

NOTCHES ON THE STICK.

PATERFEX ON LITERARY MEN OF THE PAST AND PRESENT.

Oliver Wendell Holmes and the Elements of His Character—The Story of His Success—Criticism that is Unfair—A Song by Hon. Charles B. Collins.

A good deal of honest mirth, lightness of humor, clear sense, and not a little of manly tenderness, pathos, and poetic beauty, came into this world with Oliver Wendell Holmes, on the 29th of August, 1809. I imagine he had a good deal of fun as a boy; for he continued to have a good deal of it to be the cause of a good deal in others after he grew up. The old home—the residence of the excellent Cambridge doctor, Alie Holmes—no doubt echoed to many a ringing laugh and was the witness to many a trick such as boys are quick to invent, and prompt to carry out.

He cannot be classed among the uneducated poets, (whoever they are, and certainly Burns and Bloomfield, and Clare and Whittier, had an education of some kind,) for he was born in the house of a lettered Cambridge gentleman, having books to the left and books to the right of him; and before he was done he had gone through the curriculum of Phillips Academy and of Harvard college, and had his head crowded with all the three and four-story learning of the time. He had all the degrees a poet needs; and one cannot go about Boston, all his days, and live in that classic atmosphere, and not be educated. Then he should be a doctor, like his father, and take big medical degrees, and become more than a country, or even city practitioner, but a great medical light, and a lecturer in that great college of whom I presume everybody has heard,—that was named after Dr. John Harvard. But everybody makes one mistake, at least, and he made the mistake of thinking for a whole year that he would be a lawyer. A man can learn enough of that in one year to keep himself from being caught in a legal snare, and not enough to ruin a doctor. After recovering from this error we learn "he devoted himself with ardor and industry to the pursuit of medicine."

Of course he was already a poet. A man who is ever a poet is one in the bud, as soon as he is born. For, ten to one, he makes verses before he gets off his bib and pinafore; and, if he doesn't, it is not because he don't feel like it. So we need not suppose, while he trod the hospitals of Paris, and Berlin, that he neglected the Boulevards, and Mont Martre, and all the poetic and historic haunts of those old European cities, in which he dwelt. Nor need we think that, while he made the acquaintance of the most eminent physicians and surgeons in the old world, he neglected to scrape a little acquaintance with the poets and literateurs. When he came back to America he knew France well, and he knew the French language, too, and, what is more, its literature.

In 1835, near the close, he was back in Boston, and young Dr. Holmes hung out his shingle, and when the big-bugs of the Hub were sick

"They sent for him—
"He physics, bleed, and sweats 'em."
He did not want for practice;—in the ordinary parlance, it became "large and lucrative." Halt the difficulty was solved when a man came whom people liked. There is no flaming sword in the way of a man who has two things,—ability and address. He had both, and used them. Consequently, he had more people to doctor than he wanted, and shekels rolled in. But his medical role was in the professorship of Anatomy in Harvard. When Dr. Warren stepped out, he stepped in. Many a young medico will cherish among his pleasant recollections the entrances to the class-room, with his quick step and alert manner of the author of the "Chambered Nautilus" and "Elsie Venner." Many a joke did the "autocrat of the breakfast-table" crack at the expense of the young fraternity.

But we must not be too biographical nor too bibliographical; nor need we tell about his earlier poems in the college paper at Harvard; nor how he made a fine stroke, while yet a callow youth, in his ringing song, "Old Ironsides."

Tear her to tattered ensign down,
Long has she waved on high;

Nor how his longest poems were metrical essays,—"Poetry," "Terpsichore," and "Urania"—and were written to be delivered before college and literary societies; nor how he was among the first to start the "Atlantic Monthly" and to contribute to it; nor about his famous series, "The Autocrat," the "Professor," and the "Poet," at the breakfast table, which made his fame world-wide and justly so. Lo! these are all written in the chronicles of the scribes of American literature.

