

dren's League in which she takes a deep and practical interest. The motto of the League is, "Try to do at least one kind deed every day" and its aim is in this simple and attractive fashion to instil and develop a habit of kindness. Her Ladyship advocated the establishment of a branch in Montreal, an idea which is already being put into active life.

A new feature in temperance work is announced in the shape of a contest among Temperance elocutionists for silver, gold and diamond medals. Mr. Demorest, of New York, has established, at his own personal expense, and under his own personal supervision, a Medal Contest Bureau whose motto is "Contest is Conquest," and a tournament has been arranged for Montreal district to take place some time in December.

A curious freak of commercial life is the sale of unclaimed freight which has become an annual event in connection with our large transport services. It is customary to neglect a newspaper or a novel, excusable to forget a satchel, and a valise may not be worth a second thought, but when the unclaimed list boasts of boxes, barrels, crates, trunks, baskets, stoves, cows and horses, it is time for the psychologist to interfere. One of these sales on behalf of the Canadian Pacific Railway a few days ago fell through metaphorically by the audience falling through literally. The rotten floor gave way, and auctioneer and hammer with the nondescript multitude which is wont to congregate where a bargain may drop into its lap, were precipitated into the cellar beneath. Providence was compassionate. No one was hurt.

The Sisters of the Hotel Dieu have been petitioning to give evidence in their own convent before a commissioner without the necessity of appearing in open court. Judgment is just given in their favour on the ground that although civilly dead the Sisters are alive enough to give evidence, that no proof was shown that the opposing party would suffer by the petition being granted, and that it was a serious inconvenience to cloistered nuns to leave their monastery.

In order to secure a supply of pure ice for the summer a joint-stock company is building an enormous tank in the suburbs, lined with cement, and capable of containing 500,000 gallons. The water is to be filtered before being run into the tank, and will be artificially frozen in layers a foot thick. The ice will then be cut in blocks and stored.

Mr. Ragan, with his marvellous lantern accompaniment, has been providing the delights of a week's travel without more than an hour of its fatigue.

University circles are congratulating themselves upon the recent bequest of the late Mr. Thomas Workman. The criticisms of Sir Wm. Dawson's book, "Modern Science in Bible Lands" are causing many of the author's best friends to hope that the learned gentleman will give up his attempt to reconcile the narratives of Genesis with each other and with science. Dr. Driver, perhaps the highest living authority, in a critique in the *Contemporary Review* of March last, says Sir William's attempt "shows that he is unacquainted equally with the ground upon which it rests and with the results that have been obtained and unanimously accepted by those engaged in the study," and that if the endeavour to reconcile the narratives "by honest and legitimate means does not succeed, it must be abandoned." Few books have had the ill fortune to call forth more scathing rebuke than Dr. Driver's article; while an article in the *Westminster* for May proves that the chief recommendation of Sir William's latest effort is that it has provided the readers of the *Westminster* with an opportunity of enlightening themselves as to modern research on this question.

VILLE MARIE.

### THE SONNET.—VIII.

Whither is gone the wisdom and the power  
That ancient sages scattered with the notes  
Of thought-suggesting lyres?

SUCH is the beginning of a sonnet by Hartley Coleridge, and if the question be allowed a wider range than lyrics we can repeat it yet more sadly to-day. The epic poem is generally thought to be no longer possible, though the slder Coleridge believed one subject to be available, and that was the "Destruction of Jerusalem," which he himself schemed when twenty-five years old. The drama of England has been gradually declining since its wonderfully meteor-like blaze in Elizabethan atmosphere, until it now nominally depends on a few brilliant efforts, the more bright because exceptional, amid a mass of translations and adaptations worthy of the taste but unworthy of the talent of the times. Artificial forms of verse have been resuscitated from Provençal graves to serve as winding-sheets for much wasted genius, and the history and analysis of all physical and psychical nature is temporarily preserved in an interminable multitude of sonnets, for which kind of composition a veritable epidemic has long set in and shows no sign of abatement.

It is at once sustaining and sad to read the old epics and dramas—and we can read them all to-day in excellent translations—sustaining because they ennoble the mind, enrich the heart and reduce the rampant egotism of contemporary literature to its proper insignificance; and sad, inasmuch as the decay of art and the destruction of nature are made more evident to all who reflect. Mahābhārata, Iliad, Odyssey, Nibelungenlied, Kalevala, Æneid, Lusiad, Gerusalemme Liberata and Paradise Lost for epics—and dramas too numerous to mention. The strength and purity of them form a tonic for over-worked brains and worn-out hearts, to which no parallel exists in the quack-

literature of to-day. What has this to do with the sonnet? For reply let us read through the lines of Hartley Coleridge, that unhappy type of much modern poetry, as a fitting introduction to a ramble among other compositions inspired by the mighty writers of old:

Whither is gone the wisdom and the power  
That ancient sages scattered with the notes  
Of thought-suggesting lyres? The music floats  
In the void air; even at this breathing hour,  
In every cell and every blooming bower  
The sweetness of old lays is hovering still;  
But the strong soul, the self-constraining will,  
The rugged root that bare the winsome flower,  
Is weak and withered. Were we like the Fays  
That sweetly nestle in the foxglove bells,  
Or lurk and murmur in the rose-lipped shells  
Which Neptune to the Earth for quit-rent pays,  
Then might our pretty modern Philomels  
Sustain our spirits with their roundelay.

