OUR LITERARY CORNER.

ORIGINAL AND SELECTED MATTER.

NOTES ON BOOKS AND AUTHORS.

THE FEDERAL ELECTIONS.

(SPECIALLY WRITTEN FOR "THE PRESS.")

SYDNEY, December 1, 1906.

On December 12th, for the third time in its brief history, the electors in the Commonwealth of Australia will be called upon to vote for senators and also for members of the House of Representatives. To the imagination that can properly realise it, the spectacle will be at once picturesque and significant. Over the whole vast continent, which is but little less in extent than the territory of Canada, or that of the United States, or the area of Continental Europe, from Port Darwin to Mount Lyell, and from Thursday Island to King George's Sound, men and women alike will troop to the polls. Nowhere else on earth can such a sight be seen on the same scale. The sun as he rises in the heavens will witness it first on the east coast, from Sydney north to Cooktown; he will cross the Blue Mountains and look down on the barren western division of New South Wales, engaged in the pious task; he will observe Victoria and South Australia successively join the procession, and he will wind up his tour of inspection at Fremantle and Geraldton, where the electors of the remote west coast will still be voting when the electors of the now distant east coast are bethinking themselves of the pleasures of sleep. The English General Elections are commonly spread over ten days or a fortnight, and the results come in dramatically like the dropping fire of practice at a rifle-range, following on some crashing volleys; the Federal elections rapidly mimic their slow succession, but in effect they fall on the reader next day with a sudden shock, as if they had taken place simultaneously.

SECESSION.

The interest of the observer in the elections is apparently greater than that of the electors. At the last general elections, held three years ago, out of about two million electors, less than one-half thought it worth their while to go to the polling booths. What are the reasons of so languid a participation in what might seem so important an event, if it is not rather a high privilege? There are many of them, but one is prominent. The Commonwealth has been a disappointment—to some of the States, a bitter disappointment. To judge from their persistent outcries, the less-populous States are the most dissatisfied. So discontented is Queensland that its Premier has darkly intimated that official steps of some kind will speedily be taken in that State to test the sentiments of its citizens about federation, and a Bill has been brought into the Legislative Assembly of Western Australia to permit a referendum on the subject to be taken. Little Tasmania is less energetic, but is no less querulous. What are their grounds of complaint? Those of Queensland and Tasmania are identical. In both States, with their scanty and struggling populations, hard cash has at all times been scarce, and their Governments have obeyed Adam Smith's maxim in such cases and raised their revenues by the easiest, if it is also the most wasteful, of all methods—the taxation of imports. Both Tasmania and Queensland derived more than half of their revenues from this source. The Commonwealth did not kill the goose that laid such golden eggs, but put it on short commons. The Federal tariff being still judiciously moderate, the three-fourths of the proceeds returned to the two States fell much below the amount previously received. Hence their tears and their wails. Wholesale retrenchment was effected, and in Queensland particular officials of high distinction, like Mr Wragge the meteorologist and Mr O'Donovan the Parliamentary Librarian, who had won a wide fame, were thrown upon the world. Tasmania entered on a series of desperate experiments in taxation that reminded of pre-Revolutionary France or contemporary Turkey. West Australia was generously allowed to retain its oppressive Customs duties by way of exception, but it is furious because the project of a trans-continental railway from Port Augusta to Kalgoorlie has been dropped. The railway would run through 1100 miles of a country where everlasting drought abides, but even the experienced Sir John Forrest, who has been for four years a member of Federal Ministries, and yet has done nothing for the cause, indignantly declares that if the wild-cat railway is not built, he will be "the rankest secessionist of the lot." South Australia is silent, and is presumably contented. Victoria has some cause to complain, because it has lost the high protective duties that long galvanised its industries into a show of life; but it does not complain.

New South Wales was never as enthusiastic for federation as Victoria, but it ultimately gave the casting vote that made federation practicable. What it dreaded was the loss of its freetrade system. Its most instructed advisers assured it that freetrade was in no danger. The result showed that the popular instinct was in the right, as it is apt to be, and the experts were in the wrong. As Lord Melbourne profanely remarked, what all the wise men foretold would come to pass did not come to pass, and what the so-and-so fools said would happen did happen. The new Commonwealth tariff fell upon New South Wales like a blight. Business of all kinds seemed to be stricken with paralysis. Grass might almost be seen growing on the streets. The mighty ocean highway that stretches southwards from Sydney was deserted. Years passed before the recovery came, but at last it has come. New South Wales is again prosperous, and discontent on that score is extinguished. There will be few abstentions in this State from a spirit of anti-Federalism.

Nor is the disruption of the Federal bond anywhere seriously in question. Progressive peoples do not often, or even with impunity, make a retrogressive movement. It is true that the league named the United States of Guatemala has been dissolved, and several attempts at union were made in North America before federation was finally accomplished. These were mere eddies in a rising tide. If several—even if all—of the Australian States have lost in some ways, as do all who enter into any kind of a pact, each State has gained on the whole. The deadly hostility among them has been converted into a wholesome rivalry. A step or a stride upwards from the state of nature, which philosophers tell us is a state of war, has been irrevocably taken.

THE WOMEN.

It was perhaps natural, but was none the less discouraging to reformers, that an exceptionally large proportion of the abstentions occurred among women. Of 882,763 females on the roll, only 366,476, or less than 42 per cent., then voted. It seems an accusation against the sex that over 58 per cent. of adult Australian women did not feel sufficient interest in the Commonwealth to record their votes. Yet it had earned their gratitude. At a time when no Australian State, save South Australia, had enacted womanhood suffrage, it borrowed from that State and from ever-progressive New Zealand the female vote, and triumphantly carried it with an ease unknown to any of the legislatures that have adopted it. Thus the larger body, which would naturally follow its constituent parts, is in advance of them. It has gone further. It has thrown open its legislative chambers to "the fairer, but not the weaker sex," as Disraeli, ever chivalrous to women, gallantly phrased it. At last general elections four women stood as candidates—two in New South Wales and one in Victoria for the Senate, together with one in New South Wales for the House. The last alone this time declared herself a candidate, and with more valour than discretion Miss Selina Anderson bearded the Free-trade Leader in his stronghold at East Sydney, while she has shown more judgment than courage in retiring from an impossible position. In Victoria Miss Vida Goldstein nibbled at the Senate, but found it hopelessly tough. The cause has plainly received a setback. No woman will sit in the new Parliament.

