

RED AND BLUE PENCIL

CHERRYFIELD, October 19th, 1891.

DEAR EDITOR,—



HE blossoms that glow toward me from the garden, that brighten the view from this window-seat, are called "Everlasting." The distance gives them a certain factitious lustre, and they look as freshly bright as any of their companions. The dew falls on them, as upon softer, tendrer

flowers; they keep company with the velvet pansy, they neighbour with the silken rose, and hob nob with the lush splendours of dahlia and aster; but if you approach and touch them they are to the seeming harsh and hard,—they bloom and rustle dry. In my present mood I find some points of resemblance between myself and them. I fear me I am doomed to disappoint some who, seeing from a distance, draw near to touch; since so many will handle their idols, while yet they recoil from all asperity. If not "without form or comeliness," or "like a root out of dry ground," there is a crisp edge, not grateful to the curious finger. Yet there is this virtue about the "everlasting" flower,—it will endure. When snow lies over the matted leaves where, moist and warm, the lustrous children of the garden dwelt, and the dry stalks of once rich, commanding blooms rustle in the wind, the "everlasting" blossoms look still smiling from the fire lit walls of your cosy room, making late cheer, giving you a winter-welcome. Wordsworth wrote:—

"O, sir, the good die first,
And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust
Burn to the socket."

But how will we allow such a dictum to be applied to Wordsworth himself? Meseems it is but scanty courtesy to the "hard," it may be, but "good gray heads," poetic and stately, that have grown gray among us; for though Keats, Shelley, and some others of the gentle kind went early, Longfellow, Bryant, Tennyson, and their compeers last long,—the longer the better we are pleased. These "Everlastings" may look for some consolation to Southey's little poem of the "Holly Tree," one of the most pleasing inspirations his muse affords us. He describes the tree, and then gives us the application to himself:

"Though abroad perchance I might appear
Harsh and austere
To those who on my leisure would intrude,
Reserved and rude;
Gentle at home amid my friends I'd be
Like the high leaves upon the holly tree.

"And should my youth, as youth is apt I know,
Some harshness show,
All vain asperities I day by day
Would wear away,
Till the smooth temper of my age should be
Like the high leaves upon the holly tree.

"And as when all the summer trees are seen
So bright and green
The holly leaves their fadeless hues display
Less bright than they,
But when the bare and wintry woods we see
What then so cheerful as the holly tree?

"So serious should my youth appear among
The thoughtless throng,
So would I seem amid the young and gay
More grave than they,
That in my age so cheerful I might be
As the green winter of the holly tree."

There is such a thing as consistency, and it is still a jewel; but he who has a talent for discrimination will discern what and where it is. But to think and say on all subjects to-day precisely what you did ten years ago, is not consistency, but rather stupidity, obstinacy, bigotry, or general stultification of intellect. Man is an animal who can accumulate new facts, and arrive at fresh conclusions, after he is forty years of age; and he who does learn is liable to contradict himself,—i. e. to mend. Hence, when you are confronted with a paragraph: "Sir, you said such and so, ten years since; you said otherwise yesterday," you

have a legitimate opportunity of charging your accuser with folly. You do not go far to find your rigidly positive man; but to be too positive, as Bishop Haygood saith, it requires that you know all things or know nothing;—an unpleasant dilemma for your man of mock consistency.

* * *

The delicate wraith of autumn is abroad. She was revealed in glimpses as she began "laying here and there a fiery finger on the leaves;" but now, she is no longer brightly coy, but apparent in all her domain of splendour. In these Maine forests the silver birch is shaking its light golden tresses, and the blood-red maples are blushing, by glimpses, from the groups of their piny compeers. Everywhere in this northern hemisphere it is autumnal. Not only about Mount Royal, and along all your Laurentian range, is this leafy illumination, but Katahdin stands in his October glory, with all his quiet of sheeny lakes and lone surrounding forests. Over Winnepisokee the autumnal flamingo hath flown; and the scarlet loveliness invests Sunnyside and Mount Vernon. I have often seen autumn treading on Acadian hills, and descending the vales, singeing away the leaves of the orchards as with living coals of fruit. Over that great blue expanse of the sea,—"mother and lover of men," and their devourer,—it is autumn. The lands from which our fathers came share the lustrous jewel of ripeness with us. By Rydal Mount, where Wordsworth walked, muttering eternal verse, the yellow or brown leaves are falling,—gold patines from his favourite groves. The ghost of Scott will see them, what time the setting sun

"Flames o'er the hill from Ettrick's shore,"

when walking in Dryburgh, where he lies entombed. They quiver in the morning light, all dewy, about the homes and haunts of Burns, and all along the banks of Bonnie Doon. But Britain will not anywhere show, from Dryburgh to Westminster, anything like the varied beauties of our dying year. There, as Garvie tells us, it is a ripe, mellow close, but not a majestic brilliancy, as on these shores. He paints us a picture of a fertile midland scene, like those George Eliot delighted in and drew so finely. Color it doth not lack, but the deeper tints are mostly brown or russet. Look at the fields with their golden spikes of stubble! There run the sombre-hued hedges, outlining those sunny squares. See the fat fields, the amber earth, rich with centuries of dressing, where late the plough has been run, and the meadows stretching away, fading to an olive green. There rise the red-tiled roofs of the cottages, with their white walls; the blue smoke wins the eye as it curls upward among the trees. The oaks are browning; the beeches and poplars smitten with gold. This is England,—reserved, subdued, substantial. So Thomson paints her:

"The fading many-coloured woods,
Shade deepening over shade, the country round
Imbrown; a crowded umbrage, dark and dun,
Of every hue from wan declining green
To sooty dark."

