

LITERARY CHAT

"MARCHING WITH GOMEZ."

Modesty is, perhaps, a characteristic of all war correspondents, at least of those who have actually been to the front in Cuba, instead of at Key West, for instance. Certainly it is one of the very evident qualities of Mr. Grover Flint. Possibly it was due to Mr. Flint's modesty, possibly to that hazy and unperceptive atmosphere which so often envelopes the occupant of an editorial chair—at any rate, whatever the cause may have been, this gentleman's reputation among his associates on the metropolitan daily with which he was for some time connected, was not that of a writer. A common remark among his fellow craftsmen at that time, when discussing the qualities of the lately returned war correspondent, was, "What a pity that Flint can't write!"

So much for the opinion of associate experts, for Mr. Flint's "Marching with Gomez" is one of the very best and most interesting of the recent contributions to literature about Cuba. The book—made up from field notes, taken during some four months of the spring and summer of 1896 as war correspondent with the insurgent forces—is very fascinating reading. Mr. Flint's style is so clear, so simple, and so picturesque, his appreciation of dramatic values so keen, and his artistic feeling so evident, that one follows the narrative of his experiences with unabated interest to the end. His felicity of expression is really admirable, and he gets "atmospheres," no matter whether it be of the interior of a mountain workshop, a desolated province, a guerrilla hanging, or a moving column of ragged soldiers, the infantry of "Free Cuba."

Banks of clouds obscured the moon, and cool showers blew in from the sea, as we zigzagged by *guarda rayas* (aisles for marking sections and carrying off cut cane) in the canefields, and through the tall moist grass of the pastures, up a hilly trail into the forest. Sometimes as we passed a clearing and the shadowy outline of a peasant's hut, dogs awoke and bayed until we were out of hearing. Once, as we splashed through a deep pool, a great white bird arose and floated, spirit-like, into the night ahead of us. We rode silently for perhaps an hour, slipping about in the mud on up grades, and trotting when our path offered a level, until a sharp challenge, "*Allo! Quien va?*" ("Halt! Who goes?") brought us to a stop. "Cuba," shouted the captain.

"*Avanza uno!*" ("Advance one!") came from the mysterious sentry in the bush. Then

our captain jogged forward a dozen paces with the password, and called for us to follow.

That is Mr. Flint's account of his introduction into a "permanent" Cuban camp, and is but a bit, taken at random, out of the many picturesque descriptions with which the volume abounds.

Mr. Flint did not find the insurgents doing very much of anything, except to harass the Spanish forces wherever found—a skirmish, with as much damage to the Spaniards as possible, and then a retreat with the least possible loss to the Cubans. The battle of Saratoga, which the author describes, was really more of a pitched retreat than a pitched battle—the Spaniards doing the retreating; and this is the only engagement in his experiences which the author dignifies by the name of battle. It is this lack of aggressive warfare on the part of the insurgents to which Mr. T. R. Dawley, another war correspondent, so strongly objected. Mr. Flint makes no comments, but his narrative seems to show that the harassing policy was carried on in a judicious style, and later events have seemed to prove its effectiveness.

One inference is evident from this war correspondent's personal observations of the Spaniards under engagement, and that is that our own troops would have little difficulty in "licking them out of sight." On the other hand, their behavior under fire is very probably due more to the inefficiency, and perhaps cowardice, of their commanders, than to any lack of fighting spirit in the Spanish soldier.

"Atrocities," says Mr. Flint, "committed by the Spanish guerrillas about Cienfuegos have been of such medieval ghastliness that no one ever believed them, and reports of them are handled gingerly by news editors." And he devotes a chapter to "Typical Atrocities," describing what he himself saw of the victims of the Olayita massacre, which took place at the plantation of M. Duarte, a French citizen. The *reconcentrado* feature of the Spanish policy is not touched upon in this book. It had not been adopted at the time of Mr. Flint's visit.

As to annexation, a question which may come up in Cuba's future history, Mr. Flint says:

Gomez, as a practical soldier, did not venture to speculate on Cuba's future in detail. It was looking forward enough for him to see Cuba

under her own flag and government. Neither of these men (Gomez and Hernandez) approved of any scheme of annexation to the United States, or saw any conclusion of the war short of absolute independence. * * * * I have stated that no fighting Cuban I ever met favored annexation, nor have I seen a fighting Cuban who distrusted Cuba's ability to govern herself peacefully.

