

Notches on The Stick

Dr. Ross still continues to advance his labors, and we have recently, beside the title-page of "Bonnie Jean; A Garland of Poetry and Prose in honor of the wife of Robert Burns," in press with the Raeburn Book Company,—the sixth volume of "Burnsidana," from the press of Alexander Gardner, Paisley and London. The book is somewhat belated, being due last January, but it is one of the things that can afford to wait, having always a claim on futurity. The volume is not inferior to its predecessors, unless it be the second in the series, which contained the tributes of Beecher and Curtis. This issue however is enriched with the tributes of Wallace Bruce, (to whom the volume is dedicated "Robert Burns, Poet Laureate of Lodge Canongate Kilwinning; An Address Delivered before the Members of the Lodge Jan. 31, 1893;" and Lord Roseberry's famous Addresses, "Delivered at Dumfries and Glasgow on the Centenary of the Poet's Death, 21st. of July 1896." Among the most attractive to us we find Richard Henry Stoddard's paper on "The Bradlings of Burns," and Henry Kerr's "Personal Recollections" of Robert the Second, "eldest son of the Poet." This man who lived to a venerable age and was buried at his death beside his father and mother in the Mausoleum in St. Michael's churchyard, was himself a literary lover and a writer of songs, some of which have survived the stress of time. We have often wished Burns might have lived to know and enjoy Scott, and it is interesting to find out what this son thought of him: Mr. Kerr writes: "When I first became acquainted with Robert, the eldest son of the Bard, in 1846 he had for some years been retired on a pension, an ex-Government official. He was then infirm and in poor health, yet his face, and the contour of his head, strongly reminded me, and I was only a boy then, of the well-known engravings from Nasmyth's portrait of the poet, painted in the hey-day of his popularity. Though I have frequently seen the two other sons of the poet, on their annual visit to Mr. McDiarmid in Dumfries, yet I was often brought into intimate relations with the eldest son, Robert who was an almost nightly visitor, when he was able to move about, at Mr. Mac's house, and when unwell, which was frequently the case, I had often to see him at his lodgings with messages, books, newspapers, etc., sent up to him by his old and thoughtful friends, or his family! Being, then only a boy Robert was always kind and indulgent to me, and took much interest in the books I should read. He had a fine edition of the Waverley novels in his library, as I well remember, and he told me by all means to study thoroughly the writings of Scott. He kindly lent me each volume, and introduced me to a new world as I had hitherto never seen any of the great Wizard's matchless creations. Robert's favorite tale of Scott's was the "Heart of Mid-Lothian." Ever since, I have never tired of Scott, and I cannot even to this day, say which is my favorite work the "Heart of Mid-Lothian" or "Ivanhoe." During my frequent visits to Robert's lodgings I received from him several valuable presents of books, and a copy of one of his own poetical pieces, entitled "A Song," a pastoral ballad. It is dated, "Dumfries, Jan. 1848." Those who had the best knowledge of the eldest son, Robert, used to say he was a most accomplished man, an excellent linguist, the tenderest of friends, and, though most diffident where his own productions were concerned, a poet of no mean calibre. I am not aware that Robert Secundus' poetical efforts have even appeared in a collected form. Two of his songs are printed in Blackie's "Book of Scottish Song." The first, beginning, "Ha'e ye seen in the calm, dewy morning," is most beautiful and felicitous; the second is the "Highland Piper." Mr. Kerr goes on with an account "of a visit to the farm of Ellisland, where Burns and Jean set up housekeeping, in the company of the three sons of Burns and Mr. McDiarmid: "I recollect there were not a few reminiscences of the poet at Ellisland, especially some of the existing furniture in the kitchen; the farmyard where the poet was found by his anxious wife mourning over "Mary in Heaven;" and the kitchen table, or a very similar article of furniture, on which the poet wrote out, "in the wind," so to speak, the pathetic piece after he had returned to the kitchen. A little north of the farmhouse and commanding a fine glimpse of the wooded reach of the river, was a kind of summer house—a dormitory for gaberlunzie men and "vagrants" of that ilk. This rustic house, as we were told by the tenant of Ellisland farm, was often requisitioned in Burns' time, and

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it was used for the same purpose up to the time of our visit in 1847. The poet, we are told often spent hours in this romantically surrounded summer house—a frail structure in the year 1847. Some of the poet's best pieces, as is well known, were written here, and within the sound of the murmuring waters of the Nith—a stream always dear to him." Here is a bit of verse by Robby Burns' boy. It was composed to an air by Neil Gow, and is dated "Dumfries, Jan. 1848.

