

Literature and Science.

THE FUTURE IS BETTER THAN THE PAST.

NOR where long-passed ages sleep,
Seek we Eden's golden trees ;
In the future folded up
Are its mystic harmonies.

All before us lies the way,
Give the past unto the wind ;
All before us is the day,
Night and darkness are behind.

Eden, with its angels hold,
Love and flowers and coolest sea,
Is not ancient story told
But a glowing prophecy.

—E. J. C.

THE NEWSPAPER OF TO-DAY.

NEWSPAPERS, the philosopher declares, are already the scourge of the human race. People get fascinated by newspapers ; they can read nothing but newspapers ; no printed book not full of the latest news, the latest gossip, the latest comment on the latest gossip has a chance of attention.

Each *daily* brings its petty dust
Our soon-choked souls to fill,

Mr. Arnold might have said with perfect truth. But the dust may be more or less grimy, may fly in bigger or smaller particles, may have a few grains of gold in it, or may merely be rich in the germs of every kind of pestilence. An American journalist who defends his native press in the January number of *Time* (probably his native press will not thank him) suggests to us that England has still something to be grateful for. Our daily dust might be still more infinitely impalpable, more rich in germs, more all-pervading, more grimy, than it actually is. The American dust, according to the American pressman, whom we do not accept as an authority, is as finely powdered and, to our mind, it is as disagreeable, as any dust in the world. At home we have only the infinitely little, the speeches of infinitesimal members of Parliament, the "disclaimers" of advertising notorieties, the details about actresses' raiment, the interviews with fast women and fasting men. In America matters yet more minute occupy the press. The pressmen regard their paper "as the University man regards the 'Alma Mater,' or as the British sailor regards the Union Jack. And how does this devotion declare itself? Why the children of this Alma Mater, the brood of *Acta Diurna*, "are unscrupulous, ravenous detectives in their search for all that may interest the public." In England a newspaper-man may still be a man-of-letters, and need not be a reporter. A reporter may still be an honest person of sense and

discretion, not "an unscrupulous, ravening detective." But, according to American ideas, "all persons connected with the literary portion of a newspaper are reporters." We sincerely trust and believe that this statement of the anonymous journalist does not represent American ideas correctly. In America, as in England or France, there must be hundreds of writers in newspapers who would no more make copy out of facts that come to their private knowledge, than they would defraud their laundresses. But the recent affair of Mr. Lowell and Mr. Hawthorne shows what this theory that all journalists are reporters might lead to if it were really held by all concerned.

"To satisfy the craving for speed is the object of the journalist's ambition," says the writer in *Time*. What an ambition! It is not wit, not wisdom, not humour, not clear thought and balanced ideas, that the journalist is ambitious of supplying. "To satisfy the craving for speed" suffices him. And what becomes of style in the hurly-burly? Nay, what becomes of grammar? The American journalist unconsciously answers the question. Here is an example of his grammar when he is writing with all the leisure of a monthly magazine:—"It is in this cause that the immense number of newspapers in the United States must be accounted for." Even elementary education is not, apparently, indispensable. Here is another example:—"The employment of words capable of misconstruction, of phrases liable to be misconstrued, of involved sentences, are stringently tabooed." Apparently the employment of phrases that cannot be construed at all "are not tabooed."

If these things be "tabooed" what things are desired? Why "a talk with three physicians who were attending the late General Grant." A little conversation on cancer of the tongue is a charming "item." "The daily happenings," "the smallest occurrences of everyday life"—these are printed to please a truly idiotic taste. The colour of the President's wife's gloves, and every harmless usual incident of her private life (if the word "private" still has a meaning), these things are snapped up and proclaimed on the house-top by "unscrupulous, ravening detectives."

It can hardly surely be thought that the American public at large likes this kind of thing, but the newspaper-men think so, and supply it. In England we only want this sort of garbage now and then, and not every day, and only when it is not only personal but unspeakably offensive. Moreover, the newspaper detectives here are still a small set of gutter-haunters ; it cannot even be pretended that it is necessary for all men who write to be "ravening detectives." —*The Saturday Review.*

WORDS IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

By actual enumeration of the words contained in the best dictionaries, it has been ascertained that 13,330 English words are of Saxon origin and 29,354 of classical origin. In consequence of the popular nature of the Teutonic words in the language, the Saxon element largely preponderates in the works of our greatest writers. The pronouns, numerals, propositions, and auxiliary verbs, the names of the elements and their changes, of the seasons, the heavenly bodies, the divisions of time, the features of natural scenery, the organs of the body, the modes of bodily action and posture, the commonest animals, the words used in earliest childhood, the ordinary terms of traffic, the constituent words in proverbs, the designation of kindred, the simpler emotions of the mind, terms of pleasantry, satire, contempt, indignation, invective, and anger are for the most part of Saxon origin. Words indicating a more advanced civilization and complex feelings, and most of the terms employed in art, science, mental and moral philosophy, are of classical origin. The English language, which is now spoken by nearly one hundred millions of the earth's inhabitants, is in its vocabulary one of the most heterogeneous that ever existed. There is, perhaps, no language so full of words, evidently derived from the most distant sources, as English. Every country of the globe seems to have brought some of its verbal manufactures to the intellectual market of England:—Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Celtic, Saxon, Danish, French, Spanish, Italian, German—nay, even Hindustani, Malay, and Chinese words are mixed together in the English dictionary.—*Ex.*

IN Germany, the microphone is now used for tracing leaks in water-pipes, the slightest trickling of the water being made distinctly audible when the apparatus is brought near it.

THE ultra-violet or heat rays of the spectrum, invisible to human eyes, appear to be plainly perceptible to the eyes of ants, according to the investigations of Dr. Forel, the distinguished Swiss entomologist.

A MEMBER of the London Astronomical Society has pointed out that the common assumption that a fragment of meteor dust no larger than a mustard seed may give the brilliancy of a first magnitude star, is erroneous. To give that brightness at a distance of 100 miles—about that at which meteors are usually seen—would require an electric lamp of 10,000 candle power. It is therefore probable that the smallest visible meteors have a surface equal to the incandescent portion of a 100-candle power electric arc, if not much greater.