

POET WHITTIER AT HOME.

The Venerable Poet Receives a Visitor in Amesbury, Mass.

WHAT HE THINKS OF CARDINAL LAVIGERIE'S ANTI-SLAVERY CRUSADE IN AFRICA—HOW SOME OF HIS POEMS WERE WRITTEN—HIS OPINION OF JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY.

Making recently a brief visit to Amesbury, Mass., I felt it would be hard to leave without a glimpse of the great and beloved poet, John Greenleaf Whittier, who makes his home for a great part of the year there, says a writer in the Boston Pilot. Every resident of Amesbury is proud to claim him for a fellow-citizen, and hardly a child but could point out to the stranger the quaint old homestead, which for the poet's presence is honored as a shrine of literature and patriotism.

A little Catholic school-girl conducted us thither. "There's Whittier's house," she said eagerly, as we came out through a shady lane, near St. Joseph's, and on to a shady, quiet street—"It's cream-colored now, it used to be white." There it was, with its broad front, and the neat old-fashioned door-garden between it and the street. We soon found ourselves in a pleasant little sitting-room filled with suggestive pictures and books; and presently the venerable poet himself entered with kindly greeting. He is tall, erect, with white hair and beard. The eyes, gleaming under the heavy white brows, are black, piercing and luminous. He carries his eighty-three years well, age seeming with him, as it so often seems with men of intellectual and ascetic life, an even wearing away of the mortal vesture, rather than a process of visible decay and decrepitude.

Speaking of the late John Boyle O'Reilly, he said: "That was a beautiful light too early quenched." But, later, he spoke of the beauty of dying, even prematurely, while one's record is fair, and the sadness of living to make some error or blunder which tarnishes a noble past.

"Ah, you are thinking of 'Ichabod' now," he said, having in mind his poem of that name, suggested by the retreating on the slavery question of Daniel Webster.

He was silent for a moment. Then, musingly: "Webster hurt himself by aspiring to the Presidency. It was a sad mistake. The office could have added nothing to him. He was too great for that."

Then, reverting to Boyle O'Reilly, he praised especially his poems, "Wendell Phillips" and "Crispus Attucks."

"You sympathize, I take it, with O'Reilly's feeling to Attucks rather than with that of the Massachusetts Historical Society?"

He smiled his cordial assent. "Nor would, perhaps, that criticised line

"The blood is putrid blood, the people's blood is red,"

have shocked your taste?"

He applauded O'Reilly's thought, and showed himself especially moved by the remembrance of this Catholic Irishman's work for the negro.

We touched presently on Cardinal Lavigerie's crusade against the slave-traffic in Equatorial Africa.

"I am thankful for Lavigerie's work," he said; adding, however, that in the old American slave-days, all the churches had been too slow to move against slavery.

"You forget," he ventured, "that Catholics were very few in the bulk of the Slave States; and that a Catholic priest, with his inflexible word on the indissolubility of marriages among the slaves, would hardly get a candid welcome on the average plantations."

He granted that, and he knew too, of the communities of negro nuns founded in Maryland and Louisiana long before the abolition of slavery. He recalled also the pronouncement of an early Pope against slavery.

We recalled here his poem, "St. John of Matha." "You had to come to the Old Church for a patron saint for your abolitionists." "Yes," he added, "we have our debt to your saints, and to the Old Church for her antagonism of slavery. These, know, perhaps, my poem, 'The Men of Old,' where I spoke of St. Anselm melting down the sacred vessels to make coin for the redemption of captives."

"Church property was used in the early Irish Church, too, as far back as the time of St. Patrick, for the redemption of slaves," we rejoined, not willing to give Italy all the glory.

"I remember that, too," he said; "but not all the Irish of a later day felt kindly to the negroes. I knew an Irishman in Amesbury," he said, his eyes twinkling at the remembrance, "who was very much opposed to social equality for the negro. I said to him: 'But there are many Catholic negroes in Brazil, the West Indies and other places. Thy Church accounts of them as it does of thee. And they'll have to come to it in Heaven. They'll have to meet the negroes there on equal terms.'"

"I thought," he continued, "that I had silenced him with an unanswerable argument. He sat musing for a moment, then looking up at me—'And can't the Lord make them white in Heaven, Mr. Whittier?'"

