

AUTHORS AND THEIR WORKS

The leading place in the Nineteenth century for this month is accorded, it goes without saying, to the essay by Lord Roberts on "The Army, As It Was and As It Is." It is followed by an article from Prince Kropotkin upon "The Constitutional Agitation in Russia," which is timely in view of the abortive efforts of the Zemstvos and the new impetus which seems to have been given to political action amongst the middle classes. What the Zemstvos are, of what personal elements they are composed, and by what influences they are inspired and controlled—these questions which spontaneously rise to the lips of the inquiring onlooker will be found answered in a broad sense and with much point in Prince Kropotkin's account of the situation. Whether autocracy will yield in time to the demands of the national awakening is what none can foretell, but the writer is quite emphatic in holding that the present movement is one of permanent and growing strength, as he is insistent in stigmatising the czar himself as the great obstacle to progress. "All these last ten years there has been no lack of forces which endeavored to induce the ruler of Russia to adopt a better policy; and all thru these years he himself, so weak for good, found the force to resist them. At the decisive moment he always had enough energy to throw in the weight of his own personal will." As regards this important question of individuality it would appear that the writer of the famous "Quarterly" indictment does not stand altogether alone. A dissertation of Mr. Keir Hardie, M.P., upon the unemployed is a pathetic illustration of how the faithful Cobdenite is compelled to beat the air upon this subject. Mr. Hardie wants to find "some new source of permanent and remunerative employment for at least one million workers who are at present overcrowding the labor market." In the course of his pursuit of this laudable object, he remarks that we imported last year firewood to the value of £2,000,000, and that "but for the almost criminal neglect of our opportunities, every stick of this might have been grown within our own shores." But surely the writer forgets his economic textbooks. Do not "imports and exports balance each other," and did not every log of foreign fir lead to the employment of British labor in exchange for it? That is certainly the orthodox consolation, and we gather from a sneer at protection that Mr. Hardie is orthodox. But beyond the radius of the armchair these maxims seem to lose their hold, and Mr. Hardie must have lapsed terribly, if temporarily, from grace at the time he was thinking of those intrusive firs.

That everything and everybody is in a sad way is no new story from Mr. Frederic Harrison, also in the present "Fortnightly Review." His pessimism exceeds even its own records of extremity. "Thoughts on the Present Discontents" is hardly an appropriate title, for the article contains conspicuously little thought, but only a great deal of commonplace political animus. As an exhibition of a disappointed Radical "in a tear," however, it is quite good enough to be amusing. Other bright reading will be found in an excellent account of "Eton under a Hornby," which is replete with good anecdotes, and in Mr. Edward Dicey's "Recollections of Sir Arthur Sullivan," while literary interest is well represented by Mr. Gribble's appreciation of Sainte-Beuve and Mr. Ernest Rhys's review of the collected "Swinburne." On the political side, the most considerable feature of the current number is a comparison of "The British and German Fleets," along with a study of the respective national policies behind them; while the contributions of Mr. Karl Blind on "The Awakening of Russia," and Mr. Emil Reich on "Psychological versus Armchair Historians," are both well worthy of notice.

Sir Robert Giffen, in the Contemporary, makes a telling protest against the dimensions of our public expenditure, imperial and local. He denounces a particular evil of existing conditions in the excessive strain of rates and taxes upon real property, which should be relieved by a readjustment of direct and indirect taxation; and he objects to the subventions given from the exchequer to local authorities as an encouragement to wasteful outlays. In Mr. Dillon's commentary on the relations of England, Russia and Japan the despatch of the Black Sea Fleet and the consequent violation of treaties are described with admirable succinctness.

England's lukewarmness towards her ally is already the subject of complaint in Japan and the theme of comments in Russia. The lethargy of the British admiralty when the Caroline was being purchased and despatched to Libau is a case in point. The authorities were informed in good time of the intended sale of the "torpedo yacht," they were bound, therefore, to take measures, and they did adopt some, but set to work so slowly and half-heartedly that the scheme was carried thru without difficulty. Again, the Japanese squadron lives and moves in virtue of the goal openly sold for Russian destinations in English ports, and our government wraps itself in the parchment mantle of the foreign enlistment act. Our whole attitude towards Russia is looked upon as an illustration of diplomatic "hedging."

The Egyptian government, under its English advisers, has lavished every possible attention upon the Baltic Squadron. "See the way England interprets her neutrality," cry Russians and Germans. "Behold," writes the "Novoye Vremya," "the salutary result of the lesson we administered to England in the North Sea. We now know how to keep her in order."

From these premises it is not a great stretch to the conclusion that, if Russia chooses to force the Dardanelles, "England is not credited with the courage to say no and abide by the consequences."

