

ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY, APRIL 4, 1896.

NOTCHES ON THE STICK.

FATHERLY AND HIS TALK ON SOME LITERARY MEN.

Comments on the Style of Different Authors and the Particular Charm of Each.—John Russell Hayes and His Impressions of Benjamin Leggett.

Command such books to us as are pleasant to the taste, mildly stimulative and nourishing to the spirit, and which linger as a perfume in the memory through after days, books which are at once a literary, artistic, and typographic satisfaction, and which are laid not upon lumbering shelves, but in the sacred closets with the treasure-boxes, whither we come again to court our intellectual coins, and appraise our favorite ideal jewels. Such books are Dr. John Brown's "Spare Hours," Thackeray's "English Humors," or J. J. Fields' "Recollections of Authors." No "Woods so sweet with birch and fern, A sweeter memory blow," than come from these garden treasures of genial minds, with the breathing of all the past has of choice and happy. To this irreproachable list we are inclined to add "A Shelf of Old Books" by Mrs. James J. Fields, the widow of the poet-publisher, and friend of authors whose memory is like precious ointment poured forth in the bibliography of his time.

The charm of this book is its free, quiet, conversational style, and the rare engravings. What precious things are here! What noble forms and faces, how genial and friendly, look out with easy familiarity from these pages! The significance of Browning's question,—

"Ah! did you once see Shelley plain And did he stop and speak to you?" comes to us, as we look at his pictured face, most suggestive of a being just descended from a superior realm, where spirit is supreme.

Instinctively we look over his shoulders for wings, and forget all censure of this "eternal child," the poet of the muse, whose appearance or change would at least provoke an momentary feeling of wonder and awe. He went away in the tempest and the fire, and his ashes are not as common dust:

"Thou wert the morning star among the living, Ere thy fair light had fled;— Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving New splendor to the dead."

We understand better than we did why the young Milton was called "the Lady of Christ's college," since looking at this old print of the bright spirit—"Joannes, Etatis XXI," with its fair-remoteness and pure, elevated expression. A calm nobility of mien here contrasts with the rugged battered grandeur of the "Bust of Milton, about 1654." It was the slightless Milton then, the Milton of the Paradise and the Agonistes. He has no rival as a harmonist in English blank verse. "He surely," declares, if any, was what he calls a "mint-master of languages." And here is a picture of Milton's early home at Horton, within old church, and clock-tower, mantled in ivy, where perhaps that favorite owl of poetry "does to the moon complain."

And here is the Samuel Johnson that Reynolds painted in 1770 for the Duke of Sutherland. It presents him in a new point of view. The great bear of literature has his paws in the attitude of seizure. One might say, He seems to be counting with his fingers, and they forebode that tentative restlessness that made it a necessity to touch lamp-post between the clubhouse and his home. He is high in our love and respect, that just old man, who wrote Goldsmith's epitaph, and was the friend of Collins, and the presumptuous critic of Milton and Gray. Here is Garri-son's villa, the luxurious domain, amid which the sage adorned his friend that its possession might make a death-bed terrible. Reflections of the sort were very common at that time. Dr. Young has put a remarkable number of them into still-enduring verse. The heart leaps up with a sense of youth at a chubby boy-like face of Thackeray, when about thirty years old. He is the fellow who gave you a jolly sense of good-companionship, and when he went away left "a great trail of sunshine and kindness behind him, which has never faded."

One will not pass hastily the portrait of Sir Walter that Sir Thomas Lawrence painted for George the Fourth. This is a grave, well-ordered, elegant presentation of the Wizard, but it is the same humane, sagacious, powerful presentation we are accustomed to. In the child-picture, the miniature of the poet made at Bath in his fifth or sixth year, you see how "the child is father of the man." It is a sweetly-sensative face, rather drooping and meditative, and sheltered under the curling locks that roll down to his shoulders. This is the Child Scott, who learned to love the Child Marjorie, as Dr. John Brown tells us,—Marjorie whose portrait has a thrill of wonder and surprise for us just a few pages over. How those great dark eyes glow, in that weird, white face! She was a little conjurer to fascinate him who was wizard to everybody else. When you turn to the portrait of Anne Rutherford, the mother, you see whence Scott derived his physical The same nose and lips, and forehead! His

father, so far as the portrait notices, accounts for little. If he was Scott's father, however, he was somebody to us; for the son is, in a literary sense, "human nature's daily food," to a most satisfactory extent. His eye-glance, magical as the sunshine, "gilds the most indifferent objects and adds brilliancy to the brightest."

