

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

A GERMAN DEFENCE OF SIR MORELL MACKENZIE.

DR. KLEIST, an eminent German physician, has published a timely defence of Sir Morell Mackenzie from the recent attacks of some of his *confrères*. "Is it possible [he asks] to say why the English physician adhered so steadily to his diagnosis? Is it possible to comprehend all the influences of which the outside world as yet knows nothing? May it not be possible, nay, even probable, that Mackenzie may have recognized the true nature of the disease, but could expect no results, or only the worst results, from the operation, and for this reason gave his definite veto and protest against the diagnosis of cancer? Is it impossible that, having acquainted the illustrious family with all eventualities, and having given them a statement of the duration of life in both cases, they would not consent to the operation?"

THE WESTMINSTER HALL OF THE FUTURE.

If the special commission of the judges sit in the Great Hall of the Law Courts, a use will be found for a space hitherto practically wasted, a return will be made to an ancient practice, and the hall will receive its baptism in the forensic contest of great national issues which made Westminster Hall historic. Its Gothic architecture, inconvenient for the ordinary occasions of litigation, forms a not unfit framing for a State trial. On the windows the records of the great chancellors and judges who have administered English law in the past establish continuity with the administration of justice in the present. Although not succeeding in producing, to the extent of Westminster Hall, the idea of vastness, it sufficiently suggests and has capacity practically to carry out the requisite of publicity which has always been the essence of English justice. The judges and counsel are the guides and ministers of the law, but a State trial takes place before the whole nation.—*Law Journal*.

THE POPULATION OF ST. PETERSBURG.

ALL the capitals of Europe, save one, are increasing in population, and that one, our readers will be surprised to hear, is St. Petersburg. If Constantinople had shown a falling off, one would not have wondered, but it is difficult to realize that the Russian capital has in seven years been reduced from 929,000 to 842,000 souls. So difficult is the fact of realization, indeed, that the Russian authorities refuse to realize it, and arrangements of the most stringent kind are now being organized for taking another census of St. Petersburg in November. During the last numbering of the people many families stayed out all night to escape enumeration, so of the people a number of officials will be told off to deal with the people in December a number of officials will be told off to deal with the people found in the streets. The latter will be stopped and enumerated there and then; the chances being that a good many of the citizens of the Russian capital will get put down twice over. But the Czar is determined that his capital shall show a respectable increase in its numbers, and of course his wishes must be carried out.

DOES EXCITEMENT SHORTEN LIFE?

WHOEVER have studied man's earthly tenure and the causes which tend to lengthen or curtail it will have scarcely failed to notice how contradictory is the evidence of those we naturally look to to explain them, and that their evidence, even when they agree, does not always accord with what would seem to be the facts as they appear around us. One authority says general physical development is necessary to prolong life, while another insists this is not required if the day's employment does not call for physical exertion. Dr. D. B. Richardson, an eminent English authority, declares, among many obvious, though scarcely novel, propositions, that everything that quickens the action of the heart, any kind of excitement, taxes and reduces the storage of life. If this were said of those naturally feeble, or inheriting disease, or even of those leading sedentary lives, and living from day to day without the invigorating benefits of fresh air and exercise, it would seem reasonable, for one does not have to be a skilful physiologist to know that excitement affects the nerves as well as the heart. But is the statement strictly true when referring, as here, to the entire human family? Surely soldiers engaged in actual warfare and sailors in peace as well as war live among excitements, besides being notoriously addicted to indulgences as to drinking and smoking, yet are they long-lived. Statistics show it and observations corroborate them. The pension list of the British army, giving the ages of the beneficiaries, men who have served in all climates, from twenty to forty years, and excluding those pensioned sooner because of "wounds received while in the performance of duty," shows that soldiers do not die as other men do; so it is with the naval pensioners of the Greenwich Hospital, now scattered over Great Britain, because of its abolishment. In the merchant service to-day it is no uncommon thing to find a man seventy years old in charge of a vessel—a post requiring activity of body as well as of mind. From this it would appear that a sound human body can withstand hunger and exposure and even frequent excitement, if only there is plenty of fresh air and exercise of a vigorous kind thrown in.—*Scientific American*.

THE idealistic artist finds in nature that which the common eye fails to see there. He interprets as well as paints. He throws new lights on the landscape, and reveals to us an animating spirit where we had seen only wood and water. He is the poet of the brush, the true seer; and if his work is fragmentary, selecting the beautiful and rejecting the unpleasant, no one is likely to complain. We do not need his brush to tell us that toads exist.

OUR LIBRARY TABLE

A WAR-TIME WOOING. A story. By Captain Charles King, U.S.A. Illustrated. New York: Harper and Brothers.

This story, bright and entertaining though it is, scarcely deserves all the attractions which printer, binder and artist have lavished upon it. Any book that is worth reading is worth being put in an attractive form, and the publishers have certainly not in this instance done any injustice to the author. The story turns on an attachment formed through correspondence between a young lady, secretary of a "Soldiers' Aid Society," and an officer at the front. The lady's correspondent was not the person she supposed him to be, and many bewildering complications arose that caused infinite distress to a trustful girl, and excited suspicions about the loyalty of a brave officer which only the dying confession of the culprit entirely removed. The story, without any striking characteristics of plot or incident, is told, as we have said, in a bright and entertaining way, and the illustrations are exceptionally good.

