

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

A SONG OF ENGLAND.

MR. W. H. HENLEY contributes the following fine poem to the *National Review*, of which we omit the third verse :—

What have I done for you,
England, my England?
What is there I would not do,
England, my own?
With your glorious eyes austere,
As the Lord were walking near,
Whispering terrible things and dear
As the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Round the world on your bugles blown!

Where shall the watchful Sun
England, my England,
Match the master-work you've done,
England, my own?
When shall he rejoice agen
Such a breed of mighty men
As come forward, one to ten,
To the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Through the years on your bugles blown?

They call you proud and hard,
England, my England:
You with worlds to watch and ward,
England, my own!
You whose mailed hand keeps the keys
Of such teeming destinies
You could know nor dread nor ease
Were the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Round the Pit on your bugles blown!

Mother of ships whose might,
England, my England,
Is the fierce old Sea's d light,
England, my own,
Chosen daughter of the Lord,
Spouse-in-Chief of the ancient Sword,
There's the menace of the Word
In the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Out of heaven on your bugles blown!

—Public Opinion.

BRAIN SCIENCE.

No feature of progress in physiological science is more conspicuous than that which relates to our increasing knowledge of the brain and its functions, and of the ways and works of the nervous system at large. To-day we have had the old and effete phrenology, which still lingers in the hands of certain "professors" (who will give you a full analysis of your character for half a crown), replaced by the modern scheme of brain functions, founded on observation of how the brain acts in cases of disease and on experiments on animals. The fruits of these observations are many and great. Operations for the cure of brain tumours and other ailments of the central organ of the nervous system are now successfully performed. Cases which a few years ago would have been relegated to the domain of the hopeless are now literally rescued from the grave by reason of the physician and surgeon having been supplied with exact knowledge of the brain's functions. When a patient comes to hospital presenting certain symptoms, such as the twitching of certain muscles, the physician knows the particular area of the brain concerned in the production of the twitching, and can act and advise accordingly. This, surely, is an immense advance in medicine and in science at large. Above all, it represents a beneficent measure of the highest order, since it saves many a life from extinction, and restores health and strength to many an otherwise doomed and hopelessly afflicted mortal. In other directions, too, we have progressed in brain-science. We know more about the curious workings of the brain, in what may be called the ordinary round of its duties, than did our predecessors of even twenty years ago. Recently an illustration of certain interesting phases of mental action was afforded us by the researches of M. Séglas, of the Salpêtrière Hospital of Paris, into an unusual form of speech derangement. There is a not common affection of the speech-centres in the brain called "aphasia," in which, while the sufferer knows everything which is said to him, he cannot form words in reply. M. Séglas tells us that the affection he describes may be called "onomatomanie," and that certain very distinct varieties of abnormal brain action may be included under this name. For instance, there is a phase in which the person cannot recall a particular word. He gets perfectly agonized in his efforts to remember the term. This, I take it, is an exaggeration of a state perfectly common among us. Who has not experienced, when writing or talking, a sudden difficulty in finding a word (I should say "the" word) which alone can express one's exact meaning? Then, there is a variety of the ailment described by M. Séglas in which one word gets into a person's brain, as it were, so that he is seized with an irresistible desire to go on repeating it. Next comes a case in which a very ordi-

nary word gets attached to it (in the opinion of the patient) some very terrible or peculiar meaning. It is for him a dread shibboleth, which haunts him like a grim word-spectre. The fourth variety is that wherein a person fancies certain words have a talismanic meaning. Is this a survival of the "Abracadabra" of the old days of witchcraft and magic? Finally comes a phase wherein the patient takes a violent dislike to a word, and, as it is said, spits it out as if it had a disgusting taste. M. Séglas, in the course of his study of these word-affections—if so I may name them—shows that, as might be expected, there are complex brain-processes at work in their production. In some cases the patients seem to be possessed by actual hallucinations regarding words, in others there is evidently exhibited a want of co-ordinating and controlling power over particular ideas. Thus, in one instance the words "vendredi," "malheur" and "treize" assumed to a patient an injurious and malign aspect. When they were heard, the words "samedi," "bonheur" and "quatorze" were expressed, as if to correct the influence of the former terms. In another case a patient appeared to experience a peculiar relation to the word "rage." Every time she met with the word it seemed to her to persist before her eyes, despite all her efforts to rid herself of the term. To my mind, while showing us how complicated are our speech-efforts, the interest of these observations really lies in their showing us how our little and unheeded peculiarities of thought and word may become intensified under mental excitement into very marked departures from the type of healthy brain-action.—*Dr. Andrew Wilson, in the Illustrated News of the World.*

