



REVIEW OF NEW PUBLICATIONS



Alice King.

BELOW will be found portions of a sketch written by Miss Alice King, an English authoress, and contributed by her to an English Magazine. It cannot fail to interest the reader, not only in the writer herself, but in the story that follows. The tale is sent to us without a name, but it may well be called "A Singular Story" (page 26). It shows considerable imaginative power, command of language, and a faculty of observation very remarkable under the circumstances. The manuscript is not the least wonderful part. Scarcely an erasure mars its neatness. We have many a manuscript in our possession produced by the type-writer that in regularity and correctness cannot compare with that sent us by Miss King.—EDITOR OF DEMAREST'S MAGAZINE.

Miss King writes: I was born at the hill-country village of Cutcombe, near the little town of Dunster, in West Somerset, England, in the vicarage house, which had been entirely rebuilt by my father on Lord Brougham, his old friend, presenting him with the living some years before my birth.

My sight, from my birth, was extremely imperfect and weak, indeed it hardly ever deserved the name of sight at all, it showed me objects in such a dim, indistinct manner. Landscapes, as I gazed longingly at them—for even then I had a vague perception of beauty—turned into nothing but great smudges of green fields and blue sky, faces were mere blurred spots. Such an abnormal state of vision could, of course, not last long, and at the age of seven I became totally blind, and have remained so ever since.

The fact of my being thus early deprived of sight, and also my having enjoyed beforehand such a small portion of its blessings, made me never miss it; I have never felt the want of it, and never even regretted it. There is, indeed, in my case one peculiar and beautiful point in my blindness; I am never surrounded by black night, but have always a brilliant light before my eyes—a light that seems to wrap me in a luminous cloud; moreover, I can always call up before my eyes by thinking of it, any color. These colors are never dim and dead, but always, as it were, incandescent and instinct with radiance; it is like gazing into a brilliant green, or blue, or red light.

But though I was too young when I lost my sight to understand and lament my loss, my other senses at once set about instinctively to find out ways to make up to me for the sense which was gone. My mind was already very active, and my feelings keen and lively, and they would not submit to being shut out from the world around them, and God's love and mercy let them find several other doorways for the one He had closed. I learned gradually to judge and understand and gain my ideas of everything through my ears; to get a clear picture of a beautiful country from the sounds of rushing water and of waving trees; to read character, and

comprehend the feelings of others, and sometimes dive into even their thoughts by the voice; to form my estimation of space and distance from noises and their vibrations. My sense of touch also grew very delicate, so that I soon learned to knit the finest silk or cotton, and I could tell from a person's hand-grasp whether they were or were not sympathetic to me. It is, of course, needless to say that all these faculties, acquired in childhood, have remained with me through life, and perhaps grown keener and more subtle as I grew older.

Another gift granted me, no doubt, to make up for my blindness, are certain intuitions, which, however, are very uncertain in their coming and going, which I can never call at my own free will, and of the mode of working of which I can give no clear and exact account. There has sometimes flashed suddenly into my mind a conviction that such and such a thing would happen, and it has come to pass; on the other hand, I have striven to foresee some event in which I am deeply interested, and have utterly failed. When I am talking to my pupils among the working men and lads, of whom I shall speak by and by, there has, all at once, come to me, as it were, a revelation of their state of mind, which has been of the utmost help to me in my dealings with them; but I can never gain this knowledge by any special mental process that I can define. I have generally a full consciousness of the fact when any one is looking earnestly at me with especial affection or interest, or with an entirely opposite feeling; but I cannot describe how I arrive at this knowledge. Such things are complete mysteries to me. I only know that so they are, and that they often compensate for my want of the ordinary sense of sight.

But to return to my childhood and early girlhood. I never received any special education such as is usually given to the blind, except that I was taught everything by heart, through my ears; on the other hand, my mind was most carefully and discerningly cultivated by my mother, who educated me without the help of a single master or teacher of any kind except herself. By the aid of my quick ear and my always retentive memory she taught me French and Italian, and gave me a most perfect knowledge of history and geography; the latter, indeed, she made me learn so thoroughly that I could, in my school-room days, describe the shapes of countries and provinces with the nicest accuracy, and could have dictated the drawing of maps with ease and precision.

