1886

Selected Literature.

THE STORY OF THE PHOTOGRAPHS.

Perhaps it was the rain that had been dribbling and pattering on the old tin roof all the morning, or may be it was that desire which comes into the heart of every one, just once in so often, to turn things over, look into old drawers, pore over old papers, tear up ancient correspondence and re-read old letters, or perchance the rain may have caused the desire, just as the rain in those old days, twenty odd years ago, used to make the storeroom in the attic the pleasantest room in the whole house. I don't pretend to know what did cause it; all I know is that on this particular day somewhere between two o'clock and four in the afternoon, to be accurate, he did take down from the regions of eternal dust on the top of his desk—just beyond the reach of the office boy's duster—an old tin box, dented, battered and worn, square where it should not have been so, and bulged out where it should have been square, like some men we meet in this world of disappointments and contradictions. Furthermore I know that then and there, in spite of the neat, white paper which had been put on his desk that very day, he did take out of this same box and strew over the surface of his desk in hapless confusion more things than I am sure that he ever got into in the first place unless he used miraculous powers, or unless, more improbable still, like Topsy, "they growed" their during confinement. They were the treasured accumulations of years. There was a fishing reel, a book of trout flies, with here and there a sturdy and substantial bass fly, with its strong hook, feathery mouth and gaudy wings, some fishline, a package of letters, dim and yellow with age, tied up in a blue ribbon, some receipted bills—reminiscences of college days—two or three unfinished diaries—other callow reminders—a translation of Sallust, suitable for surreptitious class-room use, and two photographs.

It was these that made our investigator pause, these two old-fashioned photographs of a woman and a boy, and changed the look of idle interest and curiosity upon his face to one more akin to sadness. They were very old style, those two, and small. Age had colored them yellow and drab, and the faces had lost their sharpness of outline, which was not in the least softened by the alteration. One photograph represented a boy, inquisitive as an interrogation point, from whose every attitude and the look of whose intelligent, laughing eyes one could tell, as he sat and poised upon the very tips of his toes, that life was a huge joke which he was ready to enjoy to the last. The boy was standing in the family lot in the cemetery under the shadow of the tall marble shaft beneath which she peacefully rests, and a book or some attic containing a moth-eaten bonnet, black with crape and white with dust, the last she had ever worn, a little mound in the family lot in the cemetery under the shadow of the tall marble shaft beneath which she peacefully rests, and a book or so with her name half faded out of it, and so careless is Old Time and cruel too in his thoughtless defacement.

Somehow it was easier to take these things out of the box than to put them back again on this drowsy, rainy afternoon, because on the young man leaned backward on his chair, resting the back of his head on a very square piece of board, and half closing his eyes to listen to the pitter-patter, drizzle-drizzle of the falling rain on the musical old tin roof, gradually these photographs grew larger and wider, longer and clearer through, until he saw at once that he could never get them back into the box, and so without even trying, he gave it up and let the rain and the pictures carry him back years and years ago, to those days of a man's life when forgotten yet hardest to recall, to those days when school was his most terrible bugbear, work his sworn and bitter enemy; when play was his only object in life, when his mother was his one advisor, his counsellor and the sharer of his joys and his sole comfort. It was here where he had been left fatherless when he was very young. While he was pondering over the past, one of the photographs spoke to the other. He was not surprised though. He would not have been a bit amazed lad the originals stepped out of their cards in their forms of the long ago, so entirely wrapped up was he in what they were speaking of, and thus it happened that they talked to each other before his face for a full half hour or more as free from interruption as if he himself had been the photograph of a deaf mute.

"Yes, my son," replied the other, "mother," observed the boy. Strange how little his voice had changed in all these years. There it was, the same pure, childish treble as when it chanted the psalms in the surpliced choir in the village church.

"Yes, it does. Especially when I want to go out and play. We were going to have a circus to-day at Willie Scott's," Willie Scott, another memory from the storehouse of the past. Poor Will Scott! Shot by the Indians on the plains the year after he left West Point.

"Well, my dear. I think we can arrange for a circus here in the house." This with a smile, tender as only a mother's can be. "Don't you think we can?"

"Of course we can't! Who ever heard of a circus in a house? Where can we have our tent?"

"Well, my son, you needn't have a circus if you don't want to. If you don't want to play that way get your books and I will read to you."

"Read to me on Saturday," replied the boy, his eyes filled with tears of disappointment. I always play on Saturday and you read to me on Sunday."

