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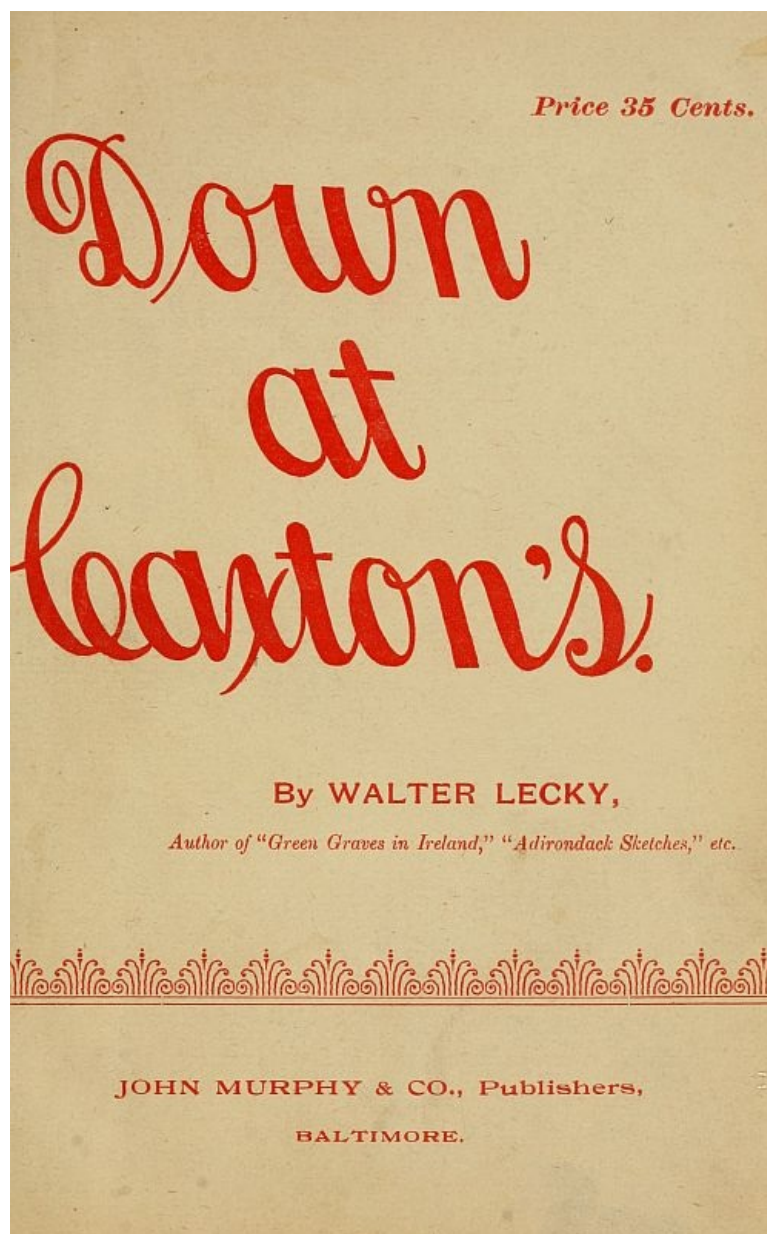
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DOWN AT CAXTON'S ***



DOWN AT CAXTON'S.

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BY WALTER LECKY,
*Author of "Green Graves in Ireland," "Adirondack
Sketches," etc.*

BALTIMORE:
JOHN MURPHY & CO.
1895.

I DEDICATE

THIS SERIES OF SKETCHES

DONE AT ODD MOMENTS STOLEN FROM THE BUSY LIFE OF A COUNTRY
DOCTOR, IN THE WILDEST PART OF THE ADIRONDACKS, TO THAT
DEAR FRIEND, WHO WROTE FOR ME AND OTHER
WANDERERS—IDYLS OF A SUMMER SEA—

TO

CHARLES WARREN STODDARD

OF THE

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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RICHARD MALCOLM JOHNSTON.

In that charming and dainty series of books published under the captivating title of "Fiction, Fact and Fancy," and edited by the gifted son of the prince of American literary critics, there is a volume with the companionable name of Billy Downs. It is as follows that Mr. Stedman introduces the creator of Billy Downs and a host of other characters, mostly types of Middle Georgia life, that shall live with the language. "So we reach the tenth milestone of our ramble, and while we are resting by the wayside let us hail the gentleman who is approaching and ask him for 'another story.' We who have heard him before know that he seldom fails to respond to such a request, and always, too, in a manner quite inimitable. As he comes nearer you may observe the dignified, yet courteous and kindly bearing of a gentleman of the old school. The white hair and moustache, the sober dress, betoken the veteran, although they are almost contradicted by eyes and an innate youthfulness in word and thought. It is not difficult to recognize in Colonel Richard Malcolm Johnston the founder of a school of fiction and the dean of Southern men of letters." The Colonel is the founder of a school of fiction, if by that school, we understand those, who are depicting for us the Georgia life of the ante-bellum days. In no otherwise can we assent to Mr. Stedman's phrase. For American critics to claim the dialect school of fiction as their own in origin, is on a par with their other critical achievements. Dialect was born a long time before Columbus took his way westward. The first wave of mankind leaving the parent stock, in their efforts to survive, carried with them the germ of dialect. Fiction in its portrayal of men and manners of a given period, was bound to reproduce it faithfully—the very least to give us a semblance of that life. This could not be done in many instances without the use of dialect. To do so were to deprive the portraiture of individuality.

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Fiction produced on such lines would be worthless. Of late there has been much cavil against dialect writers. This cavil, strange to say, emanates from the Realists.

They lay down the absurd code, that Art is purely imitative. She plays but a monkey part. Her sole duty is to depict life, paying leading attention to the portrayal of corns, bunions, and other horny excrescences, that so often accompany her. Realists will not be persuaded that such excrescences are abnormal. From a jaundiced introspection of their own little life, they frame canons of criticism to guide the world. With these congenial canons lying before them, one is astonished, if such a phrase may be used in the recent light of that school's pyrotechnic display, that they can condemn dialect. Granted, for the sake of argument, that Art is merely imitative, will not the first duty of the novelist be to reproduce the exact language, and that when done by the master-hand of a Johnston carries with it not only the speaker's tone, but the power of producing a mental image of the speaker—the very acme of the Realists' school? To paint a Georgia cracker speaking the ordinary Boston-English would be like crowning the noble brow of a South Sea native with a tall Boston beaver. The effort would be unartistic, the effect ludicrous. Colonel Johnston believes in the imitativeness of Art, to the extent of reproducing for us the peculiar dialect of Middle Georgia. He has informed us that there is not a phrase in his novels that he has not heard amid the scenes of his stories. To reproduce these is a distinct triumph of the novelist's art, but the Colonel has done more; into his every character has he breathed a soul. His figures are not the automaton skeletons of the Realists, but living men and women who have earnestly played life on the circumscribed stage of Middle Georgia.

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This life is fast passing away. Prof. Shaler, a competent authority, tells us: "At present the strong tide of modernism is sweeping over the old slave-holding States with a force which is certain to clear away a greater part of the archaic motives which so long held place in the minds of the people. With the death of this generation, which saw the rebellion, the ancient regime will disappear." It can never be lost as long as the novels of Malcolm Johnston are extant. There, in days to come, by the cheery ingle-nook, will a new generation live over in his delightful pages the curious life of Georgia. Cuvier asked for a bone to construct his skeleton. The readers of the Dukesborough tales, Billy Downs, etc., will not only have the skeleton, but live men and women preserved for them by the novelist's elixir. He has known his country and kept close to mother earth, having in his mind that "no language, after it has faded into diction, none that cannot suck up feeding juices secreted for it in the rich mother earth of common folk, can bring forth a sound and lusty book. True vigor and heartiness of phrase do not pass from page to page, but from man to man.... There is death in the dictionary." That the Colonel's language has sucked up feeding juices secreted for it in the rich mother earth of common folk will be seen on every page. Let us take at random the communication of Jones Kendrick to his cousin Simeon Newsome, as to S'phrony Miller. Sim is a farmer lad overshadowed by the overpowering "dictionary use" of his Cousin Kendrick. Sim has gone a-wooin' S'phrony. Kendrick hearing of this and urged by his mother and sister, comes to the conclusion that he would like to have S'phrony himself. This important fact he admits to Cousin Sim in the following choice morsel: Sim is overseeing his hands on the plantation; Kendrick approaches and is met by Sim. Kendrick speaks:

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"Ma and sister Maria have been for some time specified. They have both been going on to me about S'phrony Miller in a way and to an extent that in some circumstances might be called obstropolus, and to quiet their conscience I've begun a kind of a visitation over there, and my mind has arriv at the conclusion that she's a good, nice piece of flesh, to use the expressions of a man of the world, and society. What do you think, Sim, of the matter under consideration, and

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what would you advise? I like to have your advice sometimes, and I'd like to know what it would be under all circumstances and appearances of a case which, as it stands, it seems to have, and it isn't worth while to conceal the fact that it does have, a tremendous amount of immense responsibility to all parties, especially to the undersigned, referring as is well known in books and newspaper advertisements to myself. What would you say to the above, Sim, in all its parts and parties?" It may interest the reader to know that Sim acquiesced "in all its parts and parties," and that S'phrony became Mrs. Kendrick, while Sim took another mate. Of further interest to the imaginative young woman is the fact, that Mrs. Newsome and Mr. Kendrick perishing a few years later by some sort of quasi-involuntary but always friendly movements, executed in a comparatively brief time, S'phrony and Sim became one. In calling Johnston the dean of Southern men of letters, Stedman does not define his position. Page, the creator of Marse Chan, and one of the most talented of Southern dialect writers, negatively does so. In an article that has literary smack, but lacks critical perception, he rates him below Miss Murfree, James Lane Allen, and Cable. These three writers Page places at the head of Southern writers of fiction. Critics nowadays will adduce no proof; they simply affirm. The text of this discrimination should be the exactness of the character drawing, the life-like reproduction of environments, and the expertness of the dialect as a vehicle to convey the local flavor. It will hardly be gainsaid that Johnston knows his Georgia no less than Cable knows Louisiana. Johnston is a native of Georgia; the time of life most susceptible to local impressions was spent there. Cable's boyhood was otherwise. It will not be thought of that in the painting of Creole life, Cable has excelled the painter of Georgia life. In the handling of dialect, Johnston and Harris touch the high water mark of Southern fiction. It was an old critical dictum that an author to succeed must be in sympathy with his subject; this may be affirmed of Johnston. It is otherwise with Cable, and especially with Lane, whose Kentucky pictures are often caricatures. Cable poses as the friend of the colored man. His pose is dramatic. It lends a charm to his New England recitations. We have a great love for champions of every kind. The most of Mr. Cable's pages deal with Creole life, and for that life he has no sympathy. He paints it as essentially pagan, albeit it was essentially Catholic. A padre makes him sniff the air and paw ungraciously. The ceremonies of the church are so many pagan rites. Cable belongs to the school that contemns what it does not understand. His pictures of Creole life are untrue, and much as they were in vogue some years ago, are passing to the bourne of the forgotten. Johnston, although a living Catholic, fond of his church, and wedded to her every belief, draws an itinerant preacher of the Methodists with as much enthusiasm and sympathy as he would the clergy of his own church. He has no dislikes, nothing that is of man but interests this sunny-hearted romancer of the old South.

Strange as it may seem, the knowledge of his wonderful power of story-telling came late and in an accidental way. It is best described in his own words. "Story-writing," said the Colonel, "is the last thing for me in literature. I had published two or three volumes on English literature, and in conjunction with a friend had written a life of Alexander Stephens, and also a book on American and European literature, but had no idea of story-writing for money. Two or three stories of mine had found their way into the papers before I left Georgia. I had been a professor of English literature in Georgia, but during the war I took a school of boys. I removed to Baltimore and took forty boys with me and continued my school. There was in Baltimore, in 1870, a periodical called the *Southern Magazine*. The first nine of my Dukesborough Tales were contributed to that magazine. These fell into the hands of the editor of *Harper's Magazine*, who asked me what I got for them. I said not a cent, and he wanted to know why I had not sent them to him. 'Neelers Peeler's Conditions' was the first story for which I got pay. It was published in the *Century*, over the signature of Philemon Perch. Dr. Holland told Mr. Gilder to tell that man to write under his own name, adding that he himself had made a mistake in writing under a pseudonym. Sydney Lanier urged me to write, and said if I would do so he would get the matter in print for me. So he took 'Neelers Peeler's Conditions,' and it brought me eighty dollars. I was surprised that my stories were considered of any value. I withdrew from teaching about six years ago, and since that time have devoted myself to authorship. I have never put a word in my book that I have not heard the people use, and very few that I have not used myself. Powelton, Ga., is my Dukesborough. I was born fourteen miles from there.

"Of the female characters that I have created, Miss Doolana Lines was my favorite, while Mr. Bill Williams is my favorite among the male characters. I started Doolana to make her mean and stingy like her father, but I hadn't written a page before she wrenched herself out of my hands. She said to me, 'I am a woman, and you shall not make me mean.' These stories are all of Georgia as it was before the war. In the hill country the institution of slavery was very different from what it was in the rice region or near the coast. Do you know the Georgia negro has five times the sense of the South Carolina negro? Why? Because he has always been near his master, and their relations are closer. My father's negroes loved him, and he loved them, and if a negro child died upon the place my mother wept for it. Some time ago I went to the old place, and an old negro came eight miles, walked all the way, to see me.

"He got to the house before five o'clock in the morning, and opened the shutters while I was asleep. With a cry he rushed into the room. 'Oh, Massa Dick.' We cried in each other's arms. We had been boys together. One of my slaves is now a bishop—Bishop Lucius Holsey, one of the most eloquent men in Georgia."

These charming bits of autobiography show us the sterling nature of Malcolm Johnston, a nature at once cheerful, kind and loving. It is the object of such natures, in the pessimistic wayfares of life, to make friends, illuminating them with sunshine and tickling them with laughter.

MARION CRAWFORD.

In front of the Ara Coeli I stood. A swarthy Italian was telling of the dramatic death of Cola di Rienzi. His English was lightly worn, but it seemed to please his audience, and it was for that purpose they had paid their lire. The crazy-quilt language of the cicerone and his audacious way of handling history, made him cut an attractive figure in the eyes of most tourists, whose desires are amusement rather than study. As a type, to use a phrase borrowed from the school of psychological novelism, he was a study. To the student Rome is a city of absorbing interest, to the ordinary American bird of passage a dull place. It all depends on your point of view. If you are a scholar, a collector of old lace, or a vandal, Rome is your happy hunting ground. If these pursuits do not interest you, Roman beggars with all sorts and conditions of diseases, sometimes by nature, mostly by art, Roman fleas, and the gaunt ghosts of the Campagna quickly drive you from the capital of the Cæsars and Popes. A few other annoyances might be added, such as sour wine, whose mist fumes are not to be shriven by your bottle-let of eau de Cologne, garlic on the fringe of decay, and the provoking smell of salt fish in the last stage of decomposition. But you have come to Rome; it is a name to conjure with, and despite the drawbacks, you must have a glimpse, an ordinary bowing acquaintance, with the famed old dame. At the office, an English office, in the Piazza di Spagna, you have asked for a "droll guide." Who could listen to a scholarly one amid such active drawbacks as wine, fleas and fish? Michael Angelo Orazio Pantacci is your man. What do you care for good English? Did you not leave New York to leave it behind? What do you care for Roman history? Pantacci is your man, and his lecture on Cola di Rienzi is a masterpiece. A stranger joined our little crowd. Pantacci at that moment had attained his descriptive high-water mark. His pose and voice were touchingly dramatic. Cola was, as he expressed it, "to perish." The stranger smiled and passed on. His smile was a composite affair. It was easy to see in it Michael Angelo's historical duplicity and our ignorant simplicity. The stranger was tall, with the shoulders slightly stooping, a nose as near an approach to the Grecian as an American may come, a heavy black mustache, ruddy cheeks, that whispered of English food mellowed with the glowing Chianti. Who is that man? I said to my companion, whose eyes had followed the stranger rather than Pantacci. "That," said he, "is Marion Crawford, the author of the Saracenesca books. You remember reading them at Albano." Tell me something about him. He is a very clever man. Cola has perished; let us leave Pantacci. On the way to Cordietti's tell me something of his life. He knows how to tell a story, an art hardly to be met with in contemporary fiction. Fiction has abrogated to herself the whole domain of life, and thus the art of telling a story for the story's sake is lost. Fiction has a mission. She freights herself with all isms. Scott, Manzoni, even the great wizard of Spanish fiction, could they live again, were failures. Introspection is the cult, and, happily for their fame, they knew nothing of it. These great masters told us how scenes of life were enacted. Why, they left to the inquisitive and later-day brood of commentators. Since then the all absorbing scientific spirit prevails, and we moderns brush away the delightful humor of Dickens for the analytical puzzles of Henry James; the keen satire of Thackeray for the coxcomberies of George Meredith. Fairy cult interests none, modern children are ancient men. Scepticism is rampant, and the cause of it is, in a great manner, due to the modern novelist. This product of the 19th century world-spirit coolly tells us that romance lies dead. Realism has taken her place. If we are to believe the theories of its votaries, it is without an ideal—a mere anatomical transcript of man. What this theory leads to is well illustrated by the gutter filth of Zola and Catulle Mendes. It makes novel writing a trade. One ceases to be astonished at the output, if he thoroughly grasps the difference between a tradesman and an artist. Trade is a word much used by realists. Grant Allen, writing of that realistic necromancer, Guy de Maupassant, has nothing apter to define his position than the phrase "he knows his trade." In point of fact, Grant Allen enunciates a truth in this phrase, one that might be carried still further, by saying that his whole school are journeymen laborers, tradesmen, if you prefer, turning out work, tasteless and crude, at the bidding of the erubescient young person of the period. It is readily assumed that work of this kind is not, despite the word-jugglery of their school, realism. It does not deal with the true man, but with a phrase, and that abnormal. A better phrase in use in speaking of the works of this school is, "literature of disease." The artist who lives must have a model, and that we call the ideal. The nearer he approaches this the more lasting his work. All the great artists had ideals. Workmen may be guided by the rule of thumb. The first lesson a great artist learns is, "The art that merely imitates can only produce a corpse; it lacks the vital spark, the soul, which is the ideal, and which is necessary in order to create a living organic reality that will quicken genius and arouse enthusiasm throughout the ages." The gulf between the trade-novelist and the artist-novelist is of vital importance. The former believes that art is simply imitation, the latter, that art is interpretation. One is a stone-cutter, the other a sculptor.

