

## NOTCHES ON THE STICK.

HERBERT COCKIN AND HIS MUSICAL FLOWING RHYMES.

His Dashing Style of Verse—Ought to be Popular in This Age—Gentleman Dick of the Grays and his Jingo—The Pretty Fancies of "The Sighting of the Firs."

The dash-and-go style of verse—in the production of which Rudyard Kipling is the prodigy of the last half of the nineteenth century, at least,—is amazingly popular. It just suits, with its fantastic jingle, and its business-like and martial verve, the spirit of the time. It has all that is expressed by the energetic slang, "Git thar!" and the multitude who like it like it immensely. Shock your Longfellow and Tennyson-bred man it may,—run all your previous notions of taste into the ground it must,—but if you will but listen to the song of the new siren it captures you. Therefore, we are surprised that the muse of Herbert K. Cockin has not been more popular in Canada. Are we not a thrifty, energetic, busy, martial, dream-despising, and sham-ignoring people? Then why have we been occupied so fully with the fiasco and fancifulness of the muse, while we have heard so little of a man of his pith and calibre? Is it true he is a little rough-shod in his rhymes,—willingly to strain a point in the matter of poetic license; and it is so with Kipling also. But there is a whole world of "jingo" in "Gentleman Dick O' the Grays," and something else; so we in these borders ought to know and like him. The trouble is, perhaps, it is difficult to tune that kind of harp since Macaulay gave the pitch; for even Aytoun seems but a cheaper kind of Macaulay, as Crabbe, as to form, seems a homelier sort of Pope. However this may be, if our dull blood creeps ever so slowly we should get a thrill from "Gentleman Dick O' the Grays," when it comes to sheer fighting, and the record of his valorous deeds.

Down the valley their grey-coated infantry stepped,  
In a whirlwind of fury their batteries swept,  
But the Grays lit the charge in the bright morning  
light,  
With the French on our left and the sixth on our  
right,  
And swift as the bolt from the cloud lightning-  
riven,  
The Muscovite flank on the centre was driven.  
But, ere we could reform our grape-batter'd ranks,  
Th' Vladimir regiment burst on our flanks,  
And 'twas back, cut and slash—little parrying  
there—  
If the Russians were devils what demons we were!  
Right nobly our handful disputed the field,  
For a Briton can die! 'tho' he never can yield!  
Three Russians beset me; at last I fought free,  
Made much of my charger, and turned, God! to  
see  
A Vladimir horseman charge Bulstrode Hayes,  
And, 'midst the infuriate yells of the Grays,  
Deliver cut six—and Hayes dropped from his horse,  
And his ears—written lips were the lips of a corpse.  
Too late for his life—that had gasped its last  
breath—  
But in time, by the Gods! to avenge him in death;  
O'erprick of the spurs in the flank of the Grey,  
Three rounds, and I held the fire Russian at bay,  
And, crash! as their trumpet sounded "the  
wheel,"  
From his skull to his teeth I had crimsoned the  
steel.

This is good old Homeric, first-class  
fighting, such as a classic taste insures us  
to; but we are more apt to read about it  
than to see it, for the modern dynamite  
style gives no opportunity for individual  
bravery. "The death of 'Baraboy,' 'The  
Veteran's Tale,' and 'The Red Hand of  
O'Neil,' are also spirited martial pieces.

It was as the "Blacksmith," in the Toron-  
to Week, that we first became acquainted  
with Mr. Cockin's muse. Couplets and  
quatrains were then sparks from his anvil,  
and it may be that some of his wind and  
dogged when he swung his hammer. He could,  
for instance, strike out the following,  
which might make even the prince of pun-  
sters (Tom Hood, of course!) open his eyes  
in astonishment:

Here lies another saint, so good! so pure! a true  
And charming pupil of La Fontaine, who  
When far waxed strong, and strength of last grew  
faint,  
Called in the church, reformed, and died a saint.  
And yet, this man was one of those old blinks;  
Whose hearts are harder than the Plymouth Rocks,  
Where pilgrim fathers fell upon their knees,  
And, rising, fell upon the Aborigines.

