

EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN.

MR. DOUGLAS SLADEN ON ONE OF AMERICA'S
GREATEST POETS AND CRITICS.

"Have you met so and so?" "I suppose you have met so and so?" is the first question an American asks of a literary traveller. And after Whittier and Oliver Wendell Homes there is no one about whom one is asked this question oftener than Edmund Clarence Stedman. For Stedman is the centre of literary life in New York—its bright particular star—one of America's great poets and her greatest critic. His great book on the Victorian Poets is in about its fifteenth edition, and is considered the best work on contemporary English poets that has been written, and some of his poems like "Pan in Wall Street," and "How Old Brown Took Harper's Ferry" are known to every man and woman who reads in the United States—and the adults who don't read in the United States are a scarcely appreciable proportion. These two poems are too long to quote here, even if it were not superfluous. But his noble "Undiscovered Country," worthy of the pen that wrote—

Only the actions of the just,
Smell sweet and blossom in their dust.

and his pathetic "The Discoverer" and "Provençal Lovers"—the latter the best thing of its kind in the English language—are given below. A strange, picturesque career, a fascinating personality is Stedman's. It is no wonder that his battle pieces are so full of fire—vivid—for he was a war correspondent in the great Civil War. After this he saw, to use his own expression, how fools make money and made a great fortune, becoming one of the best known figures on Wall street as broker and banker. Then by no fault of his own, but by that of one in whom he placed implicit confidence, the whole was swept away, and he had to begin life again. Now his muse speaks too seldom, for his energies are taken up with editing the whole corpus of American literature—the great encyclopædic Library of American Literature, which he is editing for Mark Twain's firm, Charles L. Webster & Co. This is the most stupendous thing of the kind ever attempted. But America can ill spare one of her greatest poets for the editorial mill—it is cruel that he should not have the leisure to be writing lyrics and ballads, to form part of the household words of his country. What makes Stedman such a fine critic is the unusual combination of the generous, enthusiastic, poetical heart with a relentlessly clear and judicial intellect. His judgment detects every flaw in taste or workmanship, but his generosity makes it impossible for him to thrust a poisoned dagger where he finds these holes in the armour of his brother-poets. For to Stedman his brother-poets are brothers. It is delightful to know Stedman, to mark what an eager, enthusiastic poetical spirit burns in that spare body, what a keen intellect is revealed by that bright, intellectual face with its magnificent crown of silver hair. If he had but the leisure, no one would have a better chance of succeeding Whittier as the poet of the American people. For Stedman is essentially in touch with his people—an American of the best kind, cosmopolitan in his friendships, patriotic in his sentiments. He is proud of America, proud of being an American, satisfied with the people of America, but he feels that Europe is the complement of America—that America is an outline sketch, which wants the light and shade of Europe added to make it a complete picture.

THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY.

Could we but know
The land that ends our dark, uncertain travel,
Where lie those happier hills, and meadows low,—
Ah, if beyond the spirits' inmost cavel,
Aught of that country could we surely know,
Who would not go?

Might we but hear
The hovering angels' high imagined chorus,
Or catch, betimes, with wakeful eyes and clear,
One radiant vista of the realm before us,—
With one rapt moment given to see and hear,
Ah who would fear?

Were we quite sure
To find the peerless friend who left us lonely,
Or there by some celestial stream as pure,
To gaze in eyes that here were lovelit only—
This weary mortal coil, were we quite sure,
Who could endure?

THE DISCOVERER.

I have a little kinsman
Whose early summers are but three,
And yet a voyager is he
Greater than Drake or Frobisher,
Than all their peers together!
He is a brave discoverer,
And, far beyond the tether
Of them who seek the frozen Pole
Has sailed where the noiseless surges roll.
Ay, he has travelled whither
A winged pilot steered his bark
Through the portals of the dark,
Past hoary Mimir's well and tree,
Across the unknown sea.

Suddenly, in his fair young hour,
Came one who bore a flower,
And laid it in his dimpled hand

With this command:
"Henceforth thou art a rover;
Thou must take a voyage far,
Sail beneath the evening star,
And a wondrous land discover."
With his sweet smile innocent

Our little kinsman went.
Since that time no word
From the absent hath been heard.

Who can tell
How he fares, or answer well
What the little one has found
Since he left us, outward bound!
Would that he might return!
Then should we learn
From the pricking of his chart
How the skyey roadways part.
Hush! does not the baby this way bring,
To lay beside the severed curl,
Some stray offering
Of chrysolite or pearl?

Ah, no! not so!
We may follow on his track,
But he comes not back,
And yet I dare aver

He is a brave discoverer
Of climes his elders do not know
He has more learning than appears
On the scroll of twice three thousand years—
More than in the groves is taught,
Or from farthest Indies brought;

He knows, perchance, how spirits fare,
What shapes the angels wear,
What is their guise and speech
In those lands beyond our reach,—
And his eyes behold

Things that shall never, never be to mortal hearers
told.

