

A THOUGHT IN STONE.

STILL keeping watch and ward, O silent Sphynx,
Guarding the secrets of the Pyramids?
A symbol of eternity art thou;
Through all the years no dread of death awaits thee,
No shuddering fear, though all defiant powers
Should hold high carnival in Pluto's realm.
The earthquake spares, the fierce tornado's blast,
Speeding on lightning wing, starts back dismayed,
At strength to match his own, and shrinks away,
Abashed to look on such majestic calm.

Oh, if a heart could beat within thy breast,
And human reason light thy stony face,
What wonders would those hoary lips disclose!
But thine is stone, and such as thine alone
Could smile unmoved through all the centuries,
Yet know the tragedies that lie between
Man's birth and death, by millions multiplied.
Yes; hoary Sphynx! aught human would have doomed thee,

Consumed apace by fierce internal fires
The heart that feels, 'tis only stone survives
Or else Omnipotence that calmly views
The end from the beginning, merging all
In one eternal Now and Evermore.

What lesson teachest thou, O silent Sphynx?
By affirmation or negation's sign?

No answer? Then I view thee from afar,
And read at longer range thine alphabet,
While one by one signs weave themselves in words.

Have I a friend? Then let me learn from thee
To stand unshaken by sirocco gales,
And be to him, e'en on the desert's edge,
As firm and sure, but not as coldly mute.

Have I a faith? Then let it tower on high,
Like solid rock upon the desert's marge,
And bar the progress of the doubting fiend.

"Thy face is turned towards the teeming Nile,
The desert far behind thee."* So, my soul,
Look thou before thee with unflagging zeal,
Not back upon the desert waste of life
To feed the gaping maw of discontent;
But onward still and upward day by day,
Undaunted by the "irony of fate,"
Till heaven's sweet sunshine bids the shadows flee.

Johnstown, N. Y.

J. OLIVER SMITH.

AFTERNOON TEA.

ONE seldom sees a happier illustration of the prominence of individuals in American social life than is being afforded a deeply interested American public at the present moment, by a young married lady whose name has been invested with a certain familiarity even in Canada—Mrs. James Brown Potter. Democratic usage and tradition not permitting rank by heredity, the democrats hasten to create it by notoriety. Some individual democrat, previously known only to her own immediate New York, Boston, Chicago, or Cincinnati circle, by a happy accident accentuates her reputation. Instantly its proportions increase, it envelops her as a garment, it follows and precedes her in densely accumulating volume. Of course it is emitted by the all-belching press of her native land, and the typographical fires that cast it forth are industriously fed by the American reporter. I use the feminine pronoun advisedly, for while the newspapers teem with personal information about men who have rendered themselves and their country no more distinguished service than jumping off Brooklyn Bridge, and failing to be killed thereby, such reputation does not usually redound to their social advancement. We did not hear of Mr. Donovan's enthusiastic reception at the hands of the Gothamites elect as an immediate consequence of his remarkable jump. But in case of the notable performer belonging to the opposite sex, all the vast amount of "kudos" attached to the performance takes a social form and colour. Her own receptions are carefully depicted by an unassuming person who stands behind the orchestra in evening dress for the purpose, her comings and goings at other people's are chronicled by the same assiduous individual, who racks his journalistic brains for fresh adjectives for each occasion. Her presence sheds a glory upon every house it graces, and people before unheard of flash into the noonday of social effulgence with the comet that trails its magnificence

* From Carnegie's "Round the World."

across their Wiltons and Axminsters. We cannot speculate with any certainty upon what the result would have been if Mrs. Donovan had jumped!

