

perfectly gratuitous system of mystification, commend us to the currency of Nova Scotia. Who invented it? What is the use of it? In dealing with it, "things are not what they seem." Everything is what it isn't, and isn't what it is. You look at a sixpence, a coin you know to be equivalent to six pennies, and you are told that it is seven pence half-penny. Rather surprised, but not unwilling to turn an honest penny and a half, you attempt to change it for these seven pennies and a half; but what do you hear? Why that they are all a myth, exist only in name, and that you can only get six for it after all. And those bank notes, that horrible imposition a 20s. note, no more worth twenty shillings than it is worth fifty pounds. Why should Nova Scotia indulge in ideal shillings and pennies? Isn't it though highly romantic, that the pound, the shilling, even the penny, that we worship, is not a reality, but a mystical abstraction? This is deifying filthy lucre with a vengeance. It has however its objections. Paying or receiving money in Nova Scotia notes is a serious matter, and not to be entered upon lightly; there are those deceptive 20s. notes, and those five dollar ones, to which the former ought to be, but are not equal in value; and a similar haze of doubt surrounds the five pound and twenty dollar notes. The difficulty is slightly augmented by the decayed state of the majority of the notes, rendering it a matter of time to make out their nominal value, or indeed at the first glance to tell with certainty, whether we have one note, two, or half a one, in our hand. Is it not possible to keep the market supplied with new notes? It would be a loss to the banks certainly, as every note that resolves itself into impalpable powder in our pockets, is so much clear gain to them. But they don't want these chance gains, and it is very aggravating to the public to see its money crumbling to dust before its eyes. We got a note, greatly to our disgust, the other day, that looked more like an autumn leaf in bad circumstances, than anything else, and a close inspection and measurement elicited the curious fact, that of the original note exactly 1.59 square inches remained, a sufficient bulk for commercial purposes being obtained, by pasting it on to odd pieces of black, white, and brown paper. While in our possession, we need hardly remark, this note dissipated itself into ethereal essence.

While the great majority of mankind find it impossible to keep two ideas in their heads at once, it seems a refinement of cruelty to insist upon having any number of names for the same thing. But what have we? Take for instance, the sum of twelve-pence English, we call it a quarter, a shilling, or fifteen-pence indifferently. Half a crown answers to the detestable name of *three shillings and a penny halfpenny*. Sixpence is either seven-pence halfpenny or a York shilling. Isn't this enough to bewilder any one! Phantasmagoria of quarters and fifteen-pences, York shillings and red shillings, five dollar pieces, sovereigns and the ghosts of 20s notes, dance in endless variety through our brain. We light upon an odd piece of arithmetic in the fact that two cents are equal to one penny, while it takes twelve and a half to make sixpence. It is of course the bounden duty of shop-keepers to assist the public by placing simple and easy prices, nice round sums in fact, upon their articles. Thus if anything costs them seven-pence, they are perfectly right in charging a shilling. The diminished wear and tear upon our calculating faculties amply compensates for the increased cost. But what is gained in point of simplicity, or in point of anything else, except a large profit to the vendor, when things are priced at seven-pence halfpenny, or, confusion worse confounded, at three shillings and a penny halfpenny? On hearing such sums, we are at once weighed down by a vague sense of impending misfortune, some monstrous aerobatic feat of arithmetic has to be accomplished, and we feel anything but equal to the occasion. The only conspicuous advantage of this system, and if it foster extravagance it would be a great one, consists in its feeling experienced in paying a bill. We then find the figures placed at the bottom of a possibly long column generally represent the amount to be paid, don't anything of the kind, but a certain stage in a calculating out which we obtain a diminished sum, and the real pull on our purses; we don't see principle in the plan, but the enjoyment is. There are, by-the-by, various ways of it, nearly every one has his own, and their

peculiar charm is that they but seldom come out alike. The best plan to our mind is to reduce the figures at the star to dollars, and after having converted these first into francs and then into kreutzers, multiply by 40, or 400 if you prefer it, and divide by 50 or 500 as the case may be; find out how much this is in Napoleons, and then bring it into pounds, shillings, and pence, English sterling; you will now have something like the real sum required, provided you have made no bad mistakes in arithmetic. Many prefer to verify their calculation by going through it in some other way, but this is productive of dissatisfaction and confusion, as the chances are fifty to one, that they come out totally different.

