

LITERARY NOTES.

Mr. Horace E. Scudder has just finished the first draft of his biography of Lowell. It is to be published early in the autumn of 1901.

The new and cheaper edition of the Stevenson letters contains one from Alan Breck to Private Terence Mulvaney, with Alan's comments on the changes in the art of war since the days of his skirmish in the roundhouse of the brig Covenant.

John Ruskin was a persistent letter writer, and there are consequently a great many of his epistles in the autograph market. One dealer offers a variety of Ruskin letters at a few shillings apiece. In one of these letters he says: "It seems to me more difficult every day as it may become my own duty to live at least on as little as I can if I would enforce simplicity of life on others." He had dreams of life in a garret at that time. It was his failure to carry out in externals, as well as in the spirit, this course of renunciation that made him sign a letter—not one of the letters now on sale—"Your poor friend, John Ruskin."

Here is Tennyson's own idea of the general drift of his "In Memoriam." "It is," he said once to the Bishop of Ripon, "a kind of small 'Divina Commedia' ending in a marriage."

Mr. W. F. Prideaux has lately found a copy of that scarce little book, "The Poetical Recreations of the Champion," and discovered in it some (rather poor) epigrams by Charles Lamb, which he thinks have never been reprinted. There is also in the volume a poem, "A Lady's Sapphic," which is signed "M. L." and which he attributes to Mary Lamb:

Now the calm evening hastily approaches,  
Not a sound stirring thro' the gentle woodlands,  
Save that soft Zephyr with his downy pinions  
Scatters fresh fragrance.

Now the pale sunbeams in the west declining  
Gild the dew rising as the twilight deepens,  
Beauty and splendor decorate the landscape;  
Night is approaching.

By the cool stream's side pensively and sadly  
Sit I, while birds sing on the branches sweetly,  
And my sad thoughts all with their carols soothing,  
Lull to oblivion.

A characteristic note addressed by Charlotte Brontë to her "dear Ellen" was also disposed of at this sale. "From what you say of Mr. Clapham," she writes, "I think I should like him very much; Annie warts shaking to be put out about his appearance. What does it matter whether her husband dines in a dress coat or a market coat, provided there be worth and honesty and a clean shirt underneath?"

Those who would like to know more about the Priest of Nemi than the hero of "Eleanor" tells us must seek Mr. J. G. Fraser's beautiful book on magic and religion, "The Golden Bough." The central theme of the book is the explanation of this priesthood of Aricia and the annual sacrifice of a human representative of the god. The new edition of "The Golden Bough" is greatly enlarged, a fact due to the addition of much illustrative matter. It presents a change of view also, in so much as Mr. Fraser now regards religion and magic as distinct, the embodiments or outgrowths of two opposing principles; whereas in the original form of the book he inclined to the view that magic was a loose and undeveloped form of religion.

The Historical Manuscripts Commission of the American Historical Association proposes to publish the papers of Chief Justice Salmon P. Chase, and Mr. Herbert Friedenwald is preparing them for the press.

An English critic rejoices over the present indications of a reaction against the dominion of the bibelot in letters. He complains that the little book has had a long run and the "little masters" have made the best of it; that we have been living in an age of meticulous preciosities, a diet apt in time to become cloying to the palate. And he adds, grimly, apropos of the fashionable bibelot binding, "There has been too much of the limp lamb in the recent purveying of English letters."

The dust of Samuel Richardson, the novelist, lies under the pavement of St. Bride's, one of the quaint old churches in the "city" of London, and a brass tablet set in the wall repeats Dr. Johnson's tribute: "He enlarged the knowledge of human nature, and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue." "The novelist's gravestone," says "The London Globe," "is under the cocoanut matting in the middle aisle, where its gilt lettering is carefully sheltered from dust under a paper covering. It may seem strange that the gravestone of the author of 'Clarissa' should be thus hidden away, but there is force in the contention of Mr. Peart, the courteous parish clerk, that by this means it is preserved from being worn by many feet, and is kept in a condition to be shown to genuine pilgrims. For such Mr. Peart will gladly roll the great matting down the aisle, in an advancing and increasing cylinder (like Fame thrusting back Oblivion), until there comes in view the marble slab beneath which the 'father of the English novel' lies." A modern English novelist lives under the shadow of the old church tower—one who has lately begun to deal seriously with the life of his own country. This is Mr. Anthony Hope Hawkins, whose father, the elder Anthony Hawkins, is the rector of St. Bride's and is one of the most interesting and beloved of the older clergy in London.

