

THE RAMBLER.

AS year by year the influx of students in the Liberal Professions into our larger towns becomes startlingly obvious, the reflection occurs of itself to every thinking individual that, especially with regard to medicine, it seems a pity that so many are devoting themselves to its practice. Surely, if the poor, among whom are the greater number of afflicted, were to be thoroughly brought to understand the importance of hygienic and sanitary truths, there would be less call for so many doctors and surgeons of both sexes. Suppose our young women of leisure were to organize a kind of peripatetic and grown-up *crèche*, and as they walk from house to house, from street to street, advocating fresh air here, plenty of water there, a visit to the Dispensary, a timely appeal to the best doctor in the vicinity, make in reality the finest possible and practical use of their many powers. Call it a new kind of District Visiting, with authority back of the individual to enforce commands. Call it what you like—some such minute supervision as this would go far towards lessening the world of tribes of diseased suffering people, among whom ignorance and want of necessary leisure are so much to blame for their condition.

Well—this moralizing once a week doesn't do any good, only it occurred to me the other day that there was a great deal too much money paid for, and too much attention bestowed on—Chiffon. Male readers of THE WEEK, do you know what *Chiffon* is? I will enlighten you. It is a charming and diaphanous substance similar to *lisse* or tulle, made in different pale tints, such as cream, lilac, ivory, blue and so on. It is worn at the neck or at the wrists, and costs—the better kind—from seventy-five cents to one dollar, three dollars, five dollars a yard. There is no question as to its being becoming; the thing is, that it remains mere *Chiffon*. It is not lace, nor fine stuff, nor purple velvet, nor pure linen; neither is it jewels, nor fur, nor garniture exceeding rich, but which may pass down from one generation to another. No—it is only *Chiffon*—an article which, worn for a little while, is cast off and literally trampled and assailed under foot.

I went into a certain Yonge Street store quite recently—the very apotheosis of vulgar modern haste and triviality—and noted exactly fifty-five women at the *Chiffon* counter. Since I have been given away in these columns not so very long ago—with reference to my sex, I mean—I suppose I may as well confess that I, too, wandered to that Yonge Street pandemonium to buy some *Chiffon*. I fought my way to the counter and priced the coveted stuff, but retired without buying any. It looked so perishable, so fragile, so ephemeral, that I walked away—a trifle sadly, I own. But why should I spend money for that which is not—even *torchon* or imitation Valenciennes?

Now—I do not care to preach, but as I watched the fifty-five, feverishly inspecting the mass of *Chiffon* of different delicate hues, it seemed to flash upon me that it was sad, that it was foolish, that it was *wrong*. And I thought, too, how many, too many of us, were forever haunting the *Chiffon* counter of life, paying money for what is not bread, and giving out our precious strength in a struggle for some superfluous and trivial thing—excitement, sensation, hobby, what you will—instead of cultivating the things which make for importance to ourselves and others. *Chiffon*! Yonder winds the vast procession of humanity, and nearly every individual in it cultivates that dangerous taste for *Chiffon*. *Chiffon* at three dollars per yard—think of it! And the people—especially the working girls—will buy it—*Chiffon* holds the day. Literally, *Chiffon* means “rag,” *Chiffonné*, past participle, is “rumpled” or “crumpled,” and a *chiffonier* is a rag-gatherer. These are of course the primary meanings; there are also secondary ones. But purveyors and consumers of *Chiffon*—do not forget that the word originally meant *rag*.

Did you ever meet anybody who was ready—in the sense of work done and commissions executed—for Christmas? I have never done so myself. The year, the working year, that is, opens warmly and languidly in September. Then pleasant October comes with still an occasional feel of summer in the air; then November steals along with a hint or two of snow, and you light fires and perhaps don furs, but still it seems very far from Christmas. Then, one bright morning, you write December 1 on your note of invitation, or your business cheque, and lo! in a few days Christmas will be upon you. It always comes as a great surprise. No one is ever completely ready for it. Things that you might, that you could, that you should have done weeks before are left to that one week, very likely to the day of Christmas Eve itself. The year has caved in with you, and your plans are all frustrated. You are inclined to blame the weather, your acquaintances, the pleasant season itself. You cannot understand “where the time has gone to” and what has become of the long autumn. You heave a sigh and say you will try to do better next year, and accordingly end in doing very little, leaving over until the following Christmas the things which should have been done ere this one. And when next year arrives Christmas comes in just the old way, as a genuine shock to the system, and you are just as unprepared for it. All this is very curious, but it is most true of many people. In the end they tire themselves to death rushing about all over town the first half of the holidays, finding it difficult to get exactly what they want, and pro-