Dr. Holmes was the laureate of societies and occasions, and many of his poems served a timely purpose, and will not have the interest hereafter they had at first. He has written a great deal of temporary, and moderate verse; but he has written some that is exquisite, and that will, we predict, live as long as we read poetry at all and delight in elegant English,—such poems as—"Old Ironsides," "The Last Leaf," "The Chambered Nautilus," and his two magnificent hymns, among the finest in all our collections.

Holmes is a poet of mingled humor and

sentiment, full of sweetness and geniality. His style is artistic, and remarkable for brevity, point and sparkling brightness, and exquisite grace and finish. Some can say: "His lyrics ring and sparkle like cataracts of silver, and his serious pieces arrest the attention with the most genuine pathos and tenderness." The blending of the humorous and pathetic in him are felt in his poem, "The Last Leaf." One hardly knows whether to laugh at the comical appearance of that odd old man; or weep at his desolation and loneliness. We compromise, with the tribute of a smile and a tear.

Dr. Holmes was not a man who was liable to "lose his head," to use a common phrase, nor to be carried off his feet. He waged a gentle war on humbuggery. Nor was he of the stuff out of which pure idealists, enthusiasts, mystic and martyrs are made. Indeed, he was impatient of these things, and the blue orthodoxy of Calvinistic New England, had many an arrow from his quiver. Yet he had a devout spirit, and there was in him a strain deeply religious, as it was also deeply human.

Beers says in his book on American literature: "He had the sharp eye of the satirist and the man of the world for oddities of dress, dialect, and manners. There was a good deal of tonism or social conservatism in Holmes. He acknowledged a preference for the man with a pedigree, the man who owned family portraits, and had been brought up in familiarity with books, and could pronounce 'view' correctly. . . . with the rest of society he was disposed to ridicule the abolition movement as the crotchets of the eccentric and the long haired. But when the civil war broke out he lent his pen, his tongue, and his own flesh and blood to the cause of the union. The individuality of Holmes' writings comes in part from their local and provincial bias. He has been the laureate of Harvard college and the bard of Boston city, an Urban poet, with a cockneyish fondness for old Boston ways and things—the Common, and the Frog Pond, Faneuil Hall and King's Chapel at the Old South, Banker Hill, Long wharf and the tea-party and the town crier. It was Holmes who invented the playful saying that 'Boston State House is the hub of the solar system.'"

Holmes was for many years the friend and associate of men of letters, and as Lowell describes it at their meetings would make the "rockets" of his wit "curve their long ellipse." Longfellow, Lowell, Agassiz, Felton, Emerson, Alcott, Whitier, and many more were as the companions of his youth, and their going before him made his pathway lonelier. He too, has gone; but he has left his imperishable contribution to our literature, and the memory of a wholesome and useful life behind him.

We have in April "Munsey" a certain amount of "asseverated" criticism, in which the alleged critic is as curt as a hotel clerk or a railway official sometimes knows how to be. Though he has not demonstrated his critical right and ability, he has raised a question in some minds at least, whether he can be a gentleman. We suppose no gentleman treats with wholesale contempt anything but the contemptible; and, especially he never abuses in print a lady who certainly has never done him harm, and whom we believe worthy of better treatment. He is under the cover of a convenient anonymity, and seems merely to have sacrificed every consideration to smartness. Such an effusion would deserve no notice but that in the popular magazine where we are sorry to find it. A correspondent writes with the just indignation a generous nature feels when he gets the sense of meanness: "I have today the Easter Munsey. On page 120 is a brutal, uncalled for and mean slur on Sophie M. Almon Hensley. The little 'fiste' dog of a 'penny-a-liner' critic says he has never heard of her before, and trusted he never would again. He puts in a few lines of a poem. You will be indignant, as I was—as anyone must be—at a cur who will deliberately and wantonly speak thus of a lady in a magazine that goes all over the country. He need not have praised if he did not want to, but a gentleman would have said nothing. These book reviewers want to be 'smart Alecks,' and say cutting things which gratify their small souls. When you see the magazine you can judge the cur who wrote it."