The most suggestive note in The Empire Review occurs in a passage of Mr. Edward Dicey's "Outlook for 1905," where the writer hazards a free speculation as to the consequences of further ill-success befalling Russia in the Far East.

At any moment Russia can give the signal for a rising against Turkish rule in the Balkan Peninsula. The Turks would at once crush the insurrection, and proceed after their own fashion to do so with relentless severity. Russia would then step forward in her old character as the protectress of the Slav communities subject to the sway of Islam, and would assert, possibly in good faith, that the overthrow of Turkish rule in Europe was more pressing than the prosecution of her war with Japan. I have often noticed in my interviews with Oriental and Levantine statesmen that the they were rarely competent to give logical reasons for their views of foreign policy, they had a curious instinctive insight as to the policy which European powers are likely to adopt under possible contingencies. It was no surprise, therefore, to me to learn that the Sultan regarded with grave apprehension the continued successes of the Japanese. To one of the European ambassadors at Constantinople, who recently congratulated the Sultan on the defeat of the Russians in their attempted advance to relieve Port Arthur, his majesty replied: "There is no cause for congratulation. As long as the Russians hold their ground in the Far East they must leave Turkey alone; but if they are defeated in the Far East they will turn to the Near East and attack me."

Samuel M. Hussey, an octogenarian land agent in Kerry during the days of the Land League, has published his recollections and it is sufficient to say that, notwithstanding the passing of events, his record is interesting and sometimes amusing. It should be explained that an Irish land agent of the old school occupied a position pretty closely resembling that of an English squire; he represented the landlord and managed the estate; Mr. Hussey managed several. He was thus a prominent representative of the landlord party, and the fact that he was highly respected by large bodies of tenants rather aggravated the Land League anxiety to get him out of the way, especially as he lost no opportunity of arguing that Mr. Gladstone was Ireland's mischievous enemy. Mr. Hussey says:

I quote a colloquy overheard at a Kerry fair to show how deeply the teaching of Messrs. Parnell, Gladstone, Dillon, Morley, Davitt, Biggar and Company has taken root in the Irish mind.

Jim from Castleland meeting Mick from Glenleigh, asks: "Well, Mike, an' how are ye getting on?" "Illigant, glory be to the saints." "How's that, Mike? Sure, prices is low." "True for you, Jim, prices is low; but what we has we has, for we pays nobody."

The same notion underlies an anecdote of John Morley: John Morley was very well-meaning chief secretary but a very misguided man. In a conversation with me, Mr. Morley observed that, owing to the agitation, he saw no alternative but to make Parnell chief secretary. I said that would be no use for if he attempted to do his duty he would be shot, even more readily than I should. Mr. Morley retorted: "He is the leader of the Irish nation."

"I admit it," I replied, "and he is the only man you can make terms with." "How?" says he. "You had better ask him," says I, "to nominate some foreign potentate to appoint commissioners who will say to Mr. Parnell, 'Let Ireland pay her share of the national debt and buy out every loyal person who wishes to leave the country,' and then, if Mr. Parnell says, 'We are not able to do that,' let them retort, 'We will then disfranchise you for long enough.'"

"That's about it according to your lights," replied Mr. Morley. "Was I not right?" The associations of whiskey and the confessional provide Mr. Hussey with a host of good stories: A parish priest, within twenty miles of Tralee, who subsequently left the church—I will not say on account of

his thirst, tho as that was unquenchable, it no doubt conducted to his retirement—came into the parlor of the manager of the bank with two farmers to have a bill discounted.

The manager, having ascertained the farmers were good security, cashed the bill and gave the proceeds to the priest. He was very much surprised on the following day at the two farmers walking into his room with the money.

"What's the meaning of this?" says he. "What's the meaning of this?" says in the parish if we refused to join his reverence in the deal which was sure to be a very bad one for us. So we thought the best thing to do was to get him a little hearty at his own expense on the way home. And then we picked up his pocket and have brought the money to your honor, whilst he is cursing every thief outside his parish and will probably ask the congregation to make up the amount next Sunday."

And that is a true story and as illustrative of the Irish peasant as any you could ever get told to you.

One night a landlord in Kerry, who shall be nameless, tho he has passed over to the great majority, went to bed without having much knowledge how he got there. Two of his sons crept to the neighboring town, unscrewed the sign outside the inn and put it at the end of their parent's bed. When he awoke he looked at the sign for some time in a bewildered way. Then he observed aloud:

"I thought I went to sleep in my own bed, but I find I have not woken in the middle of the street."

Here is another of Mr. Hussey's stories: For sheer humor of a quiet sort nothing beats the observation of the late Sir John Godfrey, who never got up before one in the day and invariably breakfasted when his family were having lunch. Being asked one day to account for this rather inconvenient habit, he replied, "The fact is, I sleep very slow."

