

Notches on The Stick

Shoemaker, or Surgeon—Which?
Only an open door—let me but go,
I pine and still in my prison sit.
—The Captive.

The moralist who will hold the ethical scales to weigh the subsequent defects of his character, if he will consider mitigating circumstances at all, cannot leave out of his estimate these withering years of Coleridge's childhood. Insufficient food, a pauper's clothing, brutal, unsympathetic treatment, injudicious bathing, with wet garments dried on his back, tended to impair the gentle sensitive boy's spirit and self-respect, as well as his physical health. Those morbid conditions which induced the use of opium and which were increased by its use, (and to relieve intense pain most sufferers have recourse to anesthetic drugs), he owed to Christ's Hospital regimen. We do not wonder at much that followed, when he himself tells us that "full half the time from seventeen to eighteen was passed in the side-ward of Christ's Hospital, afflicted with jaundice and rheumatic fever."

Poor patient! It would seem that the first out-budding of his poetry was pathological! What malevolence did not have a hand in marring this son of genius? Even a paltry and mean disease rankled in his frame. "He had a remarkably delicate white skin, which was once the cause of great punishment to him. His dame had undertaken to cure him of the itch, with which the boys of his ward had suffered much; but Coleridge was doomed to suffer more than his comrade, from the use of sulphur ointment, through the great sagacity of his dame, who with her extraordinary eyes, aided by the power of glasses, could see the malady in the skin, deep and out of the power of common vision; and consequently, as often as she employed this miraculous sight, she found, or thought she found, fresh reason for continuing the friction, to the prolonged suffering and mortification of her patient. This occurred when he was about ten years of age, and gave rise to his first attempt at making a verse, as follows:—

"O Lord, have mercy on me
For I am very sad!
For why, good Lord? I've got the itch,
And eke I've got the tad!"

the school-name for ringworm."

His life became fantasy, and oblivious to all of outward present things, but gnawing hunger. This colored his day dreams; on his imagined Crusoe island he would eat a mountain of plum cake with a gusto no actual palate knows. A room with the furniture all edible, and he will eat out chairs and tables. Ah! what magnificent endowment—hunger and imagination! There is one unfulfilling joy, a new book! He can comfort himself with stuffing a hungry brain if he must starve a hungry stomach. The classics came to him, as by magic; folio, and quarto, he devoured them all, and sucked King street library dry. This was all of being, the quintessence of pure existence, "to crumple himself up in a sunny corner, and read, read, read," till in this peculiar intoxication his miseries for a season melted away. Not much wonder if a school seemed to him a more fitting torture institution than place of learning; nor matter to marvel at, if ambition and self-respect fled with the winds, and he was willing to sell himself cheap as the world seemed to count him, to a shoemaker, a recruiting officer, or anyone who would offer him an asylum from physical wretchedness.

"Near the school there resided a worthy and in their rank of life, a respectable middle-aged couple. The husband kept a little shop and was a shoemaker, with whom Coleridge had become intimate. The wife also had been kind and attentive to him, and that was sufficient to captivate his affectionate nature, which had existed from earliest childhood, and strongly endeared him to all around him. Coleridge became exceedingly desirous of being apprenticed to this man, to learn the art of shoemaking; and in due time when some of the boys were old enough to leave the school and be put to trade, Coleridge, being of the number, tutored his friend Crispin how to apply to the head master, and not to heed his anger should he become irate. Accordingly, Crispin applied at the hour proposed to see Bowyer, who having heard the proposal to take Coleridge's answer and assent to become a shoemaker, broke forth with his favorite adjuration:—*O! my life, man, what d'ye mean?* At the sound of his angry voice Crispin stood motionless, till the angry pedagogue, becoming infuriated, pushed the intruder out of the room with such force that Crispin might have sustained an action at law against him for the assault. Thus, to Coleridge's mortification and regret, as he afterwards in joke would say, 'I lost the oppor-

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tunity of supplying safeguards to the understandings of those who perhaps will never thank me for what I am aiming to do in exercising their reason.

