

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

AN AUTHOR'S DISTRESSES.

Oh! where are the letters this morning?
Pray, John, have you heard the door-bell?
I've finished my early adorning,
And eaten my breakfast as well.
I thought that he surely would send me
Some sort of a word in reply;
Good fortune will never attend me—
I think I had better "say die."

I've sent him my stanzas and sonnets,
My "Travels in Eastern Thibet";
My views on the latest new bonnets,
My Ode and my sweet Triolet;
"Adventures of Pat in a Hovel,"
Statistics of crime and disease;
The whole of that beautiful novel,
"The Marriage of Duchess Louise."

I've sent him my "Essay on Rousseau."
My "Thoughts on the Close of the Year";
"Advice to a Bride for her Trousseau,"
"Remarks on the Brewing of Beer."
I've written on one side the paper,
And numbered the sheets every one,
I've worked till the light of the taper
Has paled in the light of the sun.

If he only would write and decline it,
'Twould not seem so terrible—quite!
Does he think my own sense will divine it?
Oh, why won't that Editor write?

The Other Side of the Question.

Just hand out the waste-paper-basket;
Here's Alfred Arundel again
With "Pearls from a Moyen-age Casket,"
And "Lives of Unfortunate Men."
Here's Brown's psychological story,
In twenty-two chapters at least,
"The Life of an Old-fashioned Tory,"
Re-told by an Anglican Priest."

Five papers on Cardinal Newman,
And three on "The Hypnotic Craze,"
"The Altered Position of Woman
In these Super-civilized Days";
Miss Fol-de-rol's latest new lyric—
Ten verses—and all of them bad,
Strange ethics and science empiric,
And art and religion run mad.

Step over to Smithers', and tell 'em
To send their man round to the door;
We've lots of clean foolscap to sell 'em—
'Tis ten times as cheap as before;
And write—to contributors only—
"The Editor's gone to Peru;
He wants to be silent and lonely;
He won't read a scrap that is new.

"His magazine's fill'd to o'erflowing
Till May ninety-eight shall be here,
And while your new fancies are growing
You'd better keep out of his sphere."

—C. J. Blake, in *London Literary World*.

FROM A FRONTIER CHURCH TO LITERATURE.

THE time spent in a frontier ministry I look back upon with considerable satisfaction. The habit of ready speaking, the training in the art of meeting emergencies, the intimate knowledge of human life in its rudimentary conditions: are these not as well worth learning as the art of scanning Virgil, the list of ships in Homer, or Caesar's method of building a military bridge? More than this, the years of my ministry brought me into acquaintance with frontier preachers, and it is the privilege of a lifetime to have known a company of men so sincere and disinterested as most of these were, and to have participated in their labours. But there were, as I said, two manner of men in me, and my literary tastes and scholarly ambitions were ever rising up to protest that I was better suited for some other field. I was indeed continually cultivating habits of mind that tended to unfit me in some degree for the work I had chosen. From the highest motives I risked my life in crossing prairies afoot to preach in undaunted cabins with the thermometer below zero, but I often carried a volume of poetry, a scientific book, or perhaps a tome of French dramas along, to beguile the other man in me. Then, too, there was already growing in me that critical habit of mind which is apt to be so fatal to dogmatic beliefs, and thus to cut off religious enthusiasm below ground. In these years I wrote occasionally for *Methodist* and other periodicals. I remember particularly a paper on Beranger and his songs which I published while trying to evangelize the red-shirted lumbermen on the St. Croix. When in 1866 ill health drove me for the third time from the ministry, and I accepted the editorship of the "Little Corporal," I was fairly launched in a humble way in literature. It is no part of the purpose of this paper to recite the steps which followed. But when,

in 1870, I began to win attention and favour by writing novels illustrative of life in the great interior valley, I was only drawing on the resources which the very peculiar circumstances of my life had put at my disposal. Is it Herder who says: "My whole life is but the interpretation of the oracles of my childhood?"—*Edward Eggleston, in the Forum*.

STRYCHNINE AN ANTIDOTE TO SNAKE POISON.

