

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, MARCH 14, 1896.

NOTCHES ON THE STICK.

PATERFEX DISCUSSES VARIOUS LITERARY TOPICS.

Wagnerian Music and What a Young Lady Thinks about it—New Books—The Home Journal's Anniversary and What It Brings to the Memory.

Is noisy applause the only public expression of appreciation, that the critic of a Springfield, (Mass.) audience should take the listeners to task for impassiveness under the spell of "Lohengrin," with its splendor of scenery, and musical entrancement? The clapping of hands, the vivas, the stamping of feet, and all the thunder of the pit may have their place, after the hon mot of the clown with the smutted face as the utterance of superficial applause; but it is quite imaginable that a sympathetic cultivated company of people—such as we may suppose the prominent citizens of Springfield to be—should listen in unbroken silence, touched by the wand of such music as rouses the soul to noble conceptions by strokes of majestic art. Then the true applause is given in silence, and rapt attention, and feeling not so quickly spent, as denoted by the breath more deeply drawn, or the half audible sigh. Would we stamp our feet after the "Messiah," or "Saul"? Would we clap a prayer? We are fast coming to it, judging by the conduct of some audiences. Even "Sweet Home," or "On a Stilly Night," may be taken in silence by the sincerest listener, and there is no rule to forbid the homage of a tear. Shallow applause is a very vulgar, conventional institution, which should disappear from the place where it does not belong.

It may not be uninteresting to our readers, some account of a young lady's impressions of classic music, as conveyed in a letter to her friends at home. The recent advent of Walter Damrosch in Springfield seems to have formed an epoch with her:

... The Damrosch Opera company are to be here to-morrow night to present grand opera; and, extravagant though it may be, I am to hear them. ... The greatest Wagnerian singers in the world, and that wonderful New York Symphony orchestra of seventy people is a rare chance. There are two hundred in all, including the orchestra and choruses, and I expect something grander than I have ever thought of before. It is all in German; so one needs have a pretty understanding of it all before going, in order to appreciate it. I found some things at the library, so I have an idea of the Wagner music, and the story of Lohengrin, which is doubtless the most famous and popular of all his pieces. ... This is a great event even for Springfield,—as the grand opera visits only the largest cities,—and the sale of seats has been wonderful. Not a square foot of room is left unsold. ...

Do you want to hear about "Lohengrin"? I am full of it. I only wish I could talk it to you. ... To begin with, let me tell you something about the opera. The composer, Wagner, you have heard of,—one of the greatest of operatic writers. This opera is based first upon the search for the Holy Grail; and the sacred cup is guarded and protected at Mount Monsalvat by a company of knights, of whom Parsifal is king. The search for the Holy Grail is the foundation of another opera called Parsifal. Lohengrin is the son of Parsifal; and the mission of these knights is to aid innocent ones in distress. ...

First I must tell you of the Orchestra of seventy-five pieces,—and it was the grandest music I ever heard. Before the curtain went up at all, the prelude was the musical interpretation of the whole thing. It began with a low, mournful recitative of flutes and violins; then gradually the other parts filled in, and it grew exultant, and finally burst into a perfect storm of wild, weird music,—common, so critics say, to Wagner in music. The first rising of the curtain showed a broad meadow near Antwerp, where the scene is laid. Out beyond the meadow stretched a beautiful lake, while in the foreground are the tall trees; and under the largest—the Oak of Justice—on a throne, sits King Henry of Germany, assembled around him the nobles of Brabant. ...

The costumes of glittering armor were dazzling; with the stage setting and the orchestra below, they made a scene like fairyland. ...

Beside the King is also Prince Telramund or Frederick, whose offer of marriage has been refused by Elsa, the Princess of Brabant, so Frederick, who wants to have revenge, marries Ortrude, a woman with some magic power, and she transforms Ortrude, Elsa's only brother, into a swan. In the first act Frederick is coming forward to accuse Elsa of the crime. She is sent for, and the King commands her to stand forth and deny the charge and prove her innocence. So she appears, and declares her innocence, and tells of a vision she has had, in which a knight appears, promising to be her champion. Frederick promises to meet in equal combat anyone who may come forward to champion her. At the Herald's first call nobody appears; so again the call is sounded, and away in the distance on the lake appears a beautiful swan, drawing a boat in which stands a Knight resplendent in shining silver. He is a champion for Elsa, and he offers to fight for her, if she will become his wife when he is victorious; but under one condition, that she never will ask his name nor whence he came, under the penalty that he must leave her. To his she promises; and then comes the duel, in which he of course conquers Frederick, but generously spares his life; and then he is hailed as conqueror by all. Thus ends the First Act. ...

werp, and in the background, the gates of the town. The windows of the Palace are brilliantly lighted, and the sound of horns and trumpets is heard; for they are celebrating the betrothal of Elsa and the strange Knight. Outside the palace, on the steps, sits Ortrude and her husband Frederick. Their plot to ruin Elsa, and thus obtain her dukedom, has failed, and Frederick is in a rage at Ortrude, that she did not exert her magic and help him to conquer, and thus save him from disgrace. So they again plot revenge; and Ortrude knows it she can induce Elsa to ask of the Knight the forbidden question he will have to leave her. ...

