

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

A DIALOGUE.

Lui.

Oh, have you found the Fount of youth,
Or have you faced the Fire of Kôr?
Or whence the form, the eyes, the mouth,
The voice, the grace we praised of yore?
Ah, lightly must the years have sped,
The long, the labour-laden years,
That cast no snows upon your head,
Nor dim your eyes with any tears!
And gently must the heart have beat,
That, after many days, can send
So soft, so kind a blush to greet
The advent of so old a friend.

Elle.

Another tale doth it repeat,
My mirror; and it tells me true!
But Time, the thief of all things sweet,
Has failed to steal one grace from you.
One touch of youth he cannot steal,
One trait there is he leaves you yet;
The boyish loyalty, the leal
Absurd, impossible regret!
These are the magic: these restore
A phantom of the April prime,
Show you the face you liked of yore,
And give me back the thefts of Time!

—Andrew Lang, in *August Scribner*.

THE DECAY OF DELICACY.

THE difference between the truly modest young woman of the preceding generation and the conventional young woman of to-day is pointed out with many illustrations, some of them of a most striking nature, by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps in the *Forum* for August. A study of modern society has convinced her that we have suffered a great loss of delicacy; and that in society delicacy is strength. This change, which the building of great fortunes has brought into our social life, she traces through all our thought and activity; finding that there is a lack of delicacy in our art, and in our literature, and throughout the whole range of American activity. The article is an arraignment of the indelicate tendencies of society, by a woman. Especial emphasis is laid upon the evil of *décolleté* dress.

DOES ANYBODY LIVE A HUNDRED YEARS?

It will be remembered that Sir George Cornewall Lewis undertook to prove that nobody had ever lived to be a hundred years old. He contended that the reputed centenarians were persons whose history was obscure and whose births could not be verified. No one, he maintained, who had lived before the public was included in the number. Now, on the other hand, an English physician, Dr. George M. Humphrey, brings forward the results of an extensive and rigorous investigation, which has shown that the attainment of centenarianism is by no means impracticable, not less than seventy-four persons being enumerated who have unquestionably reached or exceeded the age of a hundred years. Nothing, for instance, could be better authenticated than the longevity of the famous French savant, Chevreul, who was more than a hundred and two years old when he died last year. In 1875, Sir Duncan Gibb recorded the case of a great-aunt of a Mr. Williams, who had sat at the head of her own table for a hundred Christmas days, having been married at the age of fifteen. We observe that Dr. Humphrey puts faith in the extraordinary age ascribed to Thomas Parr (one hundred and fifty-two years) on the ground that William Harvey, who performed the post-mortem examination, would have taken pains to ascertain the truth had he had cause to suspect that an imposition had been practised. In the case, too, of John Bayles, said to have been one hundred and thirty years old when he died in 1706, there is extant a medical description, with details, that satisfied the observers of the correctness of the reputed age. Outside of England there have been trustworthy examples of centenarianism not mentioned by Dr. Humphrey. When we bear in mind the fact that the bishops of the Greek Church are even more careful to register births than are the English parochial clergy, we must accept, as deserving of credence, the statement made to Sir Henry Halford, by Baron Brunow, the Russian Ambassador to the Court of St. James, that there is, on the borders of Siberia, a district where a year seldom passes in the course of which some person does not die at the age of one hundred and thirty. Then, again, from official accounts of deaths in the Russian Empire in 1839, it appears that there were 858 persons whose ages ranged from 100 to 105; 130 ranging from 115 to 120; and three from 150 to 156. At Dantzic, one was said to have lived to one hundred and eighty-four, and, in the next year, 1840, another died in Wallachia at the last mentioned age. In ancient times, also, there are official records of centenarianism, whose accuracy is not easy to impeach. Thus, when Vespasian made his census in A.D. 74, there were found to be, in the Roman Empire, fifty-nine persons who were just a century old; 114 who were from 100 to 110 years of age; two from 110 to 125; four from 125 to 130; three from 135 to 140. Among the distinguished persons whose age there would be abundant means of verifying, may be mentioned Fabius Maxi-

mus, who died a centenarian; Terentia, the wife of Cicero, who, according to some, lived to be one hundred and three, according to others one hundred and twelve; Claudia, the wife of the Senator Aurelius, who died at one hundred and fifteen. It is, also, to be noted that on the tenth anniversary of the taking of the Bastille, Bonaparte, then first consul, received two invalid soldiers, one of one hundred and six, the other of one hundred and seven years; and that, in 1822, Pietro Huel, who was then one hundred and seventeen years old, and the only Frenchman living who had seen Louis XIV., assisted at the inauguration of the statue of the Grand Monarch.—*New York Ledger*.

