

## I LATELY VOWED.

BY JOHN OLDMIXON.

I lately vow'd, but 'twas in haste,  
That I no more would court  
The joys that seem when they are past  
As dull as they are short.

I oft to hate my mistress swear,  
But soon my weakness find;  
I make my oaths when she's severe,  
But break them when she's kind.

## The New-York Tribune

ILLUSTRATED SUPPLEMENT.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1, 1903.

Mr. Cosmo Hamilton wants to know why English publishers shy at "strength." If they have had bad seasons of late, he thinks, it is because, owing to their "old maidish fear," they have driven novelists to the production of poor stuff. "Authors are afraid to write of things as they are, and are obliged to hedge." One of the publishers promptly writes to "The Academy and Literature," in which the inquiry appeared, to state that he will go on his knees from Bedford-st. to Waterloo Bridge and back if Mr. Hamilton—or any other person—will bring him a really strong manuscript. "Now the qualities of real strength," he adds, "are truth, breadth, and gentleness; also the ability (if needful) to touch things unsavory and yet keep clean hands. When the 'strength' of 'writer's jargon' begins to merely dream of such a standard, it is possible that the 'English publishers' of 'nowadays' may become less 'timid.'" We fear that the publisher has the better of the argument. Mr. Hamilton protests that by strength he does not mean "gloating and promiscuous excursions into the filthy," that he means "the sincere and honest treatment of subjects that may enter into the everyday life of interesting people, good, bad, and indifferent." But he seems to forget that this sincere and honest work constantly fails to give the impression of "truth, breadth, and gentleness," that, in a word, it lacks strength.

A letter from our Paris correspondent printed on another page describes the lamentable condition of the book trade in France. Sales are falling rapidly. Why is it? In the "Fortnightly" M. Octave Uzanne discourses on the subject, pointing out what he considers to be the evil influences at present affecting "The Evolution of Contemporary French Literature." Public taste, he maintains, has no longer any definite trend. Authors write too much, and people are too much in a hurry to read their works. Criticism is in a bad way. "The newspapers have sunk so low as to demand as much remuneration for giving publicity to intellectual work as for advertising manufactures, patent medicines, and other goods. . . . Every author is allowed to sing his own praises, every publisher can insert his Narcissus-like prose in the columns of any paper on payment of a fixed charge." Following on the slimy trail of this "commercial quackery," and the vulgar intriguing of mediocre writers, came the Dreyfus affair, which drew one man of letters after another from his *Tour d'ivoire*, and created an atmosphere in the highest degree inimical to the best interests of literature. All this is very amusing, but M. Uzanne does not cut to the bone. He denies that France is suffering from a literary decadence, insisting that "it would be possible to pick out works of first rate eminence and rare originality" from the mass of books published. But, though he admits that, Flaubert, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Dumas fils, Renan, Daudet and Edmond de Goncourt being dead, "the gods who still kept up the cult of the sovereign dignity of the profession and the religion of the beautiful have departed," he fails to recognize the great central fact explaining the existing situation. If, as he asserts, the "literary event" is a thing of the past in Paris, it is because France possesses to-day no great writer of genius, no man of high imaginative power, qualified to revive the traditions of the giants of earlier times.

When a modern author publishes a new edition of one of his books, or collects all his writings in a uniform set of volumes, the announcement is usually made that he has given his work a thorough revision. Sometimes he goes so far as materially to change the character of a work. Shall a man not do what he likes with his own? It would seem as though his rights in the matter were unquestionable, yet we are not surprised to find a writer in "The Daily Mail" asking, with some dubiety, if a novelist is really justified in amending his original conception. It depends, we think, upon whether he has sent that conception forth to the world before attempting to amend it. Let him make all the changes that seem to him necessary in his manuscript, but in everything save scientific or historical work, where questions of fact or even of judgment may be put in a new light by the discovery of new documents, it seems as though the author ought to have the courage to stand by his original performance. After all, why should he be allowed to pursue his education in public? Mere verbal improvements are to be accepted without a murmur. But if you have published an unsatisfactory book, it is better to take your whipping and see that it goes out of print than to take it in hand again and try to make it right. Especially as, in nine cases out of ten, you cannot make it right.

## A GREAT JOURNALIST.

The Late Paris Correspondent of  
"The London Times."MEMOIRS OF M. DE BLOWITZ. Illustrated.  
8vo, pp. x, 321. Doubleday, Page & Co.