Scarcely until almost the closing paragraph is there a hint of the real danger to a war correspondent, should he be found among the insurgent forces. Escaping from Cuba, when his work was over, in an open whale boat, on a gusty night, almost from under the guns of Nuevitas harbor, "we all of us," says Mr. Flint, "had seen enough of Spanish methods to know what it meant to be captured, and that the authorities would not be anxious for a repetition of the lingering Competitor trial. If a cruiser or gunboat were to overhaul us, we knew we should be either run down or quietly shot."

Mr. Flint's literary style impresses the reader almost as forcibly as do the more or less stirring incidents of which he writes; and the book is illustrated, and very well illustrated, by the author's own hand. Yet not long ago, when newspaper editors were scurrying about in search of literary celebrities and noted artists as war correspondents, the author of "Marching with Gomez," after all his experiences in the field, was quietly holding down an editorial chair on one of the very dailies most rabid in the search.

THE STORY OF RACHEL.

One of the most interesting books of this day has just been published in Paris. It is the story of the great Rachel, by the widow of the man who took the little gamin, the child of the Jew Félix, and polished her into the greatest artist in France.

The book is a contradiction to the wail we hear from some quarters that talent is not appreciated. Samson heard of this Jewish child of twelve, sought her out, and begged her to come to him. He even offered to give her father a pension on condition that he would keep his daughter out of the common theaters. He followed her even when she went there; he procured her engagements to appear in drawingrooms, and finally got her a place at the Comédie Française. She had the characteristics of her race in a tremendous degree. The great spirit of tragedy, which seems to be marked in some lines on the face of every Jew, was incarnate in her. She had all the poetic and artistic heritage of her race, and with it she had an inordinate love of money. She would learn every great rôle. In fifteen years she created twenty six. She would bargain for her

appearances with the shrewdness of a money lender. She had in her a fire which she did not understand, but which she was intelligent enough to use as the valuable gift it was. It was like something apart from herself.

HARVARD VIVISECTED.

When one picks up a volume of college stories, one has in mind a definite picture of what is coming. One foresees an assemblage of splendid, light hearted young fellows who call one another "old man" and talk an intricate, humorous patois; an atmosphere of sturdy good fellowship, of youth and loyalty and glorified intimacy; stunning seniors, irresponsible freshmen, and a few grinds staked out in the corners by way of contrast. The college publication and orations join the post graduate fiction in encouraging this popular ideal of a heart to heart relationship that binds all students into a happy band dancing around a benign Alma Mater.

Before one has read three pages of C. M. Flandrau's "Harvard Episodes," one realizes that this childish illusion is about to be wiped out. We are to see Harvard, not as an apotheosis of duck trousers and boyish charm, but as it really is, a community as graded and intricate as the world it is drawn from. A man in every way a gentleman may go there and at the end of two years find himself still as far aloof from the college world as he was the first day. In the world outside, a lawyer does not necessarily extend warm and immediate friendship to all other men in the same profession. In like manner, the fact of studentship at the same institution does not warrant precipitate intimacy. As one of Mr. Flandrau's characters puts it:

"It's about as sensible to suppose that your fellow students are going to take any notice of you, as it would be to expect people you had never met to lean out of their front windows and ask you to dinner if you were to stroll down the avenue some fine evening."

Mr. Flandrau's picture of Harvard life is daringly honest. He is not afraid to handle the word "society," or to betray what a power it is in college life. He gives us Harvard, not as we should choose to have it, but as it most assuredly is. At the same time he gives us a handful of strong, well told stories, subtle as well as bold, and free from all the forced funniness that has surrounded the undergraduate in fiction.

EXTERMINATED WORDS.

There are certain words which have grown so worn and battered in the service of American letters that there is nothing to do but to

grant them honorable retirement. They have been of value in their time, but every spark of vital meaning has been crushed out of them by overuse, until now their appearance throws a shabby, hackneyed air over all their surroundings.

One of the most fagged and unexpressive is the term "Bohemian." This was originally such a significant word that everybody wanted it; and all the little writers fell upon it and stripped it, so that it now lies shapeless and meaningless in the ditch of journalism. Every girl who cooks on a gas stove and dispenses with a chaperon calls herself a Bohemian. A man may win the title by a bad collar and a worse poem. Those who are economizing in apartments cover the lack of order in their meals and comfort in their living with the same convenient term, and all to whom the door of the social world is closed shriek "we Bohemians" over the wall to show that they would not enter if they could. From an expression that held a volume of meaning between its first and last letters, it has become a cheap catch word, applied to such a varied list of subjects that all its descriptive value is gone.

