

NOTCHES IN THE STICK.

DR. BOURINOT CONSIDERED AS A CANADIAN WRITER.

His Work on the Canadian Press in regard to His Native Land—Dr. Johnson as an Authority—More About the Merits of the Poetry of Bliss Carman.

Among the writers in the Canadian press, Dr. J. G. Bourinot must be counted with the first, as always instructive and always agreeable. You cannot fail, by even slight attention, to learn something valuable from him; whether he deals with constitutional law, writes a brief letter or paragraph, or mooted subject, or a historical or literary brochure; and it is knowledge imparted in a delightful way. You have not only the advantage of knowledge, but you feel the effect of mental poise, of the judicial temper, and the equitable spirit. —not the floss genial and urban—. If he has a fable you are not called to see it on parade; if he has a hobby it is a graceful one, and never ridden when thundered. He is not the pertinacious controversialist, always up with a favorite set of opinions, and alleged facts in multitude, which may or may not help to support them,—the man who never tires of himself, but of whom others grow inevitably weary. Yet his advocacy of any cause, or advance of any opinion must go far towards assuring of acceptance and respect.

Dr. Bourinot lingers with a loving touch upon the records of his native land, and describes her principal features with sympathetic vigor. The romantic shores of Caps Breton, and the heroic story, as well as the natural scenery and material wealth, with the inhabitants, of that island, have been the subjects of his pen, until we have no more comprehensive, reliable and popular authority. He turns, in his "Notes to My Library," (see The Week for July 19th) to Newfoundland,—that misty land of myth, a terra incognita to most of us,—and commends Judge Prowse's recent history, by which it may be better known, as it ought to be in our Dominion. The Island—though the papers of the Rev. Mr. Harvey in The Maritime Monthly and other journals years ago, gave us some insight—has been to us as vague as it appeared to the Scottish poet, who termed it,—

Some far place abroad,

Where sailors range to fish for cod.

But we now have opportunity at least, for fuller information. We trust Dr. Bourinot will further engage his pen with his subject.

It may not be the fashion to cite so homely and straight forward an authority as Dr. Johnson, especially in these formative transcendental days and with respect to poetry, but when we survey the amazing expansiveness, and the extreme facility of modern verse, we are tempted to recall one of his sayings. He at least had something very definite to say, even if his view of the subject seem biased or circumscribed. In one of his conversations with Boswell, after commenting on the Eneid and the Odyssey, he remarked: "It has been said there is pleasure in writing verses. I allow you may have pleasure from writing, after it is over, if you have written well; but you don't go willing to it again. I know when I have been writing verses, I have run my finger down the margin, to see how many I had made, and how few I had to make." This is a criticism searching in its nature, though in a tone most lenient and indulgent. This is the test which it applied to much verse of the time, would find it wanting. There was nothing that required it. There was no compulsion or necessity, only a mechanical choice, with little material, and little result.

Shall we be looked upon as antiquated because we commend this old time book? A man lives there, as men have rarely lived in literature. Come back again, and learn to enjoy and admire this substantial Englishman,—some of whose words we have given,—even when he uses his Thor's-hammer of bluntest speech upon his antagonist. We admire a man who can both give and take blows, without outcry. When you have sated yourself with the sickly outcome of the press,—which is often the first thing now at hand,—come and read in this biography which is easily the first of biographies. Here is a needed tonic for the time, an alternative bit to a man good. This man, so real and so human, with all that is singular in him, has some surpassing qualities of highest utility, which may still command respect. We have greater scholars, thinkers of wider range, more accomplished gentlemen, and softer and more amiable spirits, no doubt; but on the whole, we have few examples of such downright common sense; nor at its base can we find a more genuine and wholesome manhood. His powerful personality still exerts itself through Boswell's assiduous pencil and notebook, and you may still find him a friend well worth having. Read him, and find how he will cut away the fog out of your mind, and will breed the tone which is in itself the correction of many a vagary. He may sometimes vex you, but if you are true to a right touch, he will more often provoke in you a noble and generous rage. Follow no fashion that sneers at such a man. He is a live oak, with all the knots and barky roughnesses. More of his calibre and spirit would be a godsend even now. There are

not a few who ought to be handled just as Johnson would handle them. The asperities and pugnacities of such men as Johnson and Carlyle are, we imagine, greatly exaggerated. These burrs often sheath spirits of rich and generous depths and the sharpnesses we complain of are little in the account when measured with the substantial benefit the world is to derive from such vital and forceful natures. It marks our feebleness when we decry them, or darken their fame for such defects; nor does it argue much for the public stamina, where they are tenderly complained of.

