



The New Zealand Graphic

AND LADIES' JOURNAL.

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NOW that the great magazines at Home are leaving us a little to ourselves again, we colonials may turn round and glance askance at our critics. They are certainly a peculiar people, and had we the inclination, what columns of comment might be written anent their strange manners and quaint customs! For the past eight months or so the good people at Home have been butting their eyes and opening their mouths after the old nursery custom to see what Murray, Adams and Co. would give them. All they got they swallowed with avidity, and like Oliver, asked for more. Certainly they obtained their desire. Not only did gentlemen of Murray type record their impressions on Australasia, but every young jackanape who had spent half a dozen days in the colony felt constrained to write a book on where he'd been and what he'd seen. On the whole it has been amusing. The praise, to be sure, has been offensive in its patronage, but the humour of the whole thing compensates. It may be our lot to send a correspondent Home one day that he may record his impressions of the English; but even seen through our cable columns they are as we have said a strange, a very amusing people, and a deeply interesting study.

LOOK, for instance, at this matter of Mrs Osborne. People appear to have lost their senses most completely over the case. The judge, in the first instance, makes himself ridiculous by declaring that the conduct of the counsel in the case has been 'most noble.' Merciful powers, in what respect? The cross-examination was brutal, and the details were merely magnified into magnificence by the position occupied by the principal actors. The same story may be heard heaven knows how many times a year at any Police Court. The one noble thing was the conduct of the husband, and that was vulgarised so far as chivalry can be vulgarised by the public and the press. The fulsome-ness of the praise lavished on the unhappy Captain must have been amongst the bitterest of his trials, for after all he only acted as an officer and a gentleman should act. Then came the *denouement*, the flight, and the savage cry for the apprehension of the guilty woman. The extraordinary scenes which followed are, we fancy, scarcely made clear by Home papers and correspondents. The bungling seems to have been great, but Mrs Osborne did not suffer more than anyone else in this respect. The laws' delays—even the criminal laws—are amongst the greatest punishments of those who fall and are called upon to answer for their crimes at the dock of an English Court. Time after time remands are granted that the police may work up the case. Time after time prisoners, who may be perfectly innocent, are removed from court to court, and it is the commonest experience for re-arrest to follow acquittal, or the dismissing of a case.

MRS OSBORNE thieved without any driving temptation. She did her best to socially ruin the woman she had robbed, and because she looked interesting, was socially well-known, and because her husband acted as a gentleman the flood gates of sentiment were opened over as worthless a woman as any whose name is inscribed on the Newgate calendar. It was the same with Mrs Maybrick. The petitions for the reprieve of that infamous murderess were signed by hundreds of thousands, and for precisely the same reason that Mrs Osborne has been so pitied—simply because she

was 'one of us'—a lady. It is urged that to a sensitive cultured mind prison must be so terrible. Most undoubtedly. That the punishment is infinitely greater than it would be to one of the lower classes. True! The social disgrace counts for so much, they say. The disgrace is—Pah. Granted that the punishment is greater for Mrs Osborne than for Bill Sykes' helpmeet, Nancy; granted that Nancy feels no social disgrace in 'doing time,' where is the reason that Mrs Osborne should not be more severely punished? She deserves severer punishment in that she had the less temptation.

It is now proposed that this fair prisoner and perjurer should be liberated a fortnight before her child is born. It is urged that it will be so dreadful for her to have a child born in the walls of a prison. The wish to prevent the shame is kindly, but surely the good people who agitate for Mrs Osborne's release on this plea will not stop there. If Mrs Osborne is set at liberty before her *accouchement*, every woman in gaol in a similar condition may cry out—and cry out justly—for open prison doors. Their babes will suffer every whit as intensely as Mrs Osborne's from the curses of being born 'prison brats.' Nay more, the son or daughter of Captain Osborne will be guarded all its child life from the knowledge of its mother's guilt, but with the other, will it not always stand in their way, however hard they might try to be honest, and in all probability ultimately bring them back to their birth place?

ENGLISH people laugh at the French for their bursts of sentiment over their criminals, but they would do well to look at home. The law courts have become places of amusement, and so that the social position of the actors is a good one, the trial is bound to 'draw.' The English lady goes to law over her dressmaker's bills, and her lady friends gather round to lend their aid for or against her. The judge gives his friends places on the bench; and jokes with them anent the trial, and these are the people for whose benefit we are examined and criticised. The GRAPHIC special will soon sail and send his impressions on England, and the English will then change the subject.

In the spring-time saith a poet 'the young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love.' In the autumn such of us as have attained years are prone to ponder on the sadder and more melancholy side of life. Each and every season must exert its own influence on mankind. The spring, its vigour and freshness, its clear air and returning flowers, must rejoice the saddest and the weariest traveller. The exultation in the note of nesting birds and the thousand charms of spring brighten the darkest suffering, and on the young and lusty produce a perfect abandon of wild exhilaration that is very infecting. *Eheu, fugaces labuntur anni.* How quickly, alas! our years fly by. It is autumn after all that is under consideration, and we may spare our praises of spring.

