

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

IRSEN.

Do you fling down his book in a passion?
 "That speech beside Shakespeare's!" Ah, but,
 While you cavil the nut-shell's fashion,
 Is there nothing to say of the nut?

"By the bitter taste of the kernel,
 'Tis poison." Shall we, our feet
 So new in the fields eternal,
 Pronounce on bitter and sweet?

Yet bitter may purify rotten,
 And this taste that offends the tooth
 Be just what the world has forgotten,
 The pungent flavour of truth.

—Katharine Lee Bates, in *Literary World*.

THE CHANCES OF A CANADIAN LITERATURE.

MR. L. O'LOANE discusses in *THE WEEK*—the literary organ of Canada—the chances of Canada's attainment of a literature, and he discusses the matter, it must be said, in a way which is somewhat pessimistic and peculiar. Canada was born too late, and must be born again, according to the discouraging views of Mr. O'Loane. "Could Count Tolstoi," asks he, "write 'War and Peace,' or Ivan Turgeneff hold you as firmly as the Ancient Mariner did the wedding guest, if they lived in Canada? How could they? They could not learn war here, they could not be fired by the daily, hourly, human agonies, worse than those pictured in Dante's *Inferno*, which a Russian sees. The follies and cruelties of the great, the meannesses and sufferings of the poor; violent love, equally violent hate; jealousy, cruel as the grave, treachery—are on all sides of the 'unspeakable Russ.' The Slavonic race is scattering tragedies broadcast. We sit in the broad sunlight by day, in the glare of electric light by night; we are nice and warm in summer, and thanks to the self-feeders, and hot air, and steam, equally nice and warm in winter; we love conveniently and properly, we have mild dislikes during which we riddle the character of our pet aversion with a pea-shooter. We are even equal to triolets. We must have something strong and great within us before we can produce anything strong and great.—*Public Opinion*.

FOOD AND HEALTH.

PHYSICIANS have prepared tables supposed to represent the relative digestibility of food, none of which can be regarded as infallible. That of the French doctor, Beaumont, placed among the most digestible articles pigs' feet, brains, roast mutton, and oysters. This classification of oysters and tripe, and among the least digestible food roast veal, will strike Americans as a heresy. Fowl carefully prepared is considered so digestible that it is one of the articles of food most frequently given in case of sickness, and yet thousands of stomachs rebel against it. There seems no objection to placing pigs' feet at the head of the list if they are well cooked and eaten without any of those highly spiced additions used by many cooks to render them more acceptable to the palate. Among the things generally regarded as trying to the digestion are smoked and salted meats, hash, cauliflower, with several things already mentioned. Roast meats are more digestible than boiled meats. Beef roasted or broiled is the article on whose digestibility the doctors and the human stomach are best agreed. As too great variety food is not to be commended, so the prolonged use of a single article of diet is generally to be avoided. If circumstances render it necessary that a person or a community should subsist on a uniform kind of food, potatoes, fish, and milk come the nearest to satisfying all the conditions. Neither of these species of nourishment tends specially to muscle, and yet the almost exclusive use of either is entirely consistent with a perfect state of health. Milk goes far, it must be remembered, to supply the lack of animal food. A French physician, basing his conclusions on this principle, advises that cheese be made an important part of the ration of the French army, because it is highly digestible exceedingly compact, and very nourishing. The Irish peasant who is usually witty, invariably healthy, and often handsome, shows the physical advantages resulting from the use of the potato. As to fish, it is a diet that nourishes a much larger proportion of the human race than that which has the privilege—and it is limited—of feeding on the flesh of four-footed animals. As to the relative use of meat and vegetables, it depends on an infinite variety of questions, two of the most important of which are those of labor and of climate. Near the equator the use of meat is extremely limited, principally because the system does not require it, while in high degrees of latitude its consumption is greatly increased, and the greater amount of fatty matter it contains renders it the more acceptable. In many cases the want of it is supplied by pure oil. But after all is said, aside from some general rules, the question of food remains, and must always remain, one of individual constitution and human judgment.—*San Francisco Chronicle*

WE can if we will make an interest in life for ourselves, supposing that none exists in our original circumstances. We can study for the improvement of our minds and the enrichment of our knowledge, or we can do good to those who need help—good to the poor or to the sick, to the lonely or to the sorrowful.

THE DEATH OF DUNDEE.

