

Notches on The Stick

Blinthe verse made all the dim sense clear
That smiles of babbling babes conceal:
Prayer's perfect heart spoke here: and here
Rose notes of blameless woe and weal.
More soft than this poor song's appeal.
Where orchards bask, where cornfields wave,
They dropped like rain, that cleanse and lave,
And scattered all the year along,
Like dewfall on an April grave,
Sweet water from the well of song.

This is an unexpected tribute from one of the most mundane, if also most musical, of the poets of our time, to one of the most ethereal and spiritual, in whose breathing was the aroma of devotion, and whose brow seemed fanned by angels, where her praiser heard the autumnal leaves rustled by the feet of fauns. Yet we can be pleased that Swinburne has in him the grace to recognize and admire Christina Rossetti, for want of whom the world has been poorer since that December day (1894) when her "coffin was lowered from wintry sunshine into snow-sprinkled earth, in Highgate cemetery, London, and a robin sang near by, the tribute of one singer to another." But the unlike discover and regard each other.

Christina Rossetti, (who bears one of the sweetest of poetical names), has evidently found a competent biographer in MacKenzie Bell, and one of deep appreciation. He dealt with a spirit quiet and retired, whose history was of the inner life, with no more important events than the birth of poems destined to the praise of the present and of succeeding times. The few slender facts of her biography are skillfully if briefly told. We see her as she appeared to human eyes, and we also see her in the light of critical discernment and of gracious appreciation. A fair face, somewhat marred, like the face of Him she loved most, and which came to bear the imprint of extreme suffering. "In early life she is described as really lovely in appearance, with warm brown hair, peculiar eyes of hazel and blue-gray, one hue shifting into the other, with an expression of pensive sweetness in her countenance." There is now in the National Gallery a picture by her brother, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, the inspiration of which was drawn from her girlish face. Saint Christina figures as the Virgin. We are thankful for such glimpses as show her the being she was: "It was in the June of 1863," writes Mrs. Frend, "that Miss Christina Rossetti came upon her first memorable visit to my home among the Surrey hills. She was then a dark-eyed slender lady, in the plenitude of her poetic powers, having already written, some of her most perfect poems—'Goblin Market' and 'Dreamland.' To my childish eyes she appeared like some fairy princess who had come from the sunny south to play with me. In appearance she was Italian, with olive complexion and deep hazel eyes. She possessed, too, the Italian voice, which all the Rossettis were gifted with—a voice made up of strange, sweet inflections which rippled into silvery modulations in sustained conversation, making ordinary English words and phrases fall upon the ear with a soft, foreign, musical intonation though she pronounced the words themselves with the purest of English accents." This nightingale of English song remained mateless, though sought after, and sat for long nights with her bosom against a thorn. The painter who sighed after her in vain, and the man of letters, passed from the earth before her, for all the anguish that sought to stifle her songs. We have a view of her reclining upon her mother, who bends over her with that expression of consoling love and pity which mothers only can show. Resignation cannot disguise the torture that is in her face. Into her life was put "a measure of pathos and tears and comprehension of suffering, by various sorrows, disappointments, and illnesses." Consumption threatened her youth; angina pectoris drove its ten thousand needles through her heart, during her

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early womanhood; then she was long and distressingly ill, with what is known as Graves' Disease, causing a protrusion of the eyes; then followed a dropsical affection of the heart; and finally a cancer was cut from her flesh, only to return bringing with it death. No wonder, when all hope had gone, that she lifted her appealing eyes to a friend and said: "Will you promise to pray for me? I have to suffer so very much."

Christina Rossetti approaches the highest rank among the feminine singers of Britain. "There can be little doubt," wrote Andrew Lang, shortly after her death, "that we are now deprived of the greatest English poet of the sex which is made to inspire poetry rather than to create it. Except Mrs. Browning we have no one to be named with Miss Rossetti, in all the roll-call of our literary history. . . . For the quality of conscious art, and for music and color of words in regular composition, she seem to me to be unmatched." And, in the opinion of another critic and poet, Watts-Dunton, "of all contemporary poets," she was "the most indubitably inspired." But the lover and student of Mrs. Browning must surely convict him of extravagance; for has not Miss Rossetti declared, in answer to a similar literary dictum of Mr. Patchett Martin: "I doubt whether the woman is born, or for many a long day, if ever, will be born, who will balance, not to say outweigh, Mrs. Browning."

The spirit of Christina Rossetti's muse is intensely Christian and devotional. The Christ she adores in her songs. Her brother William, in opposition to Mrs. Meynall, who declared she always approached her subjects from the poetic side, says,—"No; from the religious side." If, he declares, she wrote as a poet, it was because she first believed as a saint. Watts-Dunton thinks that in her writings "we see at its best what Christianity is as the motive power of poetry. The Christian idea is essentially feminine (?) and of this feminine idea Christina Rossetti's poetry is full. In motive power the difference between classic and Christian poetry must needs be very great. But this at least cannot be controverted, that the history of literature shows no human development so beautiful as the ideal Christian woman of our own day. She is unique indeed." "The quality of her verse is inspirational, and she instinctively attains her effects. As her brother, William says, she reaches them "by an internal sense of fitness, a mental touch as delicate as the finger-tips of the blind. She simply, as it were, pours words in the mold of her idea, and the resultant effigy comes right because the idea and the mind of which it is a phrase, are beautiful ones,—serious, yet feminine, and in part almost playful." She had a seeing eye, and a power of lucid expression. It will be a while, and it may be a long one, before her place in the English choir is filled; and men will still turn, with fine regard to the purest and noblest, if not the greatest, of the family of Rossetti.