Extracts.

LADIES' LETTERS.

Sympathy is unquestionably a feminine attribute. He is singular, and to be pitied, who cannot answer for this from his personal experience, and it had need be an especial requisite in the matter of letter-writing, because women's letters are necessarily longer than men's. Where they amuse or delight us, it is by their closer insight—by the life the order, the accuracy they see in little things—by narrative which exacts minute detail. All this demands time and space. Every woman who writes well writes at length; not always, indeed, for she adopts her style to her subject, but she is never studiously terse. She allows pen to flow; she says what she has to say in her own way. Now, it requires a fine perception to know to whom you can be long and even diffuse without being tedious, and this perception sympathy alone can give. Women think it worth while to tell smaller things than men; and it is worth while, because they see further into them, and discover character and intention in actions which to men are purely accidental. There are women of such finely microscopic minds that the narrowest sphere and the most seemingly uneventful life furnish to them a field for interest and observation by which we are large gainers at second-hand. Most letters are certainly the better for something positive in the way of events or subject, nor is it wise to exercise too continuously the power of making much out of what to others is nothing, or it results actually in much ado about nothing; but certainly some of the best ladies' letters we have known have been written under circumstances where others would have found nothing whatever to say.

We see, then, that in one point women have a natural advantage in the art of letter-writing; they may write of things, and often the most obvious things, that men may not. Their natural subjects are of a more domestic character than men's can be, and even social or public matters are all treated from a private and personal point of view. We like this, though we could not, and indeed ought not to, imitate it. A man ought never so far to forget his citizenship as to fall habitually into the exclusively domestic vein. He ought to convey a consciousness of something beyond home life, or he will strike us as either selfish or trivial; and this necessarily checks a good deal of detail which would be very pleasant from some pens, but not from his. Glancing over the letters which have won for women their high acknowledged reputation in the department of manuscript literature, they owe so much of their attractiveness to gossip, to their warm interest in the smaller commerce of life to felicitous trifling, that what we began by calling one point we might end by calling the main point of their superiority where they are superior. Nor is this at all detracting from the merit of this accomplishment. A good piece of gossip told with playful malice, or with warm effusive trusting sentiment, is quite one of the pleasantest gifts the poet can bring. Our spirits are the better for it; it is society at second-hand without the trouble; it is the study of human nature made easy. Another advantage possessed by women is that they can flatter with a good conscience. The same review of great authorities shows this. All thoroughly satisfactory letters from the feminine pen have a touch of flattery in them, or what would be flattery but that partial knowledge, blind feeling, and affection make it genuine. Madame de Sevigne is always flattering her daughter. The ladies of the last century—the Mrs. Carters and Miss Tallots—extol one another in nearly turned sentences. Miss Burney lays herself at the feet of her correspondents.

We look for the most delicate, gracious criticism from our clever and more gifted female friends. They have the art of seeing the best, and can praise with a large, ungrudging expansiveness. We do not expect this from our masculine critics, from whom we should hardly know how to take it; but it is pleasant nevertheless, and constitutes another feature of sympathy which we have recognised in ladies of graceful fluent pen. The great test of excellence in this art is, of course, how a letter is received—what effect it produces before the seal is broken. We cannot guess what it may be about; the writer may live in scenes remote from our knowledge and personal interests; but we know, on sight of her handwriting, that she will either find some means of bringing us into close connexion with her concerns, or that she will throw herself with warmth and intelligence into ours.

The age of letter-writing begins earlier and lasts longer with women than with men. It is amazing what good letters girls sometimes write. They have a style peculiar to themselves, in which everything is a sort of quaint sham and pretence—the experience, the wisdom, the sentiment, the humour. All is an imitation of something else—a tone that is caught from somewhere an echo of society, but put together with a sweet audacity, an innocent swagger of the knowledge of the world and of the heart, and an unctuous precocity, that are often perfectly engaging. We know nothing more cheerful than one of these effusions inspired by hope and bright prospects, redolent of spring, and insolent with the spirit of youth and virgin liberty. Our ideas of life gain a temporary glow under the influence. We would particularly entreat young ladies possessing this delightful gift to keep it for their friends, and not to