

There is a tomb at Arqua; reared in air,
Pillared in their sarcophagus, repose
The bones of Laura's lover: here repair
Many familiar with his well-sung woes,
The pilgrims of his genius. He arose
To raise a language, and his land reclaim
From the dull yoke of her barbaric foes;
Watering the tree which bears his lady's name
With his melodious tears, he gave himself to fame.

They keep his dust in Arqua, where he died.

O quicke death, O sweet harme so queint,
How may of thee in me be such quantite,
But if that I consent that it so be?

And if that I consent, I wrongfully
Complaine ywis: thus possed to and fro,
All sterile within a bote am I
Amidde the sea, atwixen windes two,
That in contrary stonden ever mo.
Alas, what is this wonder maladie?
For heat of cold, for cold of heat I die.

Chaucer was about forty-five years old when he visited Petrarch. Let us now regard the matter affirmatively and believe that these two choice spirits met and mingled for awhile. The effect of intercourse with a man, already known to fame, must have been of no small benefit to Chaucer, and it cannot be doubted that the English master of metre must have become acquainted with the matchless sonnets of Italy's greatest lyric singer. Perhaps Petrarch may have taken up his lute and sung one or two to his guest; such a courtesy is not at all improbable, for they were known by heart in Italy and by repute out of Italy, and Chaucer must have known and spoken of them. Nothing like them had been written before, and the people were never weary of hearing and repeating the deathless poems dedicated to the mysterious Laura.

It must also be remembered that Chaucer was again in Italy, in 1378, when he accompanied Sir Edward Berkeley to Lombardy to negotiate with Bernard Visconti, Duke of Milan, and the great Sir John Hawkwood, "on certain affairs touching the expediting the king's war" with France. He remained in Italy about four months on this mission and probably heard more of Petrarch's sonnets.

In the sixth chapter of "An Essay on the Cultivation, History, and Varieties of the Species of Poem called the Sonnet," prefixed to "The Book of the Sonnet," Leigh Hunt writes thus: "How are we to account for the non-appearance of a sonnet in the poems of Chaucer?—of Chaucer, who was so fond of Italian poetry, such a servant of love, such a haunter of the green corners of reverie, particularly if they were 'small'; of Chaucer, moreover, who was so specially acquainted with the writings of Petrarca's predecessor Dante, with those of his friend Boccaccio, and who, beside eulogizing the genius of Petrarca himself, is supposed to have made his personal acquaintance at Padua! Out of the four great English poets Chaucer is the only one who has left us a sonnet of no kind whatsoever, though he was qualified for every kind, and though of none of the four poets it would seem more naturally to have fallen in the way."

Leigh Hunt proceeds to account for this sonnet absence in three ways:—

1. That when not writing narrative poetry Chaucer, from his court environment, turned rather to French miscellaneous poetry than to Italian.

2. The sonnets neither of Dante nor of Petrarca had yet followed into England the great poem of the one or the fame of the Latin poetry of the other.

3. Chaucer's propensity to narration and character was so truly his master-passion in poetry as to swallow up all the rest of his tendencies in that direction.

Leigh Hunt proceeds to remark: "The second of these reasons, however, I take to have been the chief. Had Chaucer been familiar with the sonnets of men whom he so admired, the very lovingness of his nature would hardly have failed to make him echo their tones."

We submit, with all due deference, that the conclusion of Leigh Hunt on this point is not correct and had he been a little more familiar with his Chaucer than he undoubtedly was, perhaps he would not have reached or at any rate would have modified this opinion. Leigh Hunt knew and loved his Chaucer well, but he could not have been aware of a fact we will now allude to.

As we have pointed out, it would be unreasonable to suppose that Chaucer did not know of Petrarch's sonnets after learning he had twice visited Italy and was conversant with that country's literature, and that he was not so ignorant is proved beyond a doubt by his having interposed a translation of Petrarch's 102nd sonnet in his "Troilus and Creseide," as the "Song of Troilus." It need scarcely be said that the sonnet does not appear in the "Filostrato," of Boccaccio, of which Chaucer's poem is largely a translation, and therefore it must have been known previously to the Englishman and used when occasion was favourable. The sonnet of Petrarch reads thus:—

S'amor non è, che dunque è quel ch'io sento?
Ma s'egli è amor, per Dio, che cosa è quale?
Se buona, ond'è l'effetto aspro mortale?
Se ria, ond'è sì dolce ogni tormento?
S'è mia voglia ardo, ond'è'l pianto e'l lamento?
S'è mal mio grado, il lamento che vale?
O viva morte, O diletto male,
Come puoi tanto in me, s'io nol consento?
E s'io l'consento, à gran torto mi doglio.
Fra sì contrari venti in frale barca
Mi trovo in alto mar, senza governo,
Sì lieve di saver, d'error sì carca,
Ch'è medesimo non so quel ch'io mi voglio,
E tremo a mezza state, ardo il verno.