DR. MUELLER, of Victoria, in an interesting letter addressed to Lord Lansdowne, Governor-General of India, claims to have discovered the secret of snake-poisoning. Dr. Mueller's theory is that snake poison suspends the action of the motor and vaso-motor nerve-centres. It is merely a dynamic action, and does not destroy tissue. It follows almost as a matter of course that the proper antidote is something that stimulates and increases the functional activity of these nerve-centres. And this remedy is strychnine. "It is applied," he writes, "by subcutaneous injections of ten to twenty minims of the liquor strychnine and continued every fifteen minutes until the paralyzing effect of the snake venom on the motor and vaso-motor nerve-cell are removed and slight strychnia symptoms supervene. The quantity of the drug required for this purpose depends on the amount of venom imparted by the snake, and may after the bite of a vigorous cobra amount to a grain or more, since more than half a grain has been found necessary to neutralize the effects of the bite of the tiger-snake, a reptile much resembling the cobra in appearance, but not imparting nearly as much venom. Strychnine and snake-poison being antagonistic in their action, I have found invariably that large doses of strychnine produced no toxic effects in the presence of snake-poison, until the action of the latter is completely suspended. These effects in their initial stage, manifested by slight muscular spasms, are patent to any ordinary observer, and perfectly harmless. They pass off quickly, and are an unfailing signal that the antidote is no longer required and the patient out of danger. Though fully aware of the unfavourable results of experiments with the drug on dogs made at Calcutta and London as well as in Australia, I was nevertheless so fully convinced of the correctness of my theory that I administered the antidote fearlessly to persons suffering from snake-bite, to a few at the very point of death, with pulse at wrists and respiration already suspended, and in every instance with the most gratifying success. This success has been equally marked in the practice of other medical men in nearly all parts of Australia, more especially in Queensland, where the most venomous of our snakes are met with. Owing to the general adoption of my method, deaths from snake-bite are now events of the past in Australia, and occur in rare instances, where from ignorance, neglect, or the impossibility of procuring the antidote in time it is not applied." It is quite possible of course that, although the remedy invariably succeeds in case of snake-bites in Australia, it may not be equally potent against our more deadly cobra and krait. Nevertheless it is well worth trying, and we hope that experiments with it will be made in India.—*Allahabad Pioneer*.

A PLEA FOR FAIRYLAND.

IN this age of materialism there is but little room for belief in the old heroes and in the stories of their heroic deeds which have been a delight and an inspiration to past generations. Historical iconoclasts have pulled down many of the world's idols from the pedestals on which they have stood so long, or else have striven to show that they were only figures of common clay; and we have been asked to surrender Sir William Wallace, William Tell, Joan of Arc, Jessie Brown of Lucknow, and all the heroic figures that crowd the Walhalla of the ages, to the domain of legend and imagination. In a similar spirit teachers who seem to think that knowledge is simply the possession of a long array of facts have started a crusade against the tales which have so long been offered to childhood, and would banish fairyland forever from the nursery. There may, it is true, be but scanty room in the world now for the elfin creatures who once found their home in the buttermilks and daisies, for the gnomes who dwelt in the hearts of mountains, and the giants who strode over moors and valleys. Queen Mab's chariot would be crushed by one of the myriads of feet that night and day are crowding almost every spot of earth; Will-o'-the-Wisp has had to fly before drainage and cultivation, and the steam derrick can do more than a whole army of toiling brownies. And yet life is so hard, so real, so neutral in tints, that to take away the legend and the fairy tale would rob humanity of many a pleasant memory and sunny thought. There are few men and women, no matter how much they may have been scarred in life's battles, who do not occasionally revert with a tender emotion to the days when the realm of the ideal was to them a living reality; when the world was peopled with superhuman creatures of wondrous power for good or for evil. If the age in which we live is to keep its freshness it cannot afford to lose these memories. Jack the Giant Killer, the Babes in the Wood, Little Red Riding Hood, the Sleeping Beauty, Puss in Boots, and all the quaint creations that march in procession through story books, ever living, ever radiant, cannot be taken away without leaving a void that not all the learning of the century can fill. Let the children be taught knowledge, but spare for their sakes the fairy tale.—*Philadelphia Record*.

PHYSICAL EXERCISE FOR LADIES.

