

## NATURE AND THOUGHT.

O'er wood and field, the heavy clouds, low hung  
In leaden folds against the eastern sky,  
A sombre shadow cast; a hollow sigh  
Did move among the trees, whose branches flung  
Uncertain shade upon the waters dun,  
That crept with sluggish pace and waveless tide  
Toward the plain—cheerless and dark the scene.  
A gnarled root my seat; in thought I tried  
From the dull world to turn away and glean  
Some solace sweet in fancy's region wide.  
I ope'd the poet's page that long hath been  
My constant joy—a living thought out-leaped.  
I raised my eyes, and lo! on every side  
The earth in floods of golden light was steeped.

Chatham.

HENLEIGH.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

MACHINERY THE SERVANT OF HUMANITY, AND NOT  
ITS MASTER.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—We can not tell how long a time must elapse before the accepted teachers of the people in Canada, in place of presenting to their readers well-studied generalities, valuable in their own way, on the principles of kind and Christian dealing, will search out the forms of beneficent action most suited to the horror they are commenting upon, and courageously declare the immense urgency and present need of certain forms of protection for the lives of the people.

We wait for moral and social changes, and do what we can to hasten them, and if the above speculation of mine has something of the *platitudo* about it, I can only say: I will try, before this correspondence is closed, to be more particular in suggestion.

The protection of the lives of the citizens from the dangers of travelling, on what until the era of railways used to be called the Queen's Highway, would in past times, with many imperfections in the methods, have been considered not merely a matter of urgency but of public honour.

To-day, the railway companies and their commentators combined have brought us back to the verge of barbarism and the times when every man was his own defender. To run imminent risks and to escape from them are the achievements most to be prized, according to the new and spurious public sentiment which has been imported into the thinking-habits of the people. In no other way could we get such an example as the following, in the ghouliesh ridicule with which the road-conduct of the poor ladies whose melancholy immolation has already been set forth in these columns was treated by a railway official. Mr. — said to a *Witness* reporter "that the accident was regrettable, but that the company was not to blame. Anybody who knows that part of the country is aware that it is perfectly level, and that the headlight of a train could be seen a long distance. But it is very singular what a notion some women have that a horse can beat a railway train. I have been on the engine several times myself, and seen women taking the greatest risks in crossing the track in buggies. There is a notion amongst some women that when they get behind a horse all they have to do is to shout and use the whip, and he'll beat the train every time."

The trained official, too much, we admit, in the tone of the time, seemed to think he had triumphantly settled the question. As if the ruder sex did not run the same risks, and did not even more frequently become the victims of them. And as if, O indurated official! women, in all civilized communities, till now, had not been a specially protected class. These are the real horrors of our time, the forces in daily operation that turn human hearts into stone; that block the way of administrative reforms, and supply foolish expedients and untrustworthy makeshifts for all social miseries. We must tell our zealous officer that these shocking calamities are the fruit of railway development in that line of unchecked and short-sighted philistinism that the thing has taken; and that they are made possible by defective law; but having the mind fixed, just now, more on the remedies for than the mere denunciation of an order of evils, the exact parallel of which no former time has ever beheld, I now bring one more narrative in all its impressive details within the view of the readers of THE WEEK:—

## THE LATEST ACCIDENT DISCUSSED.

"It's astonishing what risks people will run," said Detective Boas, of the Grand Trunk Railway, to a *Witness* man this morning, as the former, with Coroner Jones, Dr. Lanctot, a jury, and a crowd of Grand Trunk officials, visited the scene of the accident at the St. Marguerite Street crossing yesterday.

"Why, half an hour after the accident yesterday there was awfully near being another at the next crossing. A man was driving across in an express. A train was coming. I shouted and signed to him. He paid no attention. I then shouted to the engineer, who pulled up the engine, otherwise there must have been an accident."

That accidents in this district are not far more frequent than they are is surprising. The whole track is as open as a field. Men, women and children walk across it and along it just as they please. There is only one man for thirteen switches, and it was just by accident that he happened to be present yesterday to warn the man before the accident and to note the circumstances of it.

"It would take the whole city police to stop the traffic," said Detective Boas.

"There is surely a crying need for protection at these crossings," the *Witness* man remarked to the agent, Mr. Stone.

"But understand that these are not public streets," the agent replied. "They are farmers' crossings. The only public street in St. Henry is Notre Dame Street. If this were a public street the municipality would soon make us put up a crossing. The by-laws state that there must be protection at each railway track which runs across a public street."

But Mr. Stone admitted that there was a large pedestrian traffic on all these streets through which the track ran, and that it was not protected, either by gates or watchmen.