But what shall we say of the portrait of Burns, from a miniature daguerreotype in Mrs. Fields' possession? These were the exact features, without idealization or adornment. This is the face Scott saw and described, these are the marvelous eyes of which we heard long ago,—the eyes, of which Mrs. Basil Montague said: "I never saw such a pair as flashed from under his noble forehead." And when, coming with the turned leaf, on the face of some Allen, from an edition of his poems published in 1751, the lines of Burns come to mind, as if suggested by the life-likeness, and genial expression of Ramsay:

"Come forth! Honest Allan! Thou need not seek the halcyon, A chief sea-cleaver, The tooth of time may gnaw Tantalus' But thou'st be forever."

This is much to say of one who came to fill a gap in Scottish poetry until Burns appeared.

And here he is, called by the irritated Tennyson, rusty, crusty, fusty Christopher. He has a look of immensity, with his jovial head, not yet denuded of its flowing locks, resting on his ample frame, somewhat heavily. He stands in bronze in that city where once his living person drew the admiring gaze. "DeQuincy," writes Mrs. Field, "used to say of him 'that it was good to dwell in his shadow.' Mr. Field said that the opium-eater being one of the smallest of men in stature, and Wilson taller and broader than his race, he supposed the little man felt a physical security beside him." Sir Henry Taylor said of him: "He looked like one of Robin Hood's company; or he might have been Robin himself—jovial but fierce—as if he would be the first at a feast but by no means the last at a fray; full of fire and animal energy, and of wit and sarcasm, and hardly seeming to heed anybody about him—a man who has always been the king of his company." Such is a fit description of the man who wrote the "Notches."

In such good company who would not love to linger? Of Leigh Hunt we have two excellent portraits; that by Sir Samuel Lawrence, and the one from a drawing made in 1815. The pictured face of Barry Cornwall has gravity, sweetness and purity. It draws the heart by its attractiveness. Consumption and poetry are writ large in the drawing of Keats by Severn; and the modern Greek looks from the features of the bust by Miss Whitney. But to none of these portraits do we turn with a larger sense of delight and veneration, than to those of John Brown, and his father,—the author of "Rob," and that reverend sire with whom he made us so pleasantly familiar.

These portraits, and a rare collection of early editions of classic books, furnish the raison d'être of Mrs. Field's volume. Its unpretentious excellence commends it beyond our words, and to the lover of beautiful books, and of old literary memories and associations, it will, having been once enjoyed, remain "a joy forever."

A partial friend, in reading our stanzas on the Belle Borne Brook, confesses to some reminiscence of the "Elegy" of Gray. It leads to the reflection how, without any imitative effort, some of the spirit of a work of art passes through the soul of another leaving, its traces in his product.

What a poem that is. Who that loves poetry has not felt its power? What wonder if reflections of it appear, here and there in English literature, since his time. You feel much of its spirit in Thomas Buchanan Read's "Closing Scene." It came to us, and has filled our mind with its charm from our earliest years. Often its images and phrases come to us with elevating and consoling force. We are reminded of what Whittier has written in his preface to "Child-Life in Prose," concerning "the surmised existence of an unknown element of power, meaning and beauty." We wonder how many unknown beside himself, the poet has spoken where he says: "I well remember how, at a very early age, the solemn organ-roll of Gray's 'Elegy' and the lyric sweep and pathos of Cowper's 'Lament for the Royal George' moved and fascinated me with a sense of mystery and power felt rather than understood. 'A spirit passed before my face, but the form thereof was not discerned.' Freighted with unguessed meanings, these poems spoke to me, in an unknown tongue indeed, but like the wind in the pines or the waves on the beach, awakening faint echoes and responses, and vaguely prophesying of wonders yet to be revealed."