Crawford's canon is that art is interpretative, not imitative, and, moreover, he has a story to tell and tells it for the story's sake. He has no affinity with that school so pointedly described by the Scotch novelist, Barrie, as the one "which tells, in three volumes, how Hiram K. Wilding trod on the skirt of Alice M. Sparkins without anything coming of it." "Cordietti's," said my friend, "give the order and I will tell you what I know of Crawford." Paulo, said I to the waiter, some Chianti, and—well, a pigeon. "Crawford," said my friend, "was born in Rome about thirty-five years ago. His career has been a strange one, full of life. His early years were spent in Rome, where his father was known as a sculptor, his boyhood in the vicinity of Union Square, his early manhood in England and India. In the latter country he was the editor, proof-reader, typesetter of a small journal in the natives' interest. As such he was a thorn to the notorious freak, Blavatsky. Crawford is an American by inheritance, an Italian by breeding, an Englishman by training, an Indian by virtue of writing about India with the knowledge of a native. In 1873, by the financial

panic, Mrs. Crawford lost her large fortune, and Marion was forced to shift for himself. He became a journalist, and as such wandered over most of the interesting part of the globe. On his return to New York, at the request of his uncle, Sam Ward, the epicurean, who had discerned his kinsman's rare power of story-telling, he wrote his first book, *Mr. Isaacs*. It was a success. Of the writing of that book, Crawford has told us it was "very curious. I did not imagine that I possessed a faculty for story-writing, and I prepared for a career very different from the career of a novelist. Yet I have found that all my early life was an unconscious preparation for that work. My boyhood was spent in Rome, where my parents had lived for many years. There I was put through the usual classical training—no, it was not the usual one, for the classics are much better taught in Italy than in this country. A boy in Italy by the time he is twelve is taught to speak Latin, and his training is so thorough that he can read it with ease. From Rome I went to Cambridge, England, and remained at the university several years. Then I studied for a couple of years at the German universities. During this time I went in for the sciences, and I expected to devote myself to scientific work. Finally I went off to the East, where I did a good deal of observing, and continued my studies of the Oriental languages, in which I had taken considerable interest. It was while I was in the East that I met Jacobs, the hero of *Mr. Isaacs*. Many of the events I have recorded in *Mr. Isaacs* were the actual experiences of Jacobs."

The writing of his first novel occupied the months of May and June, 1882; it was published the same year, and at once established its author in the front rank of living American writers of fiction. Since then Crawford has written twenty volumes of fiction. Crawford is frank and he tells us how he manages to produce in a few years the amount of an ordinary lifetime. "By living in the open air, by roughing it among the Albanian mountaineers, wandering by the sunny olive slopes and vineyards of Calabria, and by taking hard work and pot luck with the native sailors on long voyages in their feluccas," are the means of the novelist to hold health and make his pen work a laxative employment. In these picturesque journeys, he lays the foundation of his stories, makes the plots and evolves the characters. He does not believe in Trollope's idea of sitting down, pen in hand, and keep on sitting until at its own wild will the story takes ink. The story in these excursions has been fully fashioned, and it becomes but a matter of penmanship to record it. How quickly this is done may be seen from the rapid writing of the novelist, which averages 6,000 words the working day. This rapid composition has its defects, defects that are in some measure compensated by the photographic views of the life and manners of the people. These views are in the rough, but they are truer than when toned down. Poetry needs paring. The greatest novels have been those that came like Crawford's, fresh from the brain, and were hastily despatched to the printer. Scott did not mope over the sheets. Thackeray's were written to the tune of "more copy." Your American critic, Stoddard, says:—"That Crawford is a man with many talents, and with great fertility of invention, is evident in every story that he has written. He has written more good stories and in more diverse ways than any English or American novelist. It does not seem to matter to him what countries or periods he deals with, or what kind of personages he draws, he is always equal to what he undertakes." It may interest you, in ending this biographic sketch, to add that he is a convert to the Catholic Church, and with the American critic's idea in view, a cosmopolitan. I was not astonished by the former information. To those who know Italy and Mr. Crawford's wonderful drawing of it, there could be but one opinion, that the faith of the novelist was the same as that of his characters. No Protestant novelist, no matter how many years he had lived in Italy, could have drawn the portraits that play in the *Saracenesca* pages. One of his friends had this in his mind's eye when he wrote of the superiority of the novelist's writings on Italy over those of his countrymen. This writer tells us that "Crawford added the indispensable advantage of being a Catholic in religion, a circumstance that has not only allowed him a truer sympathy with the life there, but has afforded him an open sesame to many things which must be sealed books to Protestants." As to my friend's summing up Crawford as a cosmopolitan, in the every-day meaning of that word, I take issue. Cosmopolitan novelist is one who can produce a three-volume novel, whose scenes are laid in all the great centers of commerce, while he sits calmly in his library. No previous study of his novelistic surroundings are necessary. Does the age want the beginning of the plot in Cairo or Venice, half-way at Tokio, and a grand finale beyond the Gates Ajar? Your novelist is ready to turn out the regulation type with the greatest ease. Cosmopolitan novel-writing is simply a trade. The living through of local and artistic impressions, the study of types in their environment, the color of surroundings are unnecessary. Imagination, divorced from nature study, is left to guide the way.

Once Crawford followed this school, and the result was "An American Politician," the "worst novel ever produced by an American." Had Crawford been a tradesman he might have produced a passable book, but being an artist, he failed, not knowing what paint to mix in order to get the coloring. The difference between an artist and tradesman, the one must go to nature direct, the other takes her secondhand. No artist can catch the lines of an Italian sunset from a studio window in London. "Art is interpretive, not imitative." Crawford is only a novelist in the true sense when he knows his characters and their surroundings. This is amply proven in the charming volumes that make his *Saracenesca* series. Here he is at home, so to speak. The Rome of Pius IX, with its struggles, its ambitions, the designs of wily intriguers, the fall of the temporal power of the Papacy, the rise of an united Italy, the flocking to Rome of the scourings and outcasts of the provincial cities, the money-mad schemes of daring but ignorant speculators, and over all the lovely blue Italian sky, rise before us in all their minuteness at the bidding of Marion Crawford. His work is hardly inferior to genuine history; "for it affords that insight into the human mind, that acquaintance with the spirit of the age, without which the most minute knowledge is only a bundle of dry and meaningless facts." Who that knows Rome of the Popes and Rome of the Vandals will not feel heavy-hearted at these lines?

"Old Rome is dead, too, never to be old Rome again. The last breath has been breathed, the aged eyes are closed forever, corruption has done its work and the grand skeleton lies bleaching on seven hills, half covered with the piecemeal stucco of a modern architectural body. The result is satisfactory to those who have brought it, if not to the rest of the world. The sepulchre of old Rome in the new capital of united Italy." The exclusiveness of the patrician families of Rome, families that a brood of novelists pretend to draw life-like, is happily hit by the painter Gouache.

Gouache, long resident in Rome, being asked what he knows of Roman families, replies, "Their palaces are historic. Their equipages are magnificent. That is all foreigners see of Roman families." Who that has seen the great Leo carried through the grand sala, a vision of intellectual loveliness, will not recall it as he reads? "The wonderful face that seemed to be carved out of transparent alabaster, smiled and slowly turned from side to side as it passed by. The thin, fragile hand moved unceasingly, blessing the people." "True," said my friend, "his pages are delicious bits of the dead past. At every sentence we halt and find a memory. He has the sense of art, if Maupassant's definition of it as 'the profound and delicious enjoyment which rises to your heart before certain pages, before certain phrases' be correct."

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Dinner was finished. A check, Paulo. We rose and went.

Venice, that lovely city by the sea, has been described a thousand times by the painter's brush, by the poet's pen. It is the last bit of poetry left to us, in the ever increasing dulness of this world—the only place that one would expect to meet a goblin or a genial Irish fairy. It is not the intention of this paper to describe the queenly city. More than a thousand kodak fiends are daily doing that work, with the eagerness of a money-lender and the artistic sense of a fence painter. A city may, however, have many attractions, other than its magic beauty; nay, even a dull uninteresting place may become interesting from some great historic event that happened there, or from some impression caught and treasured in memory's store-house. Venice has a charm for me other than the poetry that lurks in its every stone; it was there that I first dipped into one of those rare books whose charms grow around the heart soft and green as a vine-tendrill.

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A professor of mine, one of those men who hugs one saying in life, thereon building a false reputation for wisdom, was in the habit of saying, "Accidents are the spice of life." As it is his only contribution approaching the threshold of the philosopher's goddess that I heard in the five years of his weary cant, I willingly record it. To me it expresses a truth, albeit five years is a long hunt. Illustrations sometimes improve the text, and this brief paper, by the way, is but a design to enhance the professor's. It was an accident, pure and simple, that made me wend my way to the Rialto, there to lean against the parapet watching some probably great unknown painting, something that might be anything the imagination cared to conjure up. It was an accident that made an English divine ask me in sputtering French what the painter was working on. It was an accident that made me inform him in common American English that my telescope, by some accidental foresight, was at my lodgings. The divine was a genial man, one of those breaths of spring that we sometimes meet in life. Invited to my lodgings, he fancied a few tiny volumes of the apostle of "sweetness and light" to pass those hours that hang heavily, in all lands save Eden. In my pocket he thrust, as he remarked, "a no ordinary book, one that will hold you as in a vice." This proceeding was rather remarkable, had he not in the same breath invited me to take a gondola to one of the isles, and there enjoy the pocketed volume. It is delightful to meet a genuine man, speaking your mother-tongue, after weary months of Italian delving. To the little isle we went, an isle known to readers of Byron, as the place where he labored long under Armenian monks to learn their guttural tongue, the monks say "with success." I knew nothing, in those days, of destructive criticism. After a tour in the monastery, of the ordinary Italian type, I lay down on the green sward under the beneficent shade of a huge palm, wrapped in the odors of a thousand flowers that sleepily nodded to the music of the creamy breakers on the rocky shore. Books have their atmosphere as well as men. Deprive them of it, and many a charm is lost. I drew the little volume from my pocket, and there in that atmosphere, akin to the one in which it was begot, I read of life in summer seas, life that floats along serene and sweet as a bell-note on a calm, frosty night, life

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"Where the deep blue ocean never replies
To the sibilant voice of the spray."

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My Anglican friend was unable to give any clue to the author's identity, other than what the meagre title-page afforded. The title-page was of that modest kind that says, "Enter in and see for yourself." It had none of the tricks of book-making, and none of the airs of a *parvenu*. Under other skies than Italian I learned that the author of "South Sea Idyls," Charles Warren Stoddard, poet and traveller, was one of the kindest and most modest of men. In truth, that it was the combination of these rare qualities that had kept him from the crowd when lesser men made prodigious sales of their wares. To the man of mediocrity, it is a tickling sensation to float with the current to the music of the shore-rabble, who shout from an innate desire to hear their voices. With the possessor of that rare gift, genius, the mouthings of the present count little; it is for a future hold on man, that he toils. It is to do something, to paint a face, to carve a bust whose glorious shape shall hand to the ages a form of beauty, to weave a snatch of melody that shall go down the stream of time consoling dark souls. Mediocrity is mortal, genius immortal. The common mind, without bogging in metaphysics or transcendentalism, subjects so dear to American critics, may readily grasp the destination by a comparison in poetry of the "Proverbial Philosophy" with "In Memoriam," in prose "Barriers Burned Away," with "Waverly." Another point for mediocrity, perhaps from its possessor's view the best: it is well recompensed in this life. The very reverse is the case with genius. If then the author of the "South Sea Idyls" is not as popular with the crowd as the writers of short stories who revel in analysis, whether it be a gum-boil or the falling of my lady's fan, he can have no fear. It is but his badge of superiority. The few great men, who are the literary arbiters of each century, have spoken, and their verdict is the verdict of posterity. "One does these things but once," say they, "if one ever does them, but you have done them once for all; no one need ever write of the South Sea again." Here, it is well to impress on the casual reader, in the light of this verdict, a great historic truth cobwebbed over by critical spiders; that it was not the Italians that gave the chaplet to Dante, nor the Spaniards to Cervantes, nor the Portuguese to Camoëns, nor the Germans to Goethe, but the great cosmopolitan few, scattered over the world, guardians of the garden of immortality.

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Charles Warren Stoddard was born in Rochester, N. Y., 7th August, 1843. At an early age he left his native state, with his family and emigrated to California, that fertile foster-mother of American literary men. In that delightful state, region of plants and flowers, was passed his boyhood, a boyhood rich in promise, strengthened by a good education. With a natural bent for travel, fed by the tales of travellers and the waters of romance, it was his happy luck, at the age

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of twenty-three to find himself appointed to that really bright journal, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, as its correspondent. The commission was a roving one, and the young correspondent was left free to contribute sketches in his own inimitable way. Let us believe that the editor well knew the choice mind he had secured in the young writer, and so knowing was unwilling to put restrictions of the common newspaper kind in his way. How could such a correspondent be harnessed in the dull statistics and ribald gossip of these days? It was otherwise, as we his debtors know. He was to wander at his own sweet will. The slight vein of sweet melancholy that came with his life, drove him far from the grimy haunts of civilization, far from the sickening thud of men thrown against the cobble-stones of poverty. He sailed away with not a pang of sorrow to those golden isles embedded in summer seas, where the moon

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“Seems to shine with a sunny ray,
And the night looks like a mellowed day.

Isles where all things save man seem to have grown hoar in calm.
In calm unbroken since their luscious youth.”

To a man of Stoddard's genius and delicate perception, one thing could have been foreseen. These lands yet warm with the sunshine of youth would play melodies on his soul, as the winds on Æolian harps; melodies hitherto unknown to the jaded working world. That he could catch these airs and give them a tangible form, was not so sure. Others had heard these siren airs, but failed to yoke them to speech. Melville, now and then, had reproduced a few notes; notes full of dreamy beauty, making us long for the master who was to give the full and perfect song. That master was found in Stoddard. He produced, as Howells so finely has said, “the lightest, sweetest, wildest, freshest things that ever were written about the life of that summer ocean,” things “of the very make of the tropic spray,” which “know not if it be sea or sun.” Whether you open with a prodigal in Tahiti and see for yourself “that there are few such delicious bits of literature in the language,” or follow the writer, who, thanking the critics, prefers to find out for himself the worth of a writer, commences at the beginning with the charming tale of “Kana-ana,” you will be in company with the acute critic who has pronounced the life of the summer sea, “once done,” by Stoddard, “and that for all time.” What should we look for in such a book? “Pictures of life, for melody of language, for shapes and sounds of beauty;” and these are to be found without stint in the “South Sea Idyls.” The form of Kana-ana haunts me, “with his round, full girlish face, lips ripe and expressive, not quite so sensual as those of most of his race; not a bad nose, by any means; eyes perfectly glorious—regular almonds—with the mythical lashes that sweep.” Kana-ana, who had tasted of civilization, finding it hollow, pining for his own fair land, and when restored to the shade of his native palms, wasting away, dying delirious, in his tiny canoe, rocked to death by the spirit of the deep. Or is it Taboo—“the figure that was like the opposite halves of two men bodily joined together in an amateur attempt at human grafting, whose trunk was curved the wrong way; a great shoulder bullied a little shoulder, and kept it decidedly under; a long leg walked right around a short leg that was perpetually sitting itself down on invisible seats, or swinging itself for the mere pleasure of it,” meeting him by the enchanting cascade. Or is it Joe of Lahaina, whose young face seemed to embody a whole tropical romance. Joe, his bright scape-grace, met with months after in that isle of lost dreams and salty tears, the leper-land of Molokai. Who shall forget the end of that tale, where the author steals away in the darkness from the dying boy?

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“I shall never see little Joe again, with his pitiful face, growing gradually as dreadful as a cobra's, and almost as fascinating in its hideousness. I waited, a little way off in the darkness, waited and listened, till the last song was ended, and I knew he would be looking for me to say good night. But he did not find me, and he will never again find me in this life, for I left him sitting in the dark door of his sepulchre—sitting and singing in the mouth of his grave—clothed all in Death.”

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It matters little whether it be Kana-ana, Taboo or Joe of Lahaina, the hand of a master was at their birth, the spell of the wizard is around them. The full development of Stoddard's genius is not found in character-drawing, great as that gift undoubtedly is, but in his wonderful reproduction of the ever-changing hues of land and sea, under the tropical sun. What description is better fitted to fill the eye with beauty, the ear with melody, than these lines from the very first page of his “South Sea Idyls?”

