

THE FLANEUR.

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

NEW BOOKS.

MISTAKES.

BY

A

An old bachelor is very likely to fall into one of two extremes. He often becomes a Buck, and is effusively polite to the ladies, nodding roguishly at them till you fear his preternaturally black wig will fall off, grinning with his false teeth and pursing up his old rouged and wrinkled cheeks till you laugh in your sleeve at him. You laugh to see him rambling along with his poor feet in tight patent leathers, while they long for the easy slipper, and you know that he wears stays and pads, and has his shoulders "built up." Poor old soul, he fights hard with Time, but he wins few victories. Despite his dyed moustache, you instinctively know that he is an old man, and while he is paying *petits soins* to you, my little belle of eighteen, you are assured the man might be your grandfather. Be polite to him. Treat his servility kindly, my dear. Overlook his follies, and try to remember that the gray hairs which you would indeed respect are hid under that black wig; that after all he is an old man in multi, and he thinks his disguise pleases you, *ma petite*. It is useless, we know, you and I, my charming middle-aged friend, Mrs. Murlington, we know it is useless to contend with the inevitable. Stronger than paint and padding Time sets his stamp. We cannot deny his brand. The other class of bachelors are apt to turn philosophers—pseudo-philosophers, perhaps. They are a trifle cynical. They look around at life and draw sage deductions. They filter the extravagance of youth through the sieve of their experience and give you wise saws. But young men and maidens are apt to despise this gratuitous wisdom and wait till the hard lesson is taught them by their own struggle through life.

I hear the pleasant laugh of my vivacious little Rosabel as she exclaims, "Ah, ha, Monsieur, I know to which class you belong, you dear old Cynic!" Well, perhaps you do, Rosie. While I respect the ladies, while I honour the sex to which my mother belonged, I am not effusive. I like their society—in moderation, just as we like piquant sauces and sweetmeats, occasionally as a relish, but not as our entire food. They are apt to be, perhaps, a trifle monotonous as a wife, when we are forced to see them at all times; to have them by our sides, merry or sad; to have no escape! I think I should, like St. Paul, cry out in forcible language for deliverance from this body—but we'll not discuss that question. I am past the time of marrying and giving in marriage. I know, Rosie, that while the Captain has his arm around your waist—there is no need for your hanging out the *drapeau rouge*, dear; men will do it—and while your head rests upon his shoulder, you will laugh merrily at the old man. God knows I would not stop you, Cynic though you call me. I am not so wedded to Cynicism but that I know I have made mistakes in my life. This may be a mistake. I would not hold one little dear back from the temple of Hymen. I would not put one obstacle in the way, but I have no inclination to travel in that direction myself.

What kind of mistakes have I made? Some curious ones, some sad in their nature. Do you remember the little paper I wrote about small white hands? That was a mistake. I calculated that the owner of those delicate hands should have been *petite*, but instead she was coarse. I recollect that business used to bring me down one quiet street every day for a long time, at a regular hour. There was one house looked more quiet than the rest. It had an atmosphere of repose around it. In the parlour window there was always the face of a girl. She was very pale. Her yellow hair was simply looped back with a blue ribbon, and her eyes had a sorrowful expression. I set her down as a romantic young creature, one much given to yellow-covered literature. I said to myself more than once: here is a young lady waiting at the lattice, wondering why tarry the wheels of the chariot that is to bring Prince Prettiman to her arms. A helpless, love-sick thing, a mixture of morbid rapture and sickly sentiment. Yet what was the fact? I learned it months afterwards. This girl was the only daughter of a widow mother who had been bed-ridden for years. Paleface sat up with her at night, and nursed and tended her with loving care, and who will deny her a few minutes' relief, a little gazing into the streets, to contrast with the monotony of that room? I made a mistake.

I used to meet a gentleman with a very red nose and a face blossoming into pimples. I have chuckled and poked sly jokes at companions as we passed by, and calculated the cost of colouring that face. I judged *à tort*. The honest gentleman laboured under a scorbutic affection, and so far from being a drunkard, was a member of the Good Templars, and a Worthy Grand or a High Old Patriarch, or something of that kind, in the order.

