

## READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

### VANITY OF VANITIES.

Faith is a strange, sad thing;  
A blinding of the eyes with vapory shrouds,  
A sinking down to rest on treacherous clouds,  
A quiet sleep when peril lingers nigh.  
And yet I trust thee! fond and foolish I.

Hope is a wild, weird thing;  
A fierce pursuit of distant hurrying forms  
That beckon still through fires, and  
deeps, and storms,  
And can be neither grasped, nor wholly lost.  
And yet I hope, though knowing well the cost!

Love is a false, fair thing;  
A kind, sweet lie that hides a bitter truth,  
An empty vision that deludes weak youth;  
A time of waking from such dreams must be;  
Yet, since I love thee, what is that to me?

—London Society.

### CLASSIFICATION OF NOSES.

Were a classification of noses made according to their respective merits as judged by the ordinary phrenological standard, they might be placed in something like the following order:—

First Class: The classical Roman and Grecian types.

Second Class: The blended Graeco-Roman type; for example, the great Napoleon, Savonarola, and Marie Antoinette had noses of this class.

Third Class: The sanguine type; a long, straight nose, with which many illustrious men and women have been endowed, such as Francois I., Henry Irving, Charles Dickens, Thomas Carlyle.

Fourth Class: The Jewish type. Though distinctive of the race from which it has taken its name, many Gentiles have been equipped with this powerfully-outlined nose—the late "George Elliot," for instance, though without the slightest strain of Jewish blood in her veins, was highly distinguished in this respect.

Fifth Class: This class, while still a good type of nose, is slightly indicative of weakness, and yet mirabile dictu, notable men like Martin Luther, Charles Darwin, and Pasteur, had nothing better to show.

Classes Six and Seven may be bracketed together, as they include both the various common types of nose to be seen every day, and the weak, imperfect types owned, to a large extent, by the thriftless and criminal classes.—*Ca sell's Family Magazine*.

### A FAMOUS SCOTCH PAINTER.

Thomas Faed was born on June 8th, 1826, at Gatehouse of Fleet, in the Stewartry of Kirkcubright, in a lonely a spot, that is to say, as could be found in the lowlands of Scotland. It consisted of a little more than a handful of cottages abutting on old Cally House, an edifice kept discreetly in countenance by a habitation called Burley Mill. The Mill was tenanted by a millwright named Faed, and here, significantly removed from the usual art impetuses of civilization, the boy Thomas first saw the light. It has been said of the painter, as aforetime it was said of Wilkie, that he could

paint before he could spell. The elder Faed, in truth, was an inventor, a dreamer—as inventors, it seems, must needs be—as well as a builder of mills, a fact likely enough answerable for what was untrammelled in his youngster's early training. Yet it was not for nothing that the future Academician was born a Scot. That something sturdy, that something indomitable, which is a birthright of the race, was in no small measure his. His very dreams, unlike those of the ambitious millwright, were destined to make his fortunes. For what if he fell in love with his comely nurse-wench at the somewhat premature age of eight, what if he had the poorest opinion of his schoolmaster, and the poor race of dominies in general—another school, and a larger one was significantly his from the beginning. An acute observer, not a trait, not a beauty of the exquisite scenery of the stewartry was lost on the growing boy. He began his art studies by laboriously copying sundry copies of old engravings—the much admired production of a Faed uncle, which at that time hung in the Burley Mill parlor—but he quickly turned to other and saner means of artistic self-training. Eye and hand were exercised in outdoor essays. In summer weather the very kiln-house was pressed into service, and the boy Tom would be found at his easel adventuring the difficult task of making the ragged country urchins "stand."—*Marion Hepworth-Dixon in The Magazine of Art*.

### THE SPIDER'S ENEMY.

A writer gives an interesting account of the curious habits of the ichneumon-fly of Ceylon, the natural enemy of the spider. This insect is green in colour, and in form resembles a wasp, with a marvellously thin waist. It makes its nest of the well-worked clay, and then goes out on a hunting expedition. Its victims are invariably spiders of various kinds, but all are subject to the same kind of treatment. A scientific sting injects some poison which effectually paralyses the luckless spider, who is then carried off to the nest, and there fastened with a dab of moist clay. Another, and another victim is brought to this chamber of horrors. Then the prescient mother ichneumon-fly proceeds to deposit her eggs, one in the body of each spider, which can just move its legs in a vague, aimless manner, but can offer no resistance. This done, the fly returns to her work as a mason. She prepares more clay, and builds up the entrance to this ghastly cell. Then she commences a new cell, which she furnishes in like manner, and closes; then she adds yet another cell, and so proceeds till her store of eggs are all provided for, and, her task in life being accomplished, she dies, leaving her evil brood to hatch at leisure. In due time, these horrid little maggots come to life, and find themselves cradled in a larder of fresh meat. Each poor spider is still alive, and his juices afford nutriment for the ichneumon-grub, till it is ready to pass into its chrysalis stage, thence to emerge as a winged fly, fully prepared to carry out the traditions of its ancestors with regard to spiders, and to fulfil the purpose for which they have been created, according to ichneumon belief.—*Leisure Hour*.

### FOSSIL FORESTS OF THE YELLOW-STONE.

These standing silicified stumps and fallen trees were found varying in diameter from one to seven feet. Two sections of trees were found so perfect that rings of annual growth throughout could be counted, except a few, perhaps fifteen or twenty, near the heart and bark. One tree, measuring three feet in diameter, had two hundred and twenty-two rings of growth; and another, of three feet five inches diameter, had two hundred and forty-three—this without any allowance for a few missing rings at the centre and toward the bark. The larger of these trees was only about half the size of the largest seen. Many were found varying in diameter from five to seven feet, but none of this size were seen exposing the rings throughout the entire section. Judging from the closeness of the rings in certain well-preserved portions of these larger trees, many of them must have been at least five hundred years in attaining their growth, if the rings were truly annual. Taking one-half this number, two hundred and fifty years, as the probable age of the successive forests at this point, it is seen that the earliest of these trees were living more than two thousand years before the latest, during which time there were alternating conditions of growth and accumulation of volcanic material.

This estimate makes no allowance for the time necessary for the formation of a soil upon the volcanic material, which at first sight would seem necessary for the support of such a vigorous vegetation. It is not probable, however, that any considerable time was necessary for this purpose, for, with rare exceptions, each succeeding forest took root and began to grow very promptly after the destruction of its predecessor. In most cases the destroying flood consisted largely of mud, ashes, conglomerate, and other volcanic material, which formed an excellent base for vegetation; and it was doubtless covered with a luxuriant growth as soon it was dried or cooled sufficiently, and this would require only a short time.—*Prof. S. E. Tillman, in The Popular Science Monthly*.

### MARK TWAIN AS A REPORTER.

Mark Twain was fond of manufacturing items of the horrible style, but on one occasion he overdid this business, and the disease worked its own cure. He wrote an account of a terrible murder, supposed to have occurred at "Dutch Nick's," a station on the Carson River, where Empire City now stands. He made a man cut his wife's throat, and those of his nine children, after which diabolical deed the murderer mounted his horse, cut his own throat from ear to ear, rode to Carson City (a distance of three and a half miles) and fell dead in front of Pete Hopkins' saloon.

All the California papers copied the item, and several made editorial comment upon it, as being the most shocking occurrence of the kind ever known on the Pacific Coast. Of course rival Virginia City papers at once denounced the item as a "cruel and idiotic hoax." They showed how the publication of such "shocking and reckless falsehoods" disgraced and injured the State, and they