

I beg your pardon, it is gradually going up.

An Ottawa correspondent telegraphs that bets are freely offered on a majority of thirty for the Government at the next session of Parliament. Why so precise? Wouldn't twenty-nine do? Ask Sir John. I think he would put up with an odd number for once and pay all the lost bets into the bargain.

A quiet humourist wishes me to notice the curious fact that one of the Modoc gentlemen reprieved at the very last hour was called Sloluk. Slow luck in his case seems to have been sure luck.

Rain! Rain! ejaculated, with an oath, a shivering and bedabbled wretch who had just taken refuge in a street-car. "We should thank God for all his mercies," said a rubicund old gentleman sitting beside him. "I bless the rain." He was a Director of the M. P. R. C.

A profound thought.
A Flour Inspector cannot be a member of Parliament, but a member of Parliament can be a Flour Inspector.
There is a profounder thought still.
A fool can be a wise man, but a wiseman cannot.
No, that will never do. The first is decidedly the profounder thought of the twain.

I shall claim a medal from the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. I lately saved my fellow citizens from an infliction and a humbug. During the late Exhibition, a Yankee whom I met on the horse cars was going to the Fair grounds to establish a side show. The show he carried under his arm nicely concealed from view. It was a petrified Indian boy found somewhere in New Hampshire. My man was beginning to descend upon this wonder when I interrupted him with a frightful account of the tax imposed upon shows by the city. He decided to return home at once, declaring that he ought to have known that Montrealers were barbarians.

The Yankee was not so far wrong after all, for it has since turned out that the Beethoven Quintette Club were outrageously taxed on the occasion of their last visit.

Somebody was inquiring the other day who was the tall figure in vermilion and gold, standing guard on top of the Dominion Theatre Refreshment Rooms, Gosford Street. "That is Jakes Cartier," said one. "It is a member of the Temperance Vigilance Association," said another. "He is watching how often you and I turn in to the bar below?"

If there is such a thing as *prima facie* evidence, there must be *secunda facie* also.
Of course. Just as there is the first thought and the sober second thought.
One generally destroys the other. Doesn't it?
Almost always.
Then Sir John is safe. I knew he would get out of it.

Why don't journalists organize themselves into a club? Not a club with a President seated on a high back chair and the members ranged on either side in a row, discussing stiff formalities. But a social club, a gathering about a round table with books and papers and pictures and fruit and the juice of certain fruits. What a bond of union such a club would be. What an agent of mutual help. It would be an invigorating relief from the routine of daily work. The old association of school and college days would be evoked, and the scintillations which the friction of conversation would produce, would illuminate the scene with glory. Let our journalists, in all the cities, think of this and act accordingly.

ALMAVIVA.

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

BEHIND THE SCENES.

BY

I like occasionally taking a look behind the scenes of a theatre. It destroys much of the illusion; but it is the child's delight of breaking a toy to see the inside. Those gorgeous scenes don't bear inspection well. The fairy palace of Delight is a gew-gaw affair of tinsel and vermilion; the trailing roses are sorry daubs of paint; but while I am looking, how those before the curtain applaud and buzz with animation! The Queen of Beauty has the red and white pretty thick on her fallow cheeks, and if the paddings were all taken away, those young men with the eye-glasses wouldn't utter so many "Fine girl, by Jove, you know." I like to contemplate the villain with the cork eyebrows and the black moustache. I tell you, my little innocents, when he washes his face he is not so terribly wicked looking as some of you suppose.

The theatre is not the only place in the world that has scenes which we can get behind, nor is the clown the only man who cries "Here we are again," with a grin on his face while his heart aches. We have all heard public speakers declare that they had no idea they were to have been called upon to respond to a certain toast. No idea, the rogues, but we know that they have had the secretary's invitation in their pockets for a fortnight, and that the speech they make has been carefully prepared. We know that, sir, and that they have their M&S tied up with a blue ribbon to hand to the reporter of the *Nevrecheuple*.