This is a fine sonnet, but not so powerful as the opening would lead us to expect. "The rose-lipped shells which Neptune to the earth for quit-rent pays" is remarkably happy. The fays and the foxglove bells remind us of Shakespeare's "Tempest":

Where the bee sucks, there lurk I;  
In a cowslip bell I lie;

and of Drayton's "Nymphidia":

And for the Queen a fitting bower  
(Quoth he) is that fair cowslip flower.

Hartley Coleridge has an interesting note on this passage, and concludes it with the following question, "Is not the proper etymology *Folk's*, i.e., fairies' glove? Surely Reynard does not wear gloves in popular tradition!" It may be mentioned that the Anglo-Saxon name of the flower is *foxes-glofa*, while two Welsh names are singularly enough *menyng-ellyllon* (elves' gloves), and *menyng-y-llwynog* (fox's glove). The sonnet is in a form used sometimes by Wordsworth, but not by older writers. It is an irregular Italian type, composed of a three-rhymed octave and two-rhymed sestet.

Let us take Homer as the first subject of sonnets on antiquity. The oldest of the Greek poets has been denied an individual existence by modern critics during the last two centuries; but to a poet the name of Homer is no mere covering for the lip-legends of many generations. This nebular theory is comparatively recent and mainly dependent on the absence of direct evidence and the value of comparisons. Older critics accepted the personality of Homer and believed him to be the author and not merely the collector of the epics and fragments; as well as several other lost poems. He was regarded as the painter and not the framer only of the great pictures that were attributed to him. Where nothing definite is known, critics abound and there is no lack of dispute concerning anything relating to Homer. The life-period of the poet has been variously conjectured, and Herodotus is laughed at as being two or three centuries too late in his reckoning; but "the most Homeric of historians" lived nearer to the old Greek singer than we do by twenty-two centuries. It is not known to what part of Greece he belonged, and the claims of the many rival cities, desirous of having been his birth-place, have never been settled. His blindness is conjectured much as the lameness of Shakespeare, from the interpretation of a few passages.

The method of composition by which the Homeric poems were produced is not agreed upon—and never will be; whether it was epic evolution or personal invention—whether they were the gradual formation by a series of song deposits through bardic generations, like the Scandinavian epics, or whether one man wove into strong epic material the legends and songs that had long existed in a loose popular form, as Shakespeare constructed certain of his dramas. It is barely possible that some evidence may be unearthed in the course of the archaeological researches that have of late years commenced on Homeric ground. At present facts are out of reach and fads are prevalent.

Mr. Andrew Lang has a sonnet dealing very finely with the matters we have touched so slightly upon; it is called

#### HOMERIC UNITY.

The sacred keep of Ilion is rent  
With shaft and pit; vague waters wander slow  
Through plains where Simois and Scamander went  
To war with gods and heroes long ago:  
Not yet to dark Cassandra, lying low  
In rich Mycenæ, do the Fates relent;  
The bones of Agamemnon are a show,  
And ruined in his royal monument.  
The awful dust and treasures of the Dead  
Has Learning scattered wide; but vainly thee,  
Homer, she measured with her Lesbian lead,  
And strives to rend thy songs: too blind is she  
To know the crown on thine immortal head  
Of indivisible supremacy.

Mr. William Sharp has directed the attention of deaf readers to the richness of the vowel music in the last two lines of the octave. The form of the octave is rarely met with in sonnet literature. The grave of Agamemnon was unearthed in 1876 by Dr. Schliemann with those of Cassandra and her children at Mycenæ, and the controversy between the great explorer of Ilion and his opponents is still carried on as to the correctness of his valuable discoveries, as he describes them.

The language used by Homer has caused much discussion; in addition to the various dialects found in his works, evidence of a very much older form of Greek than the main body of the works is written in has been adduced. Contentions on broad fields and hand-to-hand fights on details have been waged incessantly among the students; but the "orb of song" still shines in all its primal splendour. Coleridge said and all Wolfians agree with the utterance, "I have the firmest conviction that Homer is a mere

traditional synonym with, or figure for, the Iliad;" but whether this be so or not, Homer represents the personal commencement of Greek literature to most men. In the poetic mind his personality is clearly established.

