

Notches on The Stick

It is a pity the editorship of so superb an edition of Burns as that of the "Centenary," lately issued at Edinburgh, should have fallen into hands so incompetent as those of Mr. W. E. Henley. It might be supposed the accumulated evidence furnished by the poet and his biographers would have had some weight with Mr. Henley, and that we should have had from his hand a tolerably correct and recognizable literary portrait of the poet; but alas! fair minded readers will be much deceived in this matter, and many I doubt not, will give voice to their disappointment. Mr. Henley, following the fashion of the day, seems determined to take bran new views, and to raise issues that ought to have been considered settled long ago. Mr. Henley has an essay on the life, genius and character of the poet, in which he declares that "The Cotter's Saturday Night" would have sunk into oblivion had not the volume in which it was published contained such poetry as may be found in "Halloween," "Holy Willie," and "The Farmer to his Auld Mare." What a funny old world this is, that, after a century or so, knows not what it ought to admire, till told by Mr. Henley! He declares Burns was purely a vernacular poet—whatever that is—and that "outside the vernacular a rather unlettered eighteenth century Englishman!" This statement refutes itself, with any attentive and appreciative reader of the poet. Some of the parts of the "Cotter's Saturday Night," and other of his poems, which thrill and charm us most, are precisely those parts in which the Scotch does not predominate. His genius expresses itself well in English; but most powerfully in the mingling of English and dialect, for that was the freedom of his native tongue and manner. To the statement that he was "essentially and unalterably a peasant," we will assent only with such qualification as Mr. Henley does not furnish; and we dissent from the conclusion that he was "absolutely of his station and his time;" "the poor liring, lewd, grimy free-spoken old Scot's peasant-world came to a full, brilliant, even majestic close in his work;" and that "we must accept him frankly and without reserve for a peasant of genius perverted from his peasant hood, thrust into a place for which his peasanthood and his genius alike unfitted him, denied a perfect opportunity, constrained to live his qualities into defects, and unnatural environment." Here we have a spider in a nutshell, surely; but how he got there we are not so cock sure as is this advocate, turned judge, of his position. Well, Mr. Henley, we suppose we shall have to believe it, for did not you say so, who for some inexplicable reason have been chosen to deform the most monumental edition of Burns given to the world in this century. But it is this declaration that amazes us. Burns was "a faun!" O, ho! We feel relieved: We thought he was Beelzebub, perhaps! We know, on the testimony of many that he was rather a loose and careless fellow. A recent writer declares: "For a century past poor Burns may be said to have stood in a white sheet, outside a church door, doing penance for his sins." He has been set like another Hester Prynne, to wear the "Scarlet Letter" in literature. But the figure is altered;—Mr. Henley has arranged the puppet another way. He is posed as a faun. "When Pan, his goat-footed father—Pan, whom he featured so closely," says Mr. Henley, "in his great gift of merriment, his joy of life, his puissant appetite, his innate and never-failing humanity—would whistle on him from the thicket he could not often stop his ears to the call." Is Mr. Henley ever struck with a sense of the ridiculous that he never saw the absurdity of putting a part of the poet's character for the whole. Burns had the passion for nature—in common with Pan, may be, (we don't prefer to know much of Pan) but also in common with Milton and Mrs. Browning, who were quite proper persons. A faun, for all we know, may be quite an innocent, kind of character. A green wood was his only haunt and place of life, and he had a sort of random music in him, perhaps. But maybe we are not so well acquainted with him as Mr. Henley. Is a faun a Jacobin? Is he Scotch to the backbone? Is he a sort of Tyrtus in martial and patriotic enthusiasm? Can he pray? Does he ever turn his attention to the Christian's God? Can he be reduced to a city or a cottage? Tell us, Mr. Henley.

If this is a correct portrait of Burns, what is to become of Carlyle, and all who ever wrote about Burns? for this reverses all their dicta. We remember a very significant remark of Carlyle in "Heroes and Hero Worship," and just now we are

minded to apply to it to Mr. Henley: "The valet does not know a hero when he sees him! Alas, no; it requires a kind of hero to do that." And again, he says, after alluding to Burns "power of true insight," (a faun sees nothing, perhaps, unless it be his little pleasure of the pipe, of sunlight and green leaves,) and his "superiority of vision." Mark this: "The fatal man, the man, is he not always the thinking man, the man who cannot think and see; but only gropes and halucinate, and mis-see the nature of the thing he works with? He mis-see it, mistakes it as we say; takes it for one thing, and it is another thing,—and leaves him standing like a futility there." We will only say that, perhaps, there has not in our day been an instance of mis-sight and misrepresentation of a notable character equal to that of Mr. Henley.

