

THE ALBERTAN

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MORNING ALBERTAN. \$3.00
The Year \$3.00
The Month25
The Copy05

WEEKLY ALBERTAN. \$1.00

TUESDAY, JUNE 3, 1913.

THE PASSING OF THE POET LAUREATE

Allred Austin, fourteenth successor of Ben Jonson, the first holder of the laureateship, has passed away, almost immediately after celebrating his sixtieth birthday on his seventy-ninth year. Born in 1835, near Leeds, England, he was called to the bar at London and practised as a barrister for a short time; but on the death of his father he abandoned law for journalism and literature. His first publication was "Randolph: A Tale of Polish Grief" (1864), followed by the much-criticised volume, "The Season: A Satire" (1861), and its sequel, entitled "My Satire and Its Centors," in the same year. Between that date and his death he wrote numerous volumes of verse, including "The Human Tragedy," "Songs of England," "A Tale of the Love and Other Poems," "Door of Humility" and "Sacred and Profane Love." He also wrote several novels, and as a journalist contributed to the Conservative press, notably The London Standard (which he represented at Rome and as correspondent during the Franco-German War), The Quarterly Review and The National Review, of which he was for a time editor. Among his prose works are "In Veronica's Garden," "Spring and Autumn in Ireland," "Haunts of Ancient Peace," "Lessons in Harmony," and a very interesting "Autobiography"—this last appearing in 1911. The most effective characteristic of Allred Austin's poetry, as of the best of his prose, is a genuine love of nature. His lyrical poems, it may as well be frankly admitted, are lacking in spontaneity and individuality; but many of them possess a simple, orderly charm, that of an English country lane. On Tennyson's death in 1892 it was felt that one of the then living poets, except Swinburne, Morris, and Meredith, were of sufficient distinction to succeed to the laurel crown. This prize is outside all consideration for other than purely literary reasons. For several years no new laureate was nominated. In the interval the claims of one writer and another were much canvassed, but eventually in 1896, Mr. Austin was appointed amid not a little adverse criticism. For many years his every production was received with a smile. But it is difficult to conceive who else could have been selected for so onerous and delicate a post. There has seldom been a trio of poets less courtierly than A. C. Swinburne, the Republican, William Morris, the Socialist, and George Meredith, a Radical of the type of the eighteenth century "philosophes."

THE LISBON JAILS

There are four Lisbon prisons in which political prisoners are confined. Of these, the women's prison contains only four politicals, and most of these who were awaiting trial in the military prison of S. Giorgio have now been tried. The two others, the Linoeiro and the Penitenciaría, were recently visited by Mr. S. H. Swinny. This gentleman, writing in The London Nation of May 21st, remarks: "The Linoeiro, for untried civil prisoners and those under short sentences, is an old fortress, ill-adapted for a prison. Of the untried politicals, some are in a large hall with windows on both sides. Others are in groups of rooms, not cells, generally with two beds in each, but in a few cases with three or four. The beds seemed comfortable; every place was clean, and the large hall and some of the rooms had a splendid view of the river. The infirmary was particularly clean and well ventilated. The Portuguese are a very respectable people, and I doubt if any considered it a grievance that they had to share their rooms. In fact, I was told that many preferred the great hall. In the following points it would seem that untried political prisoners in the Linoeiro are better off than they would be in England: (1) Except in the infirmary, they are kept entirely separate from the prisoners accused of ordinary crimes; (2) their relatives can visit them every day at noon without any formality; (3) they can put up pictures and photographs in their rooms; (4) they are not locked in cells, but can mix freely with those of the same group of rooms. I do not profess to speak of the prison in the past; I speak of it as it was on April 11, when I visited it. Of Commandant Franca, the governor, I formed a most favorable opinion, and he seemed on the best of terms with those in his charge. "The Penitenciaría, where prisoners undergoing long sentences are confined, consists of six

arms, radiating from a centre, each arm having exactly three tiers of exactly similar cells on each side. It was built during the rage for isolation, and was so arranged that each prisoner should be alone at exercise and at work, in the school and in the hospital. They even wore hoods with holes for eyes and mouth. The building still has all the appalling cleanliness and order of such institutions. But for some time it has been felt among prison reformers in every country that such a system is as cruel as the physical discomforts of the older prisons. It is to the credit of the present government, of which the much vilified Dr. Afonso Costa is the head, that it has begun to modify this system. The hoods were abolished on February 13; the prisoners now work in common; the doors of the cells are left open during several hours each day; and when I was there, the schools were being altered, so that the prisoners could sit on open benches, instead of being confined in separate pigeon-holes. The cells are large, with semi-circular windows, and drinking water and electric light in each. The food seemed as good as in our prisons. No distinction is made between political and other prisoners; but there we have no ground for complaint, for we make no such distinction ourselves. The work is well organized, and more varied than with us. There are several other points in which the Penitenciaría is superior to our prisons. The prisoner who behaves well is entitled to one visit a fortnight at least, instead of two in three months as here; and he may receive presents of such articles as tobacco, fruit and flowers. I saw many cells decorated with flowers and photographs. There are no plank beds at any period of the sentence. There is no corporal punishment, and the heaviest penalty is confinement in a punishment cell, hardly worse than the ordinary cells in some English prisons. "These," concludes Mr. Swinny, "are the prisons that the Duchess of Bedford compares with those of Naples and Bomba!"

