

Gossip.

FIRST WORDS.

THIS column has been handed over to me, by the high and mighty and imperious autocrat "We," who sways his despotic sceptre over these pages, as my own peculiar little corner, into which, after getting hold of the reader's button, I can gently pull him, and inflict on him any piece of news which I shall think interesting to him, and favor him with my private opinions on as many subjects as I can crush into the brief space allotted to me, or until his button or his patience gives way, which, of course, as the discerning critic can at once see, will altogether depend upon the excellent manner in which his button has been sewed on, or the amiable temper with which a benign providence has endowed him. I have headed it gossip, out of the love I bear for the dear old gossips of all time, from Plutarch down to the latest writers of biography and autobiography, whose charming books have beguiled many an hour from idleness, or wickedness, or weariness, or depression, or sadness, and invested it with interest, and filled it with pleasure, and brimmed the cup with joy which had else been empty or running over with doctor's draughts. Amongst my gossips I number all those writers who have told more truth than was agreeable to their cotemporaries, or than some weak stomachs even now can relish, who would rather tell us too much than too little, and who have no reticences with their readers, but blurt out everything they know, or hear, or imagine, in a frank reckless, confidential way, which has its resistless charm for every son of Adam, and dear, delightful, inquisitive daughter of Eve, of mind inquiring and of knowledge keen. Plutarch is of them, and pious place-hunting Pepys, who took bribes, and gave God thanks, and was altogether quite a respectable "party," although he does tell more truths in his diary than any gentleman in good society would think it prudent to ventilate in the midst of his fellow sinners. Evelyn is of them too,—Evelyn who said "I cannot bend to mean submissions;" and Grammont, the witty and wicked; and "the little quaint postmaster who came in General Braddock's carriage to pay a visit to Madam Warrington at Castlewood, among the 'Virginians,'" and who wrote a new gospel for America in "Poor Richard's Almanack;" and Madame Sevigne, whose letters all the world enchants; and Rousseau the eloquent; and boosy Boswell who was not eloquent, but who managed to write a book that everybody reads, and likes, and reads again and again, and never tires of reading; and Chateaubriand, the Byron of Christianity, whom Bulwer Lytton calls "a *he* Corinne, or a *she* De Stael," who turns from the truth at times to turn a sentence, and tells the story so that it will not tell against himself; and Madame D'Arblay, who would be read more if she had told us more, and had not been subject to fits of "proprieties," and puzzled her respectable head about what it was proper to tell and what it was improper to tell; and Holcroft who wrote good plays and led a better life; and Charles Reece Pemberton, whose "Pel Verjuice" papers—fresh as nature, and interesting as Robinson Crusoe—were the delight of magazine readers twenty years ago, who made his mark as poet, playwright, actor and lecturer, and died at last as peacefully as he had lived bravely. Here is a goodly talbeit incomplete array of godfathers and godmothers for my literary offspring. I cannot hope to gossip as wisely and acceptably as these world-renowned gossips. Mine must not only be inferior in order of power, but also inferior in interest, from the narrowed range of subjects permitted to me, and the manner of handling them, for what in the book or the letter would be but a choleric word, would be rank blasphemy in the newspaper

gossip. Still may I not hope to amuse sometimes, and sometimes, it may be, to instruct, and always to be a not-unwelcome guest with the reader, whose interest in me and my gossippings will form my best title to the absolute possession of my column in the eyes of the inscrutable, impersonal, impalpable, mysterious power, who utters his mandates in the first person plural, like a king by right divine, and makes devils tremble and obey them.*

PRESS ASSOCIATION.

There is to be a convention of impalpable Canadian "We's" in a few days. Would it not be a good idea to photograph them in a body, and present them to an admiring universe in the pages of the *Canadian Illustrated News*? Fire brigades, methodist conferences, presbyterian synods, ticket agents' conventions, parliaments, and "the staff" of railways are photographed. Why not the mighty "We's"? Are they not as great a power in the country as any other power? and will not every newspaper reader in the province be eager to see the portraits of the men who daily scatter the news broadcast over the land, and whose ready pens tell us every morning what everybody is doing everywhere, and what we ought to believe about everything until their next issue? Our "We," on account of the youthfulness of his paper, may not perhaps be considered to have attained to years of discretion, and, it is barely possible, may modestly decline to present himself amongst his royal brothers, but whether he appears in person or by proxy, or not at all, he will not object I know to my wishing them a merry meeting and a wise one—All hail to the powers of the press!

