

THE JUBILEE OF "FESTUS."

The first and immediate result of the publication of Mr. Bailey's poem in 1839 was the encouragement of poetical lawlessness. That "Festus" should be successful on its first appearance was in no degree to be wondered at. It came at a moment when poetry was in a low condition in this country, when the influence of Byron, though still paramount, was on the decline, and when the healthier influences of Keats and Wordsworth had not passed beyond a confined circle. The "Faust" of Goethe was the ruling poem of the hour in this country; after having been slowly accepted by a few readers in England, it had gradually spread, in the early translations, to the body of the nation. Tennyson was writing his enchanting melodies, which were to bring English taste back to the art of poetry; but Tennyson was still unknown. The early writings of Mr. Browning, so far as they were as yet understood, supported the "Faust" manner of composition. In this very blank and quiet time, when, to a superficial eye, English poetry seemed to be almost extinguished, Mr. Pickering produced a volume of anonymous verse entitled "Festus," which was hailed at once by a hundred voices as the manifest "Faust" of the English-speaking nations, presenting a genius as great as that of Goethe, with the further adornment of an English piety. Amid the clamour of welcome, one critic of high position allowed himself to write: "The poet of 'Festus' transcends even Goethe in one particular—in the sacred character of his poem." That "Festus" should succeed on its first appearance was no matter for surprise. What amazes us is that its vogue should have continued. In 1839 Lord Tennyson stated—and it is one of his very rare utterances on contemporary poetry—"I can scarcely trust myself to say how much I admire 'Festus,' for fear of falling into extravagance." Would he, would any judge of poetry, say as much now? We think not; yet the public seems as pleased as ever. We may trace the immediate effect of the publication of "Festus" on the poetry which followed it from younger hands. It affected Miss Barrett, as may be seen in her volumes of 1844. It affected Mr. Browning, beyond a doubt, in the execution of several of his "Bells and Pomegranates." But it may be seen working, like a coarse and fiery spirit, in the very blood of those feebler poets who began to come forward forty years ago, and who, as the Spasmodic School, ruled English poetry for a while with a fantastic sway. Nothing is more interesting than to trace the direct effect of "Festus" on these once influential writers. Sydney Dobell, in 1846, says: "I am going to read Bailey's 'Festus,' of which I as yet know nothing. Envy me." He reads it, and his own "Roman" is the first result. But it immediately affects all his conceptions of poetic art. We find him emitting such sentiments as these in his letters: "Poetry should roll from the heart as tears from the eye—unbidden. * * * Rhyme is the curse of our language and literature." This was for some years the theory of poetry as an artless inspiration, a flow of interminable blank verse thrown up in a liquid state red-hot from the volcanic mind. For this heresy "Festus" was doubtless responsible; and, apart from the pleasure given by its positive poetic merits, which are not few, it must be regarded as having been a great corrupter of taste.—*The Spectator*.

FLORENCE IN THE TIME OF LORENZO DE' MEDICI.

Florence was the Athens of the mediæval Greece, with Lorenzo de' Medici for her Pericles. Nowhere was the classic revival more enthusiastic or more general. Noble ladies kissed the hem of the robe of Filelfo; pilgrims from Spain approached Bruni on their knees; illustrious citizens like Niccolò Niccoli spent their fortunes in the collection of manuscripts. Florence had utilized her unique opportunities of classic culture. Here Manuel Chrysoloras had lectured in 1396; here learned Greeks had found an honorable asylum; here the Emperor John Palæologus, scholarly prelates like Bessarion of Nicæa, and philosophers like Genna-

dius or Gemistos Pletho had attended the council which Eugenius IV. convened in 1438; here the enlightened liberality of the Florentine Government procured instruction for the youths of the republic from the most eminent scholars of the day; here Argiropolo lectured on Thucydides, and Ficino on Plato; here flourished the Platonic Academy and the Studio Fiorentino. Admiration of the "Attic Moses" became a religious worship. In the study of Ficino a lamp was kept burning before the bust of Plato, as though it were the shrine of a Madonna, and the day of his birth and death was commemorated by banquets, as it was celebrated at Alexandria in the days of Plotinus and of Porphyry. With such advantages, and with such enthusiasts. It is not surprising that classic culture was generally diffused. Both men and women knew Greek and Latin, and the people applauded the arrival at Leghorn of a cargo of manuscript or statuary with the same delight with which they welcomed a Florentine victory. It was a period of great intellectual activity. Macchiavelli has pointed out how the mental energy which was fostered by the collisions of factions called into exercise abilities which in intervals of peace were directed to worthier objects, and raised Florence to the first place in European civilization. The republic rose to the zenith of her glory under an Athenian tyranny which had genius for excuse and the citizens for accomplices. Civil discords were extinguished, and with peace the study of the fine arts and of letters was awakened to surprising activity. But there were other sides to the picture. The intellectual advance was accompanied by moral corruption. The old love of civic freedom was extinct. Unbelief, cynicism, sensuality, and indifference poisoned the springs of social life and infected the sources of artistic genius. The cultured crowd was devoid of principle, indifferent to moral law. Selfish, dissolute, despising Christianity as a sign of intellectual weakness, men aped the graces and imitated the vices of the heathen world. They were at once profoundly superstitious and deeply skeptical. Dreams, visions, and portents ruled every detail of domestic life; learned historians like Guicciardini declared themselves to have had "experience of aerial spirits;" philosophers, like Ficino, lectured from the professional chair on the occult virtues of jewels and amulets. Lorenzo de' Medici was the leader and representative of this brilliant but hollow society. His Circean rule appealed to the taste of the cultured, while it gratified the senses of the vulgar.—*The Edinburgh Review*.