The poet laughed heartily at the remembrance of this sally of his ready Irish friend.

Presently we recalled a number of poems besides "The Men of Old," in which he had shown much comprehension of the Catholic spirit and sympathy with it. "We Catholics appreciate these poems," we said.

"But there are some of my poems, you Catholics don't like so well.

"Certainly there are," we said; "but they do not hinder us from appreciating those of a different spirit."

"My 'Female Martyr,'" he said, "was inspired by the death of a Sister of Charity, a nurse of the cholera patients."

Further on he spoke of his love for the writings of St. Thomas a Kempis. We quoted:

"The Cross, if rightly borne, shall be no burden but support to thee; No, moved in all things, for our sake, The holy monk of Kempen spoke."

"These remembers my poems better than I do myself," said the venerable poet, who seemed indisposed to touch on any work of his own, except where it served an illustrative purpose.

With more pleasure he turned to reminiscences of the other men who made the golden age of Boston's literary supremacy—Emerson, Holmes, Wendell Phillips and the rest.

"Emerson was a sweet spirit," we asked him if he had noted the collection of Wendell Phillips' speeches, just issued by Lee & Shepard, of Boston.

"I heard Wendell Phillips," he said, in a tone of elation and affectionate pride. But he had looked with pleasure at the collection we had referred to.

He invited us to a glimpse at his study, with its pleasant outlook on the well-shaded back garden. Here are the books among which he lives. Between the windows hangs an oil painting of the old farm and homestead, in Haverhill, Mass.

"Just where," we asked, "did you write that first poem of yours about the Irish exile?"

Some of our readers may remember perhaps, that Whittier's first poem, written at the age of twelve, was an attempt to describe the feelings of an Irish immigrant, leaving the Old Land forever. "Yes," he had told us in reference to it. "It was my first verse-making," but he smiled away our attempt to minutely localize it.

He showed us his brother's picture over his desk. "Is he living?" we asked. "No; he is dead. I am the last of my race."

We had already seen the portrait of his mother over the parlor mantel, a beautiful old lady in the Quaker garb—the poet has her eyes—and hanging on the opposite wall that of his lovely sister, of whom he has written so sweetly.

He called our attention to a fine picture of St. John the Evangelist, close to his desk. "Your patron saint? It should have been St. John the Baptist," we said, recalling how much of the poet's brave life had been, as his own word has it,

"A long, harsh strife with strong-willed men."

He showed us, before we left him, a picture which he prized, that of the negro jubilee singers—their own gift to him; and a fine portrait of Abraham Lincoln, in the hall.

When the shadows of the June afternoon were lengthening we left him, storing away among our most cherished memories our last glimpse of him, serene in his dignified, self-forgetting and kindly old age.

We thought of his tender poem "Marguerite," about the poor Acadian girl, the Catholic wife dying in the New England farm-house under the stern eyes of her Puritan mistress.

"She murmured a psalm of the Bible; but across the young girl pressed, With the last of her life in her fingers, the cross to her breast."

And presently we were again in sight of the Catholic church, with the statue of St. Joseph above its entrance, neighboring the near-at-hand statue of the old Colonial Governor, Josiah Bartlett. Truly,

"The old order changeth, yielding place to new, And God falls Himself in many ways."

Symbols of the Saints. Painters at an early period adopted symbols by which saints whom they depicted might be recognized. Some of these are in a manner fixed, and are not used with other saints, so that a person with a little knowledge can easily tell what saint is intended.

In the case of martyrs, where the instrument of their death could be easily used in art, it was introduced with the figure of the saint. St. Paul was beheaded with a sword, hence he is represented with one; St. Catherine, torn on a wheel, is shown with it.

Other saints have emblems derived from some fact or incident. The four evangelists are believed to be typified by the four animals seen in the chariot of the prophet, Ezekiel and one is applied to each. St. Matthew is shown with an angel or man standing near him; St. Mark with the lion; St. Luke with the ox, and St. John the evangelist with an eagle.

St. Michael the archangel, who overcame Satan, is represented as an armor with a flashing sword; St. Raphael, accompanied by a boy holding a fish, alluding to young Tobias and the fish which he carried by the angel's order.

