

## AFTER MELEAGER.

BY WALTER HEDLAM.

Love, while winging through the skies,  
Passed before Timarion's eyes;  
Hence, being tangled in that snare,  
Love himself lies prisoned there.

## The New-York Tribune

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Poor Balzac! Even beyond the grave he is pursued by at least one of the malign influences which dogged his footsteps while he lived. One of the numerous worlds he frequented was populated entirely by creditors and bailiffs. He was forever in debt, forever at odds with people who had entirely lawful designs upon his bank account. And now the enemy is at it again. The Balzac Museum in Paris, the opening of which was mentioned in these columns not long ago, is in debt to the government, which claims a sum of about \$185, due for taxes, and as the curator declines to pay the money out of his own pocket there is trouble. The tax collector has threatened to attach and sell the relics in the building if he is not paid. Meanwhile, the president of the Society of Friends of Balzac indignantly protests to the authorities that, as an establishment of national interest, the museum is legally exempt from taxation. In all probability his arguments will be heeded, for the French are not the kind of people to behave badly in a matter of this sort. We should not be surprised to hear that the whole difficulty sprang from the pedantic conduct of some officious underling. But when the incident is closed all the documents should be gathered together and conspicuously exposed in the museum. The lover of Balzac who has a sense of humor will recognize them as a delightfully characteristic exhibit.

Once more the poignant question of the average man's reading has come up for public discussion in England. At the recent meeting of the Library Association at Exeter the president for the year, Mr. F. G. Kenyon, director and principal librarian of the British Museum, devoted his address to the significance of free libraries in the spread of culture. His most interesting point was made in contradicting the current notion that the free libraries are to a predominating extent simply purveyors of fiction to those who would be better without it. Referring to the 610 places which had adopted the public library acts, he said that there were 560 in which those acts had been actually put into operation, and, basing his remarks on statistics, he continued with a statement thus reported:

It was estimated that through these libraries 66,000,000 volumes were circulated annually in the homes of the people. Of these 32,000,000 were fiction, including children's books, and 28,000,000 were not fiction. If account was taken also of the 11,000,000 volumes issued by the Reference Library and of the volumes consulted in the libraries themselves it was calculated that the proportion of fiction issued to readers was not more than 24 per cent of the whole. Further, this fiction consisted almost wholly of standard works and writings of acknowledged merit, which were not merely admissible but a desirable form of intellectual nutriment.

Mr. Kenyon also testified to the great extent to which British readers of all classes were carrying on special studies, stating that the knowledge sought in the free libraries was mainly scientific and technical knowledge, that which a man needed for the cultivation of his own trade, or it was historical, political, or sociological knowledge. We rejoice to hear all this, and we trust that we may be pardoned for remarking that it confirms what we have repeatedly asserted, that the attribution to the great public of an incurable taste for trash is merely nonsensical.

How beautiful to contemplate is the wiseacre who suddenly discovers what everybody else has known for years and solemnly heaves into print with his thrilling news! One such Columbus has lately arisen in the person of a Mr. Benson, who writes to the London "Morning Post" on that tremendous subject, "The Decline and Fall of Art." He tells us that whereas "during the Victorian Era we had many master minds . . . who by the transcendence of their genius have earned for themselves immortality . . . yet at the present time there are few—if any—whose works will outlive their own generation." There is illumination for you! And, of course, Mr. Benson duly presents his catalogues. In one he records the great geniuses of the last fifty years, and in the other he enumerates the lights of the present day. Where once we had Verdi and Wagner we now have Elgar, German and Tschalkowsky. Time was when Kean, Mac cready and Irving trod the stage. Now we rub along with Robertson, Tree and Violet Vanbrugh. The Victorian Era was a nest of singing birds, but the only poet to-day recorded by Mr. Benson is Watson, and in place of Thackeray, Dickens and Dumas, he can only name Haggard, E. Hardy and Doyle. To call attention to these things is, in Mr. Benson's opinion, to render the country a national service, "and it may probably lead to the discovery of the real cause of this rapid decline and fall of art, and possibly also a remedy may be the outcome." Sanguine Mr. Benson! We should love to watch him upon the trail of "the real cause," but sublimest of all, as a spectacle, would be his triumphant seizure of "a remedy."

## MORE MEMOIRS

## Royal but Ineffective Figures in European History.

MADAME ROYALE, THE LAST DAUPHINE. Marie-Thérèse-Charlotte de France, Duchesse d'Angoulême. By Joseph Turquan. Edited and translated by Lady Theodora Davidson. Illustrated. 8vo, pp. 335. Brentano's.

