

## Entrevu.

Over the breast of the Infinite  
One sweet song—  
Life wert thou dreaming?  
The odor of dreams is strong.

There was the flash of a glory—wild,—  
Wing from the deep;  
Eyes mute turned skyward,  
But eyes that are dull with sleep.

What does it mean, O thou heaven-gloomed?  
Hope thro' the strife?  
Dream filled thy nostrils,  
Yet breathing the breath of life?

O the eyes gazing upward!  
Yet naught is known;  
Only a song heard,  
Only a heart to moan!

JAMES T. SHORTWELL.

## The Wooden Nutmeg Age:

ITS INFLUENCE IN AMERICAN EDUCATION STILL EVIDENT.\*

IN the article on "New Weapons of the United States Army" in last February's *Century*, the closing paragraph opens: "It is absolutely certain that the practice which has existed in this country of waiting for a declaration of hostilities before inaugurating defensive and offensive preparations can no longer be followed. *'We defeated England twice and we can do it again'* is an oft-repeated boast that creates a pleasant tinkle in our ears. . . ." That this account of a boast and a desire is an accurate statement of a feeling in the average American breast has been proved by the recent outbreak of "the Cleveland war."† Concerning the feeling in question, therefore, I trust the words I say, as a descendant of men who rendered unquestionable services during both the Revolution and 1812, will be recognized as necessary reflections of a plain-speaking friend, and that the ozone in them will not be unacceptable to those who honestly desire a reasonable patriotism. What is the origin of this intense desire, then, to "defeat England," a nation profoundly friendly? Why is it that while the American flag can be, and has been, carried from one end to the other of the British Isles with acclamations, the Union Jack never appears on an American street without insult? From long inquiry on the subject I have come to the conclusion that it is a result of the manner in which popular and school-accounts of the Revolution are written. To that period of course the national pride rightly looks back as the epoch of the origin of American liberty. But in what antiquated and laughable forms is it dressed! A critical school of American history exists, but Justin Winsor, Mellen Chamberlain, Moses Coit Tyler and their like are too slow for these dime writers. "The British" of those days figure as a parallel to the Pawnees of the other branch of popular literature—a race of red-coated instead of red-skinned brutes and pusillanimous cowards: "the British" of to-day are pictured as still unchanged in melodramatic characteristics and institutions, and still preoccupied with, not the management of the affairs of their fourth of the human race, but with designs of "descending on New-York" and reimposing "monarchy" on this continent; the Liberal party, "that brilliant band of the friends of liberty" as they have been called, who in Parliament fought for the cause of the colonists as being one with that of the British masses, are included as indiscriminately in the condemnation together with all their actual and spiritual descendants; no "Tory" is allowed a conscience or an argument still less a regret in his confiscations and exiles; every patriot was a white-headed boy—a full-fledged Patrick Henry, a Paul Revere, and also a Buffalo Bill;—and every "patriot" of to-day is a descendant who inherits their wrongs, their glories, and their prowess. Is this an overstatement, I ask of any candid man? The form may vary, but the substance at least is what all my good little cousins were brought up upon.

\* The Chicago Open Court published this article in its symposium on the Monroe Doctrine, Jan. 30th, 1896.

† The protests of innumerable leading persons in favour of moderation and good-feeling have, it is true, shown that the best brains and hearts are for the most part exceptions but they are obviously a minority and more or less ahead of the generation as a whole.

Now two serious dangers exist in the state of things which such an education produces. One is the external dangers of bringing upon the country the sufferings of a criminal war. Those who have made a study of the original facts of 1776 and 1812 know a little of what that means—and they know that "the oft-repeated boast" above mentioned, is a boast without foundation. In the war of 1776 the patriots did not "defeat England" in any such sense as to flatter vanity. The conclusive testimony of Washington was that "night does not more surely follow day" than that, without the immediate aid of France, the cause was lost. In 1812 the war proclaimed by Madison, was, like the Cleveland one, for political effect. As everybody knew at the time, its actual object was the conquest of Canada, whose handful of inhabitants it was thought were defenseless while England was fighting Napoleon for the liberties of the world. The war ignominiously failed in Canada. American sea commerce was totally destroyed. Washington was captured. Several American armies and generals were taken. And the number of American prisoners was enormously greater than that of their opponents. Conveniently ignoring these trifling details, the Jingo historians, inheriting their facts from the Wooden Nutmeg Age, have clothed it with some sort of glory as "the Naval War" on account of about a dozen victories of ship over ship. Unfortunately common sense insists on pursuing the inquiry deeper, and a table of guns, crews, and tonnage of the vessels concerned shows that these victories were due to the simple policy of building larger ships and equipping them with from a third again to twice the number of crew and weight of metal.

The truth was—and here is the second and greatest danger, the internal one—that the war of 1812, unlike that of 1776, was a mean war, entered into from no sober thought nor high moral motive. Armies cannot stand up to defend frippery reasons against men fighting sternly for their homes and consciences. The same principle applies most seriously to the welding of a nation situated like the United States. Citizens whose ideal of nationality is an antiquated hatred or any other outcome of a history built upon vanity, illiberality, and the idea that impatience is freedom and rashness courage, are not the right cement for the huge regions and stirring elements of the republic. Habits cannot be confined to one set of actions. Readiness to rush into wars grows on the same bough as readiness to rush into rebellions: covetousness of foreign territory is the same appetite as covetousness by one class of the rights of another; political recklessness must produce not one but many political disorders; unfairness on the outside means like unfairness within; and the refusal to study history soberly must result in heavy losses in the making of history. Surely recent events have shown that this question of common-sense education in history is worthy of the careful attention of all, and particularly of the national patriot, who ought to hold the same principles in all countries.

W. D. LINTHALL.

Montreal.

## Thoughts on the Labour Question.

IN all ages this has been a vital question with the toiling millions, and many an ancient and many a mediæval city have resounded with the cry from famished lips of "bread or blood." But of recent years it has come into special prominence, through various causes. Of these, one of the most important is the diffusion of knowledge amongst the masses, and the opening to them of manifold avenues of pleasure undreamt of before, if but they possess the golden key. Formerly these masses accepted, as an axiomatic truth, that these avenues were closed to them. They were content to remain in that station in which it had pleased God to place them. But universal education has changed all this. It has given them a keener appreciation of the pleasures of life, and a determination to enjoy these pleasures—a determination strengthened, moreover, by their increasing scepticism on the question of heaven. Further: They are perceiving that poverty is not a blessing, is not man's rightful lot. Poverty has, of course, its uses—it gives opportunities for the display of charity; and wealth has its snares. But it is being seen that there is no more fruitful source of suffering, crime, and death, than this continual struggle with want, this dread foreboding that, through weakness or evil fortune, we shall fall by the wayside and be trampled under foot. Think of it: literally millions of