AUSTRALIAN ELECTIONS

The recent election in Australia has been a very vigorous one and the result was very close. The parties were evenly divided. As far as we can learn from reading the Australian newspapers, the navy question was seldom under discussion. The only reference to it was that each party claimed the credit of creating the Australian naval policy. And the Australian naval policy is for a real Australian navy and is much the same as the Canadian naval policy of the Liberal party. The Australians are united on this policy of an Australian navy and any person who would have dared to oppose it would have had no chance of election. And yet the Australians are not separatists in any sense of the word. They are patriotic people, who are very proud of their country. They are enthusiastic, self-reliant and confident. They do not favor giving assistance to the mother country merely by sending empty ships with no person to fight in them. The Australians are more advanced than we are in many respects. It was a contest of Liberals against Radicals under the name of Labor, in which the Conservatives had no part. The sister colonies in the Pacific are advancing more rapidly than we are in managing their own affairs. They manage their own railways, telegraphs, telephones and other utilities, have old-age pensions and much other advanced legislation. It is not surprising accordingly that such a self-reliant people should insist upon a navy of their own.

RAILWAY DISCRIMINATION

The Western Conservatives who voted in favor of rate discrimination against Western Canada and the newspapers which are excusing them, say that the railway commission will do what Mr. Maclean and others asked the Dominion to do, and will do it much better. But that discrimination has always existed. The railway commission has been in existence for seven or eight years and has not corrected that abuse. In his address in parliament Mr. Maclean said: "I have no faith, nor has The Winnipeg Free Press faith, in any general relief coming from the board of railway commissioners. They are engaged in examining 230,000 individual tariff rates. They are taking months to do so, and they will take months more. If they do anything this year, they will give will be small measure of relief. Parliament ought to come to the assistance of the railway commission and declare that there should be equality as between East and West. . . . The railway policy of the country is not to be framed up by the board of railway commissioners. The jurisdiction is in parliament and parliament ought to lay down this principle of equality in treatment." And that is all very reasonable. Fortified by such a resolution the railway commission would surely act. But without such resolution there is a possibility of delay, as there has been delay for the past seven or eight years. And Mr. Bennett voted against this declaration which would be of such assistance to the people of Western Canada.

Editorial Notes

This is the King's birthday, and many Britons are celebrating. George V. has not reigned long, but he has reigned well. He possesses the tact for which the family is famous, and his short reign has had some serious problems upon his hands, and he has made no mistakes. The resolution passed by the Methodist conference asking parliament to make a clearer definition of prize fighting and boxing bouts is very timely, and reveals a serious difficulty. The events which have been held in the West and throughout Canada, are to all intents and purposes quite as objectionable as prize fights, though it is questionable whether, according to exact wording of the law, they can be prevented. It is time that the merchants of the city and others should begin to advertise the fact that we have the very best exhibition in western Canada, and that it will be upon us in about four weeks. Perhaps the fair is one of our very great attractions to Calgary. Calgary people should help it along whenever they get an opportunity. The Industrial Bureau may be disappointed because through the efforts of the Dominion Senate, the Board of Trade manufacturers' building was turned down, but the bureau need not regret this. It has done a good deal that as an excuse if the bureau does not succeed in locating industries in Calgary. The Dominion Senate rose to the opportunity and did the right thing with the Borden naval policy, but because of the Senate's action the Board of Trade can break into all common's legislation without getting hurt somewhat. The Senate's action is a good thing when it went to the Senate, but was much better when it was in the Commons, so long as the majority of the members of the Commons expect some day to support the Senate. The Commons need not be annoyed if the Senate sometimes does what it is constitutionally expected to do. Of course a poet is not expected to get on the inside of political affairs always, but we believe that the poet person who called at the office last night to ask the address of Robert Rogers, Minister of Public Works, that he might apply for the vacant position of poet laureate, should have known somewhat better. The suggestion of Mr. Mawson that the streets in strictly residential districts should be less paved and more gravelled is a very good one. It is that way the cost of the upkeep will be less and the city more beautiful, and if the street curbs become a business thoroughfare it will cost nothing additional to extend the area of the pavement. A merger of the leading churches of the country is a big undertaking, and as both Methodists and Presbyterians seem so anxious to unite, the public is surprised that they do not unite. The stork called in Calgary 215 times last month, and the 21st messenger gave the death summons to but 95, which indicates a natural growth in Calgary which compares favorably with increased bank clearings and the building returns. Col. Carstairs has received leave of absence, and is leaving Edmonton, the capital of the province, for six months. If more Albertans who cannot see a crisis now, is a stupid person without a knowledge of anything. The late lamented poet laureate may have been a good poet, but according to the sporting edition, he would have had more readers if there had been a little more "pop" in his poems. It seems that the Presbyterians want church union and the Methodists want church union and all that prevents the union of the two churches is that they are not united. Calgary could get along very nicely this season with a strike at any of the builders' trades or a strike of any unions at all. The responsible parties on both sides should make just another effort to settle things. According to Mr. Bennett it seems to be the fault of the board of trade that Calgary forgot about the internal elevator, and the fault of the city for not handing over Mewata Park to Col. Hughes that Edmonton will get a drill hall before Calgary is so favored.

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