THE LEADERS.

Its protagonists will be the same as in the last Parliament. The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth is a man of lofty character, who is closely connected with a religious denomination that makes personal conversion and a radical change of heart the sole avenue to its communion, and no word or act in his distinguished career has ever given the lie to his high profession. His alliance with the Labour Party is his one questionable proceeding, but it has involved no conscious sacrifice of principle. He is the John Bright of Australia, and holds an audience spell-bound with his truly Demosthenic oratory. The worst that his opponents can say against him is that "he is not a man of action." He is by vocation, they allege, a man of letters, who should wander about in some natural paradise, like Sir George Grey's romantic island, where he might dream out a life of literary achievement.

The Leader of the Opposition is of a very different stamp. Short and stout, like the ideal man of "Limanora," but, like another little man, the great Earl Russell, with a good presence, he displays boundless energy when a grand enough cause wakes up his powers out of their chronic torpor. He has the name of being the best all-round speaker in Australia, and his variety, like Cleopatra's, is infinite. After dozens of speeches delivered in an oratorical campaign, he still abounds in new ideas at the end of it and fresh words to clothe them in. As the leader of a national party he would have been one of the greatest of Prime Ministers; as it is, he is the leader of a forlorn hope.

The modest chief of the Labour Party is the real king of the Commonwealth. Like other Ministers—James Ashton, the sagacious Minister for Lands in New South Wales; E. W. O'Sullivan, lately Minister for Works in the same State; and the late George Fisher, of Wellington, he is by trade a compositor. He, too, is connected with a religious denomination. If Mr Deakin is a Congregationalist and Mr Reid a Presbyterian, Mr Watson seems to be a Unitarian. In England the Unitarian used to be defined as a man who believed in one God and paid twenty shillings in the pound. Mr Watson is a Unitarian of that stamp, and his high character buttresses his position. Like other Labour leaders, he has set himself to repair his early disadvantages, by assiduous studies in political science. His style of speaking may be realised by anyone who has read the sermons of Phillips Brooks. Having said what he has to say, he is done with it, and hurries on. Succinctus—like a man with his loins girt—the old Roman word describes him ad unguem. If Deakin is all thought, and Reid all words, Watson is all action.

THE PLATFORMS.

As are the men, so are their policies. Called to the Bar, Mr Deakin chose to sacrifice his worldly prospects and devote himself for some years to journalism. In that career he learnt, and in the democratic "Age" he expounded, his policy of industrial protectionism. It is virtually the sole plank in his platform. Determined smashing of that plank, together with a fierce animosity against Socialism, born of his desertion by the Labour Party in 1899, is, again, the sole policy of Mr Reid. Remove the protectionist plank, proclaim a fiscal truce, and the two champions would agree on all else and might unite to thwart the Labour Leader, who alone has a constructive policy. State Socialism, whether Christian or Fabian, is the adopted programme of the Labour party. The nationalisation of the iron, sugar, and tobacco industries composes three-fourths of its immediate objective. The imposition of a crushing land tax, urban as well as rural, with the design—so dear to the vindictive heart of Sir George Grey—of "bursting up the big estates," is the remaining section of the quadrilateral, and it will probably bear the first brunt of the Labour onset.

FORECAST.

In New South Wales the free trade cause is understood to be secure—certainly in the elections to the Senate; and in the elections to the House there may be one or two free trade gains. Nowhere else, Tasmania perhaps excepted, need such victories be looked for. Even in Tasmania the Socialist party is steadily gaining ground. Mr Reid, who has just closed, in several of the States, a campaign that would have done honour to Gladstone, is sanguine that some isolated anti-Socialist successes will be scored in Queensland, but none the less Socialism is advancing by leaps and bounds in the State where it was first adopted by the Labour party. There it is dealing mercilessly with heretics and laggards. It ran its former chief, Mr Glassey, out of the Senate, and it is preparing to run out Senator Dawson. It will then strengthen its position in the Second Chamber, now strangely its stronghold, where it elects the Chairman of Committees. Victoria is bound to go protectionist, and there, too, the Labour party, which is gradually accepting protectionism, is moving towards a complete conquest. A general Labour victory all over Australia, with a partial continued check in New South Wales, and a possible (but improbable) slight check in Queensland, is confidently expected. If not this time, then at the next general elections, the Labour Party will command a majority large enough to give it a prior claim to office, and it will make its position impregnable with the aid of the Protectionists, who in New South Wales are retiring in favour of the Labourites, while the Labourites refuse to retire in favour of the Protectionists.

THE SIMPLE LIFE REALISED.