THE POETICAL WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING. Volumes III. and IV. London: Smith, Elder and Company. London and New York: Macmillan and Company. Toronto: Williamson and Company. Pp. about 300. \$1.50 per volume.

These volumes of a complete edition of Browning's poetical works, to which we alluded some weeks ago, contain "Pippa Passes," "King Victor and King Charles," "The Return of the Druses," "A Soul's Tragedy," "A Blot in the 'Scutcheon,'" "Colombe's Birthday," and "Men and Women." The convenient size, the neat, unadorned binding, the fine paper and excellent typography of this edition should make it desirable, not only to the student who loves Browning's poetry, but to the man or woman who loves a well-made book. The frontispiece of Volume III. is an excellent steel engraving of the poet from a portrait made in 1835. It is a profile presentment of a young man with sharp, clear cut features, long nose, long upper lip, an eloquent eye, hair wavy, worn long as the fashion was fifty years ago—altogether a striking face—keen, but contemplative; poetical and meditative but indicating practical sagacity.

The Cosmopolitan again makes its appearance after some months of retreat. The August, the Midsummer Holiday, number has a table of contents that should be gratifying to more fastidious readers than the average holiday seeker. There is a marked improvement in the coloured illustrations, but we must confess our preference for black and white. Some of the pictures that are intended to embellish a good paper on "The Romance of Roses" are too suggestive of a seedsman's catalogue. And what eccentricity of taste had the editor or author to label the portraits in "The Ladies of the American Court," "Mrs. President Cleveland," "Mrs. Secretary Fairchild," "Mrs. General Logan," etc.? But when a republic establishes a court there must necessarily be titles of social distinction.

Macmillan's, for September, continues Bret Harte's serial "Cressy," and Walter Peter's "Gaston de Lalour." George Saintsbury, whose information is so extensive, and whose style is so detestable, contributes a paper on "Winthrop Mackworth Praed." "The Indian Native Press," by Stephen Wheeler, tells some facts of interest not generally known. "Pope, and the Poetry of the Eighteenth," by W. Minto, is an acceptable addition to the literature which the recent Pope commemoration has evoked.

LITERARY AND PERSONAL GOSSIP.

MR. SWINBURNE has sent to press a new volume of poems.

A REVISED edition of the *Ballads of Hans Breitmann*, with a number of new Anglo-German poems, will be issued shortly by Messrs. Trübner and Company.

THE *Home-Maker*, a monthly magazine, edited by Marion Harland, and published by the Home-Maker Company, will make its first appearance in New York, October 1st.

MR. H. SHORTHOUSE, author of *John Inglesant*, etc., has written a new novel, *The Countess Eve*, which will be published before the end of the year by Messrs. Macmillan.

THE publication of the *Life of Prince Gortschakoff*, of the *Eminent Women* series, is likely to be a little delayed, owing to *The Times* having sent its author, Mr. Dobson, on a tour to Central Asia. Mr. Dobson is the author of the interesting articles on the Trans-Caspian Railway, now appearing in *The Times*.

LORD BEACONSFIELD and Viscount Palmerston are the subjects of two new volumes in the *International Statesman* series, published by J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia. The former is written by T. E. Kebbel, author of "A History of Toryism," and the latter by Lloyd C. Sanders, the editor of the series.

Robert Elsmere it is said, has been excluded from the Ipswich, Eng., Library by the governing committee, on the ground that it is a dangerous book for honest Ipswichians to read. The last volume of the works of the late Prof. Green, who figures as "Mr. Grey" in that remarkable novel, is about ready. It will contain a memoir and a portrait.

THE London correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* writes: "I remember the poet Browning saying how helpful Carlyle was to him when he was a young man, and he has still a great admiration for the illustrious writer. The public will be pleased to learn that Mr. Browning has entrusted to Mr. Norton, for the purpose of publication, some letters that passed between Carlyle and himself more than fifty years ago. A portion of this correspondence, which is of great interest, will shortly appear in the second series of the *Letters of Thomas Carlyle* which cover the period from 1826 to 1835.

To an Englishman, who lately visited him, Mr. Whittier expressed his surprise that his guest should know so much of his poetry by heart. "I wonder," he said, "thou shouldst burden thy memory with all that rhyme. It is not well to have too much of it; better get rid of it as soon as possible. Why, I can't remember any of it. I once went to hear a wonderful orator, and he wound up his speech with a poetical quotation, and I clapped with all my might. Some one touched me on the shoulder, and said, 'Do you know who wrote that?' I said, 'No, I don't; but it's good.' It seems I had written it myself. The fault is, I have written far too much. I wish half of it was in the Red Sea."

Harper's Weekly gives the following, under the heading "Personal":—"A gentleman who has recently visited Wilkie Collins at his home in Wimpole Street, says that the novelist is looking old, and that his hard work has left its mark on him. He is thin and stoops very much, but his eyes, though near-sighted are bright and sparkling. Mr. Collins is a hard worker, and when busy with a novel usually works night and day until it is finished. It is quite common for him to work fifteen hours at a stretch, eating scarcely anything, and drinking only a little champagne during that time. He gets very much excited over his stories, and walks about the room reciting the speeches of his characters in a most dramatic manner."