So gratuitous a slur on that venerable  
company might better have been left out of  
the author's book.

That Mr. Cockin is a son of Britain, and  
that British scenes and life are deep in his  
esteem, may be read on many of these  
pages. English names come to have a  
pleasant sound in our ears as we read of  
"Chellow Dane," "Jesmond Dane," or the  
still more familiar "whirl edale," "St.  
Hilda." So he sings of some home land-  
scape in such a simple sincere strain as to  
make us care for it too.

A far view with loving eyes  
The lovely lanes of Heaton-Rise.  
'Tis there I see the Edra Road,  
Where once the Edra River flowed.

The Hill of Herne—like some sweet dream,  
O'erthrown, as 'twere a transient gleam  
Of days gone by, when from his cell  
The hermit heard the rattle of his bell.  
His face I see, with unkempt hair,  
And 'neath the beard in silent prayer,  
Whilst softly in the twilight dim  
I hear the nun's sweet vesper hymn.

Far, far away—beyond the sea—  
Thou loved one, so dear to me,  
Enshrouded within my loving heart,  
Thy memories never can depart.

All frauds, hypocrites, scallawags, and  
humbugs in general, may learn what the  
author thinks of them, by reading this  
book,—especially under such titles as  
"Judas Iscariot," "Lying Epitaphs,"

"Public Funerals," "The Man in the  
Park," "Pomp De Scallawag," "Dr. Tan-  
ner's Fast," "Scampskowski," "The Mis-  
sionary Ship," and "These Degenerate  
Modern Days." He serves up the old saw  
about ministers children in this style:

The pompous old parson walked down the High  
Street

To order new boots for his clerical feet;  
Whilst leaving his measure the bootmaker's heir  
Passed by, with his feet—as per usual—bare.  
"An! quoth the hope of the church, in disdain  
"The shoemaker's son, the old saw's true again!"  
"Good sir," said the cobbler—uncommonly riled—  
"Don't quoth that old saw of the shoemaker's child,  
For it shoem-kor's children are always worst shod,  
Then the brats of the parson know least about God!"

Yet he is all caustic, but can touch a  
sympathetic and tender chord; as he does,  
in "Angel Eustace," "Baby Clarence,"  
"Ebel," "Bereaved," "Little Gretchen," "At  
Eveningtide," "At the Visarage Gate," etc.  
A favorite with us is the poem entitled—  
Violet.

There is mischief in your eye—little V! little V!  
There is danger in that bearing, I am sure;  
Though your looks be even saintly, yet language  
can but faintly

Tell the difference 'twixt your acts and looks de-  
maure.  
For instance there's the baby—you kiss him and,  
it may be,  
That you never thought to do the youngster any  
harm,  
But oft his yells and flinching tell of surreptitious  
pinching  
And the impress of your fingers on his tender little  
arm.

And I often think you try—little V! little V!  
To be a mother, in your own peculiar way,  
To dirty little Molly—that fractured one-eyed dolly  
Whom dearest auntie gave you on your natal day.  
Oh, how you smack and spank her, and then point-  
ly thank her,

As the humor takes sometimes your ladyship,  
No wonder that to Mar, the milkman said he'd  
scurry

Seen the hequel of 'er for a regular little clip,"  
But I know of actions sly—little V! little V!  
Toward the humble author of your presence on this  
earth,

Who in his peaceful study oft ponders whether  
should he  
Be stern or laughter-loving at thy fascinating mirth  
How well does he remember you night in calm Sep-  
tember

When you saw your active parent spring high into  
the air,  
And you know such worldly rising, and the poet's  
agonizing

Was the best pun you had left within his study chair  
Yet when thou wert like to die—little V! little V!  
He knows the weight of grief that lay upon each  
heart.

And turned the coming morrow into utter woe and  
sorrow  
For those who strove to stay the grim destroyer's  
dart.

And when Death's bolt miscarried, and the angel's  
cooking tarried,  
What joy within our walls when thy plaintive little  
cry

Told us the God of gladness had pity on our sad-  
ness—  
Had touched in peace thy garment, little V! little  
V!