So Frederick goes aside, and Ortrude tries to work her scheme. Soon Elsa appears on the balcony of the Palace, and when her song sounds forth so joyful Ortrude begins to weep sadly, and Elsa, so happy cannot bear to see her distress, and comes down to comfort her, offering her forgiveness and telling her to array herself and come with Frederick to the wedding on the morrow. Now Ortrude begins to plant her evil seed by hinting that she ought not to marry a man about whom she knows nothing—not even his name. At first Elsa is steadfast and true; still the mood remains, and the next day she is uneasy, and when they are about to enter the church, Ortrude, under the pretense of friendship, takes Elsa inside and hints that the Knight is a sorcerer, and at the same time Frederick accuses the Knight of witchcraft; but the great crowds of attendants become indignant, and so the bridal procession moves on, and as they enter the church the curtain falls. ...

During the interlude, the music of the orchestra expresses the merriment of the wedding festivities, and that famous Wedding March is played. Then, for the first part of the Third Act, we see the wedding chamber: in the centre of the back ground, a richly adorned bed; and, near the open bay window, a couch; and on each side, open doors. The bridal procession, accompanied by the most heavenly music, enters the room; the long train of lady attendants, with lighted candles held aloft, lead Elsa in from the right; and the king and nobles leading in the Knight on the left; then, when they reach the centre of the stage, the King leads the Knight to Elsa, and the attendants all withdraw. And now Elsa, in spite of her husband's warning, yields to her curiosity, and asks the fatal question about his name and home. He begs her to be silent; yet she entreats: "How sweetly sounds my name by thee when spoken. Yet may I never hear the sound of thine!" Hardly has she uttered the words when Frederick rushes in to assassinate the Knight; but Elsa is quick enough to pass him his sword, and he slays Frederick. Then the scene changes again to the meadow, as at first. The body of Frederick is brought before the King, and then the Knight comes forth to acquit himself. He declares his name and home: "Sent hither by the Holy Grail I came its Knight;—my father is Great Parsifal, and Lohengrin's my name; He explains that the mission of the Holy Grail is to aid those in distress, but only on condition of his concealing his origin. Then in the distance again appears the swan, coming to take him away. ...

When it comes near we have one of the most wonderful scenes. Lohengrin transforms the swan into Gottfried, Elsa's brother, and bids him champion her; and then a beautiful dove flutters down to take the swan's place, and draws the boat with Lohengrin away; while Elsa, overcome with sorrow, sinks down lifeless. This, in brief, is the story. ... Oh, but the music and singing I can't tell you about! It was all in German, and, remember, all singing, not a word is spoken. I had a libretto, with the German on one side and the translation on the other, so I could follow it all right through. ...

Speaking of the applause: This city has the reputation of being very cold and critical, and not much given to noisy demonstration; but, really, at that opera, after one of those exquisite scenes and that music, sweet as anything could be, it seemed wholly out of place to break out clapping, and people did not feel like it. I read that during a performance of the Opera, Parsifal, the vast audience were perfectly silent,—not a sound could be heard. During the intermissions men walked about quietly, but from beginning to end not a sound was heard. It would not have been appropriate. And so here I did not think lack of applause denoted lack of appreciation. ...

His instinctive love of beauty, and the finely artistic nature of its editor, Mr. Ralph H. Shaw, of Lowell, Mass., appear in every feature of "The Middlesex Hearthstone," the February number of which is before us. It illustrates local scenes, both by engravings and letter-press, and gathers many a bit of reminiscent and legendary lore into its garland. To some of its readers the Old Stone Bridge at Westford, and the pleasant vista on a Middlesex County road, will seem familiar. What-ever is here, pleases the eye and taste, whether it be the weirdness of touch in "The Lone House" by O. W. R., or A. B. Hervey's journeyings amid the "Haunts of Robert Burns;" "Home Ties," the story; Adelaide Cilley Waldron's poem "In Sorry Times"; or "Our Monologist," by the editor. One thing we reproduce which seems especially precious to us, remembering, as we do, the low, musical tones of the author, as he recited it while sitting at evening in the room in which we are now writing. It is re-printed in "The Hearthstone" from the "Independent."

FROM THE HILL.