James Prescott, the switchman, and two men named Poirier and Sere were prepared to swear that they all shouted to Poitras to keep back as the train was coming. His little nephew will also testify, if necessary, that he had to dissuade him from crossing.

Coroner Jones, after hearing Dr. Lanctot, who described the fatal injuries to the little girl's head, adjourned the inquest till to-morrow morning.

Dr. Lanctot says Poitras will recover.

Large numbers of people visited the scene of the accident to-day. The waggon, smashed to splinters, lies to the south, and the horse, with a big jagged hole in its side, fifty feet away to the north-west side of the track.

I will not trespass upon your space to-day, by offering remarks upon the foregoing, especially as we need more public discussion of the means of cure for these disorders in the body politic coming upon us in the half-developed condition of our railway enterprises. Our readers, I hope, will soon get in touch with this vital question for our community, so that we may report more rapid progress in view of the early meeting of Parliament at Ottawa. *Salus Populi summa lex!*

X.

## THE RAMBLER.

A NEW romance by Clark Russell! As soon as you open the book, the swirl and the surge, the rush and the riot of the sea are upon you. What is his literary method? Out of the ocean, a few merchantmen and a motley and often ill-assorted crew he has constructed a dozen matchless, ever-thrilling and ever-varying sea-stories of great truth and beauty. Stately periods of rhythmic, descriptive prose, alternate with dialogues between carefully executed portraits of strongly drawn nautical types and landmen and landwomen no less finely cut. As often as he has described a sunset or a sunrise, a storm or a wreck, a mad Captain or a gracious young Englishwoman, he can always present to you some novel and faithful variation of the picture or the type—the combinations of this dexterous artist seem without end. He has never changed his style, never wandered from his chosen subject. With the calm consciousness that he is read for that subject and that style, he goes on in the even tenor of his way seaward, ever seaward, and we board his dubious Indianmen and sit at the table with his scowling Captains, and jostle in the cabin his mutineering steward, and gaze through field-glasses at distant spectral wrecks, and become marooned or get cast adrift, and float about for days on the open sea, and take turns at the wheel and pulls at the grog and walk up and down all night under a sky studded with the glittering stars of the southern zone, and visit marvellous reefs of glowing coral and tropical islands of delicious verdure and drink famous wine out of pirates' pannikins, and travel, finally, to scenes that could only have been painted by the most ardent of imaginations, assisted by those realistic touches which abound in all his books.

What does this remarkable monotony imply? Surely not a want of versatility, of catholicity, but rather a preponderating enormous mental pressure in one enthralling direction. He is the Jules Verne of the sea. There were never penned in our language finer descriptive prose periods than some of those scattered throughout "The Frozen Pirate," "Marooned," "The Wreck of the *Grosvenor*," and perhaps "A Sailor's Sweetheart," and the last novel, "My Shipmate Louise." In this most recent sea-story there is, it is true, very little that is fundamentally novel, but the rearrangement of well-worn types and situations has been effected with wondrous skill, so that the mad Captain and the avaricious ship's carpenter, and the beautiful English maiden and the well-conducted hero, always more or less of a lay figure, are made to do fresh and thrilling duty through between three and four hundred pages of exciting narrative—in itself no inferior achievement.

"My Shipmate Louise" is well worth reading, for episodic effect, dramatic suggestion, extreme naturalness and vivid colouring; also for some analysis of character, notably that of the haughty though noble Louise.

I find in Mr. Arthur Weir's "Sonnet" of last week's WEEK a very timely thought. I am not now referring to the sonnet itself, construction or melody, but only the *raison d'être* of its appearing. He is perfectly and altogether right. To depict Nature in the useless modern way at present in vogue seems to me rather idle work most of it, and the result but poor stuff. We want a little more study of the heart and soul of things, a better acquaintance above all with the methods and beliefs of Wordsworth. Strange to say, the Sonnet itself, which, for centuries, was only reverently and sparingly used to express and contain a precious thought or a leading idea, has become the stock-in-trade of every minor poet, who makes it serve his slenderest purpose, whatever that may be. One looks in vain for a thought in hosts of modern sonnets, there is but a picture to offer. If the reader have the seeing eye, all is well. He will translate the picture into thought by sympathy with his author, by knowledge—occult and mysterious—of what the poet tried, and perhaps failed, to see. But for the majority of mankind this translation process is too subtle.

The world waits for a few masterstrokes. It wants its poetry in the Original Manuscript, straight from the hand of God. It is confessedly tired of Type-Written verse, careful, picturesque, but cold, having no Gospels to offer.