Another of these done to death words is "Cupid." Every ten cent poet has borrowed the myth for his versery (with the inevitable "stupid" for a rhyme) until by association it has gained the tawdry aspect of a last year's paper valentine. Writers, recognizing that the epithet was outworn, but liking the symbol, have tried to freshen it up as "the blind boy," "the little god who," etc., but these have failed to revive the lost charm. Cupid is hopelessly déclassé, and he who is to write freshly of love must invent a new symbolism.

There are dozens of other words, nouns and adjectives and adverbs, that are being rapidly spoiled by indiscriminate handling. "Dainty" and "quaint," in spite of their usefulness, have already succumbed to intemperate usage. "Atmosphere" must go soon, unless something is done to protect it. Nothing but a game law system will save our best and most significant words from being exterminated.

THE BIBLE MADE OVER.

It is natural that many people should resent the Polychrome Bible. Having grown up with the phrases of the old version in their ears, they find the new wording cold and comparatively meaningless. The old sacredness seems gone. It is like going back to one's home and finding it completely altered, with strangers living in it. The changes may be all for the better, but the nameless charm that has grown out of affection and long habit is gone. Therefore it

is very hard to be just to the new translation, however one may admire its historical object. We have to remember that what is now our standard was once resented as an innovation.

Yet, allowing for prejudice, there seems to be often a distinct loss of dignity in the new wording. "This also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts," is a sonorous line, beautifully simple. Its new equivalent sounds trivial beside it—"This also from Jhvh proceeds." We have a Latin verb instead of the universally preferred Saxon, inversion to mar the sincerity, and a swinging dactyl instead of solemn spondees. If we are to more than coldly admit the value of this new version, we must be caught in babyhood and trained up on it.

COLLECTING AS AN INVESTMENT.

"If I were to begin life over again," said a collector of long experience, "I would hoard everything in the way of a book, pamphlet, periodical, or letter that came into my possession, even if I had to hire a warehouse in which to store the accumulation. If I lived to the age of three score and ten I should reap the benefit of my thrift; if not, my descendants would."

Questioned closely in regard to his meaning, the old collector continued: "In my opinion, the fad for collecting all sorts of odds and ends is simply in its infancy in this country, and yet it has attained proportions that no one could have predicted when I was a boy. In those days we used to collect postage stamps. I can well remember when a postage stamp album of the kind that every collector possesses nowadays was a rarity, and happy the boy who could call one his own. Half a dollar was an enormous price to pay for a single stamp then, and I do not remember that any one more than sixteen years of age ever thought of collecting them. A short time ago I met one of my old school boy friends, who asked me what had become of my stamp collection, and I was literally unable to tell him. Then he remarked that he had come across his own a short time before, while rummaging through some old, forgotten books and papers, and had sold it for eight hundred dollars.

"Soon afterwards I took some old letters, belonging to different members of my family, to an autograph dealer, and was amazed to find that certain comparatively insignificant names had a higher value in his eyes than those of some of the most famous men in history. He accounted for this by saying that people would naturally preserve every scrap of writing signed by one prominently before the public, and would take no

pains to preserve ordinary letters. This would make it very difficult for the collector of half a century later, who might be very anxious to obtain certain more or less obscure autographs in order to complete some particular collection, like that of the signers of the Declaration, or the members of the Continental Congress."

There is reason in the words of this old collector, and no one who is familiar with the high prices paid for odd numbers of old pamphlets, or rare editions of famous books, would think of disputing them. In this connection it may be said that at a recent London book sale Bernard Quaritch, the original publisher of Fitzgerald's "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam," paid more than a hundred dollars for a copy of the first edition, which he himself had printed in 1859, and had disposed of, with great difficulty, at the rate of one penny apiece.

Another recent sale that has attracted the attention of book lovers was that of a first edition of Burns, in the original paper covers and uncut, which brought more than twenty eight hundred dollars at auction in Edinburgh. And yet, less than thirty years ago, this same volume was advertised in the Scotch newspapers and disposed of for about thirty one dollars to a Mr. G. B. Simpson, a collector, who immediately paid ten dollars for a morocco case in which to preserve his treasure.

A BOHEMIAN POET AND PALMIST.

E. Heron Allen has lately placed on the literary market a version of some of the poems of Omar Khayyam. This is a venture into a dangerous field, but some critics have warmly praised his work, which has at least served to bring once more into notice a man who achieved a certain sort of fame in America, as well as in England, about a decade ago. At that time Allen enjoyed a remarkable vogue as a palm reader, and when he came to this country his studio was thronged with women of fashion who gladly paid him five dollars to have their future unfolded.

