

an interest greatly exceeding that produced by other works of art not thus made familiar. This is but one feature in the humanizing work which this great magazine is accomplishing. — A graceful paper on James Russell Lowell was read at the eighteenth annual dinner of the Harvard Club of San Francisco, by George B. Merrill. The writer takes the diplomatic correspondence of the government and draws off some juicy sentences from Mr. Lowell. — In McClurg's tasteful reprints (A. C. McClurg & Co., Chicago) we note, in addition to those heretofore mentioned, Moore's *Lalla Rookh*, Tennyson's *Idylls of the King*, Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History*. The special merit of these editions, aside from the graceful form of the books, lies in the editor's reserve. Wherever the author has provided a preface or notes, this apparatus is given, and thus some interesting matter is revived; but the editor himself refrains from loading the books with his own writing. — The *Uncollected Writings of Thomas De Quincey*, with a Preface and Annotations, by James Hogg. (Macmillan.) Mr. Hogg, who was De Quincey's publisher at one time, has collected in two volumes considerable matter not to be found in the latest edition, that by Masson. The papers sometimes complete articles already published in the American (Riverside) edition, as in *The English in China*; but sometimes the same matter reappears under another title, as in *Suetonius Unravelled*, which in the

Riverside edition is *Elius Lamia*. To the lover of De Quincey there is little in these two volumes which will not be welcomed. — In the neat little *Knickerbocker Nuggets Series* (Putnams), three volumes are devoted to Stories from the *Arabian Nights*, selected from Lane's version by Stanley Lane-Poole. To our surprise, we find that Ali Baba, though included, is not properly a portion of the real *Arabian Nights*. The scholarly spelling fiend has invaded this sacred inclosure, also, with his 'Alā-ed-din and his 'Efrit, and other severe orthographic prigs.

*Art.* A book well worth reissuing was Sir Joshua Reynolds's *Discourses*, and the reprint is in excellent style (McClurg), with Notes and an Historical and Biographical Introduction by Edward Gilpin Johnson, and copies, of varying degrees of excellence, from Sir Joshua's portraits. The discourses themselves are full of strong sense, and an insight which sometimes struggles against English insularity. The introduction is interesting and discriminating. — Recent numbers of *L'Art*, semi-monthly (Macmillan), have etchings after Carolus Duran, L. J. R. Collin, J. Trayer, an interesting series of charcoal sketches by Charles Jaeque in a paper devoted to him, a well-illustrated continued paper on the Spitzer Museum, notes on recent public sales in London and Paris, and the customary chronicles. The standard of *L'Art* is that by which one must measure most publications of its class.

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#### THE CONTRIBUTORS' CLUB.

Dakota's Climate. — It matters little how hot or cold, wet or dry, a climate is; the people who live in the country are ready to claim many advantages for the place which they have chosen for their home. The solitary exception to this statement is Dakota. During a residence there of fourteen months — parts of two winters and one summer — not a word was said in my hearing on the subject of the climate, except to relate some new horror of it.

The Indians, it was averred, went to Dakota because they thought that no white

man would follow them to such a place. The bitterness of the cold of the winters, the torrid heat of the summers, the well-nigh ceaseless wind, the violent storms of thunder and lightning and rain, the long droughts, the duststorms, the hailstorms, must be experienced to be appreciated. Everything seems to be on an excessive scale in Dakota. The velocity of the wind, when the mercury is standing at 40° below zero, if one is out in it, will take the animal heat out of one in a few minutes. No amount of clothing can prevent intense

suffering. One feels as if one had forgotten to put on clothes, and were encountering that cruel wind naked. Perhaps the wind is the worst feature of the climate. When it is blowing on a cold night, people who live out on the prairies frequently do not go to bed. They sit all night as close as they can to a red-hot stove. Even then the side that is turned from the stove is cold.

One day, when the mercury was 25° below zero, and the wind was high, the thermometer where I sat by the stove indicated 115° above zero, and eight feet off the thermometer on the bureau stood at 20°, — a difference of 95°. It was necessary, on winter nights, to get up at least once to put wood in the stove ; but in what was called bad weather this had to be done several times during the night. Of course everything freezes, — the eggs within a few feet of the hot stove, the kerosene oil in the corner, the cabbages and turnips and potatoes and meat in the hole in the ground under the house. Every night an iron bucket of live coals is put down into this six-foot hole, to save part of the winter stores from being destroyed by freezing. One hears that people take things into their beds with them, when they want to save them ; for it will not do to let things run out in winter. It would be impossible to transport many of them across the prairies, as they would be frozen. All windows and all unnecessary doors are nailed up and chinked as closely as possible before this weather sets in ; an embankment of earth is thrown up round the house to keep the wind from coming up under the floor ; four or five furrows are run with a plough round the house, at a sufficient distance to save it from prairie fires ; and wood for a two weeks' siege, when going out-of-doors will be well-nigh unendurable, is piled high against the wall, and stored under the bed and wherever else space can be found. In this weather, if one winks out-of-doors, the eyelash freezes to the cheek, and has to be thawed out before the eye can be opened. One would scarcely be tempted to relate a second joke, where a wink was necessary to call attention to the point.