A meeting was held in Concord the other evening as a memorial to the late Dr. Elisha Mulford, the author of "The Nation," a book which not many people read in these days. Various old friends of the author gave their reminiscences of him.

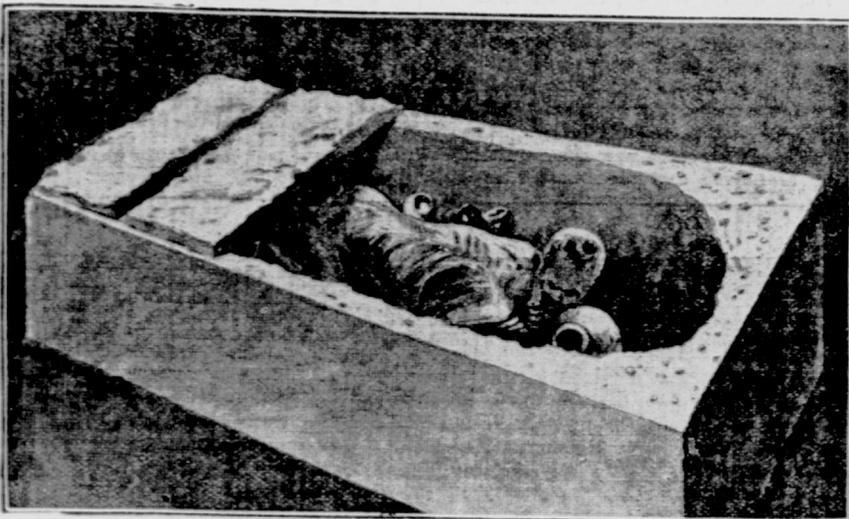
A letter describing the last hours of Jane Austen has just been sold in London. It was penned by her sister, Elizabeth Austen, who writes as follows: "She felt herself to be dying about half an hour before she became tranquil and apparently unconscious. During that half hour was her struggle, poor soul; she said she could not tell us what she suffered, though she complained of little fixed pain. When I asked her if there was anything she wanted, her answer was she wanted nothing but death, and some of her words were, 'God grant me patience, pray for me, oh pray for me.' Her voice was defective, but as long as she spoke she was intelligible. I returned about a quarter before six and found her recovering from faintness and oppression; she got so well as to be able to give me a minute account of her seizure,

and when the clock struck six she was talking quietly to me. I cannot say how soon afterward she was seized again with the same faintness, which was followed by the suffering she could not describe; but Mr. Lyford had been sent for, had applied something to give her ease, and she was in a state of quiet insensibility by seven o'clock at the latest. From that time till half-past four, when she ceased to breathe, she scarcely moved a limb, so that we have every reason to think, with gratitude to the Almighty, that her sufferings were over. The last sad ceremony is to take place on Thursday morning, her dear remains are to be deposited in the Cathedral—it is a satisfaction to me to think that they are to be in a building she admired so much—her precious soul, I presume to hope, reposes in a superior mansion."

Mr. Henry James, who now lives at Rye—the scene of Thackeray's unfinished story, "Denis Duval"—has written for "Scribner's Magazine" an interesting paper on the place and the story.

The thoroughness with which Tolstoi carries out his theory of non-resistance is illustrated by this anecdote: Some time ago he was the subject of an interview at the hands of an American journalist, whom the Count asked to his country home, and who put him under prolonged and ruthless examination. At last the visit came to an end, and the gentle sufferer saw his questioner into the carriage. As the parting greetings were being exchanged the guest hinted that after all he had not learned everything he wanted to know. "Then you must come into the house again and stay another day with us," was the Count's reply, and he would take no denial.

There is to be another compilation of stray bits of Thackeray's writing, the compiler being



THE NEOLITHIC MAN AS HE APPEARS AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

Mr. Lewis Melville, the author of a so-called "life" of the great novelist. The publisher's announcement gives us to understand that the volume will contain such matter as has not been reprinted in any book—matter, therefore, which its writer did not wish to preserve. A commentator in "The Pall Mall Gazette" sees in Mr. Melville "a well-meaning Nemesis, visiting at this far remove the indiscretions of a Pegasus in harness, and suffering not the innocent pot-boilers to be forgotten." Alas, that a dead giant should be the victim of such small fry, feeding on his fame!

