

TEA TABLE TALK.

(From the German of Heine.)

BY NED P. MAH.

They sat drinking tea. Energetic
became the discussion on love.
The men, they were cold and æsthetic.
The ladies more tenderness prove.

Spoke the withered counsellor. Said he,
"Platonic all love should be."
With irony laughed his lady,
And then—"Alas!" sighed she.

The prebend, loud voiced and word wealthy,
Said "Love's flame must not burn high
Lest it render a person unhealthy."
His daughter asked lispingly "Why?"

The countess with languor pleaded
That "Love was a passion grand."
Then graciously she proceeded
The baron his tea cup to hand.

The small vacant place at table
You, my darling, had filled so well—
You had been so charmingly able,
My treasure, your love to tell!

SANCTA SIMPLICITAS.

From the time when she was quite a little child, she had been accustomed to hear herself praised for her simplicity, her naturalness, her ingenuousness. She used to be paraded before strangers and encouraged to expatiate at her will as an example of childish innocence as purely unconscious as it was absolutely delightful; when all that she said was praised by her admiring elders and repeated with applauding laughter before her face, and the boldest flights of childish impertinence were treated both as flashes of genius and proofs of her general sweet simplicity. Thus, from the beginning she was allowed to do strange things and to say audacious ones under the guise of that same sweet simplicity which, in its want of consciousness—the twin sister of guile—makes such large claims on one's admiration; and in this way her rôle was marked out for her by nature, and she knew that she was to be Sweet Simplicity itself, with all the privileges that of character, to the end of the chapter.

Now, there are certain precious things which to touch is to destroy, like snow-crystals or the down of a butterfly's wings. We may add the bloom on a peach, the iridescence of a soap-bubble, and a girl's unconscious innocence to top all. Sancta Simplicitas was no exception to the rule which predicates destruction by manipulation. Aware that she was chartered and knowing what was expected of her on the one hand, and would be forgiven on the other, she now flung her line into very deep waters indeed, and now sailed over seas so shallow the wonder was she did not run aground and make shipwreck for life. But somehow she always saved herself in time. The risks which would have broken up others into matchwood did not leave a scratch on her, and she emerged from all her difficulties triumphant in her innocence, ignorant of her past dangers, Sancta Simplicitas to the end, ready for another bold cast into unknown waters, or a new spell of audacious steering into queer places not marked on the ordinary charts of society. Like an *enfant terrible* she became a terror to her friends; and no one knew what new enormity she might not commit, what new mischief she might not make, under the guise of innocence and want of the faculty to suspect evil. No one was safe. The friends for whom she professed most affection were just those who had most to fear at her hands: and, otherwise quite honest and straightforward girls stooped to subterfuge and concealment when Sancta Simplicitas was in the way. What agonies that poor little Linette had to undergo because of this habit of saying out all she knew, and ignoring the probability of the need of secrecy, which made the main characteristic of Sancta Simplicitas. *Appropos* of nothing, and when there was a dead silence at the table, suddenly Sancta Simplicitas, turning a beaming face on her friend, said in her loud clear voice, which her mother used to liken to a bird's song,

"What fun you were having yesterday, Linette, with Frank Foljambe in High Lane! I quite envied you sitting there on the bank like two turtle-doves!"

"Simplicitas!" says Linette, her face on fire. "Fun with Frank Foljambe in High Lane yesterday!" repeats Linette's mother, with an ominous look in her steel grey eyes; "were you in the lane with Frank Foljambe, Linette?"

"I was there for a moment, and I met him by chance!" stammers Linette.

"Sitting on the bank together?" asks the mother, with the same ominous look as before. "I was tired and sat down, and he sat down too," says Linette.

"And you did not tell me?"

"There was nothing to tell, mother."

"Nothing to tell, when I have forbidden you to speak to that young man—to meet him, to see him? Nothing to tell, Linette?"

Sancta Simplicitas looks from one to the other.

"I am so sorry," she says, with a penitent air. "I did not know that you were there in secret, Linette, else I would not have told about you."

"You are quite right, Simplicitas," says Linette's mother, yet more severely. "When girls do wrong and disobey their parents, it is only right that their sins should be made known.

Linette knows that she has done very wrong indeed, and that I am gravely displeased with her; and I am obliged to you, Simplicitas, for telling me the truth."