They who would regard themselves as quite intallible critics, who feel constrained not to spare, or who can never utter praise but with a damning qualification, may profitably read and ponder some recent sales of wisdom from that clever Scotch-Englishman (are there any more Scotch-men?) Andrew Lang. So may they who are afraid to lift their voices for fear they may not say the right thing, or say it at all. Here is a critic, among many other vocations, and this is what he had recently to say of criticism:

"Lord Cockburn begins his 'Life of Jeffrey' by calling him 'the first of English critics.' The words arouse the critical mind to thought. If Jeffrey, with his very limited knowledge, with his yet more limited taste, with the blank places in his perceptions, the numbness, as it were, of many of his sensory nerves, if he, the assessor of Scott, the hammer of Wordsworth, the enthusiast for 'The Paradise of Quakeries,' if he be the first of British critics, is it worth while to be a British critic at all or to read British criticism? It is a fact that among Jeffrey's reviews of poetry I remember none so enthusiastic as his review of 'The Paradise of Quakeries.' As a mere humbler reviewer of Dame Criticism, the

"Paradise strikes me as a very belated, weak, and cheap imitation of Pope."
"But people may say Jeffrey is not the Prince of Criticism. I don't think he is, de jure, but he certainly wore the crown. And if not Jeffrey, who is the rightful Prince? If one thinks of Dr. Johnson, who also wore the purple, one remembers, alas! his treatment of Lydidas, and his general usage of Gray. If we cast our eyes on Mr. Matthew Arnold, we cannot forget his preference of 'Enoch Arden' to all Lord Tennyson's poems; his opinion that Shelley's letters outshine his songs; his apparent inability to admire any contemporary—except Miss Ingelow. To my mind, Miss Ingelow has never had all her reward of renown; still, 'there are degrees.' As a critic, Addison is too remote, though a taste which went right about Milton and 'Chevy Chase' can seldom have gone wrong."

"Perhaps poets are the best critics, but then one recalls Coleridge on Tennyson's metrical gifts, and Wordsworth's 'rather marked inability to see more than a pretty play of heatatenism' in Keats, or in anything—not his own. We observe Burns in a wistful admiration of Aikenhead, and Scott (quoting quite seriously) Joanna Baillie with Shakespeare, and Byron holding higher than need be the banner of Pope above such Claudians as Coleridge and Wordsworth and himself. Where we find knowledge, sensuousness, power, in a critic (as in a great contemporary) we find the want of balance, consistency, and of 'quaint freedom from excess.' Where, in brief, is the faultless critic? Who sees literature steadily, and whole, and without personal or other bias?"

"The young critic, to whom I would tenderly address myself, may reflect on these facts when he feels inclined to be cocksure. A thing may be good, though not good for him; just as Lydidas is good, though not for Dr. Johnson; and Wordsworth, though not for Jeffrey. I know no more natural temptation than that which whispers to each critic that he is right in every case. Yet we see that our batters (or our better) were, O young men! were very often wrong, and we, too, may be fallible. Really, when we reflect on it, one wonders that we have the courage to damn a bad novel or a minor poet. The tale may be a 'Richard Fevelei,' the poetaster may be a Keats or a Wordsworth."

"There is a profane tale of Charles Baudelaire bidding some of his very careful with some hideous 'little soul sea or void Coast' or 'feth.' 'He may be the right one!' I think of this when a new poem or novel 'comes under my lash.' It seems very dull, dirty, pompous, postmodernistic, affected, but it may be the right one! Keats was, as the right one, so was Wordsworth, so was Shelley, so was Tennyson, and how little our critical fastness knew it! They never recognized 'Garisabel,' the critics. Their failure seems as impossible as if you did not see sunrise, or hear 'all the angels singing out of heaven,' but they were blind and deaf. Scuthey 'could not see it,' I am not quite sure that Lamb could."

"The subtlety of Nature exceeds the subtlety of man," says Bacon, and the manifold subtleties of literature are to be manifold for the versatility of any individual critic.