Since our slight note thereupon, we have read and inwardly digested Carman's threnody on Stevenson, and felt its influence, generous and poetical as it is. It takes its title from what may be supposed a passage from its subject's pen:

Here is my journey's end. . . . And very sea-mark of my utmost sail.

That this writing is in some sense extraordinary we can but admit. Such phrasing, such conception, such fancy and melody, are beyond the realm of your ordinary versifier. Yet why is not this whole matter more complete, more finished in its art, more of imagination all compact. Mr Carman seems a master of the pyrotechnics of poetry. There are frequent passages of such brilliancy or beauty that we are tempted to say, the whole of which this is a mosaic, must be a masterpiece. Such a passage is

You brethren of the light-heart guild,

The mystic fellow craft of joy.

Or this fine allusion to Stevenson's lighthouse-building fathers, with stanzas following.

His fathers lit the dangerous coast

To steer the daring merchant home;

His courage lights the darkling port

Where every sea-worn sail must come.

And since he was the type of all

That strain in us which still must flare,

The fleeting migrant of a day,

Heat high, out bound for other where,

Now therefore, where the passing ships

Hang on the edges of the noon,

And northern liners trail their smoke

Across the yellow rising moon.

Bound for his home, with shuddering screw

That beats its strength out into speed,

Until the pacing watch describes

On the sea line a scarlet seed.

Smolder and kindle and set fire

To the dark salvaged of the night,

The deep blue tapestry of stars,

Then sheet the dome in pearly light.

There in perpetual tides of day,

Where men may praise him and deplore,

Toe place of his lone grave shall be

A sea-mark set forever more.

High on a peak adrift with mist,

And round who bases, far beneath

The snow white wheeling tropic birds,

The emerald dragon breaks his teeth.

Yet the assemblage of such passages does not constitute the whole we had anticipated. We are fretted by suggestions of beauty, not sufficiently compacted and outlined; and the feeling or hope is awakened only that the writer is still on the way to the elaboration of a work of real art. The precious material is here, but why does not the moulder shape it in a still more plastic manner? We are better pleased on the whole, some of our author's shorter lyrics, which are as rarely unique as they are inimitable in their originality. But it is time for Mr. Carman to train his undoubted powers to more certain ends, and prove his more ambitious and extended pieces by reducing the superfluous of florid phrase, and by more rigorous condensation, as by greater definiteness of outline. We have a warm side toward Mr. Carman, and much admiration for his muse, while we watch eagerly his progress with the public, and each mark of his success in his native, as well as chosen, art. And our judgment may indeed be defective but it is sincere and kindly; and let it be remembered, as one has wisely said, that sincere criticism ought to raise no resentment, because judgment is not under the control of will. If the writer had no appreciation, then had he been, in this case, at least wholly silent.

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"Mamma Is Here Now."

It was in the Pennsylvania station one morning last week. In one of the waiting-rooms sat there a tired, worn-looking man with a little boy of perhaps 3 in his arms. The little fellow's shoes were only half buttoned, his hair was awkwardly combed, and his stockings were awry. At the man's side sat two little girls of perhaps 5 to 7. Their frocks were buttoned crooked, but the younger had her hair combed in a pitiful attempt at curls. The man kept glancing at the clock. By and by the elder little girl spoke.

"Is mamma here yet?" she asked.

"Let us see," the man said.

The forlorn looking quartet rose and straggled out to the platform. There some men were just lifting a long pine box from a wagon. The man looked at it a moment.

"Come," he said "let's go back; mamma is here now."—Washington Post.

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Not So Pious As He looked.

A well-known Boston man wore a white yachting cap the other week, ignorant of the fact that it was the regulation cap adopted by the Christian Endeavors. He was accosted right and left by men, women, and young girls for information. He could not understand what it all meant till a stranger accosted him on Union street. His patience was exhausted, and he said: "No, sir; I can't tell you anything about it; but I will show you to a place where they sell two good drinks for a quarter, if you have got a quarter about you." The stranger vanished.

CAMPOR OF THE EAST.

WHERE THE SUPPLY COMES FROM AND HOW IT GROWS.

The Recent Talk of Cornering the Market—Japan is the Chief Producer of the Drug—Attempts to Renew the Depleted Camphor Forests.

