GENERAL REVIEW OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

THE OREGONIAN'S HOME STUDY CIRCLE: DIRECTED BY PROF. SEYMOUR EATON

LITERARY TALKS AND REMINISCENCES

XVII.

(Concluded.)

The creator of Zenobia did not worship at the shrine of Margaret. He probably valued silence more than speech. Hawthorne had, be it remarked, the strongest horror of being bored, but his manners were so perfect that this peculiarity always passed for shyness. Read his description of Concord in "Mosses from an Old Manse," of the "variety of queer, strangely dressed, oddly behaved people, most of whom took upon themselves to be important agents of the world's destiny, yet were simply bores of a very intense water." Earnestness and absurdity strove for the prize as they have done, be it whispered, ever since in New England. The subdivisions of philosophy were legion; each sought to express itself in life. The community of Brook farm was founded that men might hoe beans together in the beauty of the idea, but the idea even about hoeing beans was not a unit; everybody had his own. When the abolition struggle came, grotesqueness and earnestness united under the flag of a great cause and sincerity gained the day.

Whittier was the poet of anti-slavery. His muse had a limited range of expression, but a pure and true note. He had the religious fervor of an old prophet, and the cause of the oppressed was the bone of his religion. He wrote stirring war lyrics, Quaker though he was, and touching appeals to humanity. He was also the poet of all that is sane and stanch and good in New England country life. "Snow Bound" is our "Cotter's Saturday Night." One can see in his poems how near to the household heart and conscience the slavery question came. It is this intimate association of public and private right that makes the strength of a nation; in moments of prosperity we are too apt to let the tie relax.

But the book of the anti-slavery question was not a poem. The words that carried conviction round the globe were not winged with meter; they were not even chosen with any special literary care. It was the story of Uncle Tom that

J. Fenimore Cooper.

fired all hearts. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was literal truth, with a touch of melodrama. It made the scenes of plantation life a vivid reality to readers of all languages, and though its literary importance inevitably waned with the turning of the wheel of events, it has kept the boards and its hold on the affections. Mrs. Stowe was also the leader in a humbler and more literary cause. Her short stories of New England village life were the first afield and started the minds of observant writers in that direction.

A legacy beyond prose or poetry that the war times left us is the memory of Abraham Lincoln. His speeches are part of the treasures of our literature. His very witticisms ought to be, for, man of action though he was, he had the insight, the poetic flash, the perception of the absurd and the profound in their vital relations which belong to creative genius. He stood for American thought in the stress and struggle of events as Emerson stood for it in its abstract and philosophical expression, and he had preeminently the quality which Emerson most lacked—a sympathetic comprehension of actual erring, suffering humanity.

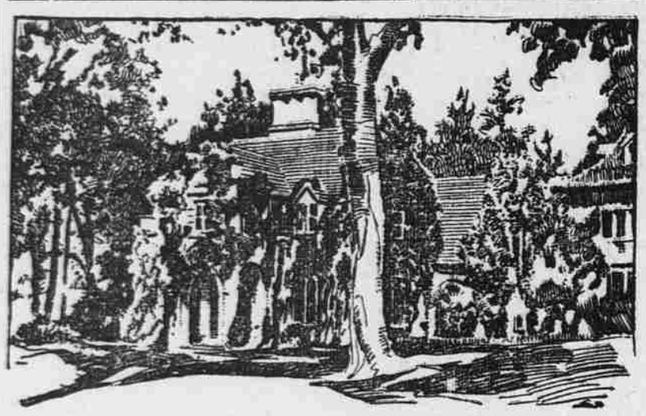
The country was making historians as fast as it made history. Prescott, Bancroft, Motley and Parkman all belong to this epoch and add to its luster, but their works have to give place in a brief summary like the present to those of the poets and men of letters who are more in the line of the belles-lettres.

Hawthorne at 46.

Were the Cambridge poets less patriotic or less American than Emerson or Whittier? Did they go abroad for their subjects or follow English models? Were they less bound up with their country's aims and struggles? Not at all; but they represented the element of culture, and it is the mission and special good of culture to be cosmopolitan, to promote understanding and the commerce of literature. Longfellow and Lowell as successive occupants of the chair of belles-lettres at Harvard for a long array of years brought all that is best in foreign as well as English literature before the minds of American youth. They were in close touch with art and life abroad, and carried over cargoes of American literature in exchange.