PROVENÇAL LOVERS.

AUCASSIN AND NICOLETTE.

Within the garden of Beaucaire
He met her by a secret stair,—
The night was centuries ago.
Said Aucassin: "My love, my pet,
These old professors vex me so!
They threaten all the pains of hell
Unless I give you up, ma belle;"
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"Now, who should there in heaven be
To fill your place, ma très-douce mie?
To reach that spot I little care!
There all the dropping priests are met;—
All the old cripples, too, are there,
That unto shrines and altars cling
To fetch the Peter-pence we bring;"
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"There are the barefoot monks and friars
With gowns well tattered by the briars,
The saints who lift their eyes and whine:
I like them not—a starveling set!
Who'd care with folk like these to dine?
The other road 'twere just as well
That you and I should take, ma belle!"
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"To purgatory I would go
With pleasant comrades whom we know,
Fair scholars, minstrels, trusty knights
Whose deeds the land will not forget,
The captains of a hundred fights,
The men of valour and degree!
We'll join that gallant company,"
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"There, too, are jousts and joyance rare,
And beauteous ladies debonnaire,
The pretty dames, the merry brides,
Who with their wedded lords coquette

And have a friend or two besides,
And all in gold and trappings gay,
With furs and crests in vair and grey,"
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

"Sweet players on the cithern strings,
And they who roam the world like kings,
Are gathered there so blithe and free!
Pardie! I'd join them now, my pet,
If you went also, ma douce mie!
The joys of heaven I'd forego
To have you with me there below,"
Said Aucassin to Nicolette.

WIMBLEDON.

In 1857 Brown Bess was still in use in India; in 1862, so imperfect was the Government manufacture that thirty-four rifles issued for use at Wimbledon did not pass the Government test; in 1860 but few men in England had ever fired a rifle; those who shot best, shot badly; the match rifles of that day, except Mr. Whitworth's, were of a very inferior quality. But little was known of ammunition, of wind gauges, of the flight of bullets; while the experience of rifle shots was almost restricted to the few deer stalkers who shot their quarry at very short distances. Our match rifles and those who use them now take the highest rank in the world; the Government rifles are of infinitely better quality. Our Wimbledon shots have beaten all previous records, while the science of shooting is known and thoroughly understood, I think, by more men in these islands than in any country in the world. As Sir Henry Halford said not long ago: "We have taught the army to shoot"; and to the National Rifle Association is it mainly due that many hundreds of thousands of men in this country have added rifle shooting to the pastimes of England, and though cricket and football are our national games there are more men in the country who shoot than play cricket. So far as numbers are concerned the rifle has more than taken the place of the bow.—
Murray's Magazine.

THE CAPTIVE'S QUERY.

Ah! Maiden fair, with waving hair,
And dark eyes deep and true,
Your searching glance, like Cupid's lance,
Has pierced my heart's core through.

It matters not, tho' I'm forgot,
And you are far from me,
I cherish yet, with fond regret,
My sweetest Memory.

As to a stream, the sun's bright beam
Brings beauty, light and grace,
So to my life, amidst its strife,
Has come Thy form—Thy face.

Thy winsome smile, devoid of guile,
Thy pure and artless mind:
A fountain bright of love and light,
Thy heart so warm, so kind.

O! Maiden fair, with waving hair,
And dark eyes deep and true;
Must I despair, or may I dare
To hope for love, and you?

Toronto, October, 1889.

T. E. MOHERLY.

SIBERIA.—A report from Vardoe, dated September 27, states that the steamer Labrador, Captain Wiggins, had reached the mouth of the Yenesei, where she waited twelve days for the river steamer, but in vain. She has now arrived back at Vardoe without having discharged. The Labrador had on board the crew of the lost Arctic yacht Lyset.

WOMEN ARE NOT HUMOURISTS.—Women as a rule are not fond of jokes; they listen to clever stories with simulated amusement and forget them immediately. The reason for this lies in one of the essentials in the make-up of woman—her profound and tender sympathy. Humour deals with the weakness of humanity: it exposes foibles and punctures tender skin. Humour sets the world laughing at some blunder of a man. It is woman nature to cover up, excuse and reform. Follies are too serious in her eyes to laugh at. If women were humourists they would not be the most earnest church workers, the most tender of nurses, and the most sentimental and refined portion of humanity. The same inherent quality which would make a true woman, a real woman, shrink as judge from pronouncing a death sentence, or as soldier from shooting an enemy through the heart, makes it impossible for her to become a humourist. Wit a woman may have, wit she does possess, and is a formidable adversary with her stiletto points of irony and satire. But humourous in the common acceptation of the term, in the careless, rollicking, stinging art of current quips and jests—never.—*Washington Post.*