

Sixteen years earlier Wordsworth had made a trip in company with his sister to the Continent, and commenced to write sonnets; nor has he surpassed some of the first noble utterances in that form of verse wherein he was prolific. It was on his return in 1802 that the state of England suggested the following rebuke to his country and tribute to Milton:

Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour.
England hath need of thee. She is a fen
Of stagnant waters; altar, sword and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart;
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea,
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

There is a touch of the Fairfax sonnet of Milton about this call from Wordsworth to the spirit of the blind patriot-poet. The state of social and political affairs justified the invocation for purification and ennobling contained in the octave; but then occurs a sudden and splendid change of key, and the genius and character of the poet is brilliantly set forth in a series of fine images to be followed by a closing allusion to the blameless conduct of Milton's private life. This is undoubtedly one of Wordsworth's finest sonnets. It was written when his feelings were raised by a prospect of marital happiness, when his pecuniary affairs were improved, and when the full power of thought was stirring him to some of his most splendid work.

Seventy-five years later, in 1877, a volume of poems by a young man of exceptional promise, Mr. Ernest Myers, included the following sonnet on Milton, which was selected by that careful critic, Mr. Mark Pattison, as a preface to his edition of Milton's sonnets. It has since taken a permanent place in sonnet literature.

He left the upland lawns and serene air
Wherefrom his soul her noble nurture drew,
And reared his helm among the unquiet crew
Battling beneath; the morning radiance rare
Of his young brow amid the tumult there
Grew dim with sulphurous dust and sanguine dew:
Yet through all soiture they who marked him knew
The signs of his life's dayspring, calm and fair,
But when peace came, peace fouler far than war,
And mirth more dissonant than battle's tone,
He, with a scornful sigh of his clear soul,
Back to his mountain clomb, now bleak and frore,
And with the awful night he dwelt alone,
In darkness, listening to the thunder's roll.

As a study of Milton we prefer this to anything written in verse that we have read. It is most true and most powerful. The reference to his blind and lonely ending of life is grandly strong. Nothing finer can be written. It is interesting to notice that Mr. Myers has used two words in this sonnet—"soiture" and "frore"—which are virtually obsolete—"pollution" and "frozen" are synonyms. There are two tendencies distinctly at work to-day in the use of the English language; one is the revival of old and almost forgotten words, significant and strong compared with the modern usurpers in common use—a movement which it is to be hoped will spread until we recover much of the solid grandeur that has been sacrificed to flimsy decoration and mere ornaments;—the other is the misuse of words and the coinage of terms, which is either impertinent or unnecessary. In a recent tale in *Blackwood's* we read of a person "contriving" a sandwich and we hear that "a fashion obtains to-day" and are told that the organs of a body "function admirably." The Americans are known as a most inventive race; but they should not infringe on the time-honoured patents of good and pure English. It is principally to American influence this corruption is due.

Longfellow was an American who loved good English and we reproduce a sonnet written by him on Milton. It is a whimsical fancy well expressed, an expansion of Wordsworth's line:

Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea.

With the ninth-wave theory we have nothing to do nor can we altogether think that it will hold water as a correct image; but the conceit is pleasant and the workmanship cunning.

I pace the sounding sea-beach and behold
How the voluminous billows roll and run,
Upheaving and subsiding, while the sun
Shines through their sheeted emerald far unrolled,
And the ninth wave, slow gathering, fold by fold,
All its loose-flowing garments into one,
Plunges upon the shore, and floods the dun
Pale reach of sands, and changes them to gold.
So in majestic cadence rise and fall
The mighty undulations of thy song,
O sightless bard, England's Meonides,
And ever and anon, high over all
Uplifted, a ninth wave, superb and strong,
Floods all the soul with its melodious seas.

And now we must take leave of Milton and the sonnets he wrote or inspired. To him sonnet-literature is vastly indebted as having adhered more closely to the best Italian form than any preceding writer and also, which is far more important, for having broken away from the traditions of the Elizabethan sonnet-writers and made the cameo-verse a vehicle for the noblest morality and highest personal expression. Mr. W. Ashcroft Noble in an essay to be found in the *Contemporary Review* of 1880, says, "It may be doubted if, before the time of Milton, we have a single sonnet which, as a sonnet and not merely as a fourteen line poem, can be praised without implicit limitations and reserves." Perhaps Sydney's "With how sad steps, O Moon!", Daniel's "Care-charmer sleep," Drayton's "Since there's no help" and a few others might be

allowed the benefit of a critical doubt; but in the main the opinion is certainly correct. There seem to be two methods, broadly speaking, of writing sonnets. There is the sonnet of description, which is composed of decorative detail, whether it be of love, scenery or character, and the sonnet of projection in which salient touches are given with a bold but effective brush—the filling in being left to the reader's imagination. There is no doubt of the superiority of the latter or of the prettiness of the former. One appeals to the soul, the other to the senses. It is almost superfluous to say that there exist certain sonnets which are unique and cannot without sacrilege be classed with any group.