The other night at a concert I saw a young lady inclining considerably to *embonpoint*, and with her dress very *décolletée*. She threw off her opera shawl, and there was a good deal of beauty to be seen that charming maids are not often prodigal of, even to the chaste moon. She drew off her gloves and flashed her diamond fingers as she boldly used her lorgnette. She tossed her head of *échevelée* hair a good deal about, and the laughter that rippled from her lips could be heard several seats off. *Ma petite*, this girl had a suspicion of rouge on her cheeks, and the pencil had done much for her eyebrows. She looked a little fast, and I, in my old-bachelor way, made some comments to a young companion that were not altogether complimentary to the lady. We had our little jokes at her expense, when a highly respectable old gentleman intimated to us in a whisper that perhaps we were not aware that the young lady was a daughter of the Rev. Mr. Hardgun. *Crede Byron*, daughter of a Methodist clergyman! Shade of Wesley, what a disciple! Surely, *messieurs et mesdames*, this was a mistake! I think in this instance she was to blame. If our virtuous young girls take the Aspasia of the city as their models and dress like them, it is not to be wondered at that an old fogie makes an occasional mistake.

I made one mistake in the Long Ago that I can never forget, that at times I think colours all my life, that flashes out little arrows of pain and rays of darkness, if I may use the expression. I thought Lydia was true-hearted, honest, sincere. I trusted her with my heart, I built up castles, and she and I swept down the stately corridors—but I made a mistake. She was cold and selfish. When the *experimentum crucis* came, this Lydia, with my heart in her hand, proved herself a sorry *mesquine*! Let it pass, we are apt to make mistakes. I have made mine. Ladies and gentlemen, which of you can escape a similar confession?

HER FACE WAS HER FORTUNE. A Novel. By F. W. Robinson. Paper. pp. 159. Price, 50 cents. New York: Harper & Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

Notwithstanding its many good points—and they are not few—we cannot venture to predict for Mr. Robinson's new novel the same success as was obtained by its predecessors. It is undoubtedly a book of great merit, ingeniously devised and constructed, the situations are striking, at times perhaps too melodramatic, the characters are well conceived, but there is a something wanting that mars the general effect. There is no lack of mystery, and no lack of love-making, much playing at cross-purposes between wavering lovers, touches of intense pathos—so many commendatory features for the mass of novel buyers—yet the story somehow, to use a vulgarism, hangs fire. In the early part it promises to be interesting; the middle portion is provocative of much "skipping," and it is only towards the end that the reader becomes thoroughly interested. Without intending a *double entendre* we may fairly say that the end is the best part, and it is only on reaching the end that the reader will be able to appreciate the book. A second perusal would doubtless bring it out in a better light. But who thinks of reading a novel twice?

SOUTH SEA IDYLLS. By Charles Warren Stoddard. Cloth. 16mo Red Edges. pp. 354. Boston: Osgood & Co. Montreal: E. F. Grafton.

This charming little book forms another of the delicate volumes of the "Saunterings" series. The Idylls are a series of sketches, which have already appeared in the pages of the *Atlantic* and the *Overland Monthly*, of life in Tahiti and Otaheite—sketches which we have no doubt the readers of these two magazines will remember, for their raciness and dreaminess and above all the revelation of a new life of which they gave us a faint and passing glimpse. Mr. Stoddard should have been a Lotos Eater. His *far niente* is delicious. He is never so happy as when he is lying on his back doing nothing and giving his whole mind to it. He is a child of the Harold Skimpole kind, but infinitely more amusing and less objectionable. Of course, from a philosopher of this class we do not expect the whole truth. He is by far too amiable to depict the dark side of human nature, so he shows us the Kanaka as bright and as loveable as his own beloved climate. As might be expected there is an amount of sameness in some of the sketches, but this is relieved by the writer's quaint humour, of the true Pacific School. In his threefold character of author, poet and artist, he gives some wonderful descriptions of scenery, and creates within his reader's breast an intense longing to quit the bleak climate of the North and revel in the soft perfumed air, and among the rich fruits and gorgeous flowers of these Isles of the Blessed. The sketches—sixteen in number—embody the writer's experiences on several visits to the islands, where he was, except on one sad occasion, hail-fellow well-met with his darling Kanakas, for whose style, or absence, of civilization he professes, and undoubtedly feels a decided preference to the trammels of ceremony, the business, the rush and noise of life in more advanced worlds. It is needless to say that he is a cynic. Yet his cynicism is so harmless, so pleasant, that it is more an attraction than otherwise. The book is one which will be taken up with pleasure, laid down with regret, and resumed with renewed expectation and a fresh sense of its beauties.

