

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

FOR REMEMBRANCE.

It would be sweet to think when we are old
Of all the pleasant days that came to pass;
That here we took the berries from the grass,
There charmed the bees with pans, and smoke unrolled,
And spread the melon nets when nights were cold,
Or pulled the blood-root in the underbrush,
And marked the singing of the tawny thrush,
While all the west was broken burning gold.

And so I bind with rhymes these memories,
As girls press pansies in the poet's leaves
And find them afterward with sweet surprise;
Or treasure petals mingled with perfume,
Loosing them in the days when April grieves;
A subtle summer in the rainy room.

—Duncan Campbell Scott, in *September Scribner*.

THE VICTORIA FALLS.

WHEN we come to the Victoria Falls on the Zambesi we arrive at one of the most remarkable sights which any river in the world has to show. The broad Zambesi, flowing nearly due south and 1,900 yards wide, is cleft by a chasm—a crack in its bed—running athwart its course. The whole river plunges precipitously down this chasm to a depth of about 360 feet, or, counting the depth of the water, say 400 feet. The entire volume of water rolls clear over quite unbroken; but after a descent of 400 feet the glassy cascade becomes a seething, bubbling, boiling froth, from which spring upwards high into the air immense columns of steam-like spray. On the extreme edge, on the very lip of the chasm, there are four or five raised lumps of rock which have become islands densely covered with trees. To a certain extent they break the uniform descent of the whole breadth of the river. Beginning on the south bank, there is first a fall of thirty-six yards in breadth, and, of course, uniform in depth of descent to the rest of the river. Then Boaruka, a small island, intervenes, and there is only a thin veil of water descending over the rock in front of it. Next comes a great fall with a breadth of 573 yards; a projecting rock separates this from a second great fall of 325 yards broad; farther east stands Garden Island; then comes a good deal of the bare rock of the river-bed uncovered by a descent of water, and beyond that a score of narrow falls, which at the time of flood constitute one enormous cascade of nearly half a mile in breadth. Those falls, however, which are between the islands are the finest, and there is little apparent difference in their volume at any period of the year. Their vast body of water, separating into spurts of comet-like form, encloses in its descent a large volume of air, which, forced into the cleft to an unknown depth, rebounds, and rushes up in a mass of vapour, and forms three to six columns of steam or smoke-like appearance, visible twenty miles distant. On attaining a height of 200 or 300 feet above the islands, this vapour becomes condensed into a perpetual shower of fine rain, which produces and sustains the most exuberant vegetation on the islands and on the neighbouring shores. As might be imagined, the most beautiful rainbows of more than semicircular extent play over the face of the Falls. After the Zambesi has descended into this gulf, which is nearly twice the depth of Niagara, its wonder does not cease. Garden Island, almost in the centre of the Falls, divides the cascade into two main branches at the bottom of the gulf, which flow round a vapour-hidden mass of rock, and reuniting in a boiling whirlpool, find an outlet nearly at right angles to the fissure of the Falls. This outlet is nearer to the eastern end of the chasm than to its western extremity, and is no more than thirty yards wide. Within these narrow limits the Zambesi, which was over a mile wide when it plunged down the Falls, rushes and surges south through this extremely narrow channel for 130 yards, then abruptly turns and enters a second chasm somewhat deeper and nearly parallel with the first. Abandoning the bottom of the eastern half of this second chasm to the growth of the large trees, it turns sharply off to the west, and forms a promontory of over 1,000 yards long by 400 yards broad at the base. After reaching this base the river runs abruptly round the head of another promontory, and flows away to the east in a third chasm; then glides round the third promontory, much narrower than the rest, and away back to the west in a fourth chasm; and after that it rounds still another promontory, and bends once more in another chasm towards the east, after which the extraordinary zigzags of this gigantic yet narrow trough become softened down into a wider, less abysmal gulf, which broadens and straightens as the river flows eastward in an easier descent.—*From Livingstone and the Exploration of Central Africa*. By H. H. Johnston, C.B., F.R.G.S., F.Z.S., etc.

THE INFLUENCE OF WEATHER ON DISEASE.