Shades of Giffard and Bloomfield! might not the boy have been happier, had Bowyer granted him his way? But would Wordsworth then ever have come with his spark of genius for that mental tinder: There's a question! This wish went by; but there are new baits for heart and fancy. To be a surgeon, like as his brother Luke is becoming, seemed soon after a fine thing to him; and the Saturdays were red letter days, when he could hold a bowl or a plaster in the hospital ward, and dream maybe of some future Sir Samuel Coleridge, the eminent physician of his time. To this end now tended his extra studies; "he plunged headlong into books of medicine, Latin, Greek, or English; devoured whole medicine dictionaries; then fell from physic to metaphysics; thence to the writings of infidels; fell in love, like all embryo poets, and wrote verses." Of whatever stream he stooped to he was no shallow drinker; and his capacity, doubtless, neutralized many ill tendencies. But the period of manhood,—without the usual callowness and adolescence, but with peculiar and long-enduring weakness,—is setting in; new prospects, with reference to neither Crispin nor Esculapius, are opening out. He is destined for university and literary life; and, in February of 1791, enters Jesus college, Cambridge, where we shall find him in residence, with his wondering circle of admirers.

The roseate time came earliest here; and there was already a glamor and ambrosia in those evenings, when his intellectual kindred gathered about him to mark the incessant flow from lips that needed no alighting bees to anoint them with honey. Middleton, his friend at Christ's Hospital, had preceded him hither, and was at Pembroke college; so that the fame of him was all abroad in the domain of gownsmen, and the curious were apt to listen to him! Ah, says the glowing herald, but you will listen to him! He will hold you by the ears without so much as the putting forth of a finger. So, in the after hours, when the lexicons and text books are up piled, the eloquent scholar, whose mind is saturated with Aeschylus, Plato and Thucydides, will discourse largely on politics, sociality and divinity, or what you will. Perhaps the latest pamphlet of Burke, which he has at heart, will furnish the text of amplifications on the public weal more wonderful than the majestic periods he expounded. No need to appeal to the author quoted; Coleridge knows him verbatim, and can repeat him without let. "Christ's Hospital boys," we are told, anticipated his doing great honor to their body. This he eventually did by his practical fame, and might have done by his college honors, had he but been as well versed in mathematics as in the classics. In his first year he contested for the prize for the Greek ode, and won it. In his second year he stood for the Craven scholarship, and of sixteen or eighteen competitors four were selected to contend for the prize; these were, Dr. Butler, late Bishop of Litchfield; Dr. Keate, late headmaster of Eton; Mr. Bethell, and Coleridge. Dr. Butler was the successful candidate, and Coleridge was supposed to stand next. But college honors were contingent on a good mathematical stand; this Coleridge, who hated mathematics, despaired of.

Middleton also became discouraged with his failure, after hard study to obtain the classical medal, and a fellowship going with it. He was started out into the world, wherein he won his successes; and with the close of their college life, the two friends were sundered, Coleridge used often to go over to Middleton's room in Pembroke college, to converse or read with him. "One day he found him intent on his book, having on a long pair of boots reaching to the knees, and beside him, on a chair next to the one he was sitting on a pistol. Coleridge had scarcely sat down before he was startled by the report of the pistol. 'Did you see that?' said Middleton. 'See what?' said Coleridge. 'That rat I just sent into its hole again. Did you feel the shot? It was to defend my legs that I put on these boots. I am frightening these rats from my books, which, without some precaution, I shall have devoured.' Middleton had doubtless practiced so long that

the rats were assured of a tolerable safety.

Various circumstances conspired to unsettle Coleridge, and to determine his removal from Cambridge. The trial and expulsion of Frend,—whose doctrines he imbibed,—aggrieved him with a sense of injustice. A more liberal tendency was airing itself, both in politics and theology; and a generous nature like that of the poet would never prompt him to join in the hunt, and cry of heresy and sedition. Strong partisanship with the Liberalism and Unitarianism prevailing in his college, began the alienation of his sympathies. Beside this he got in debt, and, as if that were not enough, fell hopelessly in love with one Mary G—, proffered himself and was rejected. His manner of getting in debt at Cambridge illustrates somewhat ludicrously the easy imprudence of his character in all business transactions. "He was no sooner at his college, than a polite upholsterer accosted him, requesting to be permitted to furnish his rooms. The next question was 'How would you like to have them furnished?' The answer, prompt and innocent enough, was, 'just as you please, sir,'—thinking the individual employed by the college. The rooms were therefore furnished according to the taste of the artisan, and the bill presented to the astonished Coleridge." The expenditure so ill begun, was increased in various ways, until at the time of his removal, he owed the sum of one hundred pounds.

