

Notches on The Stick

The mournful crisis came, with which we must not too much sadden our recital. It was an agonizing departure; but the pang is over the troubled heart at rest, and the story has often been told. We have seen the passage in our vision—a woeful phantasmagoria, indeed! Not so should poets die, despairing. We see, with a shudder, this strong soul entering the valley of Shadow, and compelled to struggle with the last adversary, without alleviation, unsmoothed, and without calm or peace. We see him daily still with love and mirth and song, at the brink of death. One white glimmer of his Orphic flame darts up before all shall be ashes, and the image of that brightness abides. The lyric is matchless, as brief:

"O wert thou in the cauld blast,
O yonder sea, on yonder lee,
My round thy sepulchres, Dumfries!
I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee."

One of the greatest masters of tone wedded its melody to his own. Ah, thou sinning, suffering melodious brother, thou must make atonement; I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee! Could no friendly arm shield thee in that hour of duns and debts, of despair and desperation, of fever and delirium,—the whole overbearing fatality of a life-time concentrated at the grave's black focus? Not so should poet die. The parting of a great harmonic soul,—is it not the setting of a sun—the withdrawal of great seas?

"So dies a wave along the shore."

Nay, he is pursued into the valley of Avernus by all the hounds of misfortune, like furies at his heels. He goes with an imprecation on his lips! Is this fit for him who was the gleeful, brotherly Robin? In one room of that poor house in the "Wee Vennel" lies the form of a man, mute and moveless. In another mourns a woman in bitter travail. Life follows strangely upon death in this dim shadow-world; and even now a soul is born that bears the name of Burns.

The public swarm, with tears flowing in the old churchyard at St. Michael's; then they go their way to fill the world with vivas over another laurel-bough wrenched from its place in Apollo's great tree of song, and broken and burned, as is this world's habit. Still Jean lives on amid the scenes of her loss and sorrow, and gets Heaven's healing and Time's, and keeps open house to a world's pilgrims who come year by year to see the shrine of a great genius. It might be said of her, as of a tender heart of earlier sorrow—"She goeth to the grave to weep there." So runs the story: The Spring that brought buds to St. Michael's for the first time since this new mound was made, brought also two passing strangers. They observed a woman in the weeds of widowhood sitting near a grave, and one of the men accosted her: "Mistress, we are strangers, and we would feel obliged if you could show us the grave of Burns." The woman pointed to the mound beside which she sat and with words choked by her tears, answered: "This is his grave, and I am his widow." She could not have written—

"See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?"

but she could feel and show all the sorrow such words might mean. The men, with still deeper reverence, apologetically retired.

But over against this may we place another picture? We have seen the boy, who was to be the author of the great prose-epic of his century,—the wisest, most generous of our poet's apologists,—poring by the hour over the treasures of the museum, and spelling the name of "Robert Burns". This is the tribute of genius to genius. But he is preeminently the poet of the

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common and the unlettered man. It was when a "fierce noonday sun" sent travelers to rest in sheltered places, when trout leaped, and "larks rendered a paean of praise," when the flowers were richest in perfume, and the sound of the reaper was in the land, that an "aged figure" was seen upon the road—"a pilgrim at the shrine of Robin." Yes, some one who had, from Sierra or Alleghany ranges, crossed the main our poet sang and dreamed of crossing,—a pilgrim, talkative, companionable,—who said: "I have long wished to see the auld clay biggin, and the banks and braces o' Bonnie Jean; to-day I have seen them, and shall go home to die in peace." An advance herald, he, of a ceaseless procession, following, and to follow:

"Pilgrims whose wandering feet have pressed
The Switzer's snow, the Arab's sand,
Or trod the piled leaves of the west—
My own green forest-land."

"All ask the cottage of his birth,
Gaze on the scenes he loved and sung,
And gather feelings not of earth
His fields and streams among."

"They linger by the Doun's low trees,
And pastoral Nith, and wooded Ayr,
And round thy sepulchres, Dumfries!
The poet's tomb is there."