The blizzards of Dakota have given her a more widespread fame than any other feature of the climate. Reaching that country at the tail end of winter, and living on

the prairie far from neighbors who could have enlightened us, my sister and I were under the impression that we saw blizzards pretty often. We saw what would go by that name elsewhere. But when we met a Dakota blizzard in the height of the season, we knew that all the other storms were as nothing in comparison. The mercury was far down. The wind caught up the accumulated snows of weeks from the rolling prairies, and lifted them up to meet the descending snows of heaven. The wind beat like waves. The sound was as the roar of a mighty ocean. As it went on, it was as though the solid earth had hurled herself headlong from her moorings, and were rushing with immeasurable velocity through unexplored space.

One hears that many women become insane in Dakota. Some say it is the lonely life ; but lives as lonely are borne cheerfully elsewhere. My theory is that insanity is caused by the wind, which intensifies the loneliness. The moaning and wailing, the lashing and swishing, the rushing and roaring, the howling and surging, of the wind go on night and day for weeks at a time, without a moment's lull. It becomes maddening. One feels as if it were beating on the brain. One longs for even one moment of rest from that eternal sound that seems to fill the universe. It is in vain to put one's fingers in one's ears, for the timbers of the little house are creaking ; the house itself is swaying on its foundations.

It is not women alone who are depressed by some influence in Dakota. This influence, whatever it may be, seems to extend to the lower orders of creation, also. We had heard that no hen cackled there. This was true of my sister's and mine, but I recall hearing a little cackling at the Agency. There the force of the wind was broken by the stockade and the buildings. A friend at the Agency made us a present of a handsome cock, and we heard his cheerful announcement, on the morning after his arrival, that he was the cock of the roost. We enjoyed the crow from our point of vantage in bed ; it was the pleasantest and most homelike sound that had greeted our ears for some time. But it did not last. That day he must have reconsidered things. At any rate, he did not crow the next morning, nor the next, nor ever again, except on one or two rare occasions, when for a brief

moment he forgot that he had resolved that there was nothing in this world worth his while to crow about. Gradually he joined the army of the silent ones; no shrill clarion was heard in that hen-house thenceforth. I think that if Gray had lived in Dakota, or Shakespeare, or John Milton, we should never have heard of the "clarion," nor of the "bird of dawning," nor of the "trumpet of the morn," nor of the rear of darkness thin being scattered by any "lively din" made by cock stoutly strutting or otherwise. Our cock's dames felt as he did about life, and took it *au grand sérieux*. What was there in laying an egg that was worth making a fuss about? So, when they laid an egg, they walked silently from the nest; not a cheery note was heard on that subject or any other from them, except very occasionally a faint chirp, as they stepped about looking for food.

There are many dogs in Dakota, but I had been there some months before I heard one bark. I feel sure that great numbers are born and live out their lives and die without ever a bark. Horses and Indian ponies abound, but I never heard a sound from one of them except once, when a pony gave a little whinny to a large drove feeding on a hillside. They lifted up their heads for a moment, and looked in the direction of the unwonted sound, but they made no response. I think the whinnying one could not have been bred in Dakota.

We heard from neighbors that, terrible as winter was, the summer was worse. They did not exaggerate. The sun bounds up from the level prairie as a flame, and as the day wears on the heat grows more and more intense. When this hot air gets in motion, it is worse than a calm. I thought the house was afire, the first time this hot wind burst up through the floor; it was in the middle of the night. People close windows and doors to keep it out as much as possible, but even under these circumstances the heat is scorching. The earth cracks open on the treeless prairie in rifts; one almost believes the crust separating the surface from the internal fires cannot be thick here.

But the hailstorms are the ruinous feature of the climate. These are of frequent occurrence, and destroy a crop or a garden so completely that they may be said to be annihilated. Hailstones as large as apples

sometimes fall, and have been known to go through a wooden door, and to kill calves six months old with a blow. We saw none so large as that, but all the crops for hundreds of miles round us were destroyed that summer. The oats and little gardens of the Indians were almost wiped out of existence; our small patch was reduced nearly to ribbons; and the only market garden on the Agency, with its hundreds of heads of cabbage, the largest and best that I ever saw, beets as large as hams and sweet as sugar, pumpkins, watermelons the hugest and most delicious that one ever tasted, potatoes, turnips, — all was a wreck.

These storms in summer come, like the blizzards in winter, with hardly a moment's warning. The clergyman's wife went out one day, for a moment, to her kitchen, which was a separate building, leaving two very young children alone in the house. A sudden storm caught her there, and all the strength that she had could not force the door open against the wind. She was held fast prisoner in the kitchen through one of the worst hailstorms that she ever encountered. Fortunately, no harm came to the baby in the cradle or the wee tot on the floor.

The thunderstorms are appalling even to one who has known storms in the tropics. The lightning is one blaze on three sides of the horizon at once, in some of the storms, and the thunder is awful to hear. One seems in the vortex of the clouds and electrical currents.

Duststorms, like Death, claim all seasons as their own. In winter the snow-banks are strewn thick with dust, and in the burning heat of summer one is blinded, and house, furniture, eyes, mouth, are full of it. These are the storms that throw a tidy housekeeper into despair.

I had almost forgotten that one good thing is said of Dakota, — malaria is unknown there. And the hardest thing said of her is that not a rat is to be found within her borders. Wise little folk!

De Absentibus nil nisi Bonum. — "You are absent-minded."  
"Very likely. Perhaps I was thinking about the absent; and in thinking about the absent, naturally one grows absent-minded."

"I have a theory, — that the absent are always forgotten."

"Not quite always. They are occasion-