We know not whether it is the must of this damp weather that has sickened us, or Prof. Wm. C. Wilkinson's article in the Bookman, but our gorge is decidedly turned. What does the man mean? This man writes of Keat's "Ode to A Nightingale"—a classic, which for over half a century has given delight to the most refined readers of English, and passes unquestioned from the dictums of foremost critics—in such manner as seemed suited to the London Quarterly when it was resolved at all hazards to suppress an upstart. This might do for the fire-side with friends who can make allowance, or as a bit of heavy humor for the class room but he gets up thus before the public, really it is time to cat-call him down. He even presumes to show how the first stanza may be mended, though, as a whole, he considers the Ode hopelessly amorphous, and unrelated to the subject. Prof. Wilkinson:

My heart sinks to a deep delicious lull
Of beating, and the pulses in my veins.
Die into motions gentle yet not dull.
That silent sing nepenthe to my pains,
And soothe me into sympathy of lot
With thee, O thou unconscious happiness,
Vocal invisible among the trees,
In some melodious plot,
Of beechen green, 'mid shadows numberless,
Singing of summer in full throated ease

His "heart sinks?" Verily, and so does the heart of his reader! I pass it around to the company—to you—to you—to you—to the five thousandth—and say: Would you accept this as an amended version of the first stanza? "Sing nepenthe, etc." Shade of Oliver Goldsmith! What a precious pendant! How things divine come mended from his pen! We have known the Professor as a maker of artificial flowers, but we doubt if he has produced anything more papery than this. He thinks in his article he may have to reckon with the class of "Keats fanatics." He will have to reckon with all people of sentiment tempered with reason. We call the whole thing a singular instance of analysis run wild and of criticism belated; and it leads one to question what the author expects to accomplish by it. If the lovers of poetry have not admired worthily they are not likely to be turned from their preferences by such trifles as this. A sublime piece of critical assurance has not before been perpetrated, and we may not see his equal for many a day.

Dr. Charcot, the celebrated French savant, and experimentalist in hysteria and hypnotism, is to be commemorated by a statue in the Salpêtrière Hospital. The work, by the sculptor Filguier, is nearly completed, and will soon be placed where it may be inspected by the Parisian public.

