Second Edition.

THE SPIRIT LAMP.

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The Spirit Lamp.

Vol. 2. No. I. Oct. 21, 1892.

OF ONE WHO FELL IN BATTLE.

War of the Rebellion, 1864.

By smoke-encumbered field and tangled lane,
Down roads whose dust was laid with scarlet dew,
Past guns dismounted, ragged heaps of slain,
Dark moving files, and bright blades glancing through,
All day the waves of battle swept the plain
Up to the ramparts, where they broke and cast
Thy young life quivering down, like foam before the blast.

Then sank the tumult. Like an angel's wing
Soft fingers swept thy pulses; the west wind
Whispered fond voices, mingling with the ring
Of Sabbath bells of Peace—such peace as brave men find,
And only look for till the months shall bring
Surcease of wrong, and fail from out the land
Bondage and shame, and Freedom's altars stand.

Bret Harte.

THE DECLENSION OF LITERATURE.

It would be absurd to insist unduly on the fact that the true criterion of fame is not genius but gentility. We have all of course been long convinced of the truth of this axiom. It may not, however, be quite unprofitable to bring it, so to speak, out of solution, and test it a

little more closely than we are in the habit of doing. To possess an infallible literary tact which will enable us to predict (from the mere cover of any book, and without the impertinency of a more detailed examination) either, on the one hand, that it will never elbow its way into fame, or, on the other, that it is the work of a master-hand, is assuredly *not* enough. In these utilitarian days we must do more than possess a conviction; we must justify it to the microscope of an incredulous world.

I shall therefore here propose a test which will for the future render everything but the reading of the book unnecessary, a test so easy that a child may learn to apply it in from one to two minutes; and yet so wide that it will embrace everything from a 32mo to an elephant folio.

May the book be considered by any fair process of mental gymnastics to come under any of the following cases?

Nom. and Acc. A Lord.
Voc. My Lord.
Gen. Of a lord.
Dat. To or for a lord.
Abl. By, with or from a lord.

The reader must not misunderstand me. Any one from a prince of the blood royal to a knight of industry is here included in the term lord. This distinction must be kept in mind if we are ever to arrive at any conclusion at all.

Let us dip then into the pages of a forgotten author, once the breviary of the *bourgeois*, now doomed to occupy the position of the photograph album without its privileges, doomed to be diurnally dusted and as diurnally mis-quoted.

Let us take up our Shakespeare. To what does he owe—or rather did he owe (for Shakespeare is as out of date as the Reformation!) his enormous, his unparalleled popularity? Simply to the fact that he was *so excessively genteel*. He has no style, is notoriously

artificial in sentiment and deficient in dramatic propriety, but he "kep' hisself respeckable," and has therefore inevitably appealed to the respectable. Run your eye down the list of *Dramatis Personæ* in any play of his whatever, and *count the commoners. Desunt omnino.* The eye is delighted with dukes, made merry with marquises and positively pampered with princes! Nary a garlic-eating squire, nary a buxom pudding-making madam, save to serve as a disinfectant to their distinction, or as the plain boiled potato doth to a heavy steak in the country. "Give me blood" is the cry of the classes; and "the silver swan of Avon" comes *more pugilum* up to the scratch, and gives it them in buckets. Yes! that is why Shakespeare succeeded—he was so aristocratical. Twit me not with "The Taming of the Shrew." It is a solitary instance of failure. But even here, I would submit, he fails not in the *quality* but in the quantity; for, say, is it not the glory of the comedy that its very summit is crowned and consecrated by our nominative case: "A lord?" An after-thought? Not a bit of it. The whole play hinges on the opening episode, and without "a lord" this would be impossible. No, no, no, no, no. We may confidently affirm of Shakespeare that never and at no time is his Burke worse than his bite. He would not be himself without his rosary of notables, we should miss our way to his shrine had he not shred unnumbered guiding strawberry-leaves in his wake.

Again and hurriedly to cluster a few examples and crush a precept from them:—Who would have ever heard of Spenser had not the "Faerie Queen" been ushered in with verses addressed to a perfect galaxy of Right Honourables, Most Honourables, Renowned and Valiant Lords and Virtuous and Beautiful Ladies? Who would have ever admired the blasphemies of Byron, or giggled over the conceits of Chesterfield, had they been born plain Jones or Johnson? Who, again, would have read "Vanity Fair" if the Marquis of Steyne had been a commoner? who would have

split their sides and cried their eyes out over the "School for Scandal," if the heroine had been *Mrs.* Teazle, and had lived at Shepherds' Bush? Why again is Dickens so intensely unpopular—Ouida the devoured of all the devourers? Because Dickens deals not in dukes, and because Ouida does know how to dally delicately with the doings of the duchesses.

But in the good old times (when the first page of a book was known as the *title*-page) one had no need to over-lord one's manuscript. A mere hint was enough; and a dedicatory epistle to the brother-in-law of a baronet (especially if abbreviated and written BART.) ensured a gallop through a dozen editions and a compliment from the nation (in the Commons). In a word they knew how to use the fourth of our cases—

Dat. To or for a lord.

And what shall we say of the ablative? Hats off, reader, ere we put on our spectacles!

By, with, or from a lord . . . . .

Who, to pick the stalk of an example from a nursery of instances, is *the* historic letter-writer?—Lord Chesterfield. Who the most popular of novelists (some fifteen years ago)?—Lord Beaconsfield. Who the greatest poet that ever stitched stanza together?—Lord Rochester. And who finally the greatest master with stained face and broken form, whose fadeless crown still shines among the brightest in our literary Valhalla?—One Francis, Lord Bacon, Viscount St. Albans.

In conclusion, and to come down to earth again, are not all these to be considered neatly docketed if we simply take one more glance at the annexed table?

