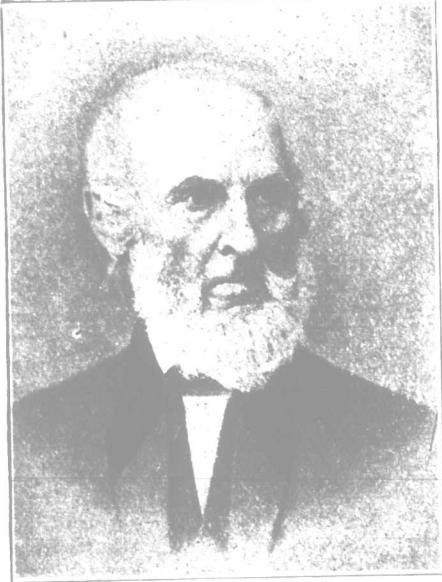
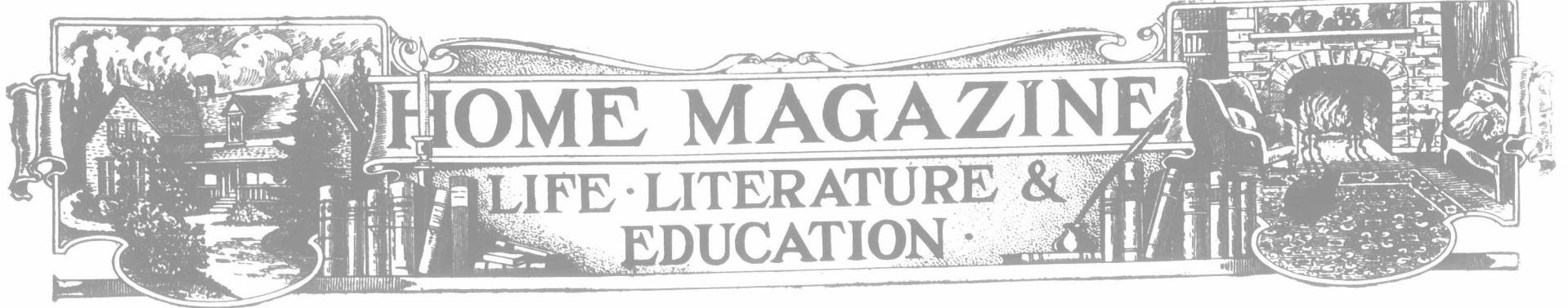




John Greenleaf Whittier.
(1807-1892.)

Little Trips Among the Eminent.

Whittier.

John Greenleaf Whittier, who has been called "in a small way, the American Burns," is, perhaps, more than any other American writer, the poet of the country. During the greater part of his life he lived close to its homely heart and life, and he loved it as only one who has so lived can love it.

He was born on the 17th of December, 1807, on a farm near Haverhill, Mass., and there he grew up, observant, happy, care-free, living the life that he afterwards pictured in "The Barefoot Boy":

"Blessings on the little man,
Barefoot boy with face of tan,
With thy turned-up pantaloons
And thy merry whistled tunes."

Who does not know it?

Indeed, his early education was chiefly that of the woods and fields, for the little schooling that he received was that of the district school, augmented by a short time at a local academy. There was, however, a small family library in his father's house, and there was an uncle somewhere who, noting the lad's fondness for books, took care to add to his stock from time to time.

Then there came a great day for the boy, when one of his teachers lent him a volume of Burns' poems. "Later," we are told, "there came a 'wandering Willie' from Scotland who could recite Burns' dialect poems in an entrancing manner," and the result of it all was that the youth began to write verses, some even in Scotch dialect. His first published poem, however, was more in the manner of Moore than of Burns.

This poem was "The Exile," sent, we may suppose, with much trepidation, to the paper of which William Lloyd Garrison, the great anti-slavery reformer, was editor, although then but twenty years of age. It was published along with a very laudatory editorial note, and the paper containing it was thrown over the fence to Whittier one day, while he was working in the field. The happiness, the ambitions raised

by this event may be well imagined.

Henceforth Whittier devoted himself strenuously to poetry-writing, whenever time could be snatched for it, but out of the reams of verse which he sent out in quest of recognition, but little was possessed of any extraordinary merit. Most of it returned, like the dove sent out from the ark, and only that written for Garrison received recognition. Indeed, in later years, Whittier himself told of how for twenty years he was "shut out from the favor of book-sellers and magazine editors."

"But I was enabled," he says, "by rigid economy, to live, in spite of them." Indeed, it was as journalist, rather than as poet, and that because of his interest in the anti-slavery campaign, that he first won standing-room among the literary men of his day.

