

Notches on The Stick

Was there some latent trace in memory, when Matthew Arnold wrote the following stanzas, of an earlier poet's words much in the same spirit? They are not altogether dissimilar, though Arnold's are saner, sweeter, and less darkly woven:

I ask not each kind soul to keep
Tearless, when of my death he hears.
Let those who will, if any, weep!

There are worse plagues on earth than tears.
I ask but that my death may find
The freedom to my life denied;
Ask but the folly of mankind
Then, then at last, to quit my side.

Nor bring to see me cease to live,
Some doctor full of phrase and fame,
To shake his sapient head and give
The ill he cannot cure a name.

Nor fetch, to take the accustomed toll
Of the poor sinner bound for death,
His brother-doctor of the soul,
To canvas with official breath

The future and its viewless things—
That undiscovered mystery
Which one who feels death's winnowing wings
Must needs read clearer, sure, than he!

Bring none of these; but let me be,
While all around in silence lies,
Moved to the window near, and see
Once more, before my dying eyes,

Bathed in the sacred dews of morn
The wild aerial landscape spread—
The world which was ere I was born,
The world which lasts when I am dead;

Thus feeling, gazing might I grow
Composed, refresh'd, ennobled, clear;
Then willing let my spirit go
To work or wait elsewhere or here!

So fulfilling Wordsworth's wish for the
aged innocent who once wandered over
the hills of Cumberland,—

As in the eye of Nature he has lived,
In the eye of Nature let him die;

prizing maybe more a final look at what
he "ne'er might see again;" though, by
that time, perhaps, the night may have
fallen, or by the darkening of the brain the
landscape be shut out, while

The casement slowly grows a glimmering square.
But earlier Byron, in the poem to
Tayrza, entitled "Eu hanasia:"

When Time, or soon or late, shall bring
The dreamless sleep that lulls the dead,
Oblivion! may thy languid wing
Wave gently o'er my dying bed!

No band of friends or heirs be there,
To weep, or wish, the coming blow:
No maiden, with dishevel'd hair,
To feel, or feign, decorous woe.

But silent let me sink to earth,
With no obnoxious mourners near:
I would not mar one hour of mirth,
Nor startle friendship with a tear.

Yet Love, if Love in such an hour
Could nobly check its useless sighs,
Might then exert its last-end power
In her who lives, and him who dies.

But vain the wish—for Beauty's ill
Will shrink, as shrinks the ebbing breath;
And woman's tears, produced at will,
Deceive in life, unman in death.

Then lonely be my latest hour,
Without regret, without a moan;
For thousands Death hath ceased to lower,
And pain been transient or unknown.

Ay, but to die and go, alas!
Where all have gone and all must go!
To be the nothing that I was
Ere born to life and living woe!

Count o'er the joys three hours had seen,
Count o'er the days from anguish free,
And know, whatever thou hast been,
'Tis something better not to be.

The opiate of oblivion—the sponge narcotic that The Cross refused; a lonely death-bed; tears forbidden and love repulsed, friendship a suspected thing! Surely this must have been written in a grievous mood and a shadowy hour. Give me rather another scene sacred in English poetry:

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires.

Only what we live we know. Alas! had Byron never an example of true womanly character and true womanly devotion? He had too many on the contrary. But we have in memory the picture of a wife, with breaking heart, but calm pale face, sitting beside her dying husband, with all patience and trust and restraint of self, till all was over that could distress him; then—and only then—breaking into a storm of irrepressible sorrow. Such a gift to man has the steadfastness of nature, with the steadfastness of God.

The poetic wish of each poet was measurably fulfilled in the manner of his departure. As to Byron, we recall that last scene at fever-stricken Missolonghi, where the servant Fletcher, alone caught his semi-delirious words. Matthew Arnold had no time for ministry of nurse or physician, or benefit of clergy,—save as that morning he had waited on the words of Ian Maclaren at Liverpool, and had been unusually impressed by the singing of one of the noblest strains in all hymnody, beginning—

When I behold the wondrous cross.

Then, after dinner,—if we have the circumstance correctly in mind,—he went out for one more look at earth and sky. It

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was his last. The summons came to him, it with less sharpness, with more urgency, than to his illustrious and noble father; for

With no drops of fiery pain,
No cold gradations of decay
Death broke at once the vital chain
And freed his soul the nearest way.