HAVING concluded his arrangements, and possibly addressed the chiefs and his officers, Dundee waited till the sun, which was shining in the faces of his men, had touched the western hills in its descent. Lochiel urged him to content himself with issuing his commands, but Dundee replied that on this first occasion he must establish his character for courage, and he charged in the centre at the head of the cavalry. To the wild shout of the Highlanders, Mackay's troops replied with a cheer, but, partly from the peculiarity of their formation, it sounded broken and feeble. The strange and savage surroundings had probably also told on their imaginations: they were, moreover, in total ignorance as to the number of their opponents; and when in the gathering twilight the outlandish array advanced against them from the shadows of the hills their resolution had probably begun to give way before a blow was struck. Their fire was ineffectual, and the Highlanders, moving swiftly down the slopes, and retaining their fire till they almost reached level ground, poured in a single volley, and, throwing away their firelocks, rushed impetuously at the thin extended line with their claymores. The soldiers of Mackay had not time to fix their bayonets, and the great bulk of them broke and ran at the first charge. An English regiment showed a firm front, but it was impossible for Mackay to stay the general stampede. The stand of the Englishmen proved fatal to Dundee. He galloped towards his cavalry, and, waving his sword, signalled to them where to charge. Desultory firing was going on, and as he lifted his arm a ball struck him below the cuirass and inflicted a mortal wound. The cavalry swept past him, and the cloud of dust and smoke concealed his fall from the enemy and from the bulk of his own forces. As he was sliding down from the saddle he was caught by a soldier named Johnstone. "How goes the day?" said Dundee. "Well for King James," answered Johnstone, "but I am sorry for your lordship." "If it goes well for him it matters the less for me," said Dundee. It is uncertain whether Dundee died on the evening of the battle, July 17, 1689, or next morning. The Highlanders being engaged in plunder or in the pursuit, probably no officer or chief witnessed his death. The body was afterwards wrapped up in a pair of highland plaids, and, after being brought to the castle of Blair, was buried in the old parish church of Blair in the Athole vault. In 1889 a monument to his memory was erected in old Blair church by the Duke of Athole.—*Dictionary of National Biography*.

Truth (Lon., Eng.) supposes that a conversation was overheard by the policeman on duty in Parliament Square between the statues of the great statesmen there. The following is Lord Beaconsfield's reply:—

"I understand your envy, friends,
 But you don't seem to know,
 That 'tis to 'Humbag' as an art
 My present fame I owe.
 You used your talents and your skill
 That *England* great might be;
 Whilst I employed my faculties
 To raise *myself*, you see.

"With what result, the scene to-day
 Has shown to you most clearly,
 For I, as Peel remarked, have been
 With posies smothered nearly;
 Though, as a fact, I never liked
 The Primrose of the ballad,
 Save when—as I said in 'Lothair'—
 I ate it in a salad!"

HOW THEY FLOGGED MADAME SIHIDA.

OF all the atrocities which have been appealing to the indignation of civilized Europe in connection with the Russian treatment of political prisoners, none is worse than the flogging to death of Madame Sihida in the prison of Ust-Kara for a revolt against the indignities of penal discipline. A fuller account of this than has yet appeared is given by Adolphe Smith in the *Universal Review*, in an article entitled "By Administrative Order:—"

There is at present in Paris a lady who knew Madame Sihida personally, and who was for some time her companion in exile. From this lady I have ascertained a few supplementary details which only paint in darker colours the drama of the Ust-Kara prison-house. Madame Sihida was not more than twenty-seven years old at the time she was flogged to death. She was the daughter of a merchant, and completed her education at the gymnasium of her native town, Taganrog. When her examinations had all been successfully passed, she became a school-teacher, and exercised her profession in the same town. In appearance she was a brunette of medium size. Her features were of a very pronounced character, though her nose was of the genus "tip-tilted," but her large black eyes never failed to attract all whom she met by their intelligent and energetic expression. In her manners she was extremely quick and lively. Easily roused, easily agitated, her friends were wont to describe her as "a bundle of nerves." She dressed very simply, but with much neatness and good taste. Her general appearance did not belie her remarkable character. Even in Russia it would be difficult to find a more extreme idealist than Madame Sihida. She insisted on the most implicit fidelity to principle, and could tolerate no compromise; not even in the minute details of daily life. For these trifles she demanded the same