“Once a green oasis blossomed before us—a garden in perfect bloom, girdled about with creamy waves; within its coral cincture pendulous boughs trailed in the glassy waters; from its hidden bowers spiced airs stole down upon us; above all the triumphant palm trees clashed their melodious branches like a chorus with cymbals; yet from the very gates of this paradise a changeful current swept us onward, and the happy isle was buried in night and distance.”

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It is not easy to make extracts from this charming book. It is a mosaic, to be read as a whole. A tile, no matter how beautiful it may be, can give no adequate conception of the mosaic of which it forms a part. It may, however, stimulate us to procure it. These extracts taken at random, would that they might have the same effect. The book, once so rare, is now within the easy reach of all. The new edition lately published by the Scribners is all that one could ask, and is a fitting home for the undying melodies of the summer seas. To read it is to be reminded of the opening lines of Endymion.

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"A thing of beauty is a joy forever,
Its loveliness increases; it will never
Pass into nothingness; but will keep
A bower quiet for us and a sleep,
Full of sweet dreams, and health, and quiet breathing."

Stoddard's other works are a volume of poems, San Francisco, 1867; "Mashallah," a work that produces, as no other work written in English, the Egypt of to-day. In this work his touch is as light as that of Gautier, while his eyes are as open as De Amicis; and a little volume on Molokai. At present he is the English professor at the Catholic University.

With the quoting of a little poem, "In Clover," a poem full of his delicate touches, I close this sketch of a writer to whom I am much indebted for happy hours under Italian skies and in Adirondack camps.

"O Sun! be very slow to set;
Sweet blossoms kiss me on the mouth;
O birds! you seem a chain of jet,
Blown over from the south.

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O cloud! press onward to the hill,
He needs you for his falling streams
The sun shall be my solace still
And feed me with his beams.

O little humpback bumble bee!
O smuggler! breaking my repose,
I'll slyly watch you now and see
Where all the honey goes.

Yes, here is room enough for two;
I'd sooner be your friend than not;
Forgetful of the world, as true,
I would it were forgot."

MAURICE FRANCIS EGAN.

The poet-critic Stedman, in his book on American poetry, gives a few lines to what he terms the Irish-American school. His definition is a little misleading, as some of the poets he cites were more American than the troop of lesser bards that grace his polished pages. It is rather a strange notion of American critics that Prof. Boyesen, having cast aside the language of Norseland to sport in the larger waters of our English tongue, is metamorphosed into a true American, while the literary sons and daughters of Irish parents, born and striking root in American soil, are marked with a foreign brand. It is the old story of English literary prejudice reproduced by American critics. American *modistes* go to Paris for their fashions, American critics to the Strand for their literary canons. It is pleasant to know that the bulk of the people stay at home. In this Irish-American school one meets with the name of Maurice Francis Egan. "A sweet and true poet" is Stedman's criticism. Coming from a master in the art of literary interpretation, it must occupy a place in all coming estimates of Mr. Egan's poetry. This criticism is, nevertheless, short and unsatisfactory, it gives no true idea of the poet's place in the letters of his country. It merely, if one is inclined to agree with Stedman, establishes that Mr. Egan has a place among the bards. In the hall of Parnassus, however, there are so many stalls that the ordinary reader prefers to have the particular place assigned to each bard pointed out. The author of this sketch, while not accredited to the theatre of Parnassus, may be able to give to those who are not under the guidance of a uniformed usher some hints whereby Mr. Egan's particular place may be discerned; that place is among the minor poets. The major stalls are all empty, waiting for the coming men, so glibly prophesied about by the little makers of our every-day literature.

Maurice Francis Egan, poet, essayist, novelist, journalist, and all-round literary man, was born in Philadelphia, Pa., May 24, 1852. His first instructors were the Christian Brothers, at their well-known La Salle College in that city. From La Salle he went to Georgetown College, as a professor of English. After leaving Georgetown he edited a short-lived venture, *McGee's Weekly*. In 1881 he became assistant editor of the *Freeman's Journal*, and remained virtually at the head of that paper until the death of its founder and the passing of the property to other hands. The founding of the Catholic University, and the acceptance of its English professorship by Warren Stoddard, made a vacancy in the faculty of Notre Dame University. This vacancy was offered to and accepted by Mr. Egan.

There are few places better fitted as a poet's home than Notre Dame. Beautiful scenery to fill the eye, brilliant society to spur the mind, and a spacious library freighted with the riches of the past. In comparison with the majority of the Catholic writers, the poet's journey in life has been comparatively smooth, though far from what it should have been. He has published the following volumes:—"That Girl of Mine," 1879; "Preludes," 1880; "Song Sonnets," London, 1885; "Theatre," 1885; "Stories of Duty," 1885; "Garden of Roses," 1886; "Life Around Us," 1886; "Novels and Novelists," 1888; "Patrick Desmond," 1893; "Poems," 1893. To this list must be added innumerable articles in magazines and weekly journals. Judged by the signed output, it is safe to write that the English professor of Notre Dame is a very busy man. The wonder is that a mind so occupied by so many diverse things can write entertainingly of each.

The poet's first book, a few sonnets and poems, was for "sweet charity's sake," and had but a limited circulation. It is safe to say that every first book of a genuine poet, despite its crudities, will show the seeker signs of things to come. Egan's book was not without promises, but in truth these promises are only partly fulfilled in his latest volume of verse. There may be many reasons adduced for this disparity between promise and fulfilment. One of them is the haste with which poetry is published. Horace's dictum of using the file has been long since forgotten. The rabble calls for poetry, and, like the Italian and his lentils, care little for the quality. If the poet harkens to the calls (and who among the contemporary bards has laughed it to scorn?) he exchanges perpetuity for the present, notoriety for fame. Nor will the rabble leave the poet freedom in choosing his material. He is simply a tradesman, and must use what is placed at his disposal. Things great and grand must be left unto that day when the poet, untrammelled by worldly care, shall write his heart's dream. If the time ever comes, the poet learns in sorrow that his dreams will never float into human speech, for the hand has lost its cunning. So the days of youth and manhood pass, blowing bubbles or decorating platitudes. Death snatches the poetling, and oblivion is his coverlid. The songs he sang died with the rabble. The new generation asked for a poet that could drill into the human heart and bring forth its secrets—a listener to nature, her interpreter to man. To such a one the vocabulary of a minor bard is useless. Another reason, more applicable to our author, is that he has been unfortunate to be a pioneer in Catholic American literature. His poems, appealing, as they do, to a distinct class, and that far from being a book-buying one, will fail to attract the lynx-eyed critic who cares only for the general literary purveyor. From such a source, the poet's chance of corrective criticism has been slight. The class to which Mr. Egan belongs has no criticism to offer its literary food givers. If an author's book sells, his name is blazoned forth in half a hundred headless petty journals. His most glaring defects become through their glasses mystic beauty spots. He is invited to lecture on all kinds of subjects. A clique grows around him, whose duty it is to puff the master. The reasons, frankly adduced, have limited the scope and dwarfed the really fine genius of Maurice Egan. His latest volume, while containing many poems that reveal hidden powers, has much of the crudity and faults of earlier work. These poems speak of better things that will be fulfilled by the poet if he will consecrate himself wholly to his art, shutting his mind to the rabble shout and eulogious criticism. Then may he hear the rhythms and cadences of that music whose orchestra comprises all things from the shells to the stars, all beings from the worm to man, all sounds from the voice

of the little bird to the voice of the great ocean. To these translations men will cling to the last, and in their clinging is the poet's fame. In his shorter poems, and notably in his sonnets, Mr. Egan is at his best. Here his scope is broader, his touch is firmer. The mastery of musical expression, lacking in his longer poems, is here to be met with in the fulness of its beauty. As a writer of sonnets, Mr. Egan has had great success. In this line of writing he is easily at the head of the younger American school of poets. "A Night in June" is a charming piece of word painting, full of beauty and power. The reader of this exquisite sonnet will feel how deftly the poet has put in words the silent magic of such a night, when air and earth have songs to sing. In the sonnet to the old lyric master Theocritus, the poet's graceful interpretative touch is equally felt.

Daphnis is mute, and hidden nymphs complain,
 And mourning mingles with their fountain's song;
 Shepherds contend no more, as all day long
 They watch their sheep on the wide, cyprus plain:
 The master-voice is silent, songs are vain;
 Blithe Pan is dead, and tales of ancient wrong
 Done by the gods, when gods and men were strong,
 Chanted to reeded pipes, no prize can gain.
 O sweetest singer of the olden days,
 In dusty books your idyls rare seem dead;
 The gods are gone, but poets never die;
 Though men may turn their ears to newer lays,
 Sicilian nightingales enrapturéd
 Caught all your songs, and nightly thrill the sky.

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The sonnet "Of Flowers" gives a happy setting to a beautiful thought:

There were no roses till the first child died,
 No violets, no balmy-breathed heartsease,—
 No heliotrope, nor buds so dear to bees,
 The honey-hearted suckle, no gold-eyed
 And lowly dandelion, nor, stretching wide
 Clover and cowslip cups, like rival seas,
 Meeting and parting, as the young spring breeze
 Runs giddy races, playing seek and hide.
 For all Flowers died when Eve left Paradise,
 And all the world was flowerless awhile,
 Until a little child was laid in earth.
 Then, from its grave grew violets for its eyes,
 And from its lips rose-petals for its smile;
 And so all flowers from that child's death took birth.

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To those who have lovingly lingered over the pages of Maurice de Guerin, pages that breathe the old Greek world of thought, the following sonnet, that paints that modern Grecian with a few masterly strokes, will be keenly relished. It is the fine implications of these lines that is the life of our hope for the poet and the future.

MAURICE DE GUERIN.

The old wine filled him, and he saw, with eyes
 Anoint of Nature, fauns and dryads fair,
 Unseen by others; to him maiden-hair
 And waxen lilacs and those birds that rise
 A-sudden from tall reeds, at slight surprise,
 Brought charmed thoughts; and in earth everywhere,
 He, like sad Jacques, found a music, rare
 As that of Syrinx to old Grecians wise.
 A Pagan heart, a Christian soul, had he,
 He followed Christ, yet for dead Pan he sighed,
 Till earth and heaven met within his breast!
 As if Theocritus, in Sicily,
 Had come upon the Figure crucified,
 And lost his gods in deep, Christ-given rest.

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As an essayist, Mr. Egan has touched many subjects, and always in an entertaining vein. Some of his essays are remarkable for their plain speaking. He has studied his race in their new surroundings, knows equally well their virtues and failings. If he can take an honest delight in the virtues, he is capable of writing with no uncertain sound on the failings, failings that have been so mercilessly used by the vulgarly comic school of American playwrights. His essays are corrective and should find their way into every Irish-American home. They would tend to correct many abuses and aid in the detection of those bunions so sacredly kept on the feet of the Irish race—last relic of the Penal times. A recent essay throws a series of blue lights—the color so well liked by Carlyle—on our shallow collegiate system. Will it be read by our Catholic educators? That is a question that time will answer. If they read it aright they will be apt to change their system of teaching the classics parrot-like, an empty word translation. They will transport their pupils from the bare class-room to the sunny skies of Greece and Rome, and under these skies see the religious dogmas, the philosophical systems, the fine arts, the entire civilization of those ancient thought giving nations. "What professor," says de Guerin, "reading Virgil and Homer to

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his pupils, has developed the poetry of the Iliad or Æneid by the poetry of nature under the Grecian and Italian skies. Who has dreamt of showing the reciprocal relation of the poets to the philosophers, the philosophers to the poets, and these in turn to the artists—Plato to Homer, Homer to Phidias? It is a want of this that makes the classics so dull to youth, so useless to manhood.” [67]

Mr. Egan, as a novelist, has written many books, dealing mostly with Irish-American life. These novels are filled with strong, manly feeling, and Catholic pictures beautiful enough to arrest the attention of the most fastidious. In these days of romance readers such books must serve as an antidote to the subtle poison that permeates the fictive art. They are pleasant and instructive, and that is a high tribute in these days of dulness and spiced immorality. Take him all in all, perhaps the most acceptable tribute is, that whatever may be his gifts in the various rôles he has essayed, heavy or slight, they have been ungrudgingly used for his race and religion.

A friend once wrote to me: "What do you know about a poet who signs his name John B. Tabb, his poems are delicious?" My answer was, that I knew nothing of his personal history, but that his poems had found their way into my aristocratic scrap-book. Here I might pause to whisper that the adjective aristocratic, in my sense, has nothing haughty about it. When joined to the noun scrap-book, a good commentator—they are scarce—would freely translate the phrase the indwelling of good poetry. Since then my personal knowledge of the poet has grown slowly, a slight stock and no leaves. Even that, like my old coat, is second-handed. Such material, no matter how highly recommended by the keepers of the golden balls, is usually found to be a poor bargain. But here it is, keeping in mind that rags are better than no clothing, and that older proverb—half a loaf is better than no bread.

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"John B. Tabb, (I quote) was born in Virginia, when or where I know not. Becoming a Catholic he studied for the priesthood and was ordained." Here my data fails me. At present he is the professor of literature in St. Charles' College, Maryland. It is something in his favor, this scanty biographical fare. Where the biography is long, laudatory, and in rounded periods, it is approached as one would a snake in the grass, with a kind of fear that in the end you may be bitten. "May I be skinned alive," said that master of word-selection and phrase-juggler, Flaubert, "before I ever turn my private feelings to literary account." And the reader, with the stench of recent keyhole biography in his nostrils, shouts "bravo." Flaubert's phrase might easily have hung on the pen of the retiring worshipper of the beautiful, "the Roman Catholic priest, who drudges through a daily round of pedagogical duties in St. Charles' College." This quoted phrase may stand. Pedagogy, at best, is a dull pursuit for a poet. It is not congenial, and I have held an odd idea that whatever was not congenial, disguise it as you may, is drudgery. And all this by way of propping the quoted sentence. The strange thing is that in the midst of this daily round of drudgery the poet finds time to produce what a recent critic well calls "verse-gems of thought." These verse-gems, if judged by intrinsic evidence, would argue an environment other than a drudgery habitation. In truth, it is hard to desecrate them by predicating of them any environment other than a spiritual one.

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This brings us to write of Fr. Tabb's poetry that it is elusive, from a critical point of view. When you bring your preconceived literary canons to bear upon it, they are found wanting—too clumsy to test the delicacy, fineness of touch, and the permeated spiritualism embodied in the verse-gem. It is well summarized in the saying that "it possesses to the full a white estate of virginal prayerful art." One might define it by negatives, such as the contrary of passion poetry. The point of view most likely to give the clearest conception would be found in the sentence: an evocation from within by a highly spiritualized intelligence. The poet has caught the higher music, the music of a soul in which dwell order and method. In other words, he has assiduously cultivated to its fullest development both the spiritual sense and the moral sense.

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It is easy to trace in Fr. Tabb's poetry the influence of Sidney Lanier. It has been asserted, and with much truth, that Lanier's influence has strangely fascinated the younger school of Southern poets. Sladen, in his book on Younger American Poets, tells us that "Lanier differs from the other dead poets included in his book, in that he was not only a poet but the founder of a school of poetry." To his school belongs Fr. Tabb, a school following the founder whose aim is to depict

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"All gracious curves of slender wings,
Bark mottlings, fibre spiralings,
Fern wavings and leaf flickerings.

Yea, all fair forms and sounds and lights,
And warmths and mysteries and mights,
Of Nature's utmost depths and heights."

The defects of this school are best seen in the founder. He was a musician before a poet, and helplessly strove to catch shades by words that can only be rendered by music. Fr. Tabb has learned this limitation of his school. For the glowing semi-panteism of Lanier he has substituted the true and no less beautiful doctrine of Christianity. All his verse-gems are redolent of his faith. They are religious in the sense that they are begotten by faith and breathe the air of the sanctuary. To read them is to leave the hum and pain of life behind, and enter the cloister where all is silent and peaceful, where dwelleth the spirit of God. Of them it is safe to assert that their white estate of virginal, prayerful art shall constitute their immortality. Fr. Tabb has not, as yet, thought fit to give them a more permanent form than they have in the current magazines. Catholic literature, and especially poetry, is so meagre that when a true singer touches the lyre it is not to be wondered at that those of his household should desire to possess his songs in a more worthy dwelling than that of an ephemeral magazine. In the absence of the coming charming volume I quote from my scrap-book a few of the verse-gems, thereby trusting to widen the poet's audience and in an humble way gain lovers for his long-promised volume.

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What could illustrate the peculiar genius of our poet better than the delicious gem that he has called

"THE WHITE JESSAMINE."

I knew she lay above me,
Where the casement all the night
Shone, softened with a phosphor glow
Of sympathetic light,
And that her fledgling spirit pure
Was pluming fast for flight.

Each tendril throbb'd and quicken'd
As I nightly climbed apace,
And could scarce restrain the blossoms
When, anear the destined place,
Her gentle whisper thrilled me
Ere I gaz'd upon her face.

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I waited, darkling, till the dawn
Should touch me into bloom,
While all my being panted
To outpour its first perfume,
When, lo! a paler flower than mine
Had blossomed in the gloom!

"Content" is another gem of exquisite thought and workmanship.

CONTENT.

Were all the heavens an overlaiden bough
Of ripened benediction lowered above me,
What could I crave, soul-satisfied as now,
That thou dost love me?

The door is shut. To each unsheltered blessing
Henceforth I say, "Depart! What wouldst thou of me?"
Beggared I am of want, this boon possessing,
That thou dost love me.

"Photographed" may well make the trio in the more fully illustrating his genius:—

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PHOTOGRAPHED.

For years, an ever-shifting shade
The sunshine of thy visage made;
Then, spider-like, the captive caught
In meshes of immortal thought.