There is a plan afoot to unite the two Paris *Salons* this year and for holding a joint exhibition on the Champ de Mars. The *Athenaeum* remarks in consequence that the

Royal Academy, taking nothing from the nation and without public aid, maintaining an art university of some hundreds of students is far worthier and safer than the French body.

As might be expected the chief—perhaps only—opponents of the fusion are the authorities and friends of the old *Salon*.

The "Latest Portrait" of the Laureate is photographed from a painting by Mr. G. F. Watts, R.A. Out of a dark Rembrandtish background, the domed head and solemn awful eye look at you. The face, lined with care and "travail of high thought," comes out in startling and almost ghastly relief to the prevailing sombreness surrounding it. Looking closer you perceive something very like laurel-branches in the dark of the obscure shadows around the head. A fitting setting for the noble lineaments so dear and familiar to the wide world that will one day be called upon to mourn him.

Mrs. Besant has been lecturing lately in Dublin on "The Class War." Her "splendid oratory" is the theme of more than one enthusiastic correspondent, and her dress is described as faithfully as if she were any ordinary member of fashionable society. This should be very distasteful to Mrs. Besant. However, she certainly said some exceedingly sensible things. "Sir, what have you got to support my daughter?" Mrs. Besant very naturally remarks that in a few years it is hoped no such demoralizing question as the above will be heard, demoralizing to her sex, perhaps also to the other. For in the dependence and humiliating position of many women, who are obliged to ask of some man every penny they spend, Mrs. Besant sees an occasion for the selfishness and narrowness of the male being.

## CANADA BEYOND THE MOUNTAINS.

LOOKING out of my window next morning from an upper storey of the Clarence Hotel—a fine specimen of the comfortable, house-like, unostentatious English inn—a delightful prospect met my eyes. Beyond the roofs of the city, half buried in rich green foliage, rises the glorious range of the snow-capped Olympian mountains, rosy and glistening in the sun-rise glow. In the nearer distance the strait of Juan de Fuca leads the great Pacific into the inner and the outer harbour, and environs the city with lake-like expanses of the fairest waters. An extraordinary climate conspires with these lovely surroundings to make it attractive all the year round. The softening influence of the great Japan current moderates the winter to the temperature of the south of England. No ice is formed suitable for use. From the same current proceed cooling breezes to temper the summer heat. I never saw such a wealth of flowers as adorn the Victorian homes. The sweet peas thickly blooming from the bottom of the vines to the height of six feet, the rose trees displaying not infrequently from 100 to 300 roses each, and continuing to bloom late in December. Among the ornamental trees, the mountain ash grows luxuriantly, revealing great bunches of deep-red berries amidst its deep green foliage. A New Yorker who has tried it writes home: "If any citizen will bring his family here for one summer, he will find that Victoria combines in itself more advantages as a summer resort than any with which he is probably familiar." Not a mosquito—so they say—and the potato bug not yet arrived. I must testify, however, to seeing a good many canker-worms pendant from the trees, and to tell the truth, I saw in one of the guest rooms of the Clarence Hotel several creatures worse than mosquitoes or any other living things that ought not to be in a hotel. They were three young panthers of the cougar variety, about twice the size of nine-day kittens, and beautifully marked. A young man of Victoria was showing them in a basket. He had just come in with a friend of his from a hunting expedition in the woods of Vancouver Island. They saw in the distance a full-grown female panther just disappearing in the undergrowth. Retracing her tracks they found in the hollow of a tree three young cougars not yet having got their eyes open. With their Remington rifles carefully charged and cocked they retreated safely to their boat with the young brutes in their game pockets. It was the owner's purpose to bring them up by hand and sell them by and by to the London "Zoo" for \$50 a piece. The drives about Victoria are peculiarly enjoyable, not only because of the good roads and the variety of the water prospects, but because of the charming homes that occupy the wide-spread suburbs. After emerging from the business centre, instead of city lots and stone fronts, with brick rears looking across high-fenced kitchen yards into the neighbours' back windows, we find home-like reservations with large front yards, verdant lawns and ample breathing spaces. The houses, although for the most part inexpensive, have a villa look that redeems them from the air of vulgar cheapness. The prevailing fashion is that of a one-storey house, broad fronted and deep in the rear, with high four square roof, the apex broken by a lantern or railed platform, and the sides relieved by ample porches or broad verandahs. Many of the residences are higher and costlier and richer in ornamentation, but there are none of the stunning and pretentious order that challenge admiration by their multiplicity of towers, pyramids, gables, peaks, big-bellied windows, and other devices for destroying the elegance of simplicity and repose. Victoria is remarkable for the multitude of its cozy homes