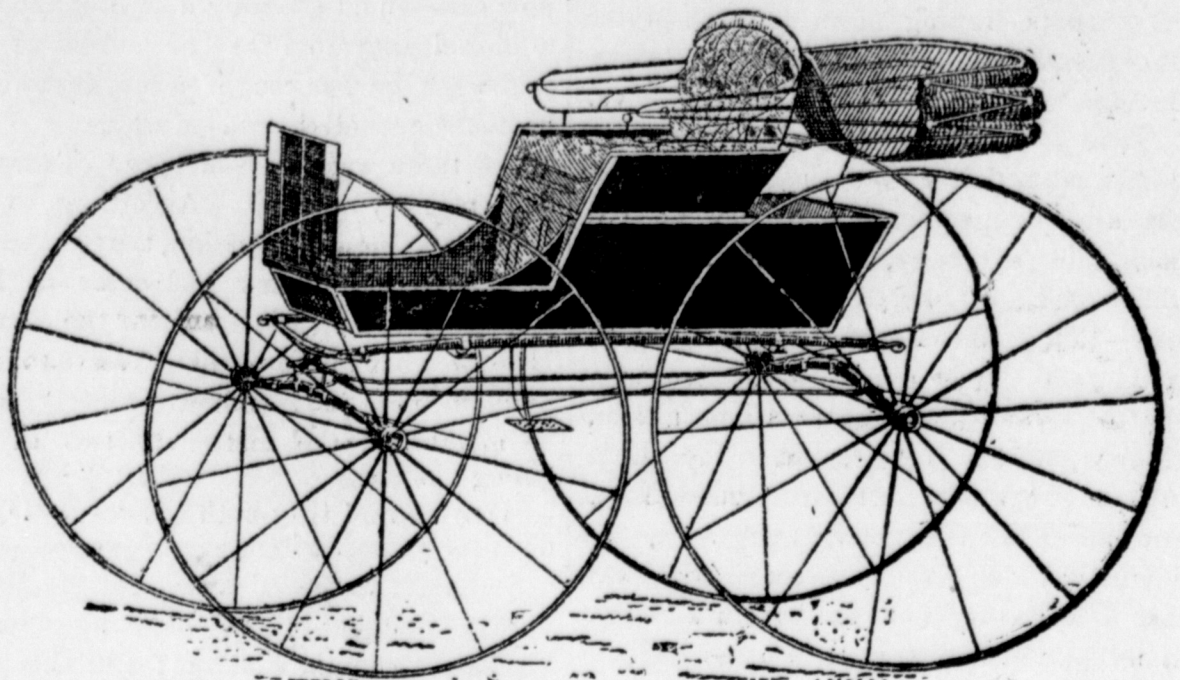
We have been favored with a copy of "The Register," formerly published by John E. Woodworth at Berwick N. S., but now under the conduct of Miss Aimee Huntington, late of the "Hants Journal," at Windsor N. S. Miss Huntington is a lady of fine talents, and has already demonstrated her editorial ability. "She is a daughter of the late Richard Huntington, who for many years published the Yarmouth 'Tribune.'" We extend to our confere our best wishes and congratulations.

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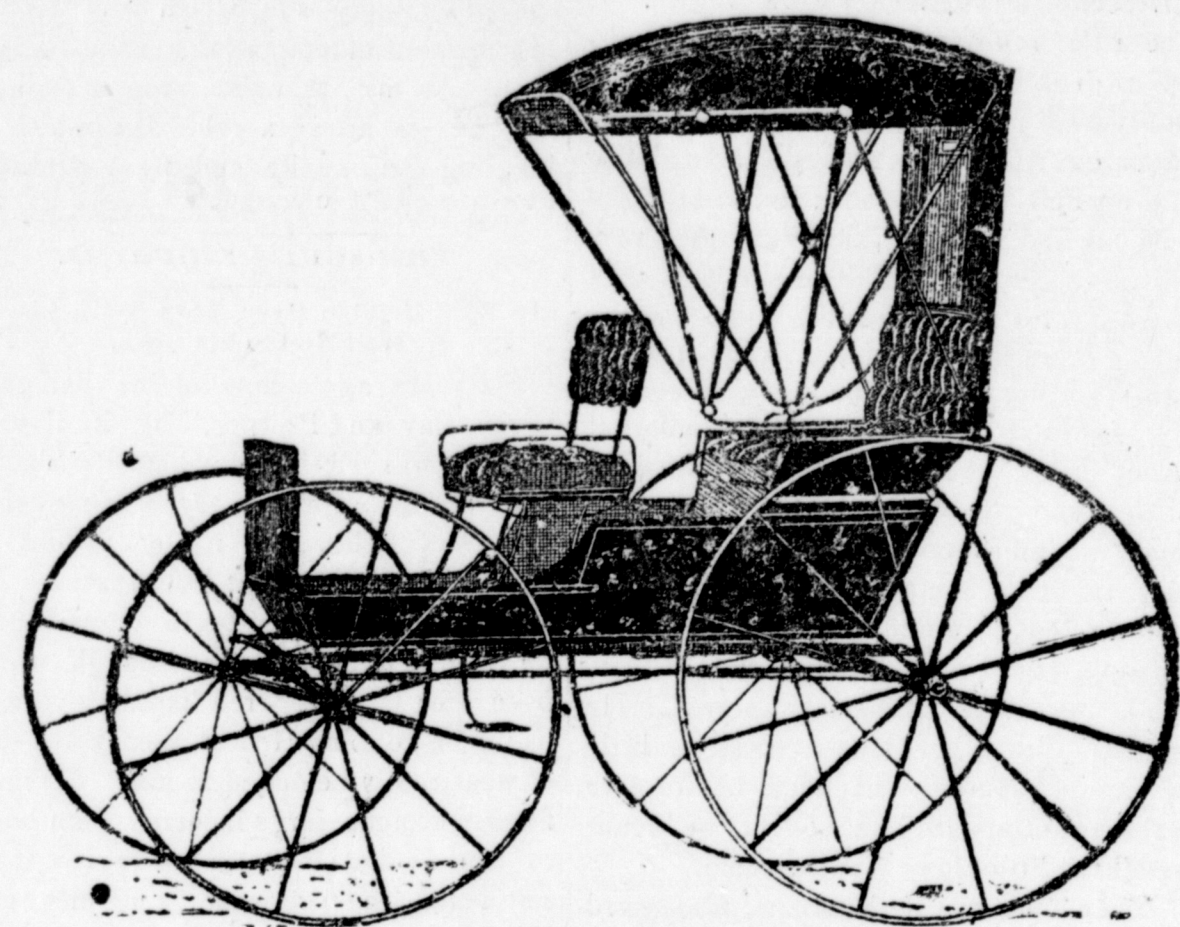
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The July Bookman contains a carefully written, and appreciative review of Prof. Charles G. D. Roberts History of Canada, by Mr. Francis Sherman, the poet, of Fredericton, N. B.

