

THE WORLD OF BOOKS.

A Poet of a Nation and Society, and a Poet of Romance.

An ipse dixit of our delightful Critic—the former bard of Elmwood—runs:

Make thyself free of Manhood's guild;
Pull down thy bars and greater build;

Fluck thee the sunset's fruit of gold,
Glean from the heavens and ocean old;
From freestone lone and trampling street
Let thy life garner daily wheat;
The epic of a man rehearse,
Be something better than thy verse.

We think of one at least, who has heeded this pleasant behest, and who, in the sunny vale of his age, has gathered ripe stores both of the muse and of manhood. Bright, virile, active, warmly sympathetic, having, and meriting, hosts of friends of all ages and in all walks of life; the Muse has glanced upon him, and he has returned her salutation, as appears from this little volume, which we have perused from red cover to red cover. These records, which belong to some fifty or sixty years, are mostly chronicles in rhyme, or addresses in which a happy personality ingeniously reveals itself; and show not only how men may in musty precinct and purloin of the law successfully woo the muse with honor, but, remembering the ripe age of the venerable author, attest—

How far the Gulf stream of our youth may flow into the arctic regions of our lives.
Hope lives with him, and in him is a liberal mind, while among the young, awakening spirits of the time who look prophetically out over this new Dominion to forecast its future, he stands with the gospel of good-will in his heart and upon his lips, which he speaks for all the Canadian peoples. He stands for good-fellowship, moderation, and a united people. So he says:

Difference of race, of creed or tongue
Should not divide Canadians, but all
"Should be one people striving for one end,
The common good of all.

He has had long and large intercourse and acquaintance with public men and measures in the country of which he is so honorable and patriotic a citizen; and whose reads these pages will find therein a historical outline of Canada's richest years, together with songs and friendly addresses, all showing wit, poetic art, and a vigorous, hearty nature. Some of the songs have a lilting flow, and a mingling of humor and patriotic good-fellowship, making them delightful reading, after more sugary rhymes have palled on the taste. As a fair sample, we give the "Song written at request of H. Black, Esq., and sung by Archibald Campbell, Esq., at the dinner given to A. Stewart, after he lost his election in 1834":

There's a Rose in our wine,
And the Shamrock shall be
The mystical sign
Of the proud one in three,
Our good constitution,
Lords, Commons and King,
Which no Resolution
To ruin shall bring:

And the Thistle, the hardy old Thistle, God bless it,
The Thistle that "comes inna lace,"
Is the type of the bearing we show to our foes
Who dare to provoke Thistle, Shamrock or Rose.

Nor shall Cambrria's sons
The occasion let slip,
There's a Lark in their hats;
There's no Lark in our ships;
And the old Constitution
Forever shall be
The bark of the loyal,
The brave, and the free:
And the boys from the Shannon, the Tweed, and the Wye,
With the sons of the Thames, all her fees shall defy;
Each alike the bold tread of Joy's footprints,
Let him come from Tweed, Shannon, or Wye or old Thames.

And what shall we do,
Who alone upon earth
Have no national name
In the land of our birth;
Called "Canadians" in Britain,
And "Foreigners" here,
We've a country we love,
And we're proud that we're dear.

The descendants of Britons, and Britons in heart,
In this true British struggle we'll all do our part,
From our brethren of Europe we never will sever—
"Here's the King, Constitution, and Stuart forever."

Mr. Wicksteed is a scholarly man, a lover of the French-Canadian muse, and a graceful and faithful translator of such fine things as the *Les Excommuniés* and *Fors L'Honneur* of Frechette, and of Benjamin Sulte's *La Statue de Cartier*, which we give as a specimen of his skill in rendering his poet's thought into a language less facile than the French:

Here in enduring bronze,
Proof against time and storm,
Stands he, "the mark and glass"
Of patriots of his time!
A head to frame his country's laws,
A brow that never blanched with fear,
A generous man—"a rough-barked oak,"
Whom Canada has not forgot!