"As I gae'd up the side o' Nith
Ae summer morning early,
The golden locks and dewy less,
The broom was wavin' fairly,
Aloft, unseen, in cloudless sky,
The lark was singin' clearly,
When, wadin' til' the broom I spied
My pretty Meg, my dearie,
Like dawnin' light frae stormy night
To sailors wae and weary,
Sae sweet to me the glint to see
O' pretty Meg, my dearie:—

"Her lips were like a half-seen rose,
When day is breakin' haly;
Her e'en beneath her snowy brow,
Like raindrops frae a lily;
Like two young snawdrops filled wi' dew,
They gleamed both bright and clearly;
Abune them shone o' Mirk, my dearie,
Of a' the flow'rs in sunny bowers,
That bloom'd that morn sae cheery,
The fairest flow'r that happy hour,
Was pretty Meg, my dearie.

"I look'd her by the sma' white hand,
My heart sprang in her bosom,
Ud on her face sat maided grace
Like sunshine on a blossom;
How lovely seemed the morning hymn
O' like a birdie near me,
But sweeter far the angel voice
O' pretty Meg, my dearie;
While summer light shall bless my sight,
An' bonnie broom shall cheer me,
I'll ne'er forget the morn I met
My pretty Meg, my dearie."

In Mr. Stoddard's article we get some straight forward sensible comment, and therein is a quotation from Samuel Egerton Brydges, which gives us insight to Burns' home and the poet's sometime manner there when he received a stranger as guest. Brydges was an English poet of his day, who visited the Bard of Ellisland, in the autumn of 1790, bearing a letter of introduction:

"About 2 miles from his residence, on a bench under a tree, I passed a figure which, from the engraved portraits of him, I did not doubt was the poet, but I did not venture to address him. Arriving at his humble cottage Mrs. Burns opened the door; she was the plain sort of humble woman she had been described. She ushered me into a neat apartment, and said that she would send for Burns, who had gone for a walk. In about half an hour he came, and my conjecture proved right; he was the person I had seen on the bench by the roadside. At first I was not entirely pleased with his countenance. I thought it had a sort of capricious jealousy, as if he was half inclined to treat me as an intruder. I resolved to bear it, and try if I could humor him. I let him choose his turn of conversation, but said a word about the friend whose letter I had brought him. It was now about four in the afternoon of an autumn day. While we were talking, Mrs. Burns, as if accustomed to entertain visitors in this way, brought in a bottle of Scotch whiskey, and set the table. I accepted this hospitality. I could not help the curious glance with which he watched me at the entrance of this sequel of homely entertainment. He was satisfied; he filled our glasses. 'Here's a health to auld Caledonia!' The fire sparkled in his eye, and mine sympathetically met his. He shook my hands, and we were friends at once. Then he drank, 'Erin forever!' and the tear of delight burst from his eye. The fountain of his heart and his mind opened at once and flowed with abundant force almost till midnight. He had amazing acuteness of intellect as well as glow of sentiment. I do not deny that he said some absurd things, and many coarse ones, and that his knowledge was very irregular, and sometimes too presumptuous, and that he did not endure contradiction with sufficient patience. His pride, and perhaps his vanity was even morbid. I carefully avoided topics in which he could not take an active part. Of literary gossip he knew nothing, and, therefore I kept aloof from it; in the technical parts of literature, his opinions were crude and unformed, but whenever he spoke of a great writer whom he had read, his taste was generally sound. To a few minor writers he gave more credit than

they deserved. His grand beauty was his main strength and his energy and elevation of thought and feeling. He had always a full mind and all flowed from a genuine spring. I never conversed with a man who appeared to be more warmly impressed with the beauties of nature, and visions of female beauty and tenderness seemed to transport him. He did not merely appear to be a poet at casual intervals, but at every moment a poetical enthusiasm seemed to beat in his veins, and he lived all his days the inward life of the outward life of a poet. I thought I perceived in Burns' cheek the symptoms of an energy which had been pushed too far, and he had this feeling himself. Every now and then he spoke of the grave so soon about to close over him. His dark eye had at first a character of sternness, but as he became warm, though this did not entirely melt away, it was mingled with changes of extreme softness."

