

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 15, 1888.

No. 867, *New Series*.

THE EDITOR cannot undertake to return, or to correspond with the writers of, rejected manuscript.

It is particularly requested that all business letters regarding the supply of the paper, &c., may be addressed to the PUBLISHER, and not to the EDITOR.

## LITERATURE.

*The Life of Stratford Canning, Viscount Stratford de Redcliffe, K.G., &c.* By Stanley Lane-Poole. (Longmans.)

(Second Notice.)

IN the autumn of 1831, Canning was persuaded by Lord Palmerston to undertake another special mission to Turkey, Greece being again the object. He visited the Morea and other parts of the desolated land, where he was received with enthusiasm by the patriots; and he formed his opinions upon Argos and Capodistrias, Lord Elgin, Vogorides, and other matters. Arrived at Stambúl early in the next year, he noted great and portentous changes—the old humiliating etiquette had been abolished, the foreigner was feared if not respected, and the unturbaned Osmanli was “drinking champagne like a Christian.” And now, when treating with the “portentous Turk,” he saw the opportunity of posing as a great reformer, of galvanising, if not quickening, the moribund empire, and of becoming archiater to the Sick Man.

“I want,” he wrote, “to see her [Turkey] in a situation to receive the full tide of European civilisation, to take her proper [?] place in the general councils of Europe, and to base her military and financial system on the only true foundations of security for persons and property” (i. 508).

Thus a mighty change of tone had been wrought by a decade or so, at the beginning of which he exclaimed, “I wish with all my soul that the sultan were driven bag and baggage into the heart of Asia” (i. 307). This vision of reform was the will-o'-the-wisp, whose treacherous light misled the rest of his career and landed him at last in a slough of despond. Even genius cannot metamorphose hyaenas and foxes into what our amiable cousins call “smelling dogs.” National transformations must come from within; imported from without they savour of the farcical. Japan would appear to be a remarkable exception; but we have still to learn how the transformation will work, or be worked.

This “brilliant and successful mission,” as Lord Pam. termed it, ended with a return to England, and was followed by the Grand Cross of the Bath. Canning naively shows (ii. 8) how the “Yes, Sir Stratford,” of waiters and cooks gratified his *amour-propre*. He had hardly time to find London “a horrid town,” when he was gazetted ambassador to the Emperor of all the Russias, and at St. Petersburg he was curtly rejected as a *persona ingrata*. Upon this important subject the biographer is most unsatisfactory (i. 374, ii. 18-20). He assures us that the Czar and the diplomat never met except at a formal

reception in Paris (1814). But the late Lord Clanricarde, than whom none better knew the diplomatic holes and corners of his own day, assured me that there had been a dispute in St. Petersburg (1824), and that the fault lay with the future ambassador's unmanageable temper. The rejection inflamed his wrath, and his friends treated it as an insult to England, as if any country can claim a right to impose upon another an unwelcome envoy. The blunderer in this case was Lord Pam., who should have ascertained the Czar's views before laying himself open to such a slight. Not that we should think much of it in these times, when we tamely suffer “those school-boy Yankees” to turn out a British minister for writing a private note on public matters, nor visit the “electioneering dodge” with a return in kind. But the Russian incident, unimportant as it appeared, was destined to bear the bitterest fruit some twenty years afterwards, when the personal rancours of two imperious and vindictive old men deluged South-eastern Europe with blood, made England a mere satellite to France, and converted Russia from a friendly rival to an angry and acrimonious enemy. It scores, however, one for Czar Nicholas that he had the grace to address his arch-Joe a letter of thanks, recognising the kindly treatment of Russian war-prisoners.