Will not forget!
Born in that long-past time
When intrigue baffled right;
True heir of Lafontaine
He broke our galling yoke.
Brave teller for the common good,
Without regret he sacrificed
Health, pleasure, fortune, rest,
Him Canada has not forgot.
Will not forget!

"The wearing cares of State
Checked not his path to fame;
His pleasant strains of verse
Flowed often bright and free.
And once set off, true type of Jean-Baptiste,
How well he sang of love and friendship's charm;
His modest rhymes the artist's skill reveal,
Whom Canada has not forgot,
Will not forget!"

"Mid treasure's highest prize,
His portrait decks my home;
Good is it that we love to praise
His steadfast will, by reason ruled."

Walt's In Verse, by G. W. Wicksteed, Q. C.,
Law Clerk, House of Commons of Canada. Ottawa:
A. Bursell & Co., 1887.

Home of "beneficial domination" memory.

His story teaches virtue to our youth,
For the path that all should strive to tread:
In memory's temple still he lives enshrined,
Him Canada has not forgot
Will not forget.

II.

By the favor of the appreciative editor and kinsman, and genial poet, of whose work we have just been treating, we have before us a classic romance in verse, the sweetness, pathos, harmony, simplicity, and rich picturesqueness of which are its sufficient excuse for being. The author is a scholar of excellent fancy, and no little poetic ability, deserving recognition as among the fingers who do honor to the land they serve and the people to whom they commit their songs. The subject of his poem is a favorite one with Mr. Fletcher since as far back as 1863, we are told, he delivered himself speculatively in a paper on "The Lost Island of Atlantis," repeating the narrative of Plato in the *Times* and *Critics*, and following it with a summary of modern research and opinion on the same topic. In the process of the years, however, this learned and curious thesis has undergone transformation "into something rich and strange," and the delicate pearly digest comes to us as something richer and of higher artistic value than the first, with all the appended dicta of a DeMaury, Winchell, or Wilson. The poem itself was born in the most new and primitive part of our common country, and the hand that inscribed it is one engaged in building up the far northwestern province we know as British Columbia. "Meet nurse for a poetic child," or meet godfather, his brother-in-law, Mr. Gustavus Wicksteed, received the precious packet, after it had crossed the frith that separates Vancouver Island from the continent, traversing the rails leading to Ottawa, and with a loving interest edited it, and saw it pass from manuscript to print. We might say much of the quality of this work, but its excellence can best be shown by a synopsis of the whole, with characteristic passages. The reader will say it opens finely, with a picture distinct, and serenely beautiful:

Silent and lonely, in the summer night,
Lay the great city, through the marble streets
No footstep moved; the palaces, the seats
Of wealth and power, the domes of malice,
Where sculptured dragons, monsters carved in stone,
Alternated with statues, clear and white,
Of ancient warrior-kings, that stood in rows
Along the Cyclopean porticoes,
Were hushed; and over all the moonlight shone.

Along the beach, beneath the massy wall,
The great sea rippled drowsily; afar
The headland glimmered like a misty star,
Wearing a cloud-wreath for a coronal;
And all the air was filled with tremulous sighs
Borne from the waste of waters, musical,
Yet dreamy soft, as some old Orphic hymn,
That floated up, what time the day grew dim,
From Dorian groves, and forest privacies.

Yet, in the voiceless silence at the hour,
An awful presence moved, unseen, unheard;
It glided onward in the way, and stirred
The sleeper's heart with dreams of gloomy power,
Visions of fear, and throbblings of despair.
The plague was here. There was no house or bower
Safe from its darts: from every door had gone
Some friend or father, some beloved one,
Borne to his grave by the red torches' glare.

And as a lovely flower, that seems to fade
In summer's heat, and bows its golden head,
Turning from these fierce heavens overpread,
To muse, in sadness, on some drowsy glade,
So many a maiden perished, white and still,
And many a soft angelic face, that made
The sunshine of its home, grown cold and gray
Beneath the coming shadow, passed away;
So warm of late, now passionless and chill.