E'en so, with half-averted eye,
Day after day I pass'd thee by,
Till, suddenly, a subtler art
Enshrined thee in my heart of heart.

"Not even the infinite surfeit of Columbus literature of the last six months can deprive Fr. Tabb's tribute in Lippincott's of its sweetness and light," says the *Review of Reviews*:

With faith unshadowed by the night,
Undazzled by the day,
With hope that plumed thee for the flight
And courage to assay,
God sent thee from the crowded ark,
Christ bearer, like the dove,
To find, o'er sundering waters dark,
New lands for conquering love.

As a final selection, we may well conclude these brief notes on a poet with staying powers by quoting a poem, contributed to the *Cosmopolitan*, called "Silence;" a poem permeated with his fine spiritual sense: [77]

Temple of God, from all eternity
Alone like Him without beginning found;
Of time, and space, and solitude the bound,
Yet in thyself of all communion free.
Is, then, the temple holier than he
That dwells therein? Must reverence surround
With barriers the portal, lest a sound
Profane it? Nay; behold a mystery!

What was, remains; what is, has ever been:
The lowliest the loftiest sustains.
A silence, by no breath of utterance stirred—
Virginity in motherhood—remains,
Clear, midst a cloud of all-pervading sin,
The voice of Love's unutterable word.

In this age of rondeaus and other feats in rhyme, it is pleasant to meet with a little book that abhors all verse tricks of the fin-de-siècle poets, and judiciously follows the old masters. Such a little book peeps at me from a corner in my library, marked in capitals, "Poems Worth Reading." It was given to me years ago by its author, and as a remembrance, a few lines from the poem that appealed most to my intellect in those days, was written on its fly-leaf. It was its author's first book, and was put forth with that shrinking modesty that has heralded all meritorious work. Of preface, that relic of egotism, there was none.

It was dedicated to one who was close to his heart, to

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"JOHN BOYLE O'REILLY,

My very dear friend, and an honorable gentleman."

It had O'Reilly's warm word to speed and gain it a hearing, a word that would have remained unwritten were it not that the little volume, of its own worth, demanded that the word but expressed its merit. Since those days, it has travelled and found a ready home. Its gentle humor has made it quotable in the fashionable salons, its quaintness tickled the lonely scholar, stinging notes against wrong and its brilliant biting to the very core of silk-dressed sham, bespoke a hearty welcome in the haunts of the poor and oppressed.

The volume was one of promise and large hope. Of it O'Reilly wrote: "Not for years has such a first book as this appeared in America." This recognition was but a truth. The author is a true poet, not a rhyme trickster or a cherry-stone filer, that brood so thoroughly detested by O'Reilly. He has something to say, a genuine, poetical impression to give in each poem. His genius, as that of most poets of Celtic blood, is essentially dramatic. This may best be seen in that fine, man-loving poem, "Netchaieff." Netchaieff, a Russian Nihilist, was condemned to prison for life. Deprived of writing materials, he allowed his fingernail to grow until he fashioned it into a pen. With this he wrote, in his blood, on the margin of a book, the story of his sufferings. Almost his last entry was a note that his jailer had just boarded up the solitary pane which admitted a little light into his cell. The "letter written in blood" was smuggled out of prison and published, and Netchaieff died very soon after. The poet's opening lines, relating to the Czar, Netchaieff's death in prison, show that the human interest of this poet swallows up all other interests. The human alone can heat his blood and rouse in impassioned verse his indignation. How finely conceived is the satire in these lines:

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"Netchaieff is dead, your Majesty.
You knew him not. He was a common hind,
Who lived ten years in hell, and then he died—
To seek another hell, as we must think,
Since he was rebel to your Majesty."

There are many startling lines in this poem, lines that would give our fairy-airy school of poets material for a dozen sonnets. "For the People" is another poem that shows the ink was not watered. It is full of truth, unpleasant to the ears of the well-fed and easy living, but truth nevertheless, painted with a bold and masterly hand. It is the critic's way to call poems of this kind passionate unreasonableness, while an irregular ode to a cat or a ballade of the shepherdess is filled with passionate reasonableness. All which proves that these amusing gentlemen are unconsciously sitting by the volcano's side. They have eyes and they see not; they have ears and they hear not. The prophetic voice of the poets who will sing from their inner seeing, caring not whether the age listens or hurries on, is lost on these so-called literary interpreters. The tocsin blast dies on the breeze, or speaks to a few lonely thinkers who catch its notes for future warning; the reed's soft sensuous music is hugged and repeated by the critics and the commonplace. When the lava tumbles forth, then the singer whose songs were a part of him, passionate, conceived in the white heat of truth, may have the diviner's crown. The critics and commonplace, in their suffering, remember the warning in these burning lines:

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"There's a serf whose chains are of paper; there's a king with a parchment crown,
There are robber knights and brigands in factory, field and town;
But the vassal pays his tribute to a lord of wage rent;
And the baron's toll is Shylock's, with a flesh and blood per cent.

"The seamstress bends to her labor all night in a narrow room,
The child, defrauded of childhood, tiptoes all day at the loom,
The soul must starve, for the body can barely on husks be fed;
And the loaded dice of a gambler settle the price of bread.

"Ye have shorn and bound the Samson, and robbed him of learning's light;
But his sluggish brain is moving, his sinews have all their might,
Look well to your gates of Gaza, your privilege, pride and caste!
The Giant is blind and thinking, and his locks are growing fast."

"Netchaieff" and "For the People" are poems with a meaning. Their author is a thinker, a keen student of the social problems that convulse our every-day life. He walks the city's streets, and

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sees sights and hears ominous murmuring. He uses the poet's right to translate these scenes and sights into his own impassioned verse. This done, his duty done. The Creator must give brains to the reader. If that has been done, the poet's lines will fall fresh and thought-provoking on his ears. It will take him from Mittens, Marjorie's Kisses, April Maids and the school of fantastic littleness, to man's inhumanity to man, the burning wrong of our day. An Adirondack climb, but then the point of view repays the exertion. It is generally written that the author of Songs and Satires is a comic poet. A half-way truth is expressed. If by comic is meant humor, yes; all poets who are worth looking into have in a greater or less degree that precious gift. It is a distinct gain if the author is an artist and knows how to use it, dangerous to the commonplace, who put it on with a white-wash brush. It is a nice line that divides humor from buffoonery. Our author is a humorist of that school whose genius has been used to alleviate human suffering. Its shafts are not forged by the hammer of spleen on the anvil of malice, but the workmanship of love mourning for misery. His spirit is akin to Hood's. His touch is light, but his poniard is a Damascene blade well pointed. Cant has no foil to set it off. "A Concord Love Song" is a charming bit of satire. I can well remember the effect it had on a teacher of mine, a proud sage of that school of word-twisting and transcendental gush. He sniffed and pawed viciously, a sure sign that the poet's dart was safely lodged in the bull's eye. Those who have, as a sleep seducer, read some of the Concord fraternity's vapid musings on the pensive Here and the doubtful Yonder, will deliciously relish such lines as these:

"Ah, the joyless fleeting
Of our primal meeting,
And the fateful greeting
Of the How and Why!
Ah, the Thingness flying
From the Hereness, sighing
For a love undying
That fain would die.

"Ah, the Ifness sadd'ning,
The Whichness madd'ning,
And the But ungladd'ning
That lie behind!
When the signless token
Of love is broken
In the speech unspoken,
Of mind to mind."

It is to his later and serious poems that the critic must go to find the poet at his best. "At Sea" is a poem with a memory, inasmuch as it is the "embodiment of as beautiful a story of brotherly love as the world makes record." The poet's brother, Mr. John Roche, pay-clerk in the United States Navy, died a hero's death in the Samoan disaster of March, 1889. Doubtless it was from this loved brother that the poet took his love for the sea, and the gallant deeds of our young navy. Here he is in his own field. "The Fight of the Armstrong Privateer" shows genuine inspiration. It has color and passion. The reader feels the swing of the graphic lines and a quickness in his own blood, while the tale of daring rapidly and gracefully unfolds itself.

James Jeffrey Roche was born at Mount Mellick, Queens county, Ireland, forty-six years ago. His father was a schoolmaster, and to him the poet is indebted for his early education. At a suitable age he entered St. Dunstan's College, Charlottetown, Prince Edward's Island, the family having emigrated there in the poet's infancy. Here he finished his classics and showed his literary bent by the publishing of a college journal. Having the valedictory assigned to him, he hopelessly broke down. The present year he returned to St. Dunstan's the orator of Commencement day, as he wittily remarked, to finish the valedictory that had overtaxed his strength as a small boy. After leaving college the poet came to Boston, entered commercial life, remaining in that hardly genial business for sixteen years. During these years his pen was busy at the real vocation of his life. He was for several years the Boston correspondent of the *Detroit Free Press*, and had been long an editorial contributor to the *Pilot*, before he took the position of assistant editor on it, in 1883. As a journalist Mr. Roche has few equals. His keen mind easily grapples the questions of the day, while his good sense in their discussion never deserts him. In a few lines he goes to the core. If his trenchant sarcasm punctures the bubble, his humor will not fail to make it ridiculous. It is not the windy editorial in our day that tortures the quacks, but the bright, pointed dart of a paragraph. It is so easy to remember, may be stored in the reader's brain so readily, and used with deadly effect at any moment. A writer who knows him well has this to say: "As a journalist he combines two qualities not often found together, discretion and brilliancy. The former quality was well exemplified in his editorial course during the recent crisis in the history of the Irish National movement. He handles political topics ably, and in the treatment of the still broader social and economic questions, writes with the strength and spirit worthy of the associate and successor of that apostle of human liberty and human brotherhood, John Boyle O'Reilly."

In truth, the one thing most essentially felt in this writer, whether in prose or poetry, is his sanity. There is no buncombe in the former, no mawkishness nor pedantic prettiness in the latter. His genius has no pose. So much the better for his fame and future. Mr. Roche's prose works are: "The Story of the Filibusters," a subject dear to a poet's heart, and the "Life of John Boyle

O'Reilly," his chief and friend. This volume was the work of ten weeks, and that in the hours free from his editorial charge. It was a feat that few men could so successfully achieve. It had to be done. No sacrifice was too great for Roche to make for his dead friend. That his health did not give way after the sleeplessness, work and worry of those ten weeks, is the wonder of those who stood near to him. Despite the limited time allowed to Mr. Roche, his biography shows few signs of haste. It is well and interestingly written, a lasting memorial and a deep tribute of affection to one of the most lovable characters of the century. O'Reilly rises from this book as he was. Friendship, while giving what was his due, restrains all affections that might mar the truth of the portrait. His stature was felt to be large enough, without any additions that crumble to time. [91]

There are those of us who hope that the poet, with greater leisure, will give to O'Reilly's race a monograph to be treasured and read by each household, a monograph where the best in O'Reilly's character shall be emphasized, and so lovingly set that those who read shall take heed and learn, while blessing him who gave the setting. The book as it is costs too much and is hardly compact enough for those who need the strong lessons of such a life as O'Reilly's. In a smaller compass and at less cost, done in that delightful way so thoroughly shown in his art of paragraphing, the little book would be a guide-post to many a struggling lad and lass. And to the young of our race must we look and to the exiled part for the full flowering. As the poet, so is the man, cheery, unaffected, kindly and man-loving. He has no airs, lacks the melodramatic of the airy-fairy school. He does not pretend that the gift of prophecy is his, nor hint that it sleeps amid verbal ingenuities. He has a song to sing, a tale to tell, and he does it with all the craft that is in him. In person Mr. Roche is of the medium height, well-built, rather dark complexioned, with abundant jet-black hair and brilliant hazel eyes. [92]

In concluding this sketch of a genuine man and true poet, I am tempted to quote the little poem he so graciously wrote in the fly-leaf of his "Songs and Satires:" [93]

"They chained her fair young body to the cold and cruel stone;
The beast begot of sea and slime had marked her for his own;
The callous world beheld the wrong, and left her there alone,
Base caitiffs who belied her, false kinsmen who denied her,
Ye left her there alone!

"My Beautiful, they left thee in thy peril and thy pain;
The night that hath no morrow was brooding on the main;
But lo! a light is breaking, of hope for thee again;
'Tis Perseus' sword a-flaming, thy dawn of day proclaiming,
Across the Western main.
O Ireland! O my country! he comes to break thy chain."

In the footsore journey through Mexico, when dinner gladdened our vision, poor Read would solemnly remark, "dinners are reverent things." Society accepted this definition. I use society in the sense that Emerson would. "When one meets his mate," writes the Concord sage, "society begins." Read was mine, and to-day his quaint remark haunts me with melancholy force. Thoughts of a dinner with the subject of this sketch, George Parsons Lathrop, and one whose fair and forceful life has been quenched, flit through my mind. It was but yesterday that I bade the gentle scholar farewell, unconsciously a long farewell, for Azarias has fled from the haunts of mortality.

"This is the burden of the heart,
The burden that it always bore;
We live to love, we meet to part,
And part to meet on earth no more."

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Colonel Johnson had read one of his charming essays. Brother Azarias and George Parsons Lathrop had listened with rapt attention to the most loveable writer of the New South. After the lecture I was asked to join them, for, as the author of *Lucille* asks, "where is the man that can live without dining?" That dinner, now that one lies dead, enters my memory as reverent and makes of Read's remark a truth. Men may or may not appear best at dinner. Circumstances lord over most dinners. As it was the only opportunity I had to snap my kodak, you must accept my picture or seek a better artist. Kodak-pictures, when taken by amateurs, are generally blurred. And now to mine.

A man of medium height, strongly built, broad shouldered, the whole frame betokening agility; face somewhat rounded giving it a pleasant plumpness, with eyes quick, nervous and snappy, lighting up a more than ordinary dark complexion—such is Parsons Lathrop, as caught by my camera. His voice was soft, clear as a bell-note, and, when heard in a lecture hall, charming; a slight hesitancy but adds to the pleasure of the listener. In reading he affects none of the dramatic poses and Delsarte movements that makes unconscious comedians of our tragic-readers. It is pleasant to listen to such a man, having no fear that in some moving passage, carried away by some quasi-involuntary elocutionary movement, he might find himself a wreck among the audience. The lines of Wordsworth are an apt description of him:

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"Yet he was a man
Whom no one could have passed without remark,
Active and nervous was his gait; his limbs,
And his whole figure, breathed intelligence."

Mr. Lathrop was born in Honolulu, Hawaiian Islands, August 25, 1851. It was a fit place for a poet's birthplace, "those gardens in perfect bloom, girded about with creaming waves." He came of Puritan stock, the founder of his family being the Rev. John Lathrop, a Separatist minister, who came to Massachusetts in 1634. Some of his kinsmen have borne a noble part in the creation of an American literature, notably the historian of the Dutch and the genial autocrat, Wendell Holmes. His primary education was had in the public schools of New York; from thence he went to Dresden, Germany, returning in 1870 to study law at Columbia College. Law was little to his liking. The dry and musty tomes, wherein is written some truth and not a little error, sanctioned by one generation of wiseacres to be whittled past recognition by another generation of the same species, could hardly hope to hold in thralldom a mind that had from boyhood browsed in the royal demesne of literature. Law and literature, despite the smart sayings of a few will not run in the same rut. In abandoning law for literature, he but followed the law of his being. What law lost literature gained. On a trip abroad a year later he met Rose Hawthorne, the second daughter of the great Nathaniel, wooed, and won her. This marriage was by far the happiest event in his life, the crowning glory of his manhood, a fountain of bliss to sustain his after life. Years later, in a little poem entitled, "Love that Lives," referring to the woman that was his all, he addresses her in words that needed no coaxing by the muses, but had long been distilled by his heart, ready for his pen to give them a setting and larger life.

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"Dear face—bright, glinting hair—
Dear life, whose heart is mine—
The thought of you is prayer,
The love of you divine."

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In starlight, or in rain;
In the sunset's shrouded glow;
Ever, with joy or pain,
To you my quick thoughts go."

And summing up, he tells us the kind of a bond that holds them. It is the

"Love that lives;
Its spring-time blossoms blow
'Mid the fruit that autumn gives;
And its life outlasts the snow."