THE RETURN OF LOUIS XVIII. From the French of Gilbert Stenger by Mrs. Rodolph Stawell. Illustrated. 8vo, pp. xv, 431. Charles Scribner's Sons.

THE LAST KING OF POLAND AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES. By R. Nisbet Bain. With sixteen illustrations. 8vo, pp. xviii, 296. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"The only man in the family" Napoleon called Madame Royale, when, at the beginning of the Hundred Days, he was informed of her valiant attempt to keep the garrison of Bordeaux loyal to her uncle, Louis XVIII, already in full flight to the Belgian frontier. It was the only great moment in the life of this daughter of the august house of Bourbon in the contemptible

the Duke of Bordeaux, the last of the Bourbons in the direct line, who died as Comte de Chambord. The French people paid no attention to this arrangement, and elected Louis Philippe instead. Till the end of her days Madame Royale clung to the title of Queen, borne by her during a few minutes. She died in exile, at Frohsdorf, in 1851.

M. Turquan's biography of this ill fated woman, who was Bourbon to the backbone, who, too, had learned nothing and forgotten nothing, is as impartial as one can be in the case of so unsympathetic, so antagonistic a subject. That she was the "man of the family" cannot be doubted. Unfortunately her influence was always thrown on the wrong side, in the interest of reaction. She had all the ideas of the old regime, but none of its graces. She loved France, but hated the French. Narrow, bigoted, she knew no charity, no forgiveness. The nobles of the empire who had made their peace with the King she treated with systematic insolence; when she attempted to be amiable to the old nobles she succeeded but rarely. Her

his innate sense of his superiority to all the rest of the world as the head of the house of Bourbon, the oldest of all dynasties, and the consciousness that upheld him in the most humiliating hours of his exile, but it shows also the meanness and pettiness of his character, his cowardice, his incapacity, his black ingratitude toward those who had served him. A felicitous phrase maker he was, but phrases did not suffice. One year was enough to show France what she had lost and what had been given her in return. Corruption, incompetence, favoritism, persecution, fraud, speculation and open theft ran riot. Paris feasted recklessly, but, says the author:

As the months passed the nation turned more and more markedly from the men and things that were acceptable to the court circle. The princes lived in the Tuileries in a sort of isolation, without ever coming into contact with the people. There was nothing in common between them and the people; there never had been, and there never would be. The Bourbons, though they came of French stock, were still foreigners in France, still unable to grasp the changes that had taken place. . . . At the beginning of 1815 the whole nation was infected with discontent. . . . Throughout the country there were risings and riots when the revenue officers came to collect the Droits Réunis. There was the same discontent with regard to subscription. . . . The royal family were the objects of constant malediction. Every resentful word they spoke was repeated, especially those of the Duchesse d'Angoulême. Conspiracies were set on foot by the ex-Jacobins and Bonapartists. The object of the plots was nothing less radical than the King's deposition and the exile of the princes, or even their disappearance in a riot.

The book, as has already been said, is a mine of information concerning the state of France, the doings and misdoings, the mistakes and crimes of commission and omission of the new reign, the condition and opinions of the people and the plotting below the surface at the capital. The returned émigrés, their ideas and claims, have a chapter to themselves, and much light is thrown on the attitude of the conquered toward the foreign liberators within their borders, from the Emperors and the King of Prussia, Schwarzenberg, Wellington and Blücher down to the Cossacks. The author is anecdotal with unerring illustrative effect. In fact, his book is so good, so comprehensive, that one may well express the wish that a work from his pen on the White Terror that followed after Waterloo may be forthcoming. The translation is exceptionally well made.

Mr. Bain's life of Stanislaus Poniatowski fits well in this review. He deals with a man who had a little of Louis XV, a touch of Louis XVI and some resemblance to Louis XVIII. Perhaps the virtues and the shortcomings of the last King of Poland are best explained by the statement that he was a typical Pole of his day and generation. His virtues as a ruler have been too much neglected by historians; Mr. Bain gives him proper credit for them without for a moment doing violence to his picture as a whole. Poniatowski had no principles, no backbone—that was his crowning misfortune—but neither had the people he ruled, and it was their crowning misfortune, too. After the first partition of Poland he sought earnestly to ameliorate the condition of the country and its people, financially and economically as well as politically, but the Poles would not let him carry out his plans. He saw the vital importance of a close alliance with Russia, but Potocki knew better, and started the pro-Prussian intrigue. Handsome, amiable, cultured, pleasure loving, weak, unstable as water, Poniatowski proved to be exactly the kind of ruler the great Catherine wished to reign at Warsaw. What chance did he really have between her, his own unruly nobles, Frederick and the ambitious Kaunitz?

