

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

ASHES.

[Written in the Shakespeare Church at Stratford-Upon-Avon.]
No eyes can see man's destiny completed
Save His, who made and knows th' eternal plan;
As shapes of clouds in mountains are repeated,
So thoughts of God accomplished are in man.

Here the divinest of all thoughts descended;
Here the sweet heavens their sweetest boon let fall;
Upon this hallowed ground began and ended
The life that knew, and felt, and uttered all.

There is not anything of human trial
That ever love deplored or sorrow knew,
No glad fulfilment and no sad denial,
Beyond the pictured truth that Shakespeare drew.

All things are said and done, and though forever
The streams dash onward and the great winds blow,
There comes no new thing in the world, and never,
A voice like his, that seems to make it so.

Take then thy fate, or opulent or sordid,
Take it and bear it and esteem it blest;
For of all crowns that ever were awarded
The crown of simple patience is the best.

— William Winter.

TENNYSON'S BIRTHDAY.

LORD TENNYSONS eighty-second birthday was celebrated at Freshwater, Isle of Wight. We need hardly say (writes the *Daily News*) that Freshwater is one of the poet's homes. The British excursionist and the American tourist know the place and love it "not wisely but too well." There is to be a concert in the Assembly Rooms, and the programme is to comprise various settings of Tennyson's words to music by Lady Tennyson. We are glad to hear that the poet is in excellent health, and has come back from his short visit to London improved rather than impaired in physical condition. We are all proud of the old age of our foremost living poet, and proud especially of the fact that years have in no way chilled or damped the youthful spirit of his song. Some of Lord Tennyson's latest poems, like some of Robert Browning's, have been among his very best. He has had lyrical command of England, and, indeed, of all English-speaking lands, for a very long time. He is above all things the Poet Laureate of the Victorian age. For although Wordsworth, to whom he succeeded, lived well into the age of Queen Victoria, he was not of it, and before that day, and for some time before it, the Poet Laureate accepted by the Court was not always the Poet Laureate accepted by the people. All the men of Tennyson's prime in literature have passed away. Some of them, like Matthew Arnold, were much younger in years than he, and are not long gone. Browning is not yet two years dead, and he, too, was much younger when he died than Lord Tennyson is to-day. Like Lord Tennyson, Browning seemed to bow to no power of years, and kept up the freshness of youth in his poetry long after the time when in former days inspiration would have been expected to desert the soul of the singer. Dickens was one of the first among the outer literary public to recognize the genius of Tennyson, and Dickens has been twenty years a classic, and Tennyson remains a living author. Thackeray came into the literary field with his first novel after Tennyson had established his place and made sure his fame, and Thackeray has gone off among the immortals for more than a quarter of a century.—*Daily News*.

BOOKSELLERS IN EARLY DAYS.

THERE were in the days of ancient Greece manuscript processors and sellers, to whom for many centuries the world was indebted for its best poetry, philosophy and wit, most of which has been lost because the art of printing was unknown; in consequence of which the Old World and the New are as far apart as the north and south poles. At the time of the Roman Empire it is supposed there were many publishing firms that issued books at least as cheaply as their modern brethren. To the Roman of the Augustan era literature was an essential, and the taste and public recitations, over which, too, emperors presided, while poets with a world-wide reputation read aloud their favourite verses. There were, too, newspapers compiled by the sanction of government, and hung up in some place of public resort for the benefit of the multitude, and which were copied for the private accommodation of the wealthy. All public events of importance had their places in these journals; the reporters, termed *actuarii*, gave abstracts of the proceedings of the law courts and public assemblies; there was a list of births, deaths and marriages, and particular attention was paid to reports of trials for divorce. Juvenal says that the women were all agog for everything horrible, and that the merchants and traders invented false news in order to affect their various markets. Every respectable house in Rome possessed a library, and among the richer classes the slave-readers and the slave-transcribers were almost as independent as cooks and scullions. These slaves were at first employed in copying celebrated writings for their masters; but gradually the natural division of labour produced a separate class—publishers.

Atticus employed a number of slaves to copy from dictation simultaneously, and was thus able to multiply books as quickly as they were demanded. Of course he found imitators, and thus publishing by written copies became a recognized trade. Martial, Ovid and Propertius mention that their works were known the world over; that young and old, women and girls, in Rome, in Britain and in Gaul read their verses. "Every one," says Martial, "has me in his pocket, every one has me in his hands." What a sight it must have been to see a Roman maiden with a copy of one of Martial's Epigrams, reading the obscenity and filth of that writer which is now to be found only in the "Index Expurgatorium," which has been consigned to the limbo of unclean things. Horace did not like this wholesale trade in his works, and speaks of his repugnance at seeing them in the hands of the vulgar—that is, the common people. School-books, too, were in great demand in Rome; Juvenal mentions that "the verses which the boy has just *conned over* at his desk, he stands up to repeat." Nero, who was of inordinate vanity, gave special command that his verses should be placed in the hands of the students. According to Martial, the first book of his epigrams could be bought, neatly bound, for five denarii (nearly seventy-five cents), but in a cheaper binding for the people for about twenty-five cents; his thirteenth book of Epigrams was sold for ten cents. By employing a number of transcribers simultaneously, it would be quite possible to produce a daily edition of five hundred and forty verses. By the employment of slave labour—and thousands of slaves were engaged in this work of transcribing—books were both plentiful and cheap in Rome.—*Boston Saturday Evening Gazette*.

MADAME NECKAR relates the following anecdote of M. Abauret, a philosopher of Geneva: "It was said of him that he never had been out of temper; some persons, by means of his female servant, were determined to put this to the proof. The woman in question stated that she had been his servant for thirty years, and she protested that during that time she had never seen him in a passion. They promised her a sum of money if she would endeavour to make him angry; she consented, and knowing he was particularly fond of having his bed well made, she on the day appointed neglected to make it. M. Abauret observed it, and the next morning made the observation to her; she answered that she had forgotten it; she said nothing more, but, on the same evening, she again neglected to make the bed; the same observation was made on the morrow by the philosopher, and she again made some such excuse, in a cooler manner than before. On the third day he said to her: 'You have not yet made my bed; you have apparently come to some resolution on the subject, as you probably found it fatigued you. But, after all, it is of no great consequence, as I begin to accustom myself to it as it is.' She threw herself at his feet, and avowed all to him."

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MORNING COLD BATHS.

In the past few years several patients have come to me, says a medical writer in the London *Lancet*, complaining that they from time to time, especially in winter, in the early part of the day, have expectorated mucus tinged with blood. In each case there was no family history of phthisis, the temperature was normal, there were no bacilli discoverable in the sputa, there was no loss of strength or weight, and the chest-sounds were healthy. The men, however, were not of a vigorous type, and they were all accustomed to have a cold bath summer and winter. It seemed likely, especially in winter, that the sudden application of intensely cold water to the whole surface of the skin too suddenly raised the internal blood-pressure, and hence the oozing of the blood through the walls of the capillary vessels lying beneath the lining membrane of the throat or larynx, or possibly the lungs. In any case, whatever the true explanation may be, the fact stands out that the unpleasant symptom disappeared as soon as the temperature of the icy-cold water was reasonably increased. The practice of taking a cold bath is so universal nowadays that it is perhaps as well to know that although the strong man may indulge in it with unmixed benefit, it may cause in the weak man a symptom which fills him with anxiety.—*Science*.

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