laymen that love has triumphed over sin, and that man is heir to immortality.—*Medical Press*.

A RED SUNSET AT SEA.

THE effect of a red sunset upon a ship sailing quietly along is a study full of sweetness. The rigging shines like wires of brass, the sails like cloth of gold; there are crimson stars wherever there are windows. Against the soft evening blue she glides glorious as a fabric richly gilt. Sometimes the slow withdrawal of the western splendour from her may be watched; then her hull will be dark with evening shadow, whilst the light, like a golden veil lifted off her by an invisible hand, slides upwards from one rounded stretch of canvas to another, till, burning for a breath like a streak of fire in the dogvane at the lofty masthead, it vanishes, and the structure floats gray as the ash of tobacco. In this withdrawal of the sun, and in the gathering of the shadows of night at sea, there is a certain melancholy; but I do not think it can be compared with the spirit of desolation you find in the breaking of the dawn over the ocean. The passage from sunlight to darkness even in the tropics is not so swift but that the mind, so to speak, has time to accept the change; but there is something in the cold, spiritless gray dawn of that always did and still does affect my spirits at sea. The froth of the running billows steals out ghastly to the faint, cheerless, and forbidding light. Chilly as the night may have been, a new edge of cold seems to have come into the air with the sifting of the melancholy spectral tinge of gray into the east. The light puts a hollow look into the face of the seaman. The aspect of his ship is full of bleakness; the stars are gone, the skies are cold, and the voices of the wind aloft are like a frosty whistling through clenched teeth. A mere fancy of course which is instantly dissolved by the first level sparkling beam of the rising sun; but then it is fancy that makes up the life of the sea, for without it what is the vocation but a dull routine of setting and furling sail, of masticating hard beef and pork, of slushing masts, washing decks, and polishing the brassworks? The spacious liquid arena is prodigal of inspiration and of delight to any one who shall carry imagination away with him on a voyage. There may be twenty different things to look at at once, and every one richer, sweeter, and more ennobling than the greatest of human poems to the heart that knows how to watch and receive. The shadow of a dark cloud over a ship, with the sunshine streaming white in clear blue foaming seas around; the vision of the iceberg at night, colouring the black atmosphere with a radiance of its own; the tropical blue of the horizon lifting into brassy brightness to the central dazzle of the sun; the airy dyes of the evening over a ship in the far loneliness of the mid-ocean—scores of such sights there are, but what magic is there in human pen to express them? The majesty of the Creator is nowhere so apparent; the Spirit of the Universe is nowhere else so present. Those who know most dare least in their desire to reproduce. What other response is there for the heart to make to the full recognition of the eye but the silence of adoration!—*Macmillan*.

SIR STAFFORD NORTHCOTE.

IT follows, if I have placed before you even the faintest image of Sir Stafford Northcote, that he lacked one quality of the great Dr. Johnson; he was but a poor hater. I do believe that, either by original creation or in answer to his prayers, God had delivered him from envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness. For this reason, though he led his party, as it seems to one not belonging to it, with singular skill and wisdom, he was not perhaps a very good party man. Ben Jonson says that in his day the times were "so wholly partial or malicious, that if a man be a friend all sits well about him, his very vices shall be virtues; if an enemy or of the contrary faction, nothing is good or tolerable in him; inasmuch that we care not to discredit and shame our judgments to soothe our passions." Nothing in this vigorous passage found an echo in Sir Stafford's nature. He thought the best he could of every one; he declined to ascribe bad motives to those at whose hands he had experienced slights and injuries, which many men, which perhaps most men, would have bitterly resented. He felt these things keenly, but with a rare magnanimity he uttered no complaint, he held his peace. I believe he forgave those who did them; he certainly made excuses for them, and that with no double sense of irony or sarcasm, but honestly, truly, simply. Well, they have their reward, and he has his!—*Lord Coleridge, in Macmillan*.