NOVA SCOTIA, in its Historical, Mercantile and Industrial Relations. By Duncan Campbell, Halifax, N. S. Printed and published by John Lovell, Montreal.

Modern History opens with a glorious discovery, that of America. This discovery was made by Columbus on the twelfth day of October, 1492. Prior to this time the science of Geography could not be said to have existed; all was confusion as to the shape and configuration of the earth. This discovery led Henry VII. of England, in the hope of rivalling Spain in the field of naval adventure, to grant a patent to Sebastian Cabot by which he was empowered to prepare an expedition for the discovery of new lands. To Cabot belongs the honour of discovering Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. In the volume now under notice the author has traced the historical, mercantile and industrial progress of Nova Scotia from the time of its discovery, when it was exclusively inhabited by the Micmacs, a race of the Algonquin North American Indians, down to the death of the late Hon. Joseph Howe. In so doing he has availed himself of the labours of two historical predecessors, Thomas C. Haliburton and Beamish Murdoch, both natives of Nova Scotia, and he is indebted to the unpublished records of the Province belonging to the Local Parliament, and numerous unpublished prize essays on the Province deposited in King's College, Windsor, N. S. Whatever may have been the labours of Haliburton and Murdoch they merely supplied the materials for the picture, rather than exhibited the picture itself—or, they were as the groups, or main features of the composition, wanting that *keeping* and *expression* which arise entirely from the effect of colour. The pencil of Campbell has supplied their deficiency and has given to the people of Nova Scotia a picture of their country which will not only be pleasant to their eyes, but to the eyes of all British subjects in North America. The author has displayed a great amount of research; his work is at once luminous and compressed, and we are not sure whether young people can commence their acquaintance with the history of Nova Scotia by the aid of a better guide. The author's *colouring* of some of the political characters which have figured in Nova Scotian history will necessarily be seen with different eyes by Conservatives and Grits, yet it must be fairly acknowledged that the cause of historical truth is in all respects promoted by cautious investigation and dispassionate remarks. In addition to the history proper there are chapters especially devoted to the coal fields, iron ores, and the fisheries, which will be found exceedingly useful to those actively engaged in commerce, and may be recommended for their accuracy. The volume is interspersed with a number of short biographies of the various Governors of the Province and of some of the leading statesmen; these, though interesting by themselves, mar to a certain extent the continuity of the historical narrative, making what the author intended as ornamental accessories to his pictures to be nothing more than groupings out of place. Nevertheless he has done a good service in a field of literature which as yet on this continent has not been well cultivated. A good sterling, impartial, and faithful history of the Provinces of Quebec and Ontario is yet to be written and would prove of inestimable value, and we trust there will soon arise among us some Hume or Smollet, Turner or Lingard, whose efforts will be crowned with success.

A gentleman had five geese and five ducks prepared for a select party of ten. I asked him the meaning of this division. "Why," said he, with a knowing smile, "a goose for every woman and a duck for every man! 'Tis a picture of life."

This is something like the hen that laid the golden egg. A gentleman in Quebec went to market the other day, and bought two couples of chicken, at fifty cents a couple. On returning home, he gave them in to be dressed. The cook found inside one of them, a coloured stone which she handed to her master. The stone was shown to a jeweller, who pronounced it an agate, worth one dollar and fifty cents. Better than nothing.

Speaking of agates reminds me of a queer derivation for the word. It was originally a charm which led the traveller safely on his way. The *fidus Achates* of Æneas was not a man, but this stone. Hence the name.