A pacific mission to Madrid for arbitrating between Dom Pedro and Dom Miguel was preceded by a journey “like diplomatic gypsies wandering from court to court with their children at their backs.” Canning found “your Spaniard as hard a negotiator as your Turk,” suspected that he had been sent on a fool's errand, refused the ambassadorship to the court of Spain, and returned to England and the House (1833-41). His hopes of place in the Conservative Cabinet having, happily for his fame, been frustrated, he set off on his fourth mission to Constantinople, where his dreams of regeneration began to assume concrete form. Mahmúd, the stout-hearted Janissarycide, had been succeeded by Abdu'l-Majid, an “amiable and irresolute youth”—in plain English, a mere tool for the able handler. Reshid Pasha, most Rabelaisian of Turks, and a man as easily managed as his lord, was outlining the famous Tanzimat or Khatt-i-Sherif of Guikhánah, the new Magna Charta of the old blood-and-iron empire. Among these altered materials Canning began his work with the temporary downfall of Riza Pasha, Saraskier or commander-in-chief, who kept up, however, his hostility to the last. He succeeded with the assistance of the ambassadors—“I and my colleagues” was the style now generally adopted—in abolishing executions for apostasy. The memoirs (ii. 195) offer an imperfect sketch of the scene with Grand Vizier Rifat Pasha, where the tyrannical ambassador “thrust the note full in his face,” as recorded by Layard (ii. 459); his undignified violence, perilously approaching a *voie de fait*, being evidently calculated. This redoubtable negotiation led to other measures equally wise and beneficial, by removing minister after minister, and by establishing a *modus vivendi* between the Porte and Hellas, Syria and Persia. The active and intelligent part taken by Canning in the labours of Layard and Newton do him infinite honour. Yet the fourth mission

ended in disconsolate mood; and, after five years of hard labour at the desk, Canning returned to England with a sense of failure.

The famous year of revolutions (1848), when sceptre and crown came tumbling down, was spent by Canning in sundry diplomatic trips to Switzerland, to the German courts, and to Greece, where a notable lack of tact brought him into unpleasant collision with his old friends, Gen. Church and Sir Edmund Lyons. The twelvemonth ended with a fifth and last residence at Stambúl; and here the ambassador found himself in acute antagonism with a Russia becoming daily more dictatorial. The Turks marched into Bucharest, and the “personal duel” had opened with the refused extradition of the Hungarian refugees, MM. Kossuth & Co.

The second half of vol. ii. is occupied with the Crimean campaign, beginning at the eleven diplomatic notes (see ii. 278), which, intended to avert it, made war inevitable. I will not enter upon this now banal subject, having already recorded my impressions in a few pages which the *Athenaeum* justly termed “an ill-natured chapter.” Unfortunately truth cannot always be writ with rose-water. Suffice it to say that the two old enemies, now more irascible and rancorous than before, stood face to face, each upholding his own nostrum, and each pooh-poohing the recipe of his rival. Czar Nicholas determined to protect with a strong hand his fellow-religionists, the Greeks—numbering some twelve millions—from Turkish tyranny and violence; and what this evil was we may learn from Canning's letter to Layard (ii. 213), noting “massacres, pillages, and revolting outrages at the expense of the Christian population in Syria and Bulgaria.” At that early stage I was travelling in Arabia and resting at Cairo, where every European who knew the condition of affairs, and who could afford to speak out, loudly praised the Russian's determination, as I have recorded in my *Pilgrimage*. Such absolute interference with the rights of a civilised power over its lieges would be a mere outrage. But Turkey was not, is not, and never will be civilised as long as Turks rule; and the massacre of Christians at Damascus (July 1860), an epoch-making event for the Moslem East, was an ample justification of Russia's contention. And the present *rapprochement* between the Turk and the Muscovite, and the instinctive feeling of the former that he can be safe only in the arms of the Czar, form a terrible comment upon the blunders of diplomacy. Of these the worst must be attributed to Canning, who, true to his principle of not allowing English prestige to be outshone, was determined that a thorough reform and an impossible change of Turkish institutions would render the Muscovite protectorate unnecessary and unadvisable. And he so worked upon English ignorance of the “Eastern Question” as to arouse at home a violent popular outbreak of moral sentiment and pugnacious sympathy, in whose presence common-sense must shrug her shoulders and hold her tongue. I often heard with shame English officers declaring—“If there ever was a righteous war it is this!”