bably dispirited the second half owing to the unsuitable and extravagant purchases they have made in a wilful hurry. Then, in the fuss of “remembering” the right people, what mistakes are made, and delicate feelings wounded, and sensibilities aroused, and so we make of Christmas a miserable, fretful, disappointing season, full of injuries to others as well as ourselves! I can only recommend a systematic planning in every direction long enough beforehand. It would be wiser in some cases not to give at all than to give with indiscretion, haste and obvious unwillingness. And I shall be glad when the custom of Christmas cards goes, as go it must. I have a wall-cabinet packed full of the useless things, which arrive year by year, are looked at, criticized and then relegated to limbo. We might manage Christmas better, I think.

I do not know why I am so melancholy this week. It may have been the Thanksgiving feast, or it may have been the result of a new book by a New Humourist, so called, or it may have been Ben-Hur. I saw Ben-Hur four times. The tableaux were capital and the dancing excellent. A little confusion of ideas was engendered by the appearance of young ladies called Gondoliers, who danced most charmingly to Sir Arthur Sullivan's music, but whom I do not recollect encountering in Lew Wallace's graphic tale of the “Days of the Messiah.” A still more curious anachronism was heard in the well-known tune of “Baby Bunting,” an old English music-hall melody evidently very familiar to the Grand Opera House gods. The incongruities of the musical accompaniment were indeed very marked, and as the rest of the performance was exceedingly well done, the management should look to it. Ben-Hur is, of course, a book intended to be taken seriously, which is more than one can say for the pantomimic representation of it, though, as to efficiency, there was no doubt. The dumb show was well managed, and the costumes quite entrancing. The Butterfly Queen executed a pretty *pas seul* worthy of many older *coryphées*. The noble proportions of Thord, the Northman, were gazed on in respectful awe. The March of the Amazons—that old and tried friend—appeared in a new guise; the drill of pale pink and green Naiads who, with hair arranged *à la Grecque*, demonstrated the versatility of Toronto young ladies. The Roman soldiers were so Roman and so very soldierly that it was quite a shock to encounter them afterwards, going home in the street-car with half the rouge and grease-paint still on their faces and their eyebrows as black and pointed as Lonnen's in “Faust Up To Date.” But Ben-Hur is evidently a drawing card, and the Management of the Infants' Home is doubtless well satisfied with the financial result of the hard week's work. The sale of the book must be greatly influenced, I should think, by such performances. It is a very noble and beautiful book, and Mr. Ebbels' rendering of the famous “Chariot Race,” supplemented by a striking and faithful tableau, was the culminating point of the performance, when the thoughts instinctively reverted to the author with gratitude and admiration. At least, mine did.

BY THE LOCH IN SCOTLAND.

A DULL grey loch, edged with brown shingle, thickly strewn with wreaths of sea-weed: dotted by white gulls, whose rapid movements give life and colouring to the autumn scene. Here and there the water is flecked with white foam and blown into eddies by the wind; beyond, and to seaward, are hills dark blue, sharply outlined on a pale background. Hills, with clefts of a bright grass green, and ravines thickly studded by firs, with shielings far up on the mountain sides, white walls surrounded by brown enclosures.

Wreaths of fleecy clouds veil the summits of the hills, shifting continuously with the wind, disclosing now and then a flock of sheep feeding, widely scattered all along the range. Suddenly a new sight burst upon the eye as sunlight glances on the scene, hill beyond hill, rugged and scarred, bright red, veiled in a mist of blue. Stretching away, far down to Loch Toyle (where once dwelt Lord Ullin's daughter), velvet-like in texture is the colouring on this late autumn afternoon. On the lowest spur but one a shepherd's cot rises, lonely, isolated, in dim distance, before which, glowing away over the loch, children's forms and coloured lines are seen. Many such cottages are scattered hereabouts, appearing at widest of intervals, whose perpetual solitude is enlivened only by the sea gulls and passing steamers. Here and there coppices fringe the borders of the loch on the nearest side of the narrow pass, where black-faced sheep and red Highland cattle are picking up the scantiest of livings. Brown bracken, russet-like in colouring in the open, yields to bright gold in hidden glades; brambles and mosses, rushes and blackberries, all of them have taken autumn shades. Now and again a keen-eyed Scotch collie starts from among the dying leaves, disclosing, perhaps, the merest shelter, hidden hitherto from the human eye, whence flocks are watched and cared for and tended on through severest winter weather—weather in which the small yard below holds all that is left of mountain sheep; and the biggest herds have steamed away southward, waiting till winter days and storms are over.

