

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

MY LOVE.

Not as all other women are
Is she that to my soul is dear ;
Her glorious fancies come from far,
Beneath the silver evening star,
And yet her heart is ever near.

Great feelings hath she of her own,
Which lesser souls may never know ;
God giveth them to her alone,
And sweet they are as any tone
Wherewith the wind may choose to blow.

Yet in herself she dwelleth not,
Although no home were half so fair ;
No simplest duty is forgot,
Life hath no dim and lowly spot
That doth not in her sunshine share.

She doeth little kindnesses,
Which most leave undone or despise ;
For naught that sets one heart at ease,
And giveth happiness and peace,
Is low-esteemed in her eyes.

She hath no scorn of common things,
And, though she seem of other birth,
Round us her heart entwines and clings,
And patiently she folds her wings
To tread the humble paths of earth.

Blessing she is : God made her so,
And deeds of week-day holiness
Fall from her noiseless as the snow,
Nor hath she ever chanced to know
That aught were easier than to bless.

She is most fair, and thereunto
Her life doth rightly harmonize :
Feeling nor thought that was not true
Ne'er made less beautiful the blue,
Unclouded heaven of her eyes.

She is a woman : one in whom
The springtime of her childish years
Hath never lost its fresh perfume,
Though knowing well that life hath room
For many blights and many tears.

I love her with a love as still
As a broad river's peaceful might,
Which, by high tower and lowly mill,
Goes wandering at its own sweet will,
And yet doth ever flow aright.

And on its full, deep breast serene,
Like quiet isles my duties lie ;
It flows around them and between,
And makes them fresh, and fair, and green,
Sweet homes wherein to live and die.

—James Russell Lowell.

THE DRAGON OF MYTHOLOGY, LEGEND AND ART.

IN the birth-time of the dragon-myth, the primitive Aryan, suffering under the manifold ills of life, attributed them all, we cannot doubt, to the operation of a malevolent force not unlike to his own, and sought a shape—*monstrum, horrendum, informe ingens*—in which they should be absorbed, and, it might be, slain. He projected his own personality into the operations of nature, of which he felt himself to be the plaything ; and gave, as Shelley phrases it, "a human heart to what we cannot know." In the cloudy stronghold of darkness his enemy was sheltered, a monstrous shape, "if shape it might be called that shape had none," from whose terrors he suffered most cruelly when the drought came, and famine and pestilence spread abroad through the plains. This is no mere poetical view of the matter, for in the Veda the earliest presentation of the enemy of Aryan man is Vritra or Ahi, the throttling snake, who is not only the universal enemy, but is also in a special manner the thief, and the black withholder of the rain ; and, conversely, Indra himself, the sustainer of the universe, the wonder worker and the old guide of man, is in special degree the light-maker and rain-bringer. Everywhere in the Veda the elemental conflict between these two goes on. Indra, youthful, agile, ruddy and strong, goes forth in his chariot, the thunderbolt forged by Tvashtri in his hand, his steeds snorting and neighing, to battle with Ahi or Vritra, the enemy. He is accompanied by clouds of Maruts, and the whole artillery of heaven is discharged ; the earth and the sky crash with his thunderbolt, the cloud-castles of the monster are shattered and broken, the celestial fountains are loosed and the rain flows plentifully on the earth below. . . . To the Chinese and Japanese belongs the credit of having conceived the dragon in the most terrific shape that has ever been given to it ; and it would probably be impossible to express in animal form greater fierceness and malignity than are depicted in the emblem of Chinese royalty. It is also in China that the dragon reaches its highest pinnacle as an object of reverence, for not only is it emblazoned on imperial standards and figured in almost every prominent position as a decoration, but it is markedly an

object of propitiation, and festivals are held in its honour. Yet its connection with the root ideas of the Hindoos is never lost, for it is a monster of mists and waters, and is painted issuing from clouds. Ling Wong, the dragon king, has in his keeping the fountains of the deeps, and from him are the rains derived. There is evidence also of human sacrifice to the monster, for Hiouen-Tsang (the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim to India, seventh century, A.D.) relates how that one Wat Yuen, on the failure of a river, immolated himself in propitiation of its dragon ; and, at the dragon boat festivals, it is now believed that the boats intimidate the monster. Such ideas were probably carried to China and Japan with Buddhism (and perhaps there engrafted on national myths), for Buddha himself was a dragon slayer, and there is much in Hiouen-Tsang throwing light upon the subject. It is possible very clearly to trace the dragon of Japan as a creature of marsh and slime, to which propitiation was made ; and it may be of interest to mention that a fairy story is now being sold in Tokio, entitled "Yamata no Orochi," in which an eight-headed monster is appeased, much as in the chivalric myth, by the sacrifice of maidens.—*Magazine of Art.*

BRONTE AND THACKERAY : A CONTRAST.

