

IN EARLY SPRING.

AN UNCOMMON INSECT.

pills, very good; I recommend to take any one; I used many times that pills." Another chapter deals with efforts in verse. The Baboo is specially funny when he attempts the lyrical expression of the passion of love as understood in the West—a subject wholly outside the sphere of his experience. Here are two stanzas from a ballad of a disappointed lover, which is a gem in its way:—

I so well prink, my clothes do drink
Perfumes all fragrant fine;
I give her trinkets nice; to drink
I give a precious wine.

And yet she goes to a man who knows
Not what is gentleness!
Indeed she shows by her curved brows
That him she loves. Oh, yes.

But perhaps the most entertaining chapter in the book is that upon petitions and begging letters. There is one appeal, the genuineness of which we hope Mr. Wright can vouch for, in which the petitioner, after explaining that he was "too much poorly during the last rains, and was resuscitated by much medicines which made magnificent excavations in the coffers of your honourable servant," details the woes of his sick children who "are damnably noiseful through pulmonary catastrophe in their interior abdomen," and winds up by praying for his patron's "longevity and procreancy." The book is excellently printed, and well, though oddly, bound. We can confidently recommend it to all readers who are not of that severe and sour complexioned sort whom good Izaak Walton disallowed as competent judges.—*From a review by Arnold Wright, in London Literary World.*

CLASSIC GROUND.

WHEN the visitor stands in the glorious Chapter House (of Westminster Abbey) he stands on the spot round which centre some of the most important events in English history. The scenes here enacted may have been sufficiently exciting for the monks, when they confessed their sins to one another, or were accused and judged, and scourged in the sight of the community before that central pillar. But how far more memorable was the assembly when the Chapter House was set apart, before 1340, for the separate use of the House of Commons! The Speaker sat in the Abbot's seat. Under this roof were passed such far-reaching Acts as the Statue of Provisions (1350) and the Statue of Præmunire, which "pared the Pope's nails to the quick, and then cut his fingers." Here Wolsey held his court as Cardinal Legate. Here the martyrs, Bilney and Barnes, were tried and sentenced to be burnt for Protestant opinions. Here were passed the Act of Supremacy and the Act of Submission; and before that slender pillar was laid the Black Book of damning evidence against the monasteries, which led to their dissolution, and roused a cry of indignation from the listening senators. And here the House of Commons continued to sit till the last day of the reign of Henry VIII. In 1547, the first year of Edward VI., the Chapel of St. Stephen, in the Palace of Westminster, was prepared for the use of the Lower House, and the Chapter House, though it was no longer used for their debates, was still regarded as public property, and was turned into the Record Office, in which, for three centuries more, were kept Doomsday Book and all the other precious documents of the kingdom. In 1865 it was happily restored from its condition of neglect and defacement by Sir Gilbert Scott.—*Archdeacon Farrar, in the Sunday Magazine.*

DANGER FROM HEAVY SEAS.

SECOND OFFICER PATERSON, of the British steamship *Vancouver* (Capt. Williams), furnishes the following details relative to the disaster that happened to that vessel on Nov. 7, eastward of the Strait of Belle Isle: "Toward midnight of the 6th the wind hauled west-north-west, bringing a tremendous sea along with it, which, with the head sea still running, caused a very treacherous cross-sea. We kept shipping heavy bodies of water, but without damage, the ship rising to the sea very nicely until 6 a.m., when two tremendous seas seemed to meet close aboard, and the ship not rising to them in time, passed right over her, causing fearful havoc. The starboard breakwater on the fore-castle head, of heavy pitch pine, was torn out of the deck. The iron rails on the fore-castle-head went aloft, and the light-tower was badly damaged. A large square iron companion on the main deck was bulged in, and an iron bulkhead crushed. The two iron doors of the alley-way were torn down, and the mass of water rushed through the alley and burst in the saloon-door, flooding the cabin. But the worst damage was caused on top of the saloon deck: the chart-house, wheel-house and bridge were swept clear over the side, leaving only a portion of the weather side of the bridge, with the third officer, who was saved. The captain, who was in his room, and the quartermaster at the wheel, were both carried away with the wreck. Another quartermaster was in the wheel-house, and he was found lying across the brass pedestal of the steering-gear, very badly cut up. The lookout on the lee side of the bridge was jammed among the wreckage and badly hurt; and two stewards, who were in the alley-way, were injured. The whole affair was over in a minute, so quickly that the captain and quartermaster had no time, probably, to realize what had happened."—*Science.*