The great and prevailing book, last month judging from its standing in the market, was James Lume Allen's "The Choir Invisible," "Quo Vadis," keeps its vogue, and is not far behind. They are both of excellent quality.

Mark Twain has started for his vacation on the continent, having completed his literary labor in London.

PASTOR FELIX.

"DOMESDAY BOOK"

Two Rare Volumes Preserved at Westminster.

The Domesday Book, often referred to, and perhaps very little understood, consists of two volumes, preserved in the Chapter House at Westminster, London. The volumes are written on vellum, and are of equal size. The larger contains 382 pages, in folio, written in a small hand in double columns. The smaller book is a quarto, has 450 pages, and is written in a larger hand. Why the volumes are called 'Domesday' is still in dispute. Some say that it is because the returns therein preserved were first deposited in one of the crypts of the Winchester Cathedral called Domus Dei, the House of God, and that Domesday is a perversion of Domus Dei. But the Domus Dei, God's house or hospital, did not have its rise until a century after the books were placed at Winchester, and there is an ancient chronicler, who probably had

means of knowing, who says they were called Domesday because of their resemblance to "the last judgment in their universality and completeness." Originally intended as an instrument of oppression by William the Conqueror, whose death followed quickly upon its completion, Domesday Book became afterward the great authoritative document in all matters of dispute relating to boundaries and privileges connected with the real property of the British realm, which then embraced all the countries except Northumberland, Cumberland, Westmorland and Durham. The King, on Christmas, 1085, ordered a general survey of the land to be made for the purpose of learning whether or no any advance could be made in the values, and that the royal revenues might thereby be increased. The returns showed a decrease in values in estates held by the subjects of the crown. And so thorough and specific was the survey that no other country possessed such accurate materials for its geographical history as are furnished for England by 'Domesday Book.'

Curiosities of an Old Sea-Bottom.

During a recent trip to Peru, Mr. S. F. Emmons observed near Lomas a plain from ten to fifteen miles broad stretching between the mountains and the seashore, and elevated 500 or 600 feet above tide-water, which, not very long ago, as time is reckoned by geologists, was a part of the sea-bottom. It still retains interesting relics of the days when it was the home, or haunt, of ocean monsters. Scattered among its sands and pebbles the inhabitants frequently find the teeth of sharks, and occasionally they turn up the jaw-bones of a whale. With the latter they construct crucifixes, whose white forms are conspicuously placed on headlands.

A Good Deal in a Few Words.

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