

# RED & BLUE PENCIL

Of the English poets of the circle of his personal friends, there was none of whom Mr. William Sharp, on his visit to this city, spoke with more kindly feeling than the late Philip Bourke Marston. There is a peculiar pathos in the story of his life. It was to him that Miss Mulock (Mrs. Craik) addressed that sweetest and most inspiring of tributes to the royalty of babyhood:

Look at me with thy large, brown eyes,  
Philip, my king;  
For round thee the purple shadow lies  
Of babyhood's royal dignities.

"Alas!" writes his American biographer, "for the large brown eyes!" When he was only three years old an accidental blow received while he was playing with some other little boys caused inflammation, which resulted in the loss of sight. His was an intense love of nature, and he never forgot the joy of seeing the waving trees, the pageant of the sunset and the faces of his friends. His childhood was haunted by the visions of the poet—the vision and the faculty divine—and dreams of fame were with him in his loneliness. Socially, he was highly favoured. Philip James Bailey was his godfather, Miss Mulock his godmother. The house of his father, Dr. John Westland Marston, was "the resort of men like Browning, Dickens, Thackeray and all the group of intellectual giants of that time." The doctor himself, like his namesake of the Elizabethan galaxy, was a dramatist. His mother was a cultivated woman, well fitted to be the wife and mother of a poet. One of his sisters also became a poet's wife.

Philip was fourteen when he first met Swinburne, whose first series of "Poems and Ballads" he already knew by heart. Both the author of "Atalanta" and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, with whom he became acquainted later, did much to encourage and develop the blind boy's genius. But sorrow sat beside his hearth. When he was twenty he lost his mother, and then "a nearer one yet and a dearer one," his betrothed, passed away and left him desolate. He was blessed with the intimacy of a young man, gifted like himself, a painter of promise and an author of more than promise; but him, too, he was destined to lose. Not, indeed, that he had not many friends, American as well as English. For several years before his death (February 13, 1887) he was well known to American lovers of poetry. The venerable Whittier, Paul Hamilton Hayne, Richard Watson Gilder were among his admirers and correspondents. Louise Chandler Moulton was the friend of the family and was destined to edit his poems and to write one of the most touching tributes to his memory. His portrait is before us. "He had," says Mrs. Moulton, "a wonderfully fine brow. His brown eyes were still beautiful in shape and colour. His dark brown hair and beard had glints of chestnut, and all his colouring was rich and warm. His was a singularly refined face, with a beautiful expression when in repose, keenly sensitive, but with full, pleasure-loving lips, that made one understand how hard his limitations must be for him to whom beauty and pleasure were so dear." Mr. Sharp has edited a collection of Philip's tales, in the preparatory Memoir to which he speaks of his friend as being "possessed of an occult, magnetic quality of attraction which few people could resist." He gave some interesting details of his intercourse with the young poet, his household and the literary circle therewith associated, which were recalled to my mind some months ago when I read of Dr. Marston's death.

In a codicil to his will, John Westland Marston devised that some of his books should be taken by each of a number of friends whom he named. He also bequeathed a letter from Elizabeth Barrett Browning and all the typewritten or other compositions of his son, Philip Bourke, to Louise Chandler Moulton, of Boston, Massachusetts, together with £200, a legacy from his son, which Mrs. Moulton had insisted on leaving to the testator. In the list of friends who were to receive sets of books from his library is the name of Philip James Bailey. Fifty years ago, on the publication of "Festus," Dr. Marston wrote thus: "I know no poem in any language that can be compared with it in copiousness and imagery. The universe is as life with symbols to this poet as it is with facts to the common observer. His illustrations, sometimes bold and towering as the mountains, are at others soft, subtle and delicate as the mists that veil their summits. But better than this, with a truth, force and simplicity seldom paralleled, we have here disclosed the very inmost life of a sincere and energetic mind. Metaphysical and physiological speculation are, so to speak, actualized and verified by the earnestness and passion of the writer. There are few books in which what is so profound in its essence is rendered so familiar in its exposition." Nor was this enthusiastic judgment exceptional. From critics like the late Lord Lytton, R. H. Horne, W. H. Ainsworth and others of rank no less exalted in the hierarchy of letters, tributes of felicitation poured in upon the young author of "Festus," who was greeted by no trivial consensus as among the first, if not the very first poet of the age. I can well recall when I shared in the aftermath of this fervid admiration.

