

(Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.)

## THE ATTIC LAND.

(From the *Edipus Colonus* of Sophocles, vs. 68-719.)

BY JOHN READE.

## I.

Of all this chivalrous land, O stranger,  
Thou hast reached the fairest spot,  
Colonus, where, in verdant dales,  
Trill the soft voiced nightingales,  
Plaintive songs of sweet lament,  
Dwelling in their ivy bowers,  
In the fruit-bespangled groves,  
Where no wind of winter moves  
The leaves, and the sun enters not;  
But where the mighty forest-ranger,  
Hæcchus, revels all the hours  
With the nurse-nymphs that he loves.

## II.

Here the narcissus, dew-besprent,  
Bursts into clusters day by day,  
To crown the brows of goddesses  
With golden gleaming crocuses,  
And thy streams which here have birth,  
Cephissus, fail not through the year,  
But with fertilizing wave  
All the fields and meadows lave,  
Gladdening the heart of earth  
As they thus meander.  
Here, too, more than anywhere,  
The Muses and the golden queen  
Of beauty love to wander.

## III.

Nor in the Asian land,  
Nor on the Isle  
Of Dorian Pèlops doth there grow a tree  
Such as here springeth up spontaneously,  
Self-formed, self-planted, awe of hostile spears.  
The gray green olive which our children rear,  
This neither youth nor age will dare to spoil,  
For blue-eyed Pallas and the Morian Jove  
Who all this region love,  
Guard it from wasteful hand.

## IV.

And other praises still I have to sing  
Of this supremely glorious Attic land—  
That she is without peer in chivalry,  
And mightiest by sea.  
'Twas thou, O sovereign Neptune, that didst bring  
These triumphs to her, both the steed with rein  
And bit to curb, and thro' the swelling main,  
Taming its clamorous wrath,  
Swiftly to guide the bark with skilful hand  
Into the Nereid's path.

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## SOCIAL GOSSIPS.—No. IV.

..... After her came Jolly June arrayed  
All in green leaves, as he a player were;  
Yet his time he wrought as well as played  
That by his plough-irons mute right well appear.

SPENSER.

The spring is now complete. Summer is fairly begun and June has now come with her beautiful Flora. The winds have done their work. The shaken air, well tempered and equalized, has subsided; the genial rains, however thickly they may come, do not saturate the ground, beyond the power of the sun to dry it up again. The mornings are as clear as crystal; the afternoons have their intensely blue skies dappled with fleecy white clouds; and the nights have their fantasies, in which the growing moon seems to lie looking at the stars, like a young shepherdess at her flock. A few nights ago she lay gazing in this manner at the evening star, like Diana, on the slope of a valley, looking up at Endymion. His young eye seemed to sparkle out upon the world; while she bending inwards, watched him with an enamoured dumbness.

This is the quiet of early summer. The swallow shoots by us like an embodied ardour of the season, and though we have not "Nature's best skilled musician," the nightingale, nor the gentle lark "at heaven's gate singing when Phœbus 'gins to rise," yet we can hear them in our imagination.

Now the trees and bushes are putting forth their crisp fans, clothing themselves in a "proud prosperity of leaves," and lifting their "wreathed branches—green and beautiful—to the sun smile of summer." The lilac is loaded with bud and the apple-trees announce their riches in a shower of silver blossoms. The slopes are green with the bright young grass which is variegated with trilliums, violets, anemones, and columbines, over which in places the birch-trees, like stooping nymphs, hang with their thickening hair, or as one of our poets has it, looking like

"Sad monitresses  
Bending like Piety before the shrine  
Of holy Nature."

The beautiful wild flowers seem to anticipate the full glow of summer, coming out to wait upon the season like fairies from their subterranean palaces.

Who is to wonder that the idea of love mingles itself with that of this cheerful and kind time of the year, setting aside even common associations? It is only its youth, and beauty, and budding life, and the "passions of the grove," that exclaims with the poet,

"Let those love now, who never loved before;  
And those who always love, now love the more."

