

TRANSLATIONS FROM MARTIAL.

(Living merrily in the heathen sense, religiously in the Christian.)

"To-morrow" you will live, "to-morrow" you are always saying,
But, Postumus, when comes this morrow that's so long delaying?

How far is it away? where, or whence is it to be sought?
Among the Parthians lies it hid? is't from Armenia brought?

E'en now this long to-morrow numbers the years of Nestor's ending,
Or Priam's, when th' unwarlike hand its last vain shaft was spending!

To-morrow, what's its price? At least you'll live to-morrow—eh?

Too late to-day! The wise man, Postumus, lived yesterday!

The favours you've done I keep ever in mind,
And deeply my feelings they touch:
Then why am I silent? you think it unkind?
You, Postumus, blab them too much.

When I chance of your gifts to speak to a friend,
At once he exclaims "There's no need;
He told me himself." Ill for two to attend
To the very same thing, 'tis agreed.

One's enough for this work; if you wish me to speak,
Be silent, I pray you, yourself.
Of the greatest of gifts no mem'ry we keep,
If the donor parade his poor self.

J. C.

CORRESPONDENCE.

REMEDIAL MEASURES ON CANADIAN RAILWAYS.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—As soon as any one of us finds himself entirely engaged in literary pursuits, the mind's eye can be easily and altogether withdrawn from terrestrial objects, and the world of fancy becomes the sphere of his existence. As long as the glow of the thoughts continues harmonious and constructive, he feels no very strong desire to return to the sublunary environment; and if we allow ourselves to be so engrossed, we are apt to forget that, ceasing to fulfil its functions, we have really lost our claim to the honours of citizenship, and to its great preliminary reward the pleasure of doing our own share in maintaining the flow of affairs of the community we form a part of. So immersed in abstractions, we become, in the civic view, of no more importance than the man afflicted with apraxia, or the inability to recognize the use or import of objects—otherwise called blindness and deafness of the mind. In a case of this sort adduced in the books, the subject could see physically, but what he saw conveyed no impression to his mind. An object presented itself before him which he could not make out, but when this object emitted sounds of the human voice, he at once recognized it to be a man. In attempting to read he saw what he considered must be letters or words, but they were unknown symbols to him; they conveyed no impression of their meaning; the memory of their signs was gone; it was a sealed book to him. In an accident that this man had sustained a portion of the internal table of the skull had been detached, and had exerted pressure upon the brain. Removal of the bone resulted in complete recovery from the pain and the mental symptoms.

Now, it would seem to the writer, that if our Canadian public were all literary persons, or all afflicted with apraxia, they could not exhibit a much greater outward indifference to the horrors so constantly presented to our minds in the daily operation of our great railway lines.

How are we to account for the phenomenon? We perfectly well know it would go hard with any single individual whose careless arrangements had so resulted in the destruction of the lives or usefulness of his fellow citizens. But when a chartered company and a representative body together occupy the stage, all this is changed, and there is a tacit, but not the less general, understanding that the calamity is to be ranked as an accident that should be deplored by all right-thinking citizens, and, their grief subsiding, should form neither warning against future like calamities nor example for future measures of protection or relief.

There is not a Canadian citizen who, if he thinks at all, does not know that our national practice is irrational and wrong, and derogatory to a young and progressive community.

Now, let us take the latest examples from the record of the daily journals, who so commonly give these items without comment:—

CORNWALL, OCT. 1.—John McMillan, aged about fifty years, employed on the canal works, was struck this morning by the down express and instantly killed. He was walking along the track west of the town on his way to work.

Sad, indeed, that our fellow-citizen should have been "instantly killed;" but, taking example by the journals, I am going to reserve my comments on this case for a future occasion, because there is even worse to come:—

MASKINONGE, OCT. 2.—The wife of Dr. Dostaler, of this place, left yesterday morning to visit her sister at Louiseville. She was

accompanied by Mrs. Piché, Miss Heroux, and two young children about five years old. In returning to Maskinonge in a carriage last evening about nine o'clock, and while crossing the track at a point known as the third crossing above Louiseville, the carriage was struck by a freight train of the C.P.R. bound for Montreal, and all three ladies instantly killed. The two children escaped without a scratch. At the time of the accident they were in the arms of their mothers, and when the dead and mangled bodies were picked up by the train hands the children were locked in their mothers' arms and complaining bitterly of being held too tight. The bodies were brought to Louiseville and the Coroner at Three Rivers was summoned. An inquest has been ordered for this afternoon.