In 1875 he became assistant editor of that staid and stately magazine the *Atlantic Monthly*, thereby adding to his fame, while it brought him into intimate relationship with the best current thought of the time. Few American literary men have not, at some time of their career, been closely allied with the press. Mr. Lathrop has been no exception. For two years, from '77 to '79, his brilliant pen guided the destinies of the *Boston Courier*. In 1879 he purchased Hawthorne's old home, "The Wayside," in Concord, Mass., making it his home until his removal to New York in 1883. His present residence is at New London, Conn., where a beautiful home, with its every nook consecrated to books and paintings, tells of an ideal literary life and companionship. Mr. Lathrop's genius is many sided. This is often a sign of strength. Men, says a recent critic, with a great and vague sense of power in them are always doubtful whether they have reached the limits of that power, and naturally incline to test this in the field in which they feel they have fewer rather than more numerous auguries of success. Into many fields this brilliant writer has gone, and with success. In some he has sowed, in others reaped a golden harvest. He was a pioneer in that movement which rightfully held that an author had something to do with his brain-work. It seems strange that in this nineteenth century such a proposition should demand a defender. Sanity, however, is not so widespread as the optimists tell. The contention of those that denied copyright was, "Ideas are common property." So they are, says our author, but granting this, don't think you have bagged your game? How about the form in which those ideas are presented? Is not the author's own work, wrought out with toil, sweat and privation—is not the labor bestowed upon that form as worthy of proper wage as the manual skill devoted to the making of a jumping jack? Yet no one has denied that jumping-jacks must be paid for. This was sound reasoning and would have had immediate effect, had Congress possessed a ha'penny worth of logic. As it was, years were wasted agitating for a self-evident right, men's energies spent, and at length a half-loaf reluctantly given. [100]

In another field Mr. Lathrop has been a worker almost single-handed, that of encouraging a school of American art. A few years ago a daub from France was valued more than a marvellous color-study of John La Farge, or a canvas breathing the luminous idealism of Waterman. Critics sniffed at American art, while they went into rhapsody over some foreign little master. Our author, whose keen perception had taught him that the men who toiled in attics, without recompense in the present, and dreary prospects for the future, for the sake of art, were not to be branded as daubers, but as real artists, the fathers of American art, became their defender. He pointed out the beauties of this new school, its strength, and above all, that whatever it might have borrowed from foreign art, it was American in the core. Men listened more for the sake of the writer than interest in his theme. Gradually they became tolerant and admitted that there was such a thing as American art. [101]

It was natural that the son-in-law of America's greatest story-teller should try his strength in fiction. His first novels show a trace of Hawthorne. They are romantic, while the wealth of language bewilders. This, as a critic remarks, was an "indication of opulence and not of poverty." The author was feeling his way. His later works bear no trace of Hawthorne; they are marked by his own fine spiritual sense. The plots are ingenious, poetically conceived and worked out with a deftness and subtlety that charms the reader. There is an air of fineness about them totally foreign to the pyrotechnic displays of current American fiction. The author is an acute observer, one who looks below the surface, an ardent student of psychology. His English is scholarly, has color and dramatic force. His novels are free from immoral suggestions, straining after effect, overdoing the pathetic and incongruous padding, the ordinary stock of our *fin de siècle* novelists. The reading of them not only amuses, a primary condition of all works of fiction, but instructs and widens the reader's horizon on the side of the good and true. In poetry Mr. Lathrop has attained his greatest strength. Some of his war-poems are full of fine feeling and manly vigor. He is no carver of cherry-stones or singer of inane sonnets and meaningless rondeaus, but a poet who has something to say; none of your humanity messages, but songs that are human, songs that find root in the human heart. Of his volumes "Rose and Rooftree," "Dreams and Days," a critic writes: [102]

"There are poems in tenderer vein which appeal to many hearts, and others wrought out of the joys and sorrows of the poet's own life, which draw hearts to him, as "May Rose" and the "Child's Wish Granted" and "The Flown Soul," the last two referring to his only son, whose death in early childhood has been the supreme grief of his life. The same critic notes the exquisite purity and delicacy of these poems, and that "in a day when the delusion is unfortunately widespread that these cannot co-exist with poetic fervor and strength." [103]

In March of 1891 Mr. Lathrop, after weary years of aimless wandering in the barren fields of sectarianism found, as Newman and Brownson had found, that peace which a warring world cannot give, in the bosom of the Catholic Church. Where Emerson halted, shackled by Puritanism and its traditional prejudice towards Catholicism, Lathrop, as Brownson, in quest of new worlds of thought, critically examined the old church and her teachings, finding therein the truth that makes men free. This step of Lathrop's, inexplicable to many of his friends, is explained in his own way, in the manly letter that concludes this sketch. Such a letter must, by its truthfulness, have held his friends. "May we not," says Kegan Paul, "carry with us loving and tender memories of men from whom we learn much, even while we differ and criticise?" [104]

"Humanly speaking, I entered into Catholicity as a result of long thought and meditation upon religion, continuing through a number of years. But there must have been a deeper force at work, that of the Holy Spirit, by means of what we call grace, for a longer time than I suspected. Certainly I was not attracted by 'the fascinations of Rome,' that are so glibly talked about, but which no one has ever been able to define to me. Perhaps those that use the phrase refer to the [105]

outward symbols of ritual, that are simply the expressive adornment of the inner meaning—the flower of it. I, at any rate, never went to Mass but once with any comprehension of it, before my conversion, and had seldom even witnessed Catholic services anywhere; although now, with knowledge and experience, I recognize the Mass—which even that arch, unorthodox author, Thomas Carlyle, called ‘the only genuine thing of our times’—as the greatest action in the world. Many Catholics had been known to me, of varying merit; and some of them were valued friends. But none of these ever urged or advised or even hinted that I should come into the Church. The best of them had (as large numbers of my fellow-Catholics have to-day) that same modesty and reverence toward the sacred mysteries that caused the early Christians also to be slow in leading catechumens—or those not yet fully prepared for belief—into the great truths of faith. My observations of life, however, increasingly convinced me that a vital, central, unchanging principle in religion was necessary, together with one great association of Christians in place of endless divisions—if the promise made to men was to be fulfilled, or really had been fulfilled. When I began to ask questions, I found Catholics quite ready to answer everything with entire straightforwardness, gentle good-will, yet firmness. Neither they nor the Church evaded anything. They presented and defended the teaching of Christ in its entirety, unexaggerated and undiminished; the complete faith, without haggling or qualification or that queer, loose assent to every sort of individual exception and denial that is allowed in other organizations. I may say here, too, that the Church, instead of being narrow or pitiless toward those not of her communion, as she is often mistakenly said to be, is the most comprehensive of all in her interpretation of God’s mercy as well as of his justice. And, instead of slighting the Bible, she uses it more incessantly than any of the Protestant bodies; at the same time shedding upon it a clear, deep light that is the only one that ever enabled me to see its full meaning and coherence. The fact is, those outside of the Church nowadays are engaged in talking so noisily and at such a rate, on their own hook, that they seldom pause to hear what the Church really says, or to understand what she is. Once convinced of the true faith, intellectually and spiritually, I could not let anything stand in the way of affirming my loyalty to it.”

It is delicious in this age of hurried bookmaking, to run across a thinker. It gives one the same kind of sensation that comes to the sportsman, when a monarch of the glen crosses his path. Bookmakers are as many as leaves of the Adirondacks after the hasty gallop of a mountain storm; thinkers are scarce. When, then, amid the leafy mass, one discovers the rare bird hiding from vulgar gaze, an irresistible desire to find his lurking place seizes the observer. This lurking place may be old to many; it was only the other day that I discovered it,—when a friend placed in my hands “Phases of Thought and Criticism,” by Brother Azarias. This book, the sale of which has been greater in England than on this side of the water, is one of suggestive criticism—a criticism founded on faith. The author holds with another thinker, that “Religion is man’s first and deepest concern. To be indifferent is to be dull or depraved, and doubt is disease.” Each chapter of his book expresses a distinct social and intellectual force. Each embodies a verifying ideal; for, continues the author, “the criticism that busies itself with the literary form is superficial, for food it gives husks.”

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While the author will not concede that mere literary form is the all in all that our modern masters claim, yet he would not be found in the ranks of M. de Bonniers, who declares that an author need not trouble himself about his grammar; let him have original ideas and a certain style, and the rest is of no consequence. The author of “Phases of Thought,” believes first in the possession of ideas, for without them an author is a sorry spectacle. He also believes that an attractive style will materially aid in the diffusion of these ideas. Many good books fall still-born from the press, for no other reasons than their slovenly style. Readers now-a-days will not plod along poor roads, when a turnpike leads to the same destination. The grammar marks the parting of ways. Brother Azarias rightfully holds that good grammar is an essential part of every great writer’s style. Classics are so, by correct grammar as well as by original ideas. This easy dictum of the slipshod writers—that if an idea takes you off your feet you must not trouble yourself about the grammar that wraps it, is but a specious pleading for their ignorance of what they pretend to despise.

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The great difference between this book and the many on similar subjects is in the manner of treatment. It starts from a solid basis; that basis the creed of the Catholic Church. The superstructure of lofty thought reared on this basis is in a style at once pellucid and crisp. The author is not only a thinker rare and original; he is a scholar broad and masterly.

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Believing that his Church holds the keys of the “kingdom come,” and as a consequence, a key to all problems moral and social that can move modern society, he grapples with them, after the manner of a knight of old, courteously but convincingly. His teaching is that, outside the bosom of the Catholic Church jostle the warring elements of confusion and uncertainty. In her fold can man find that rest, that sweet peace promised by the Redeemer. Her philosophy is the wisdom worth cherishing, the curing balm that philosophers vainly seek outside her pale. To the weary and thought-stricken would this great writer bring his often and beautifully taught lesson, that the things of this world are not the puppets of chance, nor lots of the pantheistic whole, but parts of a well-ordered system, governed by a paternal being, whom we, His children, address in that touching prayer, “Father, who art in Heaven.” From that Father came a Son, not mere man, not only a great prophet, not only a law-giver, but the true Son of God, equal to the Father, from all eternity, whose mission was, to teach all men that would listen, the way that leads to light. That this identical mission is, and will be continued to the consummation of the ages by the Catholic Church. That in the truth of these things, all men, who lovingly seek, will be confirmed, not that mere intellect alone could be the harbinger of such truths, for, as he has so well put it:—“Human reason and human knowledge, whether considered individually or collectively in the race are limited to the natural. Knowledge of the supernatural can come only from a Divine Teacher.”

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One may be convinced of every truth of revealed religion, and yet not possess the gift of faith. That gift is purely gratuitous. If, however, the seeker humbly and honestly desires the acquisition of these truths, and knocks, the door of the chamber of truth shall be opened unto him, for this has the Saviour promised. That door once opened, the Spirit of God breathes on the seeker, it opens the eyes of the soul, it reveals beyond all power of doubt or cavil, or contradiction, the supernatural as a fact, solemn, universal, constant throughout the vicissitudes of the age. While the author fashions these lofty truths on the anvil of modern scholarship, the reader finds himself, like the school children, in Longfellow’s poem, looking in through the artist’s open door full of admiration, fascinated by burning sparks. Pages have been written about the ideal, defining it, in verbiage fatiguing and elusive.

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It is a trick of pretended scholarship, to hide thought with massive word-boulders. What a difference in the process of this rare scholar?

A flying spark from his anvil lights up the dullest intellect. It is a stimulus to the weary brain, after wading through essays as to what constitutes an ideal, to have the gentle scholar, across the blazing pine logs, on a winter’s night, say: “A genius conceives and expresses a great thought. The conception so expressed delights. It enters men’s souls; it compels their admiration. They applaud and are rejoiced that another masterpiece has been brought into existence to grace the world of art and letters. The genius alone is dissatisfied. Where others see perfection, he perceives something unexpressed; beyond the reach of his art. Try as best he may, he cannot attain that indefinable something. Deep in his inner consciousness he sees a type so grand and perfect that his beautiful production appears to him but a faint and marred copy of that original.

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That original is the ideal; and the ideal it is that appeals to the aesthetic and calls forth men's admiration." What a divining power has this student, in plummeting the vagaries of modern culture!

"Every school of philosophy has its disciples, who repeat the sayings of their masters with implicit confidence, without ever stopping to question the principles from which those sayings arise or the results to which they lead." These chattering disciples will affect to sneer at the Christian belief, while they lowly sit at the feet of one of their mud gods singing "thou art the infallible one." They will not question their position simply because "these systems are accepted [118] not so much for truth's sake as because they are the intellectual fashions of the day." Such men change their philosophy as quickly as a Parisian dressmaker his styles. It may yet be shown by some mighty Teuton that vagaries in philosophy and dress are closely allied, and that the synthetic philosophy of Herbert Spencer is responsible for the coming of crinoline. What a delightful thrust at that school of criticism that singles out an author or a book as the very acme of perfection, seeing wisdom in absurdities and truth in commonplace fiction, is given in these lines: "Paint a daub and call it a Turner, and forthwith these critics will trace in it strokes of genius." With a twinkle in his eye he asks, "Think you they understand the real principles of art criticism?" You will be easily able to answer that question when you have mastered this pithy [119] definition of true criticism, be it of literature or of art, "that it is all-embracing." It has no antagonism to science so long as she travels in her rightful domain. When "science has her superstitions and her romancings as unreal and shadowy as those of the most ephemeral literature, then it is the duty of criticism to administer the medicine of truth and purge the wayward jade of her humors."

To such a mind as that of the author of "Phases of Thought," with its thorough knowledge of the art of criticism and its perfect equipment, the separating of the chaff from the meal of an author becomes not only a pleasure but a duty. This is best seen by a perusal of Chapter III, dealing with Emerson and Newman as types. With a few masterly strokes the real Emerson, not the phantom or brain figment of Burroughs and Woodberry and the long line of fad disciples, [120] passes before us. Not an inch is taken from his stature. His intellectual beauties and defects, so strongly drawn, but confirm the reader in the truth of the portraiture. One catches not only a glimpse of the man, but the springs of his soul-struggles. Emerson in his hungry quest for intellectual food, ranged through the philosophies of the east and west, purposely ignoring that of the Catholic Church. This sin cost him whole worlds of thought hidden from his vision. Newman had the same hunger to appease, but where Emerson turned away Newman, ever in search for truth, kept on, and found it in the Catholic Church. The analysis of these two minds is done in a masterly way. Azarias has no prejudices. If he puts his fingers on defects and descants on their nature and treatment, he will, no less, point out beauties and lovingly linger among them. He is a knight in the cause of truth, and would not herd with the carping critics. He will tell [121] you that Emerson's mind was like an Æolian harp. "It was awake to the most delicate impressions, and at every breath of thought it gave out a music all its own," and that the reading of him with understanding "is a mental tonic bracing for the cultured intellect as is Alpine air for the mountaineer." The pages of this book teem with thought clothed in language whose sparkling beauty is all the author's own. From such a book it is difficult to select. Emerson has well said, "No one can select the beautiful passages of another for you. Do your own quarrying." I abide by this quotation, and should ask every lover of the beautiful and true to buy this fecund book.

Patrick Francis Mullaney, better known as Brother Azarias, was born in Killenaule County, Tipperary, Ireland, June 29th, 1847. Like the majority of eminent men that his country has given [122] birth to, he came of its noble peasantry. The old tale was here enacted. The parents left the land of their birth in search of a home in our better land. This found, Azarias joined them. At the age of fifteen he joined the Christian Brothers. That great Order gave free scope to his fine abilities. In 1866 he was chosen professor of mathematics and English literature at Rock Hill College, Maryland. He continued in this position for ten years. At the expiration of his professorship he travelled a year through Europe, collecting materials and writing his "Development of Old English Thought." On his return he became president of Rock Hill College, holding that position until recalled to Paris by his Superior in 1866. After an absence of three years Brother Azarias returned to the States as professor of English literature at the De La Salle Institute, New York. [123] This is not only an important position, but it gives leisure, and that ready access to the great libraries, so prized by literary men.

KATHERINE ELEANOR CONWAY.

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"Next room to that of Roche's," said the dear O'Reilly, showing me his nest of poets, "is a gentle poetess."

The door was wide open. It is a question with my mind if the room ever knew a door. Be this as it may, there sat, with her chair close drawn to her desk, a frail, delicate-looking woman. The ordinary eye might see nothing in a face that was winsome, if not handsome; yet, let the dainty mouth curve in speech, and at once a subtle attraction, lit up by lustrous eyes, permeated the face. One characteristic that made itself felt, in the most sparse conversation with this woman, was her humility, a rare virtue among American literary women. I have known not a few among [128] that irritable class who, no sooner had they sipped the most meagre draught of fame, than they became intoxicated with their own importance, and for the balance of life wooed that meretricious goddess, Notoriety. In fiery prose and tuneful song they told of the dire misfortunes that had been heaped upon their sex by that obstinate vulgar biped, man. Their literature—for that is the name given to the crudest offspring of the press in these days—is noisy, and, says a witty writer, a noisy author is as bad as a barrel organ,—a quiet one is as refreshing as a long pause in a foolish sermon. Clergymen, who have listened to a brother divine on grace, will be the first to see the point. Our authoress—(a female filled with the vanity that troubled Solomon says I should write female author)—is a quiet and unobtrusive writer. Of the tricks that catch and the [129] ways that are crooked in literature, she knows nothing, and what is better, no amount of tawdry fame could induce her to swerve a jot from the hard stony road that leads to enduring success, the only goal worth striving for in the domain of letters. I am well aware that in the popular list of women-writers mouthed by the growing herd of flippant readers that have no other use for a book than as a time-killer,—a herd to whom ideas are as unpalatable as disestablishment to an English parson—you will fail to find the name of Katherine Conway. The reason is simple. She has no fads to air in ungrammatical English, no fallacies to adduce in halting metre. It was a Boston critic who echoed the dictum of the French critic—that grammar has no place in the world of letters. Only have ideas, that is, write meaningless platitudes, grandiose nothings, something that neither man, the angels above nor the demons down under the sea, may decipher, and this [130] illusive verbiage will make you famous. A school of critics will herald your work with such adjectives as "noble, lofty, absorbing, soul-inspiring;" nay, more, a pious missionary friend may be found to translate the verbiage into Syriac, as a present for converts. Borne on the tide of such criticism, not a few women writers have mistaken the plaudits of notoriety, that passing show, for fame. It was a saying of De Musset's that fame was a tardy plant, a lover of the soil. Be this as it may, it is safe to assert that its coming is not proclaimed by far-fetched similes, frantic metaphors, sensuous images, ranting style, ignorance of metre, want of grammar; the dishes are not of the voluptuous, morbid or the monstrous kind. Its thirst is not slaked at sewers of dulness spiced with immorality. These symptoms savor of one disease known to all pathologists as [131] notoriety. In an age of this dreaded disease it is surely refreshing to meet with works that breathe gentleness and repose,—a beautiful trust in religion, and a warm, natural heart for humanity. These traits will the reader find in abundance in the pages of Katherine Conway. "What kills a poet," says Aldrich, "is self-conceit." Of all the forms self-conceit may assume none is more foolish or detrimental, especially to a woman-poet, than the pluming of oneself as the harbinger of some renovating gospel, some panacea for human infirmities. What is the burden of your message? says the critic to the young poet. Straightway the poet evolves a message, and as messages of this kind ought to be mysterious, the poet wraps them in a jargon as unintelligible as [132] Garner's monkey dialect. Thus in America has risen a school of woman poetry, deluded by false criticism, calling itself a message to humanity, dubbed rightly the school of passion, and one might add, of pain. This school may ask, "Am I to be debarred from treating of the passions on the score of sex." By no means; the passions are legitimate subjects. Love, one of them, is your most attractive theme, but as Lilly has it, love is not to you what it is to the physiologist, a mere animal impulse which man has in common with moths and molluscs. Your task is to extract from human life, even in its commonest aspects, its most vulgar realities, what it contains of secret beauty; to lift it the level of art, not to degrade art to its level. Few American writers more fully realized these great artistic truths than the master under whose fatherly tuition Miss Conway had long been placed. Boyle O'Reilly was a Grecian in his love for nature. As such it was his aim to seek the beautiful in its commonest aspects, its most vulgar realities. No amount of claptrap or [133] fine writing could make him mistake a daub for a Turner. In the bottom of his soul he detested the little bardlings who had passed nature by, without knowing her, who wove into the warp and woof of their dulness the putridity of Zola and morbidity of Marie Bashkirtseff. Under such a guide, the poetic ideal set before Miss Conway has been of the highest, and the highest is only worth working for. This ideal must be held unswervingly, even if one sees that books that are originally vicious are "placarded in the booksellers' windows; sold on the street corners; hawked through the railroad trains; yea, given away, with packages of tea or toilet soap, in place of the chromo, mercifully put on the superannuated list." These books are but foam upon the current of time, flecking its surface for a moment, and passing away into oblivion, while what Miss Conway happily calls the literature of moral loveliness, or what might as aptly be called the literature of [134] all time, remains our contribution to posterity. Its foundations, to follow the thought of Azarias, are deeply laid in human nature, and its structure withstands the storms of adversity and the eddies of events. For such a literature O'Reilly made a life struggle; his pupil has closely followed

his footsteps in the charming, simple, melodious volume that lies before me, "A Dream of Lilies." Rarely has a Catholic book had a more artistic setting, and one might add, rarely has a volume of Catholic verse deserved it more. Here the poetess touches her highest point, and proves that years of silence have been years of study and conscientious workmanship. In her poem "Success" may be found the key to this volume;

