

NOTES FROM THE CONTINENT.

MAGAZINE readers, we are told, are gradually dying out. *Temple Bar* only just pays its way—the most remunerative one of the lot—while the others drag on, and hardly any one (except perhaps some country reading society) cares for the stuff with which their pages are filled. Month after month America sends us her periodicals: dreary lives of statesmen, long-winded descriptions of battles, wearisome stories written by imitators of Messrs. Henry James and Howells, and bristling with the worst points of both. All these are illustrated so admirably that for the sake of the drawings we buy the magazine, no one, I think, plodding through the letterpress. But *Scribner* has since April contained a mine of wealth—nearly exhausted now, alas!—in the shape of some of Thackeray's letters to Mrs. Brookfield, letters which are quite inimitable, and give Thackeray's lovers a pleasure it is impossible to exaggerate. "The more I think the less I can conceive where you picked up that style," said Jeffrey to Macaulay, apropos of the famous Essay on Milton. One feels with regard to the author of *Vanity Fair* that his style was never "picked up," but was part and parcel of the man. I saw Mrs. Brookfield at Whitby a few years ago. She was then a gentle-faced old lady, with gray hair and quiet, untroubled eyes, who used to sit on the sands all day long with the children of "Magdalen,"—the little Miss Brookfield of whom Thackeray speaks, who married Mr. Ritchie, brother of Miss Thackeray's husband, and who died in 1880. Brookfield, a fair actor, is the only son of "Grace and William," who did so much to comfort Thackeray at the time of his terrible trouble.

I HAVE been trying to find out the Hotel de la Terrasse, from which Thackeray dated some of his notes, but it has been pulled down. He gives no hint as to the whereabouts of the Osborns' rooms, or the name of the inn near the park at which the Rawdon Crawleys lodged. How real all his creations are; how enthralling his manner of telling a story; what lessons he teaches on every page! "Any one with the smallest tincture of letters must love his books," says Andrew Lang, that excellent critic, to whom Stevenson pays so many pretty compliments in his charming new volume of verses. I went down to the Allée Verte the other day, and wandering towards Antwerp came upon Laeken, where George was buried after Waterloo. They are rapidly demolishing the church, as too small for the present congregation. "Have you the graves of any English soldiers?" I asked the sexton, who answered, no: half a dozen were in a Brussels graveyard, but none here. In spite of his denial I am sure Emmy's husband rests somewhere in this dusty, noisy, rubbish-strewn spot, and lies quiet under one of these mounds with their worn inscriptions.

NEAR the palace, and about half a mile from the church, is the villa where Maximilian's poor mad wife is sighing out her days. I was told that since the awful time of the execution, Charlotte, till a month ago, never mentioned her husband's name. But one night, not long after the ex-Empress had gone to bed, one of her ladeis sat playing all sorts of airs on the piano, and then, without thinking of what she was doing, glided into the Mexican National Anthem. Unfortunately Charlotte heard the music through the open windows. A small spark was suddenly lighted in her lamp of memory, and by its light she stumbled her way to the sitting-room. The music stopped with a crash. "Maximilian!" she cried; and then the Princess fainted. When the poor tortured soul recovered she had no remembrance of what had occurred; all was dark again, and though her doctors thought a repetition of the hymn might do good, it has been tried without success.

"I WENT over to Peterborough to see the Mary Stuart relics," writes an English correspondent, "and was much interested, for though doubtless they didn't all belong to the Queen, most of them are of the period in which she lived. She spent eighteen years in captivity—do you remember that?—and would have been more than a woman if she had not tried, many and many times, to escape. But this absurd attempt at canonisation has been nipped in the bud; for, as Labouchere says, if she had been living now she most surely would have been in the Divorce Court, and most likely would have been tried for murder. Both miniatures and portraits are worth studying, but Mary can only have sat for one or two, they are all so unlike each other. Some paint her with large blue eyes, others with small brown ones. In a glass-case is the original letter written by James I. to the Dean and Chapter of Peterborough, to tell them to deliver the body of his mother to his messengers, as he wished to bury her under a suitable monument in Westminster Abbey, where she lies now, as all the world knows, close to her enemy and cousin Elizabeth. Not far from the letter is the gold rosary she held as she walked into Fotheringay Hall that chill February morning; and there is a twist of fair young hair sent from Windsor Castle, which must have been cut off years before the execution, at which time Mary was forty-six, and, as Froude tells us in his wonderful description of the scene, wore a wig. In a case by itself is a large square of fine checked lawn, which veil she is said to have worn on the day when for the last time she adorned herself; and near it is a hand-bell, rung often no doubt to summon the 'Maries.' By the way, most of the owners of these things are tremendous Stuart partisans, and write in the catalogue of James III., Charles III., and Henry IX. Some lace is shown, which came into the possession of the present owner in rather an odd manner. Some years ago a Mr. Fox, having the care of the Holyrood apartments, discovered, thrust behind a wooden dado in the Queen's rooms, a silk kirtle much trimmed with old point, both lace and gown blood-stained. His niece, an actress, being at Edinburgh at the time, he gave her the treasure, and she wore it in the play of Henry VIII., in which she had need of fine garments, not objecting either to the blood or the desecration of the relics; which assuredly did not belong to Mr. Fox. The actress married, and was

the great-aunt both of Mrs. Kendal and the author of 'Ours.' Were I the Queen I should insist on the restitution of the relic, which is both valuable in itself and interesting from association. A crowd of people, dull and depressed as most folks are when sight-seeing, thronged the room where these things are arranged, and gaped and gazed, and talked in awe-struck whispers. I soon saw all I wanted, and so went for a few minutes to the cathedral vestry, where Mary's body was buried twenty years. There I found the slab marked with the name of Catherine of Aragon, and on the wall a full length portrait—an odd church ornament—of the sexton who dug the graves of two queens: Catherine's, when he was young, and Mary's, when he was old."