GOD AND THE MASSES.

THE Jewish people never reasoned themselves into a conviction that there is only one God, and there never yet was in this world a nation that did or could do so. Individuals here and there in the world's history have found, or thought that they had found, the truth that there was one supreme God, but the masses of mankind never yet found that for themselves. For a nation, for the masses of mankind, there are but two thoughts about God—one is Paganism, the other is Atheism. One is the superstitious belief in many Gods, and the other is the utter denial, it may be merely practically, or it may be speculatively and intellectually, that there is any God. The one is the belief that sees God everywhere, the other is the darkness that sees Him nowhere; one or other of these is the fate of every human being who has no revelation. Superstition peoples the world with gods, men see and hear a god in every rock and stream and tree; in the sound of the wind and in the roar of the waves, they hear the voice of many gods. And they cower before them and entreat their mercy and believe that in the manifold workings of nature they have the capricious wills of their imaginary gods. And with this superstition science is ever at war—it is ever teaching men that what they believe to be gods are no gods; it is ever resolving what seems will into force, and what seems force into law. The domain of what is known is ever intruding itself further and further, day by day and age by age, into the region of the unknown. The mists of the early dawn of man's ignorance are melting away before the clear white light of science; and science breaks into fragments one after another—breaks into the minutest fragments, as with the wand of a magician, the idols of the heathen, and strewing their temples with them, asks the worshippers, not always angrily, sometimes very sadly and sorrowfully, and calmly, Where are now your Gods? Between these two extremes, the superstition that sees God everywhere and the scientific desolation that sees Him nowhere, there is no logical standing ground for man without revelation.—*Christ the Light of all Scripture, by the late W. C. Magee, D.D., Lord Archbishop of York.*

THE ANTIQUITY OF FAMILIAR QUOTATIONS.

AFTER all, the newest authors are the oldest. In this new edition ("Familiar Quotations") we have a lot of familiar sayings traced away back to Greece and Egypt. A new author by the name of Pilpay figures in this edition. He was a Brahmin, and he lived several centuries before Christ. Writing in some early dialect of Sanscrit, he deliberately, and with the most horrible heathen depravity, stole some of the best sayings of Herrick, Shakespeare, Butler, Cibber and others. He was bold enough to appropriate such modern sayings as "What is bred in the bone will never come out of the flesh," "Possession is the strongest tenure of the law," and so on. Hesiod, who wrote in the seventh century before Christ, was another of these antique plagiarists. Theognis, Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Plautus, Terence, and many others were great suppliers of modern familiar quotations. Every time you say "hence these tears," "the flower of youth," "I do not care one straw," "with presence of mind," or any one of several things equally familiar, you are simply quoting Terence, who died 159 years before Christ. All the way through he is as modern as Mr. Howells. Here is one of his sayings, and, after it is quoted, nothing more need be said: "In fine, nothing is said now that has not been said before."—*Boston Transcript.*

Act well your given part: the choice rests not with you.—*Epictetus.*

PEDANTRY proceeds from much reading and little understanding.—*Steele.*

WATER BABIES.

WHERE mosses green and cool
Creep round the rushy margin of the pool,
Like phantoms in the sun
The water-babies leap and laugh and run;
While from their baby-lips
The kissing wave forever glides and drips,
And every golden beam
Is fain to lave them in its loving gleam.