How different from all this, the strain of the old hymnody, referred to above, familiar to our youth, and the solace to our age! There resound the lost notes of faith and rapture. We can, hearing again the triumphant voices of the past rising on some soft wind of memory, drop the care and care, and the grim recurring doubts we all must combat, and sit for a while in Beulah's sunny quiet. Here is our favorite song and ideal of the closing scene:

When anxious cares would break my rest
And grief would tear my throbbing breast,
Thy tuneful praises, raised on high,
Shall check the murmur and the sigh.

When death o'er nature shall prevail,
And all the powers of language fail,
Joy through my swimming eyes shall break,
And mean the thanks I cannot speak.

But O when that last conflict's o'er,
And I am chained to earth no more,
With what glad accents shall I rise
To join the music of the skies!

How different, too, the spirit and attitude of England's last great Christian poet and philosopher, in the face of the solemnizing presences of Nature and Death! He walks out after a great storm of rain, having heard that one of the great leaders of his country was dying, and thus he expresses himself:

Loud is the vale—the voice is up
With which she speaks when storms are gone,
A mighty union of streams!
Of all her voices, one!

Loud is the vale!—this inland depth
In peace is roaring like the sea:
Yon star upon the mountain-top
Is listening quietly.

Sad was I, even to pain depress'd,
Importunate and heavy load!
The comforter hath found me here,
Upon this lonely road.

And many thousands now are sad—
Wait the fulfilment of their fear;
For he must die who is their stay,
Their glory disappear.

A power is passing from the earth
To breatheless Nature's dark abyss;
And when the mighty pass away,
What is it more than this—

That man who is from God sent forth,
Doth yet again to God return?
Such ebb and flow must ever be,
Then therefore should we mourn?

Byron was coeval with this muse, and scorned it. But what would he have given at the last for Wordsworth's peaceful heart and quiet spirit? His latest medicinal song, compounded so as to be, as he averred that passionate poet's "aversion," has been balm to many a sick and jaded and wounded one of our time. "This won't do!" exclaimed the critical dictator of his day; but, had he known it, nothing else would do! "O Francis Jeffrey!" writes W. J. Dawson, in his "Quest and Vision," "had you but known it this man spake the words that made for your peace and ours, he brought precisely what would do, the book bitter in the lips to critics like you, but sweet and healing to the soul of our vexed, tumultuous generation; the one medicine, the one message we most imperatively needed." He does indeed give to all who will heed him a sense of those things that the mad strife of this world never

Can utterly abolish or destroy.

While we see him stand, priest and prophet of Helvellyn,—

Our souls have sight of that immortal sea which brought us hither;
We in a moment travel thither—
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

The name Wilson has been honored, if not so numerously as the name Smith, yet more frequently than most others, on either side the great sea. The name at once turns our thoughts to Scotland and to the doughty and magnificent "Christopher North," the lion of all the tribe. He will in many respects, physical and intellectual, still continue to be the unique one. Some removes we find Alexander Wilson, the ornithologist and poet, whose spoils and exploits are divided between the citizens of two hemispheres, where ever the English speech prevails; and John Mackay Wilson, author and editor of, "Tales of the Borders,"—pabulum for some of us in callow years. In England we find Henry Bristow Wilson, clergyman, author and educator; and

