

## TIME.

Time is a taper waning fast!  
Use it, man, well whilst it doth last:  
Tost burning downward it consume away  
Before thou hast commenced the labor of the day.

## The New-York Tribune.

ILLUSTRATED SUPPLEMENT.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 19, 1900.

Professor Dicey, distributing prizes at King's College, has been offering the students some wise words on the subject of how to form a good style. "He did not profess," runs the report, "to instruct them how to be eloquent or witty, but rather how to attain the valuable art of expressing themselves in clear and accurate language." Professor Dicey was sanguine. He overlooked the fact that, when all is said and done, about the only way in which one can attain to clear and accurate language is to see that one is born with a gift for it. But at all events there was sound sense, calculated to be of some, if slight, service, in what he had to say to the students. "He counselled them to dismiss all artificial notions of style from their minds, and take for their models such writers as Sir James Fitz-James Stephen—a conspicuous instance of the effort to write just as one would speak—or Jeremy Bentham, who defined the whole of a good style to lie in the choice of 'the same word for the same thing and a different word for a different thing.' The worst if it is, however, that to offer Stephen or Bentham to the seeker after style would be, in nine cases out of ten, about as profitable as offering him the multiplication table. He doesn't worry about clarity and accuracy, he will tell you. "Why, bless my soul!" we can hear him saying, "those things come as a matter of course. They are only the dry bones of style. What I want is 'color' and 'rhythm' and 'nuance.'" He will go for these things to Stevenson or Pater, or to any one of a dozen others. He won't get them, to be sure, but it is idle to think that he will turn for them to Jeremy Bentham. Your latter day "stylist" is a very human individual.

A certain novelist, in describing his hero, has managed, perhaps without any very mischievous intention, to suggest in the portrait the traits of one of his literary contemporaries. The illustrator has emphasized the point in his sketches and has even gone a step farther, bringing in the likeness of the poor victim's publisher. All the persons concerned, the author of the story, the author he has suggested, the illustrator and the publisher, are said to be well acquainted with one another. Here is a pretty predicament which may carry the quartet into the law courts. In the mean time the publishers are doubtless watching the case with breathless interest. They, with the critics, have before this had some hard things said about them by the novelists. But the allusions have always been carefully veiled. What will happen if author and artist take to reckless and unmistakable portraiture?

The sixty-third volume of the "Dictionary of National Biography" has just reached us. It closes on the name of William Henry Zuylenstein, fourth Earl of Rochford, which is to say that the great work is practically completed. Two supplementary volumes, bringing the record up to 1900, will be published early in 1901, but Mr. George Smith, of Smith, Elder & Co., who designed the enterprise, is receiving now the congratulations due to one who has "lifted the tombstones from thirty thousand graves" to the lasting edification of mankind. Mr. John Morley promptly gave a dinner in honor of Mr. Smith, of Mr. Leslie Stephen, the first editor; of Mr. Sidney Lee, who succeeded Mr. Stephen and supervised the work to its conclusion, and to others associated with them. He said many eulogistic things, but "The Spectator" thinks he "missed the point which, more than any other, makes of that great undertaking a work of national importance. It will by degrees and in course of years correct a great national fault—the tendency to forget men who are worthy of remembrance." Perhaps "The Spectator" is right, and certainly there is to be said in favor of its hypothesis that the "Dictionary," having been composed largely by men of letters and not by mere dryasdusts, is one of the most readable publications we know. It will not be neglected. But it is just as well not to be sentimental and claim more for even a masterpiece of compilation than it is likely to accomplish. The main point, if we may venture to differ from "The Spectator," is simply that the "Dictionary" is a workmanlike addition to the tools of the writing man. The layman will use it much; the author will use it more. "Thorough" was the word that the publishers and editors took for their motto. Their best recompense, we believe, will be the knowledge of having provided for future historians an indispensable treasury of information. A dictionary, after all, is not literature, and that it can "correct a national fault" is doubtful. If it provides the writers of a nation with the right facts when these are wanted nothing more need be asked or expected.

## ELIZABETH OF RUSSIA.

## HER CONSOLIDATION OF HER FATHER'S WORK.

THE DAUGHTER OF PETER THE GREAT. A History of Russian Diplomacy and of the Russian Court Under the Empress Elizabeth Petrovna, 1741-1762. By R. Nisbet Bain. With Portraits. Octavo, pp. xviii, 328. E. P. Dutton & Co.