All our kindly impulses are apt to have more sentiment in them, than the unthinking, unreflecting man—"a clod of wayward marl"—suspects; and it is by fetching out this sentiment and making it the ruling association, that we exalt the impulse into generosity and refinement, instead of degrading it, which is too often the case, into what is selfish, and coarse, and pollutes all its systems.

In the early summer-time joy awakens the heart: with joy awakes gratitude and nature; and in our gratitude we return, on its own principle of participation, the love that has been shewn us. This association of ideas renders solitude in June, and solitude in January, two very different things. In the latter we are better contented to bear the feeling of the chilly season by ourselves;—in the former they are so sweet as well as so overflowing, that we long to share them.

Shakspeare in one of his sonnets describes himself as so identifying the beauties of spring with the thought of his absent mistress, that he says he forgot them in his own character, and played with them only as with her shadow. How

exquisitely he turns a commonplace into this fancy; and what a noble brief portrait of April he gives us at the beginning. There is a wonderful mixture of softness and strength in almost every one of the lines.

"From you have I been absent in the spring,  
When proud-pied April, dressed in all his trim,  
Hath put a spirit of youth in every thing,  
That heavy Saturn laugh'd and leap'd with him—  
Yet not the lay of birds, nor the sweet smell  
Of different flowers in odour and in hue,  
Could make me any summer's story tell,  
Or from their proud lap pluck them where they grow:  
Nor did I wonder at the lilies white,  
Nor praise the deep vermilion in the rose:  
They were but sweet, but patterns of delight  
Drawn after you,—you pattern of all those.  
Yet seem'd it winter still, and you away,  
As with your shadow, I with these did play."

In our climate we can hardly herald June as a summer month—as from its position in the year it ought to be—it is after all more like a spring month in the west of England, therefore in borrowing from the poets anything analogous to our feelings after a stroll in the country we must take what they have said about spring.

When daisies pied, and violets blue  
And lady's-smocks all silver white  
And cuckoo buds of yellow hue,  
Do paint the meadows with delight.

What lovely flowers are to be gathered from old English gardens, till'd by such loving hands as Spenser, Shakspeare, Milton, Herrick, Marlow, Wither, Wotton, Drummond, Drayton, Herbert, and others,—*L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

How they preach to us. Herrick, thus addresses the apple blossoms:

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree  
Why do ye fall so fast?  
Your date is not so past,  
But you may stay here awhile  
To blush and gently smile  
And go at last.

But you are lovely leaves, where we  
May read how soon things have  
Their end, though ne'er so brave,  
And after they have shewn their pride  
Like you, awhile they glide  
Into the grave.

The pied Daisy, and the pale Primrose, which Shakspeare calls the "Roses of the Spring"; and the "bold Oxlip"; and the "freckled Cowslip," we have not, but we have the sweet nodding Violet, "sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes or Cytherea's breath"; the Columbine; the azure Hare-bell and Long Purple; and the Pansy, for thought, the

"little western flower  
Before milk white; now purple with love's wound  
And maidens call it, Love in Idleness."

the Marigold; the Daffodil and Honeysuckle; some of the flowers from the fairy meads of "Midsummer Night's Dream," Perdita's rustic garden, or from Ophelia's garlands.

What exquisite beauty there is in the following lines in Cymbeline, Act. 4, Sc. 2, where Guiderius and Arviragus find Imogen, as they think, dead:—

Guil. "Why he but sleeps:  
If he be gone, he'll make his grave a bed;  
With female fancies will his tomb be haunted,  
And worms will not come to thee.

Arr. With fairest flowers,  
Whilst summer lasts, and I live here, Fidele,  
I'll sweeten thy sad grave: Thou shalt not lack  
The flower that's like thy face, pale primrose: nor  
The azur'd hare-bell, like thy veins; no, nor  
The leaf of eglantine, whom not to slander  
Out-sweeten'd not thy breath:  
Yea, and furr'd moss besides, when flowers are none  
To winter-ground thy corse."