MODERN LITERARY CHANCES.

THE aspirant for literary honours with pecuniary remuneration should remember that the most famous names in the literary guild earned their money for the most part in other than literary ways. Bryant was an editor and publisher. Longfellow and Holmes and Lowell were Harvard professors. Emerson and Bayard Taylor were lecturers, and Taylor was also a *Tribune* editor. Curtis and Stoddard depend upon editorial salaries; Stedman is a broker, and Halleck was John Jacob Astor's private secretary. And one might go further with this list. Whittier began as an editor, and only in middle life attempted to lean upon literature alone for a support, which his early savings and simple habits made possible. It was always Longfellow's advice to young men who wished to be literary to have first, and mainly, a vocation independent of the finer muse. If a young writer thinks he possesses genius he may, of course, experiment with it; but it will serve his purse and peace of mind better to secure some source of labour and income that is more philistine and worldly, and ride his Pegasus only at inspired intervals. For it is a fact, in spite of the occasional big figures that are given as the results of literary work, pure and simple, that the men who prosper or have prospered by that alone, are only, at any one time, a few dozen in number among our sixty-five millions of people.—*Ladies' Home Journal*.

GUILIELMUS REX.

THE folk who lived in Shakespeare's day
And saw that gentle figure pass
By London Bridge—his frequent way—
They little knew what man he was!

The pointed beard, the courteous mien,
The equal port to high and low,
All this they saw or might have seen—
But not the light behind the brow!

The doublet's modest gray or brown,
The slender sword-hilt's plain device,
What sign had these for prince or clown?
Few turned, or none, to scan him twice.

Yet 'twas the king of England's kings!
The rest with all their pomps and trains
Are mouldered, half-remembered things—
'Tis he alone that lives and reigns!

—Thomas Bailey Aldrich, in *The Century* for August.

THE WHALEMAN ABROAD.

A BETTER illustration of their (the whalemen's) proud spirit cannot be given than the encounter in Halifax between Greene, the mate of a Nantucket vessel, and the Duke of Clarence, admiral of the British fleet, and afterwards William IV. The dispute arose over the duke's attentions to a girl, and reached its climax in the Nantucket mate's seizing the future king of England and hurling him downstairs. An eye-witness of the affair was wont in after years to add as a decorative detail that the click of the duke's sword-hilt was heard on every stair. Greene at once went aboard his ship and refused to obey a summons from the admiral, who, it afterwards transpired, had intended to make the plucky Nantucket man an officer in the English navy. All the strategic resources of a quick, ready mind were often called into play during a whaleman's career, not only in weathering storms and in avoiding destruction of boats and loss of life when attacking whales, but also in escaping massacre from savage islanders and in outwitting pirates. In 1819 the whale-ship *Syren*, while on a voyage to the eastward of Cape Horn, met with an adventure which would have proved fatal to all hands but for a quick stratagem of the mate. One fine day, off one of the Pelew Islands, all the boats being after whales, and but a few men left aboard the vessel, a large band of armed natives suddenly swarmed over the bulwarks. The crew fled to the rigging, leaving the naked, howling savages in full command of the ship. The mate, on coming alongside, took in the situation at a glance, and quickly ordered the men to open the arm-chests and scatter on deck all the tacks they could find. In a moment it fairly rained tacks upon the naked savages. The deck was soon covered with these little nails. They pierced the feet of the islanders, who danced about with pain which increased with every step they took, until, with yells of rage and agony, they tumbled headlong into the sea and swam ashore. Unfortunately in the struggle the mate received an arrow-wound just over one of his eyes, and was obliged to retire from the sea.—*Gustav Kobbé*, in *the Century* for August.

THE BEST OF OUT-DOOR SPORTS.