But now the loch beams out again in sunlight, which changes all the shades of neighbouring hills, liquid blue for a moment gleams the loch, azure blue the hills—a symphony for the pencil say of a Graham, such as you

and I have often seen, which he has drawn for us, and our eyes now see again as in a well remembered picture. Now a steamer passes, belching black smoke and blotting out all the mountain side: its red funnel gleaming, its small band playing old and pathetic Scotch airs. White gulls follow afore and aft of the swiftly advancing Loch steamer, which, by the bye, sends big waves curling and leaping against each inch and rock, leaving behind it a long white line, a track, road-like in directness; whistling and screaming as it passes, echoes, disturbing the silence of the grey crags—rousing, perhaps, flocks of small birds, bringing out the inmates of lowly shielings: for an instant civilization is within measurable distance. Then again the scene sinks to rest, the shepherds trudge their weary way homewards; the last of the season, the steamers now over; nature reassumes her grim solitude, only to be disturbed at distant intervals by the passage of a traveller through the pass, or by the receipt and despatch of letters, fetched and carried many a mile. Letters which perhaps tell of Highlanders working out their lives in the far West, whose ruined cottages speak volumes of the rapid depopulation of the western Highlands, whose lives are lived out far apart in solitude as great almost as this, and whose letters teem with reminiscence of the old home by the Loch.

And “Argyll's Bowling Green” towers above, gaunt, huge, rugged in its beauty, unconquered by the hand of time, stern in beauty and magnificence, golden in russets, wreathed in blue mists; now overspread by thin clouds, its summits appearing often above them, with golden tints indescribable. The sky is gilded as the sun sinks behind them, and far away over the western seas, throwing tints innumerable, indescribable, over hill-side, moor and loch stretches an outline of highest peaks, visible only at sunset, obscured sometimes for days and weeks by rolling clouds and heavy winds. Showing wide areas where grazing is not and foxes and rabbits have their homes: where eagles build and the hardest tourist does not care to roam or climb.

Summits which will soon be melted into snow crests; when the grey Loch takes on another colouring, and winter storms sweep up with huge gusts, and the shepherd's life is grim earnest. But now, as night falls and day decreases, nothing is visible but dark blue; hills, loch side, valley, pass, all are wrapped in its varying hue; stars come out one by one; the moon rises over the scene; soft silver touches guild the loch side, nature is at rest. The moon rising like a red ball puts an end to the day's wandering: in daylight, in moonlight, storm and sunshine, nothing is more beautiful to Scottish eyes than “the Loch.”

E. K. PEIRCE.

CORRESPONDENCE.

WHAT THE N. P. HAS DONE FOR CANADA.

Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, etc.—2 Kings xviii. 14.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—If you are not already too tired of the little controversy on Free Trade and Protection, conducted between Mr. Sutherland and myself through the columns of your much esteemed paper, I would like to submit a few remarks on the above subject, with the view of replying a little more fully to my opponent on this vexed question.

I am sorry that Mr. Sutherland chafes under friendly criticism, and I hereby apologize to him for the “misfortune” I have heaped upon him in having “adversely criticized” his article entitled: “How Free Trade with the World would benefit Canada,” but perhaps he may pardon me if I can furnish him some satisfactory reasons for doing so, which are, that I had some hopes of relieving his mind of some erroneous and misleading views, or else, if I were mistaken, to invite a little information even though I be “adversely criticized” in receiving it. Moreover, let Mr. Sutherland consider that those who draw the sword are liable to perish with the sword. Let me, also, pause to thank Mr. Sutherland for the compliments he has bestowed upon me in such a public way, as to my “shrewdness” in putting a little different interpretation on his words.

Now with regard to the statement: “When Great Britain adopted a Free Trade Policy,” etc., which Mr. Sutherland cites as an example of those of mine which are open to direct criticism, I would say that, broadly considered, I think it would not be far from the truth, because, although at the exact time when Great Britain adopted a Free Trade policy (after having got all possible benefit from Protection), she had hostile tariffs to deal with; she had comparatively free markets to deal in previously, which were much nearer home than those she now has, and until some other countries, notably the United States, had built up their manufactories by Protection, she could successfully compete with them even on their own ground, within their borders, in spite of the wall of “Protection” erected by shrewd statesmen. But now the scene is changed; some foreign manufactories are about matured, and look at Great Britain sending her wares thousands of miles away to find a profitable market for them in India, China, Japan, etc. Witness also the competition she is meeting with from other nations whose manufactories have been stimulated and whose trades have been extended and are being extended by Protection.

Great Britain thrived under Protection up to a certain point. The United States has brought herself to the