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H. GREGORY & Co.

Hamilton, Oct. 22, 1863.

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TO THE PUBLIC.—Mr. Alexander Somerville, lately Editor of this paper, has had no connection therewith for the last two months, and is not authorized to act in any manner on our behalf.

H. GREGORY & Co.

Hamilton, October 31st, 1863.

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THE CANADIAN

Illustrated News.

HAMILTON, NOVEMBER 14, 1863.

H. GREGORY & Co. Proprietors.

THE OCEAN SUPREMACY OF ENGLAND.

Those who are oppressed with fears that old Britannia will soon cease to rule the waves may yet take comfort. Some of those French iron-clads, of which we have heard so much, lately attempted to board old Neptune in his den, at a time when the trident-sceptred monarch was in no very gentle mood. He very quickly gave the adventurous Frenchmen to understand that they had not yet fully learned to make themselves 'at home' on his rather dangerous domains. We are told that the iron-clad fleet, however useful in all likelihood as a home squadron, were proved 'utterly unfit for service in a heavy sea'; and that even 'in a fresh breeze they rolled and pitched about most terrifically.' It appears by all accounts that their crews had good reason to congratulate themselves on having regained the soil of 'la belle France' at last, after such a rough handling from the ancient autocrat of the briny deep. We do not forget that the Warrior and others of our own iron-clad fleet did not on trial turn out all that was expected; but they comported themselves with far more dignity and self-possession than the Frenchmen, for all that. The behaviour of the two fleets respectively amid the dangers of the deep was almost as different as that between a clown and a courtier would be at an assembly of 'rank and fashion.' Although accomplished enough in other respects, the French have not yet fully learned to 'make their manners' in Neptune's court.

Do any of our readers recollect the time, a year or two ago, when the English Channel fleet rode out triumphantly a tremendous gale, without, as we were informed, 'the loss of a spar,' while the French fleet was on the same occasion compelled ignominiously to seek refuge in harbour? The difference in the two cases just mentioned may have been to some extent in the ships, but we may safely assume that it was still more in the men. And this last is a sort of difference more likely to continue, nay, to intensify even, than to be diminished or done away with.

Let us, however, give credit where credit is due, to our 'brave allies,' as we are sincerely happy in being able to call them; in most affairs perhaps, but the Mexican business, in which our Government very properly refused to follow the lead of Louis Napoleon. It is undeniable that in what are sometimes looked upon as minor military matters, matters which have nevertheless, an immense deal to do with the fate and fortunes of an army, we have much to learn from the French. This fact, as we find it, seems

to be in great part the result of certain peculiarities in our national and social characteristics, not at all likely to be speedily effaced, but which have meanwhile some powerful compensating adjuncts with them, in even a purely military point of view. But if the French claim, as they are certainly not without some very strong reasons for doing, that they are the "first military nation on the globe," we may claim for our own country that it is still supreme on the ocean. No matter who has the ships, it is we who have the sailors. It will do us no harm to recollect, meanwhile, that we have a very strong and likely rival, the one most worthy of our attention in this respect, in our own kindred nation, the United States of North America. Even of the Americans it is safe to say, however, that appearances indicate very much the prevalence among them of the military spirit and of military aptitudes, far more than of naval. It is almost certain that they will never, as a nation, show such a decided speciality for the sea and for seamanship, as will put them along-side of England in this respect. Not but that there are good sailors among the Yankees, as good as stand anywhere, either on quarter-deck or in the fore-castle, but then, the nation as such, has too much of the inland and westward-going disposition in it, as a part of its character, to be so pronounced, so strong in its sea ward tendencies, as England is and has for long time been. It is conceded by Americans of wise observation and philosophic insight, that their people have not the real English taste for the salt water; which goes so far to account for the ocean supremacy of Britain. Except along a narrow strip of the coast of New England, the American people are all for the land and not for the sea. They had great captains and naval heroes fifty and sixty years ago; but like Washington himself, they were in reality more Englishmen than Americans. The whole American nation has very much changed since those days; whether for the better or for the worse is not our present business to enquire. But it is as certain as anything of the kind can be, that naval superiority is not nearly so distinguishing an American characteristic as it is an English one. The fate of American ocean steamers, the frequently damaged cargoes of their ocean clipper, (built as these latter have too often been; that speed was only obtained at the sacrifice of strength and seaworthiness) and the naval experiences of the war, all testify that young America does not quite come up to old England in the great business of seamanship in all its branches. Still, let us remember that our cousins are a pushing, go-ahead people, and that we cannot by any means afford to sleep and drowse over the matter, as Secretary Welles is, perhaps unjustly, represented to be in the habit of doing. England is ahead now, to be sure; but she must continue to keep working ahead all the time, if she is to maintain the relative position which she now enjoys.

RECENT MILITIA ORDERS.