"We all do err, more than seem; insinivimus omnes. Mr. Browning's later works may be his best; I feel afraid to say 'No.' Lord Tennyson's dramas may be the most priceless jewels in his crown. In fact, James Jarver de rien! I feel quite disgustingly fallible; I wonder anybody ever listens to any of us—not that the public really cares very much for what we say. Still, do let us be careful, especially the young ones. I would willingly hope that they are always quite right, and utter the verdict of the future. Still, they are human, and there is an awe in responsibility. Not that I am conscious of ever having made a critical mistake myself, even when I differ from them; that is one reason, among others, why I doubt even their infallibility."

After all, though everybody is often wrong, one reads criticism. One reads it, as Mr. Arnold drank wine, because one likes it. One is disposed to hear the response which a work evokes from a reflective, sensitive, and educated mind. It may be a jarring dissonance, or it may be a pleasing cadence. One is curious to hear, one is charmed or vexed, as the case may be."

We have from the author the following song, set to music and published by Ira W. Shaw, Milfordville, Penn. The writer is Hon. Charles H. Collins, of Hillsboro, O., and his stanzas—which appear also in his volume, "The New Year comes, My Lady,"—are entitled:

Good-bye; A Farewell to Ireland.
Good-bye to the Island.
Green Erin, good-bye;
To mist of Killarney
The blue of the sky;
To inlets and havens,
To rocks on thy Coast,
Thy true-hearted people,
Of nations the boast.
Good-bye to Cork harbor,
Where navies may ride
When storms stir the ocean
In anger and pride.
As fogs gather round us,
'Mid tempest's harsh roar,
As ship leaves the clif, my heart is on shore.
And faith is unshaken,
That yet the red hand
Of Vengeance will loosen
The chains from the land.
O where is the siren
With Liberty's smile?
Oh why has she slighted
This sea-circled isle?
O sleeping or waking,
Wherever thou art,
The tears that are flowing
Appeal to thy heart.
No Freedom then hasten
The treasure to save,
And Erin will trample
On tyranny's grave.
The signal is given,
The flag at the mast,
The farewells are spoken,—
With many, the last!
The ship has weighed anchor,
The soul breathes a sigh;
In sorrow and silence,
O Erin, good-bye!

Mr. Collins gives an account of the genesis of his poem: On a steamer in Queenstown Harbor, familiarly known as the Cove of Cork, were a number of Irish emigrants bound for America. Steamers lie in the offing, and passengers are taken out on tenders to the vessels. The flags of the various lines are hoisted at the point of embarkation, and when the tender has started with the passengers the flag is taken down. When at other vessels is due her flag is run up, so that outgoing passengers may know what steamer is in the offing, that they may be ready to board it, as their tickets indicate both the line and the vessel they are to take, and the port of its destination. In leaving Queenstown, there were many Irish people who went from that port. There were others who had come down the Channel from Liverpool. As night came on, there were a number of

women and some old men and boys, crouching a weird refrain, indicating sorrow at leaving their beloved country, the home so dear to them, and deploring the sad necessity which compelled them to do so. One boy, who was bound for Philadelphia had a remarkably fine voice, and was shrewd and quite intelligent. Gathering from him the feelings actuating the emigrants, I went forward to the binacle, light and jotted down the song in a somewhat ruder form than that in which it now appears. They sung it often on the ship. Afterwards it was published, changed to its present form, in the Hillsboro Gazette. Thence it found its way into the three volumes I published, at last attracted attention of music publishers, and now goes its rounds as the latest Irish song; and the publisher, at least, is pleased with it, and writes that it is a success among the people, of all nationalities, where he resides." We felicitate the worthy author on whatever of vogue the air set to it has given to his song.

PATERFEX.

WAS A PROFITABLE GHOST.

The Queer Story of What Happened in One of the Maine Lumber Camps.