"Well," answered the patient voice of the mother, "if my little boy does not want me to read to him he can come himself anyway he wants to. I don't care only so he is happy." And she didn't. But he didn't realize it then. Didn't realize it for years afterwards—until it was too late to appreciate it as he should have done—the way we never realize the blessings we had without the asking.

Thus the morning passed. A little unhappy boy wandered aimlessly about the house, discontented with himself and all the world besides. What would he give to be there again only for one morning? What? There isn't money enough in the world to half pay the amount. Then came dinner, and after dinner another period of loneliness, of sorrow, disappointment and wretchedness. It all came back to the man as plainly as though it were but yesterday. At length the boy spoke again, this time pleadingly.

"Mother, you said this morning that you would read to me?"

"So I did, my boy," she answered, "but I am tired now and my head aches. My eye pain me and I thought I would lie down on the sofa and take a nap. Can't you take your blocks and play quietly on the floor?"

"That is just the way you always do," exclaimed the boy impatiently. "When I want you to do anything you never want to do it."

"My eye," answered the mother sadly. "How can you say so?"

"Well," replied the boy, untouched by the mild reproach, "you know it is so." Strange, thought the man, that he ever could have been so unjust. And yet that was his photography ; these were his very tones, and, too, his very words. Would he say them now if he had the chance? But that chance, like many another, would never come back. They never do.

Then a pillow was taken from the bed. (He could see it all before him, so changed was the office by these magic photographs,) and covered by an afghan robe of quaint and forgotten device. His loved self down to sleep, while he gathered together his playthings at her feet and sat himself down in very bad humor to amuse himself and annoy her.

The blocks were refractory. They wouldn't build even so fancifully as the foundation of a house, and when it came to the upper story and the roof, he might as well have tried to erect it out of sand. So with an exclamation of disgust he noisily swept them together into a heap.

"I thought I asked my little boy to be very quiet?" remonstrated the mother patiently.

"Well, I am quiet," persisted the boy, giving the blocks another push, more noisily than before if possible. Without a murmur of complaint the mother arose from her couch and passed slowly out of the room to the direction of her chamber. The boy saw this with evident pleasure ; the man viewed it with a pang of remorse in his heart, which ached with pain.

"Now," observed the boy, when the door closed behind her from, "now I'll have some fun. I never do have any fun when mother is around."

"This," he cried to himself, "is sport. Now if I only had a real steam engine. I wonder," he continued, as a bright thought occurred to him, "whether I couldn't build a fire in the stove?"

No sooner suggested than carried out. The coal scuttle was procured and placed on top of the chair for the furnace. Into this some paper was put, then some kindling and lastly some coal, and then, not without some little apprehension, a match was applied and the train started right merrily. There stations were made one after the other in rapid succession, when to his dismay the engineer discovered that the bottom of the furnace was burning a hole in the locomotive. The room, already filled with smoke, was lighted up with the danger of burning furniture. Then terror succeeded dismay and a scream followed the rattle and clatter of the train. The chamber door was hastily opened, and through the blinding smoke the young mechanic saw his mother, her face as white as the snow with agonizing terrors. At last it was mother, her face as white as the snow with agonizing terrors. At last it was the bedclothes while the servants emptied pitcher after pitcher of water on her burning garments. He could see all this through his tears, and he could also see the little boy sobbing in affright on the floor watching the result of his disobedience. Soon all was over. Tragedies, fortunately, come to an end as well as comedies. For weeks the mother's life hung in the balance. She never spoke that first time since the fire. She lay on her back, so white and thin he scarcely could have known her. Her long hair as cut off short to her head, and around her neck once so soft and white, there was a band of fearfully interesting cloths. The nurse led him into the room. As the door opened the mother turned her head slightly in that

direction, and her eyes fell upon her child.

"Mother !" he sobbed. "Mother ! Speak to me, mother."

"Yes, my son : my poor little orphan boy."

"Mother," he cried, as he knelt by her bedside and clasped one of her hands in both of his. "Oh, mother ! Will you forgive me ? I didn't mean to do it. Really I didn't."

"My poor dear boy. What will you do when—I am—gone ?"

"You are not going to die," he gasped in terror. "You mustn't die. I won't let you."

"My—poor—boy !" she answered. That was all. Slowly her hand fell from its hand. He looked into her face. A sweet smile was on her lips, and her tears dropped were on her cheeks, but the light had gone out of her eyes forever. She was dead.

And they led the boy sobbing from the room of death.