They startle with their cries
The forest-echo where she dreaming lies;
And timid wood-nymphs creep
From shadowy haunts to see them laugh and leap.
But when the sunlight fades
Along the tree-tops of the murmuring glades—
When earthly children rest
Upon the mother's gently heaving breast—
These babies steal away
Into the wave, and sleep with sleeping day.

Arthur L. Salmon, in the Magazine of Art.

PLAIN ENGLISH.

"THE year which sees the liberation of so potent an educational force deserves to be marked with a white stone." Last year, 1891, is the golden age which deserves this token of respect and gratitude. But what do you suppose is the event thus thrillingly commemorated by the *Athenæum* of January 2? Let the patient reader think over it; what occurrence in 1891 was the liberation of a potent educational force? No schoolmaster was let out of gaol after killing a boy "with wopping" as far as I remember. Colenso's Arithmetic was not published for the first time, nor "Mr. Todhunter's excellent Euclid," though to describe the publication of a school book as "the liberation of so potent an educational force" would be to speak in a very queer way. No, "the liberation of so potent an educational force" was nothing more than the appearance of a certain romantic fiction. The astonishing sentence is from the pen of the gentleman who reviews, in the *Athenæum*, the fiction of the year. This is the way in which we, or some of us, write now. It would have staggered Holofernes if he could have foreseen the modern style. Of old, if we admired a good novel, we would have said that it was a good novel. But now we say that it is a potent educational force. We speak as if it were electricity, or something of that kind, which had lain dormant for human purposes and was suddenly turned loose into a career of beneficence and sixpenny telegrams. The late M. Flaubert kept a *sottisier*, in which he wrote down the absurdities that he came across in his journey through life. I think he would have made a note of this wonderful piece of style, which is certainly (January 2) the funniest thing that the new year has brought us. Suppose that on the appearance of "Esmond," or "Tom Jones," somebody had spoken of the event as the liberation of a potent educational force! But novels were not regarded as educational forces in those happy old days when mortals wrote English, plain, good English, and a total absence of humour was not thought identical with "Culture."—*Mr. Andrew Lang, in "Longman's Magazine."*

THE EARLY CHRISTIANS AND CLEANLINESS.

IN the reaction against the monstrous corruptions and unbridled sensuality of Pagan Rome, Christian enthusiasts rushed to the opposite extreme. An age of asceticism succeeded to an age of sensuality. The human body which Imperial Rome had pampered and indulged was now to be neglected and humiliated. A "cult of bodily uncleanness" began. A hideous, scrold, and emaciated maniac, passing his life in a long routine of useless and atrocious self-torture, became, as Mr. Lecky has said, "the ideal of the nations which had known the writings of Plato and Cicero, and the lives of Socrates and Cato. . . . The cleanliness of the body was regarded as the pollution of the soul, and the saints who were most admired had become one hideous mass of clotted filth." To borrow but one or two illustrations from the "History of European Morals," St. Athanasius relates with a thrill of admiration how St. Anthony had never once been guilty of washing his feet. For fifty years St. Abraham the hermit washed neither his face nor his feet. Another saint had never seen himself naked. Another, a famous virgin, joined herself to a community of nuns who shuddered with horror at the very mention of a bath. . . . This cult threatens to reappear. We note that some curates are abandoning clean collars and necks, and imitating the priests abroad in these matters; and where a complaint was made of this to a bright woman of literary tastes, she replied, "But uncleanness is not a crime." It seems as if it threatened to become a merit.—*Temple Bar.*

RICHARD BURTON, the romantic traveller and Oriental scholar, chose the design for his tomb; it is to be an Arab tent, executed in Carrara marble, within which a steel coffin will be supported on marble trestles in the interior of a chamber lighted by a stained-glass window, while oriental lamps will burn above it so long as the provisions of his will are remembered. The tomb will be placed in the forest of Dean. There was some vanity lingering in Sir Richard's mind when this display was arranged. How much more in accord with his life to have had his body burned and the ashes thrown upon the Libyan desert.