

*The Literary Wayside.*

In the way of fiction there was never such an abundance, and such a poverty, too, it seems to us, as now; for fiction has long since ceased to have a rational cause for being; everybody writes it, and it is quite badly done. All writing is getting overcrowded, the whole public has discovered that there is no difficulty in using pen and ink, or perhaps lead-pencil, and saying something about all manner of subjects by means thereof. The profession of author is suddenly found to be attainable by anybody, and consistent with any sort of other business. And all the while the scribblers put on the most amusing little airs about it, and an ordinary community is full of distinguished persons who write sketches or stories or poems, and generally all three. "Syndicate" managers exist to pile the papers full of these things; there are even "syndicates" of papers that have a daily story and a daily poem—Apollo, forgive! And now a junta of young newspaper men have started a journal to encourage this sort of thing. It is in Boston, too,—where they have been talking of an authors' club of real authors,—that this scheme of encouraging and instructing "writers" has been deliberately concocted and produced before the world. Are all these things signs of real literary activity, real cultivation of mind, real stirring of ideas or vitality of purpose? No, they are not. There is no more genius, no more thought, than forty years ago; no more writing worth the reading. There is a deal more reading, a deal more diffused information—and much of it is misinformation—a great common stock of expression and fame and sentiment that are easily drawn from—the knack is readily caught. But books of consequence—whether novels or essays—poems that are poetry—are not increased in proportion. You may read long enough in our current literature before you pause and say—here is a treasure that I must keep and read again and yet again.—*Boston Advertiser.*

*Mrs. Langtry's Cosy Home.*

No. 361 West Twenty-third street is a pretty little house not far from the intersection of the street by Ninth avenue. It hardly looks like a city house, and, indeed, dates back to the days when Twenty-third street was "far up town." It stands well back from the road, and is what is known in country villages as a "double house." This is where during the present season, Mrs. Langtry has ensconced herself whenever her professional engagements would permit of it. She rented it furnished in the fall, but the touch of her skilled hand is perceptible as soon as one enters the dainty little drawing-room on the left of the entrance. On a mother-of-pearl inlaid Turkish-octagonal stand is a vase in which fragrant white lilies crowd each other and fill the air with a fragrance which meets, as it were, that pouring from other lilies, roses, mignonette and so forth which fill all sorts of receptacles

in every corner of the room. Near one of the windows whose curtains, by the way, are formed of white otoman silk, stands a rare old crackle white Chinese vase turned to the base uses of a lamp and surmounted by a huge silk umbrella shade. A row of candles on the table are shaded in rather quaint fashion by an oblong shade which serves for them all. In one corner is a mirror canopied, as it were with embroidered silk, and in front of it is a china jardiniere filled with ferns and foliage plants. Gracefully disposed white silk hangings and a profusion of books, a glance into which would disclose the inscription "from the author," add to the artistic but comfortable confusion of the room. On the other side of the hall is a pleasant dining-room, while at the back is the room with its hard floor where Mrs. Langtry develops her muscle and gains fresh graces by her fencing practice.

The curtains in the little drawing-room are drawn, the lamps lighted, and in the soft radiance which comes through the tinted shades sits Mrs. Langtry herself engaged in a quiet after-dinner chat and waiting for her brougham to take her to the theatre. She looks exceedingly handsome as she sits there in her soft brown camel's hair dress with just a suspicion of color in the folds of its front.—*N. Y. Tribune.*

*The First Pipe.*

A LITTLE boy went out one day his father's wood to chop, and saw a big black pipe of clay that tempted him to stop; his father oft admonished him to never use the weed, for, if he did, his trousers then would dusted be, indeed.

The boy looked round, saw no one by, a match he struck and lit, and chuckled as he thought how sly he'd smoke a little bit; so like his dad he puffed away, and blew out clouds of smoke, till beads of sweat upon him lay and nausea in him woke.

Then ghastly white, his nerveless hand dropped in the wood that pipe; his brain it reeled, he could not stand, he struggled with a gripe; that navy plug made him so sick he thought that he would die; but when his dad applied a stick his heels were kicking high.

Full many days have passed and flown since daddy's boy was cured; the lad has now to manhood grown who by that pipe was lured; he tells the story 'bout himself as if a pretty trick, then reaches on the mantel shelf and fills his meerschaum slick.

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