Nom. and Acc. A lord.
Voc. My lord.
Gen. Of a lord.
Dat. To or for a lord.
Abl. By, with or from a lord.

Mr. B.

SIR WALTER SCOTT.

We are glad to see Mr. Lang has announced for publication his promised edition of Sir Walter Scott. There is yet "money in it," when four editions of the great novelist have been called for in two years. The sign is a healthy sign of an advancing taste towards literary sanity and whole-mindedness, and towards a belief that the reign of the *conte* and the short story is drawing to a close. It may be easier to write a three volume novel, full of the sea, the sky and woman's love, than a good short story, but we may be sure that when the great novelist again appears among us he will work μέγας μεγαλωστί only in a sphere suitable to his power. He will not write the Lord's Prayer in the compass of a threepenny bit, for a great action demands a great stage,—and we trust this new edition of Sir Walter will be worthy alike of the great novelist and of the editor who for long has been known to be an enthusiastic admirer of his subject.

Scott for a little has been under an eclipse. In a world which draws its literary verdict from the *Review of Reviews*, and when the gaiety of nations is eclipsed by the poisoning of a racehorse, or by a Whitechapel murder, Sir Walter has but little chance. He is not sensational enough. The man you meet at dinner,—candour compels us to state the sex is generally the reverse,—who says he cannot, or does not, read Scott, will be sure to part his hair in the middle, and save his hearers the trouble of inferring the speaker is an ass. Such a judgment is a mental Nilometer, and is a safe gauge of the calibre of the man.

There is a literary and spiritual *Byronismus* yet abroad. We are all wishing to air our experiences in religion and philosophy. We wish to proclaim that our hearts are withered and sere, our souls a burning, or extinct, volcano, and that tears are not in us or that they are as Marah. We all turn on our navel in a morbid way, as Carlyle said, and the Homeric man of mental, bodily

and spiritual sanity, who has no experiences, has been decried as shallow, and as having, like Canning's Knife-grinder, "no story to tell," no gospel to proclaim. How finely Lowell has remarked that in this day of George Sandisms, Chateaubriand-sentimentalists and self-exploitings, we are all hunting after the unreal, distorted, untrue,—the figures of St. Preux, René, Werther, Manfred, Quasi-Modo! The men who do greatly are the men who are sincere—with themselves. If Shakspere, Scott and old Homer had sorrows,—and doubtless the world did *not* go any better then than now in "Scio's rocky isle"—they kept them to themselves by, like a Davy lamp, consuming their own smoke, and making them for ever the warp and woof of consolation to their own kind.

The great advance of physical science, and the concurrent material improvement in human environments have rather betrayed the unwary to the belief that the mind of man can be red-taped and pigeon-holed. Excessive use of the Evolution theory has led the unscientific to regard mind and society as an exaggerated sausage machine, which lands the belated beholder on the Pisgah-top of a heap of antiquated prejudices, from which he proudly thinks he has escaped through the valley of the shadow to the dazzling effulgence of a fully realized knowledge. We think, however, all this is also being itself evolved, and that the critics who assert that Scott is deficient in the analysis of motive and action, that his morality is conventional, and his contribution to positive thought is *nil*, are all astray on first principles, and that the highest art is the suggestion, without the constant parading, of the dominant conception in the artist's mind.

Indeed to talk of the impressionist as holding the mirror up to nature is to betray ignorance of elementary optics, and to forget that it is the province of the photographer to distort, and that of the artist to preserve, the spirit of the original. The artist transfigures nature to make it real, and hence it is that we allow Turner to

take liberties with the towers of Kilchurn Castle, and with the Towing of the Téméraire. The impressionist thinks he has found in fiction a new psychological method unsuspected by the old masters. But if we are to swallow our emotions "neat" let us at least demand from the modern literary *chiffonier* that we have them natural. But he will have none of this. He rings a most elaborate scheme of physical and psychical shocks, spasms, and surprises—sensations for sensation's sake, like Keats with the Cayenne pepper on his tongue to increase the flavour of the claret. It only serves to stir unreal and unrealized desires, and to stunt reality. The morality of the great writers is like the air on the Eildon hills—clear and bracing. Homer and Menander were great writers, but there is a great gulf between them, and the modern *fin-de-siècle* novelist is far from being a Menander.

The young man in a hurry—in literature and religion—has been at the bottom of all this. Genius has been "in revolt." Genius and respectability have declared to be in eternal and necessary opposition. Morality and Art were asymptotes, though to all the great men and minds of the past they had been declared to be necessary and synthetic. Byron canted a great deal in this way, and the figures of Lara and the Corsair seem to have haunted the imagination of the succeeding race, and we still hear the faint echo of the school that regarded monogamy as decadent, and long fought with blank unrealized hopes of "living up to" the back hair of the Roman emperor Elagabalus, and languidly regretted what they fondly regarded as the sane and rational sensuousness of Boccaccio and Bracciolini.

As we have said, we regard this reviving fame of Scott as a good sign. The novel is not a tract,—and the writers of the impressionist or doctrinaire schools surely only defeat their own aims by the confusion of two distinct provinces, and if they *do* "wish to see the wheels go round," they must, like Benjamin Franklin,

be prepared to deny themselves pleasure and pay for their whistle. By so doing, they write works that are devoid of all interest, their action is ever standing still, and has no beginning, middle, nor end.