I think the following short sketch of what I consider the ideal, simple life (writes a correspondent of "T.P.'s Weekly") may interest a few of your readers. I live in a lovely Portuguese island—much as normal other people do. But this winter I spent two months in a sweet spot on the hills seven miles away from any English neighbours. To this place we come as a summer resort, and own a little colony of cottages set on a miniature plan commanding charming views. I had, however, never visited it, except occasionally for a day in the winter. This year, longing for solitude, I came to one of our small bungalows, and started house with a faithful old Portuguese peasant woman to cook for me, and a dearly-loved come as companion. I brought work and books. I superintended the pruning, digging, and tending of our cottage gardens. I took long walks amid the most delicious scenery—thatched cottages nestling in snug hamlets, pine woods, peeps of distant blue sea, far away hills purple with bilberry bushes and golden with gorse. The air was light and sweet and bracing. The blackbirds sang divinely, the moonlight nights were beyond telling beautiful. My old woman cooked to perfection the simple food I needed, and sometimes of an evening she sat on the doorstep beside me in the porch and told me curious legends of saints and sinners, the black house-cat purring contentedly close by, and the sable collie lying full length on the mat at my feet. To these most simple pleasures I invited a friend or two from time to time, and with no exception they found the quiet, peaceful, uneventful life as full of charm as I did. The country people brought me gifts of hot home-made bread, fresh eggs, and flowers, and when they were ill, or in trouble, I helped them to the best of my power. I had steaming hot coffee ready always in the kitchen in cold and wet weather, and all who came on errands or were at work in the place, had a grateful cup of this to warm and comfort them. My guests just entered into my simple plan of life without altering it. I made no extra dishes for them, only doubled what I had for myself. There was no fuss, no ceremony, no excuses offered; no strain anywhere. Among those who stayed with me was a sister from a busy London hospital who had been ill. It was delightful to watch her quick and happy recovery. Instead of visitors being, as I have often noticed is the case, a care and trouble and anxiety, mine represented to me the enjoyment of others added to my own. Emerson says: "I pray you, oh! excellent wife, not to cumber yourself and me to get a rich dinner for this man or this woman who has alighted at our gate, nor a bedchamber made ready at too great cost. These things, if they are curious in, they can get for a dollar at any village. But let this stranger, if he will, in your looks, in your accent and behaviour, read your heart and earnestness, your thought and will which he cannot buy at any price, in any village or city, and which he may well travel fifty miles and dine sparely and sleep hard in order to behold. Certainly, let the board be spread and let the bed be dressed for the stranger; but let not the emphasis of hospitality lie in these things." Can any counsel on the laws of true hospitality be saner, sweeter, or simpler, or, alas! be more rarely followed.

THE OFFSPRING OF GENIUS.

It is a fact which has often been the subject of vague comment that men of talent or genius often die childless, or rarely have descendants worthy of their fame. Professor Reibmayr, the well-known anthropologist, has recently adduced some rather striking studies in support of his thesis that "all families of marked genius and talent are sooner or later doomed to extinction in the male line," and, in accordance with the Professor's views, this fate overtakes them sooner rather than later. At one time, he shows, most really great men remained unmarried and childless; thus Buddha, Pythagoras, Solon, Plato, Demosthenes, Virgil, Copernicus, Spinoza, Raphael, Michael Angelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Cervantes, Voltaire, Beethoven, Kant, and Schubert. The marriages of others, among them Aristotle, Cæsar, Durer, Haydn, Schumann, and Heine, were childless. The descendants of the illegitimate sons of others, whether married or single, either died out like those of Galileo, or were never heard of again, like those of Rousseau. A like fate usually overtook the male issue of legitimate wedlock, as in the case of Pericles, Sophocles, Alexander, Constantine, Dante, Columbus, Bacon, Rubens, Peter the Great, Moliere, Goethe, and Schiller; while of the male descendants of others, among them Homer, Thucydides, Mohammed, Frederick the Great, and Byron, no material is available.

On the other hand, in the female line many great names still survive, as in the case of Dante, Columbus, Rubens, Schiller, and Byron. These studies have confirmed their author in his opinion that the vital energy of genius concentrated on the development of the brain and mind tends to a lack of harmony between their mental and physical powers, and sets up a predisposition to physical deterioration. Moreover, he holds that material success and recognition tend to hasten this process towards extinction. On the whole, following Max Nordau's lines, Reibmayr comes to the conclusion that the extinction of the offspring of genius is a corollary to the great law of the survival of the fittest, because genius itself is a symptom of physical deterioration.

NEW BOOKS AND PUBLICATIONS.

There ought to be no question this year about there being a Happy Christmas for boys and girls—at any rate for those whose parents will buy for them Mr Rudyard Kipling's delightful story-book, "Puck of Pook's Hill." No one can say that Mr Kipling's genius is exhausted after reading this charming work. In it he has achieved an apparently impossible task, or rather combination of tasks. He has given us one of the best fairy stories ever written. He has woven into it stirring legends of old English history, and withal he has produced a book which, while full of patriotism and pride in the land that gave us birth, never preaches, never proses, never fogs us with a word or a sentence a child cannot understand, and yet breathes throughout the quaintest fancy and the tenderest romance. Two delightful little children are acting in a Sussex meadow, by a mill stream, as much as they can remember of the Bottom scene in "The Midsummer Night's Dream," when suddenly the alders on the bank part, and they see "a small, brown, broad-shouldered, pointy-eared person, with a snub nose, slanting blue eyes, and a grin that ran right across his freckled face." This is Puck, of course, the real genuine Puck. They had been acting "Midsummer Night's Dream," three times over, on Midsummer Eve, in the middle of a Ring and under Pook's Hill, which, of course, is Puck's Hill, spelt as a Sussex rustic would spell it if he did as President Roosevelt wants us all to do. This was quite enough to break the spell of the hills and cause Puck to appear. The children made friends with him at once. He taught them the old custom of "taking seizin'" of land by the seller cutting out a clod of earth and handing it over to the buyer. When they have gravely gone through this ceremony he says, in a sing-song voice, "Now are you two lawfully seized and possessed of Old England. By right of Oak, Ash, and Thorn are you free to come and go and look and know where I shall show or best you please. You shall see What you shall see, and you shall hear What you shall hear, though It shall have happened three thousand year; and you shall know neither Doubt nor Fear. Fast! Hold fast all I give you." And the kindly little sprite proves as good as his word. By the magic of his art he calls up from the dim and shadowy past Weland the Smith-God, a chivalrous young Novice, a very perfect Norman Knight, a Roman Centurion, a Mediæval Jew—even an African native. One after another they unroll the scroll of bygone days and make the heroes of old live again. And through the perfect melody of the story runs the rich harmony embodied in the refrain of the Children's Song, with which it ends:—

"Land of our birth, our faith, our pride,
For whose dear sake our fathers died;
O motherland we pledge to thee
Head, heart, and hand through the years to be."