An, Jean! true wife and true mourner was she! Speak no more of offences, or connubial neglects; she could more than forgive. To her, after her husband had gone, his memory was radiant, and outline and color of his faults faded away. The largeness of her heart had something of divineness in it; and it was no small tribute to her erring lover when she could say of him, years after his death, while conversing with the Ettrick Shepherd: "He never said a misbehadden word to me a' the days o' his life." Then, I will venture to say that, were he here to declare himself, he could utter as much of her. Indeed, have we not his idea of her as well as his ideal of her? He spoke it to Mrs. Dunlap; and, writing to his friend, Miss Chalmers, did he not declare that in her he had "The handsomest figure, the sweetest temper, the soundest constitution, and the kindest heart in the country"? Yes, and to make the picture more attractive, "the finest woodnote wild I ever heard." Yes, and more,—she had the truest heart, as well as the warmest. Fortunate poet, indeed, in this! Where in the wide world could he have found a better? Mild of speech, gentle of heart, prudent and discreet; she could soothe and charm his perturbed spirit—that had in it something of Saul as well as of David—and settle his cares to rest. Was any woman he ever loved and sung so well fitted to him? Highland Mary might indeed be sent to beckon him from Heaven, but Jean Armour was set to steady his sometime faltering step upon the earth.

She survived him till the lichens had time to grow upon his gravestone; till his dust had been exhumed and grandly ensupulchred again. She lived to a serene and beautiful age; she saw the star of his fame ascend high, and knew him, by universal rumor, one of the greatest poets of all time. She lived, honored, respected beloved, and dwelt among her children and her children's children. In her widowhood she abode, holding the name and memory of her consort sacred, nor ever pined for another manly arm to lean upon. Of the glimpses we get of her in her tranquil age, here is one among them.

Before Hew Ainslie, the Scottish poet left Scotland for America,—which was afterwards his home and the place of his grave—he called on "Bonnie Jean," where in her cottage she lived in comfort, visited by many, whom she received with an unailing courtesy. "They got unco pack and thick together, in less time than it takes to tell it, and of course the dead poet formed the staple of 'the twa handed crack'?" Ainslie, by invitation, remained to drink a cup of tea; after which, upon his request that she would accompany him to some haunts of the bard, she immediately arose and put on her shawl. "I'm thinkin'," remarked our young man, "that can hardly be the shawl ye got frae George Thomson." "No quite, was her simple reply; 'that wad need to have been weel hained to last so long. It's sax an' threety years sin' he made me that present.' They walked together to Lincluden Abbey, I think—at any rate to a ruin—and she stood for a moment on a certain sheltered and lovely spot. 'It was just here,' she observed, 'that my man often paused, and I believe made up many a poem an' sang ere he cam' in to write it down. He was never fractious—aye gude-natured and kind baith to the bairns and to me.' How felt then, as he did long afterwards, that Jean, of all the women in the world, was the one specially fitted to be the poet's life long companion. Clarinda had a dangerous spunk about her, and would have stood no nonsense, nor tolerated his admitted aberrations. Mary Campbell, though gentle and amiable, has yet Highland blood in her veins, and the ire of the scions of Macallum is sometimes easily roused and not so easily laid. But Jean was indul-

gent, patient, affectionate, gentle, good, and above all, forgiving. She was by no means the untidy woman she has [sometimes] been represented. Her skin and complexion, even in advanced age, were fine, and she might be considered a comely as she was unquestionably a pleasant woman. When they returned from the trip, Ainslie proposed taking his immediate departure, but before leaving, grasping her hand, he said: "I wad like weel ere I gae, if ye wad permit me to kiss the cheek o' Burns' faithful Jean, to be a reminder to me o' this meetin' when I'm far awa." She laughed, held up her face to him and said: "Aye, la, an welcome." So he printed a kiss on her still unwithered lips, and that was the last he saw of Jeanie Armour.