Scott has been accused by the greatest of his countrymen who wrote on him, or, strangely enough, wrote him down, of not, in all his prose works, having given to the language a standard quotation or a familiar phrase. This defect, if defect it be, he will bear with Smollett, Richardson and Fielding, nor, perhaps, can Dumas, his nearest French parallel, escape the same censure. But they furnish characters and scenes—character not divorced from action; and character, as Aristotle said, can only be represented by characters in action. This was the conviction of Cervantes and Molière, but of late the anthropologist and the scientist have not been content to stay at home but have roamed afield in the domain of the great writers. We have too much of the "*English Men of Letters*" series, that serve as a glib and ready-reckoner style of knowledge to the people who read literature on literature and not the works themselves. The literary anthropologist is exploiting the Hottentot and the Sandwich Islander to find a parallel to the Siege of Troy or the death of Achilles. We are trying to bridge the gulf between the Kraal and the Parthenon, the Zulu and the Greek—and so the great writers, that themselves can alone create the taste by which they are to be enjoyed, suffer a temporary eclipse.

But the reign of artificiality and small men is drawing to a close. To know Sir Walter Scott is not a thing to be lightly ventured on if you are prepared wisely, with Ruskin, to read "every word." To fully know him, as Steele said of his wife, is a liberal education, best felt by those who can see the blaze of the sun sink on the Ochils; or when, rounding the passhead of the Trossachs at the corner of Loch Katrine they can see the Silver Strand and Ellen's Isle, and know that Shakespere and Cervantes can alone stand with Sir Walter Scott.

VIRTUTE L. CRESCO.

[La Rédaction désire témoigner ici de sa reconnaissance envers MM. Braassem, libraires-éditeurs, de Bruxelles, à l'obligeance desquels est due la reproduction de cette pièce.]

A Maurice Maeterlinck.

LA BAIGNEUSE.

MARION.
ELISE.
UNE PARTIE DE BATEAU.
LA BAIGNEUSE.
ISSACHAR.

(La scène représente une chambrette humblement mais convenablement meublée; en face, la croisée grande ouverte donne sur une rivière qui coule immédiatement au-dessous; plus loin s'étendent des prés que voile un brouillard argentin, lequel se dissipe de plus en plus durant le développement du drame; plus loin encore, à droite, on entrevoit une autre partie de la rivière, qui fait un coude à un point invisible du théâtre. ELISE, *mère d'Issachar, est assise dans un coin, à gauche, en face; elle tricote.* MARION, *sa bru, est occupée à mettre la nappe pour le souper.*

MAR. Voulez-vous que j'allume les chandelles, mère?

ELISE. Non, non, pas encore.

MAR. Pourquoi pas encore? Quand voulez-vous que je les allume?

ELISE. Quand Issachar sera rentré; c'est dommage de les allumer avant de se mettre à table.

MAR. Mais vous n'y voyez plus.

ELISE. Si, si, j'y vois très bien; et d'ailleurs, j'ai assez travaillé aujourd'hui.

MAR. Qu'il est tard.

ELISE. Quelle heure est-il?

MAR. Dix heures et demie. Je m'étonne qu' Issachar ne vienne pas. *(Elle se met à la fenêtre.)* Jamais depuis que nous sommes mariés il n'a été si tard à rentrer. C'est sans doute le brouillard qui l'aura retenu. Comme ça a blanchi les prairies!

ELISE. Il y a un brouillard ?

MAR. Mais oui, ne voyez-vous pas? Il me semble que c'est pire en amont. *(Un silence.)* Mère !

ELISE. Qu'y a-t-il ?

MAR. Voilà une lumière.

ELISE. Où la vois-tu ?

MAR. Sur l'eau, juste où le fleuve fait un coude...elle se meut. Ça doit être le ras d'Issachar.

ELISE. Mais il ne porte jamais de lanterne.

MAR. C'est vrai : il connaît si bien la rivière.

(On commence à distinguer des voix qui chantent ; elles s'affirment à mesure que le bateau s'approche, jusqu'à ce qu'il passe sous la fenêtre. Il est plein de gens qui s'amusent sur l'eau.)

LES VOIX.

A l'aube, à travers le bois sombre
(S. Yves, garde-nous de mal !)
Le jour naissant dessinait l'ombre
De son cheval.

MAR. Ce n'est donc pas Issachar.

LES VOIX.

A midi qu'il allait toujours
(Seigneur, garde-nous de Satan !)
L'ombre poursuivait les pas lourds
De la jument.

Mais point d'ombre de cavalier
(Saint Yves et Saint Honoré !)
Par le beau soleil reflété.

UN HOMME *(apercevant Marion à la fenêtre, la salue).* Bonsoir.

MAR. Bonsoir. Avez-vous vu mon mari ?

L'HOMME. Non.

UNE FEMME. Si fait, nous l'avons bien vu. C'était dans la ville, avant de repartir.

MAR. Que faisait-il dans la ville ?

LA FEMME. Il buvait un coup d'eau-de-vie avec le vieux Nicolas et Marthe Vatras ; je me rappelle même lui avoir entendu dire qu'il faudrait rester

jusqu'à minuit, qu'il ne partirait pas dans une telle brouée.

MAR. Elle est très épaisse, la brouée ?

L'HOMME. Non ; il fait assez clair par ici, mais ça devient pire en remontant la rivière. Bonsoir, alors.

MAR. Bonsoir.

(Le bateau reprend sa course ; on chante encore.)

LES VOIX.

Mais point d'ombre de cavalier
(S. Yves et S. Honoré !)
Par le beau soleil reflété.

(MARION *quitte la croisée et se remet à dresser la table.)*

ELISE. Quel jour est-ce, aujourd'hui ?

MAR. C'est la veille de la Saint Yves.

ELISE. Ah ! *(Encore un silence. Soudain on entend le bruit d'une chute dans l'eau, tout près.* MARION *saute à la fenêtre.)*

MAR. A présent il faut que ce soit Issachar...Il est tout près. *(Bruit d'une chute dans l'eau.)* Issachar ! Le bateau paraît ne plus s'avancer. Ça sonne comme s'il était toujours au même endroit.