"Ah! know what true success is; young hearts dream,
Dream nobly and plan loftily, nor deem
That length of years is length of living. See
A whole life's labor in an hour is done;
Not by world-tests the heavenly crown is won,
To God the man is what he means to be."

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"Dream nobly and plan loftily" has been the guiding spirit of this volume. It is a book of religious verse in the true sense, not in the general acceptance of modern religious verse, which is generally dull twaddle, egotism, mawkishness, blind gropings and haunting fears. The gentle spirit of Christ breathes through it, making an atmosphere of peace and repose. There is no bigotry to jar, no narrowness to chafe us, but the broad upland of Christian charity and truth. Nor has our author forgotten that even truth if cast in awkward mould may be passed over. To her poems she has given a dainty setting without sacrificing a jot of their strength. After reading such a book a judicious bit of Miss Conway's prose comes to my mind. "And as that Catholic light, the only true vision, brightens about us, we realize more and more that literary genius, take it all and all, has done more to attract men to good than to seduce men to evil; that the best literature is also the most fascinating, and even by its very abundance is more than a match for the bad; that time is its best ally; that it is hard, if not impossible, to corrupt the once formed pure literary taste; and, finally, that as makers of literature or critics or disseminators of it, it is our duty to believe in the best, hope in the best, and steadfastly appeal to the best in human nature; for we needs must love the highest when we see it."

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Katherine Eleanor Conway was born of Irish parents, in Rochester, on the 6th of Sept., 1853. Her early studies were made in the convent schools of her native city. From an early age she had whisperings of the muse. These whisperings at the age of fifteen convinced her that her true sphere of action was literature. In 1875 she commenced the publication of a modest little Catholic monthly, contributing poems and moral tales, under the *nom-de-plume* of "Mercedes," to other Catholic journals, in the spare hours left from editing her little venture and teaching in the convent. In 1878 she became attached to the Buffalo *Union and Times*. To this journal she contributed the most of the poems to be found in her maiden volume,—“On the Sunrise Slope,”—a volume whose rich promise has been amply fulfilled in the "Dream of Lilies." Her health failing, she sought a needful rest in Boston. Her fame had preceded her, and the gifted editor of the *Pilot*, ever on the lookout for a hopeful literary aspirant of his race, held out a willing hand to the shy stranger. "Come to us," he said, in a voice that knew no guile, "and help us in the good fight." That fight—the crowning glory of O'Reilly's noble life—was to gain an adequate position for his race and religion from the puritanism of New England. How that race and religion were held before his coming, may be best told in the language of Miss Conway, taken from a heart-sketch of her dead master and minstrel:—

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"Notwithstanding Matignon and Cheverus, and the Protestant Governor Sullivan, Catholic and Irish were, from the outset, simply interchangeable terms—and terms of odium both—in the popular New England mind; in vain the bond of a common language, in vain the Irishman's prompt and affectionate acceptance of the duties of American citizenship. To but slight softening of prejudice even his sacrifice of blood and life on every battle-field in the Civil War, in proof of the sincerity of his political profession of faith. He and his were still hounded as a class inferior and apart. They were almost unknown in the social and literary life of New England. Their pathetic sacrifices for their kin beyond the sea, their interest in the political fortunes of the old land, were jests and by-words. Their religion was the superstition of the ignorant, vulgar and pusillanimous; or, at best, motive for jealous suspicion of divided political allegiance and threatened "foreign" domination. Their children suffered petty persecutions in the public schools. The stage and the press faithfully reflected the ruling popular sentiment in their caricatures of the Catholic Irishman."

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She accepted O'Reilly's call and stood by his side with Roche, Guiney, Blake, until the hard fought battle against the prejudice to Irishism and Catholicism, planted in New England by the bigoted literature of Old England, was abated, if not destroyed; until its shadows, if cast now, are cast by the lower rather than the higher orders in the world of intellect and refinement. "And the shortening of the shadow is proof that the sun is rising," proof that her work has been far from vain. And when from the grey dawn of prejudice will come forth the white morrow of charity and truth, the singer and her songs will not be forgotten.

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LOUISE IMOGEN GUINEY.

In speaking with the author of a "Dream of Lilies," I casually mentioned the name of another Boston poetess, "one of the *Pilot* poets," as the gifted Carpenter was wont to speak of those whose genius was nursed by Boyle O'Reilly. For a few years previous to my coming, little waif poems, suggestive of talent and refinement, had seen light in the columns of that brilliant journal. They had about them that something which makes the reader hazard a bet that the youngster when fully fledged would some day leave the lowlands of minor minstrelsy for a height on Parnassus. From this singer Miss Conway had that morning received a notelet. It was none of the ordinary kind, a little anarchistic, if one might judge from the awkward pen-sketch of a hideous grinning skeleton-skull held by cross-bones which served as an illustration to the bantering text that followed, in a rather cramped girlish hand. The notelet was signed Louise Imogen Guiney. [141]

"Are you not afraid, Miss Conway," said I, "to receive such warning notes?" "It is from the best girl in America," was the frank reply; "read it." A perusal of the few dashing lines was enough, and my generous host, reading my eyes, gave me the coveted notelet. That notelet begot an interest in the writer; an interest fully repaid by the strong, careful work put forth under her name. Louise Imogen Guiney, poet, essayist, dramatist, was born in Boston, that city of "sweetness and light," in January, 1862. Her parents were Irish. Her father, Patrick Guiney, came from the hamlet of Parkstown, County Tipperary, at an early age. He was a man of the most blameless and noble character. During the civil war, as Col. Guiney of the Irish Ninth Massachusetts Volunteers, his heroism on behalf of his adopted country won him the grateful admiration of all lovers of freedom. This admiration at the close of the war was substantially shown by his election as Judge of Probate. Constant suffering from an old wound, received at the battle of the Wilderness, gave the old soldier but few years to enjoy honors from his fellow-citizens. His death was mourned by all who loved virtue and honor. Of him a Boston poet sang: [142]

"Large heart and brave! Tried soul and true!
How thickly in thy life's short span,
All strong sweet virtues throve and grew,
As friend, as hero, and as man.
Unmoved by thought of blame or praise,
Unbought by gifts of power and pride,
Thy feet still trod Time's devious ways
With Duty as thy law and guide."

Good blood, you will say, from whence our poet came, and blood counts even in poetry. I have no anecdotes to relate of Miss Guiney's early years. I am not sure that there were any. Anecdotes are usually manufactured in later life, if the subject happens to become famous. Her education was carefully planned, and intelligently carried out. She was not held in the dull routine of the school-room, but was allowed to emancipate herself in the works of the poets. What joy must have been her's, scampering home after the study of *de omni scibili*, the ordinary curriculum of any American school, to a quiet nook and the dream of her poets. Amid these dreams came the siren whisperings of the muse, telling her of the poet within struggling for life and expression. These struggles begot a tiny little volume happily named "Songs at the Start." The great American reviewer, who, ordinarily, [143]

"Bolts every book that comes out of the press,
Without the least question of larger or less,"

on this occasion, by some untoward event, stumbled on a truth when he informed us, with the air of one who rarely touches earth, that the book bore signs of promise. The people, by all means a better critic, were more apt in their judgment of the young singer. A few years later they asked her to write the memorial poem for the services in commemoration of General Grant. Thus honored by her native city, in an easy way she was led to climb the ladder of fame. In 1885 appeared her first volume of essays, "Goose Quill Papers;" in 1887 a volume of poems bearing the fanciful name of "White-Sail;" in 1888 a pretty book for children; in 1892 "Monsieur Henri, a Foot-note to French History." It is something to be noted in regard to a "Foot-note to French history," that the novelist Stevenson, in his far-off home in Samoa, was publishing at the same time a work which bore a decided likeness to her title. Stevenson's book was published as "A Foot-Note to History." In 1893 appeared her latest volume of verse, being a selection of poems previously published in American magazines. This selection (the poet has a genuine knack for tacking taking names to her volumes) is quaintly named "A Wayside Harp," and dedicated to a brace of Irish poets, the Sigerson sisters. The graceful dedication as well as many of its strongest and most artistic poems, were the outcome of a trip to Great Britain and Ireland. The author travelled with open eyes, and brought back many a dainty picture of the scenes she had so lovingly witnessed. This volume fulfils the early promise, and what is more, gives indubitable signs that the poet possesses a reserve force. Not a few women poets write themselves out in their first volume. Not so with Miss Guiney, every additional volume shows greater strength and more complete mastery of technique. After the surfeit of twaddle passing current as poetry, such a book as "A Wayside Harp" should find a waiting audience, Miss Guiney has the essentials of a poet, which I take to be color, music, perfume and passion. In their use she is an artist. In her first book an excess of these everywhere prevailed; it was from this excess, however, that the prudent critic would have hazarded a doubt as to her fitness to join the company of the bards. Since then she has been an ardent student. This study has not only taught her limitations, a thing that saves so much after pruning, but that other lesson, forgotten by so many bardlets, that the [144]

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greatest poetic effects are the result of the masterful mixing of a few simple colors. It is well that she has learned these lessons at the outset of her career. Let not the fads and fancies of this *fin de siècle* and the senseless worship of those poetasters who scorn sense while they hug sound lead her from the true road of song. No amount of meaningless words airily strung together, no amount of gymnastic rhyming feats can produce a poet. They are the badges of those wondrous little dunces that pass nature with a frown, alleging in the language of the witty Bangs that "Nature is not art." Guiney's friend and faithful mentor, O'Reilly, had taught her to abhor all those who spent their waking hours chiselling cherry stones. To him it was a poet's duty to aim high, attune his lyre, not to the petty, but the manly and hopeful; never to debase the lyre by an utterance of selfishness, but to consecrate it with the strains of liberty and humanity. If Guiney follows the teachings of her early friend—teachings which are substantially sound, she will yet produce poems that the world will not willingly let die. That Rosetti fad of hiding a mystic meaning in a poem, now occupying the brains of our teeming songsters, is now and then to be met with in our poet. It is a trade-trick. Poetry is sense—common-sense at that, and you cannot rim common-sense things with mystical hues. Abjuring these trade-tricks, and shaking off the trammels of her curious and extensive reading and evolving from herself solely, she has, says Douglas Sladen, a great promise before her. As an instance of this promise let us quote that fine poem, "The Wild Ride," which is full of genuine inspiration, and which may be the means of introducing to some the most thoroughly gifted Catholic woman writer of our country. [148]

THE WILD RIDE.

I hear in my heart, I hear in its ominous pulses,
 All day, the commotion of sinewy mane-tossing horses;
 All night from their cells the importunate tramping and neighing,
 Cowards and laggards fall back but alert to the saddle,
 Straight, grim, and abreast, vault our weather-worn galloping legion,
 With a stirrup cup each to the one gracious woman that loves him.
 The road is thro' dolour and dread, over crags and morasses! [149]
 There are shapes by the way, there are things that appall or entice us!
 What odds! We are knights, and our souls are but bent on the riding!
 I hear in my heart, I hear in its ominous pulses,
 All day, the commotion of sinewy, mane-tossing horses;
 All night from their cells the importunate tramping and neighing,
 We spur to a land of no name, outracing the storm wind;
 We leap to the infinite dark, like the sparks from the anvil,
 Thou leadest! O God! All's well with thy troopers that follow.

It was only natural that the daughter of an Irish patriot should sing of her father's land, and that in a style racy of that land. It was a hazardous experiment, as many an Irish American singer has learned in sorrow. That Miss Guiney has come out of the trying ordeal successfully, may be seen in the following little snatch, full of the aroma of green Erin:

AN IRISH PEASANT SONG.

I try to knead and spin, but my life is low the while;
 Oh, I long to be alone, and walk abroad a mile;
 Yet when I walk alone, and think of naught at all,
 Why from me that's young should the wild tears fall?

The shower-stricken earth, the earth-colored streams,
 They breathe on me awake, and moan to me in dreams;
 And yonder ivy fondling the broken castle wall,
 It pulls my heart, till the wild tears fall.

The cabin-door looks down a furze-lighted hill,
 And far as Leighlin cross the fields are green and still;
 But once I hear a blackbird in Leighlin hedges call,
 The foolishness is on me, and the wild tears fall!

Miss Guiney possesses a charming personality. Her manner is "unaffected, girlish and modest." There is about her none of the curtness and prudishness of the blue-stocking. Success has not turned her head, literary homage has not made her forget that they who will build for time must need work long and patiently, using only the best material. By so doing may it be written of her work, as she has written of Brother Bartholomew's: [151]

"Wonderful verses! fair and fine,
 Rich in the old Greek loveliness;
 The seer-like vision, half divine;
 Pathos and merriment in excess,
 And every perfect stanza told,
 Of love and of labor manifold."

MRS. BLAKE.

Boston is a charming city. It is the whim of the passing hour to sneer at the modest dame. Henry James has done so. Is not the author of "Daisy Miller" and other interminable novels a correct person to follow? The disciples of the Mutual Admiration Society in American Letters will vociferously answer "yes." Old-fashioned people may have another way. Scattered here and there [153] possibly a few there are who hold that Hawthorne was a better novelist than Howells is, that Holmes' poetry is as good as Boyesen's, and that Emerson's criticisms are more illuminative than James'. Be this as it may, Boston is a charming place to all those who had the good fortune to have been welcomed by its warm-hearted citizen, Boyle O'Reilly. To those who knew his struggles, and the earnest striving, until his weary spirit sought its final home, for Catholic literature in its true sense, the charm but increases.