Still fragrant is her memory; and, together with that of her husband,—whom she survived for a term of years equal to the whole duration of his earthly life,—it forms a part of that haunted landscape. She died March 26, 1831, and was buried beside her poet in the vault of the mausoleum a few days later. She was in the 70th. year of her age, "having spent not less than 44 years in the town of Dumfries." An attendant speaks of her closing hours: "I used to read to her out of the family Bible, and I can vividly remember seeing her after her last seizure (paralysis) lying speechless with her eyes closed. After our minister, Dr. Wallace, prayed, she opened her eyes and looked around the room for me; and as I went beside her the tears coursed down her cheeks, but she never spoke again." Ever will she be held dear, for her poet's sake and for her own. Just now beneath our eyes lies a rude engraving of Bonnie Jean, and of her little grand daughter,—a slip of a girl, who stands beside the seated matron, enfolding her neck with a slender arm. A white frilled head-dress gives an appearance of unusual fullness, almost of puffiness, to the face,—a face that is still fair, it not beautiful. These are the same winning eyes that captivated Burns, the same motherly lineaments that Ainslie looked upon and that Latta described. Dark curling locks partially escape from the cap's border, and the lips and nose suggest none of the shrinking or pinching that comes with age. It is an engaging and lovable face, with the brightness and freshness that belong to flowers and running water,—so I marvel not her poet sang of her:

"I see her in the dewy flowers,
I see her sweet and fair;
I hear her in the tuneful birds
I hear her charm the air:
There's not a bonnie flower that springs
By fountain shaw or green;
There's not a bonnie bird that sings
But minds me o' my Jean."

The "Golden Treasury" has long been known as the most perfect of English Anthologies. The Compiler, Francis Turner Palgrave, Professor of poetry at Oxford—himself a poet—has recently given the public a second volume, embodying the choice work of more recent poets, which is not up to the earlier mark, judging from the animalverions of so good a critic as Prof. Charles G. D. Roberts. He says, (Criterion of Nov.) regarding this second series,—"It is partial, unbalanced, hopelessly out of proportion and perspective; ever marked everywhere by personal bias." The sins of omission are shown to be very numerous, and in closing his comments Prof. Roberts says: What can be said of the critical discernment of a professor of poetry at Oxford who could omit such a poem as this of Stevenson's:

Under the wide and starry sky,
Dig the grave and let me lie.
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.
This be the verse you grave for me,
Here I lie where he longed to be,
Home is the sailor, home from the sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

Ralph H. Shaw of Lowell, Mass., author of "In Many Moods," "The Bar Hunt, and Other Poems," "Camp Ossipee, and Other Poems," is soon to publish by subscription a new volume to be entitled "Legend of the Trailing Arbutus, and Other Poems." It will be neatly bound, containing 100 pages, and will be sold for one dollar. Mr. Shaw is a writer of excellence, and there is a peculiar sweetness and delicacy in his best verses.

PASTOR FELIX.

Caring for the Teeth.

Do not eat, or do not feed your children on, white bread, which is deficient in phosphates, and causes the teeth to crumble. A little hard food requiring thorough mastication should be taken at every meal. The teeth should be brushed both night and morning. Avoid sweets. Drink at least two quarts of water a day—a glass the first thing in the morning, another the last thing before going to bed, the remaining quantity between meals. Consult a good dentist about every six months.—Ladies Home Journal

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A PERILOUS CALLING.

Divers Who Make a Good Living at Their Perilous Calling.

Some of the self employing divers enjoy good incomes from their labors. As a rule, a diver of this class goes down, looks at a sunken vessel and then states what he will charge to raise her. Diver Victor Hinton was paid \$159 a day for locating the sunken steamship City of Chester, and captain Anthony Williams, having raised the schooner Dauntless in two days, received \$750 for his time and trouble. The same diver, having repaired with iron plates and raised in fourteen days the steamer Meredith, ashore near Jeremie in Hayti, demanded and was paid \$7,500 for the work.

Abram Onderdonk, whose home is on Staten Island, is the oldest deep-sea diver in this country. During forty of the sixty two years of his life he has been continuously engaged in the pursuit of his calling, and it has carried him at one time and another to nearly every part of the globe. Diver Onderdonk or Captain Abe, as his friends call him, who after forty years under the waves, has come to regard nerve with prudence as reasonable guarantees of a diver's safety, counts the sword fish as the greatest danger members of his craft have to face. This fish, which has a short bony sword, as strong as steel, protruding from its head, speeds along through the water, charging dead ahead and never veering from its course for anything save a rocky ledge or the iron hull of a steamship. If it strikes a wooden craft its sword seldom fails to cut clear through the vessel's side. Should a man be attacked by it certain death awaits him. Diver Onderdonk himself never encountered but one of these creatures,—and that was a young one whose sword had not yet hardened. He was at work on the deck of a sunken vessel, when he saw the fish coming from a distance and heading straight for him. He took a tighter grip upon the axe which he held in his hand, and made ready for attack, but, to his surprise and relief, the fish, never swerving from its course, glided past him and out of his guard's range, and a moment later disappeared.