MRS. GARRETT ANDERSON, M.D., presided at a numerously attended meeting, principally of ladies, in the Hampstead Vestry Hall, Haverstock Hill, at which Miss R. Goodman, a teacher of calisthenics and gymnastic exercises on the Chreiman system, delivered an address on "The Importance of Physical Culture." With the assistance of some of her young lady pupils she went through an exhibition of musical drill and calisthenics. At the conclusion of the exercises, Mrs. Garrett Anderson, M.D., said that she was sure that all present, like herself, had felt extreme pleasure in witnessing the beautiful exhibition Miss Goodman had given them. She thought it would be a good thing for many "old fogies" if they could acquire a tenth of the skill and muscle possessed by those young people. For her own part, she was frequently urging ladies of thirty, forty, and fifty years of age to take physical exercise. It would do them good to play at ball half an hour a day. She quite endorsed all that Miss Goodman had said about the extreme value of these physical exercises, and especially those of the varied and gentle kind they had just seen. There was nothing in them too violent to be other than good for growing muscles or even only moderately strong ladies. Miss Goodman had said that Englishwomen could not walk well, but she would ask Miss Goodman who walked better? Neither American nor Australian girls walked better than English girls, though they—and particularly the Australian girls—danced a great deal better. The Germans and the French did not walk well, either. She thought that the English were at the top of the tree in that respect.

PRINTING "THE CENTURY."

WEB presses for newspapers are common enough, but this press has distinction as the first, and for three years the only, web press used in this country for good book-work. At one end of the machine is a great roll of paper more than two miles long when unwound, and weighing about 750 pounds. As the paper unwinds it passes first over a jet of steam which slightly dampens and softens, but does not wet or sodden its hard surface and fits it for receiving impressions. It next passes under a plate cylinder on which are thirty-two curved plates, inked by seven large rollers, which prints thirty-two pages on one side. Then it passes around a reversing cylinder which presents the other side of the paper to another plate cylinder, on which are thirty-two plates which print exactly on the back the proper pages for the thirty-two previously printed. This is done quickly—in less than two seconds—but with exactness. But the web of paper is still uncut. To do this it is drawn upward under a small cylinder containing a concealed knife, which cuts the printed web in strips two leaves wide and four leaves long. As soon as cut the sheets are thrown forward on endless belts of tape. An ingenious but undetectable mechanism gives to every alternate sheet a quicker movement, so that it falls exactly over its predecessor, making two lapped strips of paper. Busy little adjusters now come in play, placing these lapped sheets of paper accurately up to a head and a side guide. Without an instant of delay down comes a strong creasing blade over the long centre of the sheet, and pushes it out of sight. Pulleys at once seize the creased sheet and press it flat, in which shape it is hurried forward to meet three circular knives on one shaft which cut it across in four equal pieces. Disappearing an instant from view, it comes out on the other side at the upper end of the tail of the press in the form of four-folded sections of eight pages each. Immediately after, at the lower end of the tail of the press, out come four entirely different sections of eight pages each. This duplicate delivery shows the product of the press to be at every revolution of the cylinders sixty-four pages, neatly printed, truly cut, and accurately registered and folded, ready for the binder. This web press is not so fast as the web press of daily newspapers, but it performs more operations and does more accurate work.—*Theo. L. De Vinne, in the Century*.

HOW TO PRESERVE THE VOICE.

How to preserve the voice and keep it presumably fresh is almost like asking how to keep from growing old. Some people grow faster than others because they are imprudent and do not take care of themselves. The voice should not be imposed upon, and instead of growing husky in a decade it should remain comparatively fresh for two and even four decades. Patti's voice is a fine example of one that has never been imposed upon, never been forced to sing six nights in a week and once at a matinée. A grand opera singer should sing only twice a week, perhaps three times if his or her physical condition warrants it. Singers should have plenty of sleep, good appetites, nothing to make them nervous, and, if possible, a more or less phlegmatic disposition. The latter they rarely possess to any great degree. Overwork is death to a voice. A singer will not notice at first the inroads that gradually undermine a voice and leave it an echo of its former sweetness.—*Campanini, in Ladies' Home Journal*.

If the gatherer takes too much, Nature takes but of the man what she puts into his chest; swells the estate, but kills the owner. Nature hates monopolies and excursions.—*Emerson*.