ELISE. Ce n'est pas Issachar.

MAR. Qu'est-ce que c'est, alors ?

ELISE. Ce n'est pas un bateau du tout.

MAR. Qu'est-ce ?

ELISE. C'est...Quel jour est-ce aujourd'hui, as-tu dit ?

MAR. La veille de la Saint Yves. Pourquoi ne répondez-vous pas ?

ELISE. La veille de la Saint Yves ! Donc, c'est elle !

MAR. Elle ! Qui ?

ELISE. La baigneuse.

MAR. La baigneuse...? Qu'est-ce que cela, de grâce ?

ELISE. Bien sûr que tu le sais. Ah ! j'oubliais ; il n'y a pas une année que tu es ici. C'est une femme...

MAR. Oui se baigne—à cette heure-ci ?

ELISE. Oui—la veille de la Saint Yves. Moi, je ne l'ai jamais vue.

MAR. Pourquoi la veille de la Saint Yves?

ELISE. Parce que c'est alors qu'elle est morte.

MAR. Morte? C'est donc un revenant.

ELISE. Qui...elle s'est noyée.

MAR. Pourquoi?

ELISE. Parce qu'on l'avait séduite.

MAR. Qui?

ELISE. C'est ce que personne ne sait. Il y a de ça une dizaine d'années, tu étais enfant. Elle s'appelait Rosa...Rosa...j'oublie son nom de famille. *(Bruit d'une chute dans l'eau.)* Elle était jeune, une fillette de dix-sept ans, peut-être. Son père et sa mère demeuraient tout près d'ici. Il était maçon. Ils ont changé de demeure peu après qu'elle s'est noyée...Quelques-uns disent qu'elle s'est jetée du pont, d'autres prétendent qu'elle est entrée tout droit dans l'eau, debout. C'est possible; elle en était capable. On dit que si son âme venait à l'encontrer, lui, l'homme, qu'elle le tuerait. Elle était très passionnée, elle ne pardonnait pas.

(On entend encore la chute dans l'eau.)

MAR. C'est fort singulier...encore que je n'y croie pas le moins du monde. C'est-à-dire que je ne crois pas que ce soit elle là-bas. C'est sans doute la marée — ou un chien, peut-être. *(Silence: après peu—)* La brouée s'est dissipée par ici. Je voudrais qu' Issachar fût rentré. *(Un éclair.)* Oh! l'éclair, avez-vous vu? *(Soudain une voix d'homme qui chante se fait entendre de loin.)* Ah! c'est lui enfin. Issachar! Il ne m'entend pas encore. Issachar! *(La réponse arrive à peine, très faible.)* Issachar! que tu es tard.

ISS. Oui, il a fait un brouillard d'enfer...*(De plus près.)* Il y a quelque chose sur la route.

MAR. Dépêche-toi, Issachar! *(Un grand bruit sur l'eau.)*

LA VOIX DU FANTÔME.

Viens à moi.

ISS. Jamais.

La Voix. Tu dois.

Mar. Ciel! Qu'est-ce? *(Une lueur subite montre la forme d'une femme qui se soulève dans l'eau et embrasse l'avant du vas.)*

La Voix. Tu dois. (Marion *se presse les tempes avec angoisse. Un bruit épouvantable, puis un cri. Ensuite silence.* Marion *s'est évanouie.)*

Elise *(qui s'est levée, tombe à genoux en s'écriant)* O mon Dieu! mon Dieu! c'était mon fils!

(Rideau.)

Aurèle Legond'huis.

THE BALLADE OF THE PEA-HEN.

"The pea-hen lays once in the year."

(Arnold's Greek Exercises, 63.*)*

How many a sentence is framed by the lip
Of moralist, poet and sage,
To tell of the slip 'twixt the cup and the lip,
To warn a frivolous age!
How I think as I turn the page
Of sapient prophet or seer,
La Rochefoucauld never emitted a gnome
So telling and terse in its sibylline tone;
You may search through the poets of Hellas and Rome,
And search till you tire, as I fear,
You never will find
One more to your mind:
The pea-hen lays once in the year.

How crude and how trite is the classical saw
Of the Rotterdam Latinist's pen:
Inter offam et os quam multum! The law
To win the acceptance of men
Must hit on a happier vein,
If sinners the text will revere,—
Yet Gay and the Curé of Meudon both fail,
And Corduba's moralists really must pale
His fires as he hopelessly tries to assail
The task—for but withered and sere
Is their prose or their verse
By that mystic and terse
The pea-hen lays once in the year.

When Shakspere remarks on the flow,
The ebb, and the eddy and tide
In man and his fortunes below—
How often the current will glide
Beyond him and strand him beside
The shallows no more to appear—
I vow that, in spite of the jeer and the frown
Of critics, the laurel of victory's crown
Must garland the brow of the sage that set down
In language so telling and clear,
So pensive and sweet
Incisive and neat—
The pea-hen lays once in the year.

L'Envoy.

Prince, Potentate, Freshman or Peer,
And Man, when "occasion you miss
Of pith and of moment" on *this*
Reflect, and abstain
From regrets that are vain—
The pea-hen lays once in the year.

L.

CAUSERIES DU VENDREDI.

No. VI.—The Real Emerson.

