

P. S. Leaving Literature.

THE HANGING OF THE CRANE.

In this number we continue the study of Longfellow's poem which was commenced in our last issue.

EXPLANATORY NOTES—STANZA IV.

Notice in this prelude how the poet again impresses us with the indistinctness of the vision, "boughs that intervene," "sometimes revealed," "again concealed."

The introduction of the two similes does not add anything to the force of the passage; it would have been enough and either would have been better without the other.

"A Princess from the Fairy Isles." The poet afterward calls the "Fairy Isles" the "Isles of Flowers," and "Dreamland." We usually say Fairyland.

"A pattern girl of girls." An example of what girls should be.

"Covered and embowered in curls." How pretty and appropriate "embowered in curls" is! We see the little girl looking out from her "bower" of curls. But what does "covered in curls" add to the passage?

"Sailing with soft, silken sails." Notice the "alliteration" and "onomatopœia" in this line. Read it aloud so as to get the full effect.

"Four azure (azh'-yūr) eyes of deeper hue." "Azure" means sky-blue. The blue of the children's eyes was deeper than the blue of the bows.

"Dreamy with delight." How beautiful; one almost sees the expectant looks of the children. Notice the alliteration.

"Limpid as planets." "Limpid" is clear, transparent.

"Ocean's rounded verge." Refers to the horizon as seen at sea.

"Steadfast they gaze." How natural again!

"Horizon of their bows." Edges of their bows. The poet does not mean this absolutely, but wishes to impress on us the total absorption of the children's attention in their meal.

"The days that are to be." The future, which will come regardless of the children's heedlessness of its approach.

Notice how natural and simple this description of the children has been.

STANZA V.

Notice in this prelude how the "tossing boughs" and "drifting vapors" again add indistinctness to the scene.

The simile in the last two lines seems very "far-fetched." Are there any pleasing points of resemblance between the ever widening ring in the water caused by the pebble and the enlarged family circle? Does this figure add force or beauty to the passage?

"Pallid disk is hidden quite." Pallid means wan, and does not seem a well-chosen word here. The word "quite" is a weakness to the passage.

"Garlanded with guests." This is a metaphor. You may here see the distinction between a "metaphor" and a "simile." In a simile the comparison is fully stated, while in a metaphor it is only implied. A simile *compares* two things, a metaphor *identifies* two things. This is a very appropriate figure, and suggests, or is suggested by the simile which follows.

"Ariadne's crown." Ariadne was a daughter of Minos, a mythical king of Crete. Deserted by her first husband she was married by Bacchus, who presented her with a wedding-crown of gold, made by Vulcan, which at her death was transferred as a constellation to the skies. One of the constellations is still known as "Ariadne's crown."

STANZA VI.

The simile in this "prelude" is more appropriate than those in the preceding preludes. The meadow stream and the stream of time have points of resemblance which the mind is pleased in finding. As the mill-stream runs faster and faster until it rushes over the mill-wheel, so time seems to fly faster and faster as we approach the close of life. The weeks and months appear far shorter to an old man than they appear to a school boy.

"Seemeth to stand still." It is so quiet and placid.

"Lingereth in level places." Passes slowly in manhood.

"Gloomy mills of death." We cannot help thinking that this "mills of death" is merely a metaphorical equivalent of the "mill" of the second line.

"And now . . . alone remain." This simile is very weak and far-fetched. It is too studied and elaborate; a simile should add clearness to a passage, not make it more obscure. The allusion seems to be to the belief that magicians were not allowed to use their own peculiar powers for furthering their own ends. If they did so the mystic scroll—the instrument of their power—would pass away. That is, with each selfish wish their power would "shrink" until the last selfish thought would "consume the whole."

"Brighter than the day." Not an effective phrase. It adds nothing to the force of the description.

"Homes and hearts." We see some appropriateness in a jewel shining in a "home," but can see no meaning to the jewel shining in a "heart."

"Cathay." Ka-thā'. An old name for China, given to it by Marco Polo.

"Thousands bleed to lift one hero into fame." How true this line is. What a depth of mournful sarcasm is in it!

The last eleven lines presents to us a touchingly suggestive picture of deep pathos. Pathos is that tender feeling awakened in the human heart when "beauty is tintured with sadness." What a beautiful picture this scene would be if transferred to canvas by a great artist! Linger lovingly over the picture of the mother as she tremblingly and with secret misgivings reads the news of battle and shipwreck, her aching heart breaking with anxiety. This touching and beautiful passage is worthy of Longfellow at his best.

(To be continued.)