WE may regard it as certain that an apparent connection between infectious diseases and atmospheric conditions had suggested itself to the medical mind long before Sydenham attributed to the atmosphere an "epidemic constitution." Others have since his day expressed themselves in somewhat similar language. Among these we may mention Dr. Ballard. Many of our readers will remember how he has associated an increase in the amount of prevalent illness with a rise of atmospheric temperature and with variations in humidity, rainfall, direction of

wind, etc. That there does exist in many cases an apparent connection of the kind referred to it would be idle to dispute. That this connection, if it really exists, is merely indirect, we may also claim to be true, at all events in the class of infectious diseases. The influence of weather in such cases would be measured by its effect in providing an environment suitable to germ development. Thus moist weather, whether bleak or warm, would be found conducive to the spread of contagia, and so it is. This fact has often been attested by the extension of cholera, diarrhoea and the exanthemata. A warm and dry day, on the contrary, tends to check morbid action of an infectious kind. This fact is susceptible of more than one explanation. We may, on the one hand, regard it as a consequence of the absence of that germ-fostering condition—humidity; on the other, we cannot fail to be reminded that dry warmth and sunshine give the signal for an exodus from many crowded homes, for their freer ventilation, and consequently for diminution in the intensity of contagia. The exact value of weather changes in regard to this class of diseases, however, still is and must for some time remain *sub judice*. As for the ailments more usually associated with these changes—those, for example, more commonly known as inflammatory—the connection is here much more evident, and also in all likelihood more direct. The association of pneumonia, bronchitis, asthma and rheumatism with bleak and wet weather is too invariable to permit of our doubting its reality apart from any suggestion of septic agency.—*Lancet*.

RINGS AND WEDDING RINGS.

LOVE and wedding rings are, we hope, intimately associated; yet Colley Cibber exclaims: "Oh, how many torments lie in the small circle of a wedding ring!" Do you know why this gold circlet is placed on the left hand? Opinions differ. On the one side it is affirmed that a vein proceeding from the heart to that finger is the cause; on the other, that it denotes that the wife is subject to her husband. Napoleon I., when he married his second Empress, whispered in M. Pradt's ear: "The Roman law ordains that all slaves should wear rings, and as the women are our slaves, they ought to wear this badge of servitude." The Little Corporal and the Great Emperor was not given to weighing his words as far as politeness was concerned. It is more grateful to women to know that men in a thousand graceful ways have demonstrated the tenderness of their passion by "the giving and receiving of a ring." Herriek sings:—

And as this round
Is nowhere found
To flay or else to sever,
So let our love
As endless prove
And pure as gold forever.

It was more the fashion in old days than now to engrave a verse within the ring. Many such have been handed down to us; for example:—

Thus may our lives be one perpetual round,
Nor care nor sorrow ever shall be found.

Other mottoes, or posies, as they were called—such as "Let likings last"; "United hearts death only parts"; "Let us share in joy and care"; "As God decreed, so we agreed"; and "Love and live happily"—characterized wedding and betrothal rings alike. The following were chiefly confined to marriage rings: "A virtuous wife preserveth life"; "By God alone we too are one"; "Christ for me hath chosen thee"; "Hearts united live contented"; "God's blessing be on thee and me"; "God did foresee we should agree." Lady Cathcart, who, as the Scotchman once said, was "unco' wastefu' o' husbands," on her fourth wedding ring had inscribed: "If I survive I will have five." Whether she had the opportunity of carrying out her threat history sayeth not. William III. was hardly the kind of man to display any sentimental weakness openly, and yet when he died a gold ring was found tied to his left arm by a ribbon—the ring containing the Queen's hair. During their courtship he had presented the Princess Mary with one in the form of a gold strap and buckle, set with diamonds and the posy: "I will win and wear thee if I can." Love has ever proved superior to sorrow—indeed, grief strengthens affection—and a certain Baron Rosen sent to Siberia and deprived of all his personal trinkets, refused to relinquish his wedding ring, declaring that if it went his finger should go with it, and his wishes were respected. Dr. Johnson preserved his wife's wedding ring, with this inscription: "Eheu! Eliza Johnson, nupta, Jul. 9, 1736; mortua, eheu! March 17, 1752."—*Cassell's Family Magazine for October*.

AULD ROBIN GRAY.