St. Augustine, from his great love of God, is represented as holding a flaming heart; St. Patrick, who expelled idolatry from Ireland, as a bishop driving off a serpent with his crozier.

St. Nicholas is represented with three children in a tub, the legend being that he restored three children to life who had been brutally murdered, their bodies cut up and hid in a tub. St. Francis of Assisi is represented with the stigmata in his hands; St. Anthony of Padua as visited by the Infant Jesus.

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FALSE TO THE END.

Mrs. Margaret L. Shepherd, the de-throned president of the "Loyal Women of America," has pulled herself up from the mud of oblivion once more, and in doing so she justifies the criticism of one of her former associates to the effect that she was an untruthful person. She published this card last week:

Chicago, May 14.—In strict justice to myself and my friends at large I feel called upon to make this public statement. It has been stated in the daily press within the past few days that I had returned to the Roman Catholic Church, and had interviewed Rev. Father McGuire. I wish to say that I did make these statements, but believe I did so under great mental strain, the consequence of overwork and persecution and trouble. Now, after calm reflection, I wish to say that I am not a Roman Catholic and intend to retain the principles of Protestantism, never subjecting myself or my reason to Rome. MARGARET L. SHEPHERD.

The unsavory Margaret admits that she uttered falsehoods, and thus proclaims herself what was always maintained, viz., a reckless, unscrupulous scandal-monger and purveyor of baseless libels. We are glad that she has cleared up the mystery surrounding her course after her infamous life had been exposed by her co-workers. She is still a Protestant. Our separated brethren can have her all to themselves. We don't want her.—Boston Republic.

Dr. Conaty's Advice to Catholics. Rev. Thomas J. Conaty, D. D., pastor of the Church of the Sacred Heart, Worcester, Mass., gives this advice to his parishioners in his Monthly Calendar:

Don't get into the habit of being late for Mass. A moment of preparation before Mass may be the means of opening your soul to many graces.

Don't go to Mass without either a prayer book or rosary beads, unless you wish distraction and not devotion to occupy your mind.

Don't talk in church without necessity. Talk with God, whom you may not have visited. In His temple, since last Sunday; you will have plenty of time to talk with your neighbor.

Don't criticize the sermon, nor the manner of the preaching. It is a message from God bearing some truth to you. Heed the instruction and profit by it; it has something for you to learn.

Don't leave the church until the priest has left the sanctuary. Take a moment in which to thank God for the graces of the holy Mass.

Don't talk in the aisles, going out. Remember you are in the presence of God in His holy sacrament. Your gossip will keep until you reach the street.

Don't forget to bend the knees as you enter and leave your seat. This is an act of adoration paid to the Real Presence. Do it with faith and reverence.

Don't fail to see the holy water font and the poor-box at the church door. Take a few drops from one with which to bless yourself; drop a penny in the other that you may help to bless the deserving poor.

The Rosary at the Theatre. Without making devotion a specialty, Napoleon I. had nevertheless very clear ideas on religious matters, which ideas were implanted in his mind during his early years. One day, at the period of his highest prosperity, this monarch went to the theatre attended by a young page for whom he had a lively affection, and whom he was desirous of attaching to his person. The Emperor, however, paid but little attention to the drama and spent his time in examining the assistance. The conduct of his young attendant seemed greatly to astonish him; this young man appeared to be rapt in thought and to take very little interest in the representation. Besides, he obstinately kept his hands hidden under a fur overcoat spread across his knees. Suddenly Napoleon, leaving his seat, bent over the young duke's shoulder and thrusting his hands into the fur overcoat, brought forth a pair of beads. At that period, and with the majority of those present, the beads were not in great honor, and the blushing page stood waiting a severe reprimand. "Ah, Augustus, I caught you," said Napoleon. "Well," continued he, "I am proud of you; you are above the nonsense of the words of the monarch dared not laugh at the devotion of the page. He who thus said his beads at the theatre did indeed become a man; he died Cardinal Archbishop of Besancon, leaving numberless proofs of eminent holiness.