There are other songs which will rank among the best which Mr Kipling ever wrote. There is a sturdy ring about the "Tree Song":—

"Of all the trees that grow so fair,
Old England to adorn,
Greater are none beneath the sun
Than Oak and Ash and Thorn."

"A Song to Mithras" is noble alike in sentiment and in form. Not only throughout the story, but especially in the beautiful little "Three Part Song" the author shows how the beauty and the romance of his Sussex home have filled his soul:—

"I'm just in love with all these three,
The Weald, and the Marsh and the Down Countrie;
Nor I don't know which I love the most,
The Weald or the Marsh or the White Chalk Coast!"

The book is illustrated by H. R. Millar, and the publishers have treated it handsomely, as it deserves, in the matter of paper, print, and binding. (London: Macmillan and Company, Ltd. Christchurch: Simpson and Williams. 6s.)

Anthony Hope, as novelist, is remarkable for the possession of various distinct styles. They have heretofore been illustrated by the production of various distinct books. But "Sophy of Kravonia" determines magnificently to include them all in one. Sophy and Casimir can do a Dolly Dialogue; Sophy and Monseigneur have a gallant touch of "The Prisoner of Zenda"; here and there we recognise the apt biographer of "Tristram of Blent." And added to these there comes a borrowed manner, lending most quaint effect in the modern novelist's tale. We shall be curious to see if the literary papers note that several early descriptive chapters in "Sophy of Kravonia" are pure Carlylese. No doubt, either, that Carlye could appreciate this Sophy Grouch, Essex scullery-maid, who rose in all honesty and innocence, to be Queen of at least a petty State and the inspiration of great deeds good and bad. Sophy found her inspiration in the catechism, when she discovered that her duty lay in the state of life unto which it "shall please," not "hath pleased God to call me." We are told she was not only ready to take her chance, but co-operated with Fate, and kept an arm outstretched to seize Occasion by the forelock. "You can't catch the train unless you're at the station—and take care your watch isn't slow," is a maxim reported. Besides her beauty, she had a personal peculiarity, of which we hear much and continually throughout the book. A small birth-mark, placed just below the cheek-bone, was usually very pale in colour, but in moments of excitement deepened to a bright red, or even "glowed like angry Venus." "The Red Star" was the name by which her true lovers knew it." "The Red-starred Witch" was a favourite nickname from those committed to enmity. Plenty of romance, plenty of good fighting, is to be found at Kravonia, and some fine pathos to end with, for Sophy, courageous and lucky in all else, is unlucky in love. The Queen of a tempestuous hour is left in sorrow; though life still cried with a sweet voice, and perhaps some day there would be light again upon the hills. (London: Macmillan's Colonial Library. Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs. 2s 6d.).

A delightful disorderly family, and a girl who longs to write. With this simple material Miss Lilian Turner begins her new story, "Betty the Scribe." Poor motherless Betty at seventeen is mother for Joan, Dick, Pepper, and Baby, while she does her best to be just to Nancy, who wants "leading" and 'training," and to be special sister and helper to Cyril, her twin. "Betty was wide-visioned and earnest-purposed, but she was only seventeen, and her heart was the heart of the poet and dreamer." So she made beautiful plans, and kept to them at intervals; and the family life went in patches of comfort while Betty was mostly housekeeper, and desolation while Betty was mostly scribe, and the impossibility of belonging even for separate hours to two worlds—the world of romance and the world of duality—brought her to tragic self-sacrifice before fate stepped in to recall a still older sister from a far-off life of ease, and set heart and pen free to be solely literary. Betty went to live in an attic and contribute fashion letters to newspapers while she wrote brilliant short stories for editors afar. And naturally she failed again when it came to the grind of routine. The brilliant stories had their success, but Betty ate too little, and wrote too much, and independence ended in a nervous breakdown, relieved, for the family, by the happy fact that a melodramatic, unforgiving grandfather had been so struck by the young journalist's courage and defiance of fate as to leave her a fortune. In six weeks she was back in her attic, a young woman bound to be rich at twenty-one, with a pretty romance waiting too in the near future, but still, and for ever, "Betty the Scribe." "I can go quietly on with my book, and leave detestable social letters alone." Rosebud Dot, the oldest sister, has meanwhile been a great success as house-mother, and is also rewarded by a romance. But Miss Lilian Turner owes us another volume, to show what Fate ensued for that interesting and chaotic young soul, the diary-writing Nancy. (Ward, Lock and Company, London and Melbourne; Christchurch, Simpson and Williams).

"Richard Baldoch: an account of some episodes in his childhood, youth, and early manhood, and of the advice that was freely offered to him," is an excellent novel of the quiet sort. The childhood was somewhat subdued by a sternly religious father, who assumed the responsibilities of education so early that "the child's dawning knowledge of his father, if he could have analysed it, would have been of a man who existed chiefly for the purpose of saying, 'Thou shalt not.'" But all deprivations of the boy's home life were soothed by his surroundings of wild garden and forest. "The motherhood of Nature, to him who had never known his mother, was no mere phrase, but a very real thing." Nature's influence in counteracting the educational mistakes of man is strongly dwelt on; but the human beings introduced, for the most part, mean well, and give the advice that for fairly weighty reasons seems most advisable in their eyes. There is a sneaking young cousin, brought up in school or town, who succeeds in cheating forest-bred Richard out of an inheritance. Otherwise, they are a set of really interesting and amiable persons, and though the story is far more of thought than action, it has a quality about it decidedly above the common run of biographical novels. (London: Rivers' Colonial Library. Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 2s 6d.)