The translation given by Chaucer as "The Song of Troilus" is as follows:—

If no love is, O God, what feele I so?
And if love, what thing and which is he?
If love be good, from whence cometh my wo?
If it be wicke, a wonder thinketh me,
Whan every torment and adversitie
That cometh of him, may to me savery think;
For aie thurst I the more that iche it drinke.

And if that at mine own lust I brenne,
From whence cometh my wailing and my plaint;
If harme agree me, whereto plaine I thenne,
I n'ot, ne why unwery that I feint.

So far as we are aware this is the only place in Chaucer where a translated sonnet has been found. Leigh Hunt was evidently not cognizant of it, but it is nevertheless sufficient evidence that the English poet was familiar with the love-poems of the Italian master. A study of the language of Chaucer and that of Petrarch as exemplified in the constructions of the sonnet and its translation will readily discover to us the true reason why the former poet did not use the form of verse which the latter had made his own, and we shall plainly see that the third reason given by Leigh Hunt is nearer to the truth than the second one, on which he based his erroneous explanation. The English language in Chaucer's day was not fitted for the proper construction of a sonnet. Accent was not finally determined; syllabic value was in a transitional state; words and phrases were undergoing a process of condensation, but were as yet diffused, uncertain, and not in a fixed condition. Chaucer's metrical skill was great, far greater than that of any of his predecessors or contemporaries, but the material at his command would not admit of exact expression, perfect metre or true rhyme, and in sonnet-construction these are essentials; nor would it permit that crystal utterance of refined thought or sweet expansion of deep passion to be found in Italian or later English sonnets.

Rhyme and metre may be said to have come over to England with the Conqueror and they were handled more or less roughly by most of the poets from Layamon to Gower in verses of long iambic, alexandrine, octosyllabic and a composite stanza known as the "Romance." Such a genius as Chaucer, who had a fine ear for musical sound and a good knowledge of French and Italian poetry, could not be cramped in these measures and he proceeded to invent or to import new metres for the enrichment and illumining of his native verse. The so-called heroic metre was his chief vehicle and he used it both in couplets and stanzas; he also wrote ballades and virelays, to which Provençal forms the diffusive language at his command was far better adapted than to the sonnet; but beyond variation of rhyme positions and a more careful adjustment of accent there does not seem to have been much disposition in Chaucer towards poetical novelties.

The English tongue was not as richly pliant and sweetly smooth as the French or Italian, being as iron wire to gold thread for fine art-workmanship, and even the Provençal forms which found expression in France and Italy could not be easily adapted to similar shapes with the crude English mixed with bastard French, which made the transition language Chaucer had to employ. A miniature cannot be painted with a scrubbing-brush, nor can a rose be grown out of a granite rock; so it was that neither Chaucer nor any of his poetical foregoers or fellows wrote a sonnet.

That Chaucer had a propensity for narrative and character is most true; but it was no distinguishing mark of his poetry. It was the regular expression of English poetry up to his time, and he had the taste in common with the lesser writers of the day. Narration, metaphysical speculation and long moralizing were the chief characteristics of the thirteenth and fourteenth century English rhymers. Gower moralizes to tedium point in his "Confessio Amantio"; Minot narrated martially; Longland cracked a long whip of unrhymed alliterative satire in "Piers Ploughman"; Barbour spun out an octosyllabic epic cobweb of rhymed couplets on "The Bruce"; Wynthoun wrote an "Orygynale Cronykil of Scotland"; Lydgate was very descriptive except when he trifled with hymns and ballads; Blind Harry and other poets narrated, described and sermonized. It was the tone of the thought of the time that gave rise to this species of poetry, and, as Taine truly discerned, Scholastic Philosophy was at the root of the whole matter.

Figs cannot be gathered from thistles and such sweet fruit as sonnets could not have been picked from the tree of poetical knowledge that flourished in England in Chaucer's time. The summer of the *renaissance* had not yet crossed the sea.

SAREPTA.

ERRATA.—In Mr. Mair's sonnet, "Fulfilment," page 792, read at end of fourth line "care," and at end of fifth line "bare."

THE last report of the Saxon Medical College brings to light some startling facts respecting the prevalence of tuberculosis in the Saxon prisons. Whilst in the agricultural districts the deaths from that disease constituted only about 8 per cent. of the total number of deaths, and that proportion was not greatly exceeded even in the industrial parts of the country, the prison at Waldheim showed 65.63 per cent., and the percentage for all the prisons was 16 per cent. Again, there has been a remarkably large proportion of deaths from lung consumption in the Saxon lunatic asylums. At Sonnenstein it was 12.90 per cent., at Hochweitsch 26.67 per cent., at Colditz 13.27 per cent., and in the United National Institution at Hubertusburg 19.61 per cent. was registered.

