

## BOOKS AND MAGAZINES.

*Littell's Living Age.*

Boston: Littell &amp; Gay.

The frequent issue and well-filled pages of "Littell's Living Age" enable it to present with a freshness and completeness nowhere else attempted, the ablest essays and reviews, the choicest serial and short stories, the most interesting sketches of travel and discovery, the best poetry, and the most valuable biographical, historical, scientific and political information, from the entire body of foreign periodical literature, and from the pens of the foremost writers. An extra offer, made by the publishers to all new subscribers for 1879, is worthy of note, viz.: to send them *gratis* the six numbers of 1878, which contain, with other valuable matter, the first parts of "Sir Gibbie," a new serial story of much interest, by George MacDonald, now appearing in "The Living Age" from the author's advance sheets. Other choice new serials by distinguished authors are also announced for speedy publication.

*Notes on the Shorter Catechism.*

By Alfred Nevins, D.D., LL.D. Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication. Agent for Canada, Rev. A. Kennedy, London, Ont.

These notes make up a strongly bound and portable volume of 336 pages, which will be found of very great value as an aid in the work of Presbyterian Sabbath schools. It opens with a brief but interesting account of the Westminster Assembly, taking special notice of the Scotch ministerial members of that body, and quoting the verdict of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of the United States "We believe that no uninspired men have ever been able to exhibit in as short a compass, safer and sounder views of the doctrines of salvation than are contained in our Larger and Shorter Catechisms." The plan of the "Notes" is peculiar, and well calculated to attract and engage the attention of the ordinary reader, the explanatory matter being interspersed with short extracts from the writings of eminent men, and interesting anecdotes of Christian life, illustrative of the doctrines taught. For example, the very first thing that catches the reader's eye under Question I. is the following paragraph:

"President Humphrey says: 'For myself, though I confess with shame that when my mother used to give me my little task and teach me *The Chief End of Man*, I would gladly have been excused from both, and wondered what good thing they could ever do me; I subsequently found abundant cause to be thankful for her fidelity and perseverance. I was astonished when I began to read the Bible seriously, and to collect and arrange its doctrines, to find what a fund of definitions and important scriptural truths I had got treasured up for the occasion. And how delightful it is to hear, as we sometimes do, the aged disciple just on the verge of heaven repeating with thrilling interest and feasting his soul upon the definitions of *justification, adoption, sanctification*, and the like, which, three quarters of a century before, were imprinted indelibly upon his memory in the nursery!'"

An anecdote follows this extract, and then the didactic part is introduced. This department is characterized by fulness of matter, brevity of statement and copiousness of Scripture reference. Under Question LXVI. "What is the reason annexed to the Fifth Commandment, we find the following:

"There is too little respect paid to parental authority at the present day. It is grievous to go into many families and hear the language daily used by the children. There is truth as well as rhyme in a couplet of Randolph:

'Whoever makes his parent's heart to bleed,  
Shall have a child that will revenge the deed.'

"One thing is certain—an undutiful son and a disobedient daughter cannot long prosper. For a season they may appear well to the eye of a stranger, but their self-will and stubbornness are soon discovered, and they are despised.

"One day some men who had been condemned to hard labor on the public works for various crimes were occupied in repairing one of the Vienna streets. There passed that way a good-looking, well-dressed young man; he stopped near one of the convicts, embraced him affectionately, and then went on. A state official had been at his window during this scene and was much astonished at it. He had the young man brought to him and said: 'My friend, there is something very peculiar in embracing a convict in the street. What will people think of you? The young man said nothing for a few moments, but soon recovering himself, he replied: 'My Lord, I only followed the dictates of my duty and my heart, for the convict is my father.' Touched by these words and admiring the noble conduct of the young man, the official hastened to tell the emperor what had happened. The sovereign recognized the beauty of the filial act and gave the convict's son an important post. He wished at once to show that the punishment of crime should be individual and not general, and that nothing should inter-

fere with the divine precept, 'Honor thy father and thy mother.'

