

THE WORLD OF BOOKS.

A Packet of Delightful Epistles.

After the peculiar success which Mr. Lang achieved in his Letters to Dead Authors, the captivated public became clamorous to know what he might have to say on living celebrities. The volume before me is Mr. Lang's discreet response. The task he here undertakes is one before which he wisely hesitated. Yet he has succeeded in it, by reason of his delicacy, his subtlety of appreciation, his beguiling humor, and his Scottish caution. Only half a dozen of the letters, in truth, are concerned with the perilous subject of contemporary writers; but in these he is at his best. The others, on such themes as Fielding, Gerard de Norval, Lucretius, Virgil, Ancassin and Nicolette, Plotinus, Rochetoucauld, etc., etc., are written in a modern spirit to imaginary correspondents of this nineteenth century.

There are perhaps more accomplished critics now writing than Mr. Lang, but there are more, I feel sure, who so combine sound critical judgment with the finest graces of style. Whatever Mr. Lang writes is literature. The assured and inimitable touch is never lacking. There is a persistent flavor of Theocritus, of the Greek anthology, of the Greek and of delighted wanderings in Provençal song. All this is blended with modern sympathies, the spirit of alert inquiry, and a fondness for coquetries of phrase which sometimes come very near the verge of slang. Such is the apparent lightness of these pages that we often fail to realize just how sane and temperate are the doctrines which we are imbibing. Yet, with all his good sense, he reiterates the hackneyed lament that poetry has fallen into disfavor. "Poor poetry!" says he, with misplaced condolence. "Now we dwell in an age of democracy, and poetry wins but a feigned respect, more out of courtesy, and for old sake's sake, than for liking." This is an age which gives Tennyson his \$25,000 a year for his singing, and Browning his \$10,000, and Swinburne, with his comparatively limited appeal, \$5,000! The complaint is an idle and unfounded one. The rewards above named may not seem very large in themselves, but they go with an influence and repute which are not to be measured in dollars.

To judge of Mr. Lang's insight as a critic, one need only read his brief but adequate comparison of Tennyson and Browning. In order to delight in the one, he does not find it necessary to inveigh against the other. He admires both heartily, though, as might be expected from his own artistic and lovely verse, he sets the greater store by the Laureate. After a judicious searching out of the inevitable flaws which, like flies to amber, are to be found even in Tennyson, he thus sums up: "He is with Milton for learning, with Keats for magic and vision, with Virgil for graceful recasting of ancient golden lines." With regard to Browning, after admitting that "it is hardly to be hoped that 'Sordillo,' or 'Red Cotton Night Cap Country,' or 'Fifine,' will continue to be struggled with by posterity," he reaches the following wise conclusion: "No perversity of humor, no voluntary or involuntary harshness of style, can destroy the merit of these poems (Men and Women), which have nothing like them in the letters of the past, and must remain without successful imitators in the future. They will last all the better for a certain manliness of religious faith—something sturdy and assured—not moved by winds of doctrine, not pattering with doubts, which certainly is one of Mr. Browning's attractions in this fickle and shifting generation. He cannot be forgotten while, as he says,

A sunset touch,

A chorus ending of Euripides,

reminds men that they are creatures of immortality, and move a thousand hopes and fears. CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

The Magazines.

Scribner's Magazine for June is perhaps most noticeable for its poetry. It contains seven poems, all good, and two of them—"Vespers," by Ellen Burroughs, and "At the Ferry," by Graham R. Thomson—of unusual beauty. There is but one short story. The most important prose articles are a paper of great practical utility and suggestiveness, by W. A. Linn, on "Building and Loan Associations," and an article on "Slavery in Africa," by Prof. Henry Drummond, author of Natural Law in the Spiritual World. This paper is one whose influence should reach far. The careful and unexaggerated picture which it gives of the increasing horrors of the African slave trade are such as to make one's blood boil in one's veins. As the details of this unspeakable blot upon our century become known, a crusade should (and will, we devoutly believe) be stirred up against the slave-stealers, and the hideous iniquity wiped out.

Notes and Announcements.