The Poles perversely hastened the extinction of their own independence. This is the truth which Mr. Bain insists upon, and traces through the brief history of the realm which introduces his book. "Poland," he says, "is the only example in history of a state which deliberately committed political suicide for the sake of absolute individual liberty." He succeeds in giving a convincing psychological impression of this generous, emotional, liberty loving, utterly unpractical nation, which "by the end of the eighteenth century had become a nuisance to its neighbors and an obstacle to the development of its own people."

The picture of the social, moral, intellectual and economic condition of the country at the end of its independent existence is drawn with many details. The state of the peasantry had grown far worse than that of the French under Louis XV, the rights of the middle class had been reduced to a minimum. The great house of Czartoryski serves to show the brighter side of the reign of the nobles. Poniatowski was related to it, and at the time of his election a Czartoryski was his competitor. Among the minor figures in the book, those of Catherine's three ambassadors to Warsaw, each so eminently well fitted for the task set him, deserves special mention. Altogether a book worthy of notice.

It is illustrated with reproductions of contemporary prints, among which the author might well have made room for an engraving of the abduction of Stanislaus, which appeared in "The Almanach de Gotha" of 1770.

The papers on the Holy Land by Mr. Robert Hichens, which have for some time been running through the pages of "The Century Magazine," are now being made into a book which the Century Company will issue late next month. The illustrations will include all of Mr. Jules Guerin's full page pictures, reproduced in colors, and a quantity of halftones from photographs.



MADAME ROYALE.

(From the portrait by Vigée Le Brun.)

days of its gradual extinction. Born on December 19, 1778, the daughter of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette passed her childhood partly amid the pomp and ceremony of the French court and partly in imprisonment with her parents. After their execution and the pitiable death of the Dauphin she continued to be kept captive until surrendered, in 1795, to her maternal cousin, Francis II of Austria. He cherished a plan of marrying her to one of the Hapsburg archdukes, and of thus establishing through her, as the only surviving child of Louis XVI, a claim for his house, if not to the throne of France, at least to Alsace-Lorraine, with a vague project of a possible restoration of the kingdom of Navarre in the background when the day of reckoning should come for the French Republic.

The émigré Bourbons, Louis XVI's two brothers—the self-styled Louis XVIII and the Comte d'Artois—were as fully aware of the possible future political importance of their orphaned niece, Louis XVIII, who was childless, claimed that her parents had favored the project of a marriage between her and her cousin, the Duc d'Angoulême, elder son of the Comte d'Artois. She consented to the arrangement, and joined the Bourbon court at Mittau in 1799, where the marriage took place. Thenceforth she shared the family fortunes in Russia, Prussia and England until the Restoration, in 1814. Louis XVIII died in 1823 and was succeeded by the Comte d'Artois as Charles X. His accession raised the d'Angoulêmes to the dignity of Dauphin and Dauphine, the last to bear the titles. Seven years later Madame Royale became Queen of France during the few moments that elapsed between the abdication of Charles X in favor of her husband and the latter's abdication in favor of his murdered younger brother's son,

looks agreed with her character; her ingratitude was proverbial—it was that of her house.

The author denies that it was either her sad experiences in childhood or the uncertainties of her long exile that made her what she was. According to him, the true formative influence of her life was the disappointment of her marriage to a man of limited intellect and less than insignificant appearance, a sacrifice which she bore to the end, sustained by her great pride. M. Turquan lays great stress throughout upon the physical as well as the mental degeneration of the Bourbons in the period of their approaching extinction.

M. Stenger's book, the bulk of which is devoted to the year 1814, is crowded with instructive pictures of the contrast between the France the Bourbons had left and the France to which they returned a quarter of a century later. They had learned nothing up to then; he emphasizes their inability to learn at all. Chaos reigned in the country, which had so thoroughly forgotten the ancient regime that the names Bourbon, d'Artois, Berri, meant nothing to it. Nowhere, except among the lesser nobility in the country districts, was there a genuine desire for the return of the royal house. The great nobles at Paris, the families that had shone in the reflected glory of the court of Versailles, had made their peace with the empire, accepted honors at its hands and joined its court. The author fairly boils over with indignation at the treachery, the sycophancy of the men and women whom Napoleon had made, at their ingratitude and crawling anxiety to ingratiate themselves with the new court.

Louis XVIII stands forth full length in an exceptionally well drawn picture, which reflects