

The Presbyterian Review.

Vol. X.—No. 7.

Toronto, August 24, 1893.

\$2.00 per annum.

A Damascus Nightingale.

BY CLINTON SCOLLARD.

ON the crimson edge of the eve,
By the Barada's flutelike flow,
When the shadow shuttles began to weave
And the mountain airs to blow.
With the sight of the night's first star,
As tho' it were dumb too long,
There burst on the ear a wondrous bar
From a spirit dowered with song.

And swift it swelled to a strain
That rippled and rose and ran
Through every chord of joy or pain
That throbs in the heart of man.
It told of love lightening life
And of sorrow's bitter breath;
It pealed a psalm of peace from strife
And of triumph over death.

And I knew it for God's own bird—
A prophet voice in the dark;
The budding stars in the heaven heard,
For they could not choose but hark.
Then the worn earth hid its face
And dreamed its dream of the dawn;
The voice of man was stilled for a space,
But the bird sang on and on.

Clinton, N. Y.

—The Independent.

To All Contributors.

BY REV. G. B. F. HALLOCK.

With acknowledgements to the "Interior."

THIS article is not written by an editor. It is signed by the writer for the express purpose of keeping you from blaming it upon the editor, his assistant, or anyone connected with this or any other paper. We think we know what we are talking about, and propose to say some things—some things no editor could or would say, since either modesty or prudence would forbid.

In the first place, editors are human. Like all human beings they have hearts, and most of them very warm hearts. Contrary to a somewhat general but most mistaken impression, editors do not find their keenest delight in filling up a big waste-basket with the choice productions of a multitude of contributors. But the unfortunate fact, for most contributors, is that editors also have heads, and usually very good ones. We once heard a speaker say that there are two reasons why some people don't mind their own business; one is that they haven't any business; and the other is that they haven't any mind! But editors have minds, and they use them. If they did not, people would soon cease to purchase the papers they publish. Now, when an editor is using his mind he can tell the kind of an article he wants as soon as he has read it,—sometimes before. He stands ready to receive and give hospitable welcome to a large number of really good articles. He is hungry for them. He is waiting and longing for them. Every time he opens a letter he is hoping it will bring him one of them.

Usually he is disappointed. Why? I will tell you why. Because so many people possess "that hideous gift of being able to say nothing at extreme length." Or, what is almost as bad, if they are fortunate enough to be able to say something they are unfortunate enough to have that other "hideous habit" of saying it long. "Cut it short!" shouts the small boy at the long-winded speaker. "Cut it short," someone ought to whisper into the ear of every wordy writer. The lack of cutting it short is the secret of the failure of multitudes of people who try to write for the press.

"When you've got a thing to say,
Say it! Don't take half a day.
When your tale's got little in it,
Crowd the whole thing in a minute!
Life is short—a fleeting vapor—
Don't you fill the whole blank paper
With a tale, which, at a pinch,
Could be cornered in an inch!
Boil her down until she simmers;
Polish her until she glimmers.
When you've got a thing to say,
Say it! Don't take half a day!"

All would be writers for the press would do well to lay this sound counsel to heart. There have been even books written whose authors might have gained readers, honour and financial profit by subjecting their penning and penciling to the "boiling down" and "polishing" process of the literary workshop—however mixed the metaphor may be—and many, many big baskets full of rejected manuscripts might have been "available" had they been subjected to the same "discipline of the literary pruning-knife." So,

"Whatever you have to say, my friend,
Whether witty, or grave, or gay—
Condense as much as ever you can,
And say it in the readiest way;
And whether you write on rural affairs,
Or particular things in town,
Just a word of kindly advice, my friend—
Boil it down.

For if you go spluttering over a page,
When a couple of lines would do,
Your butter is spread so much, you see,
That the bread looks plainly through.
So when you have a story to tell,
And would like a little renown,
To make sure of your wish, my friend—
Boil it down.

When writing an article for the press,
Whether prose or verse, just try
To utter your thoughts in the fewest words,
And let it be crisp and dry;
And when it is finished, and you suppose
It is done up exactly brown,
Just look it over once more, and then—
Boil it down.

For editors do not like to print
An article lazily long,
And the general reader does not care
For a couple of yards of song.
So gather your wits in the smallest space,
If you'd win the author's crown,
And every time that you write, my friend—
Boil it down."