

officers of the corps. For this he received six months, as a first-class misdemeanant, and a fine of £50 sterling. I went to Holloway Gaol to visit him. Well do I remember the feeling of surprise at the query made by the janitor as to whether I had concealed for my friend's benefit any ardent spirits or tobacco, and the gentle patting of my costume, which ended in the annexation of my cigarette-case. I was then handed to a smart warder, whom I afterwards learned was known as "Cupid"—why, heaven only knows! We crossed a dreary-looking space—the recreation ground—and came to a door, next which a barred window revealed within a group of gruesome and woe-begone faces peering into the open, probably watching for friends, it being a visiting day. Inside the door we found ourselves at the foot of a stone staircase. Here Cupid paused and clapped his hands together three times, in response to which appeared a tall and appropriately surlily-looking warder, who seemed to be making unnecessarily loud music with a bunch of keys. My friend's name was shouted up to him by my chaperon, and he beckoned me to come up. The new guide ushered me into "the visiting room." My fond visions of the place were soon scattered.

Sufficient to say the floor was concrete, the tables and benches of unsympathetic deal. Nor shall I ever forget the apparition of my woe-begone friend coming in at the door clad in his ulster coat—for warmth, he told me. What a change the month which had already passed of his "first-class misdemeanancy" had wrought upon his stalwart Scotch frame! Pale and worn, I scarcely knew him. He smiled a sickly smile, and motioned me to take a seat. Then followed a tale of his sufferings. "The worst of all," said he, "is the want of sleep: as you know I have been all my life accustomed to late hours, and now they lock me up at eight and turn out the light at half-past. It is dreadful." After some inquiries as to whether he was allowed to read and pursue his avocations, he replied with a bitter laugh, "Do I look as if I could work? and if I did the chaplain must read and approve of my stuff, and he is an awful editor!" "You get the papers we send you?" was the next query. "Not all, I am afraid; the chaplain deals with that department also." It may here be mentioned that, with bitter and cruel irony, when he was emancipated the officials handed him a great heap of papers, chiefly consisting of the *World*, *Truth*, *Punch*, and the *Sporting Times*, which the holy man in office had considered of too secular or dangerous a nature to be admissible. "We exercise and mix with all sorts and conditions of men, and for the consideration of three shillings a week I am permitted the luxury of employing a more needy prisoner than myself to clean out my cell and do things of that sort." "Some of the prisoners," he went on, "take very different views of their fate. Look at that poor devil with his face on the table; he is a hopeless debtor. His wife was here yesterday, and he has been crying ever since. Now this is his solicitor, and I suppose he will have to be paid somehow. I will show you quite a different class of character. You must see him," and he led me into the corridor and pointed out a cheery-looking youth of sporting cut. "He is a bookmaker who has purposely got himself locked up during the frosty season—as he naively puts it, to 'Save expenses and get the whisky out of his skin.' The ruling passion is still strong upon him, and even here he manages to get a little semblance of sport. He has managed with the cunning of his craft to conceal a number of sovereigns in some way or other, and when opportunity permits he lends portions of them to some poor wretch or other, and 'flies him for thick 'uns,' as he terms it. When the gambling is over he collects his bullion, and rewards his opponent with some hope of future refreshment. Another great trial is chapel; it's not so awful as the long, dark nights, but it is very bad. And on Christmas Day it was most pathetic to see the faces of the congregation while that good man the clergyman reminded them that upon that holy and happy festival they might have been in the bosoms of their families but for their own misdemeanours." Time was up, and having secreted some documents he was anxious to have delivered without the moral supervision of the authorities, I bade my friend adieu, and having regained my cigarette-case, left the gate, with its glaring stone dragons on either side, a sadder and a wiser man. The subject of this sketch was liberated at the expiration of his term, but not till the fine of £50 was paid by a subscription raised among his fellow-workers of Fleet-street. He afterwards was appointed editor of a paper which took him to the more genial climate of the South Coast. The trials of a first-class misdemeanant had not only entered into his soul but into his lungs, and he succumbed to a consumption, leaving a young wife, and an infant which was born during his incarceration.