Alas! the little children:—where was now
Their laughter, many-voiced?—their sportive wiles,
Their bounding feet, and witchery of smiles,
With floating hair, and faces all aglow?
Silence, and fear into their play had come,
Dulling each pulse and shadowing each brow;
And so they wept and wondered. Side by side,
Lay young and old, the bridegroom and the bride,
The child and sage, all summoned to one tomb.

The greater poet called to his island the
beautiful forms of Ariel and Miranda, and
he who sang of Troy set a previous example
for later bards to follow. So here,—
There stepped a figure of heroic mean,
Fair as a goddess, stately and serene,
A star-like apparition, pure and white—
forth from the palace's sculptured portals.

This was the island queen, Evance,
All unattended, save by one stout thrall,
Who followed humbly at some interval.
With noiseless foot she trod the marble way.
She passed the open, toward the open sea,
That girt the town. In shadowy array
The palm-trees, on her right hand, lifted high
Their crests, clear cut against the opal sky,
And, on her left, she heard the murmuring sea.

She passed on, halting at last by—
A wayside cottage door,
A lowly hut that lay twixt sea and land,
Retired and peaceful as a hermitage,
wherein her aged nurse lay dying. There
she entered and stood beside the couch of
her who now lay "breathing slow her life
away," while—

The sinking soul, that seemed forever gone,
Woke at the sudden footstep, and a thrill
Of recognition o'er her features passed.
Bestowing her blessing on the head of
"two fair children kneeling by her bed,"
the mother closes her eyes forever, and in
due course "laid at rest in grassy sod
beside the ocean foam." In a beautiful
passage our poet describes Nature's seeming
indifference to the sorrow and losses
of her children:

Still shone the sun abroad,
And bird and insect, butterfly and flower,
Basked in the glorious splendor of the hour;
Silly through the air, like footstep of a god,
Murmured the low, soft wind; and all was bright:
No shadow fell on these, nor were they sad,
When, through their midst, a naked human soul
Passed, his eyes closed, and his hands in prayer,
A bubble rising to the Infinitesimal.

Then we are led to the palace chamber
of Evance:

"The Lost Island (Atlantis)." By Edward Taylor
Fletcher, F. L. S., Ottawa: A. Bursell & Co.,
Printers, 1888.

She sat alone. It was an antique room,
Lofly, not large; the cornice pearl-inlaid;
The floor mosaic; and the wall arrayed
With tapestry whose softly-shaded gloom
Was lit with life-like figures, passing fair,
The product of some long-forgotten loom.
White marble fountains, hunters and kings of old,
Stood in quaint nooks, and vases of wrought gold
Held richest flowers, whose perfume filled the air.

She thought of many a legendary rhyme
Told by her nurse, in the long vanished days
When she, a child, was listening with fixed gaze,
To those delightful stories of old time.
Here sat she, patient, on her lowly stool,
And heard how, first, when struck the fated chime,
Out of the deep like a fair lotus-flower,
Atlantis rose, and, warmed by sun and shower,
Expanded, bearing all things beautiful.

Thereon the gods came down, and dwelt with men;
Through the dim avenues of giant trees
They walked conversing; or on peaceful seas
Sublimely trod, nor shrank from human key.
The air was musical with song and mirth
Of vigorous, lusty life: from glade and glen
Soft close of incomes rose; the passing hours
Seemed garlanded with amaranthine flowers;
Nor yet was pain or sorrow known on earth.

But a pitiable change had fallen, so "on all
the land despair lay darkling, and a mourn-
ful cry went up" from the plague-stricken
people; and she questioned why some god,
some mighty one should not interpose, and—

Sweep, as with a conqueror's brand,
This pestilence from out the heavy air,
And bring back health, and joy, and all things fair,
so earning, in her infancy, lasting honor,
and being admitted to royalty as the sharer
of her throne. This is the pivotal point
in the story, for—

Scarce had the wish been framed, when came a
sound
Of sudden thunder,
and Sanadon, the deliverer, enters on the
scene; and, as lord of the winds, with a
mighty tempest sweeps the pestilence away.