Mr. Cockin evidently writes his verses at  
a heat, and spends little time with the file  
after his molten fancies take form. His are  
the busy times of the newspaper press, and  
he has little leisure, and perhaps little in-  
clination, when this style has to be turned  
in the quiet of the study. Yet there is a  
musical freedom in such lines as the follow-  
ing, that testifies the ear, while the mind  
is pleased with the sentiment:

The Sighting of the Firs.

Hark! I hear the dark wind-singer, and the night-  
gloom gathers fast  
As I linger at the casement, dreaming o'er the faded  
past;

All those bright scenes unforgotten, I behold at  
such an hour,  
Days when life seemed full of gladness—born of  
childhood's happy dower.

O ye hours of careless boyhood, midst those scenes,  
far, far away,  
When the dawning of each morrow seemed more  
bright than yesterday!

And my heart is sad within me, and the tear of  
anguish burns,  
As I listen in the gloaming to the Sighting of the Firs.  
Where are all those bygone faces? they whom I  
have loved and known?

Do the sons of men still greet them? Or has nature  
claimed her own?  
Do they tread the paths of travel? or do now their  
salty eyes

Gaze in rapture, 'midst the ransomed, on the vales  
of Paradise—  
Where are never tears nor sadness, where the storied  
bliss never lowers.

O'er the white-robed ones whose vision is of other  
kind than ours?  
This thought that steals upon me; this  
chord of sadness stirs,  
As I listen in the gloaming to the Sighting of the  
Firs.

One—ere you had passed to manhood, girded on  
his maiden sword—  
Would you know its crimson sheathing? Seek the  
treacherous Afghan blade.

Some, I know, have reach'd the harbor, and tears  
of kinship yield  
Tribute to a martyr-hero, slain in Africa's mission  
field.

Distant O'rient, Australasi, and the West Coast—  
each can tell  
Of life's fatal fever ended, of the way-worn sleeping  
well,

And across the waste of waters calls one sweet  
voice—even here,  
As I listen in the gloaming to the Sighting of the  
Firs.

From the peaceful hall of silence, whence pale mor-  
tals shrink aghast,  
Comes to me a vision salutary of the long departed  
past,

She, who long years has slumbered neath a clois-  
ter'd southern pie—  
Surely I can hear those accents, surely view that  
pensive smile!

Take me, gentlest, best of Mothers, lead me once  
more by the hand  
As in childhood's days you led me—nearer to the  
better land;

O, it may be idle dreaming, and mayhap fond  
fancy errs,  
Yet I catch one glimpse of Heaven in the Sighting  
of the Firs!

On the whole, our author, with his whole-  
some scorn of the things that are vile and  
mean, and with his equally wholesome love  
of the things that are sweet and pure, with  
the occasional beauties of his verse and its  
evident shortcomings, may give his reader  
—if not too fastidious,—a pleasant and  
profitable hour. (Toronto: C. Blackett  
Robinson, 1889.)

The punster, is not necessarily the shal-

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"Some Strange Corners of our Country,"  
by Charles F. Lammings, (Century Co. N.  
Y. 1892), is the book for globe trotters  
who know all countries but their own, and  
is a surprise to the uninitiated reader. We  
need not go to European or eastern lands  
for the venerable or the marvellous; for  
Horace Greeley's advice will apply here—  
"Go west, young man!" This attractive vol-  
ume describes and illustrates the majestic  
scenery of Colorado, Arizona, and New  
Mexico, and the life of the Pueblo and  
Navajo Indians, and assures us that nothing  
in Alpine or Himalayan regions can be  
more worthy of public attention. The  
author says in his introductory chapter:  
"We read a vast amount of the wonders of  
foreign lands; but very few writers—and  
still fewer reliable ones—tell us of the mar-  
vellous secrets of our own. Every intelli-  
gent youth knows that there are boomer  
and throwers in Australia; but how many  
are aware that there are thousands, of ab-  
origines in the United States just as expert  
with the magic club as are the Bushmen?"