I have heard a Temperance orator speaking of *aqua pura* very eloquently, and refer to the adder that lurketh in strong drink, and requesting us not to look upon the wine cup when it is red. I had supper with that orator *en famille* and we enjoyed a glass of brandy and water after a nicely devilled bone. *Ma foi*, that was a peep behind the scenes which his cold water friends little dreamed of. I would hardly like to call my orator a hypocrite. He thought abstinence was good for some, perhaps, but he didn't fear a little indulgence himself. Or maybe he looked upon his lecture as a legal gentleman would upon his address to the jury, so much talk to order for so much pay. I am not bound to explain. I only tell you of the little glimpse I had.

I like occasionally to get behind the scenes when love-making is going on. I mark Strephon and Chloe sighing and

ogling. How they bill and coo together and whisper softly and vow eternal affection and so-forth! Yet I can swear I saw Strephon with his arm round the waist of a ballet girl a few evenings before, or lacing those fairy little silver boots or looping up her back hair, while she playfully tapped him on the cheek with her fan and called him her naughty, naughty scapegrace. And Chloe sometimes whispers very low and softly to a certain young man with blonde moustaches, and they sing tender duets together. And when Miss C. is quizzed by some of her giggling young lady acquaintances about having two strings to her bow (two beaux to her string would be better) you should hear her saucy laugh as she replies *Cela est à la mode!* The mode indeed, yet what a passion you would get into if you knew about the ballet girl and how you would long to tear that brazen-faced hussey's eyes out; and Strephon would look a little *effaré* if he heard of the other young man. These glimpses behind the scenes are not altogether pleasant.

I am sometimes let behind the scenes because my head is bald and I look innocent (which, *ma bonne*, I am). Young Lovkins flung himself into my room the other night with his hair tumbled about and his gait a little unsteady. "Old boy," he exclaimed, "I am going to leave the country. I have nothing to live for. Mattie has gone back on me. That girl, how I loved her and now—'Twas ever thus: I never loved a dear gazelle to light me with her soft black eye, but when I came to know her well she snubbed me and rejected my offer," and the poor fellow burst into tears. I asked him not to emigrate in the morning by the first train and he said he wouldn't and went to sleep on my sofa. Next morning I saw Mattie and her pretty eyes were red with crying and she made her little plaint. Her heart was broken, she said; men were all so cruel. She wished she were a Catholic that she might become a nun and never see a man again. I set the misunderstanding right. I confessed these little people and pronounced the *Ego te absolvo* and brought them together. They have been married since then and I hope they never wish in their secret hearts that the old man had minded his own business!

Young people are very silly. They do not know the value of either friendship or love. The chalice is presented to their lips, containing the wine of a lifetime, and what do the *bêtes* do? They take a little sip and pour out the balance on the barren sands. They think the spring is perennial. By-and-by, perhaps when too late, they discover the value of what they so recklessly expended. When I was young I found a pearl in an oyster and I gave it to some chance acquaintance, because I thought I could easily find another. Since then I have eaten more oysters than would buy a pearl of great price; but no second gem ever came my way. *Venezic, mea bellus*. Love is a very rare thing, friendship, I think, is rarer still. When either is sincerely offered to you, let no maiden shyness induce you to refuse the gift. Flirt, my little dears, with Tom and Harry and Dick, but when the true lover or the true friend comes don't toy with him. It is, perhaps, your one chance in the lottery; seize it. What has this got to say to being behind the scenes? *A quoi bon?* Perhaps I ramble a little, but is the advice bad? The stage lover with the pinky cheeks and the curly hair is not always the best husband. See to it. Get rid of silly romance, dear; do not flirt too long with the bubble-brained Adolphus or Reginald, while a good husband is waiting in plain Charles or William. His hair is not perumed so nicely, but who has more brains, whose love will be more lasting? Try to look beyond the church pageant and see behind the scenes of domestic life.

These peeps from the door of the *coulisses* show us a good deal of deception; but we also see honest hardworking people toiling for the public amusement. What is life after all but going behind the scenes and putting a little rouge on our cheeks and then strutting about bravely? God grant that we all before the footlights of public opinion may be well up in our parts and gain the applause of the gods!

NEW BOOKS.