This the man saw through his tears as he leaned back in his chair and groaned in his pain.

"Mother," he cried aloud ; "Mother, just tell me you forgive me ; just one word."

The photograph answered not a word.

"Mother, just one word," he pleaded.

"Don't tell me I'm too late."

"Too late," whispered the photograph.

"Too late," answered the man.

"Too late," groaned the man.—Benjamin Northrop, in New York Graphic.

NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

The monthly meeting of the Natural History Society was held last evening.—After presentation of a number of donations to the library and other business, M. Chamberlain gave an address on the subject of the destruction of birds, showing to how great an extent this had been carried on of late years. He gave the history of the organization of the present movement against the slaughtering of birds, which had been inaugurated by the American Ornithologists Union and was now being carried on by the Audubon Society, an association formed in New York to counteract the wholesale destruction of native birds.

In the course of his remarks the speaker passed a deserved compliment on the sermon by Rev. T. F. Fotheringham on this subject, and stated that it had been largely quoted from by American papers, which had referred to the subject of bird destruction. Mr. Chamberlain urged the advantage of providing means for the protection of our native song and shore birds by legislation, as they were great benefit to the farmer, as they fed on consisted almost entirely of noxious insects and worms. He also advocated the encouragement of a public sentiment in favor of protecting the lives of birds, as the best means of advancing the object in view. In this view he proposed the following resolutions, which after discussion by the meeting, were unanimously adopted :—

Whereas, We have learned from reports of competent observers that the annual destruction of birds—principally for millinery purposes—is so much greater than the natural increase that unless this destruction is stopped, in a short time, many of the most useful and interesting species will be exterminated ; and

Whereas, The extermination of these birds would be a serious loss to the agriculturist and a matter of deep regret to the lovers of nature, be it

Resolved, That this society heartily endorses the action of the American Ornithologists' Union in inaugurating a crusade against the slaughtering of birds, and we cordially recommend to the people of this city and province that they co-operate with the American Ornithologists Union, in creating a public sentiment against the wearing of bird skins for decorative purposes ; and further

Resolved, That we request the press through out the province to publish these resolutions.—Sun.

The Sydney, N. S. W., Mail describes the first ladies' cricket match which has taken place in that colony. The two elevens were called the Siroccos and Fernleas, respectively, the former wearing a cardinal and blue costume, while the latter were attired in blue and gold, the cardinals and blues wegt in first and scored 83, their opponents responding the cardinals were disposed of for 40, while the wearers of the black and gold put

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Dominion Parliament.

OTTAWA, May 31.—In answer Mr. Foster said the steamship "Parisian," of the Allan line, on her last trip from Europe, had no case of small-pox on board but had a case of chicken pox, on account of which it was not deemed necessary to detain the vessel in quarantine.

In answer Mr. Foster said it was true that on the 20th May, 1884, a collision took place in the port of Gaspé between the Government steamer "La Canadienne," commanded by Captain Ludger Boldne, and the brigantine "Alliance," of Jersey ; that in consequence of such collision an inquiry was instituted by the Government and conducted by Capt. P. A. Scott, of the Royal Navy, and that at the end of an inquiry Capt. Scott did not receive the evidence of Commander Wakeham, he having been absent from the deck of "La Canadienne" when the collision occurred.— If any evidence was forthcoming to prove that any facts in the case had not been developed the Government would be prepared to hold a fresh investigation.

Mr. Thompson explained that at commuting the Franchise bill some measurements were made in the Committee, he had found that further slight amendments were required to make the clauses of the act consistent, and he therefore moved that the order for the third reading be discharged and that it be carried.

After recess the remaining amendments prepared by Mr. Thompson were passed, and the bill as amended was reported.

Mr. Thompson moved the third read-ing.

Mr. Mills moved in amendment that the bill be not read a third time, but amended so as to have the list prepared for elections to Legislative Assemblies in Provinces for the Dominion elections. Formately, come to and end as well as comelies. For weeks the mother's fire hung in the balance.

OTTAWA, June 1.—After routine proceedings, Sir John said he had been accused by Cameron (Huron) of being implicated in the timber limits. He was not in the house at the time and on hearing it wondered what it all meant. On reading the speechof Cameron, he found that the charge was that he (Sir John) had a son, who was partner of the son of Sir Charles Tupper, and that these two had used their influence with their all-powerful parents to secure through them the

timber limits, etc. He (Sir John) said he was perfectly ignorant of what the two young men named had done in the line indicated. Neither of them had ever addressed him about timber limits, grazing lands or coal areas. The statement made by Cameron, he (Sir John) could only stigmatize as infamous. The young men had pursued their business enterprises as other men in the Northwest. They were men of honor and had never done anything to dishonor themselves or their parents. Sir John took up point by point the charges made and effectually disposed of them.