The "ABC of Poultry," by E. B. Johnstone, is somewhat incomplete and disjointed. The subjects are dealt with in paragraphs, which are grouped without method. No mention is made of ducks and geese, and the only mention of turkeys, refers to their brooding instincts, but instead of it being under the head of incubation the paragraph is sandwiched between two others on diseases. The principal breeds and their colours are noticed, but no information is given as to how to breed the various colours, which is more important than how to wash fowls and clean dirty legs and ear lobes, all ably dealt with. But with all its incompleteness and disjointedness there is much useful information given in more concise form than is usual with writers on poultry, and as a whole the information is sound. (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Son, Ltd., 2s 6d).

The "New Zealand Mail" Christmas and Exhibition number is a decided advance on other Christmas publications from the same office. It contains some well-executed pictures, not only of the Exhibition but of New Zealand life and scenery, native subjects are effectively treated by Mr J. McDonald. (Wellington: "New Zealand Times" Company, Ltd.)

The November "Pall Mall Magazine" has several interesting features. There is an article on Whistler's Academy of Painting in Paris, which is redolent of art, an account of the life of a Bank of England bank-note, and a dissertation on rifle-shooting by the King's Prizeman. Mr and Mrs Herbert Gladstone's home in Downing street is described, with illustrations, and Mr Justice McCarthy contributes some reminiscences. There is the usual amount of fiction, including an episode on the life of Raoul, gentleman of fortune, which makes one look forward to the next instalment.

The following varied assortment of sixpenny editions is to hand from Mr Fountain Barber:—"Some Emotions and a Moral," by John Oliver Hobbes (London: T. Fisher Unwin); "The Gods Some Mortals," and "Lord Wickenham," by John Oliver Hobbes (London: F. V. White and Co., Ltd., 14 Bedford street, Strand, W.C.); "A Study in Temptations and a Bundle of Life," by John Oliver Hobbes (London: T. Fisher Unwin); "Young Barbarians," by Ian Maclaren (London: Hodder and Stoughton); "A Vagabond Lover," by "Rita" (London: Hutchinson and Co.); "John G. Paton, D.D., Missionary to the New Hebrides: an Autobiography" (London: Hodder and Stoughton); "The Gospel of Life: Thoughts Introductory to the Study of Christian Doctrine," by the late Bishop Westcott (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd.); "Olga Romanoff," by George Griffith (London: T. Sealey Clark, 1 Racquet Court, Fleet street, E.C.); "A House with a History," by Florence Warder (London: Everett and Co., 42 Essex street, Strand, W.C.); "The Ruling Passion," by Mrs J. H. Riddell (London: Hutchinson and Co.), and "A Stolen Pear," by Guy Boothby (London: Everett and Co.)

LITERARY GOSSIP.

Mr Pierpont Morgan has acquired an interesting relic of John Bunyan—namely, the original warrant for his arrest. It is signed by about eleven magistrates, and consists of a single sheet of blue foolscap. Effect was given to the warrant, and during his imprisonment in Bedford Gaol Bunyan began the writing of "Pilgrim's Progress." The warrant was one of a large number of old documents put up for sale in London about a quarter of a century ago, but no attention was paid to it. One ardent Bibliophile, however, was confident he had made a valuable "find," and he secured it with some other papers for two or three pounds. On the death of this collector, about three years ago, the relic came under the hammer at Sotheby's, and was sold for about £350, a much smaller sum than was anticipated.

A French critic has recently estimated that an international library of Napoleonic literature would contain at least 100,000 volumes already published.

M. Gaston Ragoot contributes to a recent number of "Les Annales" an interesting appreciation of the work of Sir A. Conan Doyle, most of whose books have been translated into French. The creator of Sherlock Holmes is, he says, "un esprit positif," gifted with an adventurous imagination. "Now this imagination could not be satisfied save in an atmosphere of horror and anguish, amid the play of the most sensational of all mysteries—the mysteries of crime and of death. And on the other hand, his scientific spirit could only be happy in elucidating these mysteries, in bringing to bear on them his habits of observation and analysis and rigorous deduction." Hence, of course, Sherlock Holmes. M. Ragoot does justice to the great detective as a romantic creation, as an admirable and subtle portrait of a strange and interesting human being, not a mere description of a mere logical machine. He does justice, also, to the fine craftsmanship of the stories in which Sherlock appears. "Conan Doyle is, in fact," he concludes, "very far above our current melodramatic literature, and yet remains below the great American whose influence he has assuredly felt." Even a Frenchman could not end without the inevitable reference to Edgar Poe, of whose influence on him Sir A. Conan Doyle must, by this time, be heartily sick of hearing.

Maxim Gorky and his companion, Madame Andrieva, left America for Europe in October. It appears that in addition to the disappointment and humiliation following the disclosure that his "wife," accompanying him under the name of Madame Gorky, was the Russian actress Andrieva, Gorky also suffered the discomforts of poverty. His literary work was unremunerative, and he disdained to accept the assistance of wealthy sympathisers, preferring that their contributions should go to support the cause of Russian freedom. Moreover, in view of the circumstances of indignity to which Mme. Andrieva was subjected, she was too proud to receive from the country anything other than that which she herself earned. Consequently, it is stated, she obtained sufficient funds for their joint small needs by working as a waitress at St. Hubert's Inn, a summer resort in the Adirondacks, near the fashionable Socialist colony where Gorky himself was residing. "I have no feeling against the Americans," she said, on leaving, "in spite of their treatment of me. Americans don't understand. They are simply incapable of understanding anything but money."

A life has been written of Leland, the famous author of "Hans Breitmann's Ballads." Everyone has heard of "The Maiden Mit Nodings On," and knows the memorable stanza beginning,

"Hans Breitmann gife a barty—
Where is dot barty now?
Where ish de lofely golden cloud
Dot float on de moundain's prow?"