The period dealt with by Mr. Bain in his biography of Elizabeth of Russia is unfamiliar to all but very searching students of European history. It is the interlude between Peter the Great and the great Catherine, during which the schemes of the one were sagaciously modified and consolidated, while the best possible preparations were being made for the schemes of the other. Peter was a squalid man of might; Catherine was splendidly vicious. Elizabeth, the daughter of the former, had some of the better qualities of both and was, above all things, worthy of them in her understanding of her duties toward the State. Her exploits have been neglected, Mr. Bain thinks, because

diers to her cause. Nor was she inclined to palter timidly with her opportunity. She was born for action. "She had not an ounce of nun's flesh about her," was the quaint observation of Finch, the British Ambassador, and when the moment arrived for striking the blow, at 2 o'clock one wintry morning, she went to the Preobrazhensky Barracks wearing the mien of a conquering amazon. Says Mr. Bain:

Immediately on dismounting Elizabeth snatched a spontoon from one of the soldiers, and led the way into the messroom, ordering, first of all, however, that all the drums in the barracks should be slit up, so that nobody could give the alarm. The men crowded after her, and when they were all assembled she exclaimed: "My children, you know whose daughter I am! It is my resolve this night to deliver you and all Russia from our German tormentors. Will you follow me?" "Matushka!" they cried enthusiastically, "we will follow thee to the death, and as for the 'nyemtsui' [Germans], we will cut them all to pieces!" "Nay, my children," replied Elizabeth, "if you hurt a hair of their heads, I will not go one step with you. There must be no bloodshed. What we are going to do we do simply for the benefit of our country." Having thus restrained their savage zeal within due limits, she knelt down, all present following her example, and, producing her silver cross, held it aloft and exclaimed: "I



ELIZABETH OF RUSSIA.  
(From an old portrait.)

her reign bristles with difficulties for the historian—it is marked by such a tangle of events, such a conflict of personalities—and because many of the most essential documents are in the Russian language. The volume before us is therefore unusually welcome. It illuminates some dark places in history. Also it is worth reading because the author is very much in sympathy with his heroine, and, painting her portrait from first hand knowledge of all the sources, makes us acquainted with a woman of commanding character and extraordinary charm. It may be added that the portrait is the more valuable because it is provided with a good background. Mr. Bain is nowhere more readable than in his pages on the personages and events of practical significance in Elizabeth's career.

The death of Peter seemed to promise hard trials for Russia. The trials came—in fact, Russia has never been without them—but those courtiers whom Mr. Bain describes as "Peter's pupils" were not the men to let the empire go to smash. On his death bed the autocrat said of one of these: "Ostermann is indispensable to Russia. He best knows her needs, and he is the only one of us who has never made a diplomatic blunder." There was never any love lost between Elizabeth and the astute friend in whom her father had such confidence. When her chance came she destroyed his power. But the chance did not come at once, and, in the interval, despite the tragic ups and downs through which the government passed, Peter's fabric lost nothing; Ostermann and other wise heads counteracted the evil influence of incompetent princes, and his young feminine antagonist found her inheritance, when she grasped it, in bad but not moribund condition. The tale of her coup d'état is thrilling. Enraged at the insolent domination of the Regent Biren and his wife, who cared neither for the infantile Ivan VI nor for Russia, but only for their own interests, she was finally spurred to seize the throne by force. She was young, robust and ravishingly beautiful, the very woman to win the grena-

swear before Heaven to die for you; will you swear to die for me?" "We swear!" thundered the grenadiers. "Then let us go!" cried the Tsarevna, rising, "and remember, my children, whatever befall, no bloodshed!"

They carried her on their shoulders to the Winter Palace, where she herself woke the unsuspecting victim of her stratagem, and so quietly did she carry out her whole plan that at 8 o'clock the next morning the people of the city were still ignorant of the sweeping change that had taken place. It was a change from alien authorities to native, from a Court dominated by selfishness to one in which patriotism flourished. Elizabeth loved her countrymen, and she adored the memory of her father. When, at the critical moment, she had hesitated about going to take command of the grenadiers who were to enforce her designs upon the throne, an appeal to the blood of Peter in her veins was sufficient to fix her wavering resolution. She carried out his policy of Russia for the Russians. This alone would have gained her the support of the people. But she had also her resources as a woman to draw upon, and these were enough to hold all Russia, and a great many distinguished foreigners, under her spell. Mr. Bain describes her as tall and stout, but of graceful presence. She could be majestic, but, generally, she preferred to be merely bewitching. Her complexion was pure and radiant. Beautiful features, with fine eyes and hair, caused her to shine pre-eminent among the women of her Court. Her favorite robes were of pink, with roses of the same color in her hair. She understood the art of pleasing, and proved it by being one of the most artlessly amiable rulers in history. Pretty manners went with her good nature. She was humane and sought to make people happy. She was, in short, like a queen out of a fairy tale. But beneath the pleasing exterior, beneath the urbanity and charm, were sinister traits such as came almost inevitably from her father's house. Pious always, in a bustling, homely way, she was also a woman of extremely dubious morals. Her education had been neglected, and she cared little for reading. Indolence was her besetting sin, after the

license which gave one favorite after another an infamous ascendancy in the affairs of her Court. But it must be added that at the worst her lovers were powerless to do permanent harm to Russia. Some of them, indeed, were effective aids in her desultory but fruitful campaign for reforms within the limits of the empire, and at all times she exercised a supervision over the State which the favorites themselves did not invariably suspect.