During the days of the Land League Mr. Hussey carried a revolver. This did not altogether protect him from moonlighters, but for some reason or other the disorderly element usually left him alone. In 1884, however, an attempt was made to blow up his house with dynamite during the night, and more than £2000 worth of damage was done. The Kerry Sentinel reported at the time that "Mr. Hussey turned into bed after the outrage, with one of his laconic jokes—that he should be called when the next explosion occurred." That was characteristic, but not quite accurate.

As a matter of fact, what I did say was: "My dear, we can have a quick night at last, for the scoundrels won't bother us again before breakfast." And I solemnly testify that within ten minutes of that observation I was fast asleep, and never woke till I was called.

J. Herbert Slater in an interesting article in The London Athenaeum on the book sales of the past year, tells us that the seller of books has not had a good time of late: "His unfortunate position is reflected in the general average, which now stands much lower than it has done at any time during the past seven years, if the depressed period of the Boer war is left out of calculation. It was hoped that the present season, which commenced in October last, might help matters appreciably; but so far it has failed to do this. If anything, the recent sales that have taken place are better for the book-hunter than ever, and, on the whole, it may be said with every confidence that the night has turned a really good and useful library for little more than half of what he would have had to pay for it three or four years ago." But he must, if he would do that, Mr. Slater remarks, pin his faith to ordination to pay for it three or four years ago, or, leaving curiosities alone.

Sir George Trevelyan has largely rewritten and extended his history of "The American Revolution," the work in which he fulfilled a promise to carry forward his "Life of Charles James Fox." Messrs. Longmans are to publish the new edition in three five-shilling volumes, and the first appears on Monday, with a new preface and a photographic copy of the late Frank Hall's portrait of the author. Sir George, whatever we may think of his political record, is an historical writer of unquestionable ease and finish, and it compensates for old regrets and old dissensions to find him bringing his less-known books more into line with the life of his uncle, Macaulay—the work by which he will chiefly be remembered. Another announcement for this month, also from the same firm, is a collection of the Dean of Westminster's lectures and addresses in two sixpenny volumes, entitled "Some Thoughts on Inspiration" and "Some Thoughts on the Athanasian Creed."

Readers the wide-world over will rejoice at the reissue of Canon Alinger's "Letters of Charles Lamb." The two volumes in which they are comprised form part of the Eversley series, which means that they are beautifully printed and neatly and artistically bound. Too frequently the letters of literary men are written with a view to future publication and thus their virtue, if dissensions to find him bringing his less-known books more into line with the life of his uncle, Macaulay—the work by which he will chiefly be remembered. Another announcement for this month, also from the same firm, is a collection of the Dean of Westminster's lectures and addresses in two sixpenny volumes, entitled "Some Thoughts on Inspiration" and "Some Thoughts on the Athanasian Creed."

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Charles Lamb on his list of friends, but a delightful correspondence, which makes the very spirit of the gentle "Elia." He finds in many a careless and artlessly constructed sentence in the letters the germ of an idea which has been developed in the essays, and, again, he finds occasionally in the essays a mere hint which is developed finely in the letters. Whether he read in essay or in letter he is charmed alike with the simplicity, the tenderness, the subtle humor, the fine sense of pathos which is characteristic of Lamb's mind and writings. There is, however, in the letters one advantage which is missed in the essays. If it is excepted the slight impediment of speech which gave so laughable a turn to many of the quips and puns with which his conversation teemed, we have in this choice set of letters a fine record of his talks with his nearest and best friends. Thackeray tells us that the great ones of the world are always lonely, and so, to some extent, it was with Lamb. True, he had his social evenings, and, in later years, his constant sighing after solitude. But who can read the record his own hand has furnished of his early life, its struggles, its self-sacrifice, its disappointments, and the bitter tragedy that, darkening his hopes, yet deepened his own feeling, and illumined both his character and writings with a beauty almost holy in its calm, and yet not feel that here is one of the great land of lonely ones? Yes; he is lonely; lonely always; most of all lonely when his sister Mary, the chief actor in the tragedy that haunts his life and brings in "the eternal note of sadness," falls a prey to her recurring visitations of insanity, and is for weeks withdrawn from his companionship. This loneliness it is that leads him to pour out his soul to the illustrious band of correspondents whose friendship he enjoys, and who in turn are honored by his confidences. Perhaps no other letter ever written has the patios of that note to Coleridge, in which Charles Lamb tells of the bitter tragedy that overwhelmed him almost on the threshold of his manhood. It is dated about September 27, 1786:

My Dearest Friend: White, or some of my friends or the public papers, by this time may have informed you of the terrible calamities that have fallen on our family. I will only give you the outline. My poor dearest sister, in a fit of insanity, has been the death of her own mother. I was at hand only in time enough to snatch the knife out of her grasp. She is at present in a madhouse, from whence I fear she must be moved to the hospital. God has preserved to me my senses. I eat and drink and sleep and have my judgment, I believe, very sound. My poor father was slightly wounded. I am left to take care of him and my aunt. Mr. Norris of the Bluecoat School has been very kind to us, and we have not other friend; but, thank God, I am very calm and composed and able to do the best that remains to do. Write as religious a letter as possible, but no mention of what is gone and done with. With me, the former things are passed away, and I have something more to do than to feel. "God Almighty have us all in His keeping!" C. Lamb.