A SIMPLETON. By Charles Reade. Toronto: Hunter, Rose & Co. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

It is the fashion now-a-days among a certain set of critics—humuncules, our author calls them—to indulge in unbounded abuse of Charles Reade and of his stories. The *Pall Mall Gazette* was, if we remember right, the first of these literary assailants, and led the van of an army of would-be connoisseurs who were and are indebted for their own opinions to those of older and more experienced warriors than themselves. With all respect to the opinion of the critic who writes for the *Pall Mall*, we must decidedly decline to chime in with his expression of disgust at Mr. Reade's writings. We have always held this author in high esteem as a brave man, a bold and fearless exponent of public wrongs, a writer possessing perfect originality with the additional and, we may add, rare merit of wonderful painstaking. These are traits that are only too seldom to be found in English fiction writers, and the Old Country may well be proud of a man who, since the death of Thackeray and Dickens, has almost single-handed sustained its literary reputation among the nations. A writer in the *Athenæum*, speaking of a recent American work of fiction, says: "There can be no doubt of the superiority of American writers over the great and increasing mass of our own fairly successful novelists, both in skill as to the manipulation of plots and insight in the delineation of character." The reproach is fairly deserved. The style of English novelism is slowly but surely deteriorating, and were there a few more novelists with the earnestness and point always observable in Mr. Reade's writings its downward progress would be speedily arrested. Although, as we have already said, we cannot subscribe to the opinion enunciated by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, we must confess to having been disappointed in the last novel by the author of "Hard Cash." It is not that the book, as a novel, is inferior. It is only inferior as compared with the writer's other works. Had it been written by any other individual it would doubtless have immediately brought the writer into prominence. Yet inferior as it is to others of Mr. Reade's books it is very far from being bad enough to detract in any sensible degree from his well-deserved reputation. Its great demerit, or rather, we should say, lack of merit, is the absence of point—a feature the more observable after Mr. Reade's earlier novels. It is merely a plain, pleasant story, with nothing particular to recommend it to the thinking reader, unless we except the irresistible attraction of the author's style. It evinces, like all of its predecessors, a vast amount of careful labour, the characters are admirably drawn, from the girlish, lovable Simpleton to crusty Uncle Philip, and the "situations" are dramatic in the extreme, while the dia-

logues are as fresh and fragrant as any that the author ever penned. With such recommendations as this it is no wonder that the book is in active demand, and that one edition has followed another in rapid succession. The edition before us is brought out by a prominent Canadian firm, whose enterprise is well known throughout the country, and whose endeavours in catering to the public taste are, we trust, meeting with the success they deserve. The book is well printed and neatly bound, and in form matches the other volumes of the series published by Messrs. Hunter & Rose.

MISS DOROTHY'S CHARGE. By the author of "My Daughter Elinor." New York: Harper & Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros. Cloth, 8vo., \$1.50.

Mr. F. L. Benedict has already made himself a name by his contributions to fiction, and his country—he is an American—may well be proud of him. It has not been reserved for many American novel writers to achieve any very great distinction in the reading world, but Mr. Benedict has proved a striking exception to the rule, and has succeeded in winning the highest praise from the critics on both sides of the Atlantic. His last production is in every way equal to its predecessors. Notwithstanding its unpretending title it is one of the most readable books of the year. It depicts American life, with a glance at high life in England and Italy, painted by an old experienced hand. The characters are master-pieces in their way, drawn with a pleasing freshness and exactitude; the style is easy and unaffected; and the scenes are described with immense graphic power. Miss Dorothy makes a charming old Aunt to her two charges, the half-sisters Valery and Cecil—a lady still in the prime of life, with strange old-maidish ways that recall the celebrated Betsy Trotwood. Valery, the poor nameless, homeless girl, is one of the noblest characters ever portrayed. Cecil, the dazzling young American heiress who captivates an English nobleman whom she refuses for an untitled countryman of her own, is a pretty young personage enough, but before her grand half-sister she pales almost into obscurity. The strangest character in the book is Hetty Flint, a humble help who believes in her star—a la Napoleon—and is firmly convinced that she is destined to become either an actress or a duchess. Her conviction is carried out in the course of the story, and though she makes but an indifferent show on the stage she succeeds perfectly as a duchess. The male characters are hardly so successful in the art of pleasing, and we can hardly accord them the praise that the author evidently intends them to meet with. As a whole "Miss Dorothy's Charge" is indubitably a success and we predict for it an immense success among novelreaders. Unfortunately its title is not so taking as it might have been.

