

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

A MAY EVENING.

FROM THE FRENCH.

Giving a cloud his last rays' purple tinge,
The setting sun
Has sunk at length beneath the hills which fringe
The distant horizon.

Beneath the breath of eve the waning day
Flickers like a pale light;
In heaven's front star-scintillations play
Like jewels sparkling bright.

The air surcharged with the young flowers' perfume
In faintest echoes moves;
The far sky smiles with joy, such as illumines
The face of him who loves.

Fluttering from branch to branch towards his mossy nest,
Still, as he moves along,
Mingles the bird, love drunk, his music's best
With the wind's song.

Here in a dell of the shadowy vale
That the cliff flows upon,
The brook, peeping, tells its babbling tale
As it bounds on.

Down there, in the ravine, the foaming waterfall
On the enamelled glade
Murmurs, in softest cadence heard by all,
Its evening serenade.

Like mighty harp, vibrant o'er distant hills,
Whose charm no distance robs;
The church bells' silver sound the evening fills
With hundred tremulous sob.

From coppice, wood, and grove, and deep abyss,
From mound and vale and plain,
What giant concert that ascends is this?
This sound without a name?

On every side up springs a voice which sighs
While feathered songsters sing,
A voice which, murmuring, to the wind replies,
And to the babbling spring.

'Raptured, perceiving all the spirit craves
In this fair, wondrous night,
My soul rocks, hushed, on harmonious waves,
Incense in Heaven's light!

Mingling fairest accents with great Nature's voice—
Which doth Hosannas raise—
My ravished soul sings too, and does rejoice
In great Jehovah's praise.

With the wind's ripple, the brooks murmuring,
The cascade-shaken red,
And distant music of church bells, I sing
Glory to Thee, O God!

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

THE LORE OF THE CALENDAR.

NO. VII.—WHITSUNTIDE, OR THE PENTECOST.

Whitsunday, or the Pentecost, is a festival of the Anglican Church as well as of the Roman. Its interest in the history of Christianity arises from the circumstance that it was the day on which the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles and imparted to them the gift of tongues. This, one of the most important events in the history of the Christian Church, was accompanied by signs and wonders—"And suddenly there came a sound from Heaven as of a rushing mighty wind." The wind is often put in the sacred Scriptures as an emblem of divine influence. It is invisible yet mighty, and thus represents the agency of the Holy Spirit. "And there appeared unto them cloven tongues of fire, and it sat upon each of them"—rested in the form of a lambent or gentle flame upon the head of each one, showing that the prodigy was directed to the Apostles, and was a very significant emblem of the promised descent of the Holy Spirit.

The feast of Pentecost, fifty days after the Passover, commemorates the delivery of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai, called sometimes by the Hebrews the feast of Weeks. The delivery of the law was given with the greatest solemnity, and accompanied, like the descent of the Holy Ghost, with every circumstance which might have a tendency to rouse the mind and fill the whole soul with the profoundest awe.—The glare of lightning, and the voice of thunder.—The sound of the trumpet, and the clouds of smoke.—The vast range of hills and rocks trembling to their centre.—Six hundred thousand men struck with inexpressible consternation—Moses himself terrified exceedingly.

In mediæval Western Europe Pentecost was a period of great festivity, and was considered a day of more importance than can be easily explained by the incidents connected with it, recorded in the Gospel, or by any later Christian legends attached to it. It was one of the great festivals of the kings and chieftains in the mediæval romances. It was that on which King Arthur is represented as holding his most splendid court.

In the romance of *Bevis of Hampton*, Whitsuntide appears as the season of festivities:

"In some at Whitsontide,
When knights most on horseback ride,
A court let them make on a day,
Steele and palfrey for to assay,
Whiche horse that best may ren."

About the year 1263, shortly after the festival of *Corpus Christi* had been established by Pope Urban IV., commenced the performance of Miracle plays or Whitsun Mysteries, which were first established at Chester. Exhibitions of a similar kind took place at Coventry, York, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Bristol, and other places; and it may be conjectured that they were originally introduced into large towns nearly contemporaneously for the purpose of disseminating a certain degree of knowledge of Scripture history; and, as Robert de Brunne remarks, for the purpose of extending a belief in the miraculous conception of the Saviour, as well as in the resurrection, &c. In 1420 we find a friar interfering at York, to procure the annual representation of the *Corpus Christi* plays, and he was then called "a professor of holy pageantry."

In 1278 the scholars or choristers of St. Paul's Cathedral presented a petition to Richard II., praying him to prohibit some ignorant and inexperienced persons from acting the History of the Old Testament, to the great prejudice of the clergy of the Church, who had expended considerable sums for a public representation of plays founded upon that portion

of Scripture at the ensuing Christmas. (See Malone's *Shakespeare* by Boswell, III. 24.)