MATAWANDA.

VISITORS to the Exhibition grounds, at Toronto, will remember the monument. It marks the site of the old French fort, Rouillé, which, nearly two centuries ago, defended the surrounding country against the hostilities of the Iroquois. At first this outpost was a mere stockade, in the midst of a vast wilderness, but with its garrison of indomitable Frenchmen, it proved formidable enough to those who sought its destruction.

Among the soldiers stationed here in those early times was a young lieutenant of the name of Leon Le Page, a lithe, handsome fellow, of a good family, and as bold as the bravest cavalier of old. He had been nurtured in luxury, yet his coming to Canada excited in him very little, if any compunction, for he had quarrelled with his father.

It seems that in his boyhood Leon was so attached to a little girl named Louise, the daughter of his father's housekeeper, that he induced his father, who was then very indulgent, to have her educated under the supervision of Father le Blanc, the village pedagogue, who was also Leon's instructor. They studied from the same books, lived in the same château, and hand in hand sought the same pleasures, so that when they grew old enough to understand the sentiment of the enamoured soul, it was only natural that their friendship ripened into love.

Monsieur Le Page, however, became very much annoyed over this state of affairs, for he had hoped that his son would finally give his attention to the daughter of their old friend, Monsieur Boijier.

"My son," said he, one day while lecturing Leon upon the subject, "Your fortune lies in espousing Marguerite. You can never marry Louise, for she is of humble parentage. Marguerite is young, gay, beautiful, and her wealth amounts to nearly a million francs. See to it, my son, see to it. Look to thy purse, and leave sentiment to fools."

"But, father," replied Leon, "I do not love her."

"Fudge! A fool's excuse."

"It is my excuse, sir, and I shall abide by it."

"Very well, my son, but if you persist in defying me, it may go hard with you and Louise, so have a care."

But Leon was adamant. Finally, however, the mother of the little girl died, and Monsieur Le Page, seeing no other course, succeeded in having Louise spirited away, so that her boy lover never saw her again. Strange to say, Father le Blanc disappeared at the same time, and it was inferred, though somewhat indirectly, that he had had something to do with the abduction. However this may have been, the affair caused so great a rupture between the meddlesome father and the obstinate son that the latter joined the army and came to Canada, hoping thereby to forget his troubles in the excitement then prevalent in the new colony.

Upon reaching the Canadian wilds he took up the cause of New France with a zeal which was at once considered reckless, and although among many of the settlers it won for him the encomium of bravery, those who knew him best were of the opinion that he had grown desperate through disappointment. He was ever ready for combat with the Iroquois, and in time of battle became so fierce and venturesome that his men were put to the utmost test of courage, whenever called upon to follow where he led.

In times of peace, however, hunting became his favourite sport, and, with dog and gun, he sought no better pastime than ranging the woods alone. There was something in the hush of nature that fascinated him. He enjoyed the loneliness of the forest intensely. Solitude gave such inspirations that he wished not for companionship. The snapping of twigs, the moaning of the pines, the rustling of leaves, seemed like fairy voices in his ears, and lured him on in his ramblings, and filled his mind with thoughts beyond the power of words to express.

One day while pursuing his favourite sport he chanced to wander farther from the fort than was his usual wont, and at sunset found himself picking his way along the shore of that little body of water in High Park which is now known as Howard Lake.

Romantic as is the locality now, it was doubly so then. The wild and rugged grandeur of the scenery, the weirdness of the lofty pine, the placidity of the lakelet, shimmering in the last warm rays of the sun, were picturesque in the extreme, and as Leon carefully proceeded over fallen logs and decaying brushwood, he looked about with admiration. He was glancing over his shoulder at the dark wooded slope of the opposite shore, where sombre shadows, like grimaced myrmidons, were beginning to muster, when suddenly, upon turning to look ahead, he discovered an Indian girl near the verge of the lakelet.

She was looking into an adjacent tree with rapt attention. An expression of terror was written upon her countenance. She did not move. Her gaze was so steadfast that she seemed rooted to the spot. Leon immediately sought the cause of this, and was horrified at the discovery. Upon a limb that bent low with its weight, he beheld the long lithe form of a panther. Instantly he brought it to the ground lifeless, then, stepping from his cover, moved toward the maiden.

Whether she had tripped and fallen while endeavouring to flee, or whether she had been so overcome with fright as to swoon, he could not determine. He thought probably she had tripped; he never heard of an Indian woman fainting. Yet he was nonplussed at finding her prostrate and apparently lifeless. Kneeling, he raised her partly from the ground; he brushed back a mass of luxuriant hair, and was surprised to find that in her features not the slightest trace of an Indian lineage could be dis-