Captain Abe has often encountered sharks and says there is little to be feared from him. A mate of his was laying some wharf blocks when suddenly surprised by uncanny foe. Despite his struggles—and he was a giant in statue and strength—the monster quickly and completely overpowered him. He was locked in the tremendous jaws of a devil fish, and fastened hopelessly against a submerged spile. McGowan realized his peril, and kept quiet until his assailant, whose arms measured nearly nine feet, loosened his hold. Then he signalled to be drawn up, and came to the surface with the writhing creature still clinging to his back.

Diving in the great lakes attending with even greater perils than with these I have just described. In Lake Huron opposite the entrance to Thunder Bay, a large buoy marks the spot where, nearly twenty-five fathoms deep, lies the wreck of a once famous lake vessel, which sank while sixty of its passengers were still in their births, not one of whom ever made a sign. The steamship took down with it when it sank not only that precious human freight, but \$300,000 in gold coin and 500 tons of copper. The sunken steamship was the Pewabic. Several lives were lost in attempts to get at this treasure, before a diver succeeded, many years after the wreck.

The business has its humorous side. Off Barnegat light a diver at work on a sunken steamer signalled to be drawn up, and reached the surface thoroughly unnerved. He said he has seen two huge objects coming toward him and nothing could dissuade him from the belief that he had encountered two submarine ghosts—until his mate went down and discovered that there was a mirror at the end of the gangway, and that the diver had seen the

reflection of his own legs vastly enlarged, coming toward him.

The veteran from whom I had this story told me of the amusing mistake made by a driver, who, much against his will, had been sent down to recover a body from a wreck. Some divers have an ineradicable dread of the dead, and never handle them when they can possibly avoid it. He was of this kind, and the water being very thick, he went groping gingerly about the cabin. After a lengthy search he found a body, and, fastening a line around it, gave the signal to haul it up. When he followed and took off his helmet a large hog lay on deck. He had tied the line about it thinking it was the body he was looking for. After that he was always called the 'pork' diver.

His former comrades have also many amusing stories to relate of a diver of other days, Tom Brintley by name, who, though a competent man and a good fellow, was over fond of stimulants. On one occasion he went down with a pretty good cargo of spirits aboard, and the men above not knowing his condition, become seriously alarmed when several hours passed by without their receiving any signals from him or any other response to those they made to him. Another diver, sent down to look for him, found him lying on his back at the bottom of the ocean, 60 feet below the surface, fast asleep.

The bed of the ocean would seem to most people an exceedingly strange place in which to take a nap, but divers live in a world of their own—a world of which their fellows know little or nothing, yet abounding at every turn with curious, beautiful and indeed, almost incredible sights.—Portland Transcript.

MARRIAGE SCHOOLS.

Educating Girls for Matrimonial Duties in Germany.

Germany has the distinction of having started a new idea—marriage schools—and they are said to be meeting with undoubted success. No girl is admitted unless she has finished her ordinary education. The principal instruction is in house-keeping, although she keeps up, more or less, the cultivation of her mind.

At the opening of the school term the mistress singles out four girls, whom she expects to take entire charge of the house for a week. Two servants, cook and housemaid, are employed to do rough work. These embryo housekeepers are expected to rise with the lark and see that the servants get through with their duties. The girls prepare breakfast with their own hands, and then make a tour of the house to see that every room has been put to perfect order. Dinner—under the supervision of the mistress—they must also cook and later on they prepare supper, tidy up the kitchen, and again go over all the house to see that everything is secure for the night.

The following week another quartet of girls is chosen; they perform the same duties. Frequently guests are invited to dine, and the girls, in turn, act as hostess. They carve the joints, and set the ball of conversation rolling after the fashion of their elders. Dances and musical parties are given occasionally, and walks and bicycling enter into the day's programme of amusements.

There does not appear to be any active effort on the part of the managers of these schools to obtain husbands for the girls, as would seem to be implied in the school title, but it is thought that men of judgement will give the preference to young women trained in all the arts which go to the making of a comfortable home.

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