

# RED AND BLUE PENCIL

DEAR EDITOR,—



UT a few nights past I lay under canvas in the drenched woods—my ear wakeful and tuned to the music of the storm; now a full diapason of rushing showers, deepened by a multitude of detaining branches; now the distinct notes of dropping leaves, making a sort of myriad "multifold melody."

I was not altogether solitary,—neither secular; for round me lay encamped a worshipful host, and at my side slumbered a presiding Elder. A hole in our flimsy roof was found, by slight experiment, to correspond with my eye; which caused its removal to a dryer part of the pillow and the pulling out of a new organ-stop,—pat, pat, pat, just beside my ear. It requires an inflexible roof, tight as a miser's fist, to make rain music an unmingled pleasure. A crystal note in your eye flats somewhat, and has all the marring effect of a false accent; and beside, half the comfort you experience with the weird musician is that—like the villainous Italian in the yard with monkey and hand-organ—he won't want to come in.

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One most notable matter is the number of snakes that have encountered my wheels, or just escaped them, as I have gone to and fro in recent pilgrimages over our woody or moory ways. I have exclaimed, too late for his snakeship, and he, perhaps, has had the dying comfort of knowing that to my slow eyes and his inexpeditious muscles were due his misfortunes. The latest—having escaped—set me going to the following effect:

Thou, skill'd and vers'd in taxidermy,  
Canst dress vermicular and squirmy?  
The plummy and the furry race  
Thine art may rear in glossy grace,  
While almost motion, life and song  
May to the mummied form belong;  
But, ah! perpetuate me, please,  
The shining sinuosities  
Of this slim snakelet just in sight,  
That from yon grassy covert frees  
Its iris'd body to the light!  
What antiseptic wilt infuse  
To fix the dolphin's changing hues,  
Or hold the fickle shades that track  
The gay chameleon's moving back?  
With that alone canst thou perform  
Thy marvels on this gliding worm—  
That, spurn'd and bruised by ev'ry heel,  
No loathing spite of mine shall feel,—  
If on the morrow it be laid  
Sunken, discolor'd and decay'd.

But go! lest there arise in me  
The ancient animosity;  
What gain have I in bloody booty,—  
Wasting the evanescent beauty?

\* \* \*

What an advantage your phrenologist or mind reader enjoys above ordinary people! Under the cover of his science he can indulge the much coveted luxury of saying unpleasant things about others,—i.e., in describing character—avoiding all risk and incurring no serious consequence. While seeing no feasible way to your purse, he can possess himself of the currency of your most secret mind, and bring it upon exchange at his pleasure. He can laugh in his sleeve and be flatterer than his fellows; he can demean mankind and be flattered for his acumen. He may say to one's very face: "Sir, you are a bundle of antipathies; simply on temperamental grounds you can cease to be a gentleman, and barely treat your new neighbour with decency." Or: "You will have a brave struggle with yourself to be safe in society; pray, encourage a few pure thoughts and honourable purposes." Or, he may even venture to say: "My friend, how much bank stock have you embezzled during the period of your responsible existence?—since I find you with most extraordinary proclivities in that kind,"—yea, and never suffer a whit therefor. Quietly, and with humour, he may dub his innocent and confiding neighbour, or the stranger within his gates, fool or knave; and his evidence shall be so internal and indubitable that his victim shall smile and yield his good name with wonder at the wisdom of him who deprives him of it.

I think, dear DOMINION, I have aforesaid introduced "Vivien" to you—not the Vivien of Tennysonian celebrity, but a worthier;—being not so much a subject of song, as a singer, of Acadian birth. I think you will be so familiar with her quaintly musical way that the following will not surprise you:

NONSENSE.

Through the sunshine and the shade  
Of a pretty forest glade  
I loiter'd woefully;  
And I sighed as I thought  
Of a land I could not see,  
Till the beauty all around me seemed to wane,  
And the south wind and perfume  
Seemed in vain, all in vain  
To the sad eyes searching space  
For a country, and a face,  
For the ocean fogs that sweep  
Fierce across the harbour-bar,  
Afar.

When a yellow frog who sat  
On a lily in a pool,  
Croaked: "Fool!  
"I, too, left a little pond  
"Far beyond!  
"But think you I sit and grieve  
"All the summer sun away?  
"No! I dive and swim,  
"And sing the livelong day!"  
Here he swelled fearfully,  
While his little speckled body  
Found a wondrous dignity  
"Now, mortal! where's the use  
"In all this wild abuse  
"O the sunshine and the flowers,  
"In a world that is so fair?  
"Croak, croak, fool, fool!"  
And he splashed into the pool  
For a water bug that crept  
Too near.

Then the crickets in the grass  
Seem to shriek as I pass,  
"Chirrup, cheer-up!  
"Chirrup, cheer-up!  
"Why stoop to sorrow's cup?  
"Nay, fling it far away!  
"And smite, smile,  
"For the summer's scented glories  
"Only last a little while!  
"And the northern winds must rage  
"And the snow must fall apace,  
"Ere thou seest those thou lovest  
"Face to face."

While an English sparrow said,  
From the vines above my head,  
"Twitter, twitter, twitter, twitter,  
"Ah! the parting may be bitter,  
"But if you did not part,—  
"Dear heart,—  
"Why, you could never know  
"How sweet  
"It is again to meet,  
"To meet!"