All this is exceedingly apt and interesting, as proceeding from a candid, cultivated man of poetical feeling. Of his characterization, Mr. Stoddard says: "This delineation of Burns in his thirty-second year is not only a notable example of intellectual portraiture, but to those who have studied his writings is an acute analysis of his genius, which accomplished what it did through its own intensity, and not through the adventitious aid of books. . . His familiarity with great writers was not extensive enough to instruct him; he was misinstructed by minor writers, with whom his acquaintance was sufficiently large. He read without judgment and admired without taste. This circumstance explains the mediocrity which characterizes all his English writings."

Other articles of some interest in this volume are: "Hon. John W. Giff, on Burns," "Burns' Relics in Brooklyn, N. Y., Valuable Manuscripts etc., at the Home of Wallace Bruce," by John D. Ross "Burns in an English Dress," "Burns in America," by John G. Dow; "The Kilmarlock 'Burns' Centenary of Publication," "Burns and Byron," and "Hawthorne's Fantasy of Burns the aged," by Rev. A. T. Lockhart; "Tam O' Shanter," by C. H. Govan; "The Religion of Burns," Walter Walsh; "Gen. Isaac S. Catlin, on Burns"; "The Jacobite ancestry of Rome," by John Muir, F. S. A. Scot; "Burns as a Mason"; "My Nannie O," by Andrew Robertson Girvan; "Burns as a newspaper man," Hunter MacCulloch; "Burns as a lover of birds," by Arthur Grant, "Scotland's new patron saint"; George Gilfillan's answer to the question, "Why Burns is more popular than Scott with the masses"; "The memory of Burns—a brief tribute from his countrymen and admirers in Belfast"; "A poet of the people" by Rev. Dr. Court; "Alex Tait, the Tarbolton poet"; "Bibliographical notes on Burns" by John Muir; and "Burns' attitude toward the clergy of his day," by Rev. John Brown; an address delivered at Fall river. The poetry of the volume embraces the work of Holmes, and Lowell Carleton. "A Robert Burns reverie" is from "The Leeds Mercury," and "Lines on the centenary of Burns, Jan., 25th, 1859," are from the book of our Acadian poetess, Mary I. Katzman Lawson late of Halifax.

We have sent us two issues of Mr. Mosher's delicately printed and choice literary booklets, containing a prose-gem of William Morris the English poet entitled "The Hollow Land," prefaced with some fine lines by our New Brunswick poet, Francis Sherman taken from his "In Memorabile Mortis."

A little while before the Fall was done
A day came when the frail year paused and said:
"Behold! a little while and I am dead;
Wilt thou not choose of all thine old dreams, one?"
Then dwell I in a garden where the sun
Shone always, and the roses all were red.

And in this garden sloping to the sea
I dwell (it seemed), to watch a pageant pass,—
Young Queens, with rellow hair bound wonderfully,
For love's sake, and because of love's decree,
Most went, I knew; and so the flowers and grass
Knew my steps also: Yet I went alas,
Deeming the garden, surely lost to me.
But as the days went over, and still our feet
Trod the warm, even places, I knew well

That here had Beauty built her citadel.
An excellent thing is "The Bibelot," and we should fancy book lovers, and followers of the old and new that is also strange, would all be after it. We have also a jubilee poem of Mr. Sherman, of which we may speak more in particular.
PASTOR FELIX.

BERMUDA BLACKS.