The verse of John Russell Hayes, introduced last week to the readers of PROGRESS, leaves such an odor in the mind of the summer world outside our homes, and gives such a pleasant impression of a joyous and genial spirit, that they may not

be altogether incurious with regard to his impressions of a very kindred spirit and a brother poet. Writing to Benj. F. Leggett, he says: "The pieces I like best (in the latest volume) are these: 'An Idyl of Lake George,' 'An Invitation,' 'In September,' (with its memories of Keats' Ode to Autumn), 'Wayside Rhymes,' 'October,' 'My Garden,' 'December,' 'Endymion,' 'Midnight and Dawn,' 'The Passing of Summer,' 'Little Saint Elizabeth,' and 'The City of Doom.' Many couplets and single lines in these and others of your poems I have marked for their beauty and felicitous phrasing, as,—

"And o'er you mountain soaring high A lone gray eagle climbed the air," "The daisies print the turf with bloom," "Basic hymns Of old Norwegian times," "From gulches' gold a breath of shade," "By lichen'd stone and leaning slat."

(So accurately and picturesquely true of said Alloway's quaint grave-yard.)

"The waters sleep forever In the ocean's mighty dream," "Where Africa dreams in drowsy tropic noons," "Where classic He has lifts her temple brow Above the sweeps of blue Toulon seas."

I have been interested to note resemblances to other poets, as to Riley in such lines as—

"The old barn, memory-haunted, Filled with the golden sheaves, 'And the spider's web is seen All in diamond dusted sheen."

and in the whole of such poems as "Where the Morning Glories Tangle," "An Invitation," and "The Passing of Summer"; to Keats, with his exquisite touch, in lines like these,—

"From counsel-shed wrinkles of the hills, 'And with late stars star the stubbled wold," "I also catch echoes of the splendor and sweep of 'Child Harold' in your City of Doom. I like your handling of your apparently favorite stanzas, (which Ben Jonson used so finely in his 'Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes'), which I think you use with special force and grace in "December," "My Garden," and "A Fallen Star."

Your pictures of the changing seasons delight me,—the "greening world" of spring, "sun-browned summer," autumn's ruddy gleam, "the amber days of Indian summer." My favorite is the last in the book, where you paint Pompeii "beside the storied sea," with all the wealth of glow and color befitting lovely Italy and the deep blue Aegean. The power of painting glowing pictures shown in that panorama of idyllic Mediterranean scenes is what makes me like also your "Capri."

"From her grove of lemon, cool and sweet The air of summer hushes."

"The dread volcano's white breath climbs the air And mounts the summer skies."

Such lines make this poem, to me, the best in the 1837 volume. Next to it I rank "The Comet." It has the same largeness of utterance and fine sweep which I admire in your "City of Doom," and which must come from your study of Byron.

"The round of the milky-way," "Round the cape of the sun's red gold."

We seem to plough "the charless seas" of the heavens in such lines. In both volumes I take pleasure in your felicitous and repeated references to the shifting year, from leafy April to the last pale days of "the waste and waning year." I find your expression often shaped after that of Tennyson, and I take you to be a lover of his,—are you not? I should like to tell you of the lines I marked as especially good. Here are some of them:

"As still as the roses blow," "The white day comes again," "The Zodiac's masters shine," "His stormy passion crumbles into rain," "The silent ferns unfurl," "Wild organ forests bend."

"The music sung Not alone by lip and tongue," "Within these wild-wood temple halls."

Parts of your "Age of Gold" chime like the Pompeii poem. In European scenes I think some of your best work lies, and I trust you will continue to draw from their exhaustless stores. Your frequent allusions to old poets add to the charm of such pieces. I have found your "Word for Shakespeare" in my copy of Mrs. Silsby's "Tributes." To a lover of Burns I should have written my letter one day earlier, on the poet's natal day."