On Sunday last the first of June, we were reminded while walking over the top of Mount Royal of an English May morning: a word, which used to awaken in the minds of our ancestors all the ideas of youth, and verdure, and blossoming, and love, and hilarity, in short the union of the two best things in the world: the love of nature and the love of each other. It was the day, on which the arrival of the year at maturity was kept, like that of a blooming heiress. They caught her eye as she was coming and sent up a hundred songs of joy.

Now as the bright Morning-star, Day's harbinger,  
Comes dancing from the East, and leads with her  
The flowery May, who from her green lap throws  
The yellow cowslip and the pale primrose.  
Hail, benighted May, that dost inspire  
Mirth, and youth, and warm desire:  
Wood and grove are of thy dressing,  
Hill, and dale, doth boast thy blessing.  
Thus we salute thee with our early song  
And welcome thee, and wish thee long.

George Wither, speaking of his Muse on Imagination, has the following,—an old favourite of ours:—

Her divine skill taught me this:  
That from everything I saw  
I could some instruction draw  
And raise pleasure to the height  
From the meanest object's sight.  
By the murmur of a spring  
Or the least bough's rustling;  
By a daisy, whose leaves spread  
Shut, when Titan goes to bed;  
Or a shady bush or tree:  
She could more infuse in me  
Than all nature's beauties can  
In some other wiser man.

Loving the daisy for its boyish recollections, we missed it in our ramble, nevertheless we had it in our mind's eye, "a silver shield with boss of gold." The Latin, if we remember, call the daisy Bellis or Bellus, as much as to say, Nice One. With the French and Italians it has the same name as a Pearl,—Marguerite, Margarita, or generally by way of endearment, Margheretina. The same word was the name of a woman, and occasioned intermixtures of compliment about pearls, daisies and fair mistresses.

Chaucer in his beautiful poem of the Flower and the Leaf, which is evidently imitated from some French poetess, says:—

And at the last there began anon  
A lady for to sing right womanly  
A bargaret in praising the daisy,  
For as me thought among her notes sweet,  
She said "Si doucet est la Margarete."

The daisy was a favorite flower of Chaucer's; there is a very interesting passage to this effect in his Legend of Good Women, where he says, that nothing but the daisy fields in spring could take him from his books. He says that he finds

\* Bargaret, a little Pastoral.

the daisy ever new, and that he shall love it till his "heart dies," and afterwards, with a natural picture of his resting on the grass.

Adown full softly I began to sink,  
And leaning on my elbow and my side  
The long day I shaped me for to abide  
For nothing else, and I shall not lie  
But for to look upon the daisy.

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## ABOUT ORDEALS.

BY

A.

I remember my grandmother telling me a story of an ordeal that happened in her young days at a quiet school near Bristol, in Gloucestershire, England. She lived when George the Third was king, and if the event related seem strange to the intelligence of the present day, recollect that ordeals were not altogether out of fashion then, and in 1759 one Sannah Hannokes, of Wingrove, in Herefordshire, was accused of being a witch and her innocence was established by her being stripped and weighed in the Parish Church, before a great concourse of people, against the Bible. Something had been stolen at school, a bit of jewellery, perhaps, and suspicion lighted upon one of the children. The ordeal took place at night. They were all called out of bed and paraded, a sorry little company of sleepy, surprised cherubs, in long night-dresses, while the mistress read a doleful passage from Baxter's Saints' Rest, about the eternal torments of hell. She then told these frightened little girls that there was a basin of water in the next room, into which each of them, one by one, should dip her right hand and whoever stole the piece of jewellery would lose the use of the guilty member. It was a cruel ordeal. I can see the little creatures, nervously approaching the water and dipping in their hands and feeling the cold shiver and wondering what would happen next, as they thought of the sugar purloined at home or the books borrowed and not returned or some other childish peccadillo. One timid little girl refused to submit to the ordeal and was pounced upon as guilty and then and there received a chastisement *supra dorsum nudum*, which was in vogue in those days, and crept back to bed. I warrant you, in no very pleasant condition for sleep. It turned out afterwards she was innocent, and only refused to submit to the ordeal through nervousness, while the real culprit, the servant maid, escaped punishment.

