

Notches on The Stick

Mr. Herbin, in his recent book on Grand Pre, has taken the position respecting the character of the Acadians and the circumstances of their deportation from the province, which, from his racial and poetical sympathies we should expect. And he gives events in such sequence, and presents such an array of evidence, as to make us feel more strongly than ever before, that argument and conclusion, with the merit thereof, cannot lie wholly with the opposite side. We have been told that the chronicle of the Abbe Raynal was more fanciful than true, and that the poem "Evangeline," drawing its conclusions therefrom, has erred, so that we have a sort of poetical Utopia instead of the veritable village of Grand Pre. Who shall certify, however, that the Abbe Raynal's account is untrue? But whether true or not, in the main features, the elements of humanity, of justice and of mercy remain, the same; and the world, instructed by the poets exquisite idyl, will continue to recognize at least the ethical and poetic truth of the pathetic narrative, and will not in its heart acquit the British authorities of the harshness, injustice, and cruelty which have been charged against them.

We have a History of Nova Scotia before us in which the Abbe Raynal's chronicle is quoted, with points of refutation. "The habitations were extremely convenient, and furnished as neatly as a substantial farmer's house in Europe." But Messrs. Beauharnois and Hocquart writing from Quebec to the Count de Maurepas, declare "the Acadians have not extended their plantations since they have come under English dominion, their houses are wretched wooden boxes, without convenience and without ornament, and scarcely containing the necessary furniture." This the historian must set down as fact, to the absolute discredit of Raynal. But why? Could not this aristocratic Frenchman have erred in his estimate of what sufficed for comfort and content among a simple peasant people? Or must we suppose he had inspected in detail each village and intended his words to be descriptive of the whole? His aim seems to have been to show that the conditions of British rule had been discouraging to the Acadian farmers, and they had recently begun to show signs of slackness and poverty in the construction of their dwellings. We cannot be sure that Beauharnois and Hocquart told the absolute truth, and that Raynal did not. Again, in respect of their community life, so attractively presented in the poem, and in the chronicle: "Whatever little difficulties arose were amicably adjusted by their elders."

"Thus dwell in love these simple Acadian farmers." This, in our mind, is no more than balanced by the counter statement of Governor Armstrong that "they are a litigious sort of people, and so ill-natured to one another, as to daily encroach on their neighbors' properties." Let him who will, having taken account of the racial and political situation, of man's liability to bias and prejudice in the work of making good his own cause, accept the later statement as unqualified truth to the discredit of an unfortunate people; but we refuse to do this. But on the side of kings and governments there is power, and often the assertion of righteousness; though it does not always follow that truth and justice are there.

Mr. Herbin writes with reference to the character of Governor Lawrence, and his policy toward the Acadians: "The last, the most famous, the most infamous, of all the governors of Nova Scotia is now before us, who is to introduce the last act of the Acadian drama. This is Charles Lawrence, the man who will ever be remembered for his connection with the deportation of the Acadians. He was a soldier, bold and active, keen and intelligent, but ambitious and unscrupulous to the highest degree. His antecedents were humble, but being endowed with more than ordinary ability, without the restraints of a refined or noble nature, he gave way when opportunity offered for high purpose and manly action, to the baser and more sordid impulses which seem to have ruled his life. He was, moreover, haughty and disdainful in manner. Without real friends, his acts received support from his agents and from those who were unable to resist him. Of low cunning, a consummate flatterer of the higher, an oppressor of the weak, with false promises and every effort to accomplish his own personal ends, Lawrence has the unenviable distinction of having caused the expatriation of the Acadians, and of having done it with great cruelty. These facts have come to light only within a few years, through the researches of French writers."

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We can but wish that Mr. Herbin had cited some documents and authorities in detail, which perhaps he may do in a later edition. But with a man of such a character it can be readily perceived that the bolder Acadians must have been goaded to such imprudent excesses as might easily be urged and used against them.

We confess to a foregone sympathy for the Acadian people, and a respect for them, which we believe is not without warrant in the facts of the case and in justice and reason as well. We appreciate the delicacy and difficulty of the political situation, and the necessity for a loyal and homogeneous population. We by no means approve of the acts of treachery and violence that parties or individuals among the French committed; though we think a more cordial attitude on the part of the English might have materially relieved the situation, had it been their aim to retain the Acadian settlers, and that they might ultimately have been brought to take the oath of allegiance. But we honor the sentiment of loyalty to their native king and country. That those dear ties of blood and birth cannot be easily broken bespeaks an essentially noble and upright people. We look upon these unfortunate as the victims of an unsettled and changeable political situation over which they had no control. We conceive of them as not all warriors, demagogues, or political spies. The majority were home-loving affectionate, and domestic, as poet and annalist represents them. Old France was a dear dream of the heart, and sacred as the unseen paradise; but their real concern, and the dearest spot on earth, was that which for eighty years they or their fathers had dwelt upon. "They had long ago learned the necessity of making use of the natural conditions of their surrounding, so that their habits and customs were characteristic of the country. It was all the harder for them when the conditions were changed by being driven away from their own country, to begin life in places entirely different from what they had known. Many of them had been born to the lives they were now living and, so to speak, they had become part of the soil. . . . Various amusements made the cold winter pleasant. Singing, dancing and open hospitality cheered their homes. They lived as one large family, bound by the ties of religion, race and kinship." That they were a people of intelligence, spirit and self-respect, with some faculty for dignified literary expression, is manifest by the memorial document addressed to Governor Lawrence and his council, which was preposterously constructed as impertinent. That the people, as regards the intercourse of the sexes, were prudent and virtuous, is alleged by the Abbe Raynal: "There never was an instance in this society of an unlawful commerce between the sexes." That pure, elevated, if not artistic and literary tastes, and a true poetical feeling, existed among them, there are not wanting the indications. Upon such a people, by the arbitrary decree of a Provincial Governor, and without the warrant of the King whose subjects they were, fell a pitiless doom. If they had perished by the