After recess the house went into committee on the resolution respecting the bounty on pig iron manufactured in Canada.

Some objection was made to the policy of developing our iron industry by the opposition, but the resolutions were reported.

The house then received several reports of the committee of supply.

After receiving the reports the house went into committee of ways and means and changed export duty on logs from three dollars per thousand feet to two dollars.

McLellan introduced a bill founded on the resolutions ; also a bill prohibiting the manufacture and sale of oleomargarine, butterine, etc., both of which were read a third time.

McLellan moved the house into committee of supply to consider supplementary estimates.

Mills moved an amendment respecting Northwest territories management.

OTTAWA, June 2.—McLelan moved the house into committee of supply, and several items of the supplementary for 1887 including $800,000 for Cape Breton railway.

To-day on the vote of military works for a canteen station in British Columbia, $25,000 were granted.

Caron explained that the object was to provide extensive earth works and other military defences, which would cost in all about $100,000. The imperial government proposed to supply the armament, guns, torpedoes, etc., which would cost from $125,000 to $130,000. The purpose was to make Victoria and Esquimalt the imperial station on the Pacific Ocean.

The contribution of Canada towards this great object would be the defences as already stated. Besides this it is proposed to establish "C" battery on the same plan as "A" and "B" batteries, whose duty it will be to take charge of the joint contributions of the Imperial and Canadian governments. It is also proposed to organize in an effective manner the militia of British Columbia. The military defences will be at Victoria and Esquimalt, at which latter port there is now being constructed a magnificent graving dock, to-wards which the imperial government makes a large contribution, the sum of $200,000 being in the Canadian estimates for the next fiscal year as an allowance on the account of the imperial government, to be repaid to Canada as the work progresses. With the Canadian Pacific completed and these important public works finished. Esquimalt will become one of the most important military stations of the empire.

Sir John stated to-day that the government was receiving almost daily communications from the imperial and American governments on the fisheries question, last nothing definite had yet been reached.

Sir John stated that a commission will be appointed to look into the whole subject of the treatment of the Indians of the Northwest during recess. He further stated that he had received a mass of documentary evidence in rebuttal of the charges made by M. C. Cameron in his report to Northwest matters. He only received it the day before yesterday, and he would have the whole prepared and disseminated as widely as the charges. His was sure that the result would be that Cameron's charges would appear to be wholly unfounded.

The house was prorogued with the following :

SPEECH :

Honorable Gentlemen of the Senate :—
Gentlemen of the House of Commons :

I desire to convey to you my best thanks for the earnestness and assiduity with which you have performed your important duties.

The legislation of the session has been of an eminently practical character, and cannot fail to aid in the promotion of the material progress of the country.

The grant of representation in the House of Commons to the Northwest territories will I apprehend by the Imperial Parliament (of which there is no reason to doubt), give the people of that vast region an interest and voice in the affairs of the Dominion, and enable them by their wants and requirements of their young country with authority before the great council of the nation. You have at the same time conferred upon them the boon of an efficient judicial system, and a speedy and inexpensive mode for the transfer of property in land.

I congratulate you heartily on the completion of the Canadian Pacific railway, and on the repayment in money and land of the advances made in its aid from the public treasury. The future prosperity of this great enterprise, and the consequent advantage to the best interests of the Dominion, I now consider as fully assured.

The appropriations in aid of various railways will tend largely to increase the trade and develop the resources of districts traversed by them, and I am especially pleased to know that by the recent legislation for the construction of a railway through Cape Breton, that historical island will at last be brought into connection with the railway system of Canada.

Among the many useful measures you have passed may especially be noticed the amendments of the Franchise act rendering its working more simple and less expensive, the consolidation of the statutes, the arrangement for the organization of a better and more economical system of parliamentary and departmental printing, and the amendment of the Customs laws act.

Gentlemen of the House of Commons :

I thank you in Her Majesty's name for the supplies you have granted for the public service.

Honorable Gentlemen and Gentlemen :

In bidding you farewell until next year, I rejoice to be able to congratulate you on the general prosperity of the country, and the great promise of a plentiful harvest.