But this is no proper description of our woods Canadian, where over every hill and vale the tints glow like sunset clouds. Burns gives us the lighter tints of autumnal foliage on Scottish slopes, as where, for instance, he paints the "sun's departing beam," gleaming on "the fading yellow woods."

* * *

By the by, have we forgotten William Rae Garvie, and is his "Thistledown" blown clean away? Nay, I think it has lodged in the soil of some minds, and the silken-purple fringe of its prickly bur is reproduced again. But honour to whom honour is due; and Garvie is a name in our literary annals to escape death and defy oblivion.

* * *

The current *Magazine of Poetry* has one genuine muse and genial countenance, at least,—the same being of George Martin. His brother-poet, John Reade, introduces his poetry with fit words of tender appreciation.

* * *

The poets still dream; some locating the golden age in the past, and others seeing that time of time; in the future. Pastor Felix, in casting about for a plea ant conclusion to this paper, hits on some fancies of his own concerning—

THE AGE OF LIGHT.

I.

YONDER comes the promise of a better, brighter morn;
Yonder come the ages of a higher freedom born;

Flushes wide the dawning, while its mantling light appears
O'er the broken fetters of the slavery of years:
Lo! the light comes up upon the ancient world of war,
Glorious-gleaming on the streaming of the warrior's steel
no more!

II.

Happy, 'mid these ages, are the nations that they live;
Blessed is the heritage their children shall receive.

III.

Hark! the ringing water 'neath the cheerful underwood
Singeth out its pleasure in a raptured solitude;—
Singeth every jocund bird, thro' vacant wilds and dumb,
"The shades of doom vanish, for the glorious One has
come!
Darkness yields his old dominion, and the throne of ancient
Night
Shall rule the world no longer,—for, behold! the Age of
Light!"

IV.

The captive of the dungeon sits no longer in the dark;
He hears the rushing waters and the singing of the lark;
The darksome doors stand open where the sunset is un-
rolled,
And his grates, with amber flooded, glow like bars of burn-
ing gold:
An angel stands transfiguring the iron entrance-way,
While the hoary walls catch glory from the coming of the
day.

V.

Not in vain the woe and travail of the ages that are gone;
Not in vain the womb of darkness folding in the infant
Dawn.

VI.

Yet it ever widens, brightens! Now the splendour loftier
glows!
O'er the crimson hills of Cloudland swift each flamy herald
goes;
The orb of vision cometh, scattering coals of fiery gem—
The Bride from out the heavens, the august Jerusalem!
The soul of Nature gloweth, and her prophecy reveals;
Her priest, the Poet, hears it, and in song the promise seals;
While the noble joy outwelleth from the spirit in his eye,
That rushes in the river, and that warbles in the sky.

VII.

Deep in the morass croucheth no more the weary slave,
Nor sinks 'mid fields of cotton, nor upon the drifting wave;
And, dreaming of his freedom in the forests far away,
No more he starts and shudders at the hounds' pursuing
bay:
Where the winds are on the mountains he hath joy of
liberty,—
Where the winds upon the mountains have been forever
free!

VIII.

The voice of Wrong in council shall not be the voice of
might,
But Love's prevailing accents shall control the Age of
Light.

IX.

O joy! the Dayspring cometh! Though the shadows have
been long
Since the ancient dewy dawn-time and morning-tide of song,
Yet the hills have light and music: Awake, my heart! be-
hold
The dancing youthful Hesper, and the Knight with spurs
of gold,—
Mightiest warrior whose exploits the singer's tongue hath
told,
Errant godlike, who shall in the love of man be bold!
O the long, long years, we hail them! the bright'ning ages
long
Of Beauty in her whiteness, and of Virtue, brave and
strong,—
Of the mighty Christ whose broken heart shed love more
holy-sweet
And costly than the ointment bringing incense to His feet!
O years the heart hath sighed for, and that eye hath never
seen!
O ample compensation for the sorrow that hath been!

X.

Yonder comes the promise of a better, brighter morn;
Onward roll the ages of a higher freedom born,—
Freedom that shall demonstrate an universal right;
Wisdom, that shall sway the world with a divine delight;
Peace, that shall brood with dove-white wing o'er continent
and sea;
Beauty, with all her lovers,—song, and star-browed Poesy!
It is coming! It is coming! Heaves the conquering Orb in
sight!
The vales may lie in shadow, but the mountain-tops are
bright!
Darkness yields his old dominion, and the throne of
ancient Night
Shall rule the world no longer,—for, behold! the Age of
Light!

—ARTHUR JOHN LOCKHART.