sword, and their ashes had been left to moulder with their households it might only sound severer. After all it is said this will remain in the mind of the poet at least, one of the political crimes detaching the Anglo-Saxon lures.

Several months ago we clipped from a Canadian paper the following:

"In taking stock now and then of our Canadian lyrics one name not long since familiar in college circles in Toronto is too seldom heard. The thoughtful face and luminous eyes of Philips Stewart are affectionately and reverently held in memory by those who recognized in the young poet's work a promise of great things, unhappily unfulfilled in his early death. He was our Canadian Keats, and wrote with a not less vivid sense of beauty. In his slight book of poems published by Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., London, is to be found in a poem entitled "Corydon and Amaryliss" the following passage, which now in these long, warm days which he so exquisitely describes seems like a regretful echo from the tomb:—

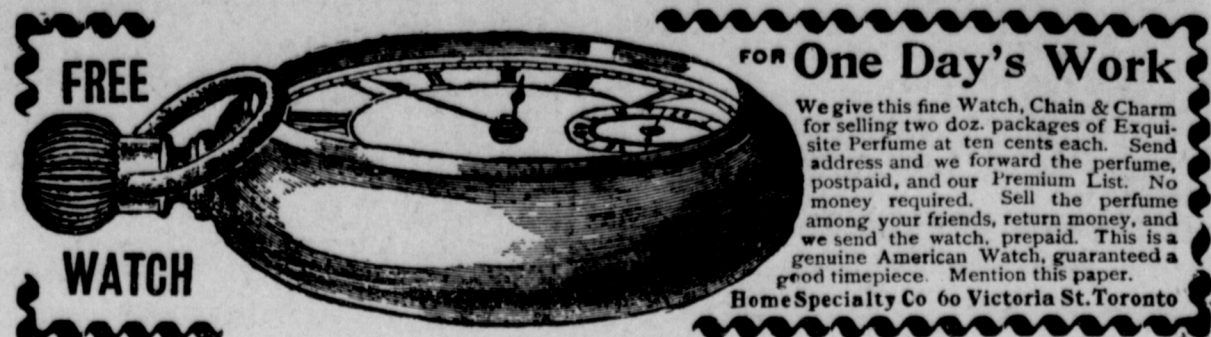
"Will not the voice of spring,
These cheerful signs of life and fragrant winds,
That wander through the drooping willows, win
Thee back to glowing life again? And thou,
O robin, with the mellow flute so full
Of melody, 'twas almost to forget
That this fair world of ours could know one pang
Or tear, it was so beautiful, so full
Of joy. How my young heart did wildly bound
With thee in warbling greenness of glad spring!
My youth hath been attuned to thy sweet song;
We have together roamed by mossy streams,
Whose gladness mingled with our own, through
fields
Where blue and berries ripened into bloom,
And by the leafy greenness of cool woods.
Our lives were like a merry dream, serene
And shadowless; passion and apathy
Were far away, when thou wert breathing forth
Thine ecstasy."

This little book, with its simple title, "Poems, by Philips Stewart," and its brief greeting inscribed on a flyleaf, is among the choicest of our possessions. The poetry may be reckoned immature, but it has yet potency of beauty which prophesied a rare unfolding, had not the young poet been cut off so untimely. He may be forgotten, but some who knew him and who have his book, will prize him for what he was and for what he might have become. His sonnet on Keats, and his Lyric,—"In shadowy calm the boat," are worthy of a place in any collection of Canadian verse.

"Zion's Herald" of Boston, and the "Christian Advocate" of New York, have an memorable dispute, reminding us of the positive man and his pertinacious wife concerning the identity of rat and mouse. Briefly to state the facts, as we have understood them,—the original "Zion's Herald," which, appearing in Jan. 1823, was the first religious and denominational weekly in the world but subsequently became by change of proprietorship consolidated with the "Christian Advocate and Journal." At a later period a religious paper was started at Boston, which finally bore, and has borne for many a year the appropriate and euphonious title of "Zion's Herald." Now the question of questions, which at uncertain periods recurs, with much ardor and amplitude of discussion, is this: Which paper is the oldest? It is on the tapis again, and Dr. Buckley has spread the matter categorically over a whole page of the "Advocate," for did not Dr. Parkhurst unwaveringly declare in his commemorative number, that "Zion's Herald" is the oldest Methodist newspaper in the world? Unmindful of a foregone controversy, as long as that concerning the supralapsarians, in which each editor had settled it to his satisfaction. We should not be surprised if some of the constituency of both papers were slightly weary of the sight of this venerable chestnut, and would recommend a future reticence like that observed by the goodwife in the ballad of Goethe.