We give on another page, (341.) copies of Militia Circular and Orders recently issued from head quarters. We hope it will be promptly admitted by men of all parties, not only that the defence of the country and the military training of our people are things that *must* be attended to, but that as a matter of fact they actually *are so*. It is plain that the work has to be done under the auspices of some Government, either Reform, Conservative, or Coalition; and if it were to be put off till we should have a Government that would suit all parties, it would never be done at all. Both Ministerialists and Oppositionists are in a manner under bonds to assist the Government in all that it does to develop and to educate the military strength of the Province; the former, because it is their leaders who have at present the power and the responsibilities of office; and the latter, because a patriotic zeal for British connection and the defence of the country is claimed by them as a special merit. Of the justice or injustice of that claim we say nothing, for we are doing our best to maintain between the two parties a course as nearly neutral as can be both assigned on paper and carried out in practice. Meanwhile a sort of national feeling, a desire for the credit of our Province, makes us wish to see a loyal and patriotic spirit predominant amongst us all generally, how much soever opposing parties may differ as to who has the greater share of it. And when we say that by the circumstances of the time, both our two great political parties are strongly impelled, even on party considerations, to forward the work

referred to; we are gratified in being able to add, that whether from good will or impulsion, or whatever you may choose to call it, the work itself goes bravely on. So that we may hope ere long to be fully prepared and able to do our duty; should we be called upon to do it, as brave and competent soldiers and freemen. We say soldiers and free men; for, however desirous we may be live to at peace with all men, the world is so far yet from being converted to the principles and practice which the millenium is some day destined to exhibit, that the nation and the people who are none of the former, are not likely long to maintain the privileges and the status of the latter.

LITERARY NOTICES.

VOICES FROM THE HEARTH. A COLLECTION OF VERSES, BY ISIDORE G. ASCHER, MONTREAL.

MONTREAL: JOHN LOVELL. NEW YORK: D. APPLETON & CO.

With unmingled pleasure we welcome Mr. Ascher's appearance among the honored few, who are planting the seeds of a poetical literature for Canada. The laborers in this field are but few, and these few, we fear, but inadequately appreciated. The names of Heavysedge, McLaughlin, Sangster, and Miss Vining, deserve to be far more widely known than they are at present. Carried off by the wild frenzy of an endless hunt after dollars, we have little time to admire the beauties of poetry; and but little to spare for the encouragement of our poets. Poetry nevertheless is as much an element of healthy national life as commerce or manufactures. The ideal in our nature craves for nutriment as well as the real, not so clamorously perhaps, yet with a force which cannot be safely disregarded.

The volume before us is the production not only of a highly poetical, but of a highly cultured mind. One that has read extensively and thought deeply. The poems are for the most part of the contemplative kind, with no prominent excellencies rising high above the surrounding level, and with no serious defects to mar their simple beauty. They are the quiet landscape with rounded hill tops, clothed with the richness of summer foliage, fringing the margin of unruffled lakelets. Not the huge mountain, with frowning cliffs, yawning chasms, and rushing cataracts.

But while contemplative, they are neither dreamy in philosophy nor maudlin in sentiment: their tone on the contrary is vigorous and notably healthy.

To the assistance of his genius, Mr. Ascher has brought the most praise-worthy painstaking and care, and as a consequence an almost faultless taste pervades his little volume. There are indeed a few lines—and they are but few—which are somewhat faulty in measure; but their faultiness is so obvious that we prefer believing that they have escaped the poet's attention, rather than that they have received his deliberate approval.

In order to establish a reputation it seems necessary, in those days, that a poet should produce at least one long poem, somewhat in the form of a novel. We do not regret, notwithstanding, that Mr. Ascher has not attempted anything of this kind. Nor do we believe that anything he may yet accomplish, in this department of his art, will give more genuine pleasure to his readers than do those little gems which chiefly compose his present volume:

We do not speak thus from a belief that his genius is incapable of these more pretentious efforts. There is indeed most gratifying evidence to the contrary, as the following extract will show. It is from his "Pygmalion." Let the reader say whether it has not the ring of a genuine epic.

"The golden sunbeams warmed with heavens glow,
Can never give what God can only give;
No passionate look can make the marble breathe;
No human ardor kindles stone to life;
The summer rains and fervid heats, in rain
On a desert, sterile waste of sand,
Which cannot yield a blade of living green—
Man fashions stone.—but God bestows the soul.
Art coldly smiles, the spirit warmly speaks,
And imperfections taint—which clings to man,
The mildew on his narrow heart and mind.
Mingles with all his deeds and mars their worth
The soul alone imparts their loveliness."

Among the best of Mr. Ascher's productions to our taste are 'Weaving,' 'False' 'The Fisherman's Watch,' 'Drink,' 'Pygmalion' and 'Short Days.' The last named first made its appearance in this journal. We shall not mar the finished beauty of these pieces by making extracts. We hope indeed that all our readers will make their acquaintance from the work itself, not alone because it is a Canadian production, but because the 'Voices from the Hearth' are voices of genuine poetry, and deserve to be read for their own intrinsic excellence.