

questions for the Biblical critic and for the historian; the geologist must build his conclusions on the phenomena which the earth affords, not ignore or manipulate them to suit a preconception. The student who passionately longs to trace man's first creation to the Miocene, and the professor who labours to restrict the prehistoric period to a thousand years, will be certain to find proof of their respective theories; they will not convince their neighbours, nor advance the cause of scientific truth.—*From the Spectator.*

### THE SUMMER RAIN.

SWEET, blessed summer rain—ah me!  
The drifting cloud-land spills  
God's mercy on the dotted lea  
And on the tented hills;

Yet is there more than shrouded sky,  
And more than falling rain,  
Or swift-borne souls of flowers that fly  
Breeze-lifted from the plain:

Strange joy comes with the freshening gust,  
The whitening of the leaves,  
The smell of sprinkled summer dust,  
The dripping of the eaves;

The soul stirs with the melting clod,  
The drenched field's silent mirth:—  
Who does not feel his heart help God  
To bless the thirsting earth?

Oh rain—oh blessed summer rain!—  
Not on the fields, alone,  
Nor woodlands, fall, nor flowery plain,  
But on the heart of stone!

—Robert Burns Wilson, in *New York Critic*.

### CORRESPONDENCE.

#### SHAKESPEARIANA.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—I am sorry that your ready acceptance of the proposal for a Shakespeariana column has not met with greater result. I hope that you will agree with me that the more reverence we feel for the mighty genius of Shakespeare, by so much the more should such over-free rendering of his works as I describe be brought under notice. The authority for the letter of the quotations that I have made from the article in question, and of the omissions, is at any time at your service. The play itself is almost always and everywhere accessible. Faithfully yours, D. FOWLER.

THE following is, I think, a curiosity in its way. In Act III., Scene IV., of the "Merchant of Venice," Portia says to Nerissa, "I'll tell thee all my whole device when I am in my coach," and "we'll see our husbands," that is, in the court. She requires the professional disguise in which she is to appear in court, and sends her servant Balthazar to her cousin Bellario, doctor of laws at Padua, for "notes and garments." She orders her messenger to use utmost speed, and instructs him to join her at the ferry on the way to Venice, "where," she says, "I shall be before thee." Accordingly, having in due time sent in a note of introduction from Dr. Bellario, concocted for the occasion and full of fiction, as indeed there was no avoiding in such a "device," she enters court "dressed like a doctor of laws." This is Shakespeare; this is the order of his play; Portia has no need to go, and does not go, to Padua. She is hard pressed for time. She takes the direct road to the ferry. But one of our recent instructors, a lady, knows better. She tells us that "Portia, after despatching an *avant courier* to Bellario, herself hastens to Padua;" that she "goes gayly on to Padua with Nerissa;" and that "in the play we see that Portia bids Balthazar wait for her at the ferry." "In the play" we have seen, as all may see for themselves, that she says, "I shall be there before thee." The lady proceeds, "either her mind must have changed, or she must have met messengers from Bellario on the road" (the alternative is not intelligible), "who tell her of his illness and inability to help her in person. Consequently she hastens on to Padua." Now, if Bellario had not yet received the errand of Balthazar, he knew nothing of Portia's interest in the trial, which had only come suddenly to her own knowledge within the last few hours. If he had received the letter carried by that messenger, he knew that it was his robes, and not his personal help, that was applied for. If he had required a messenger to Portia, he had Balthazar at hand, who was to hasten to her at the ferry. "Consequently," he would not have sent messengers to meet her on the road from Belmont to Padua. The lady continues, "in this extremity, with no other help at hand, Bellario proposes that Portia shall go in his stead." (He had been specially summoned by the Duke to attend at the trial.) There was no "extremity," because Portia was sufficient for herself, and had not counted on personal help from Bellario, ill or well; but, if there had been, there were all the other lawyers at Padua and Venice. Bellario would have made no such proposal, because he knew that Portia's resolve was already

determined on. And, while all this is put in, all that is of most significance is left out; not a word is said about "all my whole device," or "we'll see our husbands," or "notes and garments." But we are told that "Portia's eye had been the first to see the flaw in the bond." No doubt, only, "in the play" we hear nothing about any flaw, nor is there any. Portia had not yet seen the bond. At the trial she says, "let me look upon it." Then she decides:

Why this bond is forfeit;  
And lawfully by this the Jew may claim  
A pound of flesh, to be by him cut off  
Nearest the merchant's heart.