A new use for literature! A "cultured" grocer in London gives away novels to purchasers of his tea, and varies the gift according to the quantity requested.

Mark Rutherford in his forthcoming "Journal" describes a visit to Carlyle at Chelsea in 1868. The sage, who sat at breakfast in a cheerful room, was agreeable and frankly talkative. Everything in the room was in exact order, the books on the shelves, for instance, being in perfect evenness. Mark Rutherford noticed that when Carlyle replaced a book he took pains to get it even with the others. There are left only a few Scotchmen who remember Carlyle in his prime. Some old men at Craigenputtock describe him sometimes as a "sour-tempered body" who did not get on well with his brother, the then farmer of Craigenputtock.

Polish enthusiasm for the novelist, Henry K. Sienkiewicz, is great—so great that the Poles intend to celebrate his twenty-fifth "literary anniversary" by the gift to him of a fine house and estate.

THE MURDER OF POMPIIIA.

From The London Morning Post.

Those who are well acquainted with "The Ring and the Book" that is to say, almost every one who can read Browning with pleasure, should turn to the account of "The Murder of Pompilia" in "The Monthly Review." Professor Hall Griffin, a devoted student of Browning, has provided the translation of an Italian manuscript (discovered in January last by Signor Giorgi, librarian of the Casanatense Library at Rome) which gives a full account of the trial of Francesca and his assistant assassins. It is of value to those who care to study the historical bases of tragedy and romance for the variants and supplements it offers to the narrative in the "square old yellow book" from which Browning obtained his materials, and of which a translation from the poet's unique copy, now preserved in the Balliol College Library, is in preparation. It is also likely to attract the curious student of criminal character and achievement. Mr. Hall Griffin, in the many footnotes which he supplies, shows that in several notable features of his poem Browning failed, in spite of his endeavors, to perform the ever difficult operation of telling "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" about the terrible domestic tragedy with which he was concerned. No doubt some of the poet's divergences from history were introduced for artistic reasons. Others were as surely the result of misinformation or mistake. For instance, the chief criminal, Pompilia's husband, was a man of forty at his death, whereas he is fifty in "The Ring and the Book," while from the name of the Augustinian brother, "Celestine di S. Anna," Browning constructed a wholly imaginary "Hospital of St. Anna" for Pompilia to die in.

DINING OUT IN CHINA.

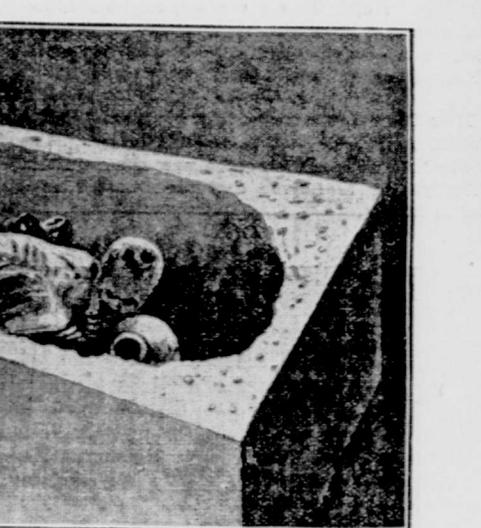
A FOREIGNER'S ENTERTAINMENT AT A CHINESE RESTAURANT.

From Blackwood's Magazine.

During the quarter of an hour before dinner the guests (only male, of course) sit or stroll about, eating cakes—a favorite being a sort of hot fruit puff (which each orders for himself)—and sipping tea. Melon seeds and salted almonds are also in demand for desultory nibbling.

When our number is complete a tremendous encounter of good manners ensues. Though the question of precedence is of course all cut and dried beforehand, each man must be polite enough to simulate an irrevocable resolve not to accept any but the lowest place until the host's "Friend, go up higher," promotes him.

The table, as mentioned, is ready laid with an imposing show; a regulation number of regulation dishes, marshalled in regulation order; quaint porcelain stands filled with slices of oranges, pears, or cold goose; towers of purple quince jelly squares, grapes, or shredded chicken breast; saucers of shrimps, salted in their skins; and, never forgotten, the famous eggs, preserved for years in lime, and served, sliced, in beds of brown jelly (much prized for their acrid and rather ammoniacal flavor, but not usually appreciated by foreigners). Hot wine, of various brands and vintages, is served throughout. That most commonly drunk is a kind of sack or sherry negus—a yellow wine distilled from Indian corn. Being comparatively mild, it is served in small cups; ardent white spirits of rice—samshu—in thimblefuls. "Rose" wine is one of several varieties, flavored with roses. (No wine is made from grapes, though they are plentiful in North China.)



