

Notches on The Stick

Appreciative readers can have become familiar with such books as "Fleurs De-Lys," and the "Romance of Sir Richard" but to admire the best of what they can find there; and yet this third volume, ("The Snowflake, and other Poems," by Arthur Weir, Montreal; John Lovell & Son, 1897,) is better than the first and second,—or so it seems to us. Mr. Weir shows he has not yet reached maturity, or his mark of power; but that he has a higher ideal of the poet's art before him, yet to be wrought out. Dignity and strength, united with severe simplicity, distinguish some of these poems,—"Entering Port," for example, and "Timor Mortis Conturbat Me," and "The Dedicatory Ode," on Sir John A. Macdonald, read at the unveiling of the monument at Ottawa; while others, like the initial poem, are elaborately, and delicately beautiful. He is direct and natural in his most effective utterances, and some of his briefer lyrics are very sweet and touching. Therefore we prefer them to his more ambitious pieces, because more evidently begotten of strong poetic feeling, they make to the heart an irresistible appeal; yet this is not said in disparagement of such excellent work as can be found in "The Snowflake," "The Masque of the Year," and "The Muse and the Pen." The first mentioned is a series of poetic pictures,—the form of verse being that of Shelley's "Cloud," and the imagery not unlike that in Bryant's "Sella," and worthy of comparison with that coldly sparkling work of its poet's later years. This poem, which lends itself to illustration so readily, made its first appearance in Christmas number of the Montreal "Star," accompanied by the work artist and engraver. "The Masque of the Year" had a similar adventure, in the pages of another Canadian Journal, at the holiday season. George Murray, of Montreal, in a recent review of this book, describes "The Masque,"—"It opens with a prologue from old Time, who is seated in the midst of a bevy of maidens, each of whom represents a month, and describes briefly her own peculiar character and office. "The New Year subsequently enters and speaks his speech, being followed by a chorus of the Months." We give one stanza; descriptive of March:

I am the month of unrest and yearning,
Of wild and untamable hatred and love.
I glide through the grove,
Calling on summer, so slow in returning,
I seek for the fruit, bud, leaf, blossom and all,
When they heed not my call,
The winds I unleash, which, like hounds on the scent,
Give voice round the farmsteads, and course o'er the moors,
With a hundred detours,
Till they leap on the forests, whose branches are rent.
I heap up the snowdrifts, bind firmer the streams,
And defy the sun's beams.
My heart throbs with hate, and all tenderness spinning,
With winter again I span heaven's blue arch.
I am passionate March.

We do not know that we can agree with the poet in this ascription of malignancy to the bluff old fellow but, at any rate the lines have vigor.

On the first appearance of "Entering Port" we thought it the noblest of the tributes to the lamented Sir John Tompson, and our impression is confirmed as we re-peruse it in this volume. It opens appropriately with the entrance of the funeral ship at the harbor of Halifax:

Hark, to the solemn gun and tolling bell!
What ship is this, dark as night or death,
Is entering port upon the sullen swell,
While an expectant nation holds its breath?

From many a threatening port the cannon gape,
Above her deck the flag of Britain flies;
Like some sad dream she comes, her sombre shape
Crushing the waves that in her pathway rise.

One of the Sea Queen's ocean wall is she,
Grim guardian of her honor; yet that prow
Ne'er upon nobler errand clef the sea,
Nor guarded Britain's honor more than now.

The following stanza we think especially fine and true:

As Truth led that strong soul wh'er'er it would
Onward through strife to honor without stain,
So is he brought through Ocean's solitude,
With but the billows for his funeral train.

We consider Mr. Weir equally happy in his memorial poem on the first great Canadian Premier:

Here, in the solemn shadow of these walls,
Wherein his voice long held the land in sway;
Here, where the cadence of the distant falls
Seems a lament for grandeur passed away,
Who, who have reaped where he had sown no bring

To him this thanksgiving,
This tribute to the unforgetten great,
That, for all time, men may revere his name,
And children learn the secret of true fame,
True greatness emulate.