This, our readers will perceive, is a "level-crossing" case. The three poor ladies so instantaneously blotted out of earthly existence! The two poor little orphans so miraculously spared! I will not enlarge, now, upon either the one or the other of these pictures; there is enough in them to fill a poem or a romance, and to equal either Greek or British drama in tragic horrors! What I wish to say now is practical. It is that the remedy for the level-crossing misery and constantly threatened danger is a plain one. We have only to build waggon bridges across the railway line, and as our individual citizens, literary or otherwise, do not so much refuse as neglect to take up the question seriously, let it at once come to be considered in our municipal councils all over the country. Those councils and councillors have heavy responsibilities indeed upon them in the lives of their people and travellers committed to their care. Now, I suppose, a waggon bridge of timber, with well selected approaches, could be put up in any country district for a very few hundred dollars, whilst an iron bridge fulfilling the same admirable purpose would cost as few thousands. Ought, then, a township or a county municipality to be frightened at such small amounts, when the vital and important purpose of the expenditure is considered? The municipalities first in the field in this reform will distinguish themselves greatly. Of course the very first question that would arise in local discussion would be the responsibility of the company concerned, which would seem essentially to be to leave the roads their line had had to cross in as good a state as they found them. In consideration, however, of the important benefits accruing to the district from the operations of the railway company, some division of responsibility and resulting expense might be arrived at, and form a basis for legislation. Writers in the Dominion who are unfettered by any corporate interests are solicited to give the public their opinions on these points. Sir John Macdonald may honourably boast his great work for railways, but he cannot wish the lives of the people he governs to be sacrificed when some earnest attention to the question, on his part, might stop the carnage. The question should obtain ventilation before the meeting of Parliament, and it should be clearly seen who are the members who are willing to come forward in the vital interests of the people. The clergy are with us in spirit, though the hindrances to Samaritan work may be numerous. Our Faculties of applied science will have pleasure in providing practical guidance, and the people, be assured, will never grudge the means for the work. If we can only get the movement fairly and speedily started we shall be much better able to gauge the common sense of a people who have accomplished so much in the past, who are benevolent in sentiment, and require only to be well led to make them eminently so in practice.

X.

THE RAMBLER.

I AM very glad to see that my remarks upon the burning question of the "Kreutzer Sonata" have been caught up with approval by several American papers, musical and otherwise. Tolstoi's depraved book is, upon the whole, meeting with the condemnation it deserves.

In this connection it seems timely to say a word about the astounding folly and criminality of the daily press in despatching such minute and horrible accounts of an unnatural crime as for the last week we have been confronted with at breakfast. It is all nonsense to say that we need not read such. If we know better, servants and children do not, and nothing is gained for morality by such supping or lunching on horrors. There should be some limit set to the portrayal in all the newspaper man's rabid colouring of such inhuman and unnatural atrocities. I could say a great deal more upon the subject, but, like all morbid themes, the less said the better.

O, there was never anything beautiful in the Morbid yet! Curse of Carlyle, sting of Byron, sin of Shelley! Failure of Keats, death of Poe, suicide of Chatterton—the world is only barely better for such.

Even the high-souled introspectiveness of George Eliot is marred by her want of healthy, spontaneous cheerfulness and good nature. We want every aid we can get to render the world—tolerable, which is, perhaps, as pessimistic a speech as anyone could make. Addison said: "The vicious man and the atheist have no pretence to cheerfulness, and would act very unreasonably should they endeavour after it. It is impossible for any one to live in good humour and enjoy his present existence who is apprehensive either of torment or of annihilation, of being miserable, or of not being at all."

A very funny phase is that of the prize-giving, prize-winning craze. (That rhyme is quite unintentional; I have been reading "Hexameters and Rhythmic Prose" in the *Atlantic*; *c'est pourquoi*.) The sad mechanic exercise of verse-making is nothing to the fascination of finding and sending in 2,500 English words in alphabetical

order, hoping thereby to attain to the glory of going to Europe with 200 dollars in gold for expenses in the breast-pocket of an Alaska seal jacket, and seated upon a Shetland pony.