The Queen once sent the poet laureate word that she would honour him with a visit on the following day. The announcement was received with full loyal welcome from the poet and his household, which, be it said in all respect, has, with all the attractions, some of the disadvantages of the poetical atmosphere. Order does not reign there supreme in outward things. The house was, however, put under arms to receive the royal visit; Tennyson arrayed himself in solemn dress-coat; Mrs. Tennyson wore an appropriate toilette; the younger Tennysons were snatched from mud pies, washed and dressed, and kept in bondage to the best clothes for the whole afternoon, while a delicate repast of strawberries and cream and flowers was prepared in an arbour out-of-doors. But the day passed, and the next, and the next, and no Majesty appeared. The household drew a sigh of regret—some of them doubtless of relief—and lapsed into slippers and mud pies once more. But lo! one morning, as the children were at their favourite pastime in the garden, and the poet meditating in his dressing-gown, and Mrs. Tennyson on domestic cares intent, a horseman dashed up to the gate and shouted, "The Queen!" and before Tennyson could don his coat or warn his wife the royal carriage drew up before the house. With the instinct of a true gentleman, he went forward to greet his sovereign, called his family to him, and led her Majesty into the house. Then there was an awful pause. Suddenly the poet raised his head, and looking at the Queen exclaimed, "Oh, woe is me! For five days I waited, ready in suitable attire, to receive my Queen. My wife was ready, and my children were washed, and pictures to behold, and her Majesty came not; and now she has come, and found us in what a plight!" The poet groaned. The Queen broke into a merry laugh, and the ice thus broken so gracefully and wittily did not form again during the visit.

The Reno (Nev.) *Crescent* vouches for the genuineness of the appended miscarried love-letter, which, with all its orthographic originalities, tells the good old story quite touchingly: "reno. Sept 2 the 1873: well mrs — I desire to tolk a fue words with on paper as I haf no convenet chance othry chance now dear I haf seen you and changed a fue words with you and I well plesed with yoeer a pearance I haf ben hieley rekmeded to you and I am satisfied that you are a good wormon and that you will make me a good companion one that will always prove true and deare I say this to you with all my heart and if you will join in the bonds of matramonia with me your true lover I will ever prove true to you. I will love you as I love my life I will stay with you in sickness and in helth I will comfort you and yours in time of distress I will furnish you in everything you need to make you and your children happy I will doe all man can doe to make you and yours happy I never will forsake you as long as watter runs or life lasts I will forsake all others and cleave onley unto you as long as we both shall live now deare I want you to belive thes words for they are faithful and true and deare dont not cast your bread on the watters and thou shalt find them a gan meny days hence and deare dont make yourself too much of a stranger to me for I am your true lover I join in the journey of this life in the journey of pese to help either a long in the journey of pese and happiness from earth to our heavenly home come deare join in the journey with me I will doe you no harme but all the good I can com my deare intended wife dont dout for I haf visibel means of support for you and children come deare dont dout for all shall bee rite your wae shall bee esey . your troubles shall bee fue . come deare dont think I will bee a skold I never will skold you nor bee crose to your children I will bee kind a fection to you my deare you shall not haf cose to find fat with me for I am determined to doe that is I wael and rite . Come deare I want you for my bosem companion to ceep me compeny wittle we journey a long the lonely paths of our journey throo the land . read thes lines a plye them to your own heart then rite to me what you think a bout the bisnes that I may no what to depend on for I most haf a pardner direct your letter to — p O sisklyou e o J H California

A pastoral cantata, founded on Tennyson's "Lord of Burleigh," has been presented in Birmingham. It is the work of Signor F. Schira.