Mr. Bain concerns himself, however, less with the internal history of Elizabeth's reign than with its relation to European diplomacy. Here he often exhibits the Empress as exasperatingly slow to action, as too indolent to take steps seemingly indispensable to the welfare of the nation. But the author wisely looks at Elizabeth's reign as a whole, and thus considered it leaves her with lasting laurels. Her delays frequently meant that she was not dilatory, but cautious; if she hesitated it was not from timidity or ignorance, but from legitimate doubt as to the advisability of the course urged upon her by the Ministers. The European States were plotting and counterplotting from one end of the year to the other. The Muscovite of earlier times had been ignored by the potentates, but the Russian of Peter's revived nation was an entirely different being, and had to be taken into account. St. Petersburg became the focus of all those intrigues which appall the historian of the eighteenth century. We do not wonder that other writers have paused where Mr. Bain has courageously essayed to set forth the facts. It has taken him three hundred pages to sketch them with tolerable lucidity. We will not pretend to outline his story. It is one of labyrinthine windings, through which the Empress Elizabeth moves in her breezy, masterful way, fencing with every Power in turn, sometimes with three or four of them at once, and never losing her head, never allowing anything but overwhelming circumstance to affect the plans she entertained for Russia. She hated the King of Prussia with an implacable hatred, and he found her an heroic foe. She did not ruin him, as she wished to do, but, as Mr. Bain observes, she rendered Prussia, the most dangerous neighbor of her country, practically harmless to Russia for the remainder of the century. This book is interesting not only because it discloses the political ability of Elizabeth, but because it presents the princes, warriors, favorites and diplomatists of the time as living beings, with all their traits and passions, big and little, in full play. The backstairs methods of the great capitals are painted in detail. The reader is taken behind the scenes, and is shown how crises which we associate chiefly with battlefields and the formal intercourse of statesmen were begotten in dirty intrigue and built up by the self-interest of corrupt rulers and officials. It is not a savory recital. The Russia of the eighteenth century was not a dainty corner of the earth, and Elizabeth, as has been indicated, was a Russian of the Russians. But she and her people were marching with civilization, and both remain intensely interesting to the student. Mr. Bain has done justice to his theme, and we relinquish his book with a lively sense of gratitude.

## "IMPOSSIBLE" FRENCH LITERATURE.

THE FRENCH PEOPLE DO NOT READ IT.

R. Davey, in The Fortnightly Review.

We are apt to imagine that because the French novel is more often than not "impossible," and the French newspaper is better written and worse informed than those others, both are faithful expressions of French thought. In the first place, the novels with illustrated covers, which figure so conspicuously in the windows of the French libraries in the neighborhood of Leicester Square, are rarely if ever found in respectable French families. La famille, unfortunately, reads very little, especially in the provinces, where you may enter a hundred houses and scarcely see a book that would not edify a convent of nuns by its "innocence" and its orthodoxy. Although the French produce perhaps more novels than any other nation, they are the people who read them the least. I once took the trouble when in Paris to interview the principal publishers, so as to ascertain for myself how it was possible for them to sell so much—well, to put it mildly—pornographic literature and pay the authors their fees. It was proved to me beyond all question that the vast majority of these objectionable works are sold in Germany, Austria, Italy, England, Spain, the United States, and especially in the South American republics. Comparatively few are sold in Paris and in the large provincial cities. In the cathedral towns, such as Orleans, Amiens, Rouen, Rheims, Rennes, etc., it is not easy to find a single copy of these pernicious books. The booksellers would be boycotted for dealing in them.

Therefore, while it is perfectly true that France produces the most corrupting and disreputable literature, on the other hand, and by reason of her conservative tendencies, she corrupts not so much herself as her neighbors. The evil is in a sense none the less great, but surely the neighbors should protect themselves! They have only to stop buying these naughty books, and a visible diminution of their production in Paris will at once ensue. Hence it happens that the insolent and outrageous caricatures of the Queen, which have so greatly offended us, do not really possess anything like the importance we have attached to them. They never had the sanction of respectable France, for respectable France, in all probability, never beheld them. "Le Rire" and its imitators are not the sort of publications which a self-respecting man is likely to take into a lady's drawing room. The excessive license of the press is, nevertheless, most harmful, and there is but one remedy for it—that which we applied to the coarse cartoons in vogue under the Regency. Disgusted by their brutality, the English public ceased to buy them. The result was simple and swift enough. The artists, finding no market for their wares, ceased to produce them, and thus by degrees we came to prefer the clean and wholesome comicality of our very own and beloved "Mr. Punch."