"I drank it, and say, 'Ah, look here, chummy, that is beer, that different stuff what you went and got t'mornin'.'"—*A Son of the Fens.*

That excellent and moral old kangaroo of a Yankee who had sense enough to help Carlyle and folly enough to try and argue Whitman out of plain speaking was not in any sense a man of letters. No more was the largely lamented proser Whittier, nor is that most maiden-auntly of physicians Holmes. They don't breed men of letters in that "nameless land which is described as the United States of North America." They have a set of "introspecteurs" who "contemplate" their own empty idiotic lives in every futile fashion, they have a large caste of man-milliners, such as Stedman and Co., and a great number of gushing and barren females that rhyme; they have critics who are dissatisfied with Shakespeare

and try and trade him off in their annual hogcrop as Bacon. You must go south of "these states" for culture, to lands where Spanish is spoken and real poetry made and real dances danced and real life lived. Those huge hideous mushroom towns of U.S.A., given over to native architects and advertisements, are full of miserable nouveaux riches and yet more miserable persons, sad because they are not nouveaux riches too, as if they could do anything with their money when they got it, but waste it in selfish pleasureless and senseless ways. And their gods are like unto them, cheating speculators, perjured politicians, successful and pious dry-goods men, cowardly road-agents, smart editors and greasy pulpit-orators. What have such a people to do with literature? They left the one poet they ever produced, or are likely to produce, to die in poverty, they even did their best to defile his grave (though in this task, to our everlasting shame, a disgusting Englishman of the name of Watts proved himself a more ignoble and active muck-chucker than any of them). Poor Emerson! he had at least the consciousness (which the rest of the babbling Boston minnikins have never had) that all was not right in the "Great Western Republic." Once too on a pathetic occasion he wrote a sad and touching little piece of verse,—a great sorrow struck a spark of poetry out of his flint. But enough of this honest fellow and his hopeless common-place copybook stuff. He never was, and is not, this fleeting down east phantasm, this angular New England evanescence.

But, curiously enough, there is an Emerson, a real Emerson, a man who can write and does write, whose book, *A Son of the Fens*, is one of the English novels of this century. Realist, in that his subject is taken from simple, actual, infinite life, "drawn from the quicke;" impressionist, in that he strives for justice of tone, for the harmony that there always is in an aspect of nature, Mr. Emerson has given a simple record, autobiograpic in form, of an East Anglian life, a hearty, wholesome, useful life, with the common ups and downs that befall

dozens of good east-country "mash men" and fishermen, but it is all somehow deeply interesting. You can fancy yourself, you cannot help fancying yourself sitting in the brick cottage by the mill over pipes and mugs of homebrewed as the plain man tells his plain tale, "backing and fetching," and "tacking down a long-reach," but still getting on, in that natural artless way, that is the perfection of art. The verisimilitude of the whole thing is almost magic: the unfolding of character is admirable and sure, the detail correct to an hair's breadth. Few such "documents" of English life have been put together, and it is a true idyll withal. Miss Dobree and Miss Ingram and Mrs. Riddell are artists all three, and they have written admirable records, but of lives that are not in the least idyllic,—cramped, mutilated, adulterated, civilized, middle-class lives; lives not lived but poorly shambled through. But this rough countryman's life is an idyll. And then Mr. Emerson never moralizes, he judges not, he is the true chronicler, he records as well as he can what is to be recorded and he leaves it. Nor does he cumber his drama with elaborate superfluous scenery, he is as free from the need of scene-painting as Homer or a Sagaman. The extraordinary force of the book is felt by a moment's comparison with the work of such worthy people as Blackmore. Beside *A Son of the Fens* how unreal, flat, sentimental, is a tale like *Lorna Doone*, and yet *Lorna Doone* has much more merit and labour in it than the vast bulk of English-made noveltry. Nor has Mr. Emerson the excited forced note which sometimes spoiled a fine page of Jeffries, or the hopeless bitterness that scarred Runciman's best work. He is not feverish, he reminds one of Vallés at his best, he has the same idiomatic aptness of phrase, definite clear memory, restraint, accurate adjustment of colour, and unprejudiced sympathy. Mr. Emerson has worked hard at his East Anglian, his earlier tales are often careful, accurate, poetic, drastic, but this *Son of the Fens* is a little masterpiece. Into that worshipful company of immortals

created by man there has entered one Dick Windmill, and his pardner Jo and his wife Jenny are with him. "Night you go, old Dicka!"

F. Y. P.

A DILEMMA AND A FALLACY.

Chapter I.

Some cutlets under a tin cover were drying up furiously before a roaring fire. The July sunlight kept darting into the blue room in languid streaks; on the fireshelf stood a few faded fritillaries, and the dust shimmered on the plain walls. Books littered the floor, and a few paper-cutters lay among them like pale, frozen snakes. A lack of motion everywhere—only relieved by the hoarse whisper of the scout in the rooms opposite and the drowsy flapping of the blind.

One would have said that the owner of the rooms was still asleep. It was past eight o'clock. . .

The guest yawned, and took up a book bound in pigskin, with a few lent-lilies meandering on the cover.

"Shall I wake him?" he said to himself, as he fluttered the leaves. "The cutlets will be leather in a quarter of an hour."

An angry splash from the bedroom seemed to answer him. In another moment a door opened, and his host entered, clad lightly in a large bath-towel and holding a corkscrew in his hand.

"Hullo—Sneerson!" he said wearily. "You here? I must have a drink,"—and he leisurely began to open a bottle of lemonade. "Two dolts and a fool made me play whist till three this morning, and I feel—I feel . . . !"

"Is anyone else coming?" asked Sneerson.

"Only Briggs and Philpott. I expect they'll be here directly. Ah! I'm better now. I'll be with you in the throwing-on of a trouser. Have an olive?"

Sneerson took one dubiously. Beere, delighted to

see his friend suffering torments from the stone, crackled from his shirt.

"Sitting up till three takes the core out of one, doesn't it?"

Sneerson said nothing, but wished the olive had been one of the dolts. In a few minutes Beere came into the room again. He was dressed this time, and was smoking a cigarette.

"You have heard about De Launville, I suppose?" he said, as he sank into a low armchair.

"No; what?" said Sneerson.

