

## Messenger and Visitor

The Maritime Baptist Publishing Company Ltd.  
Publishers and Proprietors.

S. McC. BLACK, EDITOR.  
A. H. CHIPMAN, BUSINESS MANAGER.

85 Germain Street, St. John, N. B.

Printed by PATERSON & CO., 92 Germain St.

\*\*\*

### Prize-Fighting and the Press.

It will be pretty generally admitted, we suppose, that a newspaper does not properly exist for the mere purpose of making money for those who are financially interested in it. A newspaper does not make itself. Back of it there is human will, intellect, character, and an institution which is so potent an expression of moral influence cannot escape moral accountability for what it does or what it fails to do. If therefore a newspaper subordinates the highest welfare of society to the financial interest of its owners, there is responsibility somewhere for that sin against society. Righteous journalism will be actuated by the desire to promote the well-being of society, it will be controlled by principles of truth and justice, and hold itself amenable to moral standards, just as honorable men do in their individual and personal capacity. It seems quite evident however, and quite remarkable, that newspapers pursue courses of action for the legitimate results of which neither their owners, managers nor editors would wish to be held responsible. The attitude of many daily and some weekly newspapers toward prize fighting is a case in point. It is easy to see that the wide-spread and excited interest which is being taken in this brutal sport is to a very great extent dependent upon the notoriety given to it by the press. The newspapers, more than any other agency, are responsible for keeping it alive, and of promoting such disgraces to the civilization of the century as that which occurred on Wednesday last at Carson City, Nevada. If it should be proposed to legalize such an exhibition in any Canadian province, we have no doubt that every newspaper having any claims to respectability in that province would strenuously oppose it. Editorial broadsides would thunder against it, and the influence of owners and managers would be effectively employed to avert such a disgrace. But when the great fight occurs in a distant city, then some excellent newspapers devote columns and pages of their space to pictured representations and to reports, calculated to set before their readers, in the most detailed and realistic manner, the whole programme of the brutal exhibition from start to finish. The aim indeed seems to be to give every reader of these papers as nearly as possible the same advantages (?) as those enjoyed who actually witnessed the fight. If the exhibition at Carson was a disgrace to the Continent, what about the newspapers that reproduced it and thrust the brutal details of it into every home to influence young imaginations and to make the fight the topic of conversation, not only in every club and street corner, but in every school and play ground throughout the country. Why should the State of Nevada be denounced as the one God-forsaken corner of this North American Continent on which a big prize fight could be held, and its legislature held up to scorn as a body willing to sell its honor for the wages of immorality, if this fight is treated by almost all the secular press as if it were one of the most important events of a lifetime? There are of course a class of newspapers which regard it as a triumphant defence against the charge of publishing reports of prize fights and matter of a like moral quality, to say,—"We publish these things because there is a demand for them, it is our business to furnish the people with what they like and will pay for, and if the people do not like reports of prize fights, let them say so." There is, however, we should suppose, a pretty considerable number in that honorable fraternity who can hardly be satisfied with reasoning of that kind. It is a good argument for the rum-seller, that is, it is the best he has, and if he were obliged to find a better argument he must

get out of the business. But one would think there must be, in some kind of connection with a pretty considerable proportion of our daily press, consciences that could not quite comfortably consent to the proposal to send forth into society streams of influence which are acknowledged to be vicious and demoralizing, simply because there is a demand for that sort of thing and it is sure to sell.

\*\*\*

### At Minas Basin—And Other Poems.\*

According to a familiar saying which at least possesses the authority of antiquity, the poet is a result not of education but of natural endowment. If this is true it may be expected that the poet will be heard from in his youth, while fancy's wing is all untamed and the pulses of his life are at their fullest throbb. It is true, no doubt, that poetry has been for the most part a product of the earlier years of life. Some of the greatest masters of song passed away while yet their sun was at its meridian. But the divine gift may not always find early expression in the recognized forms of poetry, though, doubtless, in one way or another, it will always be finding expression more or less in life and speech. It is very remarkable, as it seems to us, that one who has been all his life so much a man of affairs and laboriously engaged in the practical concerns of life,—the organizer and superintendent of two provincial school systems, the organizer and, for a time, the head of a denominational university, besides doing much other work which make demands upon the pragmatic rather than the poetical faculties, should now, at so comparatively advanced a period of life, give to the world a volume evincing so large poetic faculty and embodying so much poetic merit as the volume before us undoubtedly reveals. Dr. Rand has indeed, from time to time, given evidence of his ability to express noble thoughts in elegant verse, but probably not even he himself was aware of the strength of the poetic forces that slumbered within him. The partial failure of his health a few years ago was to himself, and to many others as well, a grave disappointment; but if it has resulted—as seems to be the case—in giving to us this somewhat tardy fruit of his poetic genius, the author and his readers have cause to rejoice in the disappointment as a cloud which was "big with mercy;" it has surely broken "in blessings on our heads." The comparative leisure of the past few years, and the long summer vacations spent on the beautiful shores of Minas Basin have brought to the imprisoned muse its long desired opportunity and enabled a richly endowed mind to coin its imaginative treasures into the golden coin of poetic speech.