Farther on, in connection with the question, 'Is any man able perfectly to keep the commandments of God,' we meet with this anecdote:

Dr. Gill once preaching on human inability, a gentleman present was much offended, and took him to task for degrading human nature. 'Pray, sir,' said the doctor, 'what do you think man can contribute to his conversion?' He enumerated a variety of particulars. 'And have you done all this?' said the doctor. 'Why, no, I cannot say I have yet, but I hope I shall begin soon.' 'If you have these things in your power and have not done them, you deserve to be doubly damned, and are ill-qualified to be an advocate of free-will when it has done you so little good.'

## TWO WAYS OF USING VICE AS LITERARY MATERIAL.

The question naturally arises whether sins against social purity are legitimate literary material. A critic of "Roxy," in one of the newspapers, objects to the book on account of the relations between Mark Bonamy and Nance Kirtley. The condemnation is quite sweeping, and the only inference we can make is, that sins of impurity are not legitimate literary material in the critic's opinion. Why? we ask. What is there in human life that is not legitimate material? Why should the novelist have the free handling of murder, of suicide, of theft and robbery, of slander, and a thousand cruelties that need not be named, and be forbidden to touch the abuse that is associated with the strongest and holiest affections and passions of human nature? If love has dangers, is it wrong to point them out? Is virtue very much nourished nowadays in an atmosphere of ignorance? Is there any such thing as an atmosphere of ignorance in these days?

We can get at a fair conclusion upon this matter by comparing the effect of these two books upon the mind. We have noted the effect of Bulwer's book. It was the intention of the writer, without question, to excite the prurient imaginations of his readers, and not to place the deed in its proper relations to the peace and well-being of the parties and of society. If any one can rise from the perusal of "Roxy" without realizing that Mark Bonamy went through a terrific degradation, and that a coarse pleasure was purchased by him at a price too terrible to invite imitation, he must be very singularly constituted. One book leaves, or is calculated to leave, the reader in love with vice; the other leaves or is calculated to leave him horrified by it, and disgusted with it.

We might quote the freedom with which the Bible—a book intended for universal use—employs material of this sort; but as we do not intend to appeal to the Bible moralities to make good our position, we simply allude to the matter and drop it. We maintain that all which illustrates human nature and human history is legitimate literary material, the writer being simply bound—not as a moralist, but as a literary man—to represent everything in its proper relation to the scheme of things which he finds established, as it concerns the happiness and well-being of the individual and society. When a novelist represents vice as a thing that in any way "pays," he lies, and is therefore untrue to his art. When he so represents the sin of social impurity that it shall appear more attractive than repulsive, more delightful than blameworthy,—when he represents it shorn of its natural consequences half harmless to the guilty ones, and quite venial in the eye of society, he betrays his untruth to literary art, and reduces and vulgarizes the standard of his own work. This may be said, or pleaded in the way of an *argumentum ad hominem*, that it does not become an editor who spreads before families of readers the details of a hundred adulteries and seductions and other crimes against social purity every year, accompanied with the usual amount of reportorial and judicial jesting, to take to task a conscientious novelist who treats the crime he depicts as God and nature dictate.—*J. G. Holland, in Scribner's for December.*

## JUST PUBLISHED—SENT FREE.

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I KNOW not what the world may think of my labors, but to myself it seems that I have been but a child playing on the seashore; now finding some pebble rather polished, and now some shell more agreeably variegated than another, while the immense ocean of truth extended itself unexplored before me.—*Sir Isaac Newton.*

## SCIENTIFIC AND USEFUL.

**HEALTHY CORN.**—This is much nicer prepared with saleratus than lye. Three heaping tablespoonfuls of saleratus will hull as many quarts of corn, and it will be much whiter and more agreeable to the taste than when lye is used.

**BREAD-POUNDS.**—One pint of grated bread crumbs, one teaspoonful of sugar, six eggs, one quart of milk flavored to taste. Save the whites of four eggs, beat to a froth, add three tablespoonfuls of powdered sugar, and when the pudding is done pour over the top, and set in the oven until a nice brown.

**TO CURE A COLD.** By abstaining from drink and liquid food of any kind for as long a period as possible, the internal congestion, which is in fact, the condition generally known as a cold, becomes reduced. The cause of congestion is the excess of blood contained in the overcharged membranes, and this is removed when the general bulk has been diminished by withholding the usual supply of fluid.

