



Season Notes and Sketches.

VIII.

O dewy mother, breathe on us
Something of all thy beauty and thy might.
—Archibald Lampman.

Voices of children, voices of birds, voices of many happy creatures proclaiming that the wished-for season is here at last. Thank Heaven, there is a springing time, for nature—for life—for feeling—for poesy! Come back, thou new blood of the world, and warm even the graybeard's veins,—

"Grant us a breathing-space of tender ruth, . . .
Give us the charm of spring, the touch of youth." *

The earth is not so old but thou canst lighten it, and weave every wrinkle into grace, like the smile of an infant.

This is truly known as the season of lover and poet. Now Herrick wakes up Corinna, and gives each young maiden an antidote to sloth and melancholy. The "Flower and the Leaf" of Chaucer, with many a chanson and madrigal, belong to the muse's spring, and come in finely now. In his song-garden beauty is prodigal; in his green field the daisy blooms forever; in his dewy dingle merle and mavis sing through all the year. Can it come without him, this peeping anticipation on sunward bank and by the willowy river? Does he not inspire the very "licour" of "April with his shoures sote,"

"Of whiche vertue engendred is the floure," and makes us rejoice with him, in the mornings

"When Zephirus eke with his sote brethe
Enspired hath in every holt and hette
The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne
Hath in the Ram his half cours yronne,
And smale foules maken melodie,
That slepen alle night with open eye"?

Birds may indeed come, hastening to well-known nooks of our woods, or they may gather for their flight; but the poet lives, and they shall not desert us. "Sing on, sing on, O thrush!"

"The great buds swelled; among the pensive woods
The spirits of first flowers awoke and flung
From buried faces the close-fitting hoods . . .
The frail spring-beauty with her perfumed bell,
The wind-flower, and the spotted adder-tongue." †
"Merry it is in the good green wood,
When the mavis and merle are singing."

So the gay season and the "good green wood" waken the pipe of the English ballad-singer; so once did they quicken Doric minstrelsy, when Burns sang, rejoicing to see how

"Nature hangs her mantle green
On every blooming tree,
And spreads her sheets o' daisies white
Out ower the grassy lea."

So, when Spring has made good headway, we go with her gladly to her house and temple. There she breathes a consecration; therein the drama of life is enacted. Under the first green mist o' the woods the merry men of Robin Hood go blithely, and Maid Marion walks like some home-like beautiful one, never to fade. For a time the wraith of blossoms was chary, but soon there shall be no dearth of loveliness.

"Beauty in the woodland bides
Waiting for her wedding day . . .

Hie thee hither, Bonnie May!
Time, let not her footsteps stray
Far from this way." **

X.

And with no haste nor any fear
We are as children going home. ‡

Nothing gaunt or ghostly lingers in these paths; surely Death cannot come here. Any doleful event must happen in the sodden fall, or under wild winter branches; not when the forests are in their springtide magnificence. All bright and fairy things come here. Think what Spenser saw! What noble knights, what lovely ladies did he give to inhabit the greenwood! Where "Ardenne waves . . .

* Duncan Campbell Scott.

† Archibald Lampman.

** William Rae Garvie.

‡ Bliss Carman.

her green leaves dewy with Nature's tear drops," what scenes appear, what deeds are enacted under the wand of magician Shakespeare! Coleridge had a vision of a beautiful child plucking fruits by moonlight in a wilderness; but was the elfin boy a fairer presence than one of the rarest of our poet's has conjured? How did this lovely form happen in the forest?

"There by the woodside, blown and shy,
The windflowers and violets
Brake as the drenching evening sky
When one star sets.

"Smiling within that elfin vale,
A child stood there, serene, alone;
Her slim brown ankles in the trail
White windflowers shone.

"I was so glad of her dear face,
I stooped and filled my arms with her;
While the sun touched our forest place
Fir by dark fir.

"Her grave, entrancing eyes laughed up
Under my half-bewildered rune. . . ."

There "walks in beauty" the Emilie of Chaucer, and amid the dimming shades goes astray the spotless lady of Milton. There broods the

"Forest seer,
A minstrel of the natural year,"

where the rhodora has dropped its petals in the pool. Down by the brookside lingers the lovely form of Wordsworth's Lucy; and by a most memorable rivulet, under thick woven branches, stands on the one side Robert Burns, and on the other, Highland Mary, plighting their perpetual troth.

XI.

Time will not number the hours
We'll spend in the woods
Where no sorrow intrudes,
With the streams and the birds and the flowers.
—Alexander McLachlan.

So we are glad of the thousand voices that cry out, "Here it is spring! Here it is spring!" Let us go to the woods. Now we are under the trees' generous cover. Sometimes these aisles are resonant with the melody of birds; again they are silent, with that silence felt and expressed by the poet who has with greatest subtlety portrayed our landscape:

"How still it is here in the woods. The trees
Stand motionless, as if they did not dare
To stir, lest it should break the spell. The air
Hangs quiet as spaces in a marble frieze.
Even this little brook that runs at ease,
Whispering and gurgling in its knotted bed,
Seems but to deepen with its curling thread
Of sound the shadowy sun pierced silences.
Sometimes a hawk screams, or a woodpecker
Startles the stillness from its fixed mood
With his loud, careless tap. Sometimes I hear
The dreamy white-throat from some far-off tree
Pipe slowly on the listening solitude
His five pure notes succeeding pensively." †

There are whispers here and there of leaves played on by the kissing breeze, like the whispers of infant dryads, maybe,—but what you do not care, so the ear is charmed. The pines take a deep breath, and heave a long-drawn sigh. The fir trees—

"The wash of endless waves is in their tops
Endlessly swaying;" ‡

and the shore answers distantly.