In what we may say respecting the volume before us and its author, we desire to speak with becoming modesty and hold our words subject to correction by those who are able to speak with greater authority on such matters. It needs one of poetic insight truly to interpret a poet or to estimate the value of his work, and the writer of these lines is neither a poet nor the son of a poet, nor can he pretend to any knowledge of the technique of poetic composition which would justify his offering criticism respecting the conformity of a writer to recognized standards of poetic composition. But the spirit is always more than the form through which it finds expression, and poetry is more than an art. It has spirit and life which can be recognized by wayfaring men as well as by scholars. And the verdict of the plain people after all has most to do in determining the question whether or not the author's work shall live after him. We shall attempt little in the way of criticism. There are indeed, as it seems to us, degrees of excellence in our author's work. In some pieces the note is clearer, truer than in others. Sometimes he has failed to give to his thought its perfect utterance. But there are many things which please and inspire, and some of these we desire to indicate. Despite the declaration of an English critic that "the odds are tremendously against any new book containing a single line of real poetry," we venture, nevertheless, to think that in the little volume before us

there are more than one line which the critics will be willing to class as poetry.

The book which Dr. Rand has given us contains forty-three sonnets, and in this form of poetic composition he is especially successful. For the most part the sonnets present some phase or other of nature's various life. Some of the subjects are: "At Minas Basin," "The Rain Cloud," "Love's Immanence," "A Deep-Sea Shell," "Glosscap," "Under the Beeches," "The Nightingale," "The Loon." The remainder of the book contains some thirty-seven short poems. Among those which please us most are: "Elissa," "In the Cool of the Day," "The Dragon Fly," "A Dream," "I am," "Fairy Glen," "Bay of Fundy," "Sea Music," "The Old Fisher's Song," "Nora Lee."

The larger number of these pieces also are poems of nature, and many of them are connected with objects or scenes with which the author's prolonged visits to the shores of Minas Basin have made him familiar. His passion for nature is deep, constant, and withal reverent, because he recognizes and feels, back of all the phenomena of nature, the Divine Source of all being, order and beauty.

"I am, and therefore these  
Existence is by me,—  
Flux of pendulous seas,  
The stable, the free.

"I am in blush of the rose,  
The shimmer of the dawn;  
Am girle Orion knows,  
The fount undrawn.

"I am earth's potency,  
The chemic ray's, the rain's,  
The reciprocity  
That loads the wains.

"I am, or the heavens fall,  
I dwell in my woven tent,  
Am immanent in all,—  
Suprament!"

A fine sonnet, entitled "Love's Immanence," bears eloquent testimony also to the poet's recognition of nature's profoundest meaning.

"I watch the cloud soft-poised in upper air  
And feel a presence bodied in its folds,  
The wind in dark and shine a voice eye holds  
The noontide forest listens to my prayer.  
The trampling seas with rumbling chariots bear  
Significant behests in heats and colds,  
Urim fire throbs intense on barren wolds—  
The crystal globed dew-drops love declare!

The silence of the wheeling heavens by night,  
By day, is but the pealing anthem sweet  
Beyond the pitch of my dull ears to hear,  
While veiling shadows are the excess of light  
That marks the goings of His power so near,  
And hides Love's regal presence on His seat."

On almost every page we find evidence of close and minute observation of nature. Its various objects and forms and moods are pictured with true poetic insight and grace. But the poet is not a describer of nature merely, he is rather her interpreter, pointing us to that divine presence of which nature is the manifestation. Blomidon is described as—

"Red-breasted sphinx with crown of grey and green."  
From "The Rain Cloud" we have this:

"Now falls the twisted rain, like unbound hair,  
Dusking the wooded hills and mountain trail,  
Now, marshalled by the trumpets of the gale,  
Sweeps wide with level lances to their glare."

The phenomenon of "the phantom tide"—or ground fog often seen upon the marshes or dyked lands on cool nights in the late summer, is thus described:

"Lo, as the harvest moon comes up the sky,  
Her shield of argent mellowed to the rim,  
The phantom of the buried tide doth flow;  
And without noise of wave or sea bird's cry  
Fills all thy ancient channels to the brim,  
Thy levels of a thousand years ago!"

The description of the Sea Undine is very beautiful: "Exquisite thing, soft cradled by the tide,"

"The massy tides gride over reef and ledge,  
And sudden waves from fell Euroclydom  
Dash to swift death the sailor in the Bay;  
But this, all lit with pearl, and on the edge  
Of doom—the fingers of a babe might slay—  
Sleeps in the stressful surge of Blomidon."

We believe there is nothing in the book which we like better than the sonnet entitled "Under the Beeches." Here the author strikes a stronger, clearer note than almost anywhere else. The language of this sonnet for the most part is simple, homely English, to which homely intelligences and hearts will respond. This cannot be said of all the

\* At Minas Basin—And Other Poems. By Theodore H. Rand, D. C. L. Toronto: William Briggs. 1897.