"He's been sent down for proposing to Polly at the ball."

"The fat one? or is it the one with the cherry hair? I never remember twins."

"The one with the cherry hair—though I don't think it's cherry. The Master was very sick about it. De Launville was perfectly screwed at the time, though!"

"I should think so. But drunk—why, I've never seen him touch anything."

"He doesn't; but he did at the ball all the same. But I sha'n't wait for the others. No! don't touch the cutlets. I'll make you an omelette in a minute."

Eo consilio, Beere began to crash some eggs into a basin, and gave his guest some parsley to chop. The scout now came into the room, and in bland indifference to all cooking preparations, put the cutlets on the table, took off the covers and brought in the coffee.

"You needn't wait, Padding; and—we sha'n't want the cutlets," said Beere.

"Garlic?" was his next remark.

"Humph!" said Sneerson."

"Of course I shall only rub the pan."

"Rub away."

* * * * *

"Very good—reminds one of a foreign omelette: the native animal generally tastes of dry rot."

"Well, but about De Launville?"

A knock.

"*You*, De Launville? We were just discussing you over an omelette."

"Well—they've sent me down," said the fat, rather fine-looking man who had just come in. "I don't know that I care much. I begin to hate dons. If there is one class of men more despicable than the undergraduate as such, it is the don as such. I have been 'mister'd' and 'my dear De Launville'd' and governing-body'd till I am sick of it. . . . I told the Master I had never touched wine since I was fourteen, and that *good* champagne—he absolutely twinkled when I mentioned what brand they had given us—wouldn't have upset me. . . Oh! I am sick of it all—their discipline, which is a system of espionage—their friendship, always on the look-out for a lord and a living—their religion, which is not of Christianity but of the Queen and the College. But I am boring you. Never mind—I *will* go on. I have sweated day and night to keep body and soul and battels together; I never ask a creature to my rooms, because I can't even offer him a cigarette; I have worked *hard* to live on my scholarship—and an ass with a 'reverend' to his name and a prig in his soul walks off with eight pounds a term for talking twaddle to me for half-an-hour a week; and every soul in this cursed place, from the scout to the dean, is bent on squeezing out my last shilling to pay some—due, or fee, or—Yes, I *am* sent down; but—don't breathe this to a living soul—I *might* stay."

"How?" burst out Beere and Sneerson together.

"By *marrying* Polly!" said De Launville with a bitter laugh.

(To be continued.)

BIRDS OF PASSAGE.

Whenever I want to feel in touch with the outside world, I leave my resting place at Cairo or Tantah and go by sea from Alexandria to Port Said. Arrived here

I appropriate a special corner of the verandah at the Hôtel Continental to my particular uses, making of it my home for a week or ten days.

The town of Port Said is unlovely and to the casual stranger uninteresting, but to any one who is willing to sojourn here for a time it is full of motley charm. Here it is that travellers from all parts of the world stay for a night, give me the benefit of their acquaintance for a few hours and disappear once more into the void. Hard worked missionaries from the Indies and China hurrying for a richly earned holiday into Syria, globe trotters who have done Egypt in a week and are off by the next P. & O. to Bombay or the Colonies, where they intend to "put in" a month or two, officers bound for their regiments in Colombo or Madras, commercial travellers eager to desecrate oriental palaces and mosques with Manchester woven goods and lamps of Birmingham, rich Americans speculating on the "good time" they intend to have in Jerusalem,—birds of passage all, who perch beside me for a moment and twitter a few brief nothings before they fly away. There is no opportunity of being bored here, for a chance acquaintance need never bore one, and nobody stops long enough to become uninteresting.

Sometimes I find myself discussing the advancement of Christianity among the Mahommedans; at others I am busy giving information about the canal or the snipe shooting under the Pyramids, with a boldness that surprises me when I consider my ignorance of these matters. A new conversation starts up every night, and debateable points acquire a great interest because there is never time to work to a conclusion.

Then the inhabitants of the town are queer studies. Birds of passage too, though their stay is sometimes measured by years. Birds of passage at any rate in hope, since no one cares to contemplate remaining here for ever. The boots, a Cypriote, has been engaged at the hotel for two years past. He talks cheerfully of making his fortune. He would be ill pleased with me

if I doubted the possibility, in spite of his bare feet and ragged coat. So I give him cigars and encouragement, and I have promised to visit him in Cyprus when he has filled his purse.

The Arabs here are fortune seekers in their way, and the donkeys suffer severely from their mania. Their legs seem never tired of running all day behind the jaded brutes when many ships are in port and business is brisk. Alas, the Arab character is spoiled by the atmosphere of the town. It is scarcely possible to believe oneself in the East; the fine cunning, for which "oriental diplomacy" is not too dignified a term, has given place to a vulgar Western greed and 'cuteness. The courtesy of their original manners is decayed, and there is a cockney familiarity in their behaviour, and almost a cockney vulgarity in their speech.

The native quarter is a hell, and even in appearance the place is only a theatrical Eastern town; the pantomime city of Ali Baba and Ala-ed-din. The evils of the East are indeed not hidden, but the luxury and languour that can alone lend them any charm is absent.

But it is interesting by its very strangeness and nastiness, this town of Port Said; an unwholesome place, to come out of which unsoiled gives one all the pleasure of living in the midst of an epidemic and not taking the disease.