Adown the street,
With thunder-call the mad winds raved amain:
Day drenched in gloom, and came, and went again,
And still the storm winds, furious and fleet,
Coursed on shore; and sun and stars were dead.
Then came a change. Again with silver feet,
The moonlight came and kissed each bruised flower;
And morning came, and all the healing power
Of freshening airs, and sunshine overhead.

So like a nightmare vision, passed away
The pestilence and all its gloomy shows.
The fourth day came to end: in hushed repose,
The golden gloom faded into gray,
Gleaming with stars, and shadows resplendent
Filled all the room where sat Evance.

Then came again the god. As some strong spell,
She felt his presence, murmuring, it is well:
"My people live, are saved—and I am thine!"

And they were happy through long sunny years,
The island-queen and Sanadon.

Joyous as summer-birds, they wandered out
Through regions wild and full of loveliness,
Through lonely places, where the hum and stress
Of cities come not, and the air was soft
With balmy odors of sweet scented pines;
Where, in the clear blue, the white clouds sailed
And streams flowed on through plains, or leaped in
falls
From rock to rock, in broken intervals,
Bordered by lotus-blossoms and leafy vines.

Sometimes they went inland, and visited
The mountain solitudes and privacies,
Wherein the island waters had their rise:
And taking, thus, some river at its head,
They drifted downwards on its placid stream,
Passing by caverns dark, and full of dread,
By headlands frowning vast, and towers upward,
By golden sands and beds of odorous sand,
And banyan groves, all wondrous as a dream.

Then, borne aloft in his aerial car,
The Marut brought them over the sea and land
Toward the rising sun, beyond the strand
Of far Iberia. Shining like a star,
Old Atlas raised aloft his crown of snow;
But they passed onward, o'er the sandy bar
Of rocky Salmydessus, white with foam,
And traversed so the Euxine, near the home
Of Scythians, and the broad Araxes' flow.

As they go onward, led by the Marut, or
Vedic Wind-god, the voyagers of air get
a sight of the "boundless plain where roved
the mammoths," and of Prometheus rock-
chained—an

An awful shape—with brow all scored.

They cross—
The Hima mountains, home of snow,
The story-girdle of the world, and so
Entered on Aryavarta's sacred close
Land of the marvellous;

meeting, on their way, Ulysses, and others
of the demi-gods, the line heroic, the
"world's gray fathers," amid—
The silence of the lonely western sea,
Unknown and vast, with wild waves rolling free,
Beyond Pyrene, and the sunset shore.

At last they "arrive the happy isle" of
their home, only to learn that doom hung
over it. Sanadon hears the prophecy of its
destruction, but will not leave it; as their
lord, he will stay and perish with his people,
or, better, for them. He provides an
ark of rescue, summons workers
From sunny hills, and meads Elysian,
From lonely bays, bespoken with ocean foam.
Soon on the brink of the sea their "fleet" is
ready," the people embark.

Last upon the bank,
Stood Sanadon, who waved his hand, and cheered
His parting friends, and bade them all farewell.
They call for him to come; he must re-
main, a willing sacrifice to the gods, he,
or they, must perish. The isle is rent with
earthquake, and sinks beneath the waves;
so—

Far down in silence, to awake no more.
And they, the wanderers, who ventured forth
To seek a home beyond the unknown sea,
How soon they found their way. They lived to be
Forefathers of the mighty sons of earth,
Founders of western empires, now vanished long.
The sun shone on the island of their birth,
The stars shone on the island of their birth,
The sun shone, unobscured, and the stars rolled by,
A germ of legend, and a theme for song.

Age followed age: great empires rose and fell;
The sun shone and the stars rolled by,
Lived in men's thoughts, and ever urged them on
To deeds heroic; and there was a spell
To youthful warriors in Eldorado's name;
And maidens wept to hear their mothers tell
The story of sweet Thyra, young and fair.

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