After becoming mixed up in some political intrigues, not wholly with credit to himself, Whittier finally found himself, and began to make his mark as a man of principle and talent. Drifting into editorship, he was connected with several magazines, notably the New England Review, published at Hartford, Connecticut. In 1831 he published his first book, "The Legend of New England," but was immediately so disgusted with his production that before long he was offering five dollars for each volume, in order that he might burn them all up.

In 1836 the farm was sold, and the family removed eight miles, to Amesbury, which, but for two short breaks, was to be henceforth the poet's home. One of these breaks, the longer one, was due to a two-years' residence in Philadelphia, where he was editor of the Pennsylvania Freeman during the fiercest period of the slavery agitation, and

of his best poems were contributed, was first published. "Snow-bound," his greatest poem, describing the New England farmer's life so sweetly and simply and poetically, that it has been compared to "The Cottar's Saturday Night," was published in 1866, and immediately took the New England heart by storm. "The Tent on the Beach," following in the succeeding year, "sold at a rate which Whittier could only with difficulty reconcile to his sense of the right relation of the poet's work to his reward."

Whittier never married. Though always very delicate in health, he lived to a ripe old age, dying on the 7th of September, 1892, at almost the completion of eight-five years of age.

Among his best-known poems, in addition to those already mentioned, are "Maud Muller," "Barbara Freitchie," "The Pipes at Lucknow," "Ians Deo," and many beautiful hymns, among them the one beginning with the well-known lines:

"I know not where His islands lift
Their fringed palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

Upon "Snow-bound," however, Whittier's fame will chiefly rest.

From "Snow-bound."
(Whittier.)

Shut in from all the world without,
We sat the clean-winged hearth about,
Content to let the north wind roar
In baffled rage at pane and door,
While the red logs before us beat
The frost-line back with tropic heat;
And ever, when a louder blast

And, close at hand, the basket stood
With nuts from brown October's wood.

What matter how the night behaved?
What matter how the north wind raved?
Blow high, blow low, not all its snow
Could quench our hearth-fire's ruddy glow.

O Time and Change!—with hair as gray
As was my sire's that winter day;
How strange it seems with so much gone

Of life and love, to still live on!
Ah, brother! only I and thou
Are left of all that circle now—
The dear home faces whereupon
The fitful firelight paled and shone.
Henceforward, listen as we will,
The voices of that hearth are still;
Look where we may, the wide earth o'er,

Those lighted faces smile no more.
We tread the paths their feet have worn,

We sit beneath the orchard trees,
We hear, like them, the hum of bees
And rustle of the bladed corn;
We turn the pages that they read,
Their written words we linger o'er,
But in the sun they cast no shade,
No voice is heard, no sign is made,
No step is on the conscious floor!
Yet love will dream, and Faith will trust

(Since He who knows our need is just),
That somehow, somewhere, meet we must.
Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the breaking day
Across the mournful marbles play!
Who hath not learned in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That Life is ever Lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own!

In School Days.

(Whittier.)

Still sits the schoolhouse by the road,
A ragged beggar sunning;
Around it still the sumachs grow
And blackberry vines are running.

Within, the master's desk is seen,
Deep-scarred by raps official;
The warping floor, the battered seats,
The jack-knife's carved initial;

The charcoal frescoes on its wall;
Its door's worn sill, betraying
The feet that, creeping slow to school
Went storming out to playing!

Long years ago a winter sun
Shone over it at setting;
Lit up its western window-panes,
And low caves' icy fretting.

It touched the tangled golden curls,
And brown eyes full of grieving,
Of one who still her steps delayed
When all the school were leaving.

For near her stood the little boy
Her childish favor singled;
His cap pulled low upon a face
Where pride and shame were mingled.

Pushing with restless feet the snow,
To right and left, he lingered;
As restlessly her tiny hands
The blue-checked apron fingered.



Whittier's Home, Amesbury, Massachusetts.

the enthusiasm and determination of the man are shown from the fact that, although his office upon one occasion was burned by a pro-slavery mob, he disguised himself, saved some of his effects, and "published his paper next day with a defiant note." As it was said, "A man of peace by virtue of his Quakerism, he beat his song into swords and muskets in the time of the great Civil war."

His purely literary life, however, hardly began until 1857, when the Atlantic Monthly, to which the most

Shook beam and rafter as it passed,
The merrier up its roaring draught
The great throat of the chimney laughed.

The house-dog on his paws outspread
Laid to the fire his drowsy head,
The cat's dark silhouette on the wall

A couchant tiger's seemed to fall;
And, for the winter fireside meet,
Between the andirons' straddling feet,

The mug of cider simmered slow,
The apples sputtered in a row,