THE NEOLITHIC MAN AS HE APPEARS AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM.

When all are seated ready for the fray the host raises his cup:

"Let us drink!"  
We reply, "Thanks, thanks!" then set to—with chopsticks; picking now from one dish, now from another, in piquant contrast of sweet, sour and salt.

The first fury of the opening attack being spent, the shattered bands of hors d'œuvres are withdrawn, and the guests saunter into the other rooms for a whiff of tobacco or—whisper it not in Gath—a pipe of opium, en attendant the real repast.

Certain traditional dishes form the backbone of the feast. For instance, that most delicious of bouillies, shark's fin soup, always opens the ball. It is served in a large bowl, smoking hot, and consists of a glutinous entanglement of soft fins stewed in their own liquor. The flavor is slightly salt, but exquisite. Another traditional dish appears toward the close of the feast, in the shape of a fat duck reposing in its broth. Though boiled so thoroughly that a touch from a chopstick dissolves it without aid of knife, the bird appears on the table with smooth white breast and limbs intact, and its nobly toothsome appearance is usually greeted with a buzz of anticipatory applause.

The remaining items of the menu are only curious from the mode of their selection, for each guest chooses his own dish, taking care that it shall harmonize with those already selected. One names a salmon of wild duck, his neighbor a dish of stewed mushrooms, and so on.

Wine, as remarked, is drunk throughout, and always hot (the Chinese eschew all cold drinks). The cups being small, their number has little effect; they cheer, but do not as a rule inebriate. Intoxication is extremely rare, though not apparently from moral considerations so much as from those of expediency, for tipsiness is not generally regarded as disgracing.

The finger game, resembling the Italian mora, is played during meals, the loser swallowing as penalty a cup of wine. Two men play at a time. They show suddenly and simultaneously a certain number of the fingers of one hand, and as each thrusts them forth he shouts or squeals the number which he thinks will be the total of his own and his opponent's fingers. Thus, if A thinks B is going to put up three fingers he shows four, and calls "Seven!" While B, expecting him to show two, himself shows one, and vociferates "Three!" This simple game is immensely popular throughout the eighteen provinces.

Dishes are not, as a rule, cleared away during meals, so that toward the close of dinner the table is slopped and strewn with debris, a veritable field of carnage. From time to time the convives retire to smoke, and occasionally a refresher in the shape of a coarse towel wrung out of hot water is handed round for the guests to successively wipe their steaming faces with—an agreeable process that has been imitated in the luxurious toilet rooms of the States. The apothecary of the dinner is the duck before alluded to. He is succeeded by a few sweet dishes. Finally comes a bowl or two of white boiled rice or millet porridge—to clean the palate. (In home dinners rice is the chief item; in restaurant dinners it is rigidly excluded until the finale.) Rinse-bouches of warm water follow; then a cup of tea, and the feast is over.

The guests shortly afterward disperse, the host apologizing for the wretched dinner he has dared to set before them, the guests politely protesting—emphasizing their sincerity and repletion by volleys of eructations.

When the giver of the feast leaves the restaurant the amount of the bills is, in his honor,

shrieked from court to court, as far as the street door. A dinner such as described, for a dozen people, would cost about 30 shillings, would last three hours or so, and would include great and small, more than fifty dishes.

EGYPT'S OLDEST MAN.

A NEW MUMMY AT THE BRITISH MUSEUM PRESERVED FROM PREHISTORIC TIME.

From The Sphere.

The Egyptian Gallery at the British Museum has just come into possession of the mummy of a man which may well be the oldest known body of any human being. The facts concerning it are briefly summed up in the following inscription reproduced from the case containing the mummy:

"Body of a man who was buried in a shallow oval grave hollowed out of sandstone on the west bank of the Nile in Upper Egypt. Before burial the body was treated with a preparation of bitumen and was arranged in the posture in which it now lies, on its left side, with the hands before the face and the knees drawn up nearly on a level with the chin. The grave (which has been roughly imitated by the model here exhibited) was covered with slabs of unworked stone, and in it beside the body were disposed flint knives and a number of vases partly filled with the remains and dust of funeral offerings. The man probably belonged to a fair skinned, light haired race, which may be regarded as one of the aboriginal stocks of Egypt, whose settlements are usually found on the west bank of the Nile. The style of the flint implements found in the grave indicates that the man lived in the later neolithic period of Egypt, that is, in remote ages long before the rule of Menes, the first historical King of Egypt."

