

Mr. John Weighill, late teacher in S.S. No. 8 Brock, and for nearly thirty years a teacher in the townships of Brock, Scott, Reach and Uxbridge, has from the late school regulations been compelled to retire from the profession. He has taught 32 years in all, two of which were spent in Mariposa.

Mr. S. T. Hopper B.A., of Newburgh H.S., has been appointed Classical Master of Chatham H.S., while Mr. Deeks B.A., of Caledonia H.S., has been appointed Mathematical Master. Both are gold medallists of Victoria University. The school opened on the 7th with an attendance of 125, which has been greatly increased.

Mr. Macdonald has been appointed Chairman, and Mr. William Moore, Treasurer of the London West School Board. Mr. Lacey, the retiring Chairman, and Mr. Nixon, the retiring Secretary, were complimented at a recent meeting on the very satisfactory manner in which they had discharged the duties of their respective positions.

Biographical Sketches.

WILL CARLETON.

Amongst the American Poets of the period, Will Carleton occupies a prominent position, and his poetry is read wherever the English-speaking race is to be found. It would be difficult to name poems better known to the reading public than his *Betsey and I are Out*, *How Betsey and I Made Up*, and *Over the Hills to the Poor-house*. His ancestors emigrated from England. His father was a native of New Hampshire, and migrated to Michigan, where he cleared a piece of land for a farm, and spent on it the remainder of his days. He was a most worthy man, and won the esteem of all who came in contact with him. He had the good fortune to marry a lady of high character and in every way fitted to make a real helpmate. They were blessed with five children, and Will Carleton, the subject of this notice, was born October, 21, 1845, near Hudson, in the state of Michigan. He received a liberal education, but his father, like a sensible man, believed in the nobility of labor, and young Carleton worked on the farm when not engaged in scholastic studies. At the age of sixteen he was employed in the winter months as a teacher in the district school, and in the summer-time he toiled in his father's fields. It was at this time that he commenced writing poems, and several were composed when laboring on the farm and in the open air. In 1865 he bade adieu to the old farmstead, and entered the Hillsdale College. It was during his college life that he first appeared on the platform as a reader of his own poetry. According to a sketch in Harper's Magazine, by Mr. J. T. Trowbridge, he was spending his "junior" vacation in 1868 at Aurora, Illinois, and there wrote a poem for the political campaign, entitled, *Fax*. For an impartial test of its merits, and, perhaps, also to save him from humiliation in case of failure, he first read it to an audience in a neighboring town where he was unknown. Only about a dozen persons were present, and it was noticeable that, instead of competing for front seats, they exhibited some wariness in keeping near the door, having in their minds a sudden escape from too heavy an infliction of poetry. So far from quietly stealing away, however, they remained to tender the reader a vote of thanks, and the result was that the poem was not only repeated the next night to a crowded house, but became widely popular throughout the campaign. Such was the commencement of his popular entertainments, which have met with an enthusiastic reception in the chief towns of the Old and New Worlds. He graduated in 1869, and on this occasion read his poem entitled, *Rifts in the Clouds*. He then joined the newspaper press, and was engaged first on the editorial staff of an agricultural journal published in Chicago. His next move was to Detroit, as the editor of the *Weekly Tribune*. In America, on the 30th of May in every year, the graves of the soldiers who fell in the war of 1861 to 1865

are visited and covered with flowers. Mr. Carleton in 1870, wrote some pathetic verses for this solemn and graceful ceremony, under the title of *Cover them Over*, which have since been on this commemoration day annually sung or recited throughout the states.

Mr. Carleton contributed poems to a number of publications, and had written, some years prior to this, a small volume of verses which contained all the faults of a young writer, but at the same time gave indication of the promise of a coming singer of real power. The author says that the remaining copies of the edition, and they were not few, were "exhausted" by the Chicago fire. It was in 1871 that he became widely known as a poet, his celebrity being due to the ballad, *Betsey and I are Out*. Mr. Thomas Gibbons gave in the *Hull Miscellany* the following interesting information about this poem: "It was published in the *Toledo, Ohio, Blade*, and few single ballads in English literature have obtained a wider meed of praise. It was reprinted in nearly every newspaper in America, and was soon well-known and appreciated in England. It is amusing now to read that Carleton was accused of having stolen the ballad from a spiritual medium of New York, a Mrs. Emerson French: for, curiously enough, at that date Carleton had never been in New York! Her assertions were full of startling improbabilities, without a particle of proof. She wrote hasty, limping verses to substantiate her claim, while Carleton whom she stigmatized as a literary impostor, continued writing ballads of equal power and originality with the one of disputed authorship. Mr. Carleton made a simple statement denying her claim, which is now forgotten, or else remembered only as a curiosity of impudence." Mr. D. R. Locke (*Petroleum V. Nasby*), editor of the *Toledo Blade*, long ago told how near the ballad came to being altogether lost. It was sent to his paper during his absence, and his partner, not admiring the verses, threw the manuscript into the waste barrel. When Mr. Locke returned home, he went fishing among the rejected contents of the barrel, and pulled out Carleton's poem. The concluding part was lost, and Mr. Carleton was asked to complete the poem. He had kept no copy, and had to compose an ending. The *Toledo Blade* people, at all events, never entertained a doubt about the authorship of *Betsey and I are Out*. He retired from journalistic work in 1872, and henceforth devoted his attention to authorship, study and travel.

In the following year he collected his dialectic ballads, and with a few of his earlier poems, issued them under the title of *Farm Ballads*, from the well-known house of Harper and Brothers, New York. Forty thousand copies were sold in less than eighteen months. The critical press gave the work a flattering reception, and it will not be without interest to reproduce a notice from the *New York Evening Post*, by the poet, William Cullen Bryant. He thus wrote: "About two years ago the name of Will Carleton was made suddenly famous by the publication of a ballad, *Betsey and I are Out*. Its homely farm diction, its mingled pathos and humor, its genuine touches of nature, gave it at once a popularity rarely accorded to productions of an author wholly unknown to fame. Carleton makes no pretensions to 'high art' in poetry. His ballads deal with simple country folk, in simple and homely style, but of their kind they are genuine transcripts of nature, admirable *genre* pictures from life. All of them exhibit an originality of conception and power of execution which entitle the author to rank as a master in this field of poetic literature." His next book, *Farm Legends*, published in 1875, met with an equally favorable reception. It was dedicated to the memory of a nobleman, *My Farmer Father*. His *Farm Ballads* he inscribed to his mother. Next year, it being the anniversary of American Independence, he produced a volume under the designation of *Centennial Poems for Young Folks*. He received this year from Hillsdale College the honorary degree of M.A. In 1881 *Farm Festivals* appeared, and, like his previously published works, received a hearty reception from his many admirers. The aim of Mr. Carleton, to use his own words, has been "to give expression to the truth, that with every person, even if humble or debased, there may be some good worth lifting up and saving; that in each human being, though revered and seemingly immaculate, are some faults which deserve pointing out and correcting; and that all circumstances of life, however trivial they appear, may possess those alternations of the comic and pathetic, the good and bad, the joyful and sorrowful, upon which walk the days and nights, the summers and winters, the lives and deaths, of this strange world."

It is impossible to divine the position Mr. Carleton will ultimately occupy in the great republic of letters, but his work up to the present time gives every indication of a great future.

William Andrews, in *Literary Life*.