

## READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

## PREMONITIONS.

In the winter wan and white,  
When the days grow long and bright,  
And the sun grows warm and hot  
In each southward sheltered spot  
Back of fences, under hills;  
Then my brain with fancy fills,  
Then my heart grows young again  
Through the days that wax and wane.

In the morning when I wake,  
Something all my heart doth take  
Captivè with a secret thrill  
Toward the young year's waking will;  
When I feel the sun behind  
My closed, eastward window blind,  
Something wells up in my heart  
Most of joy and hope a part.

Burns the morning's warming glow  
Over wastes of ice and snow,  
Over spaces chill and bare;  
Life and Love are in the air.  
With the year that is to be  
Throbs my heart in sympathy;  
Springward turns the whole world's mind;  
Sleep and death are left behind.

In the hot, glad afternoons,  
When the whole world melts and swoons  
In a garment of thin haze  
Over woods and rude roadways,  
And the landscape, chill and wan,  
Softer aspect taketh on,  
Then my steps to southward turn  
Where the sloping sun doth burn.

Then my heart within me sings  
Lyrics of the world's dead springs;  
Something mystic, magical,  
Hovers, glimmers over all;  
Even the osiers, red and yellow,  
Prophecy each to its fellow;  
Every voice and note I hear  
Whispers of the pulsing year.  
Cackling fowls in southward barns,  
Wild notes over sheeted tarns.

Melted roadways, soiled snow,  
Premature calling of a crow,  
Fill my soul with reveries  
As wells the upward sap in trees,  
When my steps to southward turn  
And the sloping sun doth burn.

Then at night, ere men have slept,  
Across the stars a mist hath crept;  
Then a film bedews the skies,  
And the night hath softer eyes;  
Something in the heaven aglow,  
Something in the earth below  
Toward glad dreaming turns my brain,  
And my heart grows young again.

—William Wilfred Campbell, in the *Independent*.

## HUNTING BEARS.

GENERAL E. F. BURTON describes a novel method of catching bears by the native hunters of India. Four or five sturdy men are armed, two with long spears, cross-barred on the handles close to the sharp two-edged blades, and two or three with ten foot bamboos, of which the ends are smeared with birdlime. Thus equipped, and leading several powerful dogs, the hunters sally out an hour or so before dawn, and pass along the base of the hills with the fresh morning wind blowing up from the plains below. If the hunters have luck, it is not long before the fierce dogs wind the bear; and though dogs of this species hunt as silent as death, their straining on the leash informs their masters that the shaggy game is nigh. The dogs are slipped and disappear in the darkness, and soon the roaring and growling show that they have found the game. The hunters run up to the spot where the bear is fighting with the dogs. The men with limed poles poke the bear in the ribs, and adroitly twist the ends in its long hair, thus holding it fast on either flank, and the spearmen complete the tragedy by repeated spear thrusts. It is said that a party of experienced men with good dogs never fail to secure the bear in this way.

HUMOUR is of genial quality and closely allied to pity.  
—Henry Giles.

THE Western Assurance Company at the forty-first annual meeting of its shareholders was presented with a creditable report. Though this and other companies have had a year of heavy losses, a year which resulted in the withdrawal of a number of its competitors from business, yet its report is a creditable one. A dividend of ten per cent. for the past year, a reserve fund of \$900,000, and an issue of new stock to the extent of \$200,000 must be very satisfactory to the shareholders and very inviting to the insuring public.