The best thing the Danbury man ever said. Some one having expressed surprise that he was not on the list of lecturers for the American Bureau. "O," replied Bailey, resignedly, "I don't lecture myself. I'm married."

A good story about Brignoli whose well-known gallantry was for once well repaid by a woman.

It was a few weeks ago, at the Grand Opera, Paris. Brignoli was playing Manrico to the Leonora of Mlle Krauss. In the tower-scene, the silver noted tenor had sung "Ah! che la morte," in his best manner, the hidden chorus of nuns had chanted "Miserere," and Leonora, crouching along the wall, in her weeds, had given forth "All' orrida torre." There was a thunder of applause and multitudinous bouquets were showered on the scene. Mlle Krauss, desirous that her troubadour should share the ovation with her, went deliberately to the foot of the tower, opened the door, called down her burly companion, and led him by the hand to the footlights. Much merriment ensued at the *disillusion*, and peals of renewed applause followed. Then Brignoli returned to his aerial station, was locked in, and intoned in grand style, the second strophe of the number, "Sconto col sangue mio."

I'll warrant that the fair soprano got a kiss that night from the handsome tenor.

It is announced that Fechter is going to appear again in "Hamlet," this winter. His rendering of this character is very original, and, as such, has provoked much discussion. Several of his readings are certainly remarkable. Thus when Horatio, as the ghost appears on the platform of the castle of Elsinore, exclaims:

"I'll cross it, though it blast me."

Fechter insists that he must not step athwart the line of the King's advance, as most actors do, but make the sign of the cross. His argument is that Denmark was Catholic, in the time of Hamlet, and, as is well known, the sign of the cross was then regarded as a talisman against spiritual and demoniacal ills. I confess I like this reading, because it is pretty odd and fanciful. But perhaps some Shakespearian critics might adduce a good reason why it should not be accepted.

A Kingston telegram gravely informs us that both parties were surprised at the triumphant election of Mr. Cartwright. So they were, but how differently!

What hypocrites pretty girls are!

Matilda was sitting at her window, one balmy evening, last September, and looking out for Mortimer. But Mortimer did not come. Perhaps he was amusing himself with another girl. So Matilda got disgusted, drummed on the casement with her soft fingers, declared she was disgusted with this world, and suddenly inspired with religion, looked up to the sky and sang:

I wish I were an angel,
In the bosom of God, in the bosom of God,
With the light of his face for my only evangel,
Up and away from this desolate sod,
Ah me! eternally.

She had scarcely finished this ecstatic strain, when she felt her waist encircled by a pair of manly arms. She heaved a sigh, rolled up her eyes, and let her head fall back languidly on Mortimer's breast. Oh! what an angel.

The beauty of the human form lies in its proportion. A small woman must have a small foot, but it is ridiculous for a fair-sized, well-developed female to squeeze her foot into a tight boot, in order to make it little. In her case, a good-sized foot is beautiful. Goethe's Marguerite had a large foot, and so had the lovely Countess Guiccioli.

I saw a queer picture the other day.

Scene on board ship. A fearful tempest raging. Rain, lightning, darkness in the background. In the foreground two beetling rocks against which the wreck was driving. One boat lowered. Four men on its benches holding on to a cable, down which a female passenger was to slide. The female a perfect beauty. She stood on the edge of the deck, surrounded by the officers, and prepared to descend. One minute more and it would be too late. Just then she takes out a handkerchief, gathers her dress about her ankles and ties it tight, so that its folds may not flutter indiscreetly, as she goes down the rope.

There were three or four of us looking at the picture. We all admired its workmanship.

But what of the woman?

"She is an angel of modesty," said one.

"A prude," said another.

"She ought to be pitched head-foremost into the sea, as fit food for the whales," was my rancorous criticism.

What say you, true women?

A spoony friend made a desperate attempt yesterday.

As we were going along, we met a bevy of school girls—pretty big girls they were—who were throwing snow at each other. The most ardent in the game was a lovely blonde, a Nilsson blonde, as white as her ermine tippet.

"I declare," said Spoony, "here is a snow ball shooting in December!"

ALNAVIVA.