Then the constantly changing aspect of the canal has a fascination for British ship-loving eyes. Moored up against the Syrian shore are some twenty "coal-tramps," their black furnaces sending forth long streams of smoke over the desert, their outlines hidden in the dust that hangs round them, a golden dust at times, and almost beautiful when the sunbeams glance upon it. From my verandah corner I can see great steamers ploughing through the surf beyond the lighthouse, the silver trail of their screws gleaming on the waters long after they have passed from sight; or I can watch the pilot boats scudding to meet the incoming vessels bound for all the strange ports of Asia. Then, again, I can

see the masts of ships rising, like leafless palms, above the desert, till as they approach nearer, their prows and sides become visible, apparently gliding over the sands. And when evening draws in and the sudden darkness falls over the town, the harbour is ablaze with flaming torches waving in the fresh night wind, and the men on the coal rafts seem like strange legendary people as they dive in and out of the ships' sides, the glow of the flames illumining their brown sweating bodies, while their mystic song rises above the shrill cries of the streets, the lapping of the waters, and the fiddles of the music hall next door. Suddenly, as though day were born again for a brief moment, the whole scene is clarified by the electric search-light of a steamer leaving her moorings, and seeking her course through the darkness.

Two very special episodes have marked this last visit of mine. One morning I was awakened at sunrise by the firing of guns, and a huge Russian ironclad floated up to the quay, her decks thronged with sailors and marines. She stayed three days, and every afternoon a band played on her quarter-deck. Ten minutes before sunset her yards were manned, and the grand battle hymn of the Czars resounded through the harbour, then as the sun fell behind the town the valorous strains melted into the soft sad chords of the *Adeste Fideles*, and the whole of the crew doffed their caps, and accompanied the instruments with strong fresh voices. As the music ceased the ensign was lowered, the guns thundered, and there was silence.

During the visit of the Russian flag-ship an English "trooper" came through the desert, crowded with soldiers going home. A priest attended by his acolytes stood waiting on the wharf. When the vessel cast anchor a boat was lowered, and from it landed a company of soldiers, four of whom bore a coffin covered with the Union Jack. A solemn procession started down the street towards the Catholic cemetery, led by the priest bearing a cross and the acolytes swinging

their censers of incense. In the tiny burial ground the brave soldier was laid to rest, a bird of passage killed during his flight, and as we arrived again in front of the hotel, the Russians' band was playing the war song of the Czars.

The other episode was not less sad, and happened only yesterday. A long black dirty steamer, on whose decks squatted crowds of half clad, famished looking men, passed on her eastward way. It was again a Russian vessel, bearing convicts and soldiers to Siberia.

These, too, were birds of passage, but birds of passage for the last time.

Port Said. PERCY ADDLESHAW.

THE CALL-BOY.

Read my ruse and peruse my rede;
Here is a plan
For a reading man;
A present shift in the hour of need.

I HAVE an enemy—who hath not?
Yet not an enemy (there's the rub);
He is my *friend*, vexatious cub:
Hinc illae lacrimae, hence this plot.

Gentle Reader, you know The Bore,
The adhesive caller, importunate friend
Whose visit comes not with his talk to an end,
Who only hath use for one side of your door?

He who will use my sure recipe,
Never shall try "another way":
Use my prescription without delay,
And with ordinary care the cure's complete.

Strolling leisurely down the High,
I heard a sound to split the ear;
Painfully shrill, and enginely clear,
Came a street urchin whistling by.

"Fly, small boy, to Brasenose fly,
Ask for Jarley's rooms at the Lodge,"
(*Hear my device, my golden dodge!*),
"Go to the man within," quoth I;

"Burst thy small fiend's pipe in his ear,
Whistle with might and main till he drop,
Split me his tympanum ere you stop,
And you shall be paid for your pains, d'you hear?"

Off he went while yet I spoke,
Back he came in a half-hour's space,
Back he came quite black in the face:
"I've done it," he said, "but it weren't no joke."

"No particulars, boy, 'tis done":
Half-a-crown for his pains I gave,
Bound him to me, a willing slave,
To do the same thing to any one.

* * * *

Jarley was never the same again,
Never was seen to call or smile;
I believe he died in a little while
Perfectly mad, but free from pain.

This was quite an exceptional case,
The dose applied need not be so strong:
Half-an-hour (and a popular song)
Would fell an ox in the market-place.

O. T. M.

"GRANITE DUST."

Fifty Poems by Ronald Campbell Macfie.

What is the safest sign of promise in a new poet? It is difficult to say. The thought of poetry as a criticism of life is apt to make us look especially at the substance. Has the new poet depth and originality of thought, strength and fervour of passion, a vivid and wide ranging imagination? Now certainly all these things must be present to some degree in every poet, and the δύναμις of them must be in the youngest singer, and yet as a fact the earliest poems of some of the greatest poets—Milton and Shakespeare and Tennyson—have not had these qualities for their most striking characteristics. Perhaps the converse may be true too. When a young poet's verse is overweighted with thought or

charged with a great seriousness of passion and strikingly imaginative, it is often only in one or two of the poems that this is noticeable, and perhaps in the end the young author finds a fitter sphere in fiction or some branch of prose art.

It is the form that is unique and striking in the early work of the poets we have named. They are like young giants who have found that they can wield thunderbolts and delight to experiment with them. The powers of fancy and expression are their thunderbolts. They delight in bold attempts in metre—that shall at all costs however be musical—and in figurative and allusive expression. The poet is not alone the man of imagination and feeling, but of the power to express himself, and this is the earliest perfected power. Only time and life can deepen his emotions and enlarge his imaginative vision.

This is why the present volume has filled every true lover of poetry with hope. Poetry of greater force and appeal has appeared this same year in Mr. Kipling's "Barrack Room Ballads," but Mr. Kipling's work is mature in thought and feeling, while Mr. Macfie's has all that delight in its own music, and in far-fetched and allusive fancies and modes of expression which are the characteristic notes of Tennyson's "Juvenilia," and the "Venus and Adonis," and yet among them are poems of strong and massive feeling simply and directly expressed. Mr. Macfie has almost achieved, before intruding upon readers, perfection in technique, and has given promise of thought and feeling that it is for the years to make good.

