

Poets' Corner.

SOMEHOW OR OTHER.

Life has a burden for everyone's shoulder,
None may escape from its troubles and care;
Miss it in youth and 'twixt some when we're older,
And fit us as close as the garment we wear.

Sorrow comes into our homes uninvited,
Robbing the heart of its treasure of song;
Lovers grow cold and our friendships are slighted,
Yet somehow or other we hasten along.

'Mid the sweet blossoms that smile on our faces
Grow the dank weeds that would poison and blight;
And e'en in the midst of earth's beautiful places
There's always a something that isn't just right.

Yet oft from a rock we may pluck a gay flower,
And drink from a spring in a desolate waste;
They come to the heart like heavenly dower,
And naught is so sweet to the eye or the taste.

Every-day toil is an every day blessing,
Though poverty's cottage and crust we may share;
Weak is the back on which burdens are pressing
But stout is the heart that is strengthened by prayer.

Somehow or other the pathways grow brighter,
Just when we mourned there was none to befriend;
Hope in the heart makes the burden seem lighter,
And somehow or other we get to the end.

MEN OF GENIUS AS CONVERSATIONALISTS.

THE student who may, perhaps, shine a luminary of learning and of genius, in the pages of his volume, is found, not rarely, to lie obscured beneath a heavy cloud in colloquial discourse. If you love the man of letters, seek him in the privacies of his study. It is in the hour of confidence and tranquility that his genius shall elicit a ray of intelligence, more fervid than the labours of polished composition. The great Peter Corneille, whose genius resembled that of our Shakespeare, and who has so forcibly expressed the sublime sentiments of the hero, had nothing in his exterior that indicated his genius; on the contrary, his conversation was so insipid that it never failed wearying. Nature, who had lavished on him the gifts of genius, had forgotten to blend with them her more ordinary ones. He did not even speak correctly that language of which he was such a master. When his friends represented to him how much more he might please by not disdaining to correct these trivial errors, he would smile and say—"I am not the less Peter Corneille!" Descartes, whose habits were formed in solitude and meditation, was silent in mixed company; and Thomas describes his mind by saying that he had received his intellectual wealth from nature in solid bars, but not in current coin; or as Addison expressed the same idea, by comparing himself to a banker who possessed the wealth of his friends at home, though he carried none of it in his pocket; or as that judicious moralist Nicolle, one of the Port-Royal Society, said of a scintillant wit—"He conquers me in the drawing-room, but he surrenders to me at discretion on the staircase." Such may say with Themistocles, when asked to play on a lute—"I cannot fiddle, but I can make a little village a great city." The deficiencies of Addison in conversation are well known. He preserved a rigid silence amongst strangers; but if he was silent, it was the silence of meditation. How often, at that moment, he laboured at some future Spectator! Mediocrity can talk; but it is for genius to observe. The cynical Mandeville compared Addison, after having passed an evening in his company, to "a silent parson in a tie-wig." It is no shame for an Addison to receive the censures of a Mandeville; he has only to blush when he calls down those of a Pope. Virgil was hearty in conversation, and resembling more an ordinary man than an enchanting poet. La Fontaine, says La Bruyere, appeared coarse, heavy, and stupid; he could not speak or describe what he had just seen; but when he wrote he was the model of poetry. It is very easy, said a humorous observer on La Fontaine, to be a man of wit, or fool; but to be both, and that too in the extreme degree, is indeed admirable, and only to be found in him. This observation applies to that fine natural genius Goldsmith. Chaucer was more facetious in his tales than in his conversation; and the Countess of Pembroke used to rally him by saying that his silence was more agreeable to her than his conversation. Isocrates, celebrated for his beautiful oratorical compositions, was of so timid a disposition, that he never ventured to speak in public. He compared himself to the whetstone which will not cut, but enables other things to do this; for his productions served as models to other orators. Vaucauson was said to be as much a machine as any he had made. Dryden says of himself—"My conversation is slow and dull, my humor saturnine and reserved. In short, I am none of those who endeavor to break jests in company or make repartees."

A remarkable similarity has been discovered between the Swedish language and the dialect of the Cheyenne Indians. A Swede who had enlisted at Fort Leavenworth, overheard some of the conversation among the Cheyennes, was struck with the resemblance of their language to his own, and on talking to them in his mother tongue he found that he could make them understand.

GENERAL NEWS.

Steps are being taken for establishing a new Catholic Club in London, in the place of the Stafford Club, on a proprietary basis, the proprietors being the Duke of Norfolk, the Marquis of Ripon, the Earl of Denbigh, the Earl of Kenmare, the Earl of Gainsborough, Viscount St. Asaph, Lord Petre, Lord Howard of Glossop, Lord Emly, Sir R. Gerard and others. The number of "original members" has been fixed at 350, and in the space of one week, 250 names were registered.