The Hibernians in America are disturbed over the omission of the name of Thomas Moore from the memorial tablets of the congressional library at Washington; and they are making formal and vigorous protest. This discovers the fact that the name of Moore was considered, and deliberately rejected for two principal reasons, alleged by Mr. Spofford: First—Moore is not a poet of the first rank; second,—he wrote scurrilously of America, or particularly of Thomas Jefferson and the United States. Of course, the first is a satisfactory reason, if only the first names are commemorated; but we have heard of names inscribed there which are not first. But we know not the plan on which the directors worked. The second, as it seems to us, is an insufficient reason,—or a reason only for magnanimous and generous treatment toward one fixed in the memory of his time as a minstrel of taste and feeling, to assert no higher qualities. We cannot know, of course, what documents may have come under review to influence the Commissioners in making their determination, but no printed evidence we can command will show any scurrility that is not as much the birth of the political temper of the time as of malice in the writer, and none that ought not to outweigh the consideration of the better qualities of the man and the writer. Moore's life and work are in some degree identified with America. While the Schuykill and the St. Lawrence roll, his name is inscribed on their waters, and we cannot wash it out. Surely the poet is somewhat apart from the politician; and while "The meeting of the Waters," "The Last Rose of Summer" and "The Harp That Once Thro' Tara's Hall," are a part of our Common Anglo-Saxon heritage, I should be in favor of placing a tablet with his name inscribed thereon in the Congressional Library at Washington.

The space in the court of the Public Library at Boston, from which the Baechante ejected, is to be occupied by something more appropriate doubtless, but meanwhile other parts of that noble structure are to be adorned. Colossal groups of sculpture for the interior of the building are to be furnished from designs of Augustus St. Gaudens. His selected subjects are Labor and Law, and each group will consist of three figures. Another artist Mr. French will furnish the model for the bronze doors of the library. A plaster copy of Mr. St. Gaudens' "Paritan" statue will also be made for the modern sculpture room in the Fine Arts Building. The original is standing in the city of Springfield, Mass.

The Congressional library will soon receive a bust of Wendell Phillips, which is considered one of the finest specimens of sculpture in the United States. It is the work of the Milmore brothers, and is presented by Mrs. Mary Longfellow Milmore, the sculptor's wife.

Colonel T. W. Higginson recently returned from a visit to England, thinks that literary taste is there being debased, and literary standards lowered. He finds Marie Corelli to be the most popular novelist of the day there,—a flashy writer, of second-rate ability. The school of poetry now most in vogue, as he reports, is a group of young Celtic writers, among whom William B. Yates is the most brilliant example. It is a time of remarkable literary activity, but little of great or enduring is produced. PASTOR FELIX.

Floating Islands.

Floating islands are not so rare as may be generally supposed. They are largely a matter of locality, and the one sighted three times in 1892 in the North Atlantic Ocean was not only an unusual occurrence but also of peculiar scientific interest. On the three instances the island was seen it was moving toward the Azores at the rate of about a mile an hour. Its extent was nearly 800 feet each way, and it contained much forest growth, many of the trees being thirty feet high.

VILLAGE BUILT BY PILFERING.

Stolen Lumber Composes Eddington Bend, Maine.

Eddington Bend, an incorporated settlement in the town of Eddington, three miles above Bangor, on the Penobscot river, bears a remarkable distinction in this vicinity; river men say that it was built wholly of stolen lumber.

Above Bangor the river makes a generous bend; above the bend there have stood for more than fifty years big mills in which logs from the Maine forests have been sawed into lumber and rafted below to the city for shipment to the South or for home consumption. Besides filling up the bed of the river with sawdust, these mills have, from year to year, sent down a good many stray boards, which, detached from the rafts by the swift current, have been borne into the eddy in the bend and lodged there.

The first mills in this locality were established before 1840. Early in 1845 the land about the bend was wholly uncultivated and unleased. In the summer sawing the river men, going up and down the bank, and before the snow blew down the valley there had grown up on the river shore a comfortable shanty, built wholly of fine, new boards. The mill men laughed at the enterprise of the new comer; they enjoyed the way in which he picked up their stray stock and made it into a house.

