

### Bixby's Second Retreat.

#### Poets of Nebraska.

Poetry is the language of the soul, —and here in the cold, bleak desert sands of Nebraska we are learning the syntax of that language. Iowa may blush for her Catern, who, in a dazed moment, projected that most prosaically intensive "Songs of Summer;" Missouri can acknowledge with Prof. J. S. Soudy's "Raynes of Missouri" that no poet ever appreciated her; but proud Nebraska, home of presidential timber and blizzards, seat of the "Aristocracy of Letters," exults triumphantly in her seer-like sons who read beauty into her sand-hills, sap springs of soul emotion from her ditches, endow her barren acres with plenty, and hail her the Promised Land, God's foot-stool, Heaven's side-snooze. Below, a few of her most gifted poets pass modestly in review while all the spectators in the grand stand clasp their hands and shout "Long live the Poets of Nebraska!"

#### NARVER GORTNER.

Preacher, lover, poet—and the rest the reader may easily infer from the extracts given below, Rev. Mr. Gortner after a keen, vivid personal experience in both fields, stands as the first great man who could discriminate accurately between *true love* and the *colic*: a cloud of naked memories arises as he sings:—

"Sweet Marion—dead?—ah, not forgot!  
Her spirit presence yet I trace  
And gaze into that upturned face—  
She sighs and speaks—I know not what."

And one can almost interpret the poet's deeper spiritual ideal in the objective love ditty so pathetically entitled, "Disappointment"—Sponge away your tears as you read—

"Coy Alice, laughing Lizzie  
Dark Gretchen's golden tresses,  
Fair Dorothy, sweet Alice,  
Have known my heart's caresses.  
Tonight, they all are dead to me  
And I to them—Life's sea  
Is scattered with the dark  
Cold wreck of love and shrouds  
And death-strewn breakers strand my bark."

The deep melancholy wail may be partially accounted for in the fact that the reflection was written after marriage and outside the censorship of the Republic of Letters.

#### HERBERT BATES.

The University cherishes only kindly memories and here and there red-ink traces of the "transplanted poet" who drew an inspiration from the west to pen his household "songs of Exile." The days of his miraculous rescues during the Salt Creek flood in Ninety-one are associated not unfavorably within the

"Haish sweet scent of the Atlantic's waves."

A child in sensitiveness, a giant in soul, a master in sarcasm, a mover of men, Mr. Bates was somewhat ponderous and inflexible in his objections. He saw Nebraska as it is; not as we wish it were. He drew the picture—

"The golden sunflowers myriad blossoming blaze  
From hill to golden hill,  
And melt at last into the golden haze  
Of the great distance.

—But he couldn't get down to business. He could not read the moods of the "blossoming to ze"—he didn't care to—the loneliness of a western exile overwhelmed him.

#### PROSSER HALL FRYE.

A miraculous blending of the human and the divine—subjective, introspective, imaginative and appreciative of the *reader* moods of the soul. Sitting

in his cheerless office, he dreams he sees in the circling wreath of cigarette smoke which chase each other to his vision—

"A magic spell, Love's Paradise—  
To sip the nectar of those peach-tree blossoms  
To read a message in those hazel eyes  
And think, and hope, and dream—and only dream."  
He lights another—

"Hark, hark, sad soul, to pierce thy dark  
And softentime impervious hue—  
Sweet, kiss these rose-checks, press this hand  
Just like you used to do."

#### WILLIAM REED DUNROY, S. A. E.

The latest, youngest, most adored, aside from our own Bixby, he stands easily in the lead. Mr. Dunroy with his classic features, penetrating smile, and eye for business is a loving interpretation of the true saying "a poet is *born*." We all love him. He is one of us—except he is fashioned from costlier star dust. Since the Cancellor's free chapel advertisement of "Corn Tassels," the Ivy Press has begun on the second edition. This beautiful collection "Done into print" "To the state I love" stands a monumental credit to western literary genius, and every Nebraskan should rejoice in this divine reincarnation. Read the conscious value in the "Foreword!" "I have found them copied widely in papers and periodicals" and at once the reader is head over heels in

"I'm sick of love, Oh hate me for a while,  
Draw thy full lips in two thin lines of red;  
And let the scoundrel-rog in thine eyes leap  
In flames of fire from thy head."

We only love him the more, and we shudder to think that some day he too will be—

"Alone in the night when all is dark,  
And your bones lie in the ground,  
When the gnawing of worms in your coffin-lid  
Is the only ghost of a sound."

And our hearts are strangely moved to pity for—  
"Her eyes are dim—the hollow orbs  
Will soon hold crawling worms,  
And in the roses of her lips will creep  
The slimy things."

But this does not wholly explain:—  
"Prate not to me of heaven or hell  
By bitter cost

I've known their ecstasies and woes—  
I've loved and lost."

Human weakness is depicted in the fervent "Prayer" and a deep temperance lesson incidentally indicated.

"Oh to be drunk one hour—one moment—oh God  
To live—to suffer—at last be forgiven."

The author's sweeter touches and papalship with nature are shown in the inspired interpretation of the pansy's blushes—

"Purple for shadows, gold for sunshine,  
Wait for the cloud—on high,  
Brown for the earth which gave them birth  
And blue for the azure sky."

Our hearts thrill strangely with his love songs, our courage rises for Cuban Freedom, we learn to hate injustice, to love the beautiful and good, and we are reminded of the harmoniously blended weakness and strength, by hypocrisy and sincerity, love and hate, of the human heart. In his dialect poetry, he is apt and expressive—and we are forced to feel the full truth along with the poetry in the touching tribute to the Sigma Chi—

"Far down in their hearts they tender  
Are good and righteous enough,  
They're like a hard old walnut,  
Th' shell alone bein' hull."

But whatever else may be said, Mr. Dunroy has written *real* poetry and he is selling it fast. Stand up for Nebraska,—and shout the praises of her gifted son.