Besides my regular lessons, my mind was formed and cultivated in many indirect ways. My father constantly read aloud to my mother, and from such readings I was never excluded, be the book what it might. In this way I picked up a deal of knowledge, and was very early introduced to the masterpieces of poetry and fiction.

My father would often take me on his knee when he was occupied with his translation of Virgil, and hearing him murmur over and over his musical lines, first put into my head the idea of writing poetry myself. I wrote poetry before I was ten years old. My first appearance before the public was in two hymns which were written before I was twelve, and came out in a volume of sacred verse by my father, called *The Lays of Palestine*.

I had, as a child, a great affection for out-door amusements and pursuits, preferring them, beyond measure, to sitting up primly with my doll. My love of animals was quite a passion; my dearest friend and play-fellow was our old white pony Quilp, who taught us all to ride. I was, in my girlhood, a good, and, considering my blindness, a brave horse-woman, and I was always the first lady to mount any fresh addition to the stalls.

We took several journeys on the Continent while I was a girl, and these were always great wakings up to my mind, helping to kindle my imagination, especially a long tour we took in Italy, when I was about sixteen; it brought out of me a gust of melody that resulted in a poem called *Irene*, which my father had printed for private circulation.

My first novel was written before I was twenty. I was stirred up to beginning it by reading *The Life of Charlotte Brontë*. When finished it was sent for reading and criticism to Professor Morley, with whom my father had some acquaintance. He read and approved, and found me a publisher for it.

I may as well say here that my education has, in a certain way, never ceased, and is still going on. My sister and I have taught ourselves German, Spanish, Latin, Greek and Hebrew since we grew up, and are always reading books with a view to instruction of different kinds.

I have been luckier, perhaps, than most young writers on my first setting out upon the path of literature in gaining kind and helpful friends. A fortunate chance introduced me to Mrs. Henry Wood and her son, Mr. Charles Wood, and the *Argosy* first gave a place to some of my biographical sketches, which have proved a line of literature in which I have reached special success. Throughout the whole, indeed, of my literary career I have always universally received the greatest and most kindly courtesy from men of letters. Charles Dickens, whom I especially mention as a type of his class, spoke to me, long ago, a cheering word, which re-echoes still round my heart-strings, and other men of mark have followed in the same key.

I have often been asked to explain how it is that, without the sense of sight, I can give vivid descriptions of scenery, of human faces, and of other natural objects. To such questions I can only answer that all I write comes to me without the slightest effort and as easily as song to a song-bird; the picture of such and such things rises up in my imagination, and I have nothing to do but clothe it in words and put it on paper.

The other great field of my life's work, besides literature, has been teaching and influencing working men and lads. I began with a little class of about seven lads, who came shyly and unwillingly, for in those days, in our retired country district, there was a strong and decided prejudice against the idea of a lady teaching and guiding young working men. In the course of the years that I have been carrying on the work, several hundreds of men and boys have passed through my hands, and my efforts have been ceaseless to help them onward and upward in life. Many of the men are married, and for their wives and daughters I hold also a Sunday Bible-class.

In former days both work for the press and my correspondence was done through an amanuensis, now I do it all myself with that beautiful and wonderful machine, the American type-writer. My sister corrects mistakes for me in my MSS. and reads over my proof-sheets to me, and is my constant helper and companion in all my work.

"**Art Recreations**," published by S. W. Tilton & Co., Boston, is re-demanded this season, and appears in a new edition, with fresh touches from the pen of its editor, Marian Kemble. This is one of the most comprehensive of the many guides to fancy work, and includes instruction in painting on silk, satin, plush, linen, wood, and landscape painting in oil. Hammered brass, etching, amateur photography, and many other modern and modernized or revived arts also receive attention, and render it valuable to the worker for a livelihood, as well as the amateur.