From New York he went to Chicago and other large American cities, and so widely were his soothsayings discussed that in a very short time he accumulated about five thousand dollars, with which he enjoyed himself royally. When that was gone, he settled down to the more commonplace work of a writer for newspapers and reader of manuscript for a publishing house. For a year or more he was a well known figure in Bohemian circles in New York. He was extremely kind to Selina Delaro, the actress, who had been a friend to him in the hour of his need, and was constant in his devotion

to her during the long period of her last illness. The two had been in the habit of dining every night at a certain table in a cheap Sixth avenue restaurant greatly affected at the time by writers, artists, and actors; and after her death her chair always remained empty by tacit agreement. No one of the regular habitués of the place ever thought of occupying it.

Mr. Allen is remembered to this day as one of the few foreigners of his class who experienced the ups and downs of New York life and went away without leaving a trail of unpaid debts.

CONDENSED LITERATURE.

The book review is the dog biscuit of modern literature. It contains all the essential parts in a compact form, and will sustain intellectual existence for an indefinite period. A man can swallow fifteen reviews while he would be mastering one book, and so has fifteen chances of appearing intelligent instead of one chance of really being so.

To read a book and have a real, true opinion about it requires a distinct mental effort; and so, when one can buy a ready made opinion of fair quality with any paper or magazine, why should one bother to turn several hundred leaves and laboriously work out a home made opinion? The one he buys is probably the better article, and furnishes all the phrases necessary to literary conversation. And that is what one reads for—to show that one has read.

To be sure, one misses the individual flavor of the book, and the pleasure of the personal contact with the author. Moreover, every particle of matter so gained is used specifically and definitely, so that there is nothing left over to assimilate into one's general being and increase that elusive quality known as cultivation. But after all, we have little time for things in general, if we are to be well up in things in particular. One must choose between a showy but shallow mental existence and a deep but inconspicuous mental life.

Before choosing, it would be well to offer a dog a dog biscuit and an old fashioned mutton chop, and see which he takes. Animals often show surprising intelligence.

First editions of Rudyard Kipling's earlier books have a rising value, and Mr. Kipling himself seems to be a bull in the market. An English bookseller, whose shop is in Brighton, says that some months ago the Anglo Indian author walked in and inquired:

"Got any first editions of my books?"

The tradesman replied that he had not.

"Well, if you come across any, send them to my address, will you?"

This happened last summer, when Mr. Kipling was staying at Rottingdean, a tiny village that runs down to the sea at a gap in the white chalk cliffs of the Sussex coast. His near neighbor was Sir Edward Burne-Jones, who has built a studio there. The chief attraction of the place, probably, is the fact that it is five miles from a railroad.

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Every now and then some wiseacre gravely asserts that the American comic papers are far inferior to *Punch*, and would have no success whatever were they published in Great Britain. As a matter of fact, an enormous quantity of American humorous matter is republished in England, two or three periodicals in London being made up entirely of *Life*, *Puck* and *Judge* matter, which they arrange to receive from the publishers of those papers in the form of advance sheets, sent weekly to them. On the other hand, very few of *Punch's* jokes enjoy currency in this country. This condition of things indicates that there is a certain demand for our native humorous products in the British markets, and very little demand here for theirs.

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Once upon a time, so runs the story, there was a man in London who had ventured upon various publishing schemes with but poor success, and was beginning to despair of ever making a fortune, when, by chance, he bethought himself of a huge scrapbook which his wife had compiled of various literary odds and ends that had enchained her fancy. She called her scrapbook "Titbits," and it occurred to her husband that such odds and ends, published in periodical form, might interest other people as well as his wife. The result of this meditation on his part was the appearance of a little penny paper called "Titbits" which proved so popular and gained such a wide circulation that its proprietor felt encouraged to place other literary ventures on the market, and it was not long before he became known as the publisher of a number of extremely popular penny periodicals. He is now a millionaire many times over and a baronet, while his wife, whose scrapbook proved the corner stone of their prosperity, finds her reward in the title of Lady Newnes.

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We hear so often of the great sums earned by a few successful books that many people have a vague idea that authorship is a royal road to riches. They do not realize that these much advertised volumes are the rarest of rare exceptions; that most books do not

pay expenses; and that an unknown author's first work has not one chance in fifty of doing so.

Hear the testimony of a man whose books are known and read throughout the civilized world. "During the first twelve years of my literary life," Herbert Spencer recently said, "every one of my books failed to pay for its paper, print and advertising. For many years after, they failed to pay my small living expenses—every one of them left me poorer."