The great event of the day in Austria is the extraordinary success achieved in the training camp of Bruck by an Austrian captain (Herr von Kropatschek) with a newly-invented repeating breechloader. Herr von Kropatschek is an authority in Austria on breechloaders, having devoted his whole attention to the subject ever since the defeat of 1866 brought the question of breechloaders v. muzzleloaders before the public. Herr Kropatschek's writings on breechloaders early attracted the attention of the highest military authorities, and commanded an extraordinary sale in military circles. The result of the trials with this newly-constructed rifle are not publicly stated, but they are reported to constitute a signal success.

Probably few people are aware of the large amount annually paid by the English Government in the shape of pensions. Last year's Parliamentary paper on the subject has just been issued. It consists of eighty-four folio pages, and is styled, "An account of all allowances or compensations granted as retired allowances or superannuations in all public offices and departments which remained payable on January 1, 1874, the annual amount which was granted in the year 1874, the amount which ceased within that year, and the total amount remaining payable on December 31, 1874." From its contents it appears that this last item, the actual amount paid at the close of last year, reached the large total of £1,080,715. In each of four departments—the War Office, the Customs, the Inland Revenue, and the Post Office—the figures exceeded £100,000, while in the Admiralty they amounted to £98,939. Several very liberal pensions ceased in 1874, owing to the death of their recipients. Amongst the largest of these was a pension of £1,300 to the late Hon. G. Jerningham, Minister at Stockholm; one of £1,400 to the late Mr. Maclean, Secretary to the Customs; one of £1,541 to Sir Denis Le Marchant, Clerk to the House of Commons; one of £1,800 to the late Mr. Abraham, Commissioner of Bankruptcy; one of £2,500 to the late Sir A. G. Spearman, Controller of the National Debt; and last, but not least, one of £7,352 to that leviathan pensioner, the late Rev. T. Thurlow, Patentee of Bankrupts. The common belief in the curious longevity of pensioners will, perhaps, receive fresh support from the fact that we are still paying £700 a-year in pensions to the household of the Princess Charlotte, who died no less than fifty-eight years ago.

It is now little more than five years since the Home Government acquired the telegraphic system of the country; but in that short time some marvellous results have been achieved. The total number of offices open to the public, which at the time of the transfer was about 2,000, is now little short of 5,600, of which upwards of 460 are in London alone. The number of messages forwarded annually has increased from six millions to twenty millions; and the average charge for an inland message has been reduced from 2s. 2d. to 1s. 2d. Of words transmitted on behalf of the press upwards of 220,000,000 are delivered annually, as compared with something like 2,000,000 in the days of the telegraph companies. Those companies possessed about 5,600 miles of line and 49,000 miles of wire. The Post Office possesses 24,000 miles of line and 108,000 miles of wire. But the number of instruments has increased in a still greater proportion—all of the companies together possessing fewer than 1,900 instruments, as against upwards of 11,600 worked by the Post Office. The Wheatstone apparatus, hardly known or understood half-a-dozen years ago, and so essential for the carrying on of the news service of the country, has been introduced by the Post Office to the extent of nearly 150 sets; while the "duplex" or double-working system is in general operation throughout the country, and is in use in the central telegraph stations in London on no fewer than 75 separate lines. The pneumatic tubes of the old system were about 20 in number, and measured some three miles in length. Those of the Post Office are 55 in number, and measure upwards of 23 miles. Besides extending and maintaining its own system, the Post Office has lent help in several directions towards perfecting the system of military telegraphs. It has thrown open a portion of its service to a detachment of the Royal Engineers, who have been trained, at its expense, to erect and maintain telegraph lines, although it is understood that these officers are in no sense necessary to the telegraphic service of the country, which could be equally well carried on minus the expense which the Post Office is now put to in order to make room for them.

Speaking of the decease of the ex-Emperor of Austria, an exchange says:—"Emperor Ferdinand I. of Austria, crowned King of Hungary, Bohemia, and Lombardy, died at Prague, in the 84th year of his age, after a lingering illness. He was the last Emperor of Austria who possessed the three crowns. In the whole Austrian monarchy, and those countries which in happier days had belonged to it, there is not a noble or charitable establishment of which the Emperor Ferdinand has not been the promoter and the protector. The population of Austria surnamed him Ferdinand the Kind. He had, nevertheless, a great many enemies, who hated him for being a faithful servant to God's Church—a truly Catholic monarch. He was the representative of a period of interior welfare and exterior splendour, which has now unfortunately disappeared. In 1848 he gave up his crown in favour of his nephew, the present Emperor Francis Joseph (who is the heir of his fortunes and estates), and retired to Prague, where he lived a quiet, pious life, taking part in good works, in which the Empress Marie Ann Pia, who survives him, fervently joined."