Longfellow was the most amply endowed of all our poets, the one who sang "to one clear harp in divers tones." His verse is always melodious, and the range of his meters is extraordinarily varied from the seldom-used hexameter of "Evangeline" and the swinging rhythm of "Hiawatha," both so well adapted to their new-world subjects, to the ballad, the sonnet, the lyric, even blank verse, though he seems to have cared less for that form. He failed in none of these; he was master of each. His sonnets are very fine. His choice of subjects was also catholic; they are culled from mythology, art, ethics, from the patriotic questions of his day, and from the traditional and actual life of his country. To read him is like listening to a voice of fine resonance and compass which is sweetest in its lowest tones. It is in a certain number of lyrics which bring us into what George William Curtis has called "the twilight of the mind, in which the little facts of life are saddened in view of their relation to the eternal laws of time and change," that Longfellow is in his best and most lovable mood. They have the tenderness and grace, the combination of perfect simplicity and popularity with artistic expression which mark the lyric at its best; indeed, they are a successful transplantation of that flower of song to our soil.

Lowell has something, too, of this grace and charm, but not in the same perfection. His lyrics are less beautiful than some of his longer poems, especially "The Cathedral" and the "Commemoration Ode." His range is less wide than that of his predecessor in the chair of belles-lettres at Harvard, but it includes humor, a trait which is missing in Longfellow. Humor, shrewdness and good sense went hand in hand with vigorous versification in the composition of the "Biglow Papers." He was a prose writer besides being a poet, his essays standing like those of Matthew Arnold, in rank and file with his verse. He was a wit as well, and reconciled the world to his country by after-dinner speeches when he represented us at the Court of St. James. Since his death he has been shown to us as one of the most delightful of letter writers, and we have another pleasure in store in the complete biography which will ere long be given to the world.



SUNNYSIDE, IRVING'S HOUSE ON THE HUDSON.

Lowell comes so near in many ways to Longfellow that he has slipped in, against the laws of precedence, between the older poet and Oliver Wendell Holmes, the contemporary of Longfellow. But what figure can more fittingly close a paper on the golden age of American literature than that of the poet who, starting almost with the first of the period, was almost its latest survivor, the member of the class of '29, which he celebrated on its anniversaries with a brilliancy, versification and wit such as no other college class that "keeps a poet" ever had in its employ? Holmes was sui generis, with great gifts trimly cut, a kind of scientific precision in the realm of fancy, and a humorous way of waiting to be dragged out by the occasion before he gave the rein to his muse. He was doctor and professor first, poet afterward and always. He wrote "Old Ironsides" and the "Ballad of the Boston Tea Party" in spirited vein; he drew the charming portrait of "Dorothy Q."; he has a few serious poems like "The Last Leaf," "The Chambered Nautilus," "Under the Violet," in which a very true feeling is expressed with great delicacy and self-restraint. And he punned and jested in capital verses, giving of the abundance of his

William H. Prescott.

mind, taking the public into his confidence without unbending for a moment in the reticence and dignity of his mental attitude, making it laugh as it had perhaps never laughed at anything so fastidiously delicate in tone.

In his essays he accomplished the reticence of putting away his wit in favor of a sort of modern Addisonian humor of a delightful flavor. The autocrat was a little more approachable than the poet. To the last of his honored life he was unflagging in literary charm, and the thought how few years have passed since he entertained us "Over the Teacups" is a reminder that our golden age was only the day before yesterday.

SOPHIA KIRK.

Note—An examination upon this course as the basis for the granting of certificates will be published Saturday, October 13.

OPPORTUNITIES IN SAMOA.

Uncle Sam's Possession in the Group Particularly Rich in Resources.

Success.

Somewhere in that mysterious part of the South Pacific Ocean, where one day merges into another, to keep chronometers straight and to keep mankind from trouble in marking the flight of years, lie the Samoan Islands, three in number, of which the smallest, Tutuilla, is the property of the United States. The recent division of the islands, which are

Bryant at About 50.

connected with the United States and with Australia and New Zealand by regular mail steamers, has assured their future. Tutuilla, which is as large as the State of Rhode Island, contains many acres of the richest soil, and would make a fruitful dwelling place for 100,000 ambitious men. It could be converted into vast plantations of coffee, vanilla, tobacco, cocoanuts and dozens of other native products, while a thriving town could be made to flourish beneath the flower-clad trees on the beach.

Apia, in Samoa, is one of the most prosperous towns in the South Seas, and its future is assured. It was in the hills north of this place that Robert Louis Stevenson, after roaming the earth for a paradise, found one. It was there he died.

