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NOTED SOUTHERN AUTHORESS

Reminiscences of Mrs. Augusta E. Wilson, Writer of "St. Elmo."

Mrs. Augusta Jane Evans Wilson, as far as selling powers go, was one of the most successful novelists in America. The most famous books of the well known southern authoress, who recently died at her home in Mobile, Ala., are probably "St. Elmo," which was published in 1886, and "Vashti," published in 1893. She was not a prolific writer, like other novelists of her school, and her books, commencing with "Inez" in 1856, number only nine. Her other works are "Beulah," "Macaria," "Infelice," "At the Mercy of Tiberius," "A Speckled Bird" and "Devota," the last work from her pen, which appeared in 1907.

"Macaria" was popular among the soldiers of the civil war, and it is said that a copy of the book once saved the life of one of them. He took it from his shirt one day and was surprised to find a bullet imbedded in its pages. When Mrs. Wilson was eleven years old her family moved from Columbus, Ga., to San Antonio, Tex., which soon afterward became the headquarters of the troops sent to assist General Taylor. Their glittering uniforms, the stirring martial music and exciting events of the war, combined with the exquisite scenery about the place, strongly impressed her and furnished the theme for "Inez, a Tale of the Alamo." The story, written when she was fifteen and presented to her father as a Christmas gift, was brought out by the Harpers in 1855.

It was not until she published "Beulah," however, that she tasted the fruits of substantial success. That work ran through edition after edition. "St. Elmo," of course, was Miss Evans' great success. Its sale was tremendous, and hamlets, hotels, steamboats and country seats were named in its honor. It contains a description of the Taj Mahal, and a traveler visiting the spot records the fact that he discovered a Parsee boy in the shadow of the tomb reading the London edition of one of Mrs. Wilson's books.

For "Vashti," which followed, the author received in a single check, while it was still in manuscript, \$15,000. Mrs. Wilson never wrote a magazine or a newspaper article, although she had frequently been importuned for both. One editor offered to allow her to fix her own price on a serial story, and a publisher agreed to pay her \$25,000 if she would permit him to bring her novels out in a cheap paper back form, so as not to interfere with the library edition, but both propositions were rejected.

UNIQUE PLEA FOR PARDON.

"Kick Me Out or I'll Corrupt Prison Morals," Convict Wrote Governor.

Governor Walter R. Stubbs of Kansas recently received a peculiar letter from a prisoner in the Kansas penitentiary. Usually the letters the governor receives are that the prisoner is not guilty at all, or if guilty he did not mean to do it and just forgot himself or let his temper get away with him. But there is one prisoner who offered a different reason for the governor letting him out of the prison. Here it is:

Judging from what I have read and from conversations held with prisoners in this penitentiary, I have arrived at the conclusion that I am about the only guilty scamp in this place. I cannot plead innocence. I can't write a classical poem, and I have no "flowers blooming in the conservatory of my soul." You have no idea how lonesome this leaves me. Better kick me out of here, lest I corrupt the morals of the institution.

Every man in the penitentiary who believes himself wronged or innocent is convinced that he would be able to do society much good if turned out by the governor. But a long time ago the governors learned that some of the prisoners had a mistaken idea of their innocence or usefulness, so it is seldom that a governor pays much attention to this kind of letters. Somehow or other it has become noised about that Governor Stubbs would encourage frankness in prisoners and that he expected at least some evidence of reform to convince him that some of the criminals were worthy of executive clemency.

The governor receives all sorts of letters from prisoners, both in the prison and in the reformatory, every day, but the one received the other day was the most novel one of which there is any record in the governor's office. The letter contains much other matter referring to this prisoner's case, and that quoted is only a part of the letter. The governor declined to give out the name of the prisoner. Governor Stubbs is considerably interested in the man who wrote the letter, and it is possible that some action may be taken in regard to his case.

Largest Observatory In the World.

Ground was recently broken at Mount Wilson for the construction of the telescope tower which is being constructed by an observatory company. It will be the largest of its kind in the world and will cost \$50,000. The dome will be 175 feet above the ground and will be composed of two towers, one inside the other. This is to eliminate vibration. The towers will be built three inches apart and will not be connected in any place except at the foundation.

New Dignity For President Taft's Son.

Robert A. Taft, son of President Taft has been elected president of the Yale Debating association. Young Taft holds more offices than any other Yale undergraduate. He is treasurer of the Young Men's Christian association and president of the Yale Civil Government club, besides being an officer of Phi Beta Kappa, the honorary high standard society.

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