MOST of the Brussels quality are still away in their country houses, but the town is always so bright, it never is dull (like a contented person) even when the rain streams all day on those absurdly ugly statues in the cramped little park, and the wind whisks down the long street crowned with that magnificent Palais de Justice. How Brussels can be proud of Wiertz puzzles most of us, I suppose: he is the French Haydon, I take it, with all the Englishman's exaggeration, and very little of his love for the beautiful. And how the town can have spent so much on all the mediocre works that crowd its national gallery is also a surprise. With the exception of a fine "Descent from the Cross" by Rubens, two good portraits by the same painter, and a delightful piece by Cornelius de Vos, there is nothing to keep one's attention for a moment. De Vos is comparatively little known, and was but a painter after all, never an artist, but the love of the man for his work was so genuine he could not but make a fair success of some of his pictures, and a great success of one or two. This group is full of character—a smiling father; a stiff, proud mother; two unconscious children—and once seen one never forgets the different faces, or the fine costumes, from the lady's black gown to the babies' green skirts and red necklaces. The one fault in the piece is in its composition; it is as if a photographer had arranged the sitters' positions. There it hangs for nineteenth century tourists to glance at and find fault with, in the glare of a public gallery, after being the pride and ornament of some dim Dutch parlour three hundred years ago. "Truly," as the Spanish monk said to Wilkie in speaking of the Murillos in the monastery, "these are the realities, and we are but shadows."

IN turning away from St. Gudule not long ago, I came upon the Rue Isabelle, and found to my astonishment Charlotte Brontë's school, exactly as she describes it in *Villette*, and as Mrs. Gaskell draws it in the *Life*; the name of Heger is still on a brass plate on the door, and the quaint old street is precisely the same as it was when the homesick north country girls used to look out of the windows. It is a curious part of the town, and well worth exploring. Queen Isabella (whose portrait is in the gallery) lived here, and I was shown part of her house, now let out in flats, which is extraordinarily interesting, while round the corner is the ancient palace of the Counts D'Albe, deserted years ago by that family, and used to-day as lodgings for the poor—the most picturesque pile of buildings you can imagine, so picturesque as to look unreal, and make one think of the stage or the opera. Emily and Charlotte must often have described all this in their letters home: these sights must have vividly impressed their country minds, fresh from wild moor and dreary, bleak village.

HAS it ever struck you how rare is a gift for acting? I think it is the best gift of all. We in London could count on our fingers the actors and actresses we possess. Many of us begin and end with Mrs. Bancroft, who has assuredly inherited the spirit of one of the stage ladies of long ago, say Kitty Clive or Mrs. Bracegirdle. (Great people live again. Charles Lamb still writes and dreams near the Temple; Macaulay is again making a stir in the self-same world; Hogarth is busily painting with the same brush.) We appreciate Irving and Ellen Terry; and, a long way after them, clever Mrs. Wood, smart Miss Norreys, conscientious Mrs. Kendal; and we know the good points of Farran, Coghlan, Willard, Marries, while Beerbohm-Tree astonishes one occasionally. "He's the cleverest actor I ever saw in his particular line," said a great authority on matters theatrical once to me at a first night, "but he is so disappointing sometimes." I am reading the various criticisms on Mary Anderson, with the autumn leaves from the plane trees that shade the Boulevard de Waterloo falling on my papers, and I am wondering how she will like all the plain speaking which should have been given her from the first. I saw her one evening at the Boughtons, a vision of loveliness, dressed in gleaming white satin, like one of Leslie's Shakesperian heroines, with eyes far brighter than her diamonds, and I thought what a pity she cannot be content with the freely-given homage of the drawing-room, as without an effort she enchants us, and cease to strive for the applause of the theatre, which applause she can never hope to earn. She is no actress. I have seen her in everything, and can find nothing in her but a limited amount of intelligence. She and Mrs. Langtry run neck and neck, though perhaps the American feels more than her Jersey rival. Miss Anderson is a beautiful woman,—cannot she be content? As a woman she is perfect; as an actress, a failure.

WALTER POWELL.

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MR. W. H. TULLOCK's *Story of the Life of Queen Victoria* contains a solitary instance of a pun made in answering a Royal question. The occasion was the Queen's visit to the Mansion House in the first year of her reign.—"I wonder," she said to Lord Albermarle, "if my good people of London are as glad to see me as I to see them?" He replied by pointing to the letters "V.R." woven into all the decorations, and saying, "Your Majesty can see their loyal cockney answer, 'Ve are.'"