

READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

MANNER AND CHARACTER.

THE two are not invariably synonymous, yet, to a very great degree, manner is an expression of character and is its direct result. Fineness of perception, delicacy of feeling, has its correspondence in shades and inflections of manner. As civilization advances into the finer social enlightenment, manner becomes a factor only less important than morals. Punctiliousness in those trifles whose aggregate, after all, makes up the sum of life is one of the attributes of character and is indispensable to polished manner. The prompt reply to letters and notes; the due acknowledgment of invitations, of gifts, of favours, are a part of the grammar of social life. Rudeness is justly considered as a social crime. The ill-bred person has no place in the social fabric, and he should be as much excluded from polite life as should the criminal from the business transactions of honest men. Beautiful manners are the fine inflorescence of all forms of art. Noble sculpture, beautiful paintings, the harmony of music, the charm of intellectual gifts, all find their highest and most potent expression in manner.—*Boston Traveller*.

SPEED OF TRAINS.

INQUIRY is frequently made as to how the speed of a train may be estimated. The traveller especially is curious about the speed his train is making, and we suggest three methods by which the speed may be guessed with remarkable accuracy, as follows:—1. Watch for the passage of the train by the large white mile posts with black figures upon them, and divide 3,600 by the time in seconds between posts. The result is the speed in miles per hour. 2. Listen attentively until the ear distinguishes the click, click, click of the wheel as it passes a rail joint. The number of clicks upon one side of the car in 20 seconds is the speed in miles per hour, where the rails are 30 feet in length, and this is the case generally. 3. Count the number of telegraph poles passed in two minutes if there are four or five wires to a pole, and in two minutes and twenty seconds if there are only one or two lines per pole. The number of poles passed is the number of miles per hour at which the train is travelling.—*Railway Review*.

WHAT IS POETRY?

BUT, after all, is it possible to give any sufficient and exhaustive definition of poetry at all? We may say such-and-such things are poetry, but if we attempt to add "and only these," we are certain to go wrong. Indeed, we cannot help wondering whether, in truth, poetry is not best known by the human emotions it produces. Just as music is said to awaken emotions which are stirred by and find expression only in music, so, does not poetry appeal to a special and distinct set of emotions?—and if this be so, may not it be possible to gauge what is poetry and what is not by the test of whether or not any response is given by these emotions? Of course, such a test is open to the objection that it is, in truth, merely an appeal to personal experience, and therefore does not advance the question. The value of the objection, however, depends upon the fact whether, when poetry is felt, it is felt in the same way by different people. If it is, then clearly to test what is poetry and what not by this means is no more ridiculous than to test sweetness, bitterness, heat, or cold, by individual taste. Finally, it may be said in support of this contention, that in practice every one uses the test we have suggested. If a man wants to judge whether something is poetry or not, he does not seek to apply a definition, but reads the poetry to be tested, and according as it affects him, pronounces for or against its claim to be considered a true poem.—*London Spectator*.

BACON AS A JUDGE.

BUT the serious thing is that Bacon subjected himself to two of the most dangerous influences which can act on the mind of a judge—the influence of the most powerful and most formidable man in England, and the influence of presents, in money and other gifts. From first to last he allowed Buckingham, whom no man, as Bacon soon found, could displease, except at his own peril, to write letters to him on behalf of suitors whose causes were before him; and he allowed suitors, not often while the cause was pending, but sometimes even then, to send him directly, or through his servants, large sums of money. Both these things are explained. It would have been characteristic of Bacon to be confident that he could defy temptation; these habits were the fashion of the time, and everybody took them for granted; Buckingham never asked his good offices beyond what Bacon thought just and right, and asked them rather for the sake of expectation than to influence his judgment. And as to the money presents, every office was underpaid; this was the common way of acknowledging pain and trouble; it was analogous to a doctor's or a lawyer's fee now. And there is no proof that either influence ever led Bacon to do wrong. This has been said, and said with some degree of force. But if it shows that Bacon was not in this matter below his age, it shows that he was not above it. No one knew better than Bacon that there were no more certain dangers to honesty and justice than the interference and solicitation of the great, and the old famous pest of bribes, of which all histories and laws were full. And yet on the highest seat of justice in the realm he, the great reformer of its abuses, allowed them to make their customary haunt. He did not mean to do wrong; his conscience was clear; he had not given thought to the mischief they must do, sooner or later, to all concerned with the Court of Chancery. With a magnificent carelessness, he

could afford to run safely a course closely bordering on crime, in which meaner men would sin and be ruined.—*Church's "Life of Bacon."*

GENIUS AND TALENT.

