

Drawn for Grip.



AT OTTAWA.

Lady Kanstick (to young Toronto swell who plumes himself upon the flattering notices he receives in the society column of "Saturday Night.") "Is it true Mr.—aw—Chumpley, that in Toronto the newspapers print notices of persons who are of no consequence whatever?"

ASPHODEL CANTATA.

THOUGH many touching incidents of the youthful genius of the destined laureate of Canada might be given, we shall refrain from quoting more than a few samples of his precious precocity. He refused to learn anything at school, and was pronounced a dunce by all who knew him. The master used to find doggerel verses pinned to his desk and coat-tails, sarcastic poems would reach him on post-cards, and the following selected piece was discovered one Sunday morning written in red ink on the lining of his hat :—

"This hat's no use ; the reason why
I'll tell you in a minute,
Whether it's on your head or not,
There's always nothing in it."

During this period of his career, before the age of ten, a book of old French poems came into his juvenile hands. He turned them over and concluded to introduce their peculiar forms into the English tongue. Among these were the Villa Nell, the Round O, the Bab Ballade, the Sixteener, the Chantry Ale and other foreign forms. We have selected the following specimens of beautiful art which will show the ease and grace of his adaptations. They have become very common now. Austin Dobson, Andrew Lang, Clinton Scollard, and other second-hand poets have dealt in them ; but the beauty of these originals is not to be approached by any hand.

"House to let"
Think I'll take it ;
Triolet !
"House to let ;"
Good ! you bet,
I can make it.
"House to let"
Think I'll take it.

The above specimen of the Try-a-lay was copied by all the papers of America and a gilt-edged copy was sent to the Queen of England, who send the infant prodigy a Cashmere shaw in return. Listen to this exquisite specimen of a Villa Nell, the original of its kind ever done in English ; but which has been vilely parodied by a modern Canadian bardess :

"I think it is immense
Each verse a different ending
Words and a want of sense.

My readers must be dense
Who like not what I'm sending,
I think it is immense.

Each mood and every tense
I'll use ; all syntax blending ;
Words and a want of sense.

Great Scott ! time's no expense ;
And three hours I've been spending
Words and a wont of sense.

And now I'll jump the fence
And trust there's no offending,
I think it is immense
Words and a want of sense."

The above has been translated into fifteen different languages with unvarying success and Asphodel Cantata received the order of "The Green T" from the Emperor of China. Of all the exotic forms of verse the most beautiful is undoubtedly the Bab Ballade and the proper time to write one is in the Spring. Asphodel had written ninety-nine ballades before he was eleven years of age and one of the greatest treasures I possess is a short calico shirt on which is delicately traced the following :—

"A BALLADE OF SPRING."

The beetles crawl from the rotten trees
And I thought as they every one was dead,
The bees buzz out for a ride on the breeze
And the crickets are hopping around 'tis said ;
The chipmunk has put out his little head,
The bluebird flies with a flashing wing ;
The robin has put on his shirt-front red ;
Ah ! where are the pants that I wore last spring ?

The air is fresh and it makes one sneeze
If the window is open and one's in bed
But I don't think it's healthy to lie and freeze ;
So I wait till the cool of the morn hath fled
Ere I raise my casement. My eyes are led
Around my chamber and so I sing
As I sit on the edge of my ancient bed
"Ah ! where are the pants that I wore last spring ?"

"Butter and eggs and a pound of cheese,"
I guess something better the author fed ;
But it's mad to remember such rhymes as these
When you're trying to feel the sublime instead ;
But what does it matter ? the best that are read
Are chiefly made up of a hackney'd string
Of phrases and sentiments, heavy as lead—
"Ah ! where are the pants that I wore last spring ?"

Grip ! Light on the thread-bare theme I'll shed,
To-morrow a ready-made suit shall bring ;
For her father's bull-dog has left not a shred
Of the snuff-coloured pants that I wore last spring."

Of the Round O's, Chantry Ales, and other forms of foreign verse space will not allow us to quote our poet's works. Suffice it to say that they are applauded by his dearest friends and have been favourably reviewed by the newspapers in which they have appeared. In a later article I shall speak of Asphodel Cantata's dramatic efforts, in which he has made his greatest mark.