Job Remick of Otis, Maine, claims to be the only man who ever slept by the side of a bear all winter without knowing it. Job is a farmer-lumberman, who took a crew of choppers to the headwaters of Union River last December for the purpose of getting out spool stuff for the Eddington factory. As they expected to stay several months, a good camp had to be put up cheaply and quickly as possible. The site which Job selected filled every condition. The camp was placed at the foot of a steep, stony ledge, with logs to form three sides of the structure, while the fourth side was of rock, which served the double purpose of chimney and wind-proof wall. Job, who combined the duties of cook and camp boss in one person, and was obliged to get up early and go to bed late, made a little bunk for himself next to the ledge, while the men slept in a common field bed at one side of the camp.

It was not long before the cracks between the logs and a big seam in the rock were chinked with mud and moss and the winter's work was started in earnest. Strict camp discipline was enforced. The cook and teamsters were up at 4 o'clock. Every morning at 5:30 breakfast was ready, and at 6 all started for the woods, where they worked, with half an hour's rest for dinner, until dark, when they took supper in camp, played seven-up until 9 o'clock, and went to roost in the hemlocks.

The last thing Job did every night before pulling in the latchstring was to fill the fireplace with hard-wood logs, which kept the camp warm until morning. It took a week or two to get the frost out of the ledge at the back of the camp, and when the stones had ceased to "sweat" the men began to bear strange noises, like a giant moaning in vain, which seemed to come from the recesses of the ledge. These sounds, which started after the big fire was put on at night and ceased before daylight, and were never heard when the men were up and about, were at first thought to be due to gases and water panned up in crevices of the ledge; but as the winter advanced and the groans grew to snarls of protest—like the talk of a sick Norwegian who is trying to swear in English—the choppers came to the conclusion that the camp was haunted, and began to rehearse the names of their fellow townsmen who had been murdered or died from violence. After an impartial canvass and a careful comparison of voices it was decided that the groaning ghost was the spirit of old Ira Sprague, who had wandered to these hills three years before after bears and had never come back to tell how he fared. As soon as the author of the noises was named every chopper and teamster quit work, leaving Job and the goblin to keep camp. New men were hired from an employment agency in Bangor, and though Job tried to explain the groans by saying they were due to frost in the hills, the secret was soon common talk, and again the camp was empty of everybody but Job and the ghost.

Adopting the homeopathic idea that like cures like, and that spirits distilled are the best remedy for spirits distilled, Job hired his third crew with the understanding that in addition to regular wages every man was to receive a gill of new rum at the close of his day's work. So between men going away for fear and new men coming in for solace, the crew was kept good natured and time jogged along until the latter days of March. One night after the men had turned in and the homed owls were crooning a lullaby above the sleeping camp, Job heard a scratching and clawing among the rocks by his side, and holding his breath to learn what was coming next, felt something drop down and strike him in the face. It was a large, heavy object that felt hairy and warm, like a stuffed army blanket, and as Job could determine by the dim camp fire it bore a striking resemblance to a bear. When he rose up to get a better view the visitor gave a savage growl and dropped from the bed to the floor, where it stood revealed as a full grown sea bear, with a \$15 pelt on her back and a \$5 Sate bounty on her ears.

The choppers and teamster, aroused by the noise, came on with axes, pocket knives and clubs to dispatch her at once; but Job warning them to go easy, threw a blanket over her head, and then all grappling in with bedding and coats for fenders, she was soon tied fast, with a muzzle on her nose and rope handcuffs on all her legs. Using sticks for crowbars they dug out the



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Jack—Didn't Links dine at your house last night?

Tom—Yes; I met him on the way home, and he came up and took pot luck with me. Jack—Was it anything like jack-pot luck I had the night before?

Sarcastic.

"What does it remind you of when these homely Muglet girls wash their faces?"
"I don't know. What?"
"Irrigation of the p'ain."

Consistent Fatality.

"I was just dying to see it."
"Yes?"
"Yes; and when I saw it it was perfectly killing."

Trifling With Science.

"What made that X rays lecturer so mad?"
"Somebody worked him with a piece of boneless codfish."

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