Has Society got rid of all her ordeal yet? Do we not attach too much importance to a blush, that *rubor efflorescens*? "What color's red, Miss Jones?" And yet we know she wasn't blushing at the mention of his gallant name you and I can't tell; perhaps it called up some soft recollection and the blush became her modesty and we wagged our silly heads and only looked upon it as the index of guilt! "Who broke the pane of glass in the school-room—did you Tomkins?" says the awful voice of Dr. Tanneboy. "Me, Sir; no, Sir," says the guilty rascal, with *colto scialto*, while little Smithkins, trembles and looks guilty, and before he has had time to offer up his protest, swish! appearances have deceived, guilt escaped and innocence suffered.

Another pet ordeal of Society is embodied in the idea that a rascal can't look you in the face. Can't he, indeed? Why, innocence may be abashed, but there's Jack Carom, who has been in half the gambling halls of Europe, with enough brass in his face to build a *monumentum aere perennius*, and he will swagger and outstare any one from my lord Bishop down to a five years old child! He blush? He flinch? Not he. It is his business to swagger and bully, and will you take that as a proof of innocence and condemn the ingenious Miss Rosabel, because she modestly droops her eyes and blushes at some soft impeachment? *Allons*.

I am sorry that innocence is punished; but I cannot always regret that guilt sometimes escapes. Of course it is only proper that murderers and pickpockets should be brought up for trial and condemned. But our private peccadilloes,—were we to suffer for them who should "scape whipping." Come Sir, can you lay your hand on that spotless white waistcoat of yours, and you, Madam, will you lay your hand on your fluttering palpitating little heart and vow that within the past year, the past six months, the past month, week, you have committed no sin? *Venez ici, ma bonne Rosabel*, are you too guilty? Then summon the *Carnifices*, clap the *centipon* to their feet, and wield the flagellum. Who shall "scape whipping, indeed? What an outcry of *mea culpa, mea culpa, mea culpa* there will be! No, no, we'll have none of it. We'll let the rogues off. I would not have you found out. You old sinner, you know I have my eye on you, but I am mum; not a word shall escape my lips if we did order the second—or third, was it?—bottle of port the other night and sang in rather shaky voices, that charming ditty about not going home till morning. Madam, I shall not divulge about that languishing look you gave the Rev. Mr. Softhead, nor how he sighed as he bent over your hand—no, madam, I did not say he kissed it! *Ma belle Rosabel*, you may flirt with the Captain and you shall escape whipping as far as I am concerned, for we are all rogues together.

It is well we smile and deceive and keep our guilt heart-deep in our own bosoms. If we were to go about and reveal our private griefs and little wickednesses to public gaze, what a Golgotha of skeletons we would make of this pleasant world; but we rather imitate that Spartan youth, and if sharp-fanged Care is gnawing at our vitals, we but wrap our cloaks with a more dignified air about us—and smile!

You and I, my dear reader, will have no ordeals. *Ma chère Madam*—allow this little familiarity, look upon me as your Mentor, your friend—when your charming daughter Alice comes home from the ball, there shall be no inquisition, no inquiries about Will or Harry and a lynx-eyed eagerness to detect the trembling blush. You, Sir, will not call your son into the study and enquire too closely as to the ownership of that rather disreputable looking pipe you found behind a book in his bed-room yesterday. Are you innocent yourself, Sir? Do you not have your Havanna, you old rogue, and a glass of port too? And you, Madam, recollect that little *affaire de cœur* before you honored your husband with your hand and be merciful and loving to your children. No ordeals and tests; but the open communion of love between you and them.

*Venez*; pull down the curtain, the lecture is over. *Dormez bien.*