In the sunshine and the shade  
Of a pretty forest glade  
I loitered joyfully;  
And blushed as I thought  
How thankless we can be,—  
We who call ourselves the monarchs  
Of control,—  
By the grateful little beings  
Whom we pompously deprive  
Of a soul;  
While we walk with blinded eyes,  
Listless palm,  
From a thousand tiny throats  
Sounds the psalm  
Of universal praise  
For the sunshine of their days,  
For the flowers, and the showers,  
And the balm.

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The moist woods where we were encamped were not so charming, with all the cheer of song and cordial greeting, but that we were ready unreluctant to depart when the time of folding tents had come. On our way homeward we stayed at noon for an hour of sylvan dalliance, touching the gipsy side of life. The sandy road that had led us winding through the pine woods—whose hulks had of late subsided to a low fringe of brushes—struck suddenly athwart a seeming common, with clumps of shrubbery, and patches of blueberries and heath cranberries. "This is the spot!" So, with the little phaeton at a standstill on the moss, and Dinah grazing at her will, Bertie and I drew out our lunch, and surrendered to the dolce far niente. Having despatched our frugal dinner, Bertie wandered among the berries; and I, stretched under a silver birch, was dreaming over a little pocket edition of the "Religio Medici" I happened to have with me,—dwelling especially on that fine harmonious passage on harmony, in which he becomes "a scholar of the

spheres,"\* and wondering if Addison had not become impregnated with it before he wrote,—

"What though in solemn silence all,"

in that magnificent hymn of the Creation.

While thus I mused on the felicities of Sir Thomas Browne, out of the bushes came suddenly two lank females, in flimsy calico gowns, "dragged i' the dew," and protuberant sun-bonnets, who made toward us ominously, like flamens whose altars had been violated. They seemed mother and daughter. At their approach I arose and awaited their pleasure. They halted abruptly when near enough for speech, and I was thus addressed through the lips of the elder Cassandra:

"We come over to see who ye air. This here cranberry paster is MINE, and we did'n't know but ye wer trespassin'. I've had my cranberries stole last year, an' the year afore that, agin; an' I'm on the look out. Guess I know who it is; an' it won't be very healthy fer anyone I ketch pickin' my cranberries."

"My good woman," I replied, "We trust we are not thieves, and believe ourselves to be wearied travellers, who have but paused an hour to refresh ourselves. We were not even aware we were trespassing, and will go forthwith. As for cranberries, we will abstain from them while the world standeth, if unwittingly by our indulgence we give offence to our neighbour."

"O, ye aint a-trespassin', and ye kin stay jist as long's ye like," urged Cassandra, something perplexed at her mistake, and my ironical Quixotism of style. "I know you aint a-doin' no harm," she pursued, with a mollified tone and much less starch in her manner. "I didn't see the kerridge or the hoss, I only see the boy, and thought I'd look round. But I know who it is steals my cranberries, an' it won't be healthy for him if I ketch him."

Having thus delivered herself, she and her companion retreated, vanishing into the bushes, while I returned to my Browne, and read with more credence than I had shown it just before, a passage from which I must yet partially dissent: "I was never yet once, and commend their resolutions who never marry twice; not that I disallow of second marriage; as neither in all cases of polygamy, which, considering sometimes, and the unequal number of both sexes, may also be necessary. *The whole world was made for man, but the twelfth part of man for woman. Man is the whole world and the breath of God; woman the rib and crooked piece of man.* I speak not in prejudice, nor am averse from that sweet sex." Tell it not in Gath, Sir Thomas, nor whisper it in the ear of Mrs. Woodhull. After all, as there are men, and men, so are there women, and women.

I was pleased with the portrayal of St. Andrews, N.B., whose streets I used to tread, and whence I fetched my chiefest jewel; and of the old double-decked Presbyterian pulpit, from which I held forth in adolescent days—on one or two occasions—to a patiently suffering congregation. Shall we not have some more pictures of that charming retreat by the sea?

PASTOR FELIX.

\*It is my temper, and I like it the better, to affect all harmony; and sure there is music even in the beauty, and the silent note which Cupid strikes, far sweeter than the sound of an instrument. For there is music wherever there is a harmonious order or proportion; and thus far we may maintain the music of the spheres; for those well-ordered motions, and regular paces, though they give no sound unto the ear, yet to the understanding they strike a note full of harmony.

"AS SIR JOHN WAD HA' SAID,"—Lady Strange startled polite society by the old Scotch lady-like expression, "Pre-tender, and be d—d to ye," when some ill-advised person used the discourteous word in her hearing. Sir William Stirling Maxwell adds from his own experience an instance of the use of the same word—by a lady of the House of Stuart, too. Her coachman stopped his horses one night, and excused himself by saying that he was looking at a falling star. "An' what ha'e ye to do wi' the stars, I wad like to ken?" said his mistress. "Drive on this moment, sir, and be d—d to you," adding in a lower tone as was her wont, "as Sir John wad ha' said if he had been alive, honest man." *The Saturday Review.*

NOT AN INSPIRED CLASS.—Poet: What do you think of these verses? I just wrote them off on the inspiration of the moment.

Cynic: If you can get some editor to accept them on the inspiration of the moment you will be doing very well, indeed.—Puck.