The "Dedicatory Ballad," written for the unveiling of the monument erected by the citizens of Montreal to Paul Chomedey de Maisonneuve, is also so excellent we would like to reproduce it, but, being unable to give it entire, will not mar it by fragmentary quotation. We have marked

the closing stanzas of the poem entitled "Wild Flowers":

Oh, had I in Arcadia dwelt
I would have watched for every gleam
Of shoulder, as some maid svel:
Clove the clear crystal of the stream;
I would have followed in pursuit
Of artful nymph thro' tangled brakes,
And heard with joy the satyr's flute,
Whose melody soft echo makes.
And so, from earliest days of spring,
When the first flower lifts its head,
Till autumn, when the breezes fling
Broadcast the dying leaves and dead,
Through sensuous summer's golden hours
I roam the vast Canadian woods,
Seeking the wild Canadian flowers,
True nymphs of sylvan solitude.

More than a year ago the requirements of health caused him to visit southern California, and the impressions made upon his mind by the scenes of that sunny land are, in part, recorded in "Sonnets in California," "The Pool of Sant Oline" and "Winter in the South." Of the sonnets we select "Spring in the South."

Through the quaint southern winter without snow,
Without an icy blast or chilling air,
When the broad mesas arid lie and bare,
The Ismael cactus and the sage bush grow.
The golden orange bends the lithe branch low,
The sun flowers through the by-ways every where,
Palms wave, birds sing. The earth lies free of care,
Basking in skies one golden, cloudless glow.
Then come the rains, and in their cortège bring
Streams to the canyons, and to ranch and glen
Wild flowers and orange blossoms, wherein rides
The bee on golden zephyrs. Swiftly then,
Like wind-blown fire up the Sierra sides
A blaze of poppies run, and it is spring.

Here are two or three stanzas of "The Pool of Sant Oline":

Ere yet the Spanish cavalier
For this new world set sail,
Ere yet the padre came anear
San Gabriel's sunny vale,
Ere yet the thirst for gold drew men
Across the western hills,
I rippled down this rocky glen,
The happiest of rills.
The shadows of the spreading oak
Oft lay upon my breast;
O'er through the brown madrona broke
The bear upon his quest.
Past stary yuccas to my brink,
At many a crimson dawn,
The mountain lion came to drink,
And out a timid fawn.

The golden moments came and went
Of many a sunny year,
And still I rippled on, content
And solitary here.

Mr. Weir is Canadian born, but Scotland is the country of his forefathers; therefore it is not strange that he turns with tender longing to the "land of brown heath and shaggy wood."

Mid's upon miles of ocean
'Tis Scotland roll and me:
Its hills and dales I have not seen,
And scarce expect to see.
The homestead of my fathers
The keen ploughshare has torn,
And where the hearth once welcomed all
Wastes now the golden corn.

O Canada, my country,
My love for thee is deep!
Yet I fain would see the old church-yard
Where my forefathers sleep.
And fondly, ever fondly,
My heart in secret years,
That its songs may find a welcome
In the bonnie land of Burns.
Upon the Scottish leather
I opened not my eyes,
I cannot speak the sweet Scotch tongue,
Remote my pathway lies;
But Scotland, mother Scotland,
Though fate us twain may part,
I claim my heritage of thee,
For I have the Scottish heart.

We had marked for citation, an old favorite first seen in the pages of "The Dominion Illustrated Monthly," entitled "En Route," "The Tide," one of the finest short pieces in the book. "My Comrade" "Succor the Children," "Flowers and Fears" "A Little Maid," "Rosina Vokes," "To An Infant," "To A Picture," "The Kindergarten," "Gold Tresses," and "Hamlin's Mill." The last named poem wakens in us a responsive chord, and we will reproduce it for our readers;

Brightly the sun that summer day
Upon the charming scene was shining,
And warm the thrifty village lay,
Amid its silent fields reclining.
The river like a silver thread,
Wound round the hazy shimmering hill,
Till, plunging o'er the dam, it fell
In eddies down to Hamlin's Mill.

Along the pathway, through the grove,
Beneath the shady trees, we hurried;
The birds were twittering above,
While in and out the squirrels scurried.
We took the narrow road which wound
Through clearings that were smoking still;
And soon our merry chat was drowned
Amid the noise at Hamlin's Mill.

We stood within the sunlit room,
And watched the busy bobbin turning;
Then gathered round a jangling loom,
The flying shuttle's secret learning.
Across the mossy flame we crept,
Whose leaky sides their burden spill,
And stood beside the pond, where slept
The giant power of Hamlin's Mill.