A new story by Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne, with the curiosity-piquing title of The Wrong Box, will be published by the Scribners in a fortnight, and is likely to create a great deal of interest. The tale is said to be entirely outside the lines along which Mr. Stevenson's genius for story telling has manifested itself,

and will illustrate afresh his extraordinary versatility in the field of letters. The story has a most amusing and exciting plot, dealing mainly with the astonishing and funny adventures of a young man in his attempts to secure the fruits of a Tontine life insurance policy. It is an extravaganza of the gayest quality, and some of the characters are important literary creations. The co-operation of Mr. Osbourne will enable the Scribners to protect the book by copyright. The Scribners issue an edition of Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett's first novel, "Vagabondia," originally published in 1873, under the title of "Dolly." It went to press in that year without any previous revision by the author, the copyright having passed from her hands. The present edition has been printed by Mrs. Burnett's regular publishers, with such corrections as seemed advisable to her, and with the name she originally bestowed upon it.

JOHNNY MULCAHEY

Goes to the Show, and His Father Sits on a Cake of Ice Between the Acts.

Our famerly was up ter the interstoot this week, which is ma and pa and me. It was a awful funny play, and I larfed till I thort I'd bust, like I did when pa hauled out the stove pipe what he didn't know was full of suit and emptied it on his shirt bosum. I guess ma'd a larfed pretty hard too, only she's afraid her front teeth would fall out. She says the dentists nowadays never thinks what a person's got nothin' to do but hold their teeth so's they won't fall out. Pa says its all nonsense, and what he don't see what people goes to see plays fur anyhow.

My parent on the female side (that's ma) says she does wish the new opera house was built, 'cause perhaps the managers wouldn't take the audience fur geese and try to cook 'em. I guess this is a joke. Pa had ter go out atween every act, it's so hot. 'Guess if there's a good munny acts though, what pa'd hafter get the aisles made bigger so's he could cum in. He always wipes his noble brow when he's goin out, you know, so's people 'll think hes goin out to sit on a cake of ice, till the orkestra fellers gits done turnin' orf them chesnuts. Pa wants ter know who owns the hand organ anyhow.

Plays is divided into two parts, tragedy and comically. I like tragedy when they kill the fellars good. Pa's awful mad wonst, 'cause a fellar woke up again after he got killed. He said he wouldn't a minded if he's a good actor, but the fellar oughter been killed dead. I think the best way is to tie a rock and a string on their necks and fire 'em off the wharf, 'cause when I do that with cats they don't come up again.

Ma says, give her sentiment; let her see the wronged wife rushin' inter her darlin's arms. Pa said she needed the sense, no matter what was ment. Pa's a great old joker after he comes from a play. Pa says he youser be a darlin' wonst hisself. That's after he had me. Somebody youser rush inter his arms, only he darsn't say so. He says a few likes me makes people settle down to business, and then they've got to look out for number 1. I guess number 1 is the man what takes up the taxes, 'cause pa's lookin' out for him all the time. JOHNNY MULCAHEY.

"The Odor of Decayed Intellect"

Among my friends I am proud to number one deliciously bright little lady who is never at a loss for a quick retort, or a clever speech, and who is always sure to be the first person in the room to see the humorous side of any subject or event. Not long ago I chanced to be present when some six or seven clever people were discussing the subject of lunatic asylums. One lady remarked that she had always had a perfect passion for visiting asylums, and talking to the inmates. Another said that she had such an unreasoning terror of asylums and everything connected therewith, that she sometimes thought she must be destined to become an inmate of one, and felt a sort of premonition of her fate. And then one of the gentlemen gave it as his experience that there was always a peculiar atmosphere about lunatic asylums that could not be found anywhere else. It was utterly indescribable he said, but at the same time fearfully and wonderfully perceptible, and once experienced, it was never forgotten. "I cannot imagine what causes it," he concluded. And then the brilliant little matron lifted up her voice and spoke. "Probably it is the odor of decayed intellect!" she said softly.

A Home in the Country.

The residence built and occupied by Henry Titus, situated about one mile and a-half above the village of Rothesay, is offered for sale. The house is two stories in height and contains rooms enough for a large family, and stands upon a six-acre lot, more or less, and is admirably adapted for a summer residence, as well as all the year round. There are large barns upon the premises, and the place at present cuts about five tons of hay. The view of the Kennebecasis and its islands is magnificent.

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HE TALKED ABOUT HOME.

HIS MOTHER KEPT A BOARDING HOUSE IN MONCTON

And His Name was William Kent—Where He was Going, How much He was Worth and His Desire for a Photograph—He Converses with His Mother.

