

## ASPHODEL CANTATA.

THE TRAGIC HISTORY OF THE FIRST, LAST AND ONLY  
CANADIAN POET.



HERE has of late years sprung into print a controversy as to whether there is such a thing or not as a Canadian Poet. Ever since the question was first mooted there have been claimants for the supposed honor; but as there is no salary attached the competition has not been very keen. It is a pity no Canadian Laureateship exists, so that the matter might be settled by a Government appointment with a small stipend and a barrel of whiskey thrown in, after the fashion of the English. It is rather strange, too, this has not been thought of before; as Canada has copied so much in the foundations of its Royal Academy, Institute, etc.; but it is never too late to mend—even Canadian poetry.

Now I am not at all prejudiced as a critic, nor do I purpose editing or publishing after this has seen the light, the many beautiful poems of the talented but unknown author. This is no preliminary puff or advertising dodge to secure public attention to the fact that shortly a selection from the divine works of the great unrecognized will be issued. Nor am I a personal friend of the author, combining business with gush to make a few dollars and boom his verses at the same time. No, gentle reader, this may be the current practice with a great many persons we know, who aspire to the proud position of original thinkers and beautiful writers and therefore take it in turn to belaud the members of their own little clique and belittle everyone outside it. No! this is a self-imposed labor of love, undertaken solely to bring to daylight a child of genius who has been relegated to oblivion by the churlish ingratitude of his fellow creatures—to rescue from the mire some of the diamonds of fancy that should and yet shall glitter in the hitherto empty crown of Canadian fame.

The reason I do this is because the poet is not known at all and has never yet had a chance. His effusions have been sent with punctual regularity as soon as the fine frenzy has finished with them to every newspaper editor in the Dominion, and still not one has been printed. It has been a journey of love, occupying me the last five years, to wander round all the newspaper offices in Canada and recover all I could of these priceless pearls thrown to—well, editors is a synonym in this case. Before illuminating the pages of GRIP with some of the choicest fragments, however, a slight sketch of the man will not be amiss. Asphodel Cantata is not an assumed name as it would appear; but a veritable heirloom of family nomenclature. He was the son of a travelling Italian musician, still living on the streets of New York, and his mother was a lady who supplied the button-hole market with floral offerings at reduced rates. On this account he received his euphonious name as a perpetual reminiscence of his illustrious parents. What but a child of fancy could we expect from the auspicious union of Apollo and Flora. True the Apollo ground a piano-organ and Flora made up wire-bound button-holes; but the principles of art and nature were there and in the form of their single offspring found the light. Under these circumstance I ask confidently could Asphodel Cantata ever be anything but a poet? Events will show that he certainly could not and certainly did not in spite

of every effort to alter him. This heir of the beautiful in nature and the exquisite in art was ushered into existence on the 1st of April, 1868. Observe the fitness of the events connected herewith. This was no ordinary coming into the world; no commonplace entrance upon the stage of life. Asphodel was ushered in, as became so rare and once-a-century personification of the ideal. The circumstances of his birth were probably not those of the majority of the newly arrived—for he was found by a Japanese pug, who was looking for bones in an overthrown ash-barrel. This is ever the way with genius. It is not to be looked for in a palace. That Jap pug would not have sniffed around the drawing rooms of Rideau Hall in that search for osseous relics which was to result in the discovery of an Asphodel Cantata. Petrarch was not born in a Quirinal, nor Homer in a Basilica; Shakespeare was not found on the throne of Queen Elizabeth and therefore it was not likely that Asphodel Cantata should be discovered anywhere but in a corner—so to say; for an ash-barrel may not have a corner, exactly speaking. However, he was found anyhow, and almost anywhere on the 1st of April, 1868—date ever to be remembered by future sketchers of Canadian literature, compilers of Canadian birth-day books, lovers of Canadian taffy done up in poetry, and all who honor that venerable date and everything connected therewith. Having been found, the question at once arose, "What was to be done with him?" and this question has not been solved yet and never will be until by a consensus of opinion he shall be placed in the highest niche of the Valhalla of Canadian poetry. But that is as yet away off in the dim and indiscernable beyond, whither all embryo poets are struggling; but as yet none has done more than tumble into the holes of the walls of that Valhalla and the niche is still unoccupied. Well, to get back to the Jap pug and more congenial business. The Jap pug conveyed the news to the cook, who transmitted it to the mistress, who referred it through the telephone to the police, who communicated with the Orphan's Home, who declined to receive it without an order from the Mayor, and owing to the delay in transferring the piece of joyful intelligence the town of Boomerville lost its chance of being the foster parent of Asphodel Cantata, for in the middle of the transaction, whilst the mistress of the house, which owned the lucky ash-barrel, was telephoning the police, a poor woman coming along was attracted by the joyful barking of the Jap pug, and looking into the aforesaid ash-barrel, saw the child of nature and the prodigy of art. The thermometer opposite the ash-barrel registered 16° below zero, but the warmth of a woman's love overcame the weather's noticeable coolness, and chipping away the ice-bound rubbish that surrounded the child with the metal plate of her false teeth. She dragged forth the babe in triumph, dropped it in to her market-basket and continued down town to do her shopping.

(To be continued.)

THE old German *Military Bill*—The Emperor.

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THE latest about the Crown Prince—He is not going to pot, but to Potsdam. There is a great deal in the difference.