Beside the ceaseless loom of fate
We stand and watch what it is weaving;
The warp is spun of love and hate,
The wool of merriment and grieving.
But far beyond earth's noise and dust,
There rules the one Stupendous Will,
The power in which His creatures trust,
As in the mill-pond Hamlin's Mill.

Mr. Weir is a resident of Montreal, and his poetry is one of the side issues of his life. Yet he holds the impulse and vocation of the muse reverently, and by sincere and conscientious work merits the esteem of his literary brothers and the favor and patronage of the public.

PASTOR FELIX.

HOW NOT TO CARRY THEM.

Various Ways in Which Canes May Become Sources of Danger.

"Any man who feels himself impelled to carry a cane or umbrella not in actual use in any manner except in an approximately vertical position by his side," said Mr. Glimby, "should at once hire a hall and go there and lock himself in alone, where he will not endanger the lives of his fellow mortals and where the damage done by him will be confined to the breaking of such wineows as he may stick the end of his umbrella through in his sudden turnings as he pursues his walk."

And yet, reprehensible as is the practice of carrying a cane or umbrella through the streets in any other than a vertical position, there are in this as in other crimes degrees of reprehensibility. The least dangerous of the wrong ways of carrying a cane is over the shoulder, with the point up, at an angle of about 45°. The man carrying a cane in that manner turning suddenly in a crowd is not likely to do much damage beyond knocking off a few hats.

A more objectional way of carrying a cane is horizontally under the arm, with the ends sticking out front and back. It is possible for a man carrying a cane in this manner to jab two people at once, route a considerable amount of ill-feeling and perhaps hurt somebody.

The man who carries through the streets a cane or an umbrella run through the straps of a valise with the ends sticking out is a dangerous being, for people cannot see this umbrella till they are very near to it. They might not know of its presence at all unless they should run over it, or the carrier should turn when they were close upon him.

But the most dangerous of all the careless or thoughtless cane or umbrella carriers is the man who carries a cane or an umbrella horizontally under his arm while going up a stairway; as for example, up the stairs leading to an elevated station. The point of an umbrella so carried is about on a level with the eyes of anybody following close and it is a source of great danger. There is but one thing for the follower to do if happily he shall discover the umbrella in time, and that is to give the man carrying it lots of room.

BEAUTY AND HEALTH TO FAIR WOMEN.

Miss Annie Patterson, of Sackville, N. B., Once the Victim of Nervousness and General Debility, Takes on the Health of Early Years.

Some remedies are nothing more than a temporary stimulant, and the reaction aggravates the disease. Where the system has become run down, and nervous debility in its worst forms have shown themselves, South American Nervine will cure. It strikes at the nerve centres and builds up the system by removing the real cause of trouble. Miss Annie Patterson, of Sackville, N. B., a lady well known in the Maritime Provinces, suffered terribly from indigestion and nervousness, and her case seemed incurable. She accepted South American Nervine without hope that it was any different to other remedies, but her words are, "I had taken only one bottle when my system began to take on the health of earlier years, and after taking three bottles I was completely cured."

HOW DICKENS WROTE.

The Novelist was Systematic and Methodical in His Work.

Stephen Fiske presents a most interesting picture of Dickens, his family and of "Gad's Hill," where he was a frequent and welcome guest, in the September Ladies' Home Journal. Of Dickens' method of work Mr. Fiske says: "During my visits Dickens was not at work upon a novel, but he shut himself in Fechter's chalet from 11 a. m. to 3 p. m. almost every day. This was another part of his methodical system. If he felt in the mood he would write an 'Uncommercial Traveller' article; if not, he would answer letters, read 'All the Year Round' proofs, jot down ideas, fill up the time with some sort of literary labor. This, he told me, was his discipline. The one room in the chalet was sparsely furnished, and had windows on all sides commanding quiet, pleasant views of fields and plantations. He seldom talked of his books, but one rainy day he showed me the bound manuscript of one of them, and told me his method of planning a story. Having selected a subject he would write down the name of the hero and surround it with queries: 'Shall he be rich? Parents or guardians? Defrauded of his property? An early love?' and so on with the other characters as they occurred to him. He always used blue ink, and so did Yates and Haliday, and the other writers of what was then 'the Dickens school.' They all called him 'Chief,' and he liked the title."

EASY VICTIMS.

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