## A JAPANESE PRISON.

THAT "stone walls do not a prison make" is characteristically true of prisons in Japan. It would be strange if a people so poetic and unique as the Japanese did not treat crime and criminals in a way different from any other nation, and inasmuch as their morality, religion, and standards differ from ours, so do their prisons. Among many experiences, I can count none more gloomy and dispiriting than a visit paid to an English model prison. The grey blank walls, the cold cheerless cells, the solitary prisoners at work at useless tasks, the exercise ground with the men making their daily dreary rounds, the low repulsive faces of the criminals, and the stolid indifference of the warder with his bunch of clanking keys, all combine to leave on the mind a weary sense of some of the hopeless results of advanced civilization. A visit to a Japanese prison leaves quite other memories. The people who can laugh at a funeral, and who are rarely seen to cry (except at the theatre), are bound to look at crime not too seriously, and to treat criminals more as those who have gone a little astray than as persons radically bad. "Do go and see a prison before you leave Japan," said a lady friend to me; "you will be so interested; it is one of the prettiest things I have seen in Japan." So I went. The prison I visited was the large State prison situated in the outskirts of the great spreading city of Tokio. Drawn by two fast runners yoked in the jinriksha, or small hand car, which takes the place of cab or carriage in Japan, we sped along at the rate of about seven miles an hour, through the busy streets of Tokio, across the broad river, and out into the suburbs, where the lilac blooms of the westeria and the flame-coloured masses of flowers of the azaleas were making all the gardens gay. On arriving at the prison premises, I was struck at once by the fact that there were no outside walls, and that the gates which led into the large garden and farm which surround the buildings stood wide open. The prison contained, however, 1,661 prisoners, 1,542 men and 119 women, and of this number 1,062 men and 51 women had been committed for robbery.—Mrs. Ernest Hart, in the "*Hospital*."

## HOW ORCHIDS ARE COLLECTED.

In these immense forests, where a few acres of clearing is considered a great benefit, and where clearings made, if not attended to, become forests again in three years, cutting down a few thousands of trees is no serious injury, so I provided my natives with axes, and started them out on the work of cutting down all trees containing valuable orchids, and although for the first day or two they were very much given to mistake a clump of Bromeliaceæ or Maxillaria for *Odontoglossum crispum*, they soon became adepts at plant-collecting, and would bring to our camp several hundreds of plants each night, with occasionally a few *Odontoglossum odoratum*, and *Odontoglossum cordinei* mixed amongst them. After about two months' work we had secured about ten thousand plants, cutting down to obtain them some four thousand trees, moving our camp as the plants became exhausted in the vicinity. Our next consideration was how to transport these plants to where sawn wood could be obtained. First they had to be taken to the edge of the forest on men's backs; and even then we were five days' journey from the town of Pacho, where it is usual to make the boxes to pack the orchids in for shipment to England. We got over our difficulty by making about forty capacious baskets of thin sticks, cut in the forest. In these we packed all the plants and carried them on the backs of bullocks to Pacho, where they were quickly placed in strong wooden cases, being still ten days' journey from the coast. From here mules are employed to travel with them to the banks of the Magdalena River, and from there the steamboats quickly transport them to the coastal town.—*Travels and Adventures of an Orchid-hunter*. By Albert Millican.

Too great refinement is false delicacy.—*Rochejoucauld*.

A GERMAN authority says that almost a third of all humanity—that is, 400,000,000—speak the Chinese language. Then the Hindu language is spoken by more than 100,000,000. In the third place stands the English, spoken by almost 100,000,000. Fourth, the Russian, with 89,000,000, while the German language is spoken by 57,000,000 tongues, and the Spanish by 48,000,000. Of the European languages the French is fifth in place.

THE report of the Directors of the Canada Permanent Loan and Savings Company for 1891, which was read at the annual meeting of Shareholders on the 24th ult., was very satisfactory. The receipts of interest and principal from mortgage loans and securities were \$2,414,369, a sum in excess of that received from the same source in any previous year. The total sum lent by the Company during the year was \$1,612,055. The total assets were increased from \$11,868,967 for 1890 to \$12,091,772 for 1891. After paying all the usual charges, the usual half-yearly dividends of six per cent. on the enlarged stock capital were declared, the Shareholders Income Tax thereon amounting together to \$316,991 was paid, and \$10,000 was added to the reserve fund, and \$2,096 to the contingent fund. These funds now aggregate \$1,562,252. The report speaks favourably of the Company's interests in Manitoba. This Company has one of the best records of any Canadian loan company, which is largely due to the exceptional business ability of its President, Mr. J. Herbert Mason.