I have not a word to say against these contests; they assuredly lead to the better understanding, and let us hope, spelling of our vernacular, but how are the prizes managed? Suppose three people out of one house send in the three largest lists, will they get the three leading prizes? I know a whole family at present engaged in this improving occupation. The mother has visions of the jacket; the two boys—two, if you please—of that pony, while three girls are dreaming by day and night of a china tea-set, a quadruple electro-plated tea-set and an "elegant" portière curtain—(*portière curtain* is good).

Have I anything to say about October? Scarcely as yet, for indeed the September days linger on still, and there is little of autumn in the air. But here is a prettier sketch of early autumnal fields and colourings than I could ever give you, or few others. There are no writers like the old ones, to be sure, and I leave you to find out who it is that has said: "October is, to me, the most delightful month of the year—often a dry one, sufficiently warm and yet with a fine bracing air that makes exercise delightful. And then what noble exercise for you in your shooting-jacket! To saunter through the rustling woodlands, to stalk across the stubble-fields, yellow with the last glare of day; to skirt the loin of the hill, and, over-leaping the dyke, tumble away among the ferns and reach your door just as the great red moon comes up in the east, how invigorating! I say nothing of the clear fire within and the new magazine just laid on your table. But, oh! the dismal look of a wet October and a late harvest! The central figure of the dreary picture is the farmer on the first dry breezy evening that comes after a fortnight's incessant rain in the end of the month, bending and looking through his black bean-field, sticking sodden to the ground in every stook, slimy with slugs, all going to slaver, and losing the sprouted pulse from every open pod. The miry hunters, riding homeward, sink to the fetlocks as they cross the deep clayey country. The husbandman turns cheerlessly to the higher lands. The small birds, starting from his feet, shriek adown the wind in the watery evening light. The green and yellow (both in one) glint of the oats, tussled by the wind on the edge of the waste, with the chaff of the top pickle (thrashed out by the wintry blasts that have contrived to blow in every interval of the rain) shimmering thin and white to his level eye, fluctuates away before him.

But where are the whirring gorcocks, crowing so wildly triumphant, where the deep-blooming heather of the mountain side, powdering the sportsman's ankles with rich-coloured dust; where the antlered king of the red deer, scornful of the stalker, hanging high and far in the weathergleam of the north, magnificent, momentary, as he stretches the natural living, untanned, unsophisticated buckskin of his loins away over a hundred hill-tops in the wild Highlands of Braemar; where the soft streams of pencilled light, lacing divergently the glistening clouds of the western afternoon and falling like a silent kiss on the far ancient pine-wood; where the shoulder of the green distant hill, steeped in the sunny brightness of evening, beautiful as the shoulder of Pelops; where the orange-necked wheat; where the many-coloured beauty of the autumnal woods; where the harvest moon?

This is something like that much maligned article—Descriptive Prose—is it not? What a pity it is that a greater love of the country and appetite for country walks do not exist among our people; I can count on my fingers the few I know who care to take a real country walk out along the Davenport Road and back again, and these are all Englishmen and Englishwomen. As for the Park, the better class of people are never to be seen there, nor any merry ball-playing groups of children, as in England.

PARISIAN LITERARY NOTES.

LA FRANCE ET LA RUSSIE. By Alfred Rambaud (Alcan.)—This summary title may be accepted to designate the seventh, and most important, volume of the collection of instructions given by the French Government to their ambassadors to Russia before 1789. It is impossible not to see a correlation of circumstances in the past, and the contemporary history of both nations. In arranging and collating these Archives of the French Foreign Office for publication, M. Rambaud, in his preface, as in his notes, allows the politician to dominate the historian. It is that drawback which renders him less an authority on Russia than M. Anatole—Leroy Beaulieu.

M. Rambaud forgets that neither sentiment nor fine language constitute policies or necessities and that state reasons dictate the conduct of Governments. France and Russia are two States that have had for a long time Governments of a like order, and yet they remained hostile towards one another. To-day they are governed by régimes as opposite as the poles—one is democratic and the other autocratic. With whom is an alliance possible? Only the French now base the reasons for an alliance on a general belief in the past and present magnanimity of Russia towards France, dating from 1814-15, as well as from 1875.

It is at present passed into a legend that Alexander I. joined the allies to prevent Paris from being sacked and