But the enterprising settler was not alone long. The rafters had carried his fame. The story set other poor but active men that way, and in two years the bend contained six huts, all built from the lumber gleaned from the eddy in the river.

Since then the mill owners have seen the half-dozen huts replaced by more than a score of well-built dwellings, a church and several shops. Although in the last fifty years so much lumber has been consumed, the amount picked up in any one season is so insignificant that never yet has any owner been ten fit to go in chase of his stray stock.

The bend is now the site of a prosperous little village, much frequented by Bangor folk. Some of its houses and some of its occupants are of a high and respectable class, but every one of them is subject to the remark of the mill men up river. The residents of the bend are named "the river rats" by the mill men.—New York Press.

A MILLION DESTROYED DAILY.

Women Who Can Detect Counterfeits by Their Feet.

"Every working day Uncle Sam destroys a million dollars; deliberately tears up and grinds to pulp one million dollars' worth of paper money—genuine bank notes and green-backs," writes Clifford Howard in the Ladies' Home Journal. "A million dollars in one, two, five, ten, twenty, fifty, one-hundred and one thousand dollar notes are daily punched full of holes, cut into halves and thrown into a machine that rapidly reduces them to a mass of mushy substance.

"Whenever a piece of paper money becomes soiled or torn it may be presented to the United States Treasury and redeemed. Sooner or later every note that circulates among the people becomes unfit for further service, for it is bound to become dirty or mutilated by constant handling, and the United States Government stands ready to give the holder of such a note a new note in exchange for it, or, in other words, the Government will redeem it.

"The majority of the clerks employed in this important department of the Government are women, many of whom are the most expert money counters and counterfeit detectors in the world. In fact, only experts can properly perform the work that is required; for not only must the soiled and mutilated money be accurately and rapidly counted, but all counterfeit notes must be detected and thrown out. When we consider that some counterfeiters can so cleverly imitate genuine money that their spurious notes will circulate through the country without detection, and are not discovered until they are finally turned into the Treasury, some idea of the proficiency of these experts can be gained, especially when we bear in mind that the notes are often so worn that the imprint on them can scarcely be deciphered. It not infrequently happens that these bad notes are detected simply by the feel of them, which, in some cases, is really the only way of discovering the fraud; for, while a counterfeit may occasionally succeed in so perfectly imitating the design of a note as to mislead even an expert, it is the next to impossible to him to counterfeit the paper used by the Government."

Ready for Winter.

Teachers in the public schools of a large city hear many stories, some of them amusing, some of them pathetic. A young woman who teaches in a kindergarten in Boston, upon learning that one of her little pupils was sick, went to visit her. The teacher had been to Katie's home before, and so had no difficulty in finding the two little rooms at the top of a tenement house where Katie and her mother lived. The mother was absent, and Katie well wrapped up, was sitting up in bed. After the usual inquiries and condolences, the teacher

noticed that the little girl seemed to speak with some difficulty, and said:

"Katie, I am going to examine your lungs."

"Yes'm," responded the child, dutifully, and Miss C. began to loosen the child's waist. After removing it, she found layer after layer of flannel, which she unfastened with some difficulty. Satisfying herself that there was no danger of pneumonia, she began to replace the child's dress, when Katie began to cry.

"My mother'll be awful mad at you when she gets home and finds what you've done."

"Why, Katie, what have I done?"

"You've unfastened all my flannels, and ma had just got me sewed up for the winter!"

Census Difficulties.

A census-paper may look like a very straight-forward affair, but to fill it up with literal accuracy is not always an easy business. The London Academy tells a story said to be new, of the way in which Pe-Quincey met one of these census-paper difficulties.

The question as to his own occupation was answered by the statement that he was a "writer to the magazines," but when it came to the occupation of his three daughters, his troubles began again. At last he put a ring around the names and wrote "They are like the lilies of the field—they toil not, neither do they spin."

This difficulty, however was not as bad as that which confronted an innocent family in Northumberland, England, during a census-taking. There was a baby in the house, and the column, "Deaf and dumb or blind" was a big problem to the conscientious parents.

They concluded that the baby could hear and see, but it certainly could not speak, and they accordingly put it down "Dumb." But just then a powerful scream from the infant made them reconsider the question, and they ultimately altered the entry to, "Not dumb, but can't speak."

Stranger Than Fiction.

The gentleman gives currency to a remarkable but well-authenticated story which shows what most people are supposed to know already—that truth is stranger than fiction.