THERE is a certain tendency in the civilization of our time to underestimate or overlook the need of the virile, masterful qualities of the heart and mind which have built up and alone can maintain and defend this very civilization, and which generally go hard in hand with good health and the capacity to get the utmost possible use out of the body. There is no better way of counteracting this tendency than by encouraging bodily exercise, and especially the sports which develop such qualities as courage, resolution, and endurance. The best of all sports for this purpose are those which follow the Macedonian rather than the Greek model: big-game hunting, mountaineering, the chase with horse and hound, and wilderness life with all its keen, hardy pleasures. The hunter and mountaineer lead healthier lives and in time of need they would make better soldiers than the trained athlete. Nor need these pleasures be confined to the rich. The trouble with our small men of means is quite as often that they do not know how to enjoy pleasures lying right at their doors as that they cannot afford them. From New York to Minneapolis, from Boston to San Francisco, there is no large city from which it is impossible to reach a tract of perfectly wild, wooded or mountainous land within forty-eight hours; and any two young men who can get a month's holiday in August or September cannot use it to better advantage than by tramping on foot, pack on back, over such a tract. Let them go alone; a season or two will teach them much woodcraft, and will enormously increase their stock of health, hardihood, and self-reliance. If one carries a light rifle or fowling-piece, and the other a fishing-rod, they will soon learn to help fill out their own bill of fare. Of course they must expect to find the life pretty hard, and filled with disappointments at first; but the cost will be very trifling, and if they have courage, their reward is sure to come.—*Theodore Roosevelt*, in *North American Review*.

RUDYARD KIPLING.

THE name of Rudyard Kipling has stolen across the Atlantic from London. At the tender age of 24 this latest of successful story writers is basking at this moment in the warmest light of social and critical favour, and I should judge that he stands in a good way to have his head turned, and thus be robbed of his literary originality and power of application. This latest pet of the drawing-rooms has commanded the attention of London by revealing through a series of short stories an entirely strange and fascinating life, a life "cavaliere to the general." What Bret Harte did for the pioneer days of California, Kipling is doing for the British linesmen in India. The methods of the two authors are not unlike. Given a social life that is entirely esoteric, so far as ordinary mankind is concerned, and into which life the soul of the writer has so deeply entered that it has practically become his life, and add to this a rare touch for scenic work; the natural setting, so to speak, of the human integer, together with a deep sympathy for humanity, and you get a Luck of Roaring Camp, or such character sketches as those of Mr. Kipling. Naturally such sketches centre around certain type characters, and a parallel might readily be drawn between "Jack Hamlyn," the sentimental gambler, and Private "Mulvane," whose soldierly reputation, skill in arms and steadfast courage when called upon overweigh, in the minds of his discriminating officers, his occasional lapses caused by strong drink and general cussedness. So with the minor characters, such as Private Orthoris in Mr. Kipling's character list. Each one of them is distinctive, clean cut and human. None of them is all bad, none of them unpleasantly virtuous, but all are fellows who are easily and naturally deduced from their environment. An Indian by birth, though not by blood, a trained journalist and evidently the closest sort of a close observer, Mr. Kipling knows "Tommy Atkins" all through, for as a newspaper correspondent he has campaigned with him, seen him fight in the field and chaff and quarrel in the barracks, heard his remarks about men, women and things around the camp-fire; generally, as I said, he knows him all through, both good and bad, and rather loves him. Mr. Kipling also knows his India; broad plains, great rivers, mighty forests; it's brazen sky and its cloud-splitting mountains, for lo! it is his real native land; and his people he knows as a man only knows the people among whom he was born. Mr. Kipling has evidently "come"; let us hope that he will "stay," and for the present no better advice can be given than whenever you see anything signed by his odd patronymic, read that same. You might be much worse employed.—*N. Y. Press*.

No woman ever hates a man for being in love with her; but many a woman hates a man for being a friend to her.—*Pope*.

ANOTHER African exploring party is about to set out, its purpose being to explore the upper waters of the Congo River. The Congo Commercial Company will pay the expense of the undertaking, sending out seven Europeans under the leadership of M. Alexandre Delcommune, who has spent seventeen years on the river. Nearly all the Europeans are "soldiers of fortune," and they will have with them 150 native soldiers. Their main object is to penetrate the country of Urûa, on the west of Tanganyika, which has just been touched by other explorers, who have reported it to be extremely fertile, salubrious, and rich in minerals.—*Philadelphia Ledger*.