I left the noisy stage at noon,
There at the thorp, two leagues away;
And 'tho' it was a garish day
And I could not arrive too soon
Walked hither for the simple sake
Of the delight that I should take
In passing through the quaint old town
Without the noise of wheel or hoof;

Such quiet lay on every roof
On which this shaggy crest looked down.
The stage went on apace, and soon
Its heavy rumble died away,
And there was naught to rouse the day
From its repose of hollow noon
Save, now and then, the sudden caw
Of some bold crow and 'tho' I saw
Nor bird, nor perch, the tinkling song
Of some shy thrush. It seemed as 'tho'
It were a charmed town, and so
With noiseless feet I walked along.
Two leagues, by many a house and barn
By many a window, many a door,
By many a sun-lit threshold floor
Wind-swept as is an open town,
I came, and still I reached this spot
No human form my glances caught;
No one was at the wayside well,
At any window door or gate;
The town to me was desolate,
And silent as a leant bell.
And now I look o'er it, who see
The long white way by which I came,
The way I Via Pacis name,
And beautiful it is to me;
Brown, shadowed homes in many a row,
A picture softly etched below,
No sound from it can reach my ear;
It will remain a charmed town
So long as o'er it I look down.
From all the peace and quiet here.
—Ralph H. Shaw.

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the poet with the practical wisdom of the

man of the world; and, being mature, he is

able to convey in his crisp, marrowy sen-

tences, the result of much observation and

experience. Here are a few of his briefer

notes:

"The world still genial prizes the gen-

eral traits of Burns and Lamb, and has not

yet forgiven Byron's cynicism."

"The wild-goose is the greatest traveller

extant, but he is only a goose after all.

When Jefferson was in Europe he not only

seized upon ideas which were to form a

part of the American Constitution, but he

brought back valuable seeds to enrich our

agriculture."

"The rattlesnake has compelled the res-

pect of man. There is nothing of a sneak

about this animal."

"Burke, Coleridge, and DeQuincy excite

a faint suspicion at times that fecundity

can annoy as well as sterility."

Here are one or two, at longer range:

"Among a man's personal belongings

the pocket-knife holds an intimate and

valued place. A veteran friend of the

kind becomes the nucleus of many associ-

ations. It acquires a familiar and affection-

ate physiognomy. One learns to play

with it in a caressing way as with some-

thing sentient. Even if there were no im-

mediate practical use for it, its absence

would be felt. Sometimes it is invested

with a double interest by being a gift from

relative or acquaintance. A knife kept

through many years seems in some subtle

way to become identified with one to acquire

all kinds of well. Its preservation suggests

stability, continuity, permanence. One

certainly hates to part with this faithful

companion, and when it is retired from

wear and tear, its successor seems like an

intruder and stranger."

"Thirty-six years ago I surveyed from a

commanding eminence at Round Top,

Texas, an imperial prairie exhibition,—

billows upon billows of grass, clumps of

trees, flashing little rivulets, and an un-

utterable zone of horizon. In later years

I witnessed at Big Lake George, Florida,

the milk-white apparition of day at her

first toilet; and still later I saw, in passing

from the main hall of a steamship plunging

its way from Savannah to New York, the

sun going down on one side of the vessel in

a conflagration of color, and on the other

side the moon—

"Sweet regent of the sky"—

reporting for its appointed ministry. And

somehow those bits of recollection confuse

the calendar and troop together, as if there

were no dates for them or me."

The volume is luxuriously printed, and

bound in blue, with gilt top and lettering,

as if done for the pleasure of such as delight

in elegant and leisurely things. Mr.

Collins is the next younger brother to Hon.

Charles H. Collins of Hillsboro, Ohio.

Our town is in a furor over the refusal

of Mr. Fred'k Flood,—the Principal of

Hamden Academy to graduate a class of

pupils who have fallen far below the re-

quired standard, through apparent neglect,

and loose practices and principles which

have gradually developed. We think no

wiser and braver thing has ever been done

here; and, though Mr. Flood may be dis-

carded, it is to be hoped that his conscien-

tious protest against cribbing, and all

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educational slop work, may bear in future its legitimate fruit; opening some eyes, at least, to the fact that no education is greatly to be preferred to the kind some seem to be acquiring. We lately ascertained that, in a certain college, (not in the east of course!) there was found a majority in favor of the use of "Cribbs," as against the conscience and common sense of the few who sided with the faculty! Was this what the poet meant when he said,—"Freedom is a noble thing?" Is it possible that the more false and shallow we become, the more brazenly independent we can be. Tell us, some one, how we can save our boasted virtue from becoming a monstrous vice?