SAREPTA.

PARIS LETTER.

FROM "start to finish" the Exhibition has been a gigantic success. On Sunday, despite the bursting of the monsoon, 307,000 visitors flocked to the Fair, and about 41,000 to the Palace of Industry to witness the distribution of prizes, which was quite what the theatres would call a "fairy spectacle." I was present at the kindred ceremonies of 1867 and 1878; neither could come up to the present event either in brilliancy, enthusiasm or effect. At the inauguration on the 6th of May last, the chief topic of conversation was the "skedaddling" of the ambassadors, whose governments had conspired to order their diplomatic representatives to be conspicuous by their absence at that outcome of people's efforts, genius and industry. The attachés of the round-robin embassies, who glided by the back door to the May ceremony, looked abashed, ashamed of the ridicule they had to swallow. Now the most remarkable circumstance at the gathering of the industrial clans at the distribution of prizes was, that not a soul bestowed a thought either on the absent ambassadors—the ruling passion strong in death—or even their *locum tenens* attachés; full light proof of the inutility of both, that which will make the continuance of their offices only the more permanent.

The principle of the march past of the juries and their collaborators, before M. Carnot, was the blending of diverse peoples in national or gala costumes, with displayed, variegated and eye-dazzling insignia, flanked by slices of the home and colonial army, to the strains of the choicest military and choral music. It was extremely picturesque. The first nation that defiled, following alphabetical arrangement, was the Argentine Republic and her native soldiers. The United States figured well, and a good deal was due to her smart soldiers and wide-awake commissioners. The honours of the day were reserved for Russia; when the Muscovites advanced, and dipped the eagles before the curule chair and its president-occupant, the French stood up, and indulged in political huzzas that might have reached Varzin. The Oriental colonists and the indigenous soldiery created a charming effect. There were a few kings from tropical Africa. In any future World's Fair there must be not only Eiffel Towers, but elegant extracts from the living ethnography of the universe. They supply our greed for actualities.

Only two speeches, both apropos, and of the thanks-giving and benediction order. M. Carnot is a small man, and of limited chest capacity; yet his *urbi et orbi* allocution reached the four corners of the building. His lady was in a private gallery, surrounded by a group of beauties; her toilette of red and white was charming. She has no rival in point of dress-taste, and what is not less important, possesses the art to display it without appearing to do so. Like Marie de Medicis, she has, too, her "flying squadron of beauties" when she appears at fêtes. This digression is intended to usher in the observation that M. Carnot never speaks better or proves more adequate for the occasion than when under the eye of his wife.

Premier Tirard's speech was devoted to the work and labour done; and set forth that, if the number of rewards was high, that was not due to commiserative feelings on the part of the jurors, but to the superiority of exhibits that compelled a formal recognition. M. Berger then commenced the herculean task of reading out the *palmarès*, that is, the synagogue scroll of the recompensed—an Homeric catalogue of 39,000 elect. It was a foretaste of the day of judgment. Upwards of 6,000 of the blessed were grands prix and gold medallists. Stentor, who had a fifty-man power voice, would have succumbed at the reading out. M. Berger deserves to win his deputyship at the second ballot for ever attempting the task, which soon had to be relinquished, though interludes of music allowed him to gasp for breath, and an unlimited supply of sugar and water was at his elbow to combat Saharanness of throat. He was cheered when he opened the list of glory, but he was vociferously applauded when he had to give it up.

The French attach no importance to the bridge proposed to span the Straits of Dover. It is a very old project revived, and one which the wonderful bridge over the Forth has galvanized into a novelty. Indeed the tunnel scheme never excited much attention either—beyond that it would allow the French to boast that they had constructed it, as it is well-known, John Bull desires—as a religion—to have no mainland connection with his tight little island. The demand is setting in, that having made all comfortable in the way of defence on the land side, it is necessary to bring up the navy to an equal footing with that of England's. But where is the money to come from?