OUR YESTERDAYS.

They may have been days of pleasure, or days of pain—most likely they have been painted by both; but no matter of what material they were built, they were made imperishable, for a man's yesterdays cannot be done away with; the consequences of them come one after another and the memory of them never dies. Emerson, no doubt, felt for the moment as he wrote to his daughter that it would be well if one could "finish every day and be done with it," but even as he wrote it, thinker that he was, he must have felt the impossibility, practically and spiritually, of carrying out such a creed.

Goethe, too, says:

Would'st thou be a happy liver,
Let the past be past for ever.

But this is only visionary; he does not, dares not, say this can be done, but out of his own sorrow he cries, and surely hopelessness echoes through every word.

And who would part with his yesterdays? There may be a deed or two, a word or two, which we would, if we could, weed out of that wonderful garden of the mind called "memory," but these we would rather keep, when parting with them would imply the relinquishing the whole.

So let us treasure our yesterdays truly, and in treasuring them let us remember that this day, this hour, will soon be added to their number, and, remembering this, see that it goes to make up to their glory and not to their grief.

Montreal.

MAY AUSTIN.



TEACHER: Tommy, is your papa a Christian? Tommy: No'm; he's a Baptist.

JOHNNY had been carefully brought up; anybody could see that. One day he sat upon his father's knee in a crowded steamer. A lady entered. "Madame," he said, as he rose to his feet, "take my seat."

"Darling," he said, "your eyes are as bright as diamonds, your teeth as white as pearls, your lips as red; rubies, and—and—" "Yes, George," she replied, sweetly, "and you're as green as an emerald." Then George went out into the jet black night.

A MODEST REQUEST.—Bridget has the kitchen full of her company. Mistress (from the head of the stairs): Bridget! Bridget: Yes, ma'am. Mistress: It's ten o'clock. Bridget: T'ank ye, ma'am; an' will ye be so kind ez to till me whin it's twelve.

TIMID wife (to husband going to Europe on business): Now, dear, do be careful and not fall overboard, won't you? Husband: To be sure I will. Don't worry; I will be all right. Timid wife: And if you should get wrecked out in the ocean, John, I want you to telegraph me at once.

In a small hamlet in the south of England, where old customs were kept up, it was usual for the minister never to commence the sermon until the arrival of the squire. On a certain Sunday a new minister preached, and, not knowing the rule, commenced, "When the wicked man"—He was suddenly interrupted by the clerk springing up and exclaiming, "Please, sir, he has not come yet."

"DINNIS, was ye listening to fwat the professor was lecturin' about the hivens last avenin'?" "Not intoirely, Moike. Was it intherestin'?" "Was it, indade? An' didn't he as much as say it was an Oirishman that was top of the hivins up there?" "Is that so, Moike?" "Dade an' it was, sor. He said the ladin' s'thar, and the wan that tuk the belt, was a party be the name of O'Rion—so he did."

OLD gentleman: How does my son get on? School-teacher: He's one of the best students in school. I've no complaint to make on that score. Old gentleman: That was the way with me when I went to school. I'm glad he's taking after his father. School-teacher: But he's rather unruly at times, Mr. Hardcastle, and frequently has to be reprimanded for fighting. Old Gentleman: Well, I suppose it's natural that he should have some of his mother's striking characteristics.

FANCY AND FACT.—An Irishman, waxing eloquent upon the glories of the old country, declared that a certain nobleman's palace, not far from where he used to live, had "three hundred and twenty-five winders, one winder for ivery day in the year." Another man, who was always complaining of the hard work he had to do, broke out one day: "Well, now, I wish I was home agin in me father's foine ould castle." "Your father's foine ould castle is it?" said one of his companions. "Sure it was a foine ould castle and no mistake. Ye could stand on the roof of yer father's castle, put your hand down the chimney, and open the front door."

THE MINISTER DISTURBED.—A Scotch minister was sorely kept under by his "better half," who placed him and his friends on very short allowance. On one occasion he had a visit from an old acquaintance, and after patiently waiting for his wife's departure she at length, as he thought, retired for the night. She had no sooner left than the henpecked husband exultingly exclaimed: "I am determined to be Cæsar of my own house!" and at the same time rang the bell and ordered refreshments. Just as he and his friend were beginning to enjoy themselves, "my lady" (who had overheard her unfortunate lord's boastful ejaculation) popped her head in at the door and said firmly: "Cæsar, come to bed!"

PUBLISHERS' NOTICE.

With the next number of the DOMINION ILLUSTRATED we shall begin the publication of a serial story entitled "In the Thick of It," by Mrs. S. A. Curzon, a Canadian writer of recognized ability. The story deals with the stormy period of the Upper Canadian Rebellion, the leading actors in which are effectively introduced. Mrs. Curzon is an enthusiast for the study of Canadian history. She took a prominent part in the creation of the Lundy's Lane Historical Society, to which she has contributed some interesting papers and some poems of thoroughly patriotic ring. She is best known by her volume, "Laura Secord and Other Poems," which has won her a wide and favourable reputation in the Dominion, especially in Ontario. "In the Thick of It" belongs to that class of fiction—historical romance—which has as yet been but scantily cultivated by Canadian writers. The subject is intensely interesting and the author has dealt with it in an original and striking manner. Now is a good time for those who have not yet done so to subscribe to the DOMINION ILLUSTRATED.