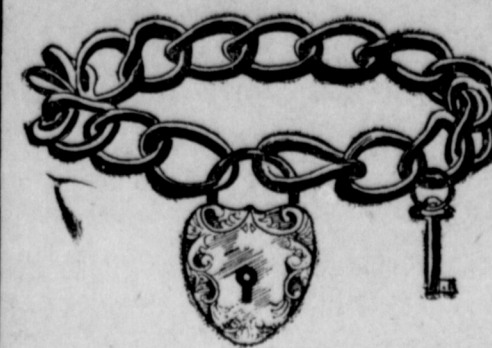
Horace Hayman Wilson, the Orientalist and scholar; with one honorable representative of the British soldiery, and a skilful writer on military and campaigning topics, Sir Robt. Thomas Wilson. But by far the longest list belongs to America; where we have, Henry Wilson, the distinguished statesman, (though his original and actual name was Jeremiah Jones Colbath); Robert Burns Wilson, artist and poet; William Wilson of Poughkeepsie, N. Y., journalist, publisher, and, in a small way, poet; Woodrow Wilson, a valuable worker in the educational field in the United States; with Sir Daniel Wilson, no less useful and honored, in the Dominion of Canada,—archæologist, author, teacher, a man of books and of noble life. Among the American writers of fiction appears the name of Mrs. Augusta Jane Wilson (Evans) whose "Inez," "Beulah," "St. Elmo," and "Vashti," are familiar to readers of that kind. The family in this country has several representatives distinguished in military life. The writer of a paragraph in The Home Journal point out that "there are four General Wilsons who are more or less in the public eye at present, and who are frequently 'much mixed,' as one of the quartette remarked recently. Three are authors, and three were born in the thirties, serving with distinction in the Union armies during the civil war, and one in the Confederate service; William Lyne Wilson, President of Washington and Lee University, who was born in 1843, and was Postmaster General in Cleveland's second administration. The others are James Grant Wilson, the friend and biographer of the poets Bryant and Halleck, and of General Grant; James Harrison Wilson, commanding the first Army Corps, stationed at Lexington, Kentucky; and John Moulder Wilson, chief of the Engineer Corps, and at present a member of the War Investigating Committee appointed by President McKinley." In addition to these we might mention James Wilson, one of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence; John Wilson, the vocalist, said to be the finest that ever came from Scotland to these shores, and only rivalled in popularity by the celebrated David Kennedy; and another John Wilson, born at Glasgow, but celebrated in this country as a printer at Cambridge, Mass. The list might perhaps be extended, but the foregoing includes nearly all names of eminence.

M. de Chevillon in a poetic and uniquely critical review of Shelley in the Revue de Paris, makes the following excellent discriminations; "No vision of poet more acute than his, no retina more subtle and impressionable. Objects that appear to our eye simple and immobile appear to him complex and moving; traversed by myriads of fugitive gleams and vibrations, always ready to dissolve, to be transformed and evaporate in the circumambient air. . . . In the infinity of facts and aspects which the world presents, each artist, by an intuitive election, attaches himself to certain characteristics that correspond to his own personality. Wordsworth feels, more than anything else, the grave, the sedate, the thoughtful; Byron, what is violent, savage, inhuman; Hugo, who understands everything, prefers the mysterious, sombre, immeasurable; Leconte de Lisle, direct and simple energy, manifested by plastic grandeur, by simple rhythm, sure, processional, and almost fatal. Shelley inclines to the variable, the fugitive, the evanescent, the ripple of the wave, the morning mist rising from the prairie, the glistening of the dew on delicate petals, ephemeral blossoms, the birth and grand uprolling of the clouds, the changing gleams of the ocean, and falling shadows of twilight; this is what remains of the visible world when it has been volatilized by his ardent glances."

Few book-reviewers of the day are more worthy of attention than the Rev. Richard Putnam, who for years past has contributed to this department of the Home Journal, New York. He is never savage, never sour; is quick to perceive excellencies and point them out; gentle and candid in his dealings, especially with budding poets; and possessing a good general acquaintance with literature. Of Charles G. D.

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Robert's 'A Sister to Evangeline,' he has recently said: this is a charming romance by the author of 'The Forge in the Forest,' whose British North American nativity, like Gilbert Parker's always asserts itself, and whose pages, also like Mr. Parker's cannot to the great delectation of readers, help revealing the poet at every turn. There is even a graceful little lyric, sweet-scented and glowing as the apple-orchard boughs whereof it speaks, on page 54; while the entire volume is laden with word-pictures, often exquisite in their simplicity and freshness, and suffused with an idyllic glamour that seems a part of the latter-day novelists just north of our border. Of course there is a great deal said of Grand Pre since the story deals almost exclusively with the exiling of the Acadians in 1755 and the inevitable Blomidon (which appears to be the Parnassus of Canadian poets, judging from the fervor and frequency wherewith it is mentioned) gets generous mention; yet one more than pardons repeated references to the Nova Scotia headland when made with the grace and aptness that Mr. Roberts manifests. The book takes an autobiographical form, and one soon grows to like its supposed author, and, if not to adore after his manner, at least to admire and commiserate the lady of his heart with the pretty Norman-French name, Yvonne Lamourie. Other excellent portrayals of character are to be noted in Grul, the prophet of Grand Pre's woe (a very strong piece of work indeed); George Anderson, the rival of the hero of the tale, Paul Grande; Nicole, the blacksmith; Lieut. Shatto, the brave military fop, the two Yankee sea-captains; Marc Paul, Grande's cousin; the old would-be witch but kind-hearted granny, Mother Pêche.