It was owing to his kindness that I found myself one blustery, raw day, ringing the door-bell of an ordinary well to-do brick house. Houses now and then carry on their fronts an inkling of their occupants. A door was opened, my card handed to a feminine hand; the aperture was not as yet wide enough to catch a glimpse of the face. The card was a power. "Come in," said a woman's [154] voice, and the door was wide open. I followed the guide, and was soon in a plain, well furnished room, in presence of a motherly-looking woman. She was knitting; at least that is part of my memory's picture. Near her hung a mocking-bird, whose notes now and then were peculiarly sad. Despite the graceful lines of the Cavalier Lovelace, iron bars do a prison make for bird and man. And the songs sung behind these bars are but bits of the crushed-out life. I was welcomed, and during busy years have held the remembrance of that visit with its hour of desultory chat and a mocking-bird's broken song. The motherly-looking woman, with her strong Celtic face freshly furrowed by sorrow in the loss of beloved children, was a charming talker and a good listener, things rarely found in your gentle or fiery poetess. She had just published, under the initials M. A. B., a volume of children's verse, and, as is natural with an author who had finished a piece of [155] work, was full of it. The pretense of some authors that they are bored to speak of their own books is a sly suggestion to praise them for their humility. Mrs. Blake—for that is the motherly-looking woman's name—spoke of her work without any hiccoughing gush or false modesty. Her eyes lit up, and the observer read in them honesty. She was deeply interested, as all thinking women must be, in the solution of the social problems that have arisen in our times, and will not be downed at the biddance of capitalist or demagogue. With her clear-cut intellect she was able to grasp a salient point, purposely hidden by the swarm of curists with their panacea remedies, that these problems must be solved in the light of religion. Man must return to Christ, not the [156] "cautious, statistical Christ" paraded in the social show, not

"The meteor blaze
That soon must fail, and leave the wanderer blind,
More dark and helpless far, than if it ne'er had shined,"

but the Christ of the Gospels, the Bringer of peace and good-will—the Bearer of burdens, the soul-guider—Christ, loving and acting, as found in the Catholic Church. Hecker had begun the preface of his wonderful book with a truth, "The age is out of joint." Problems to be solved, and lying around them millions of broken hearts. "The age is out of joint." Who will bring the light and rightify the age? Mrs. Blake has but one answer. Bring the employers and the employed nearer the Christ of the Catholic Church. This was O'Reilly's often expressed and worked-for [157] idea. It is the key-note of much of his poetry. It is the germ of his "Bohemia." It was impossible to live, as Mrs. Blake did, on the most friendly terms with such a man and not be smitten with his life-thought. In not a few published social papers Mrs. Blake has thrown out valuable and suggestive hints as to the best means of bringing the weary world under the sweet sway of religion. Her voice, it is true, is but one voice in the social wilderness, but individual efforts must not be thwarted, for is not a fresh period opening in which the individuality, the personality, of souls acting under the direct guidance of the Holy Ghost, will take up all that is good in modern ideas, and the cords of our tent be strengthened and its stakes enlarged? "What we have to dread is neither 'historical rancor' nor 'philosophical atheism,'" "nor the instinct of personal freedom." It is, in the words of Dr. Barry, that we should set little store by that "freedom wherewith Christ [158] has made us free," and that being born into a church where we may have the grandest spiritual ideas for the asking, we should fold our hands in slumber and be found, at length, "disobedient to the heavenly vision." Against such perils Hecker, the noblest life as yet in our American church, made a life-fight. On his side was Boyle O'Reilly, Roche, Mrs. Blake, Katherine Conway and Louise Guiney. Nor pass such lives in vain.

Mrs. Blake was born in Dungarvan, Co. Waterford, Ireland. In childhood she was brought to Massachusetts. In 1865 she was married to Dr. J. G. Blake, a leading physician of Boston. She has made that city her home, and is highly esteemed in its literary and social circles. Among her published books may be mentioned "Poems," Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1882, dedicated to her husband; "On The Wing," a pretty volume of Californian sketches; "Rambling Talk," a series of [159] papers contributed to the Boston journals.

Her sketches are the agreeable jottings of a highly cultivated woman; seeing nature in the light of poetry rather than science, she has made a series of charming pictures out of her wanderings. They are not free from sentiment,—illusions if you will, but that is their greatest charm. "The world of reality is a poor affair." So many books of travel are annually appearing,—books that have no excuse for being other than to prove how widespread dulness and incapacity is, that a trip with a guide like Mrs. Blake has but one failing,—its shortness. Neither in her travels nor in

her literary articles does Mrs. Blake body forth her best prose utterance. These must be found in her earnest social papers, where her woman's heart, saddened by the miseries of its fellows, pours out its streams of consolation and preaches (all earnest souls must be preachers now-a-days) the only and all sufficient cure—the Church. [160]

An extract from one of these papers will best show her power. She is portraying the Church manifesting itself in the individual as well as the family life, pleading for the central idea of her system. "Jesus Christ is the complement of man,"—the restorer of the race. The Catholic Church is the manifestation of Jesus Christ.

"There are, alas! too many weaknesses into which thoughtlessness and opportunity lead one class as well as the other. But still there is to be seen almost without exception, among practical Catholics, young wives, content and happy, welcoming from the very outset of married life the blessed company of the little ones who are to guard them as do their angels in heaven; proud like Cornelia of their jewels; gladly accepting comparative poverty and endless care; while their sisters outside the Church buy the right to idleness and personal adorning at the expense of the childless homes which are a disgrace and menace to the nation. There is the honor and purity of the fireside respected; the overpowering sweetness and strength of family ties acknowledged; the reverential love that awaits upon the father and mother shown. There are sensitive and refined women bearing sorrow with resignation and hardship without rebellion; combating pain with patience and fulfilling harsh duty without complaint. In a tremendous over-proportion to those who attempt to live outside its helpfulness, and in exact ratio to their practical devotion to the observances of the Church, they find power of resisting temptation in spite of poverty, and overcoming impulse by principle. Can the world afford to ignore an agency by which so much is accomplished? [161]

"So much for the practical side, which is the moral that particularly needs pointing at this moment. Of the spiritual amplitude and sustaining which the Church gives there is little need to speak. Only a woman can know what Faith means in the existence of women. The uplift which she needs in moments of great trial; the sustaining power to bear the constant harassment of petty worries; the outlet for emotions which otherwise choke the springs, the tonic of prayer and belief; the assurance of a force sufficiently divine and eternal to satisfy the cravings of human longing—what but this is to make life worth living for her? And where else, in these days of scepticism, is she to find such immortal dower? It is a commentary upon worldly wisdom, that it has attempted to ignore this necessity, and left woman under the increased pressure of her new obligations, to rely solely upon such frail reeds as human respect and conventional morality. She needs the inspiration of profound conviction and practical piety a hundredfold more than ever before. The woman of the old time, secluded within the limits of the household, surrounded by the material safeguard of custom, might lead an untroubled existence even if devotion and faith were not vital principles with her. The woman of to-day, harassed, beset, tempted, driven by necessity, drawn this way and that by bad advice and worse example, is attempting a hopeless task when she tries the same experiment." [162]

The poetry of Mrs. Blake is rational and wholesome. She knows her gifts and is content to use them at their best, giving us songs in a minor key, that if they add little to human thought, yet make the world better from their coming. In the poems of childhood she is particularly happy. She knows children, their joys and sorrows, has caught their ways. Her's is a heart that has danced in the joy of motherhood and been stricken when the "dead do not waken." She is our only intelligent writer of children's poems. The assertion may be controverted. A hundred Catholic poets for children may be cited writers "of genius profound," of "exquisite fancy," "whose works should grace every parish library." I quote a stereotyped criticism, a constant expression with Catholic reviewers. I laugh, in my hermitage, and blandly suggest, to all whom it may concern, that insanity in jingles is not relished by sane children. I speak from experience, having perpetrated a selection from the one hundred on a class of bright boys and girls. Peaceful sleep, and, let us hope, pleasant dreams, came to their aid. Shall I ever, Comus, forget their faces in the transition moment from dulness to delight? Let us cease cant and rapturous criticism. Catholic literature, to survive the time that gave it birth, must be built on other foundations. Hasty and unconscious productions must be branded as such. We must have, as the French so well put it, a horror of "pacotille" and "camelotte." "If my works are good," said the sculptor Rude, "they will endure; if not, all the laudation in the world would not save them from oblivion." The same may well be written of Catholic literature. Whether for children or grown-up men or women, as a Catholic critic, whose only aim has been to gain an audience for my fellow Catholic writers whose works can bear a favorable comparison with the best contemporary thought, I ask that the best shall be given, and that given, it shall be joyfully received; that trash shall not fill the book-cases, lie on the parlor-tables, be puffed in our weeklies, and genius and sacrifice be forgotten. I ask that the works of Stoddard, Johnston, Egan, Roche, Azarias, Lathrop, Tabb, Miss Repplier, Guiney, Katherine Conway, Mrs. Blake, find a welcome in each Catholic household, and that the Catholic press make their delightful personalities known to our rising generation. Of their best they have given. Shall they die before we acknowledge it? [163]

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AGNES REPLIER.

A friend of mine, a dweller in the city, a lover of red bricks, one to whom the sound of the dray-cart merrily grinding on the pavement is sweeter music than a burst of woodland song, has tardily conceded that the Adirondacks, on a summer day, is pleasant. I value his testimony and record it with pleasure. Let us be thankful for small favors when cynics are the donors. For me these woods, lakes and crystal streams hold an indescribable charm. They are the true abode of man. Here is liberty, while the city is but a cage, with its thousands uttering the plaintive cry of Sterne's prisoned starling, "I cannot get out." For the hum of wheels we have the songs of birds, the music of waterfalls, the purr of mountain brooks and the harmonies of the winds playing through the thousand different species of trees, each one differing in melody, but combining in one grand symphony. Orchestras are muffled music when compared to nature's lute. The pipes of Pan is but a poet's struggle to embody in speech such a symphony. For the city's smells, that not even a Ruskin could paint, albeit they are far from elusive, we have the mountain air that has dallied with the streams and stolen the fragrance of a thousand clover fields. Every man to his taste. There is no disputing of this. Lamb loved bricks and Wordsworth such scenes as ours; yet, Lamb would be as sadly missed from our libraries as Wordsworth. Swing my hammock in the shade of yonder pines, good Patsy. A robin is piping his sweetest notes to his brooding spouse, the Salmon river runs at my feet, biting the sandy shore, laughing loud when a saucy stone falls in its current. From over the hills comes the scent of new-mown hay; bless me! this is pleasant. To add to this enjoyment you have brought a book—something bright, you tell me. I'll soon see. And gliding into my hammock, I said my first good morning to Agnes Repplier. It was a breezy good morning, one of those where the hand unconsciously goes out as much as to say: Old fellow, you don't know how glad I am to see you. There was no friend with a white cravat standing on the first page to introduce us, and tell us that the authoress bore in her book a fecund message to struggling humanity, and that the major part of that same humanity could not see it; hence it was his duty to stand at the portal and solve the riddle. There was no begging for recognition on the score of ancestors, fads or isms. I am Agnes Repplier, said the book; how do you like me? A few pages perused, and my own voice amusingly fell on my ears, saying first class. Here was a woman who thought—not the trivial thought that nauseates in the books of so many literary women—but virile aggressive thought, that provokes, contradicts, and, like Hamlet's ghost, will not be downed. This thought is folded in a garment, whose many hues quicken the curiosity and make her pages a continual feast of wit, droll irony, and illuminative criticism all curiously and harmoniously blended. Her pages are rich in suggestion, apt in quotation. You are constantly aroused, put on your guard, laughingly disarmed, and that in a way that Lamb would have loved. She has no awe in the presence of literary gods. Lightly she trips up to them with her poniard, shows by a pass that they are made of mud, and that the aureole that encircles them is but the work of your crude imagination. Clearing away your shreds and patches she puts the author in a plain suit before you, and, how you wonder, that with all your boasted knowledge you have called for years a jackdaw a peacock!

How delightful to watch this critic armed *cap-a-pie*, demolishing some fad, that has masqueraded for years as genuine literature. Is it little Lord Fauntleroy, a character sloppy, inane, impossible to real life, yet hugged to the heart by the commonplace. Miss Repplier keenly surveys her ground, as an artist would the statue of his rival, notes the foibles, cant, false poses, and crazy-quilt jargon used to deck pet characters. Experience has taught her that you cannot combat seriously the commonplace. "The statesman or the poet," says Dudley Warner, "who launches out unmindful of this, will be likely to come to grief in his generation." Sly humor, pungent sarcasm, are the weapons effectively used. The little Lord is unrobed, and the life that seemed so full of charity and virtue, becomes but a mixture of hypocrisy and snobbery. Yet, if some of our critics could, "all the dear old nursery favorites must be banished from our midst, and the rising generation of prigs must be nourished exclusively on Little Lord Fauntleroy, and other carefully selected specimens of milk and water diet." The dear land of romance, in its most charming phase, that phase represented by Red Riding Hood, Ali Baba, Blue Beard, and the other heroes of our nurseryhood must be eliminated, for children are no longer children, in the old sense of believing "in such stuff" without questioning. American children, at any rate, are too sensitively organized to endure the unredeemed ferocity of the old fairy stories, we are told, and it is added, "no mother nowadays tells them in their unmitigated brutality." These are the empty sayings of the realists, who would have every child break its dolls to analyze the sawdust. The most casual observer of American homes knows that our children will not be fed on such stuff as realists are able to give, but will turn wistfully back to those brave old tales which are their inheritance from a splendid past, and of which no hand shall rob them. As Miss Repplier so well puts it, "we could not banish Blue Beard if we would. He is as immortal as Hamlet, and when hundreds of years shall have passed over this uncomfortably enlightened world, the children of the future—who, thank Heaven, can never, with all our efforts, be born grown-up—will still tremble at the blood-stained key, and rejoice when the big brave brothers come galloping up the road." Ferocity, brutality, if you will, may couch on every page, but this is much better than the sugared nothingness of Sunday school tales, and beats all hollow, as the expression goes, the many tricks perpetrated on children by the school of analytical fiction. Children will read Blue Beard, and thank Heaven, as grown-up men, for such a childish pleasure, adding a prayer for her who wrote the "Battle of the Babies." Bunner and others have accused Miss Repplier of ignoring contemporary works, of rudely closing in their face her library door and saying he who enters here must have outgrown his swaddling clothes, must have rounded out his good half-century. This may be one of Bunner's skits. Even if it were not, there is more than one precedent to follow.

Hazlitt, in his delightful chat on the "Reading of Old Books," begins his essay, "I hate to read new books." This author has the courage of his convictions; you do not grope in the dark to know why. Here is the reason, and it is easier to assent to it than to deny it. "Contemporary writers may generally be divided into two classes—one's friends or one's foes. Of the first we are compelled to think too well, and of the last we are disposed to think too ill, to receive much genuine pleasure from the perusal, or to judge fairly of the merits of either. One candidate for literary fame, who happens to be of our acquaintance writes finely, and like a man of genius; but unfortunately has a foolish fad, which spoils a delicate passage;—another inspires us with the highest respect for his personal talents and character, but does not come quite up to our expectation in print." All these contradictions and petty details interrupt the calm current of our reflections. These are sound reasons; as if to clinch them he adds, "but the dust, smoke, and noise of modern literature have nothing in common with the pure, silent air of immortality." [175]

Miss Repplier, an admirer of Hazlitt, and if one may hazard a guess, her master in style, would not go so far. She believes in keeping up with a decent portion of current literature, and "this means perpetual labor and speed," whereas idleness and leisure are requisite for the true enjoyment of books. To read all the frothings of the press for the sake of being called a contemporary critic were madness. She concurs with another critic that reading is not a duty, and that no man is under any obligation to read what another man wrote. When Miss Repplier stumbles across an unknown volume, picking it up dubiously, and finds in it an hour of placid but genuine enjoyment, although it is a modern book, wanting in sanctifying dust, she will use all her art to make in other hearts a loving welcome for the little stranger. "A By-Way in Fiction" tells in her own way, of a recent book born of Italian soil and sunshine, "The Chevalier of Pensieri Vani." It is the essayist's right to read those books, ancient or modern, that are to her taste, and it is a bit of impertinence in any writer to particularly recommend to Miss Repplier a list of books, which she is naturally indisposed to consider with much kindness, thrust upon her as they are, like paregoric or porous plaster. "If there be people who can take their pleasures medicinally, let them read by prescription and grow fat." Our authoress can do her own quarrying. One of the darts thrown at this charming writer is, that she would have children pore through books at their own sweet, wild will, unoppressed by that modern infliction—foot-notes. That, when a child would meet the word dog, an asterisk would not hold him to a foot-note occupying a page and giving all that science knows about that interesting animal. This is precisely the privilege that your modern critic will not allow. He will have his explanations, his margins, "build you a bridge over a rain-drop, put ladders up a pebble, and encompass you on every side with ingenious alpen-stocks and climbing irons, yet when perchance you stumble and hold out a hand for help, behold! he is never there to grasp it." What does a boy, plunging into Scott or Byron, want with these atrocities? The imagery that peoples his mind, the music that sweeps through his soul, these, and not your stilted erudition, are the milk and honey of boyhood. "I once knew a boy," says Miss Repplier, in that sparkling defense, 'Oppression of Notes,' "who so delighted in Byron's description of the dying gladiator that he made me read it to him over and over again. He did not know—and I never told him—what a gladiator was. He did not know that it was a statue, and not a real man described. He had not the faintest notion of what was meant by the Danube, or the Dacian mother or a Roman holiday; historically and geographically, the boy's mind was a happy blank. There was nothing intelligent, only a blissful stirring of the heartstrings by reason of strong words and swinging verse, and his own tangle of groping thoughts." Had the reader stopped the course of the swinging verse to explain these unknown words, boyish happiness would have flown, oppression become complete, and let us hope sleep would have rescued the bored boy from such an ordeal. [176]

Cowley, full of good sense, is on the side of our essayist. In his essay "On Myself" he relates the charm of verse, falling on his boyish ear, without comprehending fully its purport. "I believe I can tell the particular little chance that filled my head first with such chimes of verse as have never since left ringing there. For I remember when I began to read, and to take some pleasure in it, there was wont to lie in my mother's parlor (I know not by what accident, for she herself never in her life read any book but of devotion), but there was wont to lie Spenser's works; this I happened to fall upon, and was infinitely delighted with the stories of the knights, giants, and monsters, and brave houses, which I found everywhere there (though my understanding had little to do with all this), and by degrees with the tinkling of the rhyme and dance of the numbers, so that I think I had read him all over, before I was twelve years old, and was thus made a poet as immediately as a child is made an eunuch." The charm of Miss Repplier's pages lies in their good sense. She is a lover of the good and beautiful, a hater of shams and shoddies. Everything she touches becomes more interesting, whether it be Gastronomy, Old Maids, Cats, Babies, or the New York Custom House. Like Lamb and Hazlitt, a lover of old books, finding in them the pure silent air of immortality, she will welcome graciously any new book whose worth is its passport. [177]

Agnes Repplier was born in the city of brotherly love more than thirty years ago. Her father was John Repplier, a well-known coal merchant. Her earliest playmates were books. Her mother a brilliant and lovable woman, fond of books, and, as a friend of her's informed me, a writer of ability, watched over and directed the education of her more brilliant daughter. Under such a mother, amid scenes of culture, Agnes grew up, finding in books a solace for ill-health that still continues to harry her. When she entered the arena of authorship, by training and study she was well equipped. At once she was reckoned as a sovereign princess of "That proud and humble ... Gipse Land," one of the very elect of Bohemia. She came, as Stedman says, "with gentle satire or sparkling epigram to brush aside the fads and fallacies of this literary *fin de siècle*, calling upon us to return to the simple ways of the masters." Her charming volumes should be in the hands of every student of literature as a corrective against the debasing theories and tendencies [178]

of modern book-making. The student will find that if she does not know all things in heaven and on earth, she may plead in the language of Little Breeches:

“I never ain’t had no show;
But I’ve got a middlin’ tight grip, sir
On the handful o’ things I know.”