The recent talk about cornering the Camphor market is of interest to all house-keepers and has directed more attention to camphor than that article has received for years. Few people who use camphor have a definite idea of where it comes from or how it is introduced. In olden times camphor was produced in Sumatra, Borneo, and other parts of the East Indies and China, but nowadays most of the crude camphor of commerce comes from Formosa and Japan, mainly the latter. The camphor tree is an evergreen of singularly symmetrical proportions and sometimes resembles a linden. Its blossom is a white flower, and it bears a red berry. It attains a high size and a great age, some of the trees being fully fifteen feet in diameter and upward of 300 years old. As venerable and graceful giants they adorn many of the temple parks in Japan and delight the eye by their bright foliage and constant verdure.

Much of the island of Formosa is still inhabited by savages, and as the camphor forests are found only inland, the production of crude camphor is attended with considerable difficulties and danger. The Chinese have occupied the coast line only, and the savages have made it hot for the Celestials who have tried to make explorations in the interior. The camphor of Formosa is not equal to that produced in Japan, and the quantities obtainable are uncertain. Japan now supplies the world with camphor to all practical purposes. The annual export of crude camphor from Japan averages about five million pounds, of which about one-fourth comes to the United States and the remainder goes to Europe. It has to be refined before it can be used. The process of refining has hitherto been carried on in America and Europe. Recently an attempt was made to refine camphor in Japan, and that country is now shipping the finished instead of the crude article.

The crude camphor is produced by boiling the camphor tree. The tree is cut up into chips, and these are boiled in an apparatus constructed for the purpose. The vapor from the boiler or still is conducted into a receptacle containing several partitions surrounded by cold water; in the sides of these partitions are apertures, opening alternately to cause the vapor to enter the divisions by a circuitous route. The camphor vapor condenses, and is deposited in crystals or grains upon bamboo screens, whence it is finally collected as crude camphor. This process is rough in the extreme and the apparatus most unscientific, but it has the sanctity of age, and will continue to be the most acceptable to the Japanese. The production of crude camphor means the destruction of the tree, and many districts are now denuded of camphor timber.

Only recently have the Government and the people taken steps to renew the depleted forests. Many new trees have been planted, and their growth is being carefully tended. Although the youngest wood hitherto used for extracting camphor has been about seventy or eighty years old, it is expected that under the improved management the new trees will give equally good results within twenty-five or thirty years. It is an interesting fact that the roots of these trees contain a much larger proportion of camphor than the trees themselves. Of course a large quantity of wood has to be used to produce only a small quantity of camphor, and it two hundred pounds of the former give ten pounds of the latter it is considered a good output. The remaining supply of camphor trees in Japan is very large, and it has been estimated that the trees belonging to the Government alone are capable of maintaining during the next twenty-five years the present average annual supply of camphor from Japan. In one district, Tosa, in Japan, there is a group of thirteen trees about one hundred years old, which it has been estimated can produce 40,000 pounds of crude camphor, and are worth as they stand about \$4,000.

After being boiled from the wood, the camphor is brought to the market in wooden tubs rudely constructed, and it is subjected to expert examination before being accepted by the foreign merchant, and is often adulterated and always more or less impregnated with water to increase its weight. The innocent native will try to make the "foreign devil" accept from five to twenty per cent. of water, or oil and water, in his parcel of crude camphor, and the purchaser must keep his eyes open. After the process of weighing the tubs are allowed to drain for some time, and the camphor is then repacked into stronger and better packages, ready for shipment to foreign countries.

The method of refining camphor is to place the crude in iron or glass vessels in a sand bath over a fire where the material melts, changes to vapor again, condenses, and forms in crystals in a compact cake or block. Books describing this process say that a small quantity of quicklime is added to the crude camphor to facilitate the operation, and also that the clearest cakes are formed in the glass vessels, which have to be broken to extract the finished camphor. Another process of refining, is to put the crude camphor into large steel retorts, whence all impurities, oils, and moisture are conveyed to a separate receptacle and the camphor vapor is passed into a specially constructed cooling chamber, where it condenses and falls in clear crystals or grains of pure camphor. These grains are called flowers of camphor, and in that shape are used for medicinal preparations and also for manufacturers, such as the production of celluloid.

The use of camphor has been largely increased and developed in the arts of recent years, and any serious corner in the camphor market would be felt in various ways.

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