Thus England rushed into the danger with *cœur léger*, and war was declared in March, 1854. The biographer's account of that most

unhappy campaign is given with commendable candour and conciseness. But when he informs us that Prince Menschikov was "sent in confusion to Odessa" (ii. 275), he forgets to notice that the Governor-General of Finland's suite left Pera openly insulting the English embassy in the streets, and that the insult was allowed to pass. He has committed to Mr. Kinglake an appreciation of the French emperor's object in forcing on the allied movement, and our mad folly in voluntarily assuming the rôle of "second fiddle," with a force one-fourth of our rivals and unfriends, together with the feebleness of the home authorities, the inadequacy of the transport and commissariat, and the criminal frauds of the contractors. And here we must chiefly blame the craze for economy, a Liberal fad, and the Pinching Process which, first preached by the "inspired bagman," Cobden, is still pregnant with evil for the future of England. But the biographer is justly severe on the treason of France, or rather of Louis Napoleon, whose proposal to invade England when a prisoner in the German camp shows the little wisdom where-with he was treated and trusted by Lord Palmerston.

The surrender of Kars (ii. 416) is narrated with scant regard for Col. Williams, who is made to complain unnecessarily of the ambassador's "total neglect." And, after reading attentively chap. xxxi., I cannot for the life of me comprehend the meaning of Mr. Lane-Poole's communication to the *Athenaeum* of August 25, 1888. I had asserted that the late General Beatson, then commanding Bâsh Bazuks, despatched me to volunteer for the relief of Kars; and this simple statement was characterised as "a strange inversion of facts." Stationed in country quarters, the Dardanelles, no hint of the Saraskier's project reached our ears, nor was Lord Panmure's "frustration" of the proposed advance ever known to us. The "Elchi" was too diplomatic to set me right at the time, and his outbreak of rage suggested to me that he was personally averse to the scheme. The ambassador's impatience of contradiction was made evident to me at once. During my second visit to the "Palace" he boasted of having distinctly disproved all rights of the Porte to *ingérence* in Abyssinia; upon which I ventured to observe that probably the Turks had used the term "Habash," which has a wider signification, including, for instance, Moslem Harar. But he would have none of it. And the biographer also has proved himself too diplomatic to discuss a rumour universally prevalent at the time, namely, that Kars was suffered to fall as a make-weight for the southern side of Sebastopol.

Again, Mr. Lane-Poole is hardly fair to the "official family," secretaries and attachés, who almost all rose to some eminence. These "young gentlemen" did not "stand in considerable awe of the terrible Elchi," they simply shunned him as Washington's officers slunk away at the first opportunity from their ungenial chief. It is not pleasant to be turned out of the room like a naughty child, or to be considered an "uncouth cub"; the frequent use of the term "Ass" (i. 135) is apt to pall; nor does "damn your eyes" make official communication a treat. By the way, the expression attributed to Mr. (Sir

J. D.) Hay, "Damn your Excellency's eyes" (ii. 115), was afterwards assigned, with more reason, to Mr. Secretary Alison. And Lord Stratford was a hard and uncompromising schoolmaster, who never spared himself or the weaker vessels around him. He took no small pride in the tale of consecutive hours at the writing-desk, and he cared little to humour those who were not endowed with a similar development of the *Sitzfleisch*. But amid Sir Hector Stubble's "official family" we should have expected some notice of the Roving Englishman whose reminiscences are now being published. And there is not a word concerning the angry controversy between the ambassador and the Hon. Charles Murray, then Consul-General for Egypt. Canning was misled by his harsh and short-sighted estimation of the great Mohammed Ali, "an able and unscrupulous usurper" (i. 397), and determined to inflict Turkish dry-rot upon Nile-land, then advancing with giant strides in wealth and influence. Sir Charles Murray, who still lives in honoured retirement at Cannes, openly resisted his chief; and, despite all endeavours, won the day.