We shall first illustrate shortly the musical sweetness and the bold imaginative treatment of which we have spoken. Here is a verse or two from a love poem in which quite distinctly the love note is subordinate to the pictorial and artistic interest.

Thunder with loosened limbs lay huddled in a swoon,
Lightning had slunk away. There was never a stir in the air.
The trees stood still as of motionless marble hewn,

Save one high branch that was bent before the moon
By the corpse of an Absalom wind hanging heavily by the hair.

Then my love took harp: and her fingers flashed on the
golden strings:
Each hand like a living soul conscious and white and free:
Now fleet as flame and prophetic of storm and strenuous
things,
Now impotently beating as beat the tortured wings
Of a wounded gull outstretched on the wave of a golden sea

The almost violently imaginative tone of the first verse here is noticeable also in the "Dying-day o Death,"

About his temples sinuous serpent veins
Seemed writhing: and his lips were thin and starven;
While by the chisel of a myriad pains
His great brow-dome was carven.

the "Shadow of a Cross," "Loveland," the first verse of "A Day in June,"

The sun was zenith high. A lifeless cloud
Lay in the west
Like a dead angel lying in a shroud
With lilies on her breast.

and in the vigorous—with a touch of the "grotesque"—"King Death,"

Ha! ha! none dare marry me
Chuckled the king called Death,
As rattling his royal ribs together,
He danced himself out of breath.

Ha! ha! none dare marry me,
Sang he, thrumming his sickle;
None of the women so wondrously fair,
Wondrously fair and fickle.

Ha! ha! I dared marry thee,
Laughed the maiden love;
I heard thy boast and hastened here,
From the land of light above.

Ha! ha! I dare marry thee,
Even now we will wed;

And she kissed his brow and his beard and his eyes,
And Death as she kissed fell dead.

Other of the poems as the "Shadow of a Cross," "Depart," "A Pageantry of Mist," have the young poet's love for embodying in imaginative form rare elusive moments of personal experience that seem to give a glimpse of deeper than usual insight. The chief charm of these is their imaginative and musical presentation; but often they will strike in this or that breast a sympathetic note that gives them a deeper interest. This is the class to which so much of Shelley's poetry belongs.

But the best of Mr. Macfie's work are the poems in which the expression is most simple and direct, the feeling appealed to most intelligible and common to the human heart. Among these are his best love poems, the passionate "Kisses,"

White eyelids tremble on thine eyes,
Dark lashes quiver on thy cheek;
Thy passive lips dispart with sighs,
But never speak.

O love of mine what thoughts hast thou?
What thoughts make tumult in thy brain?
When on thy mouth and hair and brow
My kisses rain.

the beautiful sonnets "The Lyre," and "White Heather," and the subtle and delicate "Polemic" ending—

Hearts are thy playthings; is it not so
O coquette?
But when we get love we do not know
The gift we get;
Hearts are thy playthings—here is mine!
Why thine eyes are wet!
Love is holy and divine
O coquette!

Of that word-painting—the greatest master of which in our language has just been laid in the Abbey—we have two very delicate and exquisite examples: "A Day in June," [slightly marred by violences of the sort we

have mentioned] and "An October Eve," almost faultless in the feeling it conveys of a late autumn evening among the purple hills, under the cold darkening sky and by some rushing river in Scotland.

In the poems that might come under the heading "Criticism of Life," there is nothing of the decadent tone, rather the religious emotion predominates, and a strong note of ethical optimism.

> In the dim future, when the spray is blown
> From the near Jordan in our hair and eyes,
> Shadows will shew the stars that have been strown
> Over blue heaven till we realise
> How there are things invisible, unknown
> Beyond the skies.

We could quote much from Mr. Macfie, and dwell with pleasure on many sides of his work, for we have a presentiment that it will not soon die. When so much slipshod stuttering and sputtering verse is poured out on us in magazines and collections of sonnets, an artist in metre and expression who has been severe and exacting with himself is a welcome discovery. How much more is this the case when we find behind the artist passion and imagination, a rich and ripening character. We shall delight ourselves by quoting, to close with, a poem that hangs about the memory like the fragrance of a flower—

> Alas, alas, eheu
> That the sky is only blue,
> To gather from the grass
> The rain and dew!
>
> Alas, that eyes are fair;
> That tears may gather and there
> Mist and the breath of sighs
> From the marsh of care!
>
> Alas, alas, eheu
> That we meet but to bid adieu;
> That the sands in time's ancient glass
> Are so swift and few.

Alas, alas, eheu !
That the heart is only true
To gather where false feet pass
The thorn and rue.

HOC SECURIOR.

SONG.

SHE came like a falling star,
Sudden, and swift, and bright,
From the heaven of heavens afar
On the wilderness of night.

She came like a falling star,
Flashed by, and was no more ;
But the wilderness where lost lovers are
Is darker than before.

O.T.M.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editors of "The Spirit Lamp."

GENTLEMEN,—I have read a good deal lately in some of the new Oxford papers of the "opening" there is for a paper "run on the lines of the Cambridge *Granta*." I am sorry to say it is true that there is such an opening, but it is also true that there is an excellent opening for a paper which might be readable without being sporting, and literary without becoming priggish. In plain language, the small success your paper has obtained is owing to an attempt to get the literary merit of its authors recognized by a Philistine world through a system of personal attacks on those with whom they disagree. I conceive that it is not necessary for a "literary paper" to be offensive at the expense of "sporting" men, and that it would be better to produce a few good poems or essays than to criticise dead authors without having read them, and to abandon good taste in so doing in favour of "cheap" witticisms.

If you would adopt these very vague suggestions you would have more subscribers and fewer enemies.

I enclose my card, and am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

CATSPAW.

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