The lady upon whom the open-eyed, open-mouthed admiration of the whole American nation is at present concentrated, Mrs. James Brown Potter, might, for aught we know to the contrary, have once written her name Mrs. J. B. Potter. The social insignificance that this would imply can by no means be predicated of her with certainty, but is merely stated to show the density of the oblivion that possibly surrounded her origin. Certain it is that the patronymic Potter with its familiar accompaniment had no broad, national, not to say cosmopolitan, significance until one brief year ago, when its fair owner, at the house of the Secretary of the Navy, in Washington, recited that production of George R. Sims', iniquitously known as "'Ostler Joe," which caused the great American journalistic upheaval of 1886. Very little can be said about the poem, which, while it contains an immoral incident, is perfectly moral in tone and purpose. It has almost no literary merit, being poor, thin, weakly sentimental, and strained in its effects. It does, however, give scope to a certain amount of emotional power in the hands of an elocutionist, and Mrs. Potter's crime was simply that she recited it too well. There was absolutely no excuse for the howl of contumely and derision that began in the Washington correspondent's ubiquitous column, spread through the telegraphic despatches, and finally found blatant voice in the editorial department itself. For fully six weeks the battle raged, and, judging from its sound and fury, it is probably echoing still in some Sitkan publication which is not too remote from the centres of civilisation to take a lively interest in the doings of "society" thereat.

We are all acquainted with what followed. Mrs. Potter, pretty, clever, accomplished, but not one whit prettier, cleverer, or more accomplished than hundreds of her charming compatriots, of whom the world has never heard, went to England, and met the Prince and Princess of Wales. The correspondents attended to the rest, and the lady returns to her native Gotham with the aureole of royal approval about her shapely head, and the prospect of seeing it reflected "everywhere" in society this winter. Her photographs are sold as the English court beauties are, and she has allowed one of them to be reproduced in the New York *Mirror*; she has shown the quick American appreciation of an opportunity by making a bookful of "selections" for amateur elocutionists, and she has had the distinction of being "interviewed" by a New York *World* reporter. Her friends have thus far succeeded in dissuading her from going upon the stage, and we have not yet heard of her intention to lecture. There is still good cause to fear, however, that she may write a novel upon English society. As might be expected, Mrs. Potter's head, clever head as it is, has been slightly turned by these circumstances, over which she has really no control, and according to the *Critic*, this has been abundantly manifested in her recent "interview," which that journal's quizzical "Lounger" comments on rather amusingly thus:—

Mrs. James Brown Potter tells the *World* that her collection of pieces for recitation by amateurs will be published by the Lippincotts about the 1st of December. Additional interest attaches to this statement from the fact that when Mrs. Potter made it, her "stately figure" was "clad in a yachting suit which had pleased the taste of the Prince of Wales at Cowes last summer." She will print "'Ostler Joe" in her book for amateurs, and a poem which has "never yet challenged public criticism." It is called "Two Sinners," and was written for Mrs. Potter's little volume by Mrs. Ella Wheeler Wilcox, whom Mrs. Potter pronounces to be "a charming lady."

"The Prince of Wales has written to me asking for the first copy—which shall be sent him." Mrs. Potter is not "going back on" the acute critic of feminine habiliments whose taste was pleased by her yachting suit at Cowes last summer. He wants the first copy of her book, and he shall have it. If it doesn't reach him promptly, it won't be because it hasn't been sent to him. It may be because the postage hasn't been fully prepaid, or because an English edition of the book is copyrighted in Great Britain, or because the postmaster has lost his address. He must be patient; sooner or later the little book will come; and ten to one it will contain the fair compiler's veritable autograph. It will be a proud day for the Prince of Wales. The book is dedicated to Mr. Browning by permission; and the poet may have the further satisfaction of knowing that the compiler prizes no souvenirs of her English season more highly than his letters—and the Prince of Wales's pins. During the coming winter Mrs. Potter proposes to "study the French language and literature and the French art at the very fountain-heads"—in Paris, that is to say, where "my uncle, you know, is at present our Minister."

To say that Denman Thompson's new play, "The Old Homestead," produced for the first time in Toronto last week, gave unqualified delight to large houses, is to express the facts inadequately. The special virtues of *Joshua Whitcomb* find nowhere more enthusiastic appreciation than in this