THIRTY YEARS IN FORCE.

A County in Iowa Adheres to the Primary Law.

PORTLAND, Oct. 4.—(To the Editor.)—I note the agitation in your columns of the question of nominating party candidates for public offices by primary election instead of by the party caucus system, and, with others, have been much interested in what has been said.

The primary election is not new or untried, as some suppose. It was adopted in Louisa County, Iowa, by the Republicans, in 1871, and has been in force there ever since, is in force now, and has given such complete satisfaction that it is not probable it will ever be abandoned.

The causes that led to its adoption are common all over the country. The caucus had given a few men of the party complete control of the party machinery, and these few put men up or put them down at will, as the county was largely Republican and a nomination equivalent to election. The remedy for the evil and injustice wrought was found in the primary election plan. After it was adopted the men who had profited by the caucus tried to destroy it. They said the rank and file of the party would not attend the elections, but experience proved that they did attend, ten to one over the number who had met in the caucuses. Sometimes more votes were cast at the primary election than were afterwards cast by the party at the general election. The whole party turned out, in fact, because a nomination was about the same as an election.

Anybody could be a candidate who wanted any office that was to be filled, and the rank and file could put up any neighbor they might see fit, without his asking for it. Usually the man sought the office, but sometimes the hunt was the other way. These candidates, sometimes as many as a half dozen for a single office, would canvass vigorously among their friends and rally them to the polls, and this gave interest and spirit to the campaign and brought the voters out.

The men who favored the old caucus said the primary election would engender so much heat and friction among candidates during the contests for nominations that the defeated aspirants would not support the nominees at the regular election, and that the party would be disrupted. Exactly the reverse happened. When the result of a primary was announced, every candidate felt that he had had a fair chance to win, and that if he had not won it was because he was not popular enough, or not sufficiently known, or known too well, or for some such reason, and his friends who had supported him felt the same way, and they had no complaint to make. On the contrary, all defeated candidates felt in honor bound to stand by the nominees, and they did. There have been but two or three bolts in the 30 years the system has been in vogue, and these came from the men who had profited by the caucus system and who wanted to break down the primary election.

The effect on the party has been all that could be desired. Louisa has made the best Republican record of any county in the state, and that is saying a great deal, considering the party history in that state. The primary bred harmony and strength, because it gave to every man who aspired to office an open opportunity to appeal directly to the entire body of the party, and to do his dead level best for himself, and if he did not win, nobody but himself was to blame.

All county and township officers are nominated by the primary, including the members of the Legislature. It does not extend to district and state officers, for the reason that other counties have not adopted it.

The rules governing the primary were adopted by the convention which set it up, but have been modified, somewhat, by experience. A committeeman is chosen in each precinct or township, at the primary, each year. These constitute the county central committee, with the chairman at the county seat, and to this committee returns of the elections are made, votes counted by them, and candidates declared, 10 days after the election. Contests are provided for. The committeeman of each precinct, with two other members of the party, chosen by him, constitute the election board. Republicans can vote only in their own township or precinct. Only those can vote who supported the ticket at the preceding election, except young men casting their first vote. These are allowed to vote on declaring their purpose to support the ticket at the general election. A new resident in the township must be vouched for by a known Republican.

The plan has given great satisfaction, and none but good and competent men have ever been chosen to office. The question of returning to the caucus system has been voted upon at the primary several times, but in every instance it has been voted down by increasing numbers. The people like the primary election better and better every year.

I doubt the propriety of a state law to regulate the nomination of candidates to fill the public offices. Every man who holds the elective franchise has a right to run for office if he wants to, and every man who holds the franchise has the right to vote for any man of his choice, who is not legally disqualified, to fill any place in the gift of the people, and restrictions on these rights are of doubtful utility. They should, in fact, be carefully guarded against. Our elections cannot be too open and free, so long as the ballot is kept in the hands of those entitled by law to wield it, and candidacies and nominations should be equally free and accessible. Nominations by parties are purely party matters, and should be left in the hands of the several parties, who should defray whatever of expense that may be incurred. If primary elections are conducted by a law of the state, the public will be asked to defray the expenses, in all probability, and this will put a burden upon it that it ought not to be asked to bear. Let nominations be free and fair; let individuals and parties be held morally responsible for what they do and are, and then let the fittest hold the offices.

LEVI W. MYERS.

Killed His Son-in-Law.

