

"THE AHKOOND OF SWAT."

(Written for THE HOME JOURNAL.)
 A recent number of the *Manitoba Press* I noticed the following:

"THE AHKOOND OF SWAT."

Reader of the *Free Press* suggests the publication of this threnody, and demands some information concerning its origin. It was written by the late Mr. George Lanigan, one of the founders of the *Montreal Star*, and at the time of writing it on the staff of the *New York World*. One night a paragraph in the news announced the death of the Ahkoond of Swat, and Lanigan with his ready imagination wrote the following lines upon the sad event. Not after writing the lines Lanigan followed the good Ahkoond:

What, what,
 'Tis the news from Swat?
 Sad news
 Bad news
 Comes by the cable, led
 Through the Indian Ocean's bed,
 Through the Persian Gulf, the Red
 And the Mediterranean—he's dead.
 Ahkoond is dead.
 The Ahkoond I mourn,
 Who wouldn't?
 I strove to disregard the message stern,
 But Ahkoond't,
 Dead, dead,
 (Sorrow Swats!)
 'Tis who has he Ahkoond bled,
 'Tis whom he hath often led
 Forward to a gory bed,
 Or to victory,
 As the case might be.
 Sorrow Swats!

Tears shed,
 Shed tears like water,
 Our great Ahkoond is dead!
 What Swats the matter!
 Mourn, City of Swat,
 Our great Ahkoond is not,
 But laid 'mid worms to rot.
 His mortal part above, his soul was caught
 Because he was a good Ahkoond)
 To the bosom of Mahound,
 Though earthly walls his frame surround
 Or ever hallowed be the ground!
 And sceptics mock the lowly mound,
 And say, "He's now of no Ahkoond!"
 His soul is in the skies—
 The azure skies that bend above his loved
 Metropolis of Swat.
 He sees with larger, other eyes
 Thwart all earthly mysteries:—
 He knows what's Swat.
 At Swat bury the great Ahkoond.
 With noise of mourning and of lamentation
 At Swat bury the great Ahkoond
 With the noise of the mourning of the Swattish
 Nation!
 Tallen is at length
 The tower of strength,
 The sun is dimmed ere it had nooned:
 The great Ahkoond of Swat
 Is not!

In connection with the author of the lines allow me to say that I was well acquainted with him, socially and in newspaper work, both in Montreal and New York. Mr. Lanigan was, I believe, a native of Three Rivers, Quebec, or its vicinity, and his uncle was for some years the editor of a paper in the town of Sherbrooke, Eastern Townships, some of his relatives having developed considerable literary talent, which, however, found little outlet other than the columns of the local press. George, at an early period of his life, became associated with the *Mon-*

treal Gazette and believed to be more or less inspired by the late Mr. Justice Ramsay, at that time a prominent member of the Montreal bar. Messrs. Lanigan, "Joe" Stubbs and Graham were the original founders of the *Montreal Star*, the lively style of the two former and the business capacity and dauntless energy of the latter enabling it to be kept going despite the great odds against which it was contending. Eventually, Stubbs drifted west, where he is supposed to have been lost in the great Chicago fire, while Lanigan found his way to New York. At first, he wrote on space for the *New York World*, where his contributions were ever in the highest degree acceptable, the blue pencil man having little occasion to exercise his special function, the manuscript, though at times voluminous, having always a snap and a ring about it—whether serious, cynical or humorous—that the readers highly appreciated. Before very long, Lanigan became an important member of the editorial staff of the *World*, the late Mr. Raymond and Mr. W. H. Huribert holding him in the highest esteem. His campaign squints and political and municipal fables, of which he published a long series, were of the most effective description, sarcasm being a weapon that few knew better than he how to handle. Throughout his career, Mr. Lanigan was ever up to time, and, as the above lines attest, his versatility was such that almost on the moment he could break out into the "grave or gay, the lively or severe."

While writing, I am reminded of incidents in which we were both concerned. One of them is that during the Fenian raid of 1870, both Lanigan and I were at the front as newspaper correspondents. He went to Trout River, in the county of Huntingdon, while I was assigned to Pigeon Hill, county of Missisquoi. Representing New York as well as Montreal papers, Lanigan worked his way into the Fenian camp and obtained information that appeared in papers on both sides the line. There were no secrets in the news he secured or rather nothing was published that could have been construed as being of a confidential character; but the fact of the Canadians having got hold of information obtained from them, rather nettled the Fenians. General O'Neill was arrested by the U. S. marshal at my end of the line, and General Storr, Major—I think it was—Thomson and Captain Mannix on the Huntingdon border. Later on, I attended the trial of the three last named before Judge Woodruff at Canadaigua, N. Y., as reporter for the *Montreal Herald*. Mr. Dorahemier, subsequently Lieut.-Governor of the State, prosecuted on behalf of the U. S. authorities, and the late Judge Amosa J. Parker, of Albany, was counsel for the defence. The well known "Jimuel Briggs" (Phillip Thompson) made reports for one of the Toronto papers, while the *Globe* and several U. S. dailies were also represented. It was noticed that some of the Fenian contingent—and there were some rough customers among them—looked particularly black at the Canadian reporters, and it was whispered that somebody had better look out. For mutual protection, we kept close together, and, when sitting on the hotel balcony, several stories high, which

overlooked the railway track, we so disposed ourselves at the only door to it that we should have been able by a united effort to throw any one over who threatened to molest us. The trial being ended, we had little difficulty in discovering the reason of the mutterings. I had been mistaken for Lanigan—we being of about the same height, and it was supposed that I had come up as a State witness to testify as to what I might have learned or heard at the headquarters of the invaders.

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