

HORACE.

It is now about nineteen hundred years since Horace died, and during all the centuries that his works have been before the public, which has included all the learning and refinement of every cultivated nation, no writer in any language has been so much read, quoted, translated, and commented upon. He is the first of those classic authors who become the friend of the reader, and the friendship lasts with life. Malherbe said he used the Epistles as his breviary; Condorcet took a volume of the Odes into the dungeon where he died. De Witt, when a murderous mob burst upon him, repeated to his brother the noble lines in which the poet describes the righteous and resolute man, whom not even the fury of citizens can shake from his purpose or can drive into error. What is the secret of a popularity which time leaves unimpaired? How is it that this writer, dealing with the transactions of a life the very traditions of which are now obsolete, never fails to interest, to delight, to fascinate? We know that Demosthenes was the greatest orator, Thucydides the greatest historian, Euripides the most tear-provoking tragedian of antiquity. We admit their claims, but we never read them. Schoolboys learn them at college, and students master them in after life; but Horace is not for us an author, but a friend. We read him in our youth, and we return to him when our judgment is more mature; and we think with kindness of the man who, across nearly twenty centuries, chats to us easily, consoles, advises, amuses; whose philosophy is never cumbrous, whose learning is never pedantic, whose courtly jokes are always in season. We yield to a fascination which we can scarcely account for, but which remains constant amidst many changes.

One charm about him is that he is eminently a man of the world—a man of the world and a gentleman. And what makes this so strange is that his birth was quite ignoble. His father had been a slave. Horace tells us so himself. He had been a slave who was given his freedom, and who devoted his life to the education of this only child. Horace was still a youth when he took leave of the good father whom he was never again to see, and started for Athens to complete his education at its academy. It is hard to realise those times, and to regard the Greek city as a kind of Oxford or Cambridge. Cicero had a son there, who was perhaps a companion of young Flaccus, and we can fancy the excitement that must have been produced amongst the young Roman students when the messenger came in with tidings of the assassination of Julius Cæsar. There were plenty of young Republicans at Athens, and the student joined the crowd who crowned the statues of Brutus and Cassius with garlands. How Horace in his early manhood espoused the Republican cause, and fought at the battle of Philippi and ran away, leaving his shield ingloriously behind, he has himself told us. The party with whom he sided were utterly beaten, and he was reduced to poverty, which (he says) drove him to write. But he had made good friends; even Virgil, who was five years older than him, came to his aid, and another poet, named Varius, whose works have perished for ever. The period of want did not last long. One day he was introduced to Mæcenas. With a delightful brevity and simplicity he has described the interview. "The day I came to see you," he says in one of the Satires addressed to his patron, "I spoke but little, and that nervously; silent shame stopped me from saying more: I told no tale of an illustrious father, but the plain truth about myself. You answered but little; then nine months afterwards you sent for me again, and bid me be in the number of your friends." From that time poverty was unknown. He lived an easy, happy, careless life, rich in the possession of many friendships, untouched by political change, hospitable, kindly, and not avaricious. With that patron, whose kindness had so opportunely rescued him from want, his relations remained always the same. "Remember Flaccus," said Mæcenas on his deathbed to the Emperor, "remember Flaccus as you would myself." The solemn bequest was not forgotten, but the poet did not long survive his patron. His last illness came so suddenly upon him that he had not time to make his will. Witnesses were called in, and the poet had just force left to name the Emperor as his heir. He died in his fifty-seventh year and was buried at the end of the Esquiline Hill, close to the tomb of Mæcenas.

His life was thus not eventful, and most of what we know about it we know from himself. No small part of the charm of his writings is due to their extremely personal nature. Like Montaigne, he is confidential, even egotistical, without ever being a bore. The Satires and Epistles are literally independent of time. Omitting a very few local allusions, they remain models of what they are intended to be. Take the Fourth Satire of the Second book. It might have been written yesterday. The poet walking through the street meets a friend who is hurrying on so quickly that he cannot stop a minute. But Horace detains him, and asks him where he has been; Catus replies that he has just heard a lecture on cookery, and that he is trying now to learn its precepts off by heart; he fears lest he may forget them. Horace proposes that he should fix them in his memory by rehearsing them then and there, and Catus accordingly commences:—"Let no ordinary man lightly take to himself the science of dinner-parties unless he has first duly considered the delicate question of taste." We have only to change the scene from Rome to London and fancy the words spoken outside the Cookery School at Kensington. "Some men's genius," says Catus, "is poor, only equal to the invention of new pastry;

whereas it is worth while thoroughly to master the qualities of compound sauces." So the Satire runs on, till Horace begs that he may be taken to see this lecturer, that he may note the bearing of the great man, "and quaff draughts of the wisdom of such a blessed life."