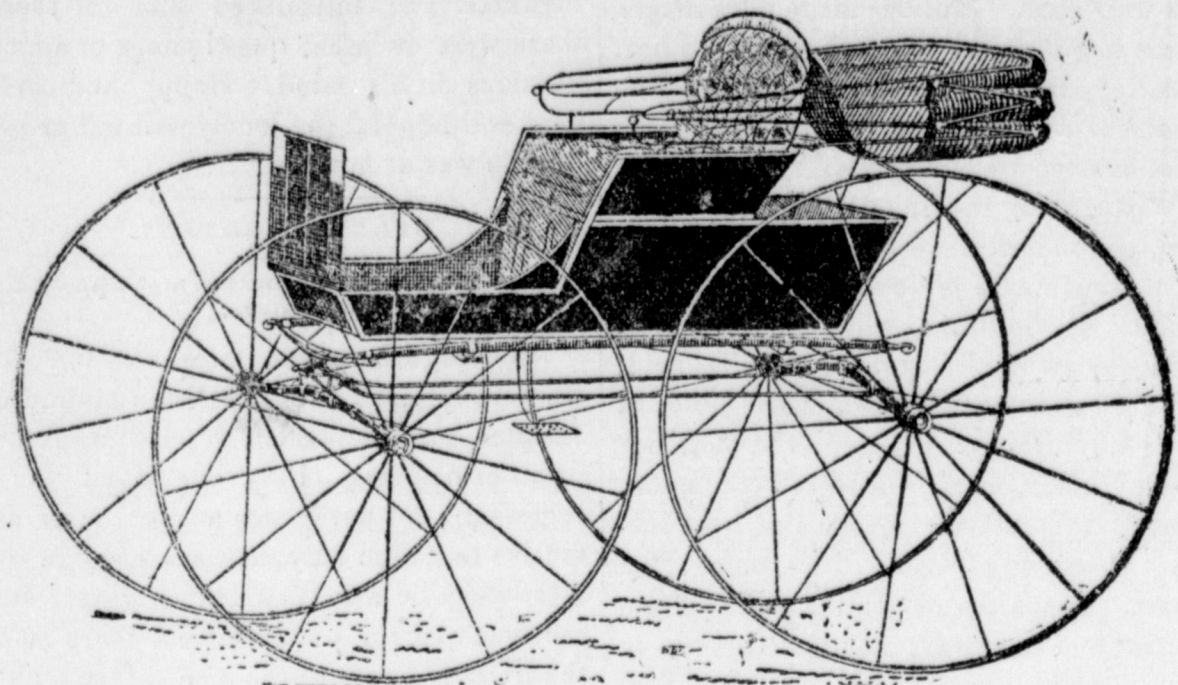
Form a Most Commendable Portion of the Island Population.

How people live so thriftily in Bermuda, and with so little exertion, is a standing enigma. Nobody is in haste and few have anything special to do. For a considerable time after the dinner hour it appears to be immaterial whether business houses are open or closed, "steamer days" excepted, and there is plenty of time for entertainments, regattas and music in the public