**CLEANING SILVERWARE, ETC., WITH POTATO-WATER.**—Silver and plated articles should be placed about ten minutes in the hot water in which potatoes have been boiled (with salt) and then be rubbed with a woollen rag, and rinsed in pure water, when the articles will not only be free from tarnish, but perfectly bright. Potato-water that has become sour by standing several days answers still better, and is also excellent for cleaning articles of steel, and glass bottles.

**BAITS FOR INSECTS.**—Experiments have lately been made in France with a view to establishing the best baits for insect traps. A number of glass fly-traps, filled with different liquids, sweet and sour, were placed under some fruit trees subject to the attacks of flies and other insects. The traps were baited with honey, weak wine and water, beer and water, vinegar and water, pure beer, pure wine, crushed pears and water, and other liquids; then the victims were counted, after the traps had been exposed for three weeks, with the following results: The trap containing beer and water stood at the head, and contained 850 flies and other insects; pure beer stood next, with 631; the crushed pears, weak wine and pure wine coming next, pure honey being at the bottom of the list, with only seventeen victims. The fermentation of the beer and water no doubt attracted the insects by its odor, but it would hardly be safe to assume that it would prove equally attractive in all instances. The tastes of insects may vary with seasons and localities, and experiment alone can decide what is best in a given place.

**DIET ON LIQUOR-DRINKING.**—Charles Napier, an English scientific man, has been testing the truth of Liebig's theory that liquor-drinking is compatible with animal food, but not with a farinaceous diet. The experiment was tried upon twenty-seven liquor-drinking persons, with results substantiating the Liebig theory. Among the more striking instances of reform brought about by a change of diet was that of a gentleman of sixty who had been addicted to intemperate habits for thirty-five years, his outbursts averaging one a week. His constitution was so shattered that he had great difficulty in insuring his life. After an attack of delirium tremens, which nearly ended fatally, he was persuaded to enter upon a farinaceous diet, which, we are assured, cured him completely in seven months. He seems to have been very thin at the beginning of the experiment, but at the close of the period named had gained twenty-eight pounds, being then of about the normal weight for a person of his height. Among the articles of food which are specified by Napier as pre-eminent for antagonism to alcohol are macaroni, haricot beans, dried peas and lentils, all of which should be well boiled, and flavored with plenty of butter or olive oil. The various garden vegetables are said to be helpful, but a diet mainly composed of them would not resist the tendency to intemperance so effectually as one of macaroni and farinaceous food. From this point of view high glutinous bread would be of great utility, but it should not be sour, such acidity being calculated to foster the habit of alcoholic drinking. A like remark may be applied to the use of salted food. If we enquire the cause of a vegetarian's alleged disinclination to alcoholic liquors, we find that the carbonaceous starch contained in the macaroni beans or oleaginous aliment appears to render unnecessary, and therefore repulsive, carbon in an alcoholic form.

**HOW PLANTS PROVIDE FOR THE FUTURE.**—Each species of plant must, of course, solve for itself the problem, during the course of its development, whether its energies will be best employed by hoarding nutriment for its own future use in bulbs and tubers, or by producing richly-endowed seeds which will give its offspring a better chance of rooting themselves comfortably, and so surviving in safety amid the ceaseless competition of rival species. The various cereals, such as wheat, barley, rye, and oats, have found it most convenient to grow afresh with each season, and to supply their embryos with an abundant store of food for their sustenance during the infant stage of plant life. Their example has been followed by peas and other pulses, and by the majority of garden fruits. On the other hand, the onion and the tiger-lily store nutriment for themselves in the underground stem, surrounded by a mass of overlapping or closely-wound leaves, which we call a bulb; the iris and the crocus lay by their stock of food in a woolly or fleshy stalk; the potato makes a rich deposit of starch in its subterranean branches or tubers; the turnip, carrot, radish, and beet use their root as the storehouse for their hoarded food-stuffs; while the orchis produces each year a new tubercle by the side of its existing root, and this second tubercle becomes in turn the parent of the next year's flowering stem. Perhaps, however, the common colchicum or meadow-saffron affords the most instructive instance of all; for during the summer it sends up green leaves alone, which devote their entire time to the accumulation of food-stuffs in a corm at their side; and when the autumn comes around this corm produces, not leaves, but a naked flower-stalk, which pushes its way through the moist earth, and, standing solitary before the October winds, depends wholly upon the stock of nutriment laid by for it in the corm.—*Popular Science Monthly.*