The Halibuton Society, at Windsor, N. B. though a college club, under the maternal shelter of Old Kings, is something more, in having so high and generous an aim as the promotion of Canadian literature. With Professor Roberts at the head of the board, and the faces of enthusiastic literatures and critics around it, what wonder if the feast began well, and the wine was found good enough at the first: The prestige of a name, so suggestive and so appropriate, as that of the celebrated humorist, was in itself a measure of success; and when the very clever monograph of Mr. Francis Blake Crofton appeared, under its patronage, and the name of "Sam Slick's" creator was again upon our lips,—as it had never vanished from our memories,—the "Halibuton," was known as a really important advent among the literary Societies of Canada. Now it is falling to fulfil the promise of its beginning. It is true that the withdrawal of Prof. Roberts from his professorship in the college withdrew him

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In some degree from his position as foster-son of the "Halibuton," but his aid and advice are not altogether wanting, and in the person of Prof. A. B. DeMille, the accomplished son of an accomplished father (Prof. James DeMille, of wide literary repute) he has a worthy successor. The issuance of a second literary venture is now in contemplation, as soon as the means can be accumulated for the purpose. A series of papers, prepared under the supervision of Prof. Roberts, on "The Poets of Canada," and which appeared in the Kings College Record, are to be revised and collected in an illustrated volume. Of this there is to be a sort of limited edition de luxe, at \$2.50, per copy, and a plainer, yet substantial and attractive edition, at \$1.00 per copy. It is desirable that all friends and patrons of the society and its enterprise, send in their names, and so expedite the work, as soon as possible.

Having made some allusions to Judge Thomas Chandler Halibuton, in a letter to Hon. Charles H. Collins, of Hillsboro, Ohio, We promptly received the following postal card reply, which shows how wide the fame of our native humorist has flown, and how justly he is appreciated:

"I read Sam Slick in 1845,—before you were born. I know all about Halibuton. I read 'Two or three copies,' also his Sam Slick Attacks in Europe. I am familiar with the man's writings and character. Nevertheless I thank you for your description of him. He gave to the world the ideas of Yankees first which it still holds."

Rev. Burton W. Lockhart, of Manchester, N. H., preaching on "The Open Vision," [John 1: 51.] closed his discourse with the following sentences:

"Nor should we treat disdainfully those seeming-slight, but perhaps each-making hints of another world given through what is called automatic hand-writing, mere dream and jargon though they be cast by the invisible deep on these human shores. Some unknown power manipulates the automatist's hand and communicates facts not known to him or to any one present, but known to some deceased person whose communication it purports to be, and who is himself a total stranger to the writer of the message. These and allied phenomena have convinced very able men in our time, that the world of immortality has at last broken open to scientific research, and if we may not see the great White Throne, and Him that sits upon it we may at last discern the hiding of His glory, the outposts of his army, the waving of his banners."

"Thus our condition in this world is not like that of a man imprisoned in a cave through whose roof no opening lets a vision of the sky. But we are rather like one who dwells in a house well supplied with windows which let in the sunlight on all sides. Faith, hope, love, knowledge, and the vision of the greater souls, are all windows. But, as in the best lighted house a mole or a blind man could not see, so here there are countless souls for whom all windows are in vain. As there are men for whom music does not exist, and others who have little perception of the universe of beauty, and others again to whom a heroic deed would seem foolish, and stiff, others again who are strangers to all the finer forms of feeling, so there are men for whom God, and the souls and the spiritual order of being in which we are immersed are unknown and unloved. These are the ignoble martyrs of our race, whose pain, so far as we know, issues in no gladness, whose loss has no compensating gain. We can only hope that when humanity reaches its goal we may see that nothing was in vain, not even those sightless eyes that gazed upon the sky without being able to discern the traces of a God."