Stow in his chronicle asserts: "This yeere (1409) was a great play at the Skinner's Well, neere unto Clearkewell, besides London, which lasted eight daies, and was of matter from the creation of the world; there were to see the same the most part of the nobles and gentles in England, and forthwith after began a royal justing in Smithfield betwene the Earle of Somerset, and the Seneschall of Henalt, Sir John Cornwall, Sir Richard of Arundel, and the son of Sir John Cheyney, against other Frenchmen."

It is said that the first of these plays, one on the passion of our Lord, was written by Gregory of Nazianzen, and a German nun of the name of Roswitha who lived in the tenth century, and wrote six Latin dramas on the stories of the saints and martyrs. About the eleventh and twelfth century the monks were generally not only the authors but the actors.

The value of these plays was much disputed amongst churchmen; some of the older councils forbade them as a profane treatment of sacred subjects—most churchmen of this day would probably so consider them. A short poem, in the Harleian collection, partly English and partly Latin, on the dissoluteness of manners in Henry the Sixth's reign, may be adduced to show that the performance of "plays," especially on "God's holidays," was then so frequent as to be considered by the writer a crying evil. The author says:—

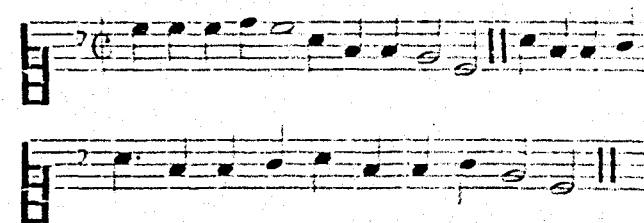
Ing'land goith to noughte, plus fecit homo viciouus.
To lust man is brought, nimis est homo delicious.
Goddie hal day, non observantur honeste.
For unthyrify pleyis, in cye regnant manifeste.

These Miracles and Plays of miracles, being the source and foundation of our national drama, are very interesting, and we should recommend all persons who have a desire to follow the subject to get Collier's History of English Dramatic Poetry to the time of Shakespeare, published by J. Murray, 1831. We have neither space nor time to pursue the subject further in connection with the Whitsun mysteries, as we want to say a few words concerning the Whitsun Morris Dance, mentioned by Shakespeare in his *Henry V.*

The Morris dance in the time of James I. was very popular. A pamphlet printed in his reign commemorates a party of Herefordshire Morris-dancers, "ten in number, whose ages together amounted to twelve hundred years." If the statement is not exaggerated, it must have been a very wholesome exercise and one conducive to longevity.

It has been supposed that the Morris dance was first brought into England in the time of Edward the Third, when John of Gaunt returned from Spain; Douce thinks it more probable that we had it from France or even from the Flemings. Few if any vestiges of it can be traced beyond the reign of Henry the Seventh, about which time, and particularly in that of Henry the Eighth, the church-wardens' accounts in several parishes afford materials that throw much light on the subject, and show that the Morris dance made a very considerable figure in the parochial festivals.

The following is the air to one of these Morris dances, the dancer having small bells attached to his legs; it is taken from Douce's illustrations of Shakespeare and ancient manners, published by Thomas Tegg, Cheapside, 1839.



These old dancings and rejoicings at Whitsuntides, what mortals can blame, provided they were harmlessly conducted? Dancing may be made joyous, and it may be made something significant of a higher order. Sterne, in his "Sentimental Journey," in reference to that after-supper dance at the French peasant's house, near Mount Tauria, says: "I thought I beheld Religion mixing in the dance;—but as I had never seen her so engaged, I should have looked upon it now as one of the illusions of an imagination which is externally misleading me, had not the old man, as soon as the dance ended, said that this was their constant way; and that all his life long he had made it a rule, after supper was over, to call out his family to dance and rejoice, believing, he said, that a cheerful and contented mind was the best sort of thanks to Heaven that an illiterate peasant could pay—

"—Or a learned prelate either, said I."

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

LARES.

On the Queen's birth-day, the weather being doubtful, I employed myself in turning out waste paper and worthless relics from every receptacle, and in sorting, or rather in glancing over odd scraps—cuttings from old magazines and newspapers, the accumulation of a third of a century, and thought that, with the permission of the editor of the *Canadian Illustrated News*, I would give its readers the benefit of some of my findings by way of supplement to the "Social Gossips" and "Notes and Queries."

In one of the pigeon-holes of my *ecritoire*, I "tumbled" over the following epitaph on a child of the name of Erotion, after Martial; it is very charming for its simplicity—unfortunately there is no author's name attached to the translation; but that deficiency, perhaps, your correspondent Sciolus can supply:

Hic festinata requiescit Erotion umbra
Crimine quam fati sexta peremit hiems
Quisquis eris nostri post me regnator agelli,
Ma'nibus exiguâ annua iusta dato.