"Beneath the rule of men entirely great,
The pen is mightier than the sword."

"PHILIP."

In the *Cornhill* for August, and in *Harper's Magazine* for September, Thackeray gives us the concluding chapters of his "Philip." In every page we are reminded, but not unpleasantly, of himself. It is the old text—"Vanity of Vanities;" the preacher is the same stout, presentable English gentleman, with a flower in his button hole, and he preaches quite as good if not a better sermon than of yore.

The showman and the puppets have not escaped the touches of time, but it is the same showman, and they are the same puppets we saw long ago in "Vanity fair," and they perform, as of old, and the curtain rises and falls as of old, and the showman stands by and explains as of old, and when it is all over, and the curtain has fallen, and the puppets have disappeared from our view, he bids us good bye as characteristically as of old:—"What? The night is falling: we have talked enough over our wine, and it is time to go home? Good-night, good-night, friends, old and young! The night will fall; the story must end, and the best of friends must part."

Charlotte Bronte, who dedicated "Jane Eyre" to him, and who delighted to do him honor, places him in the front rank of English novelists, and in the first place, and undoubtedly he is our greatest. He never exaggerates, and is never false to the human nature he knows. How genial, human, manly, and tender he can be! how terribly satirical he is at times, and what shivering sneers he sometimes vents: how far above all cant and affectation, and weak sentimentality he is; with what unsparing hand he dissects the moral ulcers of our boasted civilization and refinement; and with what vigorous and truthful pen he describes us as we are, and not as we ought to be.

There is a terrible directness, a photographic truthfulness in his pages, that we find in no other humorist. His characters are so real, I seem to remember them as old acquaintances, and always think of them as of people I have met.

I like to think of Becky Sharp returning to the halls of her ancestors, of that gallant gentleman Colonel Esmond, and Lady Castlewood, and Frank Castlewood, and Beatrice, the ambitious, the beautiful, the fascinating, with those brilliant eyes which were spells irresistible,—Beatrice, whom Frank called "Trix," and, who, after filling the pages of "Esmond" with her tantalizing beauty, re-appears in the "Virginians" as the wicked, selfish, cruel, mocking, unbelieving Baroness Bernstien. How I liked Clive Newcome, and lovely Ethel Newcome, who was only the brilliant Beatrice of "Esmond," under better influences, refined into goodness, and how I hated and utterly detested that wicked old "Countess Kew," the perfect picture of a bad old woman of the fashionable world. But when she came to die and was buried, and Thackeray makes his resistless appeal for forgiveness even for her I melted, relented, and finally forgave her from my heart, and was rather sorry for the bitter hatred I had entertained towards her. And good Colonel Newcome—dear old Tom Newcome, who would not like him? His death was like the death of an old friend, and is the saddest of these remembrances. Gallant, simple, guileless, generous in the day of his prosperity, always blameless, pure and unselfish, how worthy he was of all love and reverence, yet he passes away at last poor, helpless, neglected, maligned, but resignedly, and at peace with himself. Why did Thackeray, make him die so? Because he is the manliest and one of the wisest of writers, and knows that in real life good men do die so, and that the best do not always succeed the best, but that, as Solomon has it "one event happeneth to them all," and that virtue is not its own reward in the sense of worldly prosperity, but in the sense of intellectual satisfaction, and in the possession of a conscience, which, knowing no guile, rests in perfect peace. Our boisterous, frank, loud speaking friend Philip, and his charming little "Char" and the little sister with her great wrong her noble life, her habitual neglect and misuse of her h's and of nothing else, are surely worthy company for those old friends, for whom, and for these new ones, let us be thankful to our great teacher, whose lessons as severe as experience, are equally as valuable. Thackeray is not "cold" either, as the critical Werters of our day would persuade us. He is a fine old English gentleman who does not like to be telling us in every sentence that his great heart is full of love for all humanity, but who cannot prevent discerning hearers and readers from catching in some stray look, or tone, or incidental expression, or sentence dropped in careless haste, a hint of the wealth of love and sympathy there is in him—love and sympathy more priceless than all wisdom, if indeed these are not the highest wisdom. He sees clearly through the shows of things, to the thing itself, and distinctly discerns that "a lie cannot live forever," and that it leads at best a miserable existence, waiting its hour to be extinguished. That the quack cannot conceal himself, and cannot pass off upon us his pretence for conviction, is patent to Thackeray. Thus in his "Virginians" he introduces a drunken, betting, card-playing, dog-fighting, horse-racing parson, who preaches very good sermons which are of none effect, because—so at least I think it is our author's intention we should infer—he is not in earnest, does not translate his precepts into his life, and is a performer who plays for hire, and not an exemplar. But, with only the intimation to fellow lovers of the great novelist that the Harpers have just published his "Philip," in a handsome volume, with the original English Illustrations, I must stop talking about him for the present.