DORCHESTER, June 5.—In a law office, not a hundred miles from Dorchester,—a hotbed of Liberal-Conservatism and provincial government opposition-ism, were seated three students, in various degrees of occupation. One of them—who is also a dabbler in amateur photography,—was seated at a desk on which was a typewriter. The door opened and admitted a big, bony sailor, who remarked in one breath:

"Be this Mr. ———'s office for takin' fottgraffs? for my name is Willyum Kent and I b'long in Albert county but my father moved t' Moncton thirteen years back an' my mother keeps a boardin' house an' she never has no less than 25 boarders as true's I'm tellin' ye an' I'm mate on the Skylark down here in the bay an' I passed the 'xamination las' fall jus' as true's I'm tellin' ye an' I git thirteen dollers a month an' found an' my sister married a railway engun driver an' he gits two dollers a day an' I'm goin' to Portland with lime an' then t' th' Bermudees an' then to Savannah an' I'll be off thirteenth months as true's I'm tellin' ye an' be this Mr. ———'s office for takin' fottgraffs?"

The amateur photographer hastened to assure him that this was Mr. ———'s office, but that the photograph gallery had become detached, and had consequently been mislaid. He was very sorry, etc., etc.

"Oh, it's all right, boys, only I thought I'd like to hev my pictur took an' framed up nice to send my mother up to Moncton for she keeps a boardin' house an' she never has no less than 30 boarders as true's I'm tellin' ye an' I thought you'd take my pictur an' the man over there in the store over here up the road said as how he thought you took picturs but I guess anyway I'll get the captain to let me off up to Moncton till Monday for my name's Willyum Kent an' I'm agoin' to be away fifteen months as true's I'm tellin' ye, an' my father moved to Moncton 20 years back an' my only brother died las' winter an' I got \$1500 on his life, an' you wouldn't call him back would ye now?"

The wearied hearers said they would advise him to call the brother back long enough to get \$1500 more on his life, but they thought the insurance companies would get on to it if he played it more than once or twice.

"Well I guess I'll let him be an' I don't know that I've got much to complain of, hev I?" panted the tar. "Say, I spose you and me's on the same side of politics ain't ye cuz I'm a great Blair man an' I don't know what you fellers is but ye look like good grits an' I worked for Emmerson las' year over to Albert an' me an' my brother had it all our own way an' we saved Emmerson but praps you aint on my side."

The audience stifled conscience, lied in their throats, and affirmed that they were all good grits and warm supporters of Mr. Emmerson and his party; whereupon the gibbering idiot, casting his eyes on the youngest of the trio exclaimed:

"Wall, I declare if you ain't jest the livin' image of Mr. Emmerson hisself, Be you any kin o' hisn?"

The flattered youth assured the gentleman that he was a first cousin to Mr. Emmerson, and was always thought to resemble him closely.

"I thought so, an' now I come to think of it, I s'pose that's the reason you're all such good Emmerson men. Wall, boys, I like ye, true's I'm tellin' ye, an' I thought as how I could get one o' ye to take my pictur' to sen' to my mother what keeps a boardin'-housk up to—" Here his eye fastened itself on the typewriter. An idea seized him. "Can ye talk t' Moncton by that machine, mister?" he asked of the photographer.

"Oh, yes; talk any distance," he replied. "Why, do you want to talk to Moncton?"

"Wall, yes; I'd like to tell my mother about the pictur' an' say I'm a-comin' up if I can git off."

"Just wait till I ring them up," said the photographer, sounding the little gong on the typewriter, and assuming a listening attitude. "All ready now," he said, after sending the paper carriage along till the bell rang again, and adjusting a piece of paper to the machine. "All ready now. You have only to talk away, and I'll get the answers on this piece of paper, and let you see them."

"What must I say first?" asked the sailor. "I ain't much used t' talkin' through these machines, an' I don't hardly know how t' start."

"Just say, 'hello,' to begin with," said the photographer, encouragingly.

"Hello-o-o-o!" bawled the sailor, suiting his voice to the distance between Dorchester and Moncton. The photographer rapidly printed off an answering "hello" on the paper, and showed it to the sailor, who began to swell visibly with the importance of the situation.

"Is that you, ma?" he howled, "Yes. Is that you, William?" ticked off the photographer, showing the answer to the astonished sailor.