The Best in Existence. Mr. G. N. Boyer, merchant, Carillon, Quebec, writes: "I had a very sore back, which my doctors failed to cure. I was so bad I went to Montreal and consulted the best doctors of that city. The latter pronounced it lumbago and told me to apply a plaster, which I did, but got worse all the time. I then applied St. Jacobs Oil, and was much better next morning, and after another application was completely cured. I can highly recommend it as being the best medicine in existence. I can mention another case, a farmer, laid up for some time with sore back and could get nothing to relieve him. He came to my store, bent in two with pain. I persuaded him to try a bottle of the Oil, and told him if it did not cure him it should cost him nothing. A few days later he came in smiling. Two applications cured him. This is a man sixty years of age. I know of many such cases."

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Rocking the Empty Cradle.

The mother whose heart has been seared by the loss of a babe can, better than any one, feel the depths of woe pictured in this sketch by Mrs. M. L. Rayne in the Detroit Free Press:

It was a woman's voice crooning sweetly the old lullaby: "Hush my dear—lie still and slumber."

And as she sang she rocked an empty cradle with her foot, keeping time with its melancholy refrain. From the nestling of the blankets it looked as if the baby had only just been lifted out.

A man passing heard the singing and retraced his steps so that he could look through the open door into the little, plainly furnished room.

"Excuse me, ma'am," he said respectfully. "But I noticed that you were rocking an empty cradle. I reckon you never heard of the superstition."

"I am not superstitious," said the woman: "Holy angels guard thy bed."

"Excuse me, ma'am, but folks told my wife that if she didn't stop rocking the cradle when the baby wasn't in it, something would happen—an it did. The baby died when he was a year old."

"My baby won't die," answered the mother, "he's been an angel these three months, an when I feel so bad that I can't live another minute I come in here and make believe he's asleep. It does me good an' mebbe God lets him know, an' it comforts him. Is that superstition?"

"No, ma'am, I reckon not, and I hope you'll excuse me."

The man walked on bearing his own burden of sorrow with him, and the desolate mother rocked the empty cradle and resumed the plaintive melody: "Heavenly blessings with-out number Gently fall upon thy head."

A SECRET OF THE CONFES-SIONAL.

In the month of November, 1864, a certain Robert Dubois, whose brother was a priest of Autun, France, was brought before the court of assizes of that city, charged with the murder, for the purpose of robbery, of Louis Vion and his wife, an old couple living in the country. After a protracted trial, Dubois was at last condemned to imprisonment for life, the evidence against him, though strong, not being sufficient to warrant the death penalty.

Whilst the trial was going on, it happened that the brother of the prisoner was visited by a man who came to make his confession. In his confession he declared he was guilty of the murder of the two Vions. In vain did the priest urge on the wretched man the obligation which he was under of freeing an innocent person; the criminal had such an overpowering fear of death that he could not be induced to make the reparation required. Meanwhile sentence was pronounced on the unfortunate Dubois. The lips of his brother were sealed to secrecy.

On the day of his condemnation, the unhappy culprit, surrounded by soldiers, was led through the town, and passed under the windows where his brother, the priest, lived with their aged mother. When she recognized her son borne off in chains, she fell fainting into the priest's arms. Two months after this agonizing scene the poor mother died of a broken heart.

A few months ago the Abbe Dubois was hastily summoned to visit a sick man, who was crying loudly for the priest. It was the murderer of the Vions, whose confession he had heard years before. The guilty man, tormented by remorse of conscience, wished before his death to make public confession of the fact that he, and he alone, was guilty of the double murder. Accordingly he dictated and signed a paper in which he confessed his crime and furnished all the details above related; and this paper he put in the hands of the priest. He died a few hours afterward, loudly asking God's pardon for his crimes, in presence of a great number of witnesses.

The priest hastened to present the document to the proper authorities, and he had the consolation, after some necessary preliminaries had been gone through, of seeing his brother restored to liberty, and his innocence publicly acknowledged.—See Maria.

The Spanish Government, in order to encourage the proper celebration of the Sunday, have introduced into the Cortes a bill prohibiting servile work. The Spanish hierarchy took the initiative in this matter by requesting the Government to introduce the measure.

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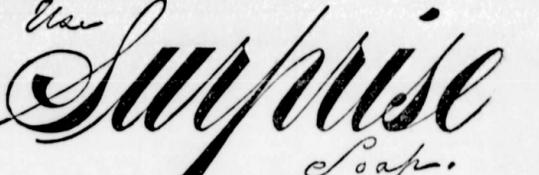
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