All have read of the astounding feats of  
the jugglers of India; but how many know  
that there are as good Indian jugglers with-  
in our own boundaries? The curious  
"Passion Play" at Oberammergau is in the  
knowledge of most young Americans; but  
very few of them have learned the startling  
fact that every year sees in the United  
States an infinitely more dramatic Passion  
Reality—a flesh and blood crucifixion,—  
wherein an ignorant fanatic represents in  
fact the death of the Saviour. How many  
young Americans could say, when some  
traveller recounted the exploits of the  
world-famous snake-charmers of the  
Orient,—"Why, yes, we have tribes of  
Indians in this country whose trained  
charmers handle the deadliest snakes with  
impunity," and go on to tell the astonish-  
ing facts in the case? How many know  
that there are Indians here who dwell in  
huge six-story tenements of their own  
building? How many know that the last  
witch in the United States did not go up  
in the cruel smoke of old Salem, but that  
there is still within our border a vast do-  
main wherein witchcraft is as fully believed  
in as yesterday is, and where somebody is  
executed every year for the strange crime  
of "being a witch!" The subjects thus  
mooted, and others beside, are elaborated  
in the twenty one succeeding chapters, and  
in such a manner as to enlist the reader  
who has once looked into the book. It is  
illustrated by about forty eight fine wood-  
cuts, and a colored frontispiece, showing  
that marvel of the most rudimentary of  
looms, the No. 1. Navajo blanket.

The punster, is not necessarily the shal-

lowest fellow alive, although the pun is  
not allowed to be the brainiest sort of wit.  
Tom Hood, who was apt at more serious  
things, was stuck as full of puns as an  
apple full of cloves; and old Dr. John-  
ston, for all his contempt—for weak minds,  
admitted,—"If I were punished for every  
pun I shed there would not be left a puny  
shred of my punnish head." But there is  
a difference in the quality of puns, as of  
poems; and we cannot but applaud Hood,  
when, hearing a very loquacious lady com-  
mended for her piety, he reports, "yes, her  
mag-piety." Neither will we sneer at the  
celebrated punster—though we forget his  
name—who, upon being requested to make  
an extemporaneous pun, asked for a sub-  
ject; and when some one of the company  
suggested, "the king," responded, "Oh, the  
King is no subject!" The punster may  
have his apologist, and if any one can read,  
"He went and told the sexton, and the  
sexton tolled the bell," without satisfaction,  
he is not to be envied.

We count it a fortunate circumstance  
when "diamond cuts diamond," and wit  
"gets the drop" on wit. We particularly  
enjoy it in the case of him who, having a  
sharp and savage tongue himself, is put to  
sudden silence by an unexpected rejoinder.  
A joke that went against Dean Swift, for  
instance, would have as much salt, to us  
at least, as one would that was made by  
him. His returner reverence was once  
taken down by a blacksmith, whose ser-  
vice he sought at a late hour. It happened  
that, having dined at some little distance  
from Laracor, his residence, he was return-  
ing on horseback at evening. It was  
pretty dark, and just before reaching a  
neighboring village his horse cast a shoe;  
so, unwilling to risk his animal by contin-  
uing his ride he lighted down at the house  
of one Kelly, a blacksmith, and said, in  
his most pompous manner: "Pray, sir,  
can you shoe a horse with a candle?"  
"No," replied the son of Vulcan, "I cannot."  
Presently, however, he added, "But I can  
with a hammer." The genial, and often  
sharp, but never bitter, "Autocrat," got his  
"come-up-pence," from a "foeman worthy  
of his steel,"—John G. Saxo. How could  
you have brain fever? queried Holmes.  
"It is only strong brains that have brain  
fever." Whereupon Saxo rejoined—"How  
did you find that out?"

Natural Mistake.  
"My good man, you shouldn't be sleep-  
ing out doors like this," said the belated  
citizen.  
"None o'er clatter now, or I'll take you  
in."  
"Beg your pardon. I had no idea that  
you were a policeman."

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## WRITING AND THOUGHT.