Some years ago the cashier of a Liverpool merchant received a Bank of England note, which he held up to the light to make sure it was genuine. In doing so he noticed some very indistinct red marks, as if words had been traced on the front of the note and on the margin, and out of curiosity he tried to decipher them. At length he made out the following sentence:

"If this note should fall into the hands of John Dean of Longhillmar, he will learn thereby that his brother is languishing a prisoner in Algiers."

Mr. Dean on being shown the note, lost no time in asking the government for assistance, and finally secured the freedom of his brother, on payment of a ransom to the bey. The unfortunate man had been a prisoner for eleven years, and had traced, with a piece of wood for pen and his own blood for ink, the message on the bank-note, in the hope of its being seen sooner or later.

Destruction of Alpine Flowers.

Alpine flowers are being destroyed at such a rate that an edict on the subject has just been issued by the prefect of the Haute-Savoie. It appears that such plants as the gentian, the edelweiss, the cycloamen, the arnica montana, and the aromatic genepi are year by year becoming more scarce owing to the high prices which are obtained for specimens in the markets of big Continental cities—even the edelweiss, so much prized as a souvenir of a visit to the Swiss mountains, being sold at a price sufficiently high to entice the Alpine peasants to risk much in gathering."

A Long Guarded Secret.

The long guarded secret of a number of Japanese alloys as stated in the Iron Industry Gazette, has now been revealed by workmen. "Shadko" is an alloy of copper and one to ten per cent of gold, and is given the copper or blue-black hue of sword sheaths and decorative articles by being placed in a mordant of sulphuric cop-

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per, alum and verdigris. "Gni-shi butichi," of the well known gray color, is a copper alloy with thirty to fifty per cent of silver. "Mokume" is a mixture of several alloys. About fifty sheets of gold, "shadko," copper, silver and the last mentioned alloy are soldered together, hammered out and put in the mordant. "Sinahu," the finest Japanese brass, consists of ten parts of copper and five of zinc. "Karakana," of bell metals, are made of ten parts of copper, four of tin, one-half of zinc, the copper being melted first, and the other metals added in the above order.

Aromatic Vinegar for the Sick Room.

There is a French legend that during the plague at Marseilles a band of robbers plundered the dying and dead without injury to themselves. They were imprisoned, tried and condemned to death, but were pardoned on condition that they disclosed the secret whereby they could ransack with impunity houses afflicted with the terrible scourge. They gave the following recipe, which makes a delicious and refreshing wash for the sick room. Take rosemary, wormwood, lavender, rue, sage and mint, a large handful of each; place in a stone jar and turn over it one gallon of strong elder vinegar, cover closely and keep near the fire for four days; then strain and add one ounce of powdered camphor. Bottle and keep tightly corked. It is very aromatic, cooling and refreshing in the sick room, and is of great value to nurses.

Oriental Railways.

A cog wheel railway is to be built up Mount Sinai to the spot where, according to tradition, Moses stood while receiving the Sacred Tables, the spot being already marked by a stone cross erected by the Empress Helena, mother of Constantine the Great. It is proposed to connect the road with a line from Port Said through the Isthmus of Sinai and Arabia, to Birra on the Persian Gulf.

The Persian Railroad Tramway Company finds railroading the land of the Shah beset with difficulties, the receipts for 1896 showing a decrease of 18 per cent., due to three months' traffic suspension, a lot of boiler tubes ordered miscarried, and, when a second lot arrived, the Shah had been murdered and for fear of an outbreak train service was forbidden on certain parts of the line.

When Accidents Occur.

A prominent English shipbuilding firm has given out the record from their accident book for the two past years. The figures, or, rather, the conclusions, drawn from the record, are as follows: 6 a. m. to 8:15 a. m., 17 per cent; 9 a. m. to 1 p. m., 50 per cent; 2:15 p. m. to 5:15 p. m., 29 per cent; 5:15 p. m. to 6 a. m., 4 per cent. The last item covers only the operation of the night shifts in two departments.

Brethren.

After all, we're brethren no matter where we be—We folks that coax the soil to life, or you that sail the sea; Don't matter where they place us—don't matter where we roam; This world—for all its trials—is still our home—our home!

I mean, while, we're a-livin' here!—on this here mortal side—And so, when night is fallin', let's throw the window wide—And let the lamps shine out! Because, wherever we may roam, This world until we reach the next, is still our home—our home!—F. L. Stanton, in Atlanta Constitution.

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