But just as John Hay's finer work was overshadowed by "Pike County Ballads," so Leland's brilliant versatility suffers by the popularity of Hans Breitmann. Leland was one of the most picturesque and fascinating literary figures of his time. The famous ballads represent only a small fraction of his literary labours. He translated the works of Heine—no small achievement. He probably knew more about the gypsies than any other man, not excepting George Borrow, and wrote some delightful books about them. A wonderful linguist, he studied the Algonquin Indians of North America, and the Etruscan remains, and the value of his published researches on these subjects is recognised by specialists. He compiled an important "Dictionary of Slang," in two volumes, in collaboration with Professor F. Barrere. At the meeting of the Oriental Congress in London in 1891 he was, he tells us, referred to as being "beyond question at the very head of pidgin English learning and literature." In a letter to his niece he writes:—"There's a proud position for a man! Yes—I am the Shakespeare and Milton and Grimm and Heine and Everybody else of that language. When pidgin English shall become — as Sir Richard Burton predicted it would—the common language of the world, then I shall be a great man."

Up to the age of forty-five, although he had done much good literary work and was highly esteemed in American literary and journalistic circles, his European reputation had yet to be made. Then in 1869 he flashed upon the world with "Hans Breitmann's Ballads," published in five parts in Philadelphia. He had been writing these for many years, the first having been written in 1856. In England, as in America, edition after edition was published. When Leland visited London for the second time, he was received as Hans Breitmann, to his great annoyance, for he objected to being identified with the disreputable old adventurer, who was no more like him than the Heathen Chinee was like Bret Harte. The ballads were set to music, and the name was given to cigars. A pamphlet was published, called "Dr Gospel According to Saint Breitmann, and a comic paper, "Hans Breitmann, appeared. Uncritical people were unable to tell the difference between the "Ballads" and the imitations, and the author was warned by the press that the British public would not stand a surfeit, even of Hans Breitmann. More serious were the indignation in Germany and the praise in France. Many Germans regarded the "Ballads" as a satire on their race, and a reflection on their way of making war. In the "Revue des Deux Mondes," M Bentzon introduced "Hans Breitmann" to French readers in a translation. The lines previously quoted begin in the French version, "Hans Breitmann a donne une soiree. Ou est cette soiree maintenant?" This rendering should be a warning against all like attempts to translate the untranslatable.

The Dean of Westminster has sanctioned the name of Elizabeth Barrett Browning appearing in Poets' Corner. When Robert Browning died the honour of burial was offered to his wife's remains, which rest at Florence, but the offer was declined. Now, at the centenary of her birth, her name is to be inscribed at the foot of her husband's grave in the Abbey.

IN LIGHTER VEIN.

An Appeal.—Counsel: "M'lud, the prisoner is an orphan. At an early age he lost his mother. His only mother, m'lud."—"Pick-Me-Up."

True Politeness.—Aunt (showing small nephew, who has come on a visit, round the grounds): "Now, dear, I'll just take you through the orchard, and then I must really go and lie down."—Nephew: "Auntie, if you'd rather go at once, you know, please do. I—I shouldn't be a bit lonely."—"Punch."

Once upon a time there were in Paris two papers, the "Razor" and the "Scorpion," which were always going for each other with great ferocity. Every week people bought the "Razor" to read how it cut the "Scorpion," and the "Scorpion" to learn how it stung the "Razor." A certain philanthropist felt pained to see such violence, so he invited the two editors to dine, in the hope that over good fare he could make peace between them. At the appointed time one lean, melancholy man presented himself, and was ushered in. After an interval, as no other guest appeared, the host demanded: "May I ask, are you the editor of the 'Razor' or the 'Scorpion'?" "Both," said the sad-eyed man.

One of Irving's favourite stories was that of the funeral in Dublin of a young married woman, so we are told in Mr Bram Stoker's biography. The undertaker, after the wont of his craft, was arranging the whole affair according to the completest local rule of mortuary etiquette. He bustled up to the widower, saying:

"You, sir, will, of course, go in the carriage with the mother of the deceased."

"What! Me go in the carriage with me mother-in-law? Not likely!"

"Oh, sir, but I assure you it is necessary. The rule is an inviolate one established by precedents beyond all cavil!" expostulated the horrified undertaker. But the widower was obdurate.

"I won't go. That's flat!"

"Oh, but my good sir. Remember the gravity of the occasion—the publicity—the—the—possibility—scandal." His voice faded into a gasp. The widower stuck to his resolution, and so the undertaker laid the matter before some of his intimate friends who were awaiting instructions. These surrounded the chief mourner, and began to remonstrate with him:

"You really must, old chap. It is necessary."

"I'll not! Go with me mother-in-law! Rot!"

"But look here, old chap——"

"I'll not, I tell ye—I'll go in any other carriage that ye wish, but not in that."

"Oh, of course, if ye won't, ye won't. But, remember, it beforehand, that afterwards when it'll be thrown up against ye, that it'll be construed into an affront on the poor girl that's gone. Ye loved her, Jack, we all know, an' ye wouldn't like that!"

This argument prevailed. He signed to the undertaker, and began to pull on his black gloves. As he began to move towards the carriage he turned to his friends and said in a low voice:

"I'm doin' it because ye say I ought to, and for the poor girl that's gone But ye'll spoil me day!"

WOMAN'S WORLD.

WOMEN IN THE ENGLISH CIVIL SERVICE.

The woman Civil Servant, says a London paper, has great hopes of the Postmaster-General, who has promised to lay her grievances before the Government, with a recommendation that her rate of pay be increased. By far the greater number of women and girl clerks employed by Government belong to the Postal Department, and it is the Post Office clerks who consider that they have most cause to grumble.

