

LITERATURE OF THE PEOPLE.

“THE Crock of Gold,” “Toil and Trial,” and a “Story of the West End,” are all little works which have been sent us for review during the last few months. The “Crock of Gold” is a story about a poor English labourer, who lived in a damp, unwholesome, exceedingly picturesque hovel, on eight shillings per week; “Toil and Trial” is a story about a poor shopman and his wife, who had to toil together in much unhappiness on the long-hour, late-shutting-up system; and a “Story of the West End” is a story about two poor needle-girls, of whom one sank into the grave under her protracted labour, and the other narrowly escaped degradation and ruin. They are all interesting, well-written little works; but what we would at present remark in incidental connection with them is that very decided change of direction which our higher literature has taken during the last twenty years, and more especially during the last ten. The great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers of the present reading public could sympathize in the joys and sorrows of only kings and queens; and the critics of the day gave reasons why it should be so. Humble life was introduced upon the stage, or into works of fiction, only to be laughed at; or so bedizzened with the unnatural frippery of Pastoral, that the picture represented, not the realities of actual life, but merely one of the idlest conventionalities of literature. But we have lived to see a great revolution in these matters reach almost its culminating point. It is kings and queens, albeit subjected to greater and more sudden revolutions than at any former period of the world’s history, that have now no place in the literature of fiction. We have our humbler people exhibited instead; and the reading public are invited to sympathize in the sorrows and