"ROMOLA."

I suppose every-body who has read "Adam Bede," or "The Mill on the Floss," or "Silas Marner" is reading this new story, by the same authoress, which the Harpers are reprinting in their

monthly magazine. It is a story, the scene of which is laid in sunny Italy, in "Florence the fair," in the days of the magnificent Medici. Some of these readers may care to read what Ernest Charles Jones, once a popular Chartist, leader, now a successful member of the English bar, has written about

ITALY.

Away and away, to Italy!
With its crested ripples sparkling;
And its watery furrows darkling;
And its white sail like a swallow
Darting over the hollow;
And its sun intensely bright;
And its sea intensely blue;
And its crowd of lazy nations,
With nothing on earth to do;
And its old cyclopean ruins,—
Dust of empires dead,—
Foot prints of the giants,
In which the pigmies tread;
And its white domed cities lying
With the faintest veil of haze,
Like a dream of boyhood visioned
By the light of later days.
And its olive-leaf scarce trembling—
And its sky so pure and still;
Not a frown from earth to zenith,
Save one small cloud on the hill.
The olive leaf scarce trembling
The cloud so small and fair;
Just enough to say—the spirit
Of a storm is watching there!
'Thro' the forest's leafy masses
You might see how the current ran.
As a thought in whispers passes
'Thro' the myriad tribes of man;
And the cloud, like Jupiter's eagle
Looking down on his old Rome,
Perched waiting on his mountain
'Till the thunder day shall come.

And about

FLORENCE.

At Florence in the dark ages,
When Florence alone was bright,
(She has left on her marble pages
Her testament of light.)

At Florence in the dark ages,
When Florence alone was free,
(She rose, in the pride of her sages,
Like the sun on a troubled sea.)

While yet as an ark she drifted
On the Earth's barbarian flood,
And the wreck of the Arts uplifted
From the deluge of human blood;

Where many a feat of glory
And deed of worth were done,
From the links of her broken story
I've saved to the world this one.

And thereupon the poet godson of his late Hanoverian Majesty "tells a story." Well, it is this Italy and this Florence that Miss Evans is to delineate for us in "Romola," and I expect she will tell us a different tale about it. What story tells not to say, as Byron fiercely said, what liars the poets are. The "marble pages," of which this one sings were stained with blood, were they not? and the freedom was the privilege of the few not the inheritance of the many, and the "arts uplifted" were, I am afraid, lifted up out of the reach of common clay mortals. But poets gloss over these trifles so finely. For instance, who does not remember the fine lines of Mrs Hemans on the landing of the pilgrim fathers, who she says

—"left unstained what there they found,
Freedom to worship God."

And who does not know that they do no such thing. That they found the freedom indeed is true, but it is equally true that they made it "skedaddle" faster than any Grand Army that ever "made tracks." I know that my faced friend the deacon will object to this, but I know also, my good friend, that if we had enjoyed the blessed privilege of existing in their day, and under their paternal government, we should have ended our illustrious career at the stake. But my gossip is fast becoming serious not to say hot, and must cease for the reason, if even space, the supreme arbiters of articles, and much else, did not forbid further speech. We agree that all poets are more or less liars, and that all novelists are not like this one, who will tell us a good many truths about olden Italy which may possibly enable us to understand better the wondrous modern Italy of our own day—the Italy of Mazzini and Garibaldi.

EUGENE.