The editor of Butler's Journal inquires: "Can you give me any account of the life and writings of Ellen Hamlin Butler? What is her present address, and is the name she goes by her maiden or married name?"

Miss Butler is the daughter of Rev. Nathaniel Butler, D. D. She was born at Auburn, Me., in 1860, her mother being a daughter of Judge Stephen A. Emory. The Butler family have resided at Camden, Me., at Alton, Ill., and at Bangor, Me. We do not know her present address, but presume it could be obtained from the Portland Transcript office, since she is an occasional contributor to that paper. The poem from which we recently quoted a line appears in "The Poets of Maine," and it runs as follows:

The Voice of Maine.

Greece in her day of power saw,
Amid her matchless forms of stone,
A race, by nature's happiest law,
More perfect. On her sea swept throne
She mourned the grace of which they died,
And wept for sterner clay again.
Be mine the nobler Spartan pride,
Behold my sons—the sons of Maine.

Rome strewed the streets with garlands, when
Her legions came with captive bands.
Those were the days of mighty men;
But those the days of wasted lands,
Behold my warriors come! No sound
Of wailing breaks the martial strain,

No blood of slaves is on the crowned:

These are my sons—the sons of Maine.

These are my sons. No mystic sage
Hath reverence like those who read
The prophecy on war's dark page,
And bade the land be comforted.
For some with counsel, some with sword,
Went down, an awful cup to drain,
And knew the fiat of the Lord;
These are my sons—the sons of Maine.

The Nation knows my children—they
Who carry in their souls and wills
Some mood that must command and sway,—
A birthright of their frost-hewn hills.
And those who knew no vaunted part
Still tolled in silence for my gain,
All share the bounties of my heart—
These are my sons—the sons of Maine.

Young hearts are here, who only wear
The earlier glory manhood yields;
They hold my future,—wait to bear
Fresh harvests from far broader fields.
Today there is no thought of strife,
No ghost of old, forgotten pain,
Brethren—whose life is all my life
These are my sons—the sons of Maine.

O voices, winter clear, awake
In all the wild familiar shrines;
In thunder on the great shores break,
Call deathless, from the mountain pines.
The chant that lulled their cradle-rest
Is sweet to homesick heart and brain:
Cry, "Welcome!" down each cliff and crest,
For these my sons—the sons of Maine.

No collection of Miss Butler's poems has, as yet, been published.

We have a copy of the Hagerstown Mail, giving additional particulars, and written in high terms of eulogy, concerning the late William Armstrong Collins. In speaking of the varied talents of Mr. Collins, the writer says: "Widely ranging were the gifts he bore so modestly. He was as vivid in conversation as with the pen, his expression abounding in wit and wisdom, in humor and happy suggestion, so that it was a high privilege to hear him discourse; and in it all never came a spark of envy, ill will or scandal, differentiating him and his ideas and views at once, as the Gulf Stream shears the Atlantic from the vast ocean of his fellow-beings. He had a delightful way of treating even his own suffering, looking at pain in the quaint philosophical way that was all his own, and bearing the dreadful sufferings with the fortitude of a hero—a hero, even though the struggle was not a world battle, but confined to the narrow limits of his own body, and though he knew composedly and even with cheerfulness then, that the tide of the combat was against him, and he must soon leave behind him on this earth all who were near and dear to him. He died, as he had lived, a brave, a chivalric man. Many are they who will cherish his memory, and honor him for what he was. Only those who knew him best fully realize how brilliant a career was curbed of its proper path by feeble health, and how cultivated, refined and starlike a mind reposes now in perfect peace." Had William Collins been a man of far less mark, it would be good to hear of so serene and steadfast a spirit, and of a character that the furnace can refine, but not consume. There have been Sidneys in private life since he, who made illustrious the field of Zutphen, passed out of time. The world will show more of them as the days go on, for it cannot be that such shall altogether perish from the earth.

We learn, by the Montreal Star, of the publication of a work in prose, by the Canadian poet, Arthur Weir. It is entitled "A Canuck Down South," and records in a pleasantly familiar manner his observations and experiences during a tour in the South and West in pursuit of health. The many who know Mr. Weir as a lyrical writer, and have tested his aptness at descriptive verse, will not be surprised to find the same pictorial grace and color in his prose writing: The reviewer gives a quotable example descriptive of scenery in part of Arizona, which we reproduce:

"We seem to be in Nature's boiler-room, and her stupendous energy is shown in

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rivers of congealed lava and cinders heaped up mountain high.