Several of the papers most highly prized by us come to our study recently in form somewhat changed. The Portland Transcript has enlarged its news department, without any abridgement of its purely literary and domestic pages. The printing seems a trifle poor in spots, but as this is the first issue there is much allowance, and future editions will doubtless appear more satisfactory in all mechanical and artistic respects. The Monthly has been absorbed in the twelve pages which are hereafter to be given the patrons of

The Transcript, and no much-prized feature, familiar hitherto, is to be omitted. A story, which promises well is commenced in the current number, by Mrs. Clara Marcelle Greene. The Midwestern Hearststone is to be changed in form to that of the standard Magazine, and will not appear in its new dress until April. The week presents a smaller page,—a distinct advantage. It would be better if made still more book-like, and better adapted to their purposes who wish to have their back numbers bound. Hon. J. W. Longley, in the issue of March 13th, vindicates himself, as to his loyalty, which had been called in question: "I have never spoken a word or penned a line which justified any person whomsoever in impugning my loyalty to the Empire or my devotion to the great Dominion to which we owe our best allegiance, and around which our fondest aspirations cluster."

A Living Without Work. "I recall an experience I once had down in Indiana says a prominent actor. "We had been playing one night stands for ten days or more, and our company was in a very demoralized condition. Early one morning we boarded a freight train (with a rickety old passenger coach attached) in order to reach the point where we were billed to perform the following evening. It was impossible to even try to sleep, for the roadbed was rough and the car was as wretched an old box as could be conceived of. However, I curled and twisted myself on one of the seats and shut my eyes through sheer exhaustion, while other members of the company distributed themselves about the car and sought to beguile the tedium of the journey by story telling. Presently I became interested in the chat of two farmers who sat across the aisle. The two old worthies were discussing the weather, crops, and similar subjects of concern to the average tiller of the soil. By and by one asked the other: 'I wonder who them folks be that are havin' such a good time back there, laughin' an' carryin' on?'"

"Well, I don't know," said the second farmer; "I've been watchin' 'em for some time, an' I've kinder made up my mind that they was a theatrical company."

"Yes, I reckon they be," said the other, and then he added with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders: "Curious thing about some people, ain't it? Anything to make a livin' without work!"—Chicago Record.

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Emoluments of an Executioner. M. Deibler's name having been a good deal before the Parisian public lately in connection with a case in the law courts, advantage has been taken of the circumstance by the partisans of "economy at all costs," who maintain that his emoluments are too high to demand a reduction of at least one-half; while the opponents of capital punishment would carry out a more fundamental retrenchment by abolishing the post altogether. "Without seeking to advocate or contest the opinions of one side rather than the other," says Le Progrès Medical, "it seems to us that the sub-record extracted from the archives of old Paris possesses sufficient interest to warrant its publication. Our readers will see from it what a terrible thing the capital penalty was in former days, and at the same time learn that the gentlemen who acted as executioners, with their assistants and torturers, did not labor for glory alone."

They are Grateful. John D. Mishier says in the Dramatic Times: "Newspaper advertisements are read when they contain information and tell the truth. Don't become an annoyance to the proprietor and his representatives by asking for columns of local news you give in return a two dollar advertisement. Make the interests mutual and they and you will get along pleasantly. The theatrical profession can never repay the obligations we owe to editors and representatives of the American newspapers for the prominence they have given our business and their untiring willingness to assist and befriend us."

Turquoise and Topaz. A well known lapidary cautions those who own turquoise rings to remove them when washing the hands, lest the color be injured. The explanation of the change from blue to green that sometimes takes place in the stones is that they are affected by the emanations from the skin, as well as by certain elements in some kinds of cologne and other perfumes. The changes in the color of the topaz are believed to be due to light and heat, as experiments with the stones show that strong sunlight will bleach them.

Why

do we experience hard times at different seasons of the year? It is quite natural for each occupation to have a bright and dull season, and the latter is generally made harder to put through than necessary. When the bright season comes on everything has got to go and you never look ahead for the future. If you were to study economy at all seasons, how much better off you would be.

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