The Direct Knowledge of the Senses is the  
Main Thing.

Perhaps the most suggestive event of the  
meeting of the British Association was the  
address delivered by Prof. Flanders  
Petrie on "Man Before Writing," in which  
he described the formation of ideas prior  
to speech and the development of art prior  
to language. Our knowledge of the first  
must, of course, be founded mainly upon  
observation of children and of animals, in  
the former of whom ideas are plainly en-  
tangled to the words by which they after-  
ward come to be expressed, while in the  
latter they are altogether independent of  
them. For the second, Prof. Petrie took  
his illustrations from the pictorial writing  
of the ancient Egyptians, which, as it was  
presumably or certainly prior to the dis-  
covery of alphabetical writing, remains as  
a monument of intelligent expression apart  
from words.

On the basis thus furnished he rests the  
somewhat sweeping conclusion that the  
present generation is "drunken with writ-  
ing" that we "let it override the growth of  
our minds and the common use of our  
senses," and that "the servant, speech, has  
come to be mistaken for the matter,  
thought." He goes even further than this,  
and expresses his belief that writing is but  
a hurtful hindrance when it takes the place  
of the direct knowledge of the senses, and  
that the senses cannot grow or feed the  
mind when the fetters of writing are allow-  
ed to hold them back from the living touch  
of nature. He cites the Baconian aphorism  
that words are the money of fools, but the  
counters of wise men and believes that  
the prevailing trust in writing has clearly  
deadened the memory of the senses, which  
is always more ready in those who do not  
read, and that in some measure it has even  
deadened the senses themselves.

The assumptions underlying this argu-  
ment will appear very startling to many  
people who would probably be said by  
Prof. Petrie to be living under the yoke  
which he condemns, and who have been  
accustomed to regard an incapacity to read  
writing as the direct of all misfortunes, and  
even as an insurmountable barrier against  
the attainment of any high degree of men-  
tal activity. Dickens, who in many re-  
spects must be regarded as a fair exponent  
of the views of the man in the street, has  
no better way of emphasizing the intellec-  
tual darkness of his vagabond than to de-  
scribe him as shuffling along, "unfamiliar  
with the shapes, and in utter darkness as  
to the meaning, of those mysterious sym-  
bols, so abundant over the shops, and at  
the corner of streets, and on the doors, and  
in the windows;" and he has not thought it  
necessary, keen observer though he was,  
to provide him with any additional acute-  
ness of sense memory by way of compen-

sation for, or consequence of his deficiency.  
It is always interesting to be confronted  
with a doctrine which runs counter to all  
ordinary prepossessions, and to be com-  
pelled, as it were, to turn these prepos-  
sitions over in the mind and to see what can  
really be urged in defense of them.

The widely prevalent belief quoted by  
Prof. Petrie that words are the instruments  
of thought, and that no thought is possible  
without language, is clearly one that must  
be abandoned. No lines can be drawn be-  
tween the thoughts of the animal, of the  
savage and of the child, and they are all  
as far as they go, independent of language.  
But it may safely be affirmed that no com-  
plexity or subtlety of thought is possible  
without words, or without words upon  
which usage has conferred precise and de-  
finite meanings, so that they are under-  
stood in the same sense by all who have  
legitimate occasion to employ them. If we  
conceive the idea of a dumb philosopher,  
who occupies him self in obscure thinking,  
it would be necessary for him to invent  
some symbols by which the gradations of  
his thought could be pictured to his own  
mind; and when the philosopher is not  
dumb, such symbols are supplied by the  
words which enable him to convey his  
thoughts to others and to receive theirs  
in return. An agricultural peasant may be  
a man of great natural acuteness, but as  
long as he is restricted to the peasants vo-  
cabulary of two or three hundred words  
there would be no channel through which it  
would be possible to convey to his intelli-  
gence a great number of facts and doctrines  
which are familiar to better educated people.  
It would be hardly possible, for example,  
to make him understand the undulatory  
theory of light and the consequences which  
flow from it, although his natural capacity  
might be quite equal to the task—London  
Times.

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