There are three classes of women workers in the Post Office—the sorter, the telegraphist, and the savings bank clerk. Of these only the telegraphist comes into contact with the general public, for, however strange it may seem, the girl who retails stamps, or registers a telephone message, or issues a money order, is a telegraphist. The savings bank clerk (who is the aristocrat of the profession), and the sorter are employed only at the Head Office, and are never seen by the man who goes into an ordinary post office. It is the former who has been doing the grumbling of late years, owing to her salary having been cut down. Up to 1902 she entered the service, after having passed a preliminary examination at sixteen years of age, with a salary of £35 a year, which was increased to £65 if at the age of eighteen she passed a second examination. In 1902, however, the Government considered this salary too large, and reduced it by £10, so that now the savings bank clerk of eighteen years of age receives only a guinea a week. In order to obtain this salary, she has to pass an examination in English composition, hand-writing, arithmetic, geography, French, German, and Latin (two of these subjects), algebra, shorthand, and English history. Once having entered the service as a fully qualified clerk, she obtains a yearly increase of £2 10s up to £70, thence by a £5 rise to £120, and as a principal to £170.

There has been a distinct decrease in the popularity of the Service since the reduction of salary took place in 1902. In 1901, for instance, 342 candidates went up for the examination, whereas last year only 125 presented themselves.

The telegraphist before mentioned has not to undergo the stiff examination which is compulsory on the Savings Bank clerk, but she has to make herself efficient in telegraphy. After passing a comparatively easy competitive examination, she is taken on at 7s a week, and when she has proved herself efficient is set to work at a branch post-office at a commencing salary of £36 8s per annum—14s a week. The female sorter begins at 12s a week.

A typist in the service of the London County Council starts work at 17 years of age at a salary of £52, rising in twelve months' time to £65. The examination for this post is comparatively simple, and includes no foreign languages. The Post Office clerk derives much of her grievance from this fact, for she considers, and, no doubt, rightly, her proficiency in French and German to be worth more than the extra shilling per week.

ONE WOMAN, ONE STYLE.

The milliner-consultant has made her profession famous in Paris. She has only just now arrived in London. The one style which will make a "new woman" of her has to be discovered for every customer. Women are notorious for choosing the wrong hat, says the consultant. She allows a customer to choose her hat. The customer wanders round the room, picks out a model entirely unsuitable, and pins it on at a wrong angle. The consultant shows her why the style is ungraceful. It may be too high, too low, or too broad in the brim. The colour does not tone with the eyes and hair, one of the most important points in millinery. Country customers send photographs to the consultant, a lock of hair, and the colour of the eyes. Presumably the consultant has hats of a style to suit all faces.

LADIES-IN-WAITING.

A graphic article on "Ladies in Waiting," written by one of them for the September "Lady's Realm," makes it a matter of surprise that the supply of workers should exceed the demand. Two qualifications are an absolute necessity. The first is the power to make one's self agreeable at all times and seasons. The second is the physical capacity to stand for several hours consecutively. Some women can stand; there are others who cannot. Queen Alexandra, when giving away war medals, stood with practically no change of position for two hours and twenty-five minutes. A lady of the bedchamber, who was never robust, was asked how she had managed the standing during Queen Victoria's drawing-rooms. She replied, "Old and roomy slippers. I always kept an old pair, two sizes too large, which did duty year after year and were useless for anything else." A lady-in-waiting must have no opinions or moods whilst on duty. If the Royal personage wishes to sit up till the early hours, no fatigue must be shown. An attendant on royalty must only be tired or sleepy, hungry or thirsty, when her mistress is in a like condition."

A HEADMASTER'S ADVICE TO MOTHERS.

The headmaster of Eton, the Hon. E. Lyttelton, recently delivered a special address to a gathering of members of the "Mothers' Union" in the Guildhall at Windsor. He began by saying how enormously was impressed on a schoolmaster the importance of the training in the home before boys went to school at the age of nine years. He warned mothers against the danger of "over-softness" to their children, and fathers against the corresponding danger of only warning boys against what was wrong instead of appealing to the highest parts of their nature. Law and discipline in the home must be maintained, and it fell to the mother to maintain it. The idea of many mothers was to devote the holidays of their boys to giving them everything they wanted, and expecting nothing from them in return in the way of self-sacrifice. Why was it that religion was so small a part in the life of so many young men and women? Because religion had not been brought in contact with that which was the subject of greatest interest to a boy—the temptations which concerned his moral life. Moral struggles, especially at some time of failure, should be dealt with, not merely on the ground of good advice, but on the definite ground of religious truth. The education of their children ought to be the first work of parents.

THE BLOUSE QUESTION.

The transparent blouse has been studied by the Paris correspondent of the "Tribune," who says:—"I have spent the summer at various fashionable seaside places, and have studied the funny little ways of blouses; and the more I have studied the more certain I have become that the whole success of the popular garment depends on the under-bodice.

"In my opinion—and this is also the opinion of famous experts in the world of dress—there never should be a question of a 'transparent blouse' in the street; for the evening it is another matter, and then individual taste can be called into play, but for ordinary street wear a transparent blouse worn over a low-necked corset is never in good taste, and it is very rarely becoming.

"Unquestionably the ideal underbodice for unlined blouses is a tight-fitting one, made of fine white taffetas lined with the thinnest possible batiste; the bodice ought to be cut and fitted in the most careful manner, and it ought to have tight-fitting elbow sleeves. It should fit as perfectly and as comfortably as a redingote turned out by Redfern, and it ought to fasten invisibly in front.

"Given four or five such under-bodices—which, by the way, should always be sent to the cleaner instead of to the laundress—the blouse question becomes a comparatively simple one. For winter wear it is an easy matter to introduce an interlining of thin flannel, and over such a bodice the most fragile of lace blouses can be easily arranged. I assure you that the effect of nine-tenths of the lovely blouses worn by women at such places as Trouville, and Biarritz, is spoiled by the under-bodice; if the latter be an elaborate affair, with many ribbons run through lace insertions, etc., the wearer looks as though she were pretending to be a little girl in a 'party frock,' and with a transparent blouse the ordinary cache corset looks positively indecent. Over pure white taffetas thin muslins and fine laces look their very best, and over a properly-fitted under-bodice the light blouse is bound to fall into graceful lines."