How hospitable is the forest! Full suits of wealthy greenery rustle on all the branches. Underfoot ran the blushful Mayflower before these leaves were out. Yet it peeps out of the moss and crisp last years' foliage at you. See how the sunlight leaps and laughs among the thousand little twinkling whisperers! How the rays are toned and softened amid these myriad green disks! There are grotesques and arabesques,—little bits of light and shade, on tiny knolls and in wee hollows, where oak and beech stretch their roots so indolently. A coloured butterfly flits into light! Solomon was not garmented so richly. There comes across that bright space a pigmy one with yellow wings! A redbreast hops and hops. Ha! that is a thrush, deep in the hollow among the cedars! And that—that's a bobolink out in the clearing! The poets have got as fond over him as ever over skylark, cuckoo or nightingale. Through Bryant we hear him telling his name to all the hills. He tumbles through the fancy of Whittier a "little typsy fairy." Hear him! "Gladness on wings,

the bobolink is here!" exults Lowell. But scarcely have they given us a finer description than our own Lampman:

"The restless bobolink loiters and woos
Down in the hollows and over the swells,
Dropping in and out of the Shadows,—
Sprinkling his music about the meadows,—
Whistles, and little checks and coos,
And the tinkle of glassy bells."

Well, you are comfortably housed here, under the green-wood tree. You stretch out on the moss, saying, "It is good to be here for six hours, more or less." Then pulling out a new volume, with many a marked page, you read some song a friend has written, before you proceed to dream:

"At evening when the winds are still,
And wide the yellowing landscape glows,
My fir-woods on the lonely hill
Are crowned with sun, and loud with crows.
Their flocks throng down the open sky
From far, salt flats, and sedgy seas,
Then dusk and dewfall quench the cry,—
So calm a home is in my trees.

"At morning, when the young wind swings
The green, slim tops and branches high,
Out puffs a noisy whirl of wings,
Dispersing up the empty sky:
In this dear refuge no roof stops
The skyward pinion winning through;
My trees shut out the world,—their tops
Are open to the infinite blue." *

But spring soon endeth, and so should these musings.
PASTOR FELIX.

* Chas. G. D. Roberts' *My Trees*.

Free Home.

Free home! We all remember well those delightful days when we played "hide-and-seek" with the other small boys and girls who are now either "married or dead." No matter what success has since been ours, our hearts have never throbbled more exultantly than when, after hiding in some perilously dangerous spot, we have safely touched the magic spot called the "den," and triumphantly cried "Free Home." And when, flushed and excited after the evening game, we laid our heads on the pillow, we went through the play again in our dreams, but in our dreams we were never able to touch the "den."

We have seldom, even in our hearts, cried "Free home" since we lost our childhood. We have never found out the "den." Often it has seemed within sight, but ere we reached the spot it had faded away. Sometimes we actually touched the den we had sought, but when we arrived there we could not cry "free home." If our tongues uttered it, our hearts did not echo it, for we felt that there was still some goal beyond.

The years slip on, and we never find the den, until, at last, sitting quietly in the twilight, we hear the children calling "Free home," and we wonder how long it will be now before we echo that joyful cry, until we enter at the golden gate of the heavenly Jerusalem, and meet the loved ones gone before, for not until then will we say in perfect truth "Free home!"

L. L.

As Cynosure Undimmed.

FLOATING defiant over subject seas
That whelming rise and hiss their rage in vain;
Where envious foemen's blows unceasing rain,
Yon oriflamb its challenge to the breeze
Flings wide. Heat, storm, nor traitor, these
Dim not the lustre of its crimson stain
With heroes' life-blood dyed, thro' toil and pain
And death achieving glorious victories.

Emblem of Empire vast, of old undreamed,
Meeting the rising and the setting sun,
Thee loyal homage gratefully we pay,
Hail thee our choice! For us thou hast redeemed
A Country, dowered a Home, and won
A share in Greater Britain's onward sway.

—SAMUEL M. BAYLIS.

Golf in Kingston.

With the golfists and cricketers together Barriefield common will be almost impassible this summer. Even the cricketers alone are about as dangerous to the unwary pedestrian as an ordinary battlefield. But you can see a game of cricket at a distance, and dodge the artillery accordingly. A mild looking old gentleman pottering about with a young lady seems harmless enough, and you take no notice of him, till a sudden whizzing in the air, a shock, and your left eye lying on the grass beside you, warn you that it is golf again.—*Kingston News*.

* Bliss Carman's *Marjorie*.

† Archibald Lampman's *Solitude*.

‡ Chas. G. D. Roberts.