

THE SCRAP BOOK.

THE LOST LAUREATE.

GLADSTONE! No doubt you've blundered now and then,
And we, your candid friends, take care you know it;
But, most of all, what puzzles gods and men
Is, why, to make a lord, you killed a poet!

You tossed the minstrel for his tunesome trick
A coronet. His thanks are less than civil;
For you—you he bespeaks a curse and kick,
And you—you he insults with lordly drivell!

That coronet has cramped a noble brain,
So that our Britain, in the leash held panting,
With ears alert for some Tyrtæan strain,
Has heard—a burst of mere hysteric ranting!

The fleet that slept in peace your word can make
To belt the world with England's floating thunder—
But ah, too late—too late it is to wake
The clarion note cracked with your generous blunder!

M.

LORD RANDOLPH CHURCHILL.

OUR Master Malapert's imitation of the style of the immature Disraeli is amusing enough and characteristic withal. But it is one of those outbreaks which lead men on both sides of the House to regard Lord Randolph Churchill with despair, not unmingled with dread. How can you treat seriously a politician who one day poses as a statesman and the next turns somersaults in the gutter? More than most of our contemporaries, we have endeavoured to regard the member for Woodstock as a statesman and a possible leader of a great party. But every now and then some outburst of *gaminerie* compels us to admit that the heir-presumptive to the Conservative leadership is but a political street Arab after all. No doubt Lord Randolph will console himself by reflecting that similar things were said of Disraeli, and he lived through them all to emerge as Prime Minister. But he did not emerge to Prime Minister until the people had forgotten that he ever wrote the letters of Runnymede, whereas our pinch-beck Dizzy hopes to succeed to office before Christmas. He may reply that things have changed since those days, that the new constituencies like to see statesmen changed, and that we are in for an era of bargee politics. If so, of course our Prince Flibberty-Gibberty will stand to win. But he misconceives the sober, serious character of the people whom he aspires to rule. They are diverted by his antics. He enlivens the dulness of the political arena. But to entrust him with power—that is altogether another matter. Of this we had a slight but significant illustration last Christmas, when 1,450 persons sent in voting papers indicating who in their opinion were the greatest statesmen and the greatest humbugs of the day. For every vote given to Lord Randolph as a statesman, he had three as a humbug—*Pall Mall Gazette*.

THE *London Spectator* says, referring to the impudent letter sent by Lord Churchill to Earl Granville:—"In our view, this letter of Lord Randolph Churchill's disposes finally of all the claims of that very clever person to leadership of any kind. You must have sanity in a leader. Cleverness is desirable, but sanity is necessary. With sanity of mind you can get along even without cleverness, but with cleverness you cannot get along without sanity. Indeed, the cleverer the man who shows no sobriety and sanity, the more dangerous are the counsels of that man. Lord Randolph Churchill will probably always retain a great power of mischief. But a great power of mischief is not an adequate credential for any leader, least of all for the trusted leader of the Conservative Party."

LADIES' FASHIONS.

THIS is what a lady writes to the *Pall Mall Gazette* about fashion, and our fair readers would do well to ponder over the remarks made:—

"Looking at the great majority of women who are dressed according to the latest fashions, it is impossible to believe that any of them can have the slightest sense of form or colour. Or do they really think the narrow-soled, high-heeled shoe, which bears but the faintest resemblance to a human foot, looks becoming on their aching-feet? Do they believe that the narrow waist, pressed in by steels and laces, is anything but fearfully out of proportion? The skin-tight bodice which forbids all graceful, easy movements, the over-trimmed skirt, with the monstrous cage at the back (dress-improver, indeed!) which performs the services of a pack-horse by bearing its owner's burdensome goods, and at the same time is a constant source of amusement to those who watch its short, sharp movements, reminding the beholder of a duck's tail more than of anything else—what are they but the ever multiplying signs of the tyranny of what is now called 'fashion'? Surely a savage from the depths of a primordial forest would shrink from some of the reptiles and monsters worn as ornaments on the bare arms and necks of our women, not to speak of the loathsome insects and creeping things worn as earrings, brooches, hairpins, etc. Laugh at the coiffure of some African native, some Asiatic despot, and beware of comparing them with some of the coiffures for ladies in our widely-circulated fashion papers. Wonder at the plumes worn by Tawhio, but do not forget that plumes have their significance with us as well, both between the ears of the steeds drawing the funeral chariot and on the 'artistic' structure known as the chignon, which is not only allowed, but insisted on in the highest circles. Listen to the conversation between a dressmaker and her fair customer,

and you will find that the very names of dress materials are rapidly going back to the age of Louis XIV., when the new fashionable shades were known as the Sick Spaniard, the Dying Monkey, the Glad Widow, and such like appellations. What is the 'scouring cloth' at present announced as a novelty of the season (not to speak of the 'crushed strawberry' or the 'London smoke') but a step backward in the same direction? However, the name is all that is objectionable in the material, which in itself is almost the only satisfactory part among our 'fashions.'