* Among the valuable collection of books connected with the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in the McGill College Library, the student may have his mind directed to the ancient manners, customs, sports, &c. (Antiquates Vulgares) of the English people, and their observances of the Saints' Days and Festivals—the Lore of the Calendar.

Sic Lare perpetuo, sic turba sospito, solus
Flebilis in terra sit lapis isto tua.

THE EPITAPH OF EROTION.

Underneath this greedy stone,
Lies little sweet Erotion;
Whom the Fates, with hearts as cold,
Nipt away at six years old.
Thou, whoever thou mayst be
That hast this small field after me,
Let the yearly rites be paid
To her little slender shade;
So shall no disease or jar
Hurt thy house or chill thy Lar;
But this tomb here be alone,
The only melancholy stone.

I was much struck with the expression "chill thy Lar" and not being satisfied with the Dictionary meaning of Lare, The Divinities presiding over the whole hearth and the whole house,—I turned up in another pigeon-hole devoted to Archaeology and kindred subjects a note of Dacier's upon Horace, (Book I., Ode 12,) in which he informs us that in some parts of Languedoc, in his time, the fire-place was still called the Lar; and that the name was also given to houses.

What a consoling idea that if the yearly rites to the dead were for ever paid, whether it be the decorating of their monuments with wreaths of flowers, or ornamenting them with the leaves and branches of the trees sacred to the respective gods to whose service they were set apart, or seeing that the lamps suspended in their sepulchral chambers were duly lighted, then no disease nor contention should enter the dwellings of those who did such kindly offices for the dead.

These Lares, or Lars, I find are the lesser and most familiar gods; and though their offices were afterwards extended a good deal, in the same way as those of the Penates with whom they are often wrongly confounded, their principal sphere was the fire-place. The statues of the Lares generally stood about the fire-place or hearth in little niches, some in the shape of monkeys; more likely manikins, or rude human images; they were represented as good-natured grinning countenances, sometimes with dogs at their feet. From these manikins and human images may have sprung

"her andirons"

which Jachimo in *Cymbeline*, Act. 2. Scene 4, describes as

"two winking Cupids
Of silver, each on one foot standing, nicely
Depending on their brands"

In the same pigeon-hole I also found the following:—
author's name, entitled:—

TO THE LARES,

ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF FIRES.

Ye little household fairies,
Called anciently the Lares,
Who on my study shelf there,
Though Venus was herself there,
Slept all the summer hours,
Beneath your little bowers
Of glassy watered flowers—
Your busy time is come now:
So take care, all and some now,
And keep my hearth in order
Through every nook and corner,
And let the fire burn brightly
And solidly yet lightly,
With just a little clinking,
To soothe me while I am thinking,
And fit for glorious poking.
In case a friend should look in,
So may your sh. if afford ye
Fit place to lean and board ye,
With never dust nor smoking
(That acrimonious choking)
But evergreens and berries,
And all the best which there is
Among the winter flowers:
To serve ye still for bowers:
And sticks of odorous wood to
Send up your godships' food too,
And some divine antique too,
Which ye may whisper Greek to,
And then a sea-shell glistening,
With music for your listening,
And chimney-mounting vapours
With all their coils and capers,
Such as are fit for chasing,
When ye would go a racing.

Perhaps some of your contributors, Shakespeare Medallists at McGill College, may know the author, and should they have a copy of Herriek, that excellent poet of the Anacrostic order in the time of good old Queen Bess, they might add to your columns the continuation of one of his lively odes upon the Lares, the beginning of which I only remember:—

It was, and still my care is
To worship you, the Lares.

Some writers make the Lares the offspring of the goddess Mania, who presided over the spirits of the dead; and suppose that originally they were the same as those spirits, which is a very probable as well as agreeable superstition, the nations of Italy having been accustomed to bury their dead in their houses.

Upon this supposition, the good or benevolent spirits were called, Familiar Lares, and the evil or malignant ones Larva and Lemures. Thus Milton, in his awful hymn on the Nativity:—

In consecrated earth,
And on the holy hearth,
The Larva and Lemures moan with midnight plaint
In Urns and Altars round
A drear and dying sound
Affrights the Flammens at their service quaint;
And the chill marble seems to sweat
While each peculiar Power foregoes his wonted seat.

But Ovid tells a story of a gossiping nymph Lar, who having told Juno of her husband's amours with Juturna, was "sent to hell" by him, and courted by Mercury on the road the consequence of which was the birth of the Lares. This seems to have a natural reference enough to the gossiping over fire-pieces.

R. E. A.

* "So shall no disease hurt thy house, or household, nor any ailment thy Lar." Here is a curious use of the noun Lar. In Knight's edition of Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act. 4, Sc. 7, we have

Was this a face
To be exposed against the jarring winds?
Probably the contentious winds, as we find in the same play
Thou think'st 'tis much, that this contentious storm
Invades us to the skin.
Again in *The Tempest*, Act. 2, Sc. 1.

"his bold head
'Bove the contentious waves he kept."