The semi Centennial number of the "Home Journal" (N. Y.) must revive in the breasts of its numerous readers the most vivid recollections and the tenderest emotions of Lang Syne. Who that ever knew "Nat Willis," and the author of "Woodman Spare that Tree," can read these rich pages, and mark these portraits and illustrations, without smiles and tears! We have been taken back to that day when first we read "The City Pigeon," and "The Shadows lay along Broadway," and to the early charm and grace of the "Pencilings by the Way," which are not yet declined in my esteem, perhaps because I have not lately read them. But who shall ever grow weary of "The letters from under a bridge," or of dear beautiful "Glenmary."—Willis' early home in the New York wild, before ever "Idlewild" on the Hudson was thought of. Here all these things are before us again! The honest, genial, ever-smiling face of George P. Morris—royal and brotherly in its stamp—looks out upon us from this first page. And here is "Undercliff," his home at Cold Spring, in the Hudson's haunted heart. And here is Willis, after his face had been marked by suffering and care; but there is the self-same curl trailing over his brow, as carefully trained as that of Disraeli. They called him "Top," till he felt galled; but this—what there was of it—was only the straw on the still current of an essentially noble nature. One thing is certain, it was no practice of his to speak ill of others. His daughter, Imogen (now Mrs. Dr. Eldy, of Cambridge, Mass.) relates how on one occasion when at table in the home at "Idlewild," she spoke her mind about some guest recently departed, her father looked up and said quietly: "My dear, can't you find anything pleasant to say of Mr.—? Remember that every one has some good qualities, if we only look for them." That word "pleasant" was in a considerable degree indicative of Willis' character; he was eminently a pacific, sunny-hearted man, with a native elegance of style and manner, that needed to be rectified by no artifice of etiquette.

Here we have many a glimpse of these two brotherly men, and partners in literature and the publishing business, given by men and women who knew them, or by members of their own families. How we should like to share all with the readers of PROGRESS! "The difference between Morris and Willis was that the one could not subside into a smile, or the other rise to the hilarity of a hearty laugh. Willis showed his merriment and amusement by the curves of his lips and the light of his eye; Morris had the heartiest and most musical laugh I have ever heard, on or off the stage—an infectious laugh that set the hearer laughing, even if he had not heard the jest." So writes A. Oakley Hall, a friend who knew them through many years. O! Willis he says: "I loved to hear him talk. He had a low sweet coo of a voice, and was so scrupulously exact in expression and graceful in bearing that the casual acquaintance, or the unthinking, called his manner affected." We get glimpses of him going and coming between "Idlewild" and the city on the steamer Mary Powell, pointing out to some casual acquaintance some noted or beautiful places along the

shore, and giving the legend or history of the same; bargaining for his country estate in the rough—a ravine, picturesque, with tangled shrubbery,—and taking the unpoetic owners disparaging, descriptive phrase,—"an Idle Wild, sir,"—for its poetic name. But the saddest glimpse is that we get through Mrs. Ida Putnam, the daughter of Genl. Morris: "When father died in 1864, Willis came and stood beside him. Looking on his loved partner, he said: 'There lies the best friend I ever had!' Poor Willis! as I looked at his feeble trembling form, the tears rolling down his sensitive face, and then on the calm, grand, peaceful countenance of the dead, the words which father had written in memory of John W. Francis, jr., son of the eminent physician, involuntarily came to mind:

'He was the pulse-beat of true hearts,
The love-light of fond eyes;
When such a man from earth departs,
'Tis the survivor dies.'"

We have letters and portraits of contributors and editors, during the days of Willis and Morris, and since: Morris Phillips, brought up with them, their successor, and the present proprietor, with his son; George Barry, Howard Hinton, Barry Gray, T. B. Aldrich and George W. Howe, former editors, or associates; Edgar A. Poe, associated somewhat with Willis; The Nestor of Journalism, Chas. A. Dana; Joseph Howard, Edmund Clarence Stedman, W. Fearing Gill, Robert Bonner, and others. Then, there is the present force and faculty; Benj. R. Tucker, associate editor; Rev. Richard Putnam, literary critic and reviewer; Albert Matthews (Paul Siegel) essayist, Mrs. Frank Leslie and Miss Mabel Duncan, foreign correspondents; Hillary Bell and I. S. Isaacs, Musical and Dramatic Critics; Madeline Vinton Dahlgren, Frank G. Barry, Stephen Fiske, Lee Harby, Isaac B. Choate and William B. Chisholm, poets; down to David Glassford, Business Manager, and the Manager of the Composing room, Owen Kindelon. Ah! but can the "Home Journal" be fifty years old!

PATERFEX.

He Had Faith.
A young man about 25 years old was sitting in the waiting-room of the Brush street depot with a year-old baby on his knee, and his alarm and helplessness when the child began to howl were so marked as to attract attention. By and by a waiting passenger walked over to him with a smile of pity on his