

MISS CLEVELAND'S BOOK.

A Canadian's Criticism Which is Delicately Worded, Even if Severe.

BRANTFORD, July 21.—Do you know we hadn't a suspicion over here that Miss Cleveland's name was *Rose*. Somebody having told us that she had a distinctly formulated contempt for most of the eddying frivolities of the social whirlpool, we straightway conceived her a sober-robed Sappho of austere demeanor and an unquestionably Scriptural godmother. *Rose M. Cleveland!* It is a very pretty name. Of course by any other its gifted owner might have kindled incense at the altar of literature equally fragrant in the nostrils of the nation; but I wonder if she will altogether scorn the fact that up here among her late-coming Canadian namesakes we find even the outside of her charming book euphonious and suggestive.

I confess I opened it in a very improper spirit. For some years past the American press has been diverting itself at the expense of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen in flagrant criticism of such impressions of hers as it pleased Her Majesty to allow it the privilege of becoming acquainted with, and the flagitious fabrication of others like unto them, yet so unlike us to provoke derision. We colonists of orange Canada, still in the faith of our monarchical forefathers, still unwilling to accept Uncle Sam before he proposes, have been obliged to sit and suffer. "Now," thought I loyally and vindictively at the advent of the White House book, "now is my righteous opportunity. I will gather together my superlatives and all the weapons of my vocabulary. I will smite and spare not. I will revile this reviling nation. I will avenge the honor of the royal family with my strong right hand. I will demonstrate unto these scoffers the fun of national literature in high places, so far as in me lies!" Thus, stiff-necked in my wrath, I meditated. At the first page I experienced the sensation of the unexpected, for how was I to know that to be exalted is not to be very, very dull; at the second, rage at the American institutions that bring forth brilliancy where propriety, stupidity and dignity are quite enough; at the third I repented me, and deep was the valley of my humiliation, as with a tear of self-pity and a sigh of reparation I closed my armory and laid the volume of gracious sentiment on top of my Queen's. Just here one word for our poor Sovereign. You know she has been totally without the advantages of an American education. She is not, I am afraid, what you would call "sharp." In her youth, I have no doubt, her newspapers were selected for her, and were probably of the most tame orthodox description. She never attended a "mixed" school in her life, and her governesses evidently paid more attention to deportment than to syntax. Then she has the misfortune to belong to the Guelphs—a notably thick-headed family. Presently she will be at your mercy again, and I beg that you will be temperate in your amusement. You are really too big, you know, to ridicule your grandmother.

But to return to our White House privilege, from which we have been ungratefully long away, and which we have investigated no farther than the cover, it seems to me that one of the most charming characteristics of Miss Cleveland's literary style is its emphasis. She is delightfully emphatic. There is no parley, no consideration of half truths. She forms her conviction and with swift, sure strokes nails it up fearlessly, a shining mark. George Eliot's poetry, the subject of her first essay, she denounces as a myth born of popular misconception of the relation of spirit and meter, and the unwise determination of the novelist to wear the bays whether the wreath became her or not. Her charge against the verse that it is not spontaneous and not spiritual we accept at once as undeniable, and to her conclusion that it is not poetry we are vigorously assented. There is something very like poetry, however, in the way Miss Cleveland relieves the unfortunate "Spanish Gypsy" of her mantle of song and leaves her clad chiefly in ethics traveling toward the "stone-wall" finality of her creator's creed. Prose, she says, can no more become poetry by bearing its name than a lily "if rechristened rose" could "gain in addition to its own spotless perfections the deep-hearted sorcery of that enchanting crumpled wonder which we thrill in touching as if it, too, had nerves and blood and a human heart—a rose!" "Crumpled wonder" is delicious. Miss Cleveland quite deserved her baptismal compliment.

As might be expected from the title "Reciprocity" takes a very commercial view of life. It is somewhat novel and startling to be informed that all our little courtesies and amenities, which we have been hitherto deluded into believing spontaneous and uncalculating, are inspired by motives strictly *quid pro quo*, but Miss Cleveland has not the fear of public *amour propre* before her eyes. Especially are we convinced of this when we read her calm statement that "a flirt is the most harmless person in the world. * * * You can walk through them and not know there is anything there!" Gentle, unconscious withering gibes. The amount of suffering it will inflict upon a large proportion all classes who have from time immemorial considered themselves dangerous if not deadly members of society is something uncomfortable to contemplate. In "Altruistic Faith" Miss Cleveland shows us the highest phase of her philosophy. An epigram sparkles here and there and the attentive ear may detect an echo of Carlyle. One might conclude from the fervid character of the historical studies that the author took great pleasure in their compilation. There is an occasional lapse of logic, an occasional metaphor rather hopelessly mixed; but the essays glow with enthusiasm and will leave a vivid impression.

In view of the very strong light that beats upon the White House Miss Cleveland deserves to be congratulated upon the courage that gave her convictions to the world at this juncture and grateful acknowledgment from those whom she has permitted to know her, to whom White Houses are inaccessible and the inhabitants thereof to be regarded from afar off.

GARTH GRAFTON.