

THE MAKING OF BOOKS.

The Vain Attempts of the Handicapped of Ancestral Luster to Climb the Hill of Fame.

BRANTFORD, Ont., Aug. 20.—The statement has reached us, been denied and reasserted that Col. Fred Grant will shortly present his country—already, one might suppose, sufficiently afflicted—with a biography of the hero so lately gone to his grave, who happens—for heroes must have relations—to be the Colonel's father. That worthy individual has never written a book before, nor anything else that we can discover, except a somewhat stilted invitation to his father's funeral, in which he calls himself "the undersigned." Now, whoever writes the great General's life, it is fore-ordained that we shall all buy it and read it. In the interest of a greatly biographed world, therefore, the Colonel should abstain. Some one ought kindly but firmly to set before him the miserable fate of various foregone biographers who have been clever men, and if he should show any trepidation about joining their execrated ranks it should be accounted a righteous fear. The timeworn proverb about the audacity of fools and the timidity of angels ought to be placed unobtrusively where he would be sure to see it, and a lecture tour should be suggested as a profitable substitute. "Of course," says one Journal, "no one living has such ample material for giving a picture of Gen. Grant's character as has the Colonel." If "material" is the only requisite, however, a hero's best historian would be his valet, whose opportunities are unlimited, and who possesses the proverbial independence of opinion as well.

The same "personal" column informs me that Alice Field, a daughter of Cyrus Field, is writing a novel. I don't know anything about Miss Field's ability in the direction of fiction. Her novel may be an immortal affair, the glorious product of a genius that has burst the golden fetters of enervating millionaireism and, contrary to all established precedent, accomplished something, in which case it is a thousand pities that the work should be heralded by the name of its grandpapa. There be so many unbelievers in the world whom it will be difficult to convince that Cyrus Field's fame did not accomplish his daughter's. It may be a satisfactory fact to her publisher, but how sad that the youthful spirit, with a distinguished connection, can never rejoice in the undimmed luster of its own renown, unless it shine forth under a *nom de plume*, which is a bushel not usually applied to a candle of this description; all of which leads one to reflect upon the degenerate character of modern Fame. She at whose feet importunate mortals used to kneel, vainly imploring but an icy glance; behold, her favor may be bought and sold! Every day she renders tribute unto Ciesar, who once exacted it. She cringes to the money bags of any vulgar Midas; she smiles upon the possessor of an extraordinary biceps; she respects you if you are well enough acquainted with any friend of hers to shoot him, and you win her eternal regard by running away with his wife. She is in bondage to printers' ink, not entirely a self-respecting fluid, as everybody knows. One instinctively regrets, in these days of ready-made reputations, the unappreciative old times when the impecunious poet waited, hat in hand, in the hall of his lordship with a taste for letters, whose patronage and whose flunkey's snubs the shabby rhymester courted for the "desire of fame" that burnt under his frayed great coat. Genius seems to strive better in obscurity and upon a mutton bone than in purple and fine linen and upon *pate de foie gras*. The immortal nine will not be courted by electric light. It makes them feel old-fashioned and queer and suspicious of being flirted with. They prefer devotion and a farthing dip.

Am hoping that some poet not too well fed nor too extensively advertised will ponder over that bugler's last "Good-night" to the great General until the notes make such a glorious echo in his soul that presently he will voice its beautiful sadness to a world that feels it, but dumbly, not being vouchsafed utterance of the inspiration that may glow sometimes in very common clay. The last "Good-night" that rang so often across the still darkness of fented fields, a good-night to which there might be no good-morrow; a good-night from one to all, now from all to one—the noblest one, the bravest and the best! There, as he lay for the last time in the sunlit world, amid the warm beauty and strength and hope of throbbing human life, before they shut him in with darkness and silence and loneliness and cold, once more the old familiar notes. "Good-night," a long. And they fell on the dull ear and passed, I suppose, and trembled among the listening trees and thrilled in the heart of the world. The pathos of it!

Allow me to applaud the idea of the overland monthly that I saw in The Post a week ago, suggesting an addition to the furniture of the ordinary sanctum in the shape of an advisory chair. Let me recapitulate. The advisory editor is to take entire charge of that department of modern journalism known—alas! to many of us!—as the waste-basket. The would-be contributors whose inspirations are "unavailable" may, by inclosing a consideration, receive by return mail not only his MS. well thumbled and dejected looking, but an elaborate essay upon the cause of its rejection and the writer's literary prospects. Are you nurturing the insane idea that letters will maintain you in affluence? Repair unto the advisory editor, propitiate him with a propitiation of greenbacks, and you will probably hear that the world is waiting for you, but they have a good deal of that kind of thing on hand at present, so he must reluctantly compel it to wait a little longer. He may even punctuate "that kind of thing" for you and correct the spelling, if it be so that there are two figures on the face of your propitiation. And he will, no doubt, be pleased to hear from you again on the same terms. Yes, there is a great field for the advisory editor, an inexhaustible field, for thousands of human beings come into the world every year with a dormant predilection toward literature, which will stand a good deal of pecuniary pruning before it dies on account of its location. The first magazine that starts an advisory editor need not depend on its circulation for a living. Editorial inhumanity will also pass away and be forgotten and no scribe will dare to revile spring poetry. All hail to the advisory editor.

In the literary connection, have you happened to see "Across the Chasm?" I wouldn't advise you to make any particular effort to do so if you haven't, unless you happen to be a young man in need of a few rather elementary lessons in etiquette. Even in that case I think it would be better to invest in one of the numerous little books that treat exclusively of the subject. They are somewhat unreliable in places, I believe, but you get more information for your money. According to "Across the Chasm" the department of manners has been much neglected by the recent constructors of fiction. The young lady, a Southerner, who bridges the "chasm" by marrying a Northerner selects him solely because of her three suitors, who pay assiduous and rather monotonous court, relieved only by exceptional *gaucheries* all through the volume, he is the best behaved. The Yankee who won her repented of his misdeeds, reformed, and was accepted. How are the chivalrous heroes and uncalculating heroines and thrilling plots of the story-telling age departed! It is time to mourn them when we get a judicial young person calmly reviewing the merits and demerits by the cold light of decorum and demanding immaculate cuffs of the man of her choice. An episode in connection with the soup, an exciting scene over a visiting card in German type, a climax when the unlucky offender puts his knife in his mouth! Introduced into certain Western colleges under the title of "Manners Made Easy," the little volume might justify its existence, but it is hardly fair to impose it upon the public as a novel, even a summer novel.

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