## ENGLAND BEFORE THE STORM.

THE day that is the night of days,  
With cannon-fire for sun ablaze,  
We spy from any billow's lift;  
And England still this tidal drift!  
Would she to sainted forethought vow  
A space before the thunders flood,  
That martyr of its hour might now  
Spare her the tears of blood?

Asleep upon her ancient deeds,  
She hugs the vision plethora breeds,  
And counts her manifold increase  
Of treasure in the fruits of peace.  
What curse on earth's improvident,  
When the dread trumpet shatters rest,  
Is wreaked, she knows, yet smiles content  
As cradle rocked from breast.

She, impious to the Lord of Hosts,  
The valour of her offspring boasts,  
Mindless that now on land and main  
His heeded prayer is active brain.  
No more great heart may guard the home,  
Save eyed and armed and skilled to cleave  
Yon swallower wave with shroud of foam,  
We see not distant heave.

They stand to be her sacrifice,  
The sons this mother flings like dice,  
To face the odds and brave the Fates;  
As in those days of starry dates,  
When cannon cannon's counterblast  
Awakened, muzzle muzzle bowled,  
And high in swathe of smoke the mast  
Its fighting rag outrolled.

—George Meredith, in the *Athenæum*.

## ROBERT BURNS.

THE anniversary of Robert Burns, patron saint of them that dwell north of the Tweed, was fitly celebrated on Monday. Among others, Mr. Andrew Lang made some remarks to the members of the Edinburgh Burns Club, which were both critical and enthusiastic. It appears that persons—Scotch persons too—have been depreciating Burns. They think that some of his patriotic songs—even the famous "Scots wif a hae wi' Wallace bled"—are rantin', roarin' things, and they observe that his non-dialect poems are affected. Mr. Lang seems to agree with this criticism. But he says, and says truly, that for kindness, for homely generosity and nobility of sentiment, for genuine unaffected humour, and for much of the spontaneous music of the true singer, you will not easily match the Ayrshire ploughman. And Mr. Lang thinks it was as well that he died a hundred years ago. "Had Burns been living to-day, would the world that lay around him have been so fit to inspire him with song? The mirth, the sport, the tradition are 'a' wede awa'." London would inevitably have sucked him into its dingy and disastrous Corrievreckan. He would have battered at the door of the theatre, he might have scribbled articles for the press and drunk in Fleet Street, and contributed verses to the magazines." On the other hand, it is quite possible that he might have been a fashionable man of letters, a prosperous literary tradesman. In that case it is probable that Robert would not have written

Had we never loved sae kindly,  
Had we never loved sae blindly.

—St. James Gazette.

## MISPRONUNCIATION.

A MISTAKE in the pronunciation of a word, even though its meaning is understood, often produces a most ludicrous effect. In this way a clergyman, reading in public from "The Tramp Abroad," turned into a farce the description of the ascent of the Alps and the ensuing accident. "The snow gave way," he said, "and hurled five of them, all guides, into one of the crevasses of the glazier." The audience began to titter. "I suppose you people don't know the meaning of a glazier," said he angrily, and continued his reading until he reached the passage, "Dr. Forbes uttered the prediction that the glazier would deliver up its dead at the foot of the mountain thirty-five years from the time of the accident," when the audience laughed aloud. "I really don't know what you people are laughing at. It's quite true," said he, more angrily than before. "Forty-one years after the catastrophe the remains were cast forth at the foot of the glazier," whereupon the chairman nearly rolled out of his chair with laughter. "I don't know what you are laughing at, Mr. Chairman. I should have thought it was very sad. The deceased had carried food with them, and the guide said that the mutton had no odour when he took it from the glazier." Shrieks of laughter brought the reading to an abrupt conclusion. The indignant clergyman refused to go on, and to this day he has never been able to see the joke.

WITH us law is nothing unless behind it there stands a war, living public opinion. Let that die or grow indifferent, and statutes are waste paper, lacking executive force.—Wendell Phillips.