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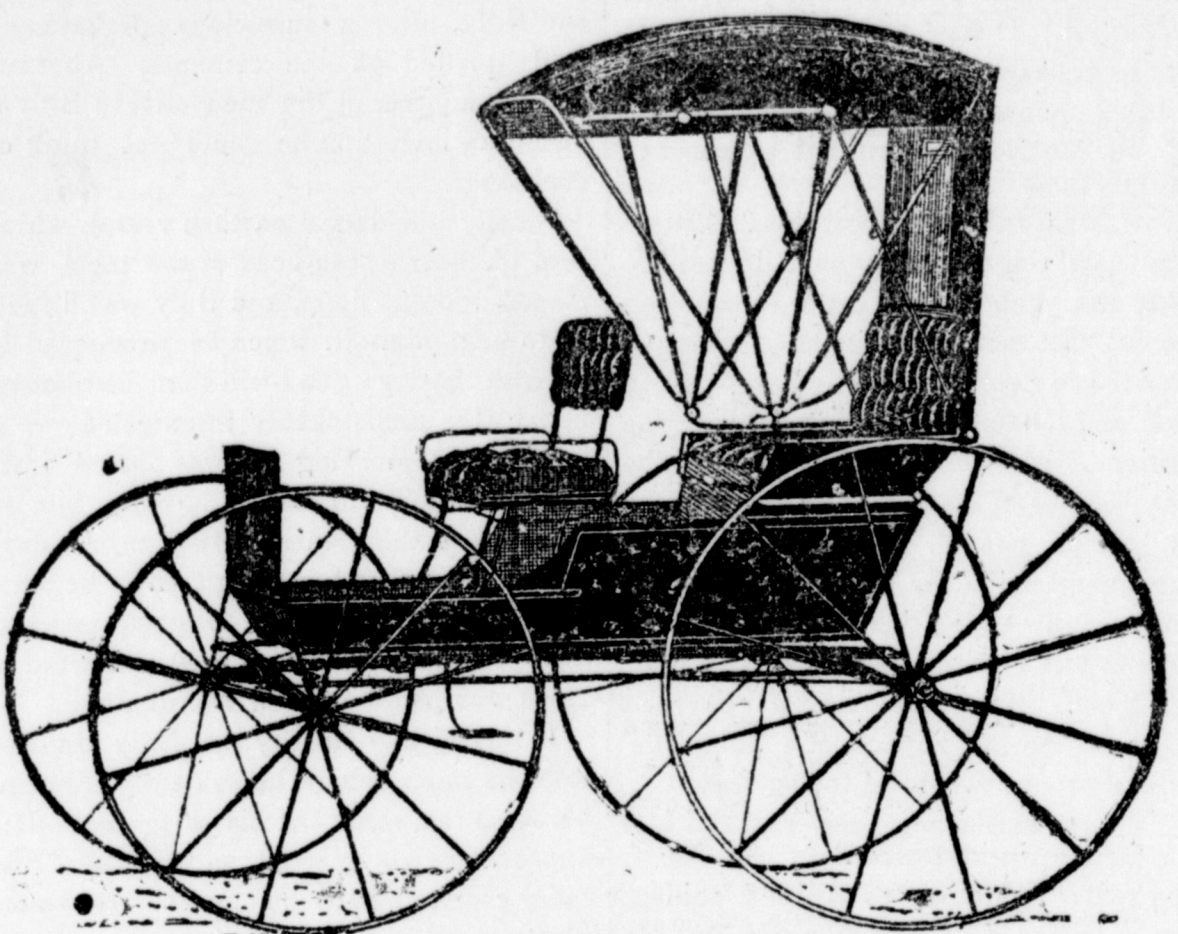
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square by the imperial band. Common laborers get about \$1 a day, and the best mechanics, such as carpenters and masons, not over 9 shillings, or \$1.50. Beef costs nearly as much as in New York, and strange to say, vegetables are but little cheaper, while buildings used as tenements are divided into such small apartments as to return large rents. For all this, people of every class and color dress well and seem to lack no substantial comfort. The public schools are wholly surrendered to the colored population, whites preferring to patronize private institutions. Therefore, while there is no class antagonism, there is little direct communication beyond the necessities of business intercourse. Colored men as a rule drive the coaches, sail the boats, and make the laboring force in all lines of industry, whether in mechanics or agriculture. On the local steamboats all hands are colored—captain, crew and engineers. Even the pilots to conduct the big steamers into port are all colored, and of acknowledged competency. Colored people have their own church edifice, but have a regular place assigned them at other houses of worship. Evidently, so far as color is concerned, all controversy has ceased in Bermuda, each race treating the other with respectful consideration. In no community are the ordinary courtesies observed with a more scrupulous regard, especially in the intercourse with visitors from abroad. The almost total disappearance of the strictly negro type of physiognomy is at once noticeable. Already all of the colored population are Europeanizing to some extent, not only in features but in complexion, language and dress. In fact, not a few of the best looking, most genteel and prosperous among them are hardly distinguishable from the Caucasian race. It is also to be set down in their favor that they are uniformly polite, always excepting the 'Barbadoes nigger,' who is prone to be insufferably insolent.

There are few, if any, low-down and disreputable blacks. They are sometimes called lazy, but I think this is said by people who contrast them with workers in the northern states of America, which is unfair. Nobody works in Bermuda as real workmen do in the States or in Europe. Compared with the negro of our northern States the black Bermudians as a whole are at least two generations ahead. They live in clean and nice houses, they dress neatly, their churches and schools are well attended and interesting, they are not loungers and idlers and drunkards; and most of the hard work of the islands in sawing out blocks of limestone building houses, driving horses and asses, loading and unloading vessels, piloting and sailing all sorts of craft into and about the harbor, cultivating the onions, potatoes and lilies boxing and barreling and shipping the same and acting as servants on all occasions and everywhere except at the tables of a few hotels, is done by intelligent, handy, respectful and competent blacks. Bermuda in the whitest and cleanest place that I have seen in any part of the world its streets are better swept, its houses are better garnished, its every detail is white and bright and pure as soap and lime and water and work can make it, and the credit of this whiteness and light is due, in a large degree to the industry and honest labor of the black population, whom some writers call 'improvident and lazy.' It is a Yankee libel upon a race that have much to be proud of in the position which they have gained in two generations since they were emancipated from slavery.—New York Observer.

A Centenary Cyclist.

James Lane, of Chicago, who celebrated his one hundredth birthday anniversary last March, is one of the enthusiastic bicycle riders on the North Side. He asserts he is the oldest wheelman in the world, and every pleasant afternoon, says a correspondent, he can be seen "scorching" along the North Side boulevards.