This is the writing of a man with a big heart, a rare sense of duty and a deep religious feeling. There are many instances in these two volumes of his generosity and tenderness; many of his splendid critical insight and delicacy; many of his sadness and depression and solicitude for Mary and indeed for any friend in need or sickness; many of his puns and humor running riot over the pages. But we fortune kind or unkind, the fates dark or bright, it is always the same gentle uncomplaining spirit that reveals itself. Perhaps no other man in letters had more real reason to be soured and hardened; and certainly no other man rose so superior to heartbreak and preserved despite it all so many and so lovable a cheerful heart. It is inevitable that a man like Lamb should draw toward himself the friendship of the great men of his time. Hence, quite apart from his own influence, which is the main thing, it is interesting to read his letters, and when we think that they have been called forth by his regard for men like Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, the Lloyds, Dyer, Manning, who set upon a mission of his own to Lhasa: Mrs. Godwin, Moxon, Rickman, Hazlitt, Basil Montague, Haydon, Cottle, A. C. Cowden Clarke, Barton and the rest, it remains but to express appreciation of the manner in which the late Canon Alinger edited these letters and to thank the publishers for reissuing them in the form of a second edition.

In his plea for the indefinite extension of an author's copyright on his own work, Samuel Clemens, otherwise "Mark Twain," makes the interesting calculation that the present limitation of copyright to forty-two years is a gross wrong to the writers whose books outlive that period of time. The number of such writers, according to Mr. Clemens, is about one in every two hundred and fifty writers of books. Considering this remarkable small proportion of survivors of the present portion of copyright, Mr. Clemens's presentation of the case in their behalf does not look so extravagant as might be the case if the number of authors whose work goes down to posterity were large. The publishers as well as the public generally ought to be easily reconciled to some arrangement by which these authors "and their descendants" could live on canvasback duck and Cape Cod oysters instead of on ham. Hence it is that the student of his essays finds on turning to his letters, and not indeed, a further series of those papers which have placed the name of

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"A Race for Life."

It is claimed by those familiar with Theodore Kremer's work as a popular playwright, that his new melodrama, "A Race for Life," to be produced at the Majestic next week, is in plot, construction, individuality of characterization and sustained interest and sensation, much the cleverest thing he has yet turned out. Its scene is laid in the wild region bordering on the Sierra Nevada range of the Pacific slope, and the story told in the four heart-rending and hair-raising acts, ranges from Austin Seymour's cattle ranch to the racetrack at Los Angeles; serving to both melodramatically and truthfully introduce the typical good and bad and fierce and funny characters bred and developed where men are largely a law unto themselves. The storm-centre of the plot is a game and fleet thoroughbred, which, after many hair-bred and hair-raising escapes from cold "play," dynamite, dope and other sensational manifestations of profound personal interest, thwarts about the most villainous of all melodramatic villains and saves her owner's life and fortune by winning the Los Angeles Derby, when a long shot in the books, and ridden by the villain's own son. The race and its finish are said to carry pluck, plungers and patrons alike, clear off their feet and out of their heads. The staging of the piece is up to its producers' usual high standard.

Wholesale Murders in Spain.

The recent discovery of a wholesale murder-bed in the vicinity of Seville, has caused a wild sensation thruout all Spain. It appears that during six years two men, el Frances and Munoz, have invited wealthy men to a country seat of theirs, where the visitors were then killed, their pockets rifled and their bodies buried in a corner of the small estate. These crimes are unrivalled for the cunning and skill with which they have been perpetrated. They were brought to light by the mysterious disappearance of a wealthy merchant of Seville. Thanks to an anonymous letter sent to the weeping widow, the police were put on the track of the murderers, and the estate was searched. At last after digging around in several parts of the field, a veritable cemetery of victims was discovered, and so far six corpses—one of them that of the recently missing merchant—have been unearthed. It is supposed that still more corpses will be found. Both el Frances and Munoz have confessed, but they refuse to say if more victims are buried in the fields of the estate. When asked how they committed the series of murders, they explained that upon entering the gates at night, attracted thither by the hopes of winning heavy sums at cards, the visitors were instantly felled by means of a long, heavy hammer.

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