Another notable characteristic of the poet is his appreciation of the country. He has the art of a landscape-painter in describing a landscape. There always comes some happy, forcible adjective that puts the scene locally and individually before you. He turns away from the overgrown city, and takes his holiday amongst the vines and olive trees of the Sabine farm. Few letters have ever been penned more delightful than that in which the poet, writing to his country steward, complains of town life, and longs to be back amongst the fields and the woods. These Epistles have a wonderful ease and simplicity. They read as if they were mere letters, and not studied literary productions. Pope imitated Horace, but the labour of the file is to be traced on every polished line, and his Satires smell of midnight oil. Horace is always simple and natural. His friend Bullatius is travelling in Iona. Was ever such a gossiping, pleasant letter written by a stay-at-home to some acquaintance wandering about in his travels? He asks him how he likes the different places, and how they compare with the field of Mars and the stream of Tiber. He is glad to know all the news his correspondent can tell him, but he has something to say himself, and he keeps it for the end of the letter. Busy idleness, he says, is the vice of the day. It is with ships and chariots that people seek to live pleasant lives, and yet it is reason and discretion which take away our cares, and not a spot that commands a wide expanse of sea. 'Tis the sky, and not the wind they change who speed across the sea. If the Satire on cookery seems applicable to the very year we live in, is not this hint to the restless Bullatius as appropriate in an age of tourist agencies and a feverish restlessness for travel? The touch of nature is upon everything that Horace has left behind, and so in every century his works find kinship with every cultivated people.—*London Globe.*

OUR SUMMER RESORTS.

THE THOUSAND ISLANDS.

There cannot be a doubt that, as Canada is more and more opened up, numberless nooks of exquisite beauty will reveal themselves for the delight of the tourist, who, with true feeling for nature, cares not to rush along certain well marked lines of travel and "do" as great a number of square miles of country, but will rather take his time for leisurely and quiet roamings, enjoying a thousand beauties that elude the more hurried traveller, and that delicious sense of communion with Nature, and absorption of her tranquillizing influences which is impossible on crowded steamboats or amid snorting and shrieking locomotives.

It is doubtless, in part the sense of this that makes "camping out," in various forms a rapidly growing habit in Canada, in the absence of those facilities for "summer boarders," which are so common in the United States. And "camping out," if more troublesome, is certainly a much more independent and private life. One can, if one likes, be perfectly alone with Nature, without those slight drawbacks caused by the mingling of incongruous elements and diverse habits of life. Still better is the light, inexpensive summer cottage, where one can enjoy at once the charms of lovely scenery, and the home life, for the lack of which no scenery can quite make up; the summer home compensating to its owner, for lack of variety, by the growing associations that make it from year to year more homelike and endeared.

It is no wonder, then, that our beautiful inland archipelago, the "Thousand Islands," so called (though this is really setting them down at about half their number) should be from summer to summer more profusely dotted with the white tents of the camper, and the summer cottage of the less transient visitor. The traveller who has seen these islands only from the deck of one of our fine river steamers or propellers, has no adequate idea of their real beauty. Very probably their very number oppresses him, and the "*toujours perdrix*" feeling of satiety overpowers that of enjoyment as he passes through some thirty miles of river, thickly studded with groups of islands, which, though no two are just alike, yet from their strong family resemblance, give an impression of sameness, if not monotony, to the cursory tourist.

But let him descend from the high deck of the swift steamer and embark on a small skiff; let him look *up* instead of *down* at the islands; let him trace their mazy channels and explore their shadowy recesses, from the rosy dawn of a summer morning till its dewy eve, resting in the noonday heat on the shore of some cool shadowy bay, green with water-lily leaves and rushes, where he can stretch himself in a mossy nook, under the shade of oak or hemlock or graceful birch, and smoke the pipe of peace, as doubtless many an Iroquois "brave" has done there before him; let him wander on, day after day, in leisurely nomad fashion, pitching his tent where it pleases him, and striking it again when the migratory impulse comes; and let him continue this Arab life for some weeks, till he has really made acquaintance with a number of *individual* islands, and he will tell you that he never before had any idea of their real beauty. For their charm is not that of bold outline and striking beauty which