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LITERATURE AND OUR CATHOLIC POOR.

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We are told, with some show of truth, that this age shall be noted in history as one given to the study of social problems. The contemporary literature of a country is a good index to what people are thinking about. Magazines are, as a rule, for their time, and deal with the forces upward in men's minds. The most cursory glance at their contents will show the predominance of the Social Problem treated from some phase or other. The best minds are engaged as partisans. Social science may be said to be the order of the day. It has crushed poetry to the skirts of advertising, romance is its happy basking ground. The drama has made it its own. There are some, fogies of course, so says your sapient scientist, who believe that the social science so spasmodically treated in current literature is but a passing fad, and that poetry shall be restored to her old quarters, romance amuse as of old, and the drama be winnowed of rant, scenic sensation, and bestial morality. These dreams may be vain, but then even fogies have their hopes. A branch of this science—the tree is overshadowing—treats of the literature and the masses. Anything about the masses interests me.

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When I read the other day, "Literature and the Masses; a Social Study," among the contents of a *fin de siècle* magazine, I would have pawned my wearing apparel rather than go home without it. Its reading was painful, as all reading must be where the author knows less about his subject than the ordinary reader. Later, another article fell in my way, dealing with the same subject. Its author had more material, but his use of it was clumsy. It was while reading this article, that I noted the utter stupidity with which things Catholic are treated by the ordinary literary purveyor. These ephemeral pen-wielders seem to hold the most fantastic notions of the Church. What Azarias says of Emerson is true of them: "They seek truth in every religious and philosophical system outside of the teachings of the Catholic Church." They will not drink from Rome. To correct all this author's errors is not my plan. In this paper I restrict myself to a part of the same subject, Literature and Our Catholic Poor. I prefer an independent study to patchwork. It is the usual thing in such studies to present credentials. I present mine. Five years' life in the tenement districts of New York and other great cities of the Union, in full contact, from the peculiarity of my position, with the poor. During these years I was led to make a study of their reading. This study, to be intelligible, must be prefaced by a few hints on their life and environment. It is useless to deny the often-repeated assertion that their lot in the great cities is hard and crushing. It is a continual struggle for nominal existence. The children commence work at a premature age. Their education is meagre and broken. Marriage is entered in early life, without the slightest provision. To these marriages there is little selection. The girls have been brought up in factories, household restraint frets their soul. Of household economy, so necessary to the city toiler, they know nothing. If ends meet it is well. If not, there is trust and sorrow. The day of their marriage means a few stuffy rooms, badly ventilated, filled with the most bizarre and useless furniture put in by shylock, who will, in the coming years, exact ten times their value. Thus started, children are born, puny and sickly, prey of physician and druggist. If these children survive, at an early age they follow the father and mother by entering foundries and factories to toil life's weary round away. When they die the family is pauperized for years. It is a common plaint of the tenements that "I would have been worth something if my boy had not died." Every death is not only a drain on the immediate family, but on their friends, who are supposed to turn out and give "the corpse a decent burial." The decent burial means coaches, flowers and whiskey. The most casual observer must notice the giant part liquor plays, in the lives of the poor. Liquor and its concomitant, tobacco, in the deadly form of cigarettes, are known to the boy. He has been brought up in that atmosphere. His father has his cheap, ill-smelling cigar and frothy pint for supper. His mother and a few gossiping friends have chased the heavy day with a few pints "because they were dry." He delights in being the Mercury of the "growler." Hanging by the balustrade he sips the beer, "just to taste it." That taste, alas, lingers through life. As he grows older it becomes more refined. His teachers are the sumptuous, dazzling bar-rooms guarding each city corner, while betraying the nation. The owners of these vice palaces are wise in their generation. For his stuffy home, broken furniture and cheerless aspects, they show him wide, airy rooms, polished furniture, bevelled glass mirrors, dazzling light, music, gaiety, companionship, and the illusive charm of revelry. The reading matter in such places is on a par with the other attractions. It is sensational. Its authors are skilled in the base development of the passions. It smacks obscenity, and early dulls the intellect to finer things. To be enmeshed in its threads is the greatest sorrow of a young life. When the bar-room does not allure, there is another siren to be taken into account. It is the promiscuous gathering at the neighbor's house who has been so unfortunate as to find a music dealer to trust him with a piano at three times its price. Here gather the Romeos and Juliets to

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"Sing and dance
And parley vous France,
Drink beer Alanna
And play on the grand piano."

The songs are of no literary value, sometimes comic, sometimes sentimental, more often with an ambiguity that is more suggestive than downright obscenity. Of the so-called comic, "McGinty" was a great hit, while "After the Ball" was its equal in the sentimental line. It is a

strange sight to see pale, flaccid, worn-out Juliet thrum the indifferent piano, while near her in a dramatic posture, learned from some melo-dramatic actor, stands twisted Romeo, singing some sentimental song, balancing his voice to the poor performer, and indifferent piano. To hear such stuff—I speak from auricular demonstration—is no small affliction. After songs come dances, weary night flies quickly away. Work comes with the morrow. Sleepy and tired they buckle on their armor and go out uncomplainingly to tear and wear the sickly body. Thus generation after generation passes to the tread-mill and beyond. It is not to be expected that the literature of such people would be of a high grade. To say that they have no time to read were a fallacy, inasmuch as they do read. Here the question arises, what do they read? I answer that they possess a literature of their own, both in weekly journals and published volumes. They support, strange as it may seem, a school of novelists for their delectation. These journals are a medley of blood-and-thunder stories, far-fetched jokes, sporting news, etiquette as she is above stairs, marriage hints, palmistry, dress making, now and then a page of original topical music hemmed with fake advertising. The point to be noted in these journals, a shrewd business one, they are never beyond the reader's intelligence. Their novels must be simple and amusing. That is, their author must know how to spin a story. He must amuse. Each weekly instalment must have its comic as well as tragic denouement. The hero must be a villain of the most approved type, neither wanting in courage nor in cunning. The heroine must be on the side of the angelic, mesmerized by the prowess of her hero. A vast quantity of supers are constantly on hand, in case of emergency. Murders, suicides, broken hearts and lesser afflictions are of frequent occurrence. The hero may perish at any moment, provided a more reckless devil takes his place. Half a dozen heroines may come to grief in one serial. An author must be lavish. Provided he is, style is not reckoned, and bad grammar but adds a taking flavor. Woe be to the editor who would inflict on his readers a novel of the school of Henry James or Paul Bourget. The masses hold that the primary condition of fiction is to amuse. They are right. These journals are carried in ladies' satchels, they stick out of young men's pockets. On ferry-boats, in street cars, in their stuffy rooms, in the few minutes snatched from the dinner hour they are eagerly read. They may be crumpled and thrust into the pocket at any moment. No handwashing is necessary to handle them. Their cost is light, five cents a week. By a system of interchange a club of five may for that cost peruse five different story papers. This system is in general practice. The greatest amount for the least money strongly appeals to the poor. The novels in book form are of a much lower grade than the serials. Written by profligate men and women, in a vile style, their only object is to undermine morality. Falsity to the marriage vows, deception, theft, the catalogue of a criminal court, is strongly inculcated as the right path. These novels, generally in paper covers, are showy and eye-catching. A voluptuous siren on the cover, with an ambiguous title allures the minor to his ruin. I have known not a few book-sellers who passed as eminently respectable, do a thriving trade in this class of books. The fact that they kept the stock in drawers in the rear of their stores told of their conscious complicity in the destruction and degradation of our youth. These novels are cheap, within the reach of the poor, a point to be noted. The question arises, what can be done to counteract this spread of pernicious literature among our Catholic poor? There is but one answer on the lips of those who should be heard; fight it with good literature—yet literature not beyond their understanding. Put in their hands good novels, whose primary purpose is to amuse. The good-natured gentleman who would put into the hands of the poor as a Christmas gift *Fabiola*, *Callista*, *Pauline Seward*, etc., would make a great mistake. These books would become playthings for greasy babies or curled paper to light the "evening smoke." The bread winners will not be bored. They have worked hard all day, and at evening want some kind of amusement. The book must be nervy, a tonic. Dictionaries are scarce in the haunts of the poor. Footnotes are an abomination. The author must whisk the reader along. A rapid canter, only broken by hearty laughter or honest pity. Have we any Catholic novels that will do this? It is the plaint of the know-nothing scribes, tossing their empty skulls, to write a capital No. From experience I answer yes. The novels of that true writer of boys' stories, *Father Finn*, are just the thing for the poor. They want to read of boys that are not old men, none of your goody-goody little nobodies. A boy is no fool. In real life he would not chum with your sweet little Toms, your praying, psalm-singing Jamies, and your dying angelic Marys. Nor shall he in books, thank heaven. *Father Finn* has drawn the boy as he is. His books would be joyfully welcomed, if published in a cheap paper form, say at twenty-five cents per copy. List to the wail of the fattening Catholic publisher, who will read that idea. It is, however, a sane one. If Protestants can make cheap books, thereby creating the market, why not Catholics? Until this is done it is useless to cry out, as authors do, nobody will buy my books. Yes, your books will be bought if they are reasonable in price, and properly placed before the public. As it is, your books are snuffed out by the immense amount of trash handled by the ordinary Catholic bookseller, and you help this by writing deep-dyed hypocrisy of the trash-makers. *Azarias* mildly expresses my idea in one of his posthumous papers: "Catholic reviewers must plead guilty to the impeachment of having been in the past too laudatory of inferior work." The stories of that sterling man, *Malcolm Johnston*, called *Dukesborough Tales*, I once gave to a wretched family. On visiting them a week after, what delight it was to hear the health-giving laughter they had found in them. To another family I gave *Billy Downs*. Asking how they liked them, I was told that they were as "fine as silk." A youth of fourteen, his face decidedly humorous, volunteered the criticism that "Billy had no grit." During the illness of four or five patients of mine I read the assembled family "*Chumming With a Savage*," "*Joe of Lahaina*." When I came to the final sentence in *Joe*, where *Charlie Stoddard* leaves him "sitting and singing in the mouth of his grave—clothed all in death," two of the youngsters burst into tears, while the father much agitated, said, "Doctor, I don't see how he had the heart to leave him." They were so much attached to the book that, although it had been my choice old chum in many a land, I gave it to them. Lately I gave "*Life Around Us*," a collection of stories by *Maurice F. Egan*. It was a great success. *Egan* has the true touch for the masses when he wishes. Another little story much prized

was Nugent Robinson's "Better Than Gold." To these might be added in cheap form those of Marian Brunowe, May Crowley, Helen Sweeney, a promising young writer, and Lelia Bugg. How to reach the poor with these books presents few obstacles. Cardinal Vaughan has solved the difficulty in England. Attach to every parish church in city and country a library of well selected interesting Catholic books. Let their circulation be free of charge. The great majority of Catholic poor attend some of the Sunday Masses. If the library is open, they will gladly take a book home. The reading of this book will instill a taste. They will tell their friends of it. It will be the subject of many a chat. If it is cheap, not a few of the neighbors will wish to purchase it. Their criticism, always racy and generally correct, will, as Birrell has pointed out in one of his essays, be its sure pass to success. After a year's friendly intercourse the library will become a necessity, and they will gladly pay a fee for their week's delight. The author that has won their hearts will be on their lips, his new books, on account of old ties, will be eagerly purchased and loudly proclaimed. [200]

Families that are shy and backward as church-members, might be visited and literature left. This I hold is priestly work. If they come not to Christ, let us, as the teachers of old, bring Christ to them. It will be read. After your footsteps can be no longer heard curiosity will come to your assistance. The little maid will pick it up, the parents will read. I have again and again left those charming temperance manifestoes of Father Mahony in homes of squalor and misery, the outcome of weekly drunks. These stray leaves, I am happy to write, in many cases marked the beginning of better things.

To counteract the serials is, to use an expression, a horse of another color. Our weeklies are, as a general rule, dull. The poor take a squint at some of the dailies. This squint gives them the gist of their world. They do not care, as they will tell you, "to be reading the same thing over twice." Our weeklies are too often a rehash of the dailies. Another remark that I often heard among them is, "that our weeklies have too much Irish news." They are not wanting in patriotism to the home of many of their fathers, yet what interest could they be supposed to take in the long-winded personal rivalries of Irish statesmen, or the rank rant of the one hundred orators that strut that unhappy isle. A bit of McCarthy, or Sexton, will be welcomed, but they rightly draw the line at page after page of rhodomontade. If, instead of this stuff, living articles were written, short stories, poems, biographies of eminent Catholics, their Church and her great mission made known, then would the poor read, and a powerful weapon against the serials be placed in our hands. There are some of our weeklies that cannot be classed under this criticism. They are few. [202]

The Ave Maria, founded and conducted by one who is thoroughly capable, could be easily made a great favorite with the poor. Its contents are varied and replete with good things. I have used it with effect. Another and later venture is the Young Catholic, by the Paulists, which will fill a want. Its editor is full of sane ideas. Boys' stories, full of adventure, spirited pictures, will win it a way to all young hearts. These papers may never reach the poor, if folding our arms we stand idly by, expecting the masses by intuition to know their value. Could not parish libraries have cheap editions for free distribution among the poorer denizens? To defray expenses, a collection might be taken up twice a year. No good Catholic will begrudge a few cents, when he knows that it will go to brighten the hard life of his less fortune-favored brother. The critic who does nothing in life but sneer may call this Utopian. It is the old cuckoo call, known to every man that tries to help his fellows. Newman, Barry, Lilly, Brownson, Hecker, Ireland, Spalding, all the glittering names on our rosary have heard it, and went their way, knowing full well that if the finger of God traces their path, human obstacles are of little weight. The plan, however, is eminently practical. In one of the poorest parishes in the diocese of Ogdensburgh, it has been tried and with abundant success. I remember well last summer with what pleasure I heard a mountain urchin ask his pastor, "Father, can I have the *Pilot*?" This urchin had made the acquaintance of James Jeffrey Roche and Katherine E. Conway. He was in good company. Infidelity is going to our poor. Her weapon is the printing press. The pulpit is well, but its arm is too short. [204]

Shall we stand idly by and lose our own, or shall we buckle on the armor of intelligent methods as mirrored in this paper, thereby not only delivering our own from its coarseness and petrification, but carrying the kindly light to those who know us not? Let us remember in these days, when socialism claims the poor, that our Church is not alone for the cultured, it is pre-eminently her duty to lead and guide the masses. This, to a great extent, must be done by the newspaper and book-stall.

Our Church must man the printing press with the same zeal which animated the Jesuit scholars, explorers and civilizers of three hundred years ago; "then will our enemies be as much surprised as disheartened."

BY WALTER LECKY,
Author of "Adirondack Sketches," "Down at Caxton's," etc.

PRESS COMMENTS:

A new beam, a new factor in American Literature.—*Maurice F. Egan.*

Charming essays.—*C. Warren Stoddard.*

They deserve book form.—*Brother Azarias.*

Destined to win early recognition.—*R. Malcolm Johnston.*

Lecky imitates himself. He is pungent, witty, humorous and epigrammatic, with dashes of occasional eloquence.—*Eugene Davis in Western Watchman.*

"Green Graves in Ireland," by Walter Lecky, is a delightful little book.—*Western Watchman.*

It is a well written, and pathetic tribute to the heroes who suffered in the holy cause of freedom.—*Donahoe's Magazine.*

There is mingled pathos and humor in the volume.—*Ave Maria.*

The author's style is bright and pungent; and this literary flavor he preserves throughout the pages of this very attractive book. He understands the spirit and sparkle of the Irish mind, and he has caught a good deal of it in his jaunting car excursions about the Irish capital.—*Catholic World.*

A clever monograph. Walter Lecky has written exquisitely.—*Catholic News, N. Y.*

The book will interest all who really love the country of the bards, and will be an excellent stimulus to young persons inclined to forget the fame of their ancestors.—*Boston Pilot.*

[208]

Large literary ability.—*Union Times.*

An important and valuable addition to the growing literature of America.—*True Witness.*

The paper and type of the little volume are excellent; surprisingly so, for the low price at which it may be procured. For the rest we can say that Mr. Lecky's style invests his subject with a charm which, we think, will induce the most unwilling reader who has opened his little book to persevere through its entire contents.—*American Ecclesiastical Review.*

Walter Lecky is comparatively a new name in literature, but it is one destined to stand for good and beautiful things, especially the Catholic readers. His Adirondack sketches in the Catholic World are one of the brightest features of that excellent magazine.—*Boston Pilot.*

Transcriber's Note: Text uses "her's" where most would expect "hers."
Additionally, many of the quotation marks do not match. They were retained as printed.

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