POSTHUMOUS correspondence generally throws a strange light on the character of celebrated people. There have just been published some letters from Charlotte Brontë to a friend, and in them she writes of Thackeray. Which does one suppose would be the more generous of the two—the tender-hearted authoress of "Jane Eyre," or the satirist of "Vanity Fair"? Hear, first, what Charlotte Brontë says : "Mr. Thackeray is a keen, ruthless satirist. I had never perused his writings but with feelings of blended admiration and indignation. Critics, it appears to me, do not know what an intellectual boa-constrictor he is ; they call him 'humorous,' 'brilliant ;' his is a most scalping humour, a most deadly brilliancy—he does not play with his prey, he coils round it and crushes it in his rings. I wonder what the world thinks of him. I should think the faults of such a man would be distrust of anything good in human nature ; galling suspicion of bad motives lurking behind good actions. Are these his failings? They are, at any rate, the failings of his written sentiments, for he cannot find in his heart to represent either man or woman as at once good and wise." Now listen to Thackeray's monody on Charlotte Brontë : "Which of her readers has not become her friend? As one thinks of that life so noble, so lonely—of that passion for truth—of those nights and nights of eager study, swarming fancies, invention, depression, elation, prayer ; as one reads the necessarily incomplete, though most touching and admirable history of the heart that throbbed in this one little frame—of this one amongst the myriads of souls that have lived and died on this great earth—this great earth?—this little speck of the infinite universe of God—with what wonder do we think of to-day, with what awe await to-morrow, when that which is now but darkly seen shall be clear!"

PRINCE BISMARCK'S MEMOIRS.

PRINCE BISMARCK (the *Times'* Paris correspondent understands) has partly written five chapters of his intended book. These relate to his embassy in France, his mission in Russia in 1866, the Berlin Congress, and his retirement. He is said to have asked Professor Geffcken to write from his dictation, a request which was quite unexpected. But it must be remembered that he has no longer M. Lothar Bucher, that M. Schweinberg is connected with the Berlin censorship, and that he fears M. Pindter is not a sufficiently practiced writer. Hence his application to Professor Geffcken, who in the Emperor Frederick's fragmentary memoirs showed much skill. The work, so far as can be judged from its present shape, is historical and anecdotal, and discusses politics only when they relate to events in which he was directly concerned. The anecdotes are related with his characteristic liveliness. Thus of the war of 1866 he gives the following curious details, which may be collated with the first interview between William I. and Francis Joseph after the Treaty of Prague, when William in tears threw himself into the arms of the Austrian Emperor. Before Prussia had declared war against Austria she was anxious to ascertain the temper of Saxony, and sounded her. The King of Saxony, a close friend of the Austrian Emperor, not venturing on opposition to his aggressive neighbour, yet not willing to turn against Austria, and accurately guessing, moreover, that he would sooner or later be the sufferer if he furnished Prussia the means of expelling Austria from the German Confederation, had declared that he would be neutral. This, however, was not enough for Prussia. Saxony might at any moment offer a hand to Austria and to Bavaria, which was quite inclined to join the latter. Saxony's neutrality made Prussia hesitate. William and his already powerful Minister did not venture on uttering the decisive word, though the declaration of war was already drawn up. Count Beust and Francis Joseph knew this, and Count Beust was strongly encouraging his master to resist. "Your Majesty," he said to the King of Saxony, "cannot go further. The Austrian Emperor may already blame our neutrality as weak and selfish, but to go further would be worse. I scarcely dare to say, but everybody else would say it in my place : it would be treason." "Very good," replied the King of Saxony, "I will yield only to force." Prince Bismarck then tells how William I., by a painful

effort, and on being shown that the very existence of his dynasty and country was at stake, was induced to send the King of Saxony an ultimatum to the effect that Prussia could not be content with his neutrality, and that the importance and geographical situation of his kingdom would make such neutrality resemble hostility, for the uncertainty it would have would hamper Prussia's movements and the independence of her action. "The King," says Prince Bismarck, "when we had drawn up and sent the ultimatum, wept at the thought of the chagrin it would cause the King of Saxony and of the pain which would be felt by Francis Joseph, who could not fail to be immediately apprised of it. The King wept, and I, feeling tears escaping from my eyes, bent over my master's hand and kissed it, wetting it with my tears." Commenting upon this incident, M. de Blowitz adds the following caution : However trustworthy the source of my information, if Prince Bismarck chooses to dispute it I cannot stand by it. There are diplomatists concerning whom, even when you tell the absolute truth about them, it is prudent not to be too positive, so that you can withdraw without being wanting in respect to yourself or your readers.

Il Trovatore says : "There recently died at San Jose, in California, Hermann Kottingere, once a celebrated professor and player of the violin. By his long-continued work and economy he saved 200,000 dollars in gold which he kept hidden in his mattress, on which he died in misery, without any medical assistance. He never would consent to call a doctor or chemist, not wishing to pay their fees. Besides his money, he also possessed a Stradivarius, for which immense sums had been offered to him. Around his death-bed stood a son, whom he had sent away together with his mother and five other children, under the pretence of being too poor to keep them all. The dying man, afraid lest his son should take the hidden treasure, forbade him to come near his bed. The body of the dead artist showed that the cause of his death was simple starvation."

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