"Great interest attaches to these studies of negro character" ("Folks from Dixie," by Paul Lawrence Dunbar,) says "The London Critic"; "for the author is himself a young negro who has written verse of real distinction. Although the people of color have often been studied sympathetically by many authors, 'Folks from Dixie' is one of the first contributions which they have made to literature. One may heartily praise the book without going so far as Mr. Howells and hailing it as a work of genius. The stories are told in a naive style, and give one the impression of immense good heartedness. The kindly nature of the African is dwelt upon, and Paul Dunbar does a service to his race in making his readers realize it. There are both humor and pathos in the sketches, some of which are new in subject and treatment; others, like 'A Family Feud,' are but old world themes in a black mask."

We had not supposed that a work of importance by Thomas Carlyle, yet unknown to the general public, could be in existence; but such an unexpected treasure is announced



ced as forthcoming during the autumn. "Historical Sketches of Noted Persons and Events in the Reigns of James I. and Charles I." is its title; and the reason of its long delay seems to be that after having written it the sage of Chelsea contemplated a more extensive work on the same subject, which, however he was diverted from executing by the greater interest he began to feel in the preparation of his "Cromwell's Letters and Speeches," in which work he absorbed considerable of the material he had worked into the "Sketches." The manuscript has been discovered, among a number of the author's papers, by his nephew, Mr. Alexander Carlyle; and, as it is found to be in itself a complete and interesting work, it has been decided to publish it.

Joaquin Miller, or Cincinnatus Heine Miller, or "the wild Byron of the West," who drew our early thought to El Dorado, and made for us enchanted ground of Arizona and Nicaragua—though he has grown gray in the service, is still before us a striking figure, dramatic and imposing as ever. He is just home from Klondike, with nuggets and gold-dust for California as well as dreams and fancies, and he avers: "The Klondike mines are certainly the richest ever found on the face of the globe, but the gold is ten fold harder to get than in any camp I have ever been in." Mr. Miller wears well and it is said that his "latest portrait shows him as having aged but little, though the snows of many winters are whitening his lengthening beard and shortening locks." Mr. Miller is not absorbed in poetry to the exclusion of interest in public affairs, but he has his peculiar opinions and sympathies. He leans toward the native and bohemian peoples, who live "near to nature's heart," rather than the more complex and strongly organized society. He is interested in the Eastern affairs, and the prospective American possessions there, and he has a warm side turned toward Hawaii and her native glories. On his return from his Pacific voyage he spoke in rapturous terms of Honolulu, and denounced the government of President Dole, declaring that "there had been nothing so monstrous since the Reign of Terror." He has seen some phases of northern life worthy of poetry, and it is expected that "the next book Mr. Miller gives the public will be inspired by a muse he found amid the snow-clad Alaska mountains."

The Cincinnati "Time's-Star," devotes a whole column to the vilest doggerel extant, and entitles his screed, "A Sucker State Poet." The "poet" is indeed a "sucker," and is in the most rudimentary tadpole state. It must be inferred that to win the recognition of a western editor an alleged "poet" must be sufficiently cheap. It will be the minimum and not the maximum of poetic inspiration that brings the bays. If the "Sucker State Poet" could by any possibility have done worse he might have had an editorial column and a half. What satisfaction must accrue to a vain and vulgar soul, hungry for just such notoriety, who without any title to praise for his work, desires promotion. The indulgent editor of a city daily knows what will meet his wishes.

The lovers of Ian Maclaren may anticipate a new volume of stories to be published during the autumn. PASTOR FELIX.

Decline of Races.

Official statistics are quoted showing that the birth rate in France has fallen from 33 per 1,000 at the beginning of the century to 22 per 1,000, or less than the death rate. In some of the United States, however, this matter is even more serious, it would appear. Thus, the birth rate in Nevada is given at 16.30 per 1,000; Maine, 17.99; New Hampshire, 18.4; and Vermont, 18.5, while California strange to say, has a birth rate of 19.4 per 1,000, or nearly 12 per cent. less than that of France—a fact which, in view of the favorable climate, ample area, and diversity of interest and employment characteristic of the State, is most striking. Following California is Connecticut, which has a birth rate of 21.03 per 1,000, Massachusetts, 21.5 per, while Rhode Island has 22.5 or a somewhat higher rate than the French; then Wyoming, with its 21.8, comes between Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and Oregon figures as 22.5. These data, it is asserted, show that within a period varying from 60 to 200 years, according to

circumstances, the Anglo-Saxon race of inhabitants of New England and the Pacific coast will be replaced by another.

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The Greater Man.

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Neighbors—"In honor of Dewey, I presume?"

Newpope—"No. In honor of his millionaire uncle."—Norristown Herald.

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