Mr. Spencer could not induce any publisher to accept his first volume, "Social Statics." He issued seven hundred and fifty copies at his own expense, and it took him fourteen years to sell them. In those fourteen years the financial result of his work was a net loss of six thousand dollars. In the next ten years he was able to make this loss good. That is to say that after fourteen years of literary apprenticeship a man who is deservedly ranked as one of the geniuses of the age was able to earn six hundred dollars a year with his pen!

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Zola is not the first prominent author to suffer the penalty of the law, and if he writes a book within prison walls it will not be a new thing in literary annals. "The Pilgrim's Progress," which John Bunyan wrote during his twelve years in Bedford jail, is the most famous precedent; but there are others. Richard Lovelace, whose "To Althea, from Prison" is one of the classics of the English language, published "Lucasta" while held prisoner by the victorious Roundheads.

William O'Brien, the Irish author and politician, has been prosecuted several times on charges of sedition and libel, and one of his novels, "When We Were Boys," was written in prison. The late Edmund Yates was sentenced to four months' incarceration for a libel on Lord Lonsdale published in his paper, the *World*, but he was released after four weeks in jail.

When Tom Paine published "The Rights of Man" his bold utterances were so distasteful to George III's government that he was prosecuted and convicted, but before being sentenced he escaped to France. His enemies were so bitter that a man whose only offense was that of selling the proscribed book was condemned to fourteen years' transportation. Paine was imprisoned later, but for another reason. He was warmly welcomed by the revolutionists in France, and elected to the convention; but when he dared to oppose one of Robespierre's projects, the champion of liberty was promptly sent to jail, where he remained for nearly a year.

ETCHINGS

FOLLY AND FOOLS.

FOOLS rush in—and often come out millionaires.

When a man realizes what a fool he is, it is sometimes the first dawning of intelligence.

The thought that it is not pleasant to have fools around has never yet led any of us to take our departure.

Few productions of nature can equal the fool that a wise man can make of himself.

When we think what idiots we've made of ourselves, we generally console ourselves with the reflection that we must be remarkably shrewd to discover it.

The man that has never committed a folly is like a river that has either dried up or is about to overflow its banks.

"A fool and his money are soon parted," may be a very wise adage, but the sole effect it has upon most of us is to convince us that if we could only once get rich, we'd never again be poor.

H. C. Boulbee.

A NEW VERSION OF SOME OLD VERSES.

(With acknowledgments to the "other" poet.)

OH, say not woman's heart is caught
With every idle pleasure!
Ah, no! 'Tis only when she learns
Golf's name; it wander's never;
Deep in her heart that passion grows—
In spite of cyclones, rains, and snows,
She golfs, and golfs forever!

Ogden Ward.

HOLDING THE SKEIN.

WHEN Madge and I were sweethearts, in the winters long ago,
We used to trace the future in the fire's ruddy glow.

The pictures are forgotten, but the memories remain

Of Madge the yarn a winding, and I—I held the skein.

I watched her nimble fingers with their tips as red as wine,

And if the yarn grew tangled—why, it wasn't fault of mine,

For I was building castles where my little queen should reign,

While Madge the yarn was winding, and I—I held the skein.

Demure as any nun was she, this little queen of mine,

'Twas plain that I should be the oak, and she the clinging vine;

She bent to every whim of mine, and ne'er did she complain

In those days when she wound the yarn, and I—I held the skein.

But since we now are married, and our children clamber round,

And find the fire pictures that so long ago we found,

And now that there's a frock to mend and little socks to darn,

She winds me round her finger as she used to do the yarn.

Roy Farrell Greene.

SYLVIA IN THE SPRINGTIME.

VOICE of the youth of the year,
Wren song and thrush song and cuckoo note clear!

Melody's core, the articulate soul of the Spring—

Oh, to hear Sylvia sing!

Flower of the youth of the year,
Bell of the hyacinth, daffodil spear!
Day dream of beauty and veriest vision of grace—

Oh, to see Sylvia's face!

Clinton Scollard.

IN A GARDEN OLD.

THE hollyhocks grew prim and tall
Along the sunny garden wall,
And wore a staid and stately air,
But none with Polly could compare—
Sweet Polly among the flowers.

The roses nodded by the walk,
Heads touching as when lover's talk,
Though sweet they were, and fair to see,
Polly was sweeter far to me—
Sweet Polly among the flowers.

Though lavender and thyme both grew
Along the walk, and, gemmed with dew,
A tangled border of grass pinks,
Yet Polly was more sweet, methinks—
Sweet Polly among the flowers.

And fragrant lilies, white and fair,
Poured out their subtle incense there,
But hung their heads with very shame
And envy when sweet Polly came—
Sweet Polly among the flowers.