#### SOME THOUGHTS ON SHAKESPEARE.\*

MR. CANNING'S "Thoughts on Shakespeare" make one of those books which must be read to be believed in. The critic feels almost inclined to emulate Lamb's misbehaviour on a famous occasion, and cry "Let me get at him! let me feel his head!" To begin with, though Mr. Canning is pleased to call his remarks "Thoughts," they consist in effect of little but a dreary abstract of the matter of the plays, interspersed fortunately with extracts. "One of the witches relates having [sic] been refused some chestnuts by a sailor's wife, and vindictively discloses her plan of revenge on the husband, regretfully admitting her

\* "Thoughts on Shakespeare's Historical Plays." By the Hon. A. G. S. Canning. (London: W. H. Allen and Co. 1884.)

limited powers of mischief, which enable her to torment the luckless sailor for a certain time, but not to destroy his vessel." And so it goes on for three hundred large and incredible pages. Mr. Canning's contributions in the way of thoughts proper consist of such observations as that "Octavius and his sister are infinitely more worthy alike of interest and admiration" than the "unscrupulous pair" who are "considered the hero and heroine" of "Antony and Cleopatra." In the way of erudition he is a still more remarkable commentator, as may be judged from his remark that "Shakspeare closely follows the account of Holinshed, but Sir Walter Scott, who probably knew more of Scottish history, gives a different version of the events on which 'Macbeth' is founded." These three brief samples will enable any one who has even a glimmering of what criticism ought to be to estimate Mr. Canning's book. When its diverting effect has been exhausted, it is rather a melancholy production. A very little of the spectacle of a well-meaning and industrious person publishing volumes of such dreary folly goes a long way

#### CITY NOTES.

The port of Suakin, which has come into so much prominence of late, is, in the opinion of Consul Jago, likely to become the chief commercial port of the Red Sea, "by reason of the magnitude and value of its imports and exports, capable as they are of immense extension." The Consul reports that the trade of Jeddah, upon which Suakin formerly depended, has been driven into other channels by quarantine regulations, the partial suppression of the slave trade, and other causes, and Suakin having cut herself free with the resources of the rich countries at her back already outbids Jeddah. The importance of English influence being paramount at Suakin is therefore apparent.

The authorities in Mexico are stated to understand fully that it is useless to approach any financial house in London with renewed offers of composition on the Government debt, unless some sort of surplus can be shown in the Budget or native revenues other than those arising from a new loan which can be assigned as security for that loan. On the last occasion there came out so glaringly the difficulty of paying interest on the old debt without incurring a new one that Mexico was practically shunted from the London money market long before the breakdown of negotiations was admitted. The Banque Nationale and the Banque Mercantile are now in union, and reports of the terms on which they propose to guarantee 1 to 1½ per cent. on what is known as the English debt of Mexico have grown very circumstantial. It is worth remark, too, that the quarters supposed to be best informed as to the progress of financial negotiations now give out that nothing is being done; whereas, when the last negotiation had virtually collapsed, the contrary was asserted.

The Mexican National Railway has acknowledged inability to pay the April interest on its bonds. Its president, known as General Palmer, issues a characteristic circular, in which he asks the bondholders to fund their coupons for three years—a proposal which ought to secure his dismissal with promptitude. Great numbers of the bonds are found to be held in London, where dealings were lately done below 20, the price having now risen to within a little of 30. Two or three years ago the same bonds were quoted at 100 in New York. General Palmer has been turned out of the management of the Denver and Rio Grande, and the shareholders in the Mexican National Railroad Company may be excused if they prefer to appoint a receiver to the policy of allowing this gentleman to deal for three years with the money due to the bondholders.

The vestry of St. Luke has set itself the task of furnishing the ratepayers of the parish with the information necessary to enable them to check the water company's charges. The information will be printed on the back of the rate papers. This is a move in the right direction, for a deaf ignorance prevails on the matter, and many inquiring minds have been quieted by hints that existing charges are not up to the limit which might be reached, therefore on the principle that it is better to let sleeping dogs lie many consumers, particularly in the Lambeth district, say little and do less. But if all the vestries would follow the lead of St. Luke's, and furnish on the back of the rate papers particulars of the authorized charges, the consumers' hands would be materially strengthened. A few years ago the Lambeth Company got up a new assessment, and wherever rents had been increased, and regardless of the rate assessment, they considerably increased their charges. Few companies want more looking after than the Lambeth Water Company.

The Rajah of Sarawak is to be congratulated on the financial condition of his country. The revenue has grown to £54,223, and the expenditure for 1883 leaves a surplus of £73; as compared with 1882 the revenue shows an increase of over £1,000. The import duties have increased nearly £500, notwithstanding the abolition of the duty on matches, which yielded £240. The expenditure shows an increase over 1882 amounting to £6,041, which is spread over nearly every department of the little State. The navy swallows up a large share, and the Rajah's visit to Europe accounts for an increase of nearly £4,000 in the Civil List.

The Easter holiday traffic on the principal railways shows a most gratifying increase over last year. The Great Western carried 32,000, against 23,000 last year; the Great Eastern, 89,400, against 69,300; the South Eastern, 41,116, against 37,331. The other lines have not furnished totals, but all give interesting details of well filled trains to all the principal holiday resorts.