BRIGHT days are with us, lengthened and serene,
The clouds grow mellow, and the forest hath
Its budding pleasures; yet of Winter's scath
Some drear memorials here and there are seen.
For, though the wind no more breathes frosty-keen,
It often floats the old leaves in our path,
Or sighs along some unrequited aftermath,
To mind us of the rigour that hath been.
O thou my joy, Spring of my wondrous year!
Forgive, if in thy presence aught of grief
Remain from that dead time ere thou wast here.
Now, surely, such gainsaying shall be brief;
For thou wilt set my feet where flower and leaf
And soft new sward blot out the stubble sere.

—*Edith M. Thomas, in March Scribner.*

THE PHILOSOPHY OF REPETITIONS.

WHAT I have been saying of repetitions leads me into a train of reflections like which I think many readers will find something in their own mental history. The area of consciousness is covered by layers of habitual thoughts, as a sea-beach is covered with wave-worn, rounded pebbles, shaped, smoothed, and polished by long attrition against each other. These thoughts remain very much the same from day to day, even from week to week; and as we grow older, from month to month, and from year to year. The tides of waking consciousness roll in upon them daily as we unclose our eyelids, and keep up the gentle movement and murmur of ordinary mental respiration until we close them again in slumber. When we think we are thinking, we are for the most part only listening to the sound of attrition between these inert elements of our intelligence. They shift their places a little, they change their relations to each other, they roll over and turn up new surfaces. Now and then a new fragment is cast in among them, to be worn and rounded and take its place with the others, but the pebbled floor of consciousness is almost as stationary as the pavement of a city thoroughfare.—*From "Over the Teacups"; by the author of "The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table."*

ORIGIN OF THE TITLE OF "POET LAUREATE."

WHARTON, in his "History of English Poetry," states that in the reign of Henry III., there was a *Versificator Regis*, to whom an annual stipend was first paid of one hundred shillings. Chaucer, on his return from abroad, assumed the title of "poet laureate"; and in the twelfth year of Richard II. (1389), he obtained a grant of an annual allowance of wine. The appellation of Laureate seems to have originated in a custom of the English universities of presenting a laurel wreath to graduates in rhetoric and versification; the new graduate being then styled Poeta Laureatus. The king's laureate was then simply a graduated rhetorician in the service of the king. It was his duty to write an ode on the birthday of the sovereign, and sometimes on the occasion of a national victory; but this custom gradually died out towards the conclusion of the reign of George III. In 1630, the office seems to have been made permanent. The salary was fixed at £100 per annum, with a tierce of canary; which latter emolument was, under Southey's tenancy of the office, commuted into an annual payment of £27. The following is a full list since 1599: Edmund Spenser, died 1599; Samuel Daniel, died 1619; Ben Jonson (born 1574), died 1637; Sir William Devenant, 1637, died 1688; John Dryden, 1670, deposed at the revolution, 1688; Thomas Shadwell, 1688, died 1692; Nahum Tate, 1692, died 1715; Nicholas Rowe, died 1718; Rev. Lawrence Eusden, 1718, died 1730; Colley Cibber, 1730, died 1757; William Whitehead (on the refusal of Gray) 1757, died 1785; Rev. Dr. Thomas Warton (on the refusal of Mason) 1785, died 1790; Henry James Pye, 1790, died 1813; Dr. Robert Southey (on the refusal of Scott) 1813, died March 21, 1843; William Wordsworth, 1843, died April 23, 1850; Alfred Tennyson (born 1809), installed 1850.