GARDEN NOTES.

(BY HORTUS.)

ANSWERS TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"C. Cross B."—The suckers on your raspberry canes should be cut off close to the ground, with the exception of three or four of the strongest around the base of the present canes. These will be the fruit-bearing growths for the next season's crop. For the rest of the season remove any fresh growing suckers, unless new plants are wanted for a fresh plantation. Remember that young growths with fibrous roots are the best to plant out.

"A Lover of Flowers."—You may be able to procure Lathyrus pubescens later in the season, from some of the local nurserymen. If raised from seed, sow at once if procurable. If seedsmen in the city cannot supply, get them to procure from Australia, where stocks are held. Plants of Tropæolum speciosum are procurable from any of the nurseries in the city or suburbs.

GENERAL REMARKS.

Interest in horticulture during the week has centred in the main corridor of the Exhibition. In addition to the exhibits at the Rose Show there was a very representative gathering of horticulturists from many parts of New Zealand, and several nurserymen from Australia. The result of such fraternising can only end in good. Such gatherings mean criticism and exchange of ideas, always a beneficial thing if taken rightly. The only fly in the ointment was the extreme heat and high winds, which deducted much from the quality of the exhibits, and prevented the visitors from gaining a true idea of the possibilities of gardening in Christchurch.

One of the weak elements of the show was the fact that several of the exhibits were not named. This lessened the value of the show from an educational standpoint. Amateurs were not solely to blame, as some of the professional exhibits were conspicuous for this shortcoming.

Continued dry weather is affecting gardens in a very marked degree. Many of the flowers and vegetables have quite stopped growing, and suggest a resting period. Where water has been freely used, growth is vigorous, the moisture and the heat forcing at a great rate. The drought is not local, for reports from nearly every centre state that the dry spell is almost universal throughout the colony. Even Dunedin horticulturists are complaining sorely about the shortage of rain, which is a most unusual thing for that part of the colony to suffer from in the spring and early summer months.

FLOWER GARDEN.

For the last two weeks we have strongly advocated the rigorous thinning of vegetables, so that first-class results may be obtained. This advice is just as good if applied to many of the seedling plants in the flower garden. In sowing annuals many people make the common mistake of sowing too thickly. The bad effects of this error may be mitigated if thinning out is freely done, with no sparing hand, as should be done if high quality flowers are desired. Not only so, but a much larger and better display is assured if plenty of room is allowed each plant to furnish its growth up to its possibilities. These lines have force in view of a patch of annuals growing in one of the city gardens. Instead of vigorous, healthy plants making strong constitutions for a later display, an innumerable quantity of weaklings, with poor coloured foliage, are throwing up puny heads of bloom, which will, in a few days, make a miserable and transitory show.

Again we must point out that in the struggle for existence such results are bound to happen. The food supply is necessarily limited in a small space, and is only capable of supporting a small number of plants properly. Where ten to twenty times the number are struggling for life, it must follow that results will be disappointing. Thin out well, and give plenty of feeding and breathing space. Do it at once. It is now getting well on in the season for this work to be done. Where the drought is too severe, keep the hose going, giving good soakings at the roots. Heavy watering at this season of the year is never dangerous. The ground being warm and the root action vigorous, plants are capable of absorbing any quantity of water.

KITCHEN GARDEN.

Money and manure have been likened in the fact that neither do any good in a heap, but are both stimulating and valuable when spread. This is peculiarly true of manure at this season, especially when applied as a top dressing to vegetables. Too little knowledge of the value of top-dressing in the kitchen garden is manifested by the amateur. Those who have made this a principle of summer feeding have obtained most satisfactory results, and continue the practice. In heavy land it helps to supply the humus so necessary for breaking it up into finer particles, and in light, dry soils provides a moist covering for the surface roots, and also a continuous food supply to draw on. On a particularly dry, shingly piece of land in the neighbourhood of Christchurch one grower obtains most satisfactory results from the use of manure as a top-dressing, whereas without the manure the crop is a comparative failure. Where manure cannot be procured a top-dressing of short grass, such as lawn clippings, is a good substitute.

A RAILWAY DISASTER.

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TRAGIC END OF EUROPEAN REFUGEES.

(Per Sierra; at Auckland.)

CHICAGO, November 12.

More than one-half of the passengers on an immigrant train on the Baltimore and Ohio railroad were killed or injured in a collision to-day between a passenger train and a freight train near Woodville. One hundred and sixty-five passengers were on the train, and of these forty-seven were killed outright, or were burned to death in a fire which broke out in the wreckage immediately after the collision. The names of all the dead will probably never be known, as forty-five of the bodies were consumed in the flames or were so badly burned that identification was impossible. Thirty-eight people were injured, and several of these will die. Eighty others escaped unhurt.

The disaster was caused by the blunder of an employee of the railroad company. The passenger train was loaded with mission Jews, Servians and Poles—all of them recent arrivals in this country. Relief trains were at once sent out with every available physician, and every possible aid was given to the injured. A large number of relatives of the passengers on the ill-fated train were in Chicago awaiting their arrival, and when the report of the collision was received the scenes around the Baltimore and Ohio station were harrowing. Men were there who had come to this country to escape the massacres in Russia, and who, after months of hard work had saved enough to pay the passages of members of their families, and their grief when they became aware that possibly all their sacrifices and efforts had resulted only in the death of those whom they sought to bring to them, was pitiful in the extreme. Crowds of Russians and Poles waited around the depot all day, and when late in the afternoon a train came in bearing 38 injured passengers, it was with the greatest difficulty that the police were able to open a passage way for the wounded.