And:

For the intent and purpose of the law  
Hath full relation to the penalty,  
Which here appeareth due upon the bond.

There was indeed a "device," by which she saved Antonio from Shylock's knife, but that is another matter. One more example or two. Nerissa is called in the play Portia's "maid" by Portia herself, and by Gratiano, who also calls Portia Nerissa's "mistress;" this lady calls her her "*dame d'honneur* and friend." She expatiates upon the horror excited in Portia's mind by seeing Shylock whet his knife; she does not see it, for it takes place before she enters the court. Such is the style in which we have "Shakespeare made easy" for us. And the most curious part of it all is that it is accepted and defended. I have asked people whether there could be any excuse for the actual reversal of Shakespeare's own words, such as "wait for me there," in place of "I shall be there before thee," to say nothing of continual misleading less direct, but I have asked in vain. This lady brought to her work station, rank, much well-earned prestige from former achievements on the stage, and all the persuasiveness of an accomplished writer, and, as a matter of course, all she says is taken for granted by those who do not know better, and how many are they not? D. F.

#### ANTICOSTI.

To the Editor of THE WEEK:

SIR,—I have just read an article in THE WEEK on Anticosti, its capabilities and incapacities. May I respectfully beg your permission, as one of the delegates chosen by the directors of the company formed in England for the purpose of sending out suitable men as settlers there, to offer a few remarks thereon, not for the purpose of creating or prolonging a spirit of controversy, but with the view of doing justice to an island, the resources of which appear to be known only to few? During the last month I, in company with six others, started from Quebec in the steam-tug *Conqueror* for the isle of wrecks and barren rocks. We landed at English Bay, where we found about sixty well-built houses, well-stocked general stores, and had the opportunity of conversing with many of the oldest residents there, some of them having spent from twenty to forty years of their lives there, perfectly satisfied with their banishment on this horrid island. During our stay there we visited English Bay, Salmon River, Fox Bay, East Bay, South-West Point, Jupiter River, and Ellis Bay, taking frequent pleasant strolls through the impenetrable scrubs, falsely so called. We could only come to this conclusion, viz.: no finer roots, vegetables of all kinds, and even oats, barley, and wheat can be grown in any part of Canada. The natural grass grows to an enormous height, and must possess highly nutritious properties, as some fine specimens of bullocks may be seen on the island fattened entirely on these grasses; and we saw large quantities of splendid hay, also the produce of this barren rock. Being in possession of these facts, it is difficult to conceive the necessity of importing even fodder for pigs, horses and sheep, as has been erroneously asserted. The water supply is excellent, and of the purest kind; the timber, varying from one to seven feet, suitable for boat building and general purposes. The rich deposits of marl, its wild fruits in abundance, its rivers and creeks, and the whole of the sea-coast around it, seem to me to render it an island to be sought rather than to be avoided; and I have no doubt that many a happy home will be established there very shortly. I am taking home some fine specimens of potatoes, swedes and other roots grown at Anticosti, and shall only be too pleased to place them in the hands of those who have been hitherto most sceptical as to its capabilities. As a test of my hopes for the future of this place, I feel that from all I have seen of it I shall be justified in endeavouring to induce two of my sons, now in the Colonies, to take up land there.

I am, sir, yours,

I. TIMBERS.

Rossin House, Toronto, Oct. 6, 1886.

P.S.—I have omitted one very important point. It has been asserted that cows could not possibly live on the island more than two years. I believe there is one place only where some noxious weed is picked up by them, at South-West Point; but if removed to any other part they do well, their milk being of the finest quality.

WHEN "Thad" Stevens was a young lawyer in the Pennsylvania Courts, he once lost his case by what he considered a wrong ruling of the judge. Disgusted, he banged his law books on the table, picked up his hat, and started for the door with some vigorous words in his mouth. The Judge feeling that his dignity was assailed, rose impressively and said: "Mr. Stevens!" Mr. Stevens stopped, turned, and bowed deferentially. "Mr. Stevens," said the Judge, "do you intend by such conduct to express your contempt for this court?" And Stevens, with mock seriousness, answered: "Express my contempt for this court! No, I was trying to conceal it, your Honour!"