Hereupon Linette bursts into tears, and Sancta Simplicitas wipes her blue eyes to follow suit.

In her quality of dove-like innocence Sancta Simplicitas does the oddest things imaginable. She sees no evil, she says, and she cannot imagine that others should think what does not exist. Suppose she does go out for a whole day's sight-seeing with a handsome young compatriot, met by chance in Florence and glad of the companionship of a pretty girl "with no nonsense about her"—well, and why should she not? she asks, opening her eyes very wide when someone, more clear-sighted than her own mother and with courage in proportion to her perspicuity, remonstrates with her and counsels more prudence of conduct and more attention to ordinary rules of discretion. What harm can there possibly be in her going to the Pitti and the Uffizi, to the Boboli Gardens, to Fiesole, to Ginori's, with the young man like this Mr. Smith, so nice as he is albeit picked up at a venture and without credentials worth a pinch of salt? When she asks this she looks so full of almost cherubic innocence, you really do not know how to answer her. It is a frightful thing, you think, to stain the snow-white purity of a girl's innocence by opening her eyes to evil hitherto unknown and undreamt of. And if she be really so innocent, so unconscious of evil, so purely and childishly cherubic, is it not best after all to leave her where you have found her?—and in any case her conduct is her mother's affair, not yours. So you abandon your post with a discomfited air, and leave Sancta Simplicitas still unenlightened and triumphant.

Nothing is so precious to Sancta Simplicitas as the true truth. She has no idea that anyone can be offended by it. Wherefore, if your nose be red, she tells you of it; if your dress be ill-made, she pinches up the ugly fold between her fingers and shows the misfit to all around; if the color of your dress be unbecoming, she proclaims the fact in her shrill tones till the whole assembly turns round to look at you and condemn with her. No blot that can be hit is left untouched, and when you are not up to the mark in any respect whatever, no one within earshot is allowed to remain ignorant of your comparative failure. If you resent this publication of your shortcomings and infirmities, you only do worse for yourself, for Sancta Simplicitas is then doubly outspoken in her zeal to vindicate herself for truth's sake, and you have to undergo two acts of mortification instead of one. Neither is the most painful chapter in your life's history more sacred to her than were your fatigued looks, the crimson tip of your unhappy nose, the unbecoming arrangement of your wardrobe. Has your eldest son turned out ill, and gone off to Australia under a cloud so dense that you know neither time nor the future can dispel it? Sancta Simplicitas never sees you without making the most tender and minute inquiries about him, asking where he is? and what he is doing? and when did you last hear from him? as if he had been her brother or her lover at the least. Has her favorite daughter made a regrettable marriage, and taken as her husband the man above all most antipathetic to you? the man against whom you warned her almost to the extent of forbidding? Again Sancta Simplicitas, thinking no evil, and of course imagining that parents must always love their children and forgive them their misdeeds, makes the most careful inquiries respecting her condition and her happiness—and refuses to recognize your discomfort. Have you been engaged to a faithless lover, and has the engagement been broken off by the familiar process of jilting? Sancta Simplicitas, knowing nothing of the story, which rumor, however, has whispered pretty loudly to all concerned, invariably turns the conversation on that one special person, the sound of whose name is like red-hot iron in your soul. But what should such a sweet child of nature as she know of red-hot iron in a man's soul? of faithlessness in a woman's beloved? of vulgar jilting and well-known despair? You cannot tell her of your pain, any more than you could tell her of the impropriety on the surface of which she was floating; and you have to bear, with what courage and constancy you may possess, a torture which you know in your own heart to be voluntarily and needlessly inflicted. But no one ever attempts to unmask or to direct Sancta Simplicitas. The reputation of innocence granted her as a child she has carefully kept up as a woman, till she has established a claim for a kind of irresponsible freedom of manner, speech and deed, which is only possible to the doves of humanity. The world is both patient and credulous, for all the under-current of intrigue that goes on. The many imagine sweet Sancta Simplicitas to be all that she appears to be, and only the few perceive that she is not. But the few are discreet, and hold their convictions as sacred from the many—as they would hold their weak places from Sancta Simplicitas herself; and her youth passes in a perpetual flinging about of wildfire with a careless hand, and an incessant stamping on other folk's toes with a smiling face which seems to make design impossible.