INDEED, one might almost reverse the ordinary estimate, and say that Genius, in its most frequent form, is really Talent backed up by application. To this special class of Genius belong such men (to take a typical example) as Charles Darwin. It was not the mere *aperçu* of natural selection or survival of the fittest that set the seal upon Darwin's undoubted apostolate. Other men had had that same *aperçu* in greater or less degree before him: some of them smaller men, no doubt, and some of them at least his peers in grasp and ability. Wells had had it years earlier; Patrick Matthew had had it as a passing glimpse; Wallace lighted upon it almost simultaneously; Herbert Spencer trembled more than once with strange nearness upon the very verge of discovery. But what Darwin did was to raise this *aperçu* into the guiding star and mainspring of his active life; to work away at it early and late; to heap together instances *pro* and *con*; to bring out at last, after endless toil that banner of a fresh epoch, the 'Origin of Species,' with all its wonderful ancillary treatises. Darwin's mind, though broad and open—a mind of singular candour and acuteness and penetration—was not in respect of mere general ability, very far above the average constructive mind of the better class of English scientific men. He had twenty contemporaries in the Royal Society who were probably his equals in native intellect and generalising power. But he had no equals in industry and systematic observation; it was the combination of so much faculty for hard work with so much high organising intelligence that enabled Darwin to produce so vast a result upon the thought of the world and the future of science, of philosophy, and of politics.—*Grant Allen in "Fortnightly Review."*

A FAMOUS ART PATRON.

UNLIKE his predecessors, Hadrian cared little for the supremacy of Rome. Rome was no more to him than other cities of the empire, and, either in war or peace, he was always on the move; there was a restless fire in his nature, and he had set himself the task of visiting every province of his empire, and seeing with his own eyes the needs of the peoples he ruled over. Britain, Gaul, Germany, Spain, Carthage, Alexandria, each province was visited in turn, every department of the public service of each was investigated, overhauled, reformed, and everywhere public works marked the course of his progress. But through all his travels he remained "the Greekling," his bearded face—an innovation on the close-shaven chins of all his predecessors—proclaimed him the sophist and philosopher, and Athens was still his favourite city, and he delighted to abide there, fancying himself living in Hellas of the Golden Age. Never since the loss of her liberty had Greece had so powerful a friend; Athens was rebuilt, her temples and theatres restored, and a new quarter, named after Hadrian, added to the city. Indeed, throughout all the cities of Asia Minor he scattered showy buildings with lavish munificence. His cosmopolitan taste, by elevating the status of provincial cities, lowered the supremacy of Rome, yet no emperor enriched the capital so much as this restless Hadrian. The works of his with which we are all most familiar are the bridge and castle, now called of St. Angelo, but originally known as Pons Ælius, and the mausoleum of Hadrian. That tomb of many emperors, that fortress of many fights, is now impressive, bleak and grim, a dark discoloured wreck of the white marble pile that rose tier upon tier, surmounted by a gilded dome. But though the bridge and castle are most familiar to our eyes, the buildings most closely associated with the memory of Hadrian are the ruined fragments at the base of the hill of Tivoli, known as Hadrian's villa, but which was, in truth, a very considerable suburb, bounded by a ring fence ten or twelve miles in circuit, containing within its girth a strange agglomeration of heterogeneous buildings, constructed from his designs. Almost every known masterpiece of the ancient world was here adapted or imitated; temples of Egypt, of Asia, and of Greece; Plato's academy, the Stoic's porch, the Lyceum, Greek and Latin libraries and theatres, palaces, barracks, baths—all gorgeous beyond description, incomparably costly, enriched with such multitudes of statues that there is scarcely a museum in Europe which has not drawn largely from this well; embellished by every means that the art of sumptuous Rome could command, paved with mosaics wrought of gold and jewels, luxurious beyond the most enervated dreams of Hadrian's dear Greece. Nor were the gardens one whit less magnificent than the buildings; there were marble colonnades for shade, paved with mosaic; the pond for the sham sea-fights was paved throughout with yellow marble; the groves, the hills, the fields, the streams were all laid out with elaborate art in imitation of the description of the meadows, vales and rivers of antiquity. Art was perverted from its true function; everything was made to look like something it was not, was strained to represent some sentiment that had no existence in Rome of the second century; all was an imitation of something that had gone before, so that the art of Hadrian's Rome, for all its priceless splendour of material and elaboration of technique, was a lifeless thing, unnatural and unreal; the echo of a true note that had for long been silenced, and that with each re-echoing grew duller, more blurred, less true. The gods of Greece were dead, the old mythology disbelieved, the old ideal disregarded; the artists of Hadrian's time, in repeating their story, had no message to interpret to the world—no voice of their own; they were merely translators. Indeed, in many cases already, their work was only the translation of an older translation, and a chance reference by Lucian to sculpture as "merely mechanical," reveals in what humble estimation the sculptor's art was held.—*The Magazine of Art for September*.