



CHERRYFIELD, March 13th, 1890.

My Dear Editor "ILLUSTRATED":

Shield me, when you have discovered that my last sonnet has an unorthodox line (namely, the fifteenth), with other infractions of the canon law respecting the numerous species. There will never be wanting, in our day, willful transgressors of that statute, with nothing better behind it than immemorial custom.

What became of the "Red and Blue Pencil"? Did it roll down and under the desk, and dust itself into the basket? Did it get behind the editor's ear, and so remain invisible? Or did Felix slip slyly into the sanctum and carry it off? He will yield it upon the promise that you will use it once a week; he has a hungry eye for such colours.

Would you like a short story from him; or, mayhap, a parable, since he has not furnished anything in that kind, as an all-round writer should be apt to do? He had a singular rencounter not long since, when he had gone for an evening walk, hoping to get from the hand of Nature's sweet apothecary a fresh bottle of ozone. Whom should he see, crossing the pasture-knolls, wherever their mossy nebs were stuck above the snow, but a solitary and beautiful maiden, tired and bedraggled, whose face showed the rose and the lily, and her dishevelled locks the thready gold. Noting her sylphid shape and airy movement, unlike any of our village maidens, he drew up and accosted her. "Gentle lady, may I bid you a good evening, and inquire whither you wander so far from our public ways, and why you are so strangely clad?" Fixing her eyes on him—eyes so full of light and wild beauty that he had never dreamed of such—she answered him, in accents wonderfully clear and musical: "I love the wilderness; it is my home. I steal harmlessly into quiet dwellings, wander over old battlefields, hover over the cataracts, leap with dancing maidens and haunt many places; but I build my house among green leaves. I am the Canadian muse, banished from my native country, and wandering down to the Acadian lands, to the shores that answer to my beloved hills and forests." "Why, dear lady," asked Felix, "have you left that youthful nation, just now in its spring, where, if ever, the native muse should be entertained?" "Alas!" she faltered, and the tears rushed to her eyes, "There has recently come from abroad a spirit called Scientific Criticism, that scorns me, and tells me I am inconsistent, and out of harmony with the time. I have been instructed that there is no need of me, and no place for me; that, indeed, my anomalous presence is not desired; that nothing distinctive exists in my character, and nothing heroic in my spirit. And what—I deemed they said—is this Canada, anyway, but an extension of England; and what do we presume to have to ourselves alone? There are no birds singing among these trees, no flowers blooming in our fields; but British bards have sung them better than can any fictitious native muse. Besides, we have of song a sufficiency; the bobolinks have long ago had their caroling season, now let them betake to the rice-swamps and feed themselves, while we who have leisure for such things re-awaken foregone melodies. So, henceforth, there is commended to me, on native ground, nothing save self-suppression, while that ground is being pre-empted in the interest of a certain canonised spirit of Epical Antiquity, and men are to be instructed to admire wisely, distrusting their own ability to produce worthy of admiration, rather devoting their paralytic energies to the payment of a well-earned meed due the elders. So, as I vanish from men whose words and deeds are hard and cold, I have fled my country, and seek the south, in hope of a blander, more cheery and open welcome."

Dear Editor, this lady whom you love is entertained at my home, and I am delighted with her.

For the present she will not leave me, hoping to propitiate the iron powers. But after a season, if you will remit a portion of her car-fare I will furnish the remainder, and she will return to you in good flesh, and with unimpaired beauty.

Trusting to hear from you upon this subject, I have the honour of being

Your obedient servant,
PASTOR FELIX.

SONNETS.

I.

WOLFE.

When Gray had completed the "Elegy," he sent a copy of it to his friend, General Wolfe, in America; and the story goes, that as the great hero was sitting, wrapped in his military cloak, on board the barge which the sailors were rowing up the St. Lawrence, towards Quebec, he produced the poem and read it by the waning light of approaching evening, until he came to those lines, which he repeated aloud to his officers:

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour—

Then, pausing for a moment, he finished the stanza—"Acadia," by Frederic S. Cozzens

Wolfe was in one of the foremost boats, and while he was being rowed ashore he recited the celebrated poem, Gray's "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," saying, as he finished: "Gentlemen, I would rather have written these lines than take Quebec."—Thomas A. Marquis, in "Stories of New France."

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave,"

Thrilled the low voice, in awed and rapt delight,
Of him who drew to Stadacona's height;
Fateful he rode on the reluctant wave.

Saint Lawrence soft his ripply prow did lave,
Songful consenting; while the falling eye
Did with august and pastoral musing grieve
How all must die—the timorous and the brave.

List, our wan hero—o'er whose pensive brow
Doom hung red laurels, waiting but the day—
Sighing for honours of the cloistered bard!
Sweet peace, and song, 'twere better these; we bow
To fates decree. Thou, victor in affray!
A nation's praiseful tears be thy reward.

II.

Love, and the harp—O would that these were mine,
Friend, nested in those English vales, that I
Shall see no more! Dear streams we wandered by—
Careless companions in a dream divine.

Than on yon steep supreme in arms to shine,
With you to walk, were soother! Fancies vain!
We not our path reverse, nor choose again.