During his thirty-odd years of service as Paris correspondent of "The London Times" M. de Blowitz forced for himself a general recognition, and made manifest in a way peculiarly his own the power of the press in moulding public opinion and in shaping the destinies of nations. All acquainted with the inner history of recent European politics know that he played an important part in some events of no small magnitude. Added to this, he was the confidant of monarchs and statesmen, who outvied one another in showing him marks of respect. He was one of Europe's most bedecorated men, and his home was a museum of tokens of regard from almost every part of the Continent. Through him not infrequently diplomats conveyed to the world information of far-reaching importance, which they knew would have far

detail with one significant omission—the name of the diplomat who gave him the treaty. The story, needless to say, forms one of the most entertaining chapters in the memoirs. It has, too, a most unique sequel—the narrative of the method adopted by Bismarck five years later to entrap M. de Blowitz into revealing the mystery of the treaty.

According to M. de Blowitz, the Iron Chancellor did not scruple to avail himself of the services of a woman, the Princess Krailta, with whom the journalist was well acquainted. She surprised him one day by giving him the details of a peculiar mission upon which she had been employed by Kaiser Wilhelm; and having thus paved the way to confidences on his part, she suddenly asked him point blank how he had been enabled to effect the publication of the Berlin Treaty at the moment of its signature. We quote from the memoirs:

To her surprise I was silent!

For some moments, since the close of her narrative, one of the candles of the candelabrum on the table in front of the sofa had begun to flicker. I was astonished at this, as the doors and windows were all closed. On looking around I was unable to guess from what quarter the current of air came that caused the flame to flicker. I moved and placed myself just in front of the candelabrum, and I then felt, coming from the direction of the mirror, an unmistakable draught which fanned my cheek.

I perceived at once that I was the victim of treachery, which is what I hate above all else in the world. I closely scrutinized the mirror and saw that a slight gap, which had been made only during the last few instants, separated the two halves of the glass, and I understood that behind it there was a witness ready to take down what I might say. Rising suddenly, and in a voice which I vainly endeavored to render calm, I said, pointing at the flickering flame and then at the cloven mirror, just when the Princess was putting out her hand to remove the candlestick:

"Madame, it is needless. You see that I have understood."

She saw that distinctly and, turning away her head, she touched an electric button. The door opened, a servant appeared, and, without looking at me, she stretched out her hand and indicated the way to the door.

A truly remarkable tale, in a highly dramatic setting! Thus does M. de Blowitz score against the man who had caused all Europe to laugh, by remarking to a diplomatist as he lifted up the tablecloth at a session of the Berlin congress: "I am looking to see if Blowitz is not underneath."

There are many equally strange and sensational episodes in this collection of memoirs. There is, for example, the story of "Eloeu," the religious zealot whose life and death alike formed a dismal tragedy; there is the Zenda-like narrative of the mysterious Princess Alva; and there is the revelation of the tragedy at San Remo, with the doctors quarrelling over the pathetic figure of the dying Frederick. But it is not in these that the power of the journalist is best revealed; it is in the chapters that detail his crowning triumphs, his diplomatic successes—notably in connection with the war scare of 1875—and his interviews with Leo XIII, Bismarck and the Sultan. Truly, M. de Blowitz need not have feared the fate—against which he so eloquently pleads in behalf of brother journalists—the fate of passing from the stage of life, no matter what his achievements, "unwept, unhonored and unsung."



M. DE BLOWITZ IN THE LAST YEAR OF HIS LIFE  
(From a photograph.)

more weight coming from him than through ordinary diplomatic channels.

Perhaps nothing sums up the position M. de Blowitz attained in the world of diplomacy, as in the world of journalism, quite so well as the involuntary tribute once paid him by George Augustus Sala, who, in speaking to a friend of the impression De Blowitz made on him during a reception at the Elysée, said: "Heavens! We specials are all paid ambassadors' salaries, but de Blowitz is treated by the ambassadors as though he were greater than they!" Of course, he had enemies, and these industriously circulated all manner of stories calculated to discredit him. But De Blowitz pursued the even tenor of his way, and so far as public opinion was concerned the stories injured him not a whit. Assuredly a life such as his must have been replete with personal incidents worth narration, and it cannot be accounted a matter of surprise that the announcement of the publication of his memoirs was sufficient to cause a widespread flutter of anticipation. The memoirs are now to hand, and prove in no way disappointing.