Mrs. Alice Wellington Rollins has written a little book which Messrs. Cassell & Co. will publish, called *The Story of a Ranch*. It is a true story, the outcome of the author's own experience on a Kansas sheep ranch, and it is as fresh and bracing as a prairie breeze. There is a good deal of information mixed in with picturesque descriptions, and the result is a book that will serve the double purpose of entertainment and instruction.

An important book on Cassell & Co.'s list is *The Story of the Heavens*, by Robert Stowell Ball, LL.D., Fellow of the Royal Society of London, etc., etc. The book, although on a scientific subject, is written in a popular manner, and is profusely illustrated with plain and colored plates of exceptional quality.

"**The World's Workers**" is the general title of a series of brief biographies of men and women who have won distinguished places on Fame's eternal bead-roll, which Messrs. Cassell & Co. have just begun publishing.

A Prince of Darkness is an interesting novel by the popular author of *The House on the Marsh*. There is no lack of incident here, told with dramatic power, and considerable skill. The publishers are D. Appleton & Co. This is one of the new twenty-five cent series put out by this house.

Lives of Poor Boys who Became Famous is by Sarah K. Bolton, and published by Thomas Y. Crowell & Co., 13 Astor Place, New York. It consists of a series of short sketches of men who have achieved reputation without the aid of a fortune. It is a good book for youth.

The Coming Struggle for India, by Professor A. Vambéry of the Buda-Pesth University, "is written to show the despotic power of Russia, and to animate the English to maintain their position in India." It is well written, and will prove of interest at the present time. Cassell & Company, publishers.

The Rise of Silas Lapham, by William D. Howells, is a story of a man who made a fortune and is anxious to do with it as his better-born neighbors do with theirs. He is not a very exalted character, though not a despicable one, and his type is by no means uncommon. The other characters are well drawn, and the book is written with Mr. Howells' usual care, and shows his keen analysis of character. Ticknor & Company, Boston.

Mr. Ruskin's publisher, Mr. Allen, of Orpington, will issue in twelve monthly parts a translation of Gotthelf's novel of "Ulric, the Farm Servant." The translation has been made by Julia Firth. Mr. Ruskin supplies some notes and revises the whole.

Next year will be "jubilee year" of the Art Union of London. The coupon gift for every subscriber during the year will consist of a finely printed copy of Sir Walter Scott's poem, "The Bridal of Triermain," illustrated with fourteen designs specially made for it by Mr. Percy Macquoid.

Along the upper border of Chinese newspapers, where we usually place the title and date, is written the exhortation, "Please respect written paper; the merit is boundless"—an exhortation that is generally heeded, for the papers are carefully filed in shop and office, and are read and re-read until at last they fall to pieces. Then a man from the society that takes written paper for its special care comes and takes away the well-thumbed printed rags and tatters to be reverently burnt in a crematorium attached to the *Wên-Mo-Mian*, the Literary and Military Temple.

An almanac three thousand years old, found in Egypt, is in the British Museum. It is supposed to be the oldest in the world. It was found on the body of an Egyptian. The days are written in red ink, and under each is a figure followed by three characters, signifying the probable state of the weather for that day. Like the other Egyptian manuscripts, it is written on papyrus. It is written in columns, but is not in its integrity, having been evidently torn before its owner died.

"**As It is Written**: a Jewish Musician's Story," by Sidney Luska, published by Cassell & Co., is intended as a psychological study, but is more in the nature of a conundrum. It is a simply horrible story, the author of which has not carried out his apparently original idea of investing it with a mysterious and supernatural interest. There is something lurid, and something tragical, and something melodramatic, and something of the writing medium about the musician, but he falls of being a hero—the jury that tried him ought to have hung him, or imprisoned him for life—he is not the sort of man it is pleasant to have around.

"**Karan Kringle's Journal**" is a humorous narrative of an old maid's love affairs, fortunes and misfortunes, published by T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia. But Miss Karan Kringle is no fool; you may laugh with her, but not at her; her shrewdness and common-sense are never at fault, and carry her through her varied adventures successfully.