The following sonnet by Hartley Coleridge is interesting because we have two versions. It also contains a quotation from Wordsworth, whose influence over the young poet was greater than that of any—even of his illustrious parent. A great sympathy existed between the two men, and when, after many trials, life became a final failure for [poor Hartley, he betook himself to live near the great nature-worshipper. When death released young Coleridge from the terrible mental struggle which made his life so gloomy, Wordsworth said, "Let him lie by us—he would have wished it," and the erring man was buried in Grasmere Churchyard.

#### HOMER.

Far from the sight of earth, yet bright and plain  
As the clear noon-day sun, an "orb of song"  
Lovely and bright is seen amid the throng  
Of lesser stars, that rise, and wax, and wane,  
The transient rulers of the fickle main;  
One constant light gleams through the dark and long  
And narrow aisle of memory. How strong,  
How fortified with all the numerous train  
Of truths wert thou, great poet of mankind,  
Who told'st in verse as mighty as the sea,  
And various as the voices of the wind,  
The strength of passion rising in the glee  
Of battle. Fear was glorified by thee  
And Death is lovely in thy tale enshrined.

Another version of this sonnet reads as follows:

Far from all measured space, yet clear and plain  
As sun at noon, a "mighty orb of song"  
Illumes extremest heaven. Beyond the throng  
Of lesser stars, that rise, and wax, and wane,  
The transient rulers of the fickle main,  
One steadfast light gleams through the dark and long  
And narrowing aisle of memory. How strong,  
How fortified with all the numerous train  
Of human truths, Great Poet of thy kind,  
Wert thou, whose verse, capacious as the sea,  
And various as the voices of the wind,  
Swell'd with the gladness of the battle's glee,  
And yet could glorify infirmity,  
When Priam wept, or shame-struck Helen pined.

The quotation from Wordsworth is extended in the second version, and is taken from the "Excursion," where it is applied to "the divine Milton."

Of the two versions we prefer the latter. The same rhymes are used in both, with the exception of the last two lines. In the first version "bright" is used twice as an attribute to the "orb of song," and a repetition of this kind depreciates the value of a sonnet. "The dark and long and narrowing aisle of memory" is preferable to "The dark and long and narrow aisle," and the second version gains by the naming of the two infirmities made glorious in Homer's verse. The general character and commonplace diction mar the close of the first version.

Keats has a sonnet addressed to Homer in which allusion is made to the traditional blindness of the old poet. In one of the Homeric hymns a passage occurs in which the sweetest singer is adjudged to be "the blind man that dwells in rocky Chios; his songs deserve the prize for all time to come." Keats was no Greek scholar, except through the media of translations and dictionaries of mythology. His knowledge of Homer was gained through Chapman's English version, on first looking into which formed the subject of Keats' best sonnet, already noted in our third article.

#### TO HOMER.

Standing aloof in giant ignorance,  
Of thee I hear, and of the Cyclades,  
As one who sits ashore and longs perchance  
To visit dolphin-coral in deep seas.  
So thou wast blind! but then the veil was rent,  
For Jove uncurtained heaven to let thee live,  
And Neptune made for thee a spermy tent,  
And Pan made sing for thee his forest-hive:  
Aye, on the shores of darkness there is light,  
And precipices show untrodden green;  
There is a budding morrow in mid-night,  
There is a triple sight in blindness keen;  
Such seeing had'st thou, as it once befel  
To Dian, Queen of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell.

Evidently inspired by the same feeling and thought which prompted Hartley Coleridge to utter the complaint which serves to open this article, Mr. Andrew Lang has produced a sonnet on "The Odyssey" which is one of the best of the few he has written. Mr. Lang is one of the masters of modern verse of invention, and there is a trace here and there in his sonnets of the pretty tricks of words that go so far to make the charm of *vers de société*, but which rather decrease the value of the sonnet. Mr. Lang is specially happy in two qualities that give a musical ring even to his sonnets—alliteration and vowel-modulation. An instance of these is seen in the line, "And only the low lutes of love complain." The quality that mostly permeates his sonnets is decorative and the strong foundation is sometimes doubtful, because so much art is implied.

#### THE ODYSSEY.

As one that for a weary space has lain  
Lulled by the song of Circe and her wine  
In gardens near the pale of Proserpine,  
Where that Ægean isle forgets the main,  
And only the low lutes of love complain,  
And only shadows of wan lovers pine,  
As such an one were glad to know the brine  
Salt on his lips, and the large air again,  
So gladly from the songs of modern speech  
Men turn and see the stars, and feel the free  
Shrill wind beyond the close of heavy flowers,  
And through the music of the languid hours  
They hear like ocean on a western beach  
The surge and thunder of the Odyssey.

Mr. Lang has yet another sonnet on Homer, in which he dares an image that shall take the place of the oceanic metaphor usually employed to poetically describe the great epics.