Some readers will doubtless find in them much that is familiar, for several of the most interesting chapters have already appeared in print in the form of reminiscences and interviews. The period which the memoirs cover is a long one, extending from the author's earliest youth until within a few years of his retirement from journalism. Marked though they be by a certain egotism, pardonable in a man of M. de Blowitz's attainments, these pages ring true to human nature and will find an answering response in the sympathy of the reader. Herein we see one of the traits that contributed so largely to his success. He knew the secret of winning the confidence and good will of those who could help him. He was essentially a man of tact as well as a man of resource. But what, in our opinion, was the chief factor in making him a leading figure in the newspaper world, over and above his innate talents, was that he made his work his life. He was an enthusiast. True, it was accident, to a certain extent, that first brought M. de Blowitz into the ranks, but

Banuelos, a Spanish Senator, with whom he was acquainted. The next minute his carriage was whirling him over the ice covered streets to the count's residence.

He had evidently arrived at a most inopportune moment. The count, accompanied by his daughters, was about to depart to a ball. Hurdled M. de Blowitz inquired if he had heard the news. The count replied that he had just learned it, and that he had previous reasons for believing it to be true. But he could state nothing confirmatory. M. de Blowitz then bluntly asked him if he would accompany him to the Palais de Castile, where the new King was living. At this suggestion the count's daughters, impatiently awaiting their father, protested vigorously. They were anxious to go to the ball. The countess appeared at this juncture, and, learning how things stood, volunteered to accompany the girls and allow the count to assist the journalist in obtaining the information he required. The next moment, madly as ever, the carriage was dashing over the streets once more. Within an hour De Blowitz had seen the King himself, had learned all the facts, and had communicated them to "The Times." With pardonable pride he adds that he was the first to address Alphonso as "Your Majesty."

The death of Frederic Hardman had left the post of Paris correspondent vacant for some time, and it was evident that the arbiters of "The Times's" destinies were undecided about the advisability of giving M. de Blowitz full powers as correspondent. But their indecision vanished from the moment they received the Spanish dispatch. As the years rolled by and M. de Blowitz, the admiration and despair of his fellow journalists in the French capital, scored and scored again, "The Times" never had cause to regret its choice. Even more noteworthy than his Alphonso accomplishment was his remarkable feat of securing a copy of the Berlin treaty of 1878, enabling his paper to publish the text in full coincident with the signing of the treaty in Berlin. The story of how he obtained what even the German journalists sought in vain has never been fully told, although it has been known in a general way for a number of years. M. de Blowitz in these memoirs narrates it in

## THE DEATH DICE.

From The London Tattler.

The German Emperor has just made a most interesting historic presentation to the Hohenzollern Museum. It consists of the famous "death dice," by the help of which one of Kaiser Wilhelm's ancestors decided a difficult case about the middle of the seventeenth century. A beautiful young girl had been murdered, and suspicion fell on two soldiers, Ralph and Alfred, who were rival suitors for her hand. As both prisoners denied their guilt, and even torture failed to extract a confession from either, Prince Frederick William, the Kaiser's ancestor, decided to cut the gordian knot with the dice box. The two soldiers should throw for their lives, the loser to be executed as the murderer. The event was celebrated with great pomp and solemnity, and the Prince himself assisted at this appeal to Divine intervention, as it was considered by everybody, including the accused themselves. Ralph was given the first throw, and he threw sixes, the highest possible number, and no doubt felt jubilant.

The dice box was then given to Alfred, who fell on his knees and prayed aloud, "Almighty God, Thou knowest I am innocent. Protect me, I beseech Thee." Rising to his feet, he threw the dice with such force that one of them broke in two. The unbroken one showed six, the broken one also showed six on the larger portion, and the bit that had been split off showed one, giving a total of thirteen, or one more than the throw of Ralph. The whole audience thrilled with astonishment, while the Prince exclaimed, "God has spoken!" Ralph, regarding the miracle as a sign from Heaven, confessed his guilt, and was sentenced to death. It is probable that Alfred ever after did not number himself among those who look upon thirteen as an unlucky number.

## ARGYLL AND LONGFELLOW.

From The Criterion.

The Great Duke of Argyll was visiting his son, then Governor-General of Canada, and met Longfellow in the American poet's ancient colonial mansion at Cambridge, Mass. As they sat together on the veranda the duke persistently asked the names of the various birds he saw and heard singing in the poet's trees, as well as of the flowers and bushes growing in his extensive and beautiful garden. Longfellow was neither botanist nor ornithologist, and did not know.

"I was surprised to find your Longfellow such an ignorant person," said the duke subsequently to an American acquaintance. "Indeed! Pray, on what subject?" "Why, he could not tell me the names of the birds and flowers to be heard and seen in his own garden." "May I ask how many languages you speak?" the American asked. "Certainly, but one." "Mr. Longfellow," was the answer, "speaks six and translates freely from almost all the languages of Europe."