"Manufacturers of ladies' dress materials are, indeed, far ahead of modistes and dressmakers; for no one looking at the beautiful soft stuffs which are brought out in ever-growing varieties can for a moment doubt that they were intended for dresses of a very different style than that consisting of a heavy mass of 'drapery' for a skirt, and a tight sleek-looking bodice. Then there are the hats and bonnets of which the illustrations given in the latest fashion papers ought surely to speak for, or rather against, themselves. These shapeless structures are 'still increasing in height,' and not in height only but in weight as well. Where will it end, this towering-up of ribbons, flowers, fruits, feathers, birds, insects, and now and then even reptiles and small quadrupeds? Years ago objections used to be raised against the 'flower gardens' on ladies' hats. Alas! for those neat little flower gardens bedded on light straws and laces! The whole hat or bonnet of those times was less in weight than at the present day one heavy silk or velvet bow. And so it is with every part of women's dress. There is decidedly too much of it—with one exception, however, and that exception, it need hardly be said, is formed by the indecently low evening dresses to expose themselves in which goes a long way to show that our women are rapidly losing that modest womanliness which forms one of their greatest charms, and that, moreover, the laws of health are utterly disregarded by a generation which deems it a sign of enlightenment to talk of and advocate sanitary improvements of all kinds."

LAUGHABLE NOTES FROM THE "ROYAL MAIL."

THE "Royal Mail" is a storehouse of amusing and interesting anecdotes. It is the Dead Letter Office that supplies the most entertaining of these. A number of persons seem to have an unlimited faith in what the Post Office can do and undertakes to do. The dead letter is, by a mistake not perhaps very unnatural in the ignorant, supposed to be a place where information can be obtained about the dead. So one person writes as follows:—"We heard in the paper about twelve or fourteen months back Mary Ann ———, the servant-girl at London, was dead. Please send it to the Printer's Office whether there was a small fortune left for." This does not excite one's sympathy; but here is a pathetic little appeal: "I rite a Line two see if you hard Enny thing of my husband ——— that was left at ——— ill. please will you rite back by return of post as we are in great trouble." The Office again is expected to find situations. A young woman desires "a housekeeper's situation where a domestic is kept," and wishes the postmaster to find one for her, with the proviso that it "must be a dissenting family, Baptist preferred." A farmer wants to know where he can profitably sell a pig of thirty stone; another correspondent desires to know where he can buy a parcel of Mithridate mustard; a third wants to know whether "there is to be a baby show this year at Woolwich, and if so where it is to be holden, and what day." Stranger than all is the following. A gallant Frenchman wishes to propose, but first wants to know whether the lady is alive. This is his letter:—

J'ai cinquante-trois ans. Veuillez être assez bon de me faire réponse pour me donner des résultats sur l'existence de Madame. . . Si parfois elle était toujours veuve, je voudrais lui faire la proposition de lui demander sa main d'après que j'en aurais des nouvelles. En attendant, Monsieur, votre réponse.

Under the head of mistakes of course there are some very amusing things. Perhaps this is as good as any: "A St. Louis merchant, while in New York, received a telegram notifying that his wife was ill. He sent a message to his family doctor, asking the nature of the sickness, and if there was any danger, and promptly received the answer: 'No danger; your wife has had a child; if we can keep her from having another to-night, she will do well.'" "Child" had been written for "chill."

It will not be possible much longer to defer a national decision on the question of cremation. The evils of our burial customs are constantly occupying the attention of hygienists, and they will have to be seriously considered by Parliament and the public.—*Liverpool Mercury*.

Now that Niagara Falls (American side) are free and public property, large improvements will take place in their vicinity. There will be more visitors, and more need of accommodations. The railroads and hotels will be aided. One of the best points of inspection is Falls View, where the Michigan Central Railroad will erect a hotel. While all this is going on on the American side, what about the Canadian side? If Mr. Mowat could have his way, the river side from the Falls downwards would be monopolized by a railway company.—*London Free Press*.

AMERICAN Eulogy on Mr. Watts, the Agnostic Orator:—"At 3 p.m., same day and place, Mr. Watts spoke on 'Agnosticism and Theism.' He defined, explained, and defended Agnosticism as the only consistent attitude between Atheism and Theism. Atheism, the speaker said, was illogical, because it dogmatically denied that of which we had no means of gaining any knowledge whatever. He then attacked Theism, as dogmatically taught by the clergy. What followed can only be described as a tornado of logic accompanied by copious showers of wit and humour, with an occasional hailstorm of raillery thrown in. To enumerate all the brilliant things said, would transcend the limits of this letter: suffice it to say, he left the Christian Theists not the ghost of a leg to stand upon, or the dream of a peg upon which to hang the shadow of a hope."