The storm that with deadly violence swept the coasts of New England so recently left almost untouched the region of which Toronto is a centre. Our learned correspondent and poet in that city says: "Do you know it was all south and east of us here. We had a gentle snow-fall on the Saturday, of some three inches, and the weather cleared at 6 p. m. A glorious moonlight night followed, and Sunday—all day—was as still as a breathless October day, and as bright and radiant as any day I ever saw. Meanwhile death and destruction had their way east and south. . . . Last Sunday night we had a snow-fall of fifteen inches, one of the heaviest I ever saw here, but the weather was, mild, and the snow as white and soft as swans-down. It struck the boles of the trees, and covered every branch and fence, and the landscape was fairland next day, and is still. All the trees in the Park and in the streets are as though solid marble—their boles—so white. It seems like the snow-storms we used to have when I was a boy at Canada. My earliest impressions, perhaps, of beauty,—a real warm emotion that lingered lovingly with me,—was given by the sculptured snow-dritte, and the feathery sky-work in its virgin purity. These, and the play of light and shadow, and the waving motion of the grasses, are my earliest consciousness of poetic emotion."

The geniuses of the whole earth exploit themselves in America. The latest who promises a visit is Jehan Rictus, of Paris, known as "the Poet of the Submerged Tenth." Excessive length of hair and a dislike of mere notoriety are mentioned as prominent characteristics.

The maker of the last batch of days puts in less east and more shortening.
PASTOR FELIX.

KIPLING AND THE ELEPHANT.
An American's Story of the Englishman's Kindness to a Sick Stranger.

One afternoon we went together to the Zoo, and, while strolling about, our ears were assailed by the most melancholy sound I have ever heard, a complaining, fretting, lamenting sound, proceeding from the elephant house.

"What's the matter in there?" asked Mr. Kipling of the keeper,

"A sick elephant, sir; he cries all the time; we don't know what to do with him," was the answer.

Mr. Kipling hurried away from me in the direction of the lament, which was growing louder and more pitiful. I followed and saw him go up close to the cage, where stood an elephant with sadly drooped ears and trunk. He was crying actual tears at the same time that he mourned his lot most audibly. In another moment Mr. Kipling was right up at the bars, and I heard him speak to the sick beast in a language that may have been elephantese, but certainly was not English. Instantly the whining stopped, the ears were lifted, the monster turned his sleepy little suffering eyes upon his visitor and put out his trunk. Mr. Kipling began to caress it, still speaking in the same soothing tone and in words unintelligible to me, at least. After a few minutes the beast began to answer in a much lower tone of voice, and evidently recounted his woes. Possibly elephants, when "enjoying poor health," like to confide their symptoms of sympathizing listeners as much as do some human invalids. Certain it was that Mr. Kipling and that elephant carried on a conversation with the result that the elephant found his spirits much cheered and improved. The whine went out of his voice. He forgot that he was much to be pitied; he began to exchange experiences with his friend, and he was quite unconscious, as was Mr. Kipling, of the amused and interested crowd collecting about the cage. At last, with a start, Mr. Kipling found himself and his elephant the observed of all observers and beat a hasty retreat leaving behind him a very different creature from the one he had found.

"Doesn't that beat anything you ever saw?" ejaculated a compatriot of mine, as the elephant trumpeted a loud and cheerful good-bye to the back of his vanishing visitor, and I agreed with him that I did.

"What language were you talking to that elephant?" I asked when I overtook my friend.

"Language? What do you mean?" he answered with a laugh.

"Are you a mowgli?" I persisted, "and can you talk to all those beasts in their own tongues?" but he only smiled in reply.—The Argonaut.

Obeded Orders.

Some years ago during a severe engagement an officer in command of a company observed a British soldier distinguishing himself in a most remarkable way, and at last saw him fall, severely wounded. He was immediately rescued and hurried to the rear, and the officer sent an orderly to ascertain the man's condition. The messenger returned with the sad news that the wounded man was dying. The officer at once despatched the orderly with instructions that great care should be taken of such a brave fellow and that he must not die. When the wounded soldier heard the latter remark, he turned to the orderly and feebly said—"Give my respects to my officer, and tell him I will obey orders. If he says I must not die, then I will not die!" Nor did he; and to-day he is one of the proud officers who have risen from the ranks.

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