The Congresses are drawing also to a close. That for making known the advantage of the Metric system has been held. Observers notice the progress of the question has received a check since France declined to be bound by

the finding of the Meridian Congress at Washington, to make Greenwich, and not Paris, the First Meridian. Paris turns out more maps for foreign countries with the Greenwich meridian, than she does maps having the meridian of Paris. The Congress on the subject of "Absinthe" was interesting, the enemies of the "green parrot" beverage, as absinthe is familiarly called, injured their cause by over-denunciation. Absinthe is a very deleterious drink, and makes a host of victims; it takes the place of gin and whiskey in other countries. But no stimulant is so adulterated as absinthe, not even the dozen litres of "genuine cognac," with capsule and fancy label, shipped in attractive baskets to West African negroes, and only "at 9 frs. the dozen." The saddest circumstance about absinthe consumption is—the progress made in its moderate drinking. I remember the time when respectable people would feel ashamed to be seen drinking it, and never outside a café. Now it is the commonest afternoon "pick-me up," and rivals in popularity real German beer. Respectable women from the provincial towns do not blush before their "green-parrot," on the outside tables of a Parisian café. Of course no lady ever sits outside a café, and the fewer that patronize its inside the better.

The Congress for the "observance of Sunday," was able to register progress. But the latter is due, not to any pious influences or religious scruples, but to the fact, that the labourer must have one day's rest out of the seven, and the employees twenty-four hours' amusement. It is this necessity for muscle and brain repose, which explains why so many shops now close on Sundays; clients go to the country on that day, or to the theatres, but never go shopping. Any pressure to be remunerative, should be applied to the contractors of Government works, keeping bands at their ordinary calling on Sundays. I think the spectacle of the English and American sections of the Exhibition being virtually closed on Sundays, has done much to strike the unthinking crowd. Materially it is the loss of one day's wages, that constitutes the grand difficulty. Let John Burns when he has given the Bakers a lift, come over and try his hand as a Sunday salvationist of French dockyarders.

The journals here are coining with highly paid puffs on the prize men of the Exhibition. The commissions from foreign countries are also recommencing the mutual admiration banquets, with hired Marquises and loaned Princes, to do oratorical duty.

Germany has prohibited the reproduction of the Eiffel Tower, in pastry or sugar-work. It recalls the Gaul.

Z.

MONTREAL LETTER.

THE good people of the Queen City of the West would find it difficult to believe our municipal incapacity. With flying colours and flourishing trumpets we signed a contract with an electric light company to lighten our streets with electricity instead of gas. In spite of the fact that we were offered the service for \$87,600, and that Quebec gets a similar number of lights for \$64,000, we agreed to pay the Royal Company \$119,000 per annum; and in face of the unprecedented rapidity of the development of the science of electricity, with its prospect of better and cheaper appliances, we gave the company a monopoly for ten years. The result is so unsatisfactory that the most conflicting proposals are being made, as possible loopholes for the company to escape from blame and loss, and as loopholes for us to escape from the inefficiency of the bargain. To escape from the bargain itself is what no one ever dreams of. We must go back to gas. We must have more arcs if we keep to electricity. We must encourage the company by paying more, and extending the monopoly.

Then our streets are being made, unmade, and re-made. Drainage we have little time to heed. At every corner what poor civic laws we possess are conspicuous only by their neglect. Our police used to stand and look on. Now they sit and look away. At prodigious expense, we built, one year ago, the most hideous deformity in the shape of a dyke for the spring floods that ever marred the appearance of a naturally beautiful harbour. Now we threaten to break it up with cuttings, tunnels, vamps, and the scientifico-financial mind knows not what, to improve the harbour and the streets which lead to it. It is not yet too late for a mass meeting, when we might resolve upon the temporary removal of Montreal, the raising of the entire island, say forty feet, and the rebuilding of the city according to common sense.

At a vestry meeting on the 3rd instant, an effort was made to introduce the surplice to the choir of St. George's Church. As St. George's ranks as the stronghold of evangelicism in the Anglican body, much interest centred around the question. The promoters of the innovation disclaimed any intention to insert the thin edge of ritualism. The difficulty of securing and maintaining an enthusiastic choir without some such incentive to regular attendance and practice was their only ground. Nevertheless, the proposal met with sturdy and persistent opposition, and a motion even to chant the psalms and the litany on occasional festivals and evenings was vigorously voted down. The idea, however, has not been abandoned, and disappointed enthusiasts are relieving their feelings in the public press.

One of the most important movements which has ever been witnessed in Montreal, under the auspices of women and womanly management, has just been completed. The annual conference of temperance workers, known as the Provincial Christian Temperance Union, lasting for the