A cork rope is one of the latest inventions. It is made of small corks placed end to end, and the whole covered with a braiding of cotton twine; over this is a coarser braiding in heavy strands. According to the inventor, a one inch thick rope will stand a strain of 1,000 lb.

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AN insect which is not uncommon in India is a medium-sized mantis, between three and four inches in total length. It is one of those mantises, says Mr. J. R. Holt in *Science-Gossip* for March, which have a long slender thorax, and which, owing to the second and third pairs of legs being very long, carry their thorax and head very high. In this insect the thorax is about half its entire length, and is of a bright grass-green colour, without any markings, and it obviously mimicks a grass-stem. The abdomen is also somewhat slender; the wing-covers are of a grass green colour, without markings; and it obviously mimicks a grass-blade. But in both these cases the mimicry is obvious, as also the reason for it, and it is not what Mr. Holt would call attention to. The first joint of the fore-legs is widened and flattened; it is also green, and the posterior surface is marked with a large ocellus. When the insect is undisturbed, it remains generally in one place, but is not perfectly motionless; it sways perpetually and uniformly from side to side. In this position it looks very harmless, but if it is startled or alarmed its aspect instantly changes: it partly opens the wings, turns its head and thorax so as to face the terrifying object, makes a noise like a sudden, sharp puff of wind, very like the noise made by a startled snake, and raises its fore-legs so that the first joint lies along the thorax; and, the inside margin of the expansion being nearly straight, it looks as if the fore-legs and thorax were connected. In this position the ocelli are very conspicuous, and, with the small, triangular head and slender thorax, the effect is to produce a ludicrous resemblance to a diminutive cobra. Now, what puzzles one is this exact resemblance. The insect could not be taken for a cobra on account of its small size and green colour; while, if the object is only to appear formidable, it could have been obtained without imitating a cobra so exactly. It may be suggested that there is no direct imitation, but that the same causes which have led to the development of the eye spots in the cobra have also led to the development of ocelli in this insect, viz., that the apparent possession of a large head gives the animal a more formidable appearance; but this explanation is apparently negated by the peculiar noise made by the insect, which certainly seems to indicate that a snake is imitated. Possibly the object of the noise is to suggest that it is some kind of snake, and then the ocelli may suggest that it is one of the cobra kind. Maybe some of our readers may be able to suggest a better explanation. Anyhow, the thing is curious, and worthy of note.—*Science.*

TIME, which deadens hatred, secretly strengthens love.—*Richter.*

THE CANADA LIFE ASSURANCE COMPANY held its annual general meeting at Hamilton on Tuesday, the 7th inst., Mr. A. G. Ramsay, the President, in the chair. The report presented to the meeting was of the most satisfactory character. It showed that during last year, the forty-fourth year of this long established Company, 2,787 new assurances were applied for, representing the largest sum of \$6,192,728. Of these 2,448 policies were issued, representing assurances for \$5,583,121, with new annual premiums for \$188,787.06. Adding this to the existing assurances, the report presents a total of policies in force at 31st December, 1890, amounting to 25,667 for \$54,086,801.26 upon 19,097 lives. This is really a splendid showing and one of which any Canadian Company may well be proud. The excess in the death-rate of last year can fairly be attributed, as it is in the report, to *la grippe*. The income of the year is put at \$2,098,205.10, and after all usual and necessary deductions had been made, the assets of the Company were increased by the sum of \$551,969, raising them to the substantial sum of \$11,032,440.09. It appears that this Company is actually "carrying the war into Africa," and its thriving and developing business in Michigan is another facer for the pessimists whose chief occupation consists in belittling Canada and exalting the United States. The fine new building of the Company in Toronto is a credit to the city and a monument to its enterprise and energy.

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