The grave was first seen by a wandering Arab; he reported his discovery to a British official, who immediately sent a couple of Egyptian soldiers to guard it day and night until it could be safely removed. The body is not a mummy of the ordinary historic Egyptian period such as that of Rameses II, the father of the Pharaoh of the Exodus. It was never bound up in linen or cased in any painted coffin, but was merely coated with a preparation of bitumen, the Arabic word for which is mumia; hence our word mummy. To reach the period when this man hunted along the banks of the Nile it is necessary to travel backward in time through the modern period since Elizabeth, through Mediaeval Europe, through the whole history of Rome and Greece, past the time of the earliest mummied king the museum possesses, past even Menes, the earliest king to which Egyptian records make reference, who, according to Mariette, ruled about 5000 B. C. Then we are among two prehistoric races, one the conquerors and the other the conquered, out of which sprang the Egyptian race of the earliest dynasties. It is with these remote stocks that this man is connected. Considering the conditions in which he was found it is evident that he was associated with a late period of the new Stone Age of Egypt. He is buried in a characteristically neolithic grave (the graves of this period are covered with rude slabs of stone), and has neolithic pots and flint implements beside him. They are like other neolithic pots and chipped flint weapons and knives found in other parts of the world. The fine, thin flint knives were perhaps placed in the grave as part of a funeral ritual. They should be compared with the Egyptian flints in the prehistoric section of the museum; they are almost identical with those found in the grave. There is, of course, no inscription of any kind on the pots, knives or grave, all having been made long before the invention of a written language. It is curious to note that certain ancient Egyptian documents mention traditions of a race called the Trehenu, who had red hair and blue eyes. This man has distinctly auburn hair. He was buried on the western shore. In later times every Egyptian was buried on that side of the river, and Egyptian models of the death boats on which the bodies were ferried over the stream may be seen in the Egyptian Gallery.

THE LATE OSCAR WILDE.

REGRETFUL REFLECTIONS OF HIS CLOSING HOURS.

Paris correspondence of The London Chronicle.

About three weeks ago I was scouring Paris to discover the address of a M. Sébastien Melnoth for the purpose of verifying a statement that he had been unjustly deprived of certain dramatic rights of authorship. At length a French literary friend informed me that the object of my search was lying ill at a little hotel in the far off Rue des Beaux Arts. To save time he had called upon him in my name. M. Melnoth was Oscar Wilde. On the same evening I received a letter in answer to my "petit bleu." I instantly answered this in person. The once brilliant and adulated poet-playwright, though in bed, looked well in the face. The first part of the conversation on his side was a mixture of defiance and bitterness. I did my best to console him, and he suddenly burst into tears. I felt deeply moved as he told the sad tale of blight and misery through which he had passed. Men who had been the recipients of sterling generosity had betrayed him and trodden him under their feet. Perhaps there was some justice in his wailing.

Then he turned to religious subjects, and muttered almost savagely, "Much of my moral obliquity is due to the fact that my father would not allow me to become a Catholic. The artistic side of the Church and the fragrance of its teaching would have curbed my degeneracies. I intend to be received before long." He spoke almost smilingly of his operation, saying that it would cost him £40, adding that he owed nearly 2,000 francs to the hotel.

The operation in question was intestinal, and then symptoms of cerebral meningitis set in. Leeches were applied to the ears, but the patient sank away rapidly. Two kind friends, Mr. Robert Ross and Mr. Turner, nursed him, while Father Cuthbert Dunn, one of the British Catholic chaplains from the Avenue Hoche, administered the customary rites of the Church. Oscar Wilde tried to articulate the prayers which accompany extreme unction, and his deathbed was one of repentance.

To-morrow morning the funeral service will take place at the Church St. Germain des Prés, after which the body will be interred in the Bagneux Cemetery. A small cross will surmount the grave, with the following inscription: "Ci git Oscar Wilde, Poète et Auteur Dramatique, R. I. P."

LETTING HER HAVE HER CHOICE.

From The Philadelphia Record.

Nell (excitedly)—Here's a telegram from Jack Punter, of the 'Varsity team.

Belle—What's it say?  
"It says: 'Nose broken. How do you prefer it set—Greek or Roman?'"