A SONG altogether of Fife origin and authorship marks the commencement of the period of modern ballads. It will be acknowledged that "Auld Robin Gray" has few superiors, either amongst its predecessors or successors, though to call it the "King of Scottish Ballads," as Chambers does, is to raise it to a dangerous eminence, which it would not be prudent even for the most patriotic native of the "kingdom" to claim for it. For our present purpose it is more to the point to observe its modern character and sentiment. This cannot be better shown than by an extract from the letter Lady Anne Barnard wrote in 1823 to the author of "Waverley," who had referred in the "Pirate" to "Jeannie Gray, the village heroine in Lady Anne Lindsay's beautiful ballad": "Robin Gray," Lady Anne, then an old lady, writes, "so called from its being the name of the old herdsman

at Balcarres, was born soon after the close of the year 1771. My sister Margaret had married, and accompanied her husband to London. I was melancholy, and endeavoured to amuse myself by attempting a few poetical trifles. There was an ancient Scotch melody of which I was passionately fond. Sophy Johnstone used to sing it to us at Balcarres; I longed to hear old Sophy's air to different words, and to give to its plaintive tone some little history of virtuous distress in humble life, which might suit it. While attempting this in my closet, I called to my little sister, now Lady Hardwicke: 'I have been writing a ballad, my dear. I am oppressing my heroine with many misfortunes. I have already sent her Jamie to sea and broken her father's arm, and made her mother fall sick, and given her Auld Robin Gray for a lover; but I wish to load her with a fifth sorrow in the four lines, poor thing! Help me to one, I pray.' 'Steal the cow, sister Anne,' said the little Elizabeth. The cow was immediately lifted by me, and the song completed. At our fireside, amongst our neighbours, 'Auld Robin Gray' was always called for. I was pleased with the approbation it met with." To which Sir Walter Scott answered: "I wish to heaven I could obtain an equally authentic copy of 'Hardyknute,' and then I think old Fife might cock her crest in honour of her two poetesses."—*Blackwood's*.

FIJIAN HOUSES.

THE ordinary Fijian house looks, outside, like a great oblong hay-stack, standing on a mound raised some few feet above the surrounding level, with a long ridge-pole extending beyond the roof at either gable, its ends sometimes ornamented with shells. The hay-stack has a doorway or two, with a mat suspended in it. Houses with greater pretensions, however, have the walls prettily latticed with reeds, and distinct from the roof, which is elaborately thatched, with great projecting eaves. Inside, immense posts, usually of *vesi*-wood (*Azela bijuga*), and a very ingenious framework, support the roof. The interior decorations of sinnet (coconut fibre), always in rectilinear patterns—for they do not affect curves—are sometimes pretty. The black, squared lintels of the door are the stems of tree-ferns. On a great shelf overhead is stored the family *lau*, a convenient Fijian word equivalent to the Italian *roba*. Here it comprises their fishing-gear, huge rolls of *tappa* or native cloth, mats, immense pottery vessels, and the like. The shelves were also handy in war-time as a point of vantage whence you could conveniently spear your neighbour as he entered, and before his eyes became used to the subdued light. The floor is strewn with mats, on which you recline, and is usually raised a foot or so toward one end, which enables you to take a graceful attitude, leaning on your elbow. Cooking is done in a little hut outside, or sometimes there is a great fireplace on the floor, confined by four logs, the smoke finding its way out through the lofty roof. As you enter the house, you find the mats being swept, or fresh ones unrolled and laid down. Your traps are brought up from the boat, and if this happens to have grounded half a mile from the shore, you have perhaps yourself been carried to land by these willing giants. A few words are exchanged with the village chief or your host for the time being—far too few, to my mind, even for politeness. I am told they do not expect it.—*Popular Science Monthly*.

LADY DUFFERIN tells some interesting anecdotes about the Baboo English of the Hindoos. One man, during an examination, was told to write an essay upon the horse, which he did in the following brief terms: "The horse is a very noble animal, but when irritated he ceases to do so." Another had to write upon the difference between riches and poverty, and he ended by saying: "In short, the rich man welters in crimson velvet, while the poor man snorts on flint."—*Canadian American*.

PINE, ROSE, & FLEUR DE LIS.

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