The *Anse de Foulon**—the embattled line—
The lofty plain, red-reeking—the wild call
And cry of battle—the obstreperous roar
Of the dread onset—passion, pain and pride!
Lo! *there thy way!* For thee, the stinging ball;
The far, faint cheer, from earth's receding shore,
The column'd stone: "HERE WOLFE VICTORIOUS DIED!"†

III.

A RESPONSE.

(Written after reading Dr. A. H. Chandler's "Songs of Immortality.")

O thou, who singest sweet the gliding years,
And paint'st the seasons that so swiftly fly—
So, linking Time to Immortality,
Winning the rhythm and music of our tears

Wherewith to chime thy sacramental verse,—
Take my poor thanks, for some harmonious gift
Shed on my meditative hour, to lift

My thought through the unwithering universe
To where He sits upon His circle high
Presiding, who our narrow bound invades

With life, and light and beauty,—still engirt
By songful, radiant hosts, that never die;
There see I, 'mid the whitely-luminous shades,
Thee beauteous soul,—inspiring Poesy!
Still lovely, and all lonely, as thou wert.

ARTHUR JOHN LOCKHART.

*The path by which he ascended the cliff.

†This is the inscription on the memorial column that marks the spot where he fell, Sept. 13, 1759.

To the Editor of THE DOMINION ILLUSTRATED:

SIR,—The Montreal Society of Canadian Literature is doing such gracious work for Canada, and I, with others, am so entirely in sympathy with its noble and patriotic aims that I almost shrink from giving expression to what may appear like criticism or disclaimer of any of its methods.

Believe me, it is only under the strong pressure of conviction that I am now constrained to do so.

In the reading of two of the papers, to which I was an interested and delighted listener, there was something to be regretted, viz. that in the first—that on "The Literary Movement in Canada up to 1841," undue prominence was given to the French element in our literature, to the comparative exclusion of the English; which, granted that it was, owing to the then condition of things, less predominant, was yet, I think, sufficiently so to be entitled to a larger share of recognition than it received, especially at the hands of an Anglo-

Canadian essayist, and before a society, the large majority of the members of which are Anglo-Canadian.

I say this in no narrow spirit.

Mr. James Fields, in his delightful work, "Yesterdays with Authors," quotes of Pope the words applied to him by Sainte Beuve:

"He had the characteristic sign of literary natures—the faithful worship of genius."

As Canadians of mixed ancestry, we must always mutually rejoice in each other's literary heritage; but, on the other hand, we must be careful not to make too little of whatever literary stock in trade we inherit from our English progenitors.

In the paper on Isabella Valency Crawford, there was no fault to be found in this direction. From the outset the subject was treated on purely Anglo-Canadian, or Canadian lines, and the essayist evinced throughout the keenest appreciation of the phenomenal powers of our dead singer.

This was as it should be. She has gone from among us now, and our laggard homage comes, alas! too late to touch her or redeem Canada from the reproach of bovine indifference while she lived; but we may lay our maple garlands upon her grave, and with bowed heads acknowledge her now as our crowned one, of whom we were not worthy.

To give, in the course of an essay limited to an hour's length, the whole poem of "Old Spooks's Pass," was, I think, a mistake, because it necessitated the omission of some of the writer's finest short poems, and of passages of rare beauty from others, which we could not afford to miss.

Also, it does not seem to me that because roses are, as we are told, not of much account in Madrid, the poem, "Roses in Madrid," which exhales their perfume and drops their melody, and diffuses around us their colour, as rarely, as affluently and almost as palpably as the flower itself, ought to be condemned as an anachronism.

Among the selections familiar to us through the "Songs of the Great Dominion," I was disappointed to miss "The Axe," every word of which will always "bite deep and wide" to Canadian hearts, and that incomparable lyric:

"O, love will build his lily walls."

Also one which, I daresay, will be new to many of your readers, and which I now ask you to republish.

It rang out like a clarion blast after the return of the volunteers in 1885, at the close of the North-West rebellion.

EROL GERVAISE.

LET THE WOMEN HAVE THEM FIRST.

A welcome! Oh yes, 'tis a kindly word, but why will ye plan and prate

Of feasting and speeches, and such small things, while the wives and mothers wait.

Plan as ye will, and do as ye will, but think of the hunger and thirst

In the hearts that wait, and do as you will, but lend us our laddies first.

Why, what would ye have? There is not a lad that treads in the gallant ranks

Who does not already bear on his breast the rose of a nation's thanks.

A welcome! Why, what do you mean by that! when the very stones must sing

As our men march over them home again—the walls of the city ring

With the thunder of throats and the tramp and the tread of feet that rush and run—

I think in my heart that the very trees must shout for the bold work done.

Why, what would ye have? There is not a lad who treads in the gallant ranks

Who does not already bear on his breast the rose of a nation's thanks.

A welcome! There is not a babe at the breast won't spring at the roll of the drum

That heralds them home—the keen long cry in the air of "They come! They come!"

And what of it all if ye bade them wade knee deep in a wave of wine,

And toss'd tall torches and arch'd the town in garlands of maple and pine?

All dust in the wind of a woman's cry, as she snatches from the ranks

Her boy, who bears on his brave young breast the rose of a nation's thanks.

A welcome! There's doubt if the lad would stand like stone in their steady line

When a babe held high in a dear wife's hand, or the stars that swim and shine