

CANADIAN SONNET WRITERS.

WRITING on "The Sonnet in America" in the *National Review*, Mr. Wm. Sharp refers in flattering terms to Canadian writers of verse in this form. We make the following extracts:—

"The poet—one almost unread in this country, and very little known in America—who had the potentiality of becoming one of the greatest sonnet-writers on either side of the Atlantic, was among the worst offenders in this respect; for there are several remarkably noteworthy poems in this form by the late Charles Heavysege (a Canadian, however, it should be observed), which are neither more nor less than sets of seven rhymed couplets. Undoubtedly the primary need of a sonnet is adequacy of motive, absolute adequacy, in so far that the reader should feel that the matter could not have been said in less, and would be spoilt by further enlargement of space; in a word, that no other poetic form would be so apt. In this sense, accordingly, a poem which consists of seven rhymed couplets may be much more truly a sonnet than one which is thoroughly orthodox in structure, but is merely an ordinary descriptive poem, which might as well have been expressed in twelve or in fifteen lines. But not the least peculiar charm of this species of verse is the pleasurable anticipation of prescribed harmonies. A glance betrays whether an example be after the Petrarchian or Shakespearian model in what may be termed its general contour, and to the sensitive reader there is a very unpleasant jar when some bastard form confuses the expected with the actual rhyme harmonies. To write, therefore, in a formless sonnet is to defraud the reader of a metrical music, the enjoyment of which had been with him a foregone conclusion. Yet no one could read such a poem as the following, by Heavysege, without realizing that, formless and even inartistic as it is, it is potentially a fine sonnet:—

ANNIHILATION.

Up from the deep Annihilation came
And shook the shore of nature with his frame:
Vulcan, nor Polyphemus of one eye,
For size or strength could with the monster vie;
Who, landed, round his sullen eyeballs rolled,
While dripped the ooze from limbs of mighty mould.
But who the bard that shall in song express
(For he was clad) the more than Anarch's dress?
All round about him hanging were decays
And ever-dropping remnants of the past;
But how shall I recite my great amaze
As down the abyss I saw him coolly cast
Slowly, but constantly, some lofty name
Men thought secure in bright, eternal fame?

"In 'The Dead,' another potentially noble sonnet, there is manifest a kind of blind groping after propriety of form:—

How great unto the living seem the dead!
How sacred, solemn; how heroic grown;
How vast and vague, as they obscurely tread
The shadowy confines of the dim unknown!
For they have met the monster that we dread,
Have learned the secret not to mortal shown.
E'en as gigantic shadows on the wall
The spirit of the daunted child amaze,
So on us thoughts of the departed fall,
And with phantasma fill our gloomy gaze.
Awe and deep wonder lend the living lines,
And hope and ecstasy the borrowed beams,
While fitful fancy the full form divines,
And all is what imagination dreams.

"In his later examples Heavysege actually arrived at the correct Shakespearian form, though even in his powerful 'Night'—the sonnet that contains the lovely quatrain—

Oh, Night, art thou so grim, when black and bare
Of moonbeams, and no cloudlets to adorn,
Like a nude Ethiop 'twixt two hours fair
Thou stand'st between the Evening and the Morn—

he confuses the rhyming terminals of the second and third quatrains.

"There are one or two Canadian poets whose verse has mainly appeared in United States magazines, and who, apart from any accident of birth or place, are distinctively American. Foremost among these northern singers are Charles G. D. Roberts and Archibald Lampman. The former is admittedly at the head of younger Canadian poets, and his 'In Divers Tones' and other volumes have gained attention here as well as over the sea. Among his best sonnets are two which have been widely circulated in this country, 'The Potato Harvest' and 'The Sower,' studies in impressionistic realism, which show that the sonnet can have the simple directness of the ordinary quatrain, or rhymed heroics. Mr. Lampman would seem to be to Canada what Maurice Thompson and Miss Edith Thomas are to the States, the foremost young poet-chronicler of nature. His 'Among the Millet' is a pleasant volume; but that he can convey the human as well as the merely naturalistic sentiment is evident in the following sonnet, which is all the more noteworthy as it deals with a theme that poets have generally shirked, as though the shriek of the steam engine were the direst sound the Muse could hear:—

THE RAILWAY STATION.

The darkness brings no quiet here, the light
No waking; ever on my blinded brain
The flare of lights, the rush, and cry, and strain,
The engine's scream, the hiss and thunder smite;
I see the hurrying crowds, the clasp, the flight,
Faces that touch, eyes that are dim with pain;
I see the hoarse wheels turn, and the great train
Move labouring out into the boundless night.

So many souls within its dim recesses,
So many bright, so many mournful eyes;
Mine eyes that watch grow fixed with dreams and guesses;
What threads of life, what hidden histories,
What sweet or passionate dreams and dark distresses,
What unknown thoughts, what various agonies!