"Say, ma, I guess I'll run up for Sun-

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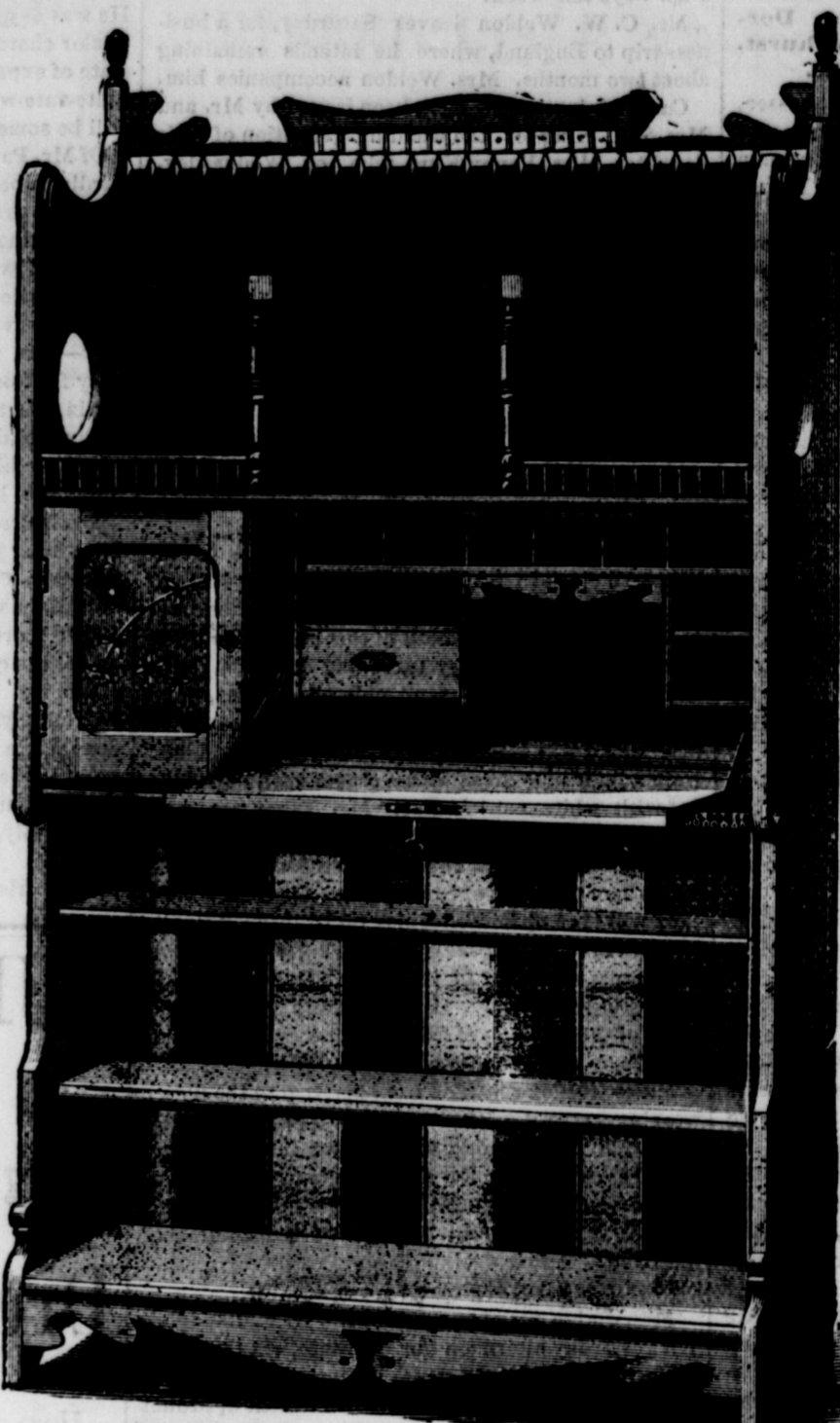
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Every man should confine his business to his office, but for the hundreds who do not, what more convenient house desk to work at than this? Wives would be reconciled, perhaps, to their husband's evening letter writing hour, if they could be consoled in the day time by such a handsome polished oak Secretary.

Students with a method will find this Secretary has all the nooks and crannies they want, with shelves for their books and, best of all, it can be closed, and not a paper touched during the absence of the owner.

day an' see yes all afore leavin', if I can git off," was the next shout.

"Yes, William, be sure and come," was the reply, neatly printed as before. And so the farce went on for ten minutes, the sailor becoming more and more delighted every minute, while the other two students were in convulsions of silent laughter, and the photographer himself was almost overcome. When the sailor had said all he wanted to, he was handed the paper with the messages thereon, with a recommendation to show it to his mother when he got home. He went out remarking that he was "glad he come in, an' they was mighty good company anyway, an' he thought he'd a bin able t' git his pictur' took to send t' his mother up t' Moncton, an' she kep' a boardin'-house, an' she never had no less than 35 boarders, true's I'm tellin' ye."

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