In dress Sancta Simplicitas is as audacious as she is in spirit. She exaggerates all fashions, and clothes herself in garments which make the world stare, and which are always a caricature of the mode prevailing at the moment. When crinolines were in fashion, the Sancta Simplic-

tas of the day wore the widest that could be made; when tight skirts came in, she had hers tied back so that she could not walk with steps longer than a few inches, and not the ghost of a fold concealed her figure. In the rage of small hats she sticks a mere saucer on the top of her head—in that of large ones she is not content with anything short of a fish-kettle, with enough feathers round the brim to deck the top of a hearse. If she goes in for flounces and frivolities, she is a mass of shreds, like aristocratic rags sewn together—when she affects a severer style she makes herself look as much like a coachman or a jockey as she knows how. She wears double-breasted coats, belchers, wide-awakes and bluchers; and when men laugh as she passes, and women turn up their noses, she opens her eyes and asks "Why?" She is Sancta Simplicitas for her own part, and understands nothing of the world's more *rusee* methods. Indeed, the one thing that she cannot and will not understand is that aught should be forbidden. "To the pure all things are pure," is the motto by which she lives; and if she means no harm, she says with wide-open eyes, why should others think she does wrong? So she passes on her way, soft-footed, purring, and giving no warning as she leaps over the grass; but she knows when to make her silent spring, and where to touch the vital part, and whom to lull into security by her innocence of evil and her cherubic simplicity.

LITERATURE AND LAWS.

In his delightful chat in the "Easy Chair" of the February number of *Harpur's*, Mr. Curtis makes some statements which very well express what is a widespread opinion concerning literature and writers. It is summed up in these phrases: "The form of expression which the poetic genius takes, is instinctive, and is not determined by circumstance. Shakespeare was not a poet who wrote dramas because he lived in 'the spacious times of great Elizabeth.' It was the remarkable constellation of dramatic genius that made the splendor of those times. It is not to be supposed that he would have written epics had he lived under the Commonwealth, or that Milton eighty years earlier would have been a dramatist."

Yet there are objections to this manner of regarding the human mind and its operations. It requires us to suppose that the splendor of the Elizabethan stage was the result of a number of coincidences,—that at about the same time there were born a number of remarkable men, each of whom by chance hit upon play-writing as the form of composition that best suited him. A little later, in what we briefly call the literature of the eighteenth century, there was a still larger number of coincidences; and at the present time, equally by coincidence, there are a number of English bards and bardlings singing harmoniously imitations of the old French and Italian poems. When we look at the literature of Spain, France and Germany, the number and extent of these coincidences are very much increased. We find Boileau writing very singularly like that of Dryden and Pope; we find in France and Germany renewed interest in the past at the same time that this begins to show itself in England.

In these circumstances, is one not justified in supposing it possible that mere coincidence is an unsatisfactory explanation of these similarities? In general, do we not reject the notion of accidental coincidence when the examples amount to more than a very small number? If we see the cars running eastward over Cambridge bridge, packed, every morning between the hours of eight and ten, we do not call it a mere coincidence that so many people are going in one direction; we know that they contain people coming into town to their business; and it is not difficult to understand why it is hard to get a seat in the horse-cars going out of town towards six o'clock in the afternoon. Further illustrations are unnecessary. All science, all the business of life, rests on the more or less complete comprehension of the fact that there are certain laws in accordance with which human beings work and play; and an important part of the business of life is the investigation and interpretation of these laws. History teaches us that the past is not an incoherent jumble of accidents. We see in our own country the notions of freedom growing from the day the Pilgrims landed, and preparing the colonists for resistance to royal exactions. It is possible to trace clearly the rise of the spirit of secession in the South, and the reluctant aversion to slavery in the North. It is not by mere coincidence that at the last election the people rose against the politicians. Is literature, then, alone left in the world unaffected by circumstances? The reign of coincidence is still large, if it controls this form of expression.