OUR LIBRARY TABLE.

The *Quiver* for June is a very attractive number. The opening paper is a "Sunday under the shadow of Heligoland," filled with dainty illustrations; and then comes the beginning of a charming story, "Dorothy's Vocation," by the author of "Monica." Prof. Blakie's third instalment of his "A new Book of Martyrs," with its graphic descriptions of the sufferings of pious men in past ages will be read with unflagging interest. The gloom of these pages is relieved by the loveliness of those that follow on "The New Wedding Ring," though that, too, has its sad pages. "A Sunday-School Sixty Years Ago," describes just what its title indicates. A poem by George Weatherly fills the foot of a page. "The Vicar's Daughter" is a pretty story, and so is "Miss Hillary's Suitors," which is rapidly drawing to a close. "The First Question in the Upper Room," by the Rev. J. Telford; and then we have a timely and readable interview with the Rev. Newman Hall. A pretty story and the "Short Arrows," bring the number to a close.—Cassell & Co., New York.

In the June *Century* Mr. Kennan begins his account of the most important investigations made by him into the Exile System, viz., his visit to the Convict Mines of Kara. Two striking pictures are those of "Convicts at Work in one of the Kara Gold Placers," and "Convicts Returning at Night from the Mines." The frontispiece of this number of the *Century* is a portrait of the famous French artist, Corot. An article by an English writer on "The Bloodhound" is accompanied by wood engravings from sketches by an English artist. Mr. DeKay continues his Irish papers with a curiously illustrated article on "Early Heroes of Ireland." In the life of Lincoln several interesting chapters on important political events are published: "The Pomeroy Circular," "The Cleveland Convention," "The Resignation of Chase." The Old Master written about and illustrated by Stillman and Cole in this number is Spinello Aretino. Mrs. Mary Hallock Foote's serial story, "The Last Assembly Ball," is concluded in this number. "The Relations of the United States and Canada," is the subject of a paper by Charles H. Lugin. Short stories are published by George A. Hibbard, entitled "The Woman in the Case," and by James Lane Allen, entitled "King Solomon of Kentucky," illustrated by Kemble. An interesting personal chapter is that by Mrs. Margaret J. Preston, the poet, who describes General Lee in his home "After the War." Altogether the publishers furnish an exceptionally strong number.

HARPER'S MAGAZINE, in its June Number, pays a graceful compliment to the men who, in recent years, have borne a large share in sustaining the reputation of its pages for artistic excellence. It publishes an essay by Henry James reviewing the work in black and white of F. D. Millet, Edwin A. Abbey, Alfred Parsons, George H. Boughton, George du Maurier, and C. S. Reinhart. As if to confirm Mr. James's appreciative criticism, this Number contains a full-page drawing by Mr. Du Maurier, one of Wordsworth's sonnets illustrated by Mr. Parsons, and Præd's quaint poem, "Quince," illustrated with nine drawings by Mr. Abbey. Professor George Howard Darwin, son of the late Charles Darwin, explains "The Mystery and the Charm of Saturn's Rings." Joseph Jastrow, Ph.D., gives a clear, scientific estimate of "The Problems of 'Psychic Research.'" In his second paper upon "Social Life in Russia" the Vicomte Eugène Melchior de Vogüé follows the summer flight of the Russian seigneurs from St. Petersburg to their great estates in the interior. C. H. Farnham is the author of a richly illustrated paper upon "Montreal," sure to prove very interesting reading to Canadians, and the famous war correspondent, Dr. William Howard Russell, of an account of "An Incident in the Irish Rebellion." Installments of "Jupiter Lights," by Constance Fenimore Woolson, and "A Little Journey in the World," by Charles Dudley Warner, together with poems by A. B. Ward, Harriet Prescott Spofford, and an anonymous author complete the list of contributions.

THE *North American Review* for June opens with an article on "Wealth," by Andrew Carnegie, in which he deals sensibly with the administration of wealth "so that the ties of brotherhood may still bind together the rich and poor in harmonious relationship." In the paper the great iron king considers the three modes in which surplus wealth may be disposed of: (1) by legacies to the families of the decedents, (2) by bequests for public purposes, or (3) by public spirited administration during the lives of its possessors. The first of these modes Mr. Carnegie considers injudicious; the second has the drawback involved in a man having to wait until he is dead before his wealth becomes of much good to the world; the third he deems the only true and satisfactory way in which men of wealth may serve their generation and solve the problem between the rich and poor. The article is creditable alike to the head and the heart of the writer. Mr. Wiman discusses in an interesting and carefully-prepared paper that problem of our time, "What is the Destiny of Canada?"—in his opinion a Canadian Republic independent alike of the United States and of Britain. The versatile and charming writer, Andrew Lang, deals with "Unhappy Marriages in Fiction," a paper which readers of the *North American* will, we presume, turn to with avidity and read with delight. The theme, though a delicate one, is made happy in its treatment. "The Inevitable Surrender of Orthodoxy" is a paper by the Rev. M. J. Savage, from the point of view of a Unitarian. "The Religious Value of Enthusiasm,"