As an example of Philip Bourke Marston's style and thought, and also as being in harmony with the fleeting

season through which we are passing, I give the following poem:

## SUMMER CHANGES.

Sang the Lily and sang the Rose  
Out of the heart of my garden close:  
"O joy, O joy of the summer tide!"  
Sang the Wind, as it moved above them;  
"Roses were sent for the Sun to love them,  
Dear little buds, in the leaves that hide!"

Sang the Trees, as they rustled together:  
"O the joy of the summer weather!  
Roses and Lilies, how do you fare?"  
Sang the Red Rose, and sang the White:  
"Glad we are of the sun's large light,  
And the song of the birds that dart through the air."

Lily and Rose and tall green Tree,  
Swaying boughs where the bright birds be,  
Thrilled by music and thrilled by wings,  
How glad they were on that summer day!  
Little they recked of cold skies and gray,  
Or the dreary dirge that a Storm-Wind sings!

Golden butterflies gleam in the sun,  
Laugh with the flowers, and kiss each one;  
And great bees come, with their sleepy tune,  
To sip their honey and circle round;  
And the flowers are lulled by that drowsy sound,  
And fall asleep in the heart of the noon.

A small white cloud in a sky of blue;  
Roses and Lilies, what will they do?  
For a wind springs up and sings in the trees.  
Down comes the rain; the garden's awake:  
Roses and Lilies begin to quake,  
That were rocked to sleep by the gentle breeze.

Ah, Roses and Lilies! Each delicate petal  
The wind and the rain with fear unsettle—  
This way and that way the tall trees sway;  
But the wind goes by, and the rain stops soon,  
And smiles again in the face of the noon,  
And the flowers grow glad in the sun's warm ray.

Sing my Lilies, and sing my Roses,  
With never a dream that the summer closes.  
But the Trees are old; and I fancy they tell,  
Each unto each, how the summer flies;  
They remember the last year's wintry skies;  
But that summer returns the Trees know well.

And as a specimen of one mood of the elder poet after whom Philip Marston was named I add this invocation from "Festus":

England! my country, great and free!  
Heart of the world, I leap to thee!  
How shall my country fight  
When her foes rise against her,  
But with thine arm, O Sea!  
The arm which thou lent'st her?  
Where shall my country be buried  
When she shall die?  
Earth is too scant for her grave:  
Where shall she lie?  
She hath brethren more than a hundred,  
And they all want room;  
They may die and may lie where they live—  
They shall not mix with her doom.  
Where but within thy arms,  
O sea, O sea?  
Wherein she hath lived and gloried,  
Let her rest be!  
We will rise and will say to the sea,  
Flow over her!  
We will cry to the depths of the deep,  
Cover her!  
The world hath drawn his sword,  
And his red shield drips before him:—  
But, my country, rise!  
Thou canst never die  
While a foe hath life to fly;  
Rise land, and gore him!

A friend (D. J.) asked me not long since who it was that was said to have had bees settle on his lips during infancy. It was Plato (himself also called the Attic Bee). Pliny mentions the fact as a portent of the eloquence to which he should attain in maturity—"Suavitatem illam prædulcis eloquii portententes." Ælian gives the legend in a fuller form. He says that, when Aristo and Perictione were sacrificing to the muses on Mount Hymettus, the former laid down the infant Plato among a clump of myrtles near by. The babe fell asleep there and, as he slept, a swarm of bees settled on his lips.

Among the odes attributed to Anacreon there is one pretty piece (No. 40 in the Leipzig edition of Weise, with Brunck's notes), in which Cupid, while sleeping among the roses, is represented as having been stung by a bee. Being only a child, he cries and goes to his mother, complaining that a little serpent had bitten him, the same that the country people call a bee. But Aphrodite replied: "If so much suffering can be caused by so small a creature, just imagine how great must be the anguish caused by Cupid's arrows!" This ode is translated by Moore, and forms No. 35 of his "Odes of Anacreon." Theocritus has a pretty idyll on the same subject (No. 19). He makes Eros (Cupid) to be stung as he is stealing honey. He blows his

fingers and stamps and jumps. His mother draws the same moral as before.