courageous consistency as in the most important moments of trial. If once a friend rendered himself culpable, in private life, of some little action, however trifling, which was not in harmony with his principles, he was at once lost in her estimation, and this in spite of a very great merit displayed in public life and in graver circumstances. Ust-Kara, where Madame Sihida was imprisoned, is the first of the villages which, taken together, constitute the gold-mining district of Kara. It is a large village boasting of three shops, and inhabited principally by Russians, who live either by agricultural pursuits or by trade. Here is the female political prison. It is a large square building, situate in the middle of fields, and therefore cannot be approached without attracting attention. As usual, the prison is surrounded by a high stockade, which forms a spacious yard. The rooms or cells are small, and they all give on to a passage. This passage is carefully closed and watched, but the doors are left open so that the prisoners are free to visit the various rooms, and make the most of each other's society. The atmosphere, or rather the small rooms, are very damp and unwholesome. The prisoners complain that there is no ambulance chest provided in this prison, though it exists in the ordinary convict gaols. The service also is not done by women but by gendarmes, which is of course very unpleasant for the female prisoners. It was in this damp prison, and in a climate where the temperature, in winter, falls sometimes to 48 deg. Réaumur below zero, and 42 deg. Réaumur of cold is quite usual, that Madame Soluzeff-Kovalsky was dragged from her bed in her night-dress, and made to walk down the passage to the officer's room. Here even her slender night-garment was torn from her, and convict's robes substituted, amid the jeers of brutal soldiers or gaolers. Three times the women organized a hunger strike to obtain the removal of Masukoff, the director of the prison, who had caused this outrage to be committed. The last of these strikes, it will be remembered by those who have read the account, lasted twenty-two days. The women were only kept alive by food mechanically forced upon them. Then at last Madame Sihida, that energetic "bundle of nerves," as her friends describe her, contrived to box Masukoff's ears; and, instead of being hung as she had hoped for this offence, she was flogged to death. The Russian Government boasts that it has abolished the *knout*, but it has established in its stead the *plot*, a sort of birch, which, according to the testimony of Russian officers, quoted by Mr. George Kennan, can be made to cause death in a hundred blows. It was precisely to a hundred blows that Madame Sihida was condemned, and this in spite of the protest of the prison doctor, who refused to be present. The execution, there is good reason to believe, was illegal, since, according to law, corporal punishment should only be administered after judgment pronounced by a tribunal, and after examination and approval by a medical man. Both these conditions were wanting in the present case. Nevertheless, and at the single command of the chief director of convict prisons in Eastern Siberia, Madame Sihida was flogged. This dreadful and degrading punishment is generally administered in a manner as simple as it is brutal. The victim is stripped and thrown down on a bench, some soldiers hold the arms, others hold or sit upon the legs, while the executioner flogs the naked back from the neck down to the hips. No wonder so sensitive, nervous, and highly-strung a woman as Madame Sihida died from the shock of such inhuman treatment. Nor is it surprising that all the political prisoners who had heard of this atrocious brutality joined together in such a protest as would impress even the Russian authorities. Madame Sihida's three prison companions, Mesdames Maria Kovalskaia, Smirnizki, and Kalnujy, poisoned themselves. The thirty male political prisoners at Lower Kara also, it is known, took poison, though only two died, the authorities being able to administer emetics in time to save the rest.

THE "ELEPHANT MAN."

THE *British Medical Journal* publishes an elaborate account of this unfortunate personage (who died recently in the London Hospital), with engravings from photographs. He was afflicted with two terrible deformities—overgrowth of certain bones, and a severe skin disease of a disfiguring nature. Two enormous bony outgrowths developed on his forehead, the bones of the upper jaw, right arm, and both feet were of great size. The skin disease consisted of wart-like masses, quite superficial on some parts, but forming large excrescences on the back of the head and loins. The skin formed large loose flaps on the right side of the chest and the lower part of the back. The eyelids, ears, left arm and other parts remained free from the skin disease. The high masses of bone on the forehead, with the prominent nose and lip, which hung downwards, owing to overgrowth of the skin, gave an elephantine appearance to the features. The head, during the past three or four years, grew so heavy, that at length the man had great difficulty in holding it up. He slept in a crouching position, with his hands clasped over his legs, and his head on his knees. There can be no doubt that the weight of the head killed him, as stated at the inquest. The poor fellow was grateful, intelligent, and interesting. The Princess of Wales and half the celebrities in London visited him. Ever since he entered the hospital the Princess forwarded to him yearly a Christmas card with an autograph message, whilst from time to time the Prince sent him game. Lady Dorothy Neville, Mrs. Kendal, Miss Lankester, and other ladies also showed him great kindness in a very practical manner.