"Among yonder peaks lies cold and still the crater of many a volcano which once perhaps rivalled Krakatta, Etna, and Vesuvius. In the dawning ages, when the continent bore a different shape, and strange monsters lurked in the sea, and stranger trol the earth, what a dreadful scene must the Arizona have presented, the solid world trembling with pent-up vapours, the lava winding luridly down the vast mountain-slopes—the air thick with steam and ashes, and sick with the continuous thunder of mighty explosions. For miles upon miles, on all sides, as the train swept along, we saw nothing but the relics of subterranean fires." As a contrast to this, here are a few sentences from page 95, descriptive of California: "It was like Arcadia. The sun sauntered lazily through the sky, day after day, and let the seasons take care of themselves. The century plant thought itself very energetic because it had bloomed once since the Declaration of Independence, while the flowers forgot time altogether and blossomed the whole year round. There a thousand years were as a day, and a day was a thousand years."

Mr. Weir has for some time been industriously preparing a still larger work, which is now in press. It is entitled "From Paddle to Propeller," and is, "a work on the history of transportation in Canada."

Mr. Henry T. Morgan, of Toronto, who recently published a Dictionary of Canadian biography, mentioned in these columns, promises a work of more than ordinary interest. "Types of Canadian Women, Past and Present," is to be a book as well of artistic as of literary and historic value. It is heralded in the Canadian press in a manner calculated to draw attention: "The volume, or volumes, besides recording the names and achievements of Canadian maids and dames from the days of Marie Madeline de Vercheres, Mlle. de Lotbiniere, and Mary Simpson down to our own time, will be profusely illustrated with portraits and other pictorial representations. Many copies of paintings and photographs have been received from London and Paris for insertion in the book."

William B. Cushing says of Rudyard Kipling, in his late review of "The Day's Work," in The Home Journal: "Sentimental, Latinized-inclined minds will not find much consolation in Kipling. It is the opening of a green chestnut burr—this Kipling cult. There is beauty of style and exquisite word-painting at times; but Kipling will switch off into his roughest, harshest character tones before you realize that he has left you. We may say that Kipling, like Carlyle, has won his spurs in literature in spite of the hard-scrabble road over which he hurries. Intellectual invalids and sybarites need not try to follow him, for they will be in the lurch in a twinkling. His style is tonic from A to Z.—no let-up. Kipling may be properly the young man's author; but then it is the young man who is to give the direction in coming literature. He seems at once the product and pioneer of his age in Anglo-Saxon romance; and he is Anglo-Saxon in every fibre." It is said that a great and new stylist must create the taste by which he is enjoyed. May it not be equally true that time is required for the creation of that taste, and that some may acquire it who at first revolt. Even if the style be vicious, or have crude or diseased elements, nevertheless the same holds true. We may grow to toleration, then to liking, then to passionate admiration. For even

Vice is a creature of such hidden mien
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
But seen too oft, familiar with its face,
We learn to love, then pity, then embrace.

With all that might be urged against his peculiar style, we would not however, have these lines too strictly applied to Mr. Kipling.

PASTOR FELIX.

Merely Cogitating.

A certain judge who, during the plea of a rather prosy counsel, could not refrain from gently nodding his head in sleep, was caught at this by the lawyer, who looked significantly at him.

"Perhaps," said the judge testily and prevaricatingly, "the counsel thinks the court was asleep, but he may be assured that the court was merely cogitating."

The lawyer talked on. Presently the judge, again overcome by his somnolency, nodded off, and aroused himself with a little sudden snoring snore.

"If you please your honour," said the lawyer, "I will suspend my plea until the court shall have ceased to cogitate audibly."

"You may go on, Mr. F.," said the judge; and he did not fall asleep again.

Evidence.

"I don't know whether you were in the army or not," said the street-car conductor who had been instructed not to collect fares from soldiers. "You haven't your uniform." "That's a fact. But taste this. 'It's quinine.' 'Yes.' Watch me swallow it. There," he proceeded, as he

smacked his lips; "that ought to be proof enough. When a man can eat a handful of quinine without making a face, the chances are about a hundred to one that he has been in one of Uncle Sam's camps for a while."—Washington Star.

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Bear in mind that rheumatism neglected means increased sufferings and certain death. Be wise while you have a fair measure of strength left. Use Paine's Celery Compound and banish an enemy that has no mercy when it obtains the mastery. It solely remains with you to determine whether you will banish danger or remain in a misery and wretchedness.

Victoria's Pagoda.

It is not generally known that at Osborne there is a garden cottage in the shape of a pagoda, where none may enter except her Majesty. This cottage holds nothing but mementos of the late Prince Consort and relics of the Queen's youth, as well as the toys and games of all her children, many of which the Prince Consort made himself for he was no mean carpenter. There are also here wonderful fishes caught by the Duke of Coburg in Canadian seas, birds and tigers shot by the Prince of Wales while in India, a mummy case brought from Egypt, and other precious curiosities that are dearly prized by the Queen, who visits this family museum every day while at Osborne, and sits among the remains of her own and her children's youth.

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Postmaster: "Don't you know anyone in the village?"

Tourist: "No."

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Tourist: "Yes."

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