WHEELING, W. Va., Oct. 5.—General Dryden, a prominent attorney, was shot and killed today by Thomas Workman, his father-in-law. While Dryden's father-in-law was visiting him, Dryden became enraged at his wife, and began beating her. Her father undertook to protect her, and finally to save himself drew a revolver and shot Dryden. Mrs. Dryden is prostrated.

ASHLAND FOREST RESERVE

BETWEEN 22,000 AND 23,000 ACRES INCLUDED ON TRACT.

Object to Preserve Water Supply of Oregon Town—Sheep Grazing Should Be Prohibited.

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22.—A short space in the annual report of the Geological Survey is devoted to the Ashland forest reserve, in Southwestern Oregon, lying about four miles south of the town of Ashland, in Jackson County. It contains between 22,000 and 23,000 acres. The object of this reserve is to maintain the stability of the waterheads and to preserve the volume and purity of Ashland Creek, which furnishes the water supply to the town of Ashland. To quote the report:

"The reserve consists of Siskiyou Peak, or Ashland Butte, as the mountain is locally called, and spurs radiating from it. The peak is an elevation rising from the crest of Siskiyou Range, and attains a height of nearly 8000 feet above sea level. The actual peak rises about 800 feet above the general crest line of the range in this locality.

"A large amount of water drains out of the reserve. Most of it flows into Rogue River through Applegate, Wagner and Ashland Creeks. Another and smaller portion finds its way into Klamath River through various small creeks on the southern slope of the peak. Ashland Creek heads directly on the northern slopes of Siskiyou Peak. Snow lies at its head throughout the year. It empties into Bear Creek one-half mile east of the town of Ashland. In addition to supplying water to this town, it furnishes irrigation for a number of fruit ranches, supplies motive power to one saw mill and to one electric light plant located above the town, to one grist mill, one woolen mill, and a five-stamp quartz mill located in the city, besides water for a cyanide reduction plant, and serves also in part as the town sewer. All in all, the stream is very important to the town.

"The reserve contains no proper agricultural lands; the summits of the low spurs in the eastern areas might possibly be utilized for orchard purposes if cleared. Most, if not the entire, area is gold-bearing quartz ledges occur in many places on the slopes of Siskiyou Peak and placer deposits exist, in all probability, near the head of the creeks. No mining is carried on inside the reserve area. The summit and slopes of Siskiyou Peak and the high northern Mount Wagner spur are grassy in many places. Sheep range here, or did the year before last (1897). True, most of their runs have been on the slopes shedding water into Applegate Creek and Klamath River, but some had left their marks on the Ashland side. If the purity and stability of the water volume in Ashland Creek is worthy of consideration, the prohibition of sheep grazing within the reserve area should be absolute. A band of sheep confined to such a limited tract as the grazing area in the Ashland reserve soon makes the ground reek with the most pestiferous exhalations, which cannot but find their way into the running water.

"The forest consists of stands of alpine hemlock, red fir and yellow pine types. The alpine hemlock type occurs on the summit of the peak, and is composed almost wholly of noble fir. The others have the ordinary compositon of their respective types elsewhere.

"Fires have marked most of the reserve, but have not burned in the reserve within the last 10 or 12 years to any great extent, except on the summit of the range, at the base of the peak, where the timber on 300 or 400 acres has been almost totally destroyed

"The mill timber in the reserve is of good quality, except in the eastern portion, where fires, years ago, badly seared the most of it. It is generally difficult of access for logging operations. But whether easy or difficult of access, it is obvious that the maintenance of the Ashland Creek water volume is prohibitive to lumbering operations in the reserve."

Appended to the report are two tables, showing the distribution and quantity of timber on the reserve. Of the total area, 20,000 acres is forested, 1700 acres naturally nonforested, and 300 acres have been deforested by fires of modern date.

Of the timber now standing, which is estimated at 200,000,000 feet B. M., the red fir forms one-half, noble fir one-quarter, or about 50,000,000 feet, yellow pine, 30,000,000 feet, sugar pine, 12,000,000 feet, white fir, 6,000,000 feet, and incense cedar, 2,000,000 feet.

OUR IMPENDING FATE.

What Will Happen if McKinley Rex I Is Elected.

SELLWOOD, Or., Oct. 5.—(To the Editor.)—Those members of the W. C. T. U. who have been praying and trying to induce others to pray for the defeat of McKinley were doubtless asking for just what they most desired, the election of Bryan. For even those misguided people are not mad enough to think that the defeat of McKinley could mean anything but the election of Bryan. But to ask God to perform a miracle to that end—for nothing short of a miracle would do it—is so absurd, not to say irreverent, that it is hard to understand how any one with any intelligence could be guilty of it.