Virgil has devoted the fourth book of his Georgics to bees and bee-keeping. Of the poets who have written descriptively or didactically of the bee's wondrous skill and industry the name is legion.

J. F. H.

## The Victims of the Electric Wire.

The Board of Trade have not been successful in their efforts to obtain from the Government of the United States an official return of the fatal casualties that have resulted from electric currents in that country, no complete data having as yet been collected. On the other hand, a transcript has been received of entries in the official registers of the Health Department of the Municipality of New York relating to such occurrences in that city during the three years 1887-9. A short time since a striking description of an accident of this sort to men and horses in the public streets, forwarded to us by our correspondent in New York, and published in our columns, was received with some incredulity, and excellent *à priori* reasons were in some quarters put forth to show that nothing of the kind could possibly have occurred. Nevertheless the accuracy of our correspondent's startling narrative was speedily and fully established, and since then the public eye has become accustomed to announcements of a similar kind. The schedule of "deaths from electricity," furnished by the New York Health Department, must fully dispel all doubt, if any still exists, of the fact that the application of electricity to illumination and the supply of power on the scale to which it is being applied in America brings with it serious perils. The uses of electricity are constantly multiplying, while the habit of employing it is extending in America—as it appears likely to do here—with an amazing rapidity, and it is painfully significant that of the sixteen accidents recorded in the paper to which we have referred, three only occurred in 1887, while five came within 1888, and eight within 1889. The casualties have thus, as will be seen, increased in the third year nearly threefold. The victims are not confined to electricians and employees of the Electric Light and Power Companies. They include a clerk, a peddler, a buyer, a sailor, an engineer, a labourer, and a fireman. The poor peddler was found dead on the pavement in Broadway. He is supposed to have inadvertently touched a wire hanging loose from one of the overhead networks, which had come in contact with an electric wire. One was struck dead while engaged in the simple act of cutting a wire during a fire; another through tumbling on a wire in a cellar of a house. The labourer was at work in a shaft in Tenth Avenue when an electric-light wire touched the back of his neck. The sailor is stated to have been standing on an iron awning in the street, when he incautiously grasped an electric wire with a like fatal result; the "buyer" was simply handling a metal show case which happened to touch a live electric wire. In one case the shock brought down the electric light pole which the man was repairing, causing a fracture of the base of the skull; and in another the burns are recorded to have been found in the right hand as well as in both knees. Generally, however, the register adds to the date, name, and cause of the accident, nothing but the lugubrious note, "Body found at —." Of the horses which have lost their lives in New York streets from the same cause no account is forthcoming. Such is the note of warning conveyed by what is, as far as we are aware, the first official list that has been published of the victims of the electric wire.—*Daily News*.

## How Sea-Urchins Live.

Some sea-urchins are known to live in cavities in rocks. And the diameter of the cavity is often wider than that of the entrance, so that the animal could not leave its home or be taken out without injury. On the French coast of Croisic (Lower Loire) may be seen thousands of urchins thus ensconced in the granite rock which is rich in felspar and quartz. The animal, it is not doubted, make and widen the holes for themselves; but the question how has not been satisfactorily answered. Chemical solution of the rock seems excluded, considering both the nature of the latter, and also that no acid which could be thus used has been proved to exist in the urchin. The matter has been studied lately by M. John, and in an inaugural dissertation (*Arch. f. Naturges.*) he explains the effects by mechanical action. With the so-called "lantern of Aristotle" the animal probably bites the rock; the sucker feet are also attached, and a rotatory motion is imparted to the body, the prickly points, with the lantern, gradually wearing down the surface. These cavities afford a shelter to the urchins against the action of the waves. An attempt is made to conceal them by means of mussel and other shells. The rocks in which the cavities occur are in general thickly covered with calcareous Alga. It has been thought that possibly these decompose the rock, and so facilitate the work of the urchins. M. John, however, finds no such chemical relation, but atmospheric agencies, he considers, may help the work of boring. A number of other animals are known to penetrate rock, and it is supposed that they do it also in a mechanical way. Recently, M. Forel described to the Vaudois Society of Natural Sciences how in the hard limestone of Constantine, Algiers, *Helix aspera* was found in holes four to five inches in depth.