The season of falling leaves, of dying summer beauty, and decay cannot fail to exert some influence, great or small, over minds that are not wholly corrupted by that crass-imaginativeness and intellectual stupor which are the characteristics of those quaint mortals whose fetish and whose creed they themselves blasphemously call common-sense. This dread quality is the armoured hide of the Philistine. The blatant bullying councillor, so well known in all corporations and boroughs, the man whose obtuseness maddens his fellows, the man whose adverseness to all progress makes him a terror to the community, is invariably in his own and his supporters' opinion a common sense man. The proposition that each separate season, but especially spring and autumn, have their own special influences on the human mind would appear as preposterous to him as that there is aught elevating in art or beauty. He would state his opinion with that frankness and brutality which are the attributes of common sense as he understands it, and would laugh as loudly and scornfully over this theory as he does when it is proposed to spend money on any building that is not ugly as well as useful. Such a man is but a lower grade animal, and can feel so little that his case is scarcely worth considering. And, as has been said, with his exception every human creature is influenced by the spell of the seasons.

Spring is the season of youth—poets have always made it so—autumn of old age. Spring means hope, autumn inclines to melancholy. Who has not felt the chastening air of the month when their feet rustle through the dead and fallen leaves on the roadside—the very leaves that seemed so brave and strong in their fresh, verdant youthfulness so few days—or was it months—ago. The awful brevity of it all, the drawing to a close of another year (for even in New Zealand the autumn seems the beginning of the end) is brought so vividly before us and points such a moral that it is impossible not to feel to a greater or less extent saddened. It all seems so typical, so satirically typical of life. The simile of a platitudinarian perhaps but so human as to preclude its omission. The pitiful result of all the display and green bravery is so obvious, the facility of struggling against invincible antagonists—time and death—so clearly brought home. The result seems ridiculously mean and paltry compared to the promise. Youth was no glad—experience is so grievous. How well—how far too well—most of us remember when our lives put forth the gentle buds of hope. How rudely the frost's early disappointment nipt them o' nights, but it was spring then, and the life and strength were in us to forget the troubles of the darkness in the glorious sunlight of renewed morning. And so we rejoiced and put out such a profusion of the now broadening leaves of hope and ambition that the most cynical could not have found it in his heart to tell us 'twas but temporary. But there was no need to tell. The brave days drew quickly to a close; there were longer and longer spells of cloud between the sunshine. At last hope's leaves began to fall, and even now they lie dead and decaying at our feet, and rustle with mournful cadence as our feet drag wearily through them to the end.

So now in the autumn, weary with the garish glare of summer, saddened by failure, broken with work and conscious of the coming winter, in it strange that our minds turn towards shadowland, and with lingering but not altogether unwilling steps, our minds wander off into the gloaming of melancholy? The mists of doubt steal over and encompass us, and the sun seems gone forever. Happily it is seldom we get thus morbidly regretful, but blues will come and the autumn is their harvest time. How many have spent their youth in endeavouring to prove true the great Cardinal's dictum that there's no such word as fail! How many have spent their lives finding out that life is to most a perpetual failure or a succession of victories costlier than defeat! But Riche-lieu was right. There is no such word as fail—but there is despair. To try and to fail, to deny the unsuccess and to plod on and on, battling not against heroic odds, that would be inspiring, but against the miserable pitiful enemies of poverty and ill-health, always hoping, always believing that to-morrow must be fairer, that joy will come with the dawning, eternally to choke down the disappointment and force ourselves to begin to hope again, such is the life of thousands. With infinite pains to struggle up a couple of rungs of the ladder of success, only to be pushed down again, and yet to scramble to our feet and make another effort, regardless of the cuts and bruises—such is life to most of us. Assuredly men know not the word fail, else who would continue in the struggle!

To the best and bravest there come times when it is, indeed, hard not to cry that the struggle naught availeth. Home, love, and beauty, were we not willing to work for them to the last gasp? It seemed so easy in the brave young days. We were to work and succeed, and surround those we loved with all things that were fitting to the measure of our affection. We were to see the glow of triumph over our success reflected in the faces of our wives and our children. *Versus inopes rerum,* as Horace says. Vain imaginings! We have worked as well as we know, but the success is long delayed. The glad look of triumph we cannot see, only those of that trustfulness, that faithfulness which raise the wives of struggling men to a position something higher than the angels, and a deal more solidly comforting. Yet after all

'Comfort, comfort scorned of devils, this in truth the poet sings,
That a sorrow-crown of sorrow is remembering happier things.'

God help the thousands who see the beings they best love on earth remembering the happier days of hope! Heaven pity the long nights of work and worry! Autumn a-vaunt! The thoughts called up of life's autumn are too hard, too bitter, and cannot long be endured.

SUSPICIOUS PRAISE.—'Mary,' said Mrs Brown, 'has Mrs Jones been over to borrow anything this afternoon?' 'No, ma'am.' 'I was afraid she had been. I met her this morning and she said that my Jimmy was the nicest little boy in the block, and wanted to know if he couldn't come over to-morrow and play with her little girl.'

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