"**Architecture Simplified; or, How to Build a House**," is a very useful little book in a paper cover, which comes from Chicago (Geo. W. Ogilvie), and contains within its small covers a vast amount of practical information for those who want to build an inexpensive country home. Upwards of twenty-five plans and specifications are given, and many incidentally valuable facts in addition to the illustrated plans and builders' synopsis of materials required. There is a saving to some persons of hundreds of dollars in this little work.

The Magazine of American History for October contains the facsimile of an autograph letter of General Grant (never before published), on the character of Alexander H. Stephens, Vice-President of the Confederacy. Another interesting feature is the beginning of a series of papers by General Wm. Farrar Smith, familiarly known among military men as "Baldy" Smith, on the "Kentucky Campaign of 1861-62," one of the unique attractions of which is the author's ingenious method of allowing the military leaders to tell their own stories—through their official correspondence. Some curious revelations may be expected.

"**Dora's Device**" is a romance by George R. Cather, editor of *The Southern Aegis*. This is an ingenious American novel of great interest and unusual power. The plot deals with a commercial crash, a murder, a secret with ghostly surroundings, true love that does not run smoothly, a mad infatuation inspired by a beautiful and reckless woman, and shrewd detective work in which a deaf and dumb lad figures prominently. Hosts of thrilling incidents are presented, while the characters are drawn with graphic touches. T. B. Peterson & Brothers, Philadelphia, are the publishers.

"**The Parson o' Dumford**" is the story of a muscular clergyman in a factory town, and of a "lock-out" in the foundry, which is the principal dependence of the community. There are some interesting and natural touches, but on the whole, the incidents are strained, and the development of character not original, and decidedly unpleasant: while the ending manages to leave everything and everybody uncomfortable all around. J. Manville Fenn is the author, Cassell & Company the publishers.

No. 14 of the Reading Club Series, edited by Mr. George M. Baker, and containing an excellent variety of prose and poetry for reading purposes, has been published by Lee & Shepard, of Boston.

"**Mind Reading and Beyond**," by Mr. Wm. A. Hovey, formerly editor of the Boston *Transcript*, embodies the results and conclusions of the committee, which included some of the most famous scientists of England, in their investigations into psychical phenomena. Mr. Hovey's volume is based upon the records of the society upon a particular branch of psychical investigation, and largely made up of experiments, which are very clearly explained, and often with the aid of diagrams. It is believed by the author that the evidence suffices to establish Mind-Reading as a fact; though of this, of course, every reader must judge for himself. Lee & Shepard are the publishers.

"**The Hunter's Hand-Book**" is a manual which should be considered indispensable by would-be sportsmen, for it contains a complete list of the paraphernalia necessary to camping-out, and also furnishes information in regard to the treatment of persons in case of ordinary accidents, and the use of such additions to the commissariat as are found in woods, fields, rivers, and mountains within a small compass. "An Old Hunter" supplies a good deal of valuable information, which can only have been acquired by experience, and may be accepted without much qualification. His "Camp-Cooking" receipts would, some of them, be found an improvement on the methods in more civilized localities. Boston: Lee & Shepard.

ONE of the attractions of the December number of DEMAREST'S MONTHLY MAGAZINE will be the commencement of an original story by Mr. Julian Hawthorne, entitled "A DAUGHTER OF PASSION." Mr. Hawthorne is the rising young novelist of this country, his work has the finest literary flavor, and is the most purely literary in its character, of any that has seen the light since his father's time. The mantle of his father seems indeed to have fallen upon the son, and we are glad to be able to put before our readers a story so strong in its grasp, so subtle in its analysis, so refined in its tone, and so pure in its English, as "A Daughter of Passion." Mr. Hawthorne is peculiarly happy in stories or novelettes, of a length which require several to make a book—and it is not the least evidence of his mastery, that within these limits are contained the fine touches that present in miniature the development of character, feeling and motive that other writers spread over two or three volumes.