The W. C. T. U. is an organization of good and intelligent women who have accomplished great good in the way of temperance work, and their prayers in the past have doubtless often "availed much." It would, therefore, be unjust to suppose that any considerable number of them are silly enough to pray for the defeat of McKinley.

The reason given for this action is that the President has not banished wine from the White House. If Bryan were elected that would probably be the first thing he would do. Of course his record on that point is not well known, but his party has a record which it is not likely it would care to endanger by nominating a man whose temperance principles are uncertain.

But it seems there is another reason for the defeat of McKinley, which these good Bryan people did not realize at the time they conceived the idea of gaining the desired end by prayer. This reason is set forth in a calamity contribution to the Telegram a week or two ago, written by Mr. O'Day.

It appears from what Mr. O'Day says that the President has not yet done anything so very outrageous, but he wants to, and is only waiting till his re-election is assured, when he will begin to carry out his base designs against our liberties. It is expected that after he has subjected the Philippines, and brought them under "the iron heel of oppression"—compared to which the tyranny of Spain would be enjoyable—he will turn his attention to the United States.

What he will do with Congress is not yet predicted, but he will not allow that body to thwart his plan of imperialism. He has determined to become Emperor of the United States and nothing short of defeat in November can avert such a calamity.

It is a sad state of things to contemplate—the downfall of the greatest Republic on earth. Republics have been looked upon as experiments and many of them have failed, and some of those which have not really failed are still not up to the ideal standard. But this country was supposed to have passed beyond the experimental stage, showing to the world that a Republic could endure and become a power among nations. For this great Nation to return to monarchy is enough to cause the statue of Liberty to rend her clothes. And the "monarchies of the Old World" will not tremble any more, as they have been supposed to do, but will look with complacency upon the downfall of this Republic and say, "I told you so."

But of course it may be possible yet to avert this terrible calamity. All that is necessary is to elect Bryan. Then all will be well. He will be content to be simply President. He is not a warrior. He even refused to make use of the Colonel's commission given him out of courtesy, preferring to look for fame on the platform, the stump, or any other place rather than on the battlefield. He don't want war. He don't want to subject anybody. He wants peace and don't care how much it costs. So if elected he will simply be the "people's humble servant." He will give the Philippines all the liberty they can make any use of. He will annihilate the trusts—except the one in which Mr. Croker is interested. He will "restore silver" to the place it occupied before "the crime," and do many more things a President ought to do. And those temperance women who are praying for his election will be made happy, for the temperance movement will immediately be given such an impetus that, like Tom Twist, it will be "unable to stop." And thus instead of going back on every principle for which "our fathers fought" this country will go on in the way its founders intended and shall become indeed the ideal Republic. CHAS. K. BURNSIDE.

EDICTS OF THE KING OF COREA

His Confidences to His People Are of the Burlesque Order.

The King is always biting the dust in public. He informs his people that he cannot eat on account of this and he cannot sleep on account of that. His edicts rank with the best of comic literature. I copied, when there, some of his daily confidences, says a writer in Harper's Weekly.

"The defense of the country is a matter of the utmost importance. This is true at all times, but especially so today. Hence We by a previous edict placed Our Army and Navy under Our direct command." The fact that Corea had no navy was purely incidental.

The following was another: "The welfare of Our people is Our constant thought. We realize that since last year's disturbance Our people have suffered greatly on account of lack of peace and order. The dead suffer as much as the living, but Our government has not done anything to ameliorate existing conditions. This thought worries us so much that the affluence by which We are surrounded is rather uncomfortable."

This seems too good to be confined to the Corean archives: "January 14, 1896.—Laws anl rules proceed from the King. Three and thirty years have elapsed since We ascended to the throne. Treaty relations must be observed with the nations of the world, and changes be introduced in politics. We have therefore adopted the new calendar, introduced a title of the reign, changed the style of dress and cut off the top-knot. You should not regard Us as loving innovations. Wide sleeves and large hats have become familiar by usage. The top-knots and head-bands, once regarded as novelties when first introduced for the sake of convenience, became fashionable only because people liked them. But that they, the top-knot and head-band, stand in the way of activity and health is true. Nor is it right in this day of ships and vehicles that we should stick to the customs of the excellent past."