The Crimean affair soon stank in the public nostrils. Begun with unpardonable levity, and carried on as a "soldier's campaign" under incapable commanders—our worst enemies—it became a national nuisance. And farseeing men already foretold that out ignominious failure in diplomacy would cause the conquest of the Caucasus, would turn the Muscovite from south to south-eastwards, would drive him to absorb Turcomania, and would suggest to him the measures rendering India valueless to England. So the Many-headed One (as is its wont) called loudly for a victim, the *bouc éxpiatoire* being Lord Stratford, the prime cause and motive power of the untoward event. He was no longer possible at Constantinople. He could not save the Turks from themselves. He found a final resignation advisable in early 1858; and he received only a compassionate permission to take leave of his imperial pupil, and to farewell his "colony" at Pera, where his stout-hearted advocacy of English claims and his open-handed hospitality to strangers and visitors had secured him a host of partizans. He was received with popular demonstrations of more than usual warmth, and bade a Stoic's adieu to the scene of his long labours with something of the pomp and circumstance which his soul loved.

The "Epilogue" (ii. 454) sketches with simplicity and earnestness the calm and restful evening of an eventful and tempestuous day. We see the "Nestor of foreign politics" fading by slow degrees out of London life and society, and leading a hermit-like existence at Frant Court, where he died full of years and honours *æst.* 94, 1880. The chapter is exceedingly well written, full of pathos and power. Avoiding the *lues Boswelliana*, which peeps out on former occasions, it will conciliate not a few of Canning's many unfriends, who remember him only in his over-masterful phase. And the Life concludes with the Laureate's well-worn lines, beginning with "Thou third great Canning," and ending with the model cacophony

"Who wert the voice of England in the East."

RICHARD F. BURTON.

*The Twilight of the Gods, and other Tales.*  
By Richard Garnett. (Fisher Unwin.)

REFINED satire has ever been the delight of the cultivated; and if the art somewhat languish in these degenerate days the more emphatic should be the welcome to any novel and excellent exemplification. There never is, there perhaps never can be, a really wide circle of readers for distinctively literary satire—the satire of the scholar, the ethical student, the man of letters; for enjoyment of it implies, of necessity, an attitude of mental superiority towards many of the most generally accepted beliefs, stereotyped traditions, and hereditary opinions. No one readily, or willingly, sees the more or less ludicrous incongruities that haunt the more sterile of human convictions, if to him those convictions are the literal and irrefutable indices of truth; only those can smile to whom the convictions are as dreams that have been dreamt. But if this inevitably narrows a satirist's public, it recompenses him by alluring that "select few" who are the adherents most desired by the true artist.

In his new book Mr. Garnett proves himself to be an artist in literary satire. He has exceeding culture, a wide range of sympathy, the rare faculty of serene irony, and a style at once delicate and vigorous, concise and yet vividly illustrative. There is not one of the tales in this volume which does not afford ample warranty of his qualifications; and if here and there an inferior, almost a banal, touch or episode occur, the critical reader must blame the vitiated taste of the day as much as the author. It is perhaps a fault that the themes are occasionally so remote from ordinary "cultivated" knowledge that the writer's erudite play of fancy should lose somewhat; but, after all, it is the treatment and not the subject itself which is of real value and interest. Not that the majority of Mr. Garnett's charming stories deserve to be banned with the reproach of undue remoteness of theme; and even the philosophical experimentalists, Plotinus and the Imperial Gallienus, or the poetically minded but too Christian Nonnus, may be familiar enough to most readers.

The tales are sixteen in number, and embrace as diverse periods and as many religions as any visionary Esoteric Buddhist could compass in a Kensingtonian trance. The first, and on the whole the most charming, is that which gives its title to the book. The fanciful episode of which it treats is the promulgation, in the fourth century, of the religion of the Prophet of Nazareth throughout all the Hellenic realm—and the consequent dethronement, dispersal, and hopeless confusion of the gods of old. The story opens finely with the fall of an eagle among the peaks of Caucasus, and the enfranchisement from his long captivity of Zeus' inveterate foe. Freed from his rock and his burden of immortality, Prometheus again treads the common ways of earth. He meets a lovely maiden, the last priestess of Apollo, fleeing from a mob of Christian iconoclasts, and astonishes her by his perfect knowledge of classic Greek and his amazing ignorance of the very names of Homer and Plato. It is a case of love at first sight. Prometheus loves Elenko, and gladly takes on the new malison—or rather