libel on those classical enchantresses. I have no doubt that it would be useful off the Banks in frightening the fog away. The hurry of preparation for departure was succeeded by a tantalizing delay in starting, but at last we began our journey towards the extreme north of the island. Newfoundland being the goal of the *Harlaw's* ambition, she simply contented herself with a shriek of warning at one or two ports of call, and standing well off in the roadstead, awaited the coming of the little boats which were to bear away such passengers as necessity compelled to land in them. It was midnight when we reached the southern edge of Aspy Bay, and prepared to disembark at White Cave. The inhabitants of the fishing village were evidently sound sleepers, and a bewildering variety of the siren's allurements were called into requisition before the light of an approaching dory could be seen upon the water. Six of us scrambled into this craft, and the long sweep of the oars soon brought us shoreward. The tide was out, and the belated travellers wearily climbed a ladder leading up to the fish-besprinkled wharf. A bluff and hearty Englishman, with whom my friend, happily, had some slight acquaintance, extended to both of us the hospitality of his house. He was the proprietor of the fishing-station, and we gratefully availed ourselves of his kindness, for the village was innocent of any sort of hotel, and there seemed a prospect that we might have to pass the remainder of the night in the shed among the cured fish. The rest of the party, I believe, found shelter somewhere, though I could not bring myself to inquire too curiously as to their fate. Our host preceded us up the hill, and having invoked the grudging aid of a servant roused from her slumbers, made ready a much more comfortable repast than the rude accommodation would have led us to anticipate. He then conducted us to a chamber scantily furnished, where the murmur of the sea soon lulled us to rest.

The morning revealed the grandeur of our surroundings. The white huts of the fishermen lay scattered at the foot of the huge hill up which we climbed, to be greeted by the "innumerable laughter of the sea," and the coastline of rugged headlands stretching away for miles, and breasting with their granite sides the ceaseless rush of the waves, now calm enough, but in a few hours tossing their white arms of surf high up upon the shore. Our host conducted us to a dizzy height, whence looking down we marked how the sea had bored its way among the rocks, hollowing out their foundations, and threatening to hurl down the jutting crag on which we stood from its precarious eminence.

After breakfast we set out in a fishing-smack for the other side of the bay, where a courteous Frenchman, whom we encountered in our travels, had invited us to visit him. The wind had risen, and as the spray was dashing over our vessel we were glad to make a safe landing within the bar which protected the little harbour. Our host was manager of a lobster factory, and resided on the premises. The limited resources of the establishment could not damp his ardour or check his flow of spirits. He was a trader with St. Pierre and Miquelon, a brilliant talker, a linguist, and a scholar. Yet he seemed quite contented in his lonely retreat, solacing himself with the prospect of an occasional visit to *la belle France*. The unwonted presence of company caused a flutter of excitement in the housekeeper's breast, and necessitated an improvised chair in the shape of a herring-box for our accommodation at dinner. But neither the garlic nor the grease nor the leathern pancakes could destroy appetites whetted by healthy exposure to wind and weather. We speedily demolished the viands, and enjoyed the long, thin rolls of tobacco which were produced after the repast as much as if they had been the choicest Havana. But a trout brook was not far off, and waving adieus to our kind host we rowed up the river. It seemed to be a holiday, however, with the fish, and only a few yielded to our enticements. We were fortunate enough to have an introduction to the chief man of the North Bay, a burly Dutchman, trader and exporter of fish and lobsters, who gave us a genial welcome to his fireside, when, after a drive of some miles along the coast, we sought his hospitality for the night. There are social compensations even in such remote regions as those in which we were journeying. One could scarcely have expected to encounter in succession three men of different nationalities, living in such a primitive way, yet intelligent and entertaining, and with that strongly marked individuality which the more machine-like movements of great centres of population seem in part to destroy. The family of our last host had been well educated, and as we sat in the parlour playing chess with the charming daughters of the household the hardships of our recent journey were soon forgotten. Just outside the Dutchman's estate, beautifully situated by the open sea, rose the frowning hill over fifteen hundred feet in height, which, from the shape of its summit, was called the Sugar Loaf. A recent fire, originating probably in some traveller's camp, had broken out among the brush at its base, and a strong wind had carried a wide fire-track up to the top, which showed bare and grim in contrast with the thick pines which elsewhere covered the mountain.

VIATOR.

(To be concluded.)

A new disease, called photo-electric ophthalmia, is described as due to the continual action of the electric light on the eyes. The patient is awakened in the night by severe pain around the eye, accompanied with excessive secretion of tears. An oculist of Cronstadt is said to have had thirty patients thus affected under his care in the last ten years.—*Science*.