Yet, just as travellers will not leave any tract of the earth's surface unexplored, men will find it hard to believe that the movements of literature are incapable of explanation. To take the case of Milton as an example, we see his poems full of classical allusion, of lines from Latin poetry; and we know that he lived at a time when cultivation rested on the study of antiquity. In the "Paradise Lost," it is easy to detect his references to his surroundings, and in the choice of his subject we see the Puritan spirit that eighty years earlier was barely beginning to exist. That Milton, if he had lived in the time of Shakespeare, would have written plays, no one can, of course, positively affirm. Yet his "Comus," which he wrote when every

poet wrote masques, and his "Samson Agonistes," which he wrote when all the critics and dramatists were busying themselves over the classical stage, make it a not unlikely hypothesis. Yet we may be sure that he would not have written his "Paradise Lost" then, because the influences to which he would have been exposed were wholly unlike those that helped to produce that great poem. England was powerful, successful, and beginning to assert herself; royalty was an object of respect, and the worship of the beautiful had not begun to shock the great mass of the people. Milton saw a different sight; and everything that he saw left its mark on his poetry. The "Paradise Lost" was the epic of a way of looking at the world that did not exist eighty years earlier.

Hence, it may be possible to say that the poet, in choosing the form in which he shall express himself, is modified by circumstances, just as he is in choosing the sort of house that he will build or the hat he will wear. We all, great and little, are modified by our time, just as we modify it and make it.

THE AUTHOR OF "KATHLEEN MAVOURNEEN."

Frederick Nicholls Crouch, the author of the well-known song, "Kathleen Mavourneen," is now living in Baltimore, old and very poor. He has been composer, musician, author, poet, journalist, soldier and laborer. He was born in England in 1808. His musical education began in early youth, and when the Royal Academy of Music was established in 1822 he was admitted as a student. He afterward became a writer of works on music and a contributor to periodicals, during which time he associated with Thackeray and other London literary men. The words of "Kathleen Mavourneen" were sent to him by Mrs. Crawford, and the melody came to him as he was riding one day along the banks of the Tamar, in West England. "I was so infatuated with it," said Mr. Crouch, "that I sang the song to large audiences in the Plymouth Assembly Rooms, Plymouth, Devonshire, and within a week it began to spread." Mr. Crouch also composed the songs, "Would I were with Thee," "The Widower," "We Parted in Silence," "Sing to Me, Nora," "The Widow to Her Child," and many others that used to be popular. In addition to his songs he wrote the operas of "The Fifth of November" and "Sir Roger de Coverly." In 1849 he came to America with Max Maretzak, after the failure of whose operatic ventures of that epoch Mr. Crouch went to Maine, where he lectured on music and directed concerts for several years. He finally moved to Baltimore, and on the outbreak of the war enlisted in the Richmond Grays. He served all through the war. At its close he made his way to Buckingham Court House, Virginia, and worked on a farm as a laborer and gardener. Then he came again to Baltimore, and has remained there ever since. Finding that he could not make a living for himself and family by teaching music, he accepted a position in a furniture store as a varnisher. He is now out of employment and too old to help himself. He has a wife and five children. He tries to smile cheerily at fate—says the *Baltimore Sun*, from which we condense this account—but the smile is full of pathos.

ANOTHER FAST OCEAN STEAMER.

The Fulda is the name of a new ship lately built in Scotland for service between New-York and Bremen. She is a magnificent vessel of 5,124 tons gross, built by John Elder & Co., of Glasgow. The vessel lately went on a run extending over six hours, the trip being prolonged from Cumbrae Light to Corsewall Light, beyond the mouth of Lock Ryan, and back again. Over that great stretch of sea, and the time mentioned with the tide against her both ways, she attained, says *Engineering*, the extraordinary speed of 17,803 knots, or upward of 20 1/2 statute miles per hour, a speed which has never yet been exceeded by any other great ocean steamer, with the exception of the Alaska and the Stirling, which were also built in Fairfield Shipyard.

NEWS OF THE WEEK.

The Sheriff's house at Tralee, Ireland, has been blown up.

LORD RIPON will resign the vicereignty of India at the end of the year.

CONRAD, who murdered his wife and children at Berlin, has been beheaded.

A LETTER from Michael Davitt strongly denounces the dynamite policy.

THE Phoenix Park murder trial has commenced; a true bill was returned against Joe Brady.

THE Paris police are watching the Russian refugees in that city, in anticipation of a plot against the Czar.

THE recent meeting of the Socialist congress at Copenhagen has aggravated the difficulties between Prussia and Denmark.

THE House of Commons passed the Government bill regarding explosives to its third reading yesterday afternoon. The bill provides for the punishment of persons causing an explosion endangering life or property by servitude for life, all accessories being treated as principals.