

1813. During the last period, the desire for the honor of the office had grown, and the number of literary men so greatly increased that there were many aspirants for the honor. The Lord Chamberlain conferred it upon Nahum Taylor, a man whose ability has been much questioned. Now the office began to lose its close connection with the theatre and moved over to the church and royal household. But interest soon began to wane. The fourth period begins with Southey in 1813. Wordsworth followed him and the last is Alfred Tennyson. The interest has almost died out and it is probable that the custom of laureating will end with this noted writer.

#### ONE LIFE,—MODERN BUT ROMANTIC.

Our poets look to ancient days for themes fit to celebrate in song and verse. Modern events are usually thought to lack the romance which is to be found in the deeds of the age of chivalry. We wait for the vista of years to draw a misty veil over the prosaic features of a hero's life. This is, however, but because our eyes are too gross to look at the life of one near to us, and, ignoring the commonplace, admire the grand and poetical. What is there in the name of John Brown to cause the nerves to thrill and the eye to kindle at the remembrance of heroic deeds? There have been hundreds of John Browns, a dozen or so quite distinguished. But America can claim, and should be proud to claim a man of this most common name, whose character was as unique and whose life was as romantic as is possible in this present matter-of-fact age.

John Brown, whom the school-boy knows only as "the man who took Harper's Ferry in 1859 and was hung for it," was of pure Puritan stock, but four generations removed from the Mayflower. He possessed nearly all the virtues and but few of the faults of the sturdy New Englanders. As an example of straightforward, sterling honesty, deep earnestness of purpose, fervent piety and unselfish desire to better mankind, he is indeed hard to equal. More than a third of his life was spent as an unpretentious Connecticut tanner. He afterwards lived in Ohio and New York, following the trades of wool buying and farming. While in New York we first hear of efforts on his part to help the blacks. Some freed slaves had been placed on farms in the wilderness of western New York, and these Brown aided in every possible way to get started. But when a boy, a hatred for slavery had grown up from contrasting with his own lot that of a slave boy in a family he visited. It was natural that such views should strengthen in one to whom injustice of any kind was hateful, and for many years previous to his death, his sole aim and desire in life was to help drive the curse of slavery from our land. We hear of him only as a warrior, but for years he paid fines regularly rather than perform military duty. He firmly resolved never to fight except for liberty. About the time most men rest on their oars and give way to the rising generation, John Brown received word from his sons who were living in Kansas, that on account of their anti-slavery principles, the border ruffians were making them trouble. He immediately seized the opportunity to work for freedom, and went to Kansas for the sole purpose of aiding to drive out slavery and its sympathizers from Kansas. During the next few years his life is as varied and exciting as pure fiction could make it. He showed consummate skill as an organizer, commander and master of guerilla warfare. A dozen men with Brown at their head were more than a match for three times that number of Missourian ruffians. At one time we hear of him commanding the defence of Lawrence; now forcing a gang of ruffians to kneel and pray at the muzzle of a gun; then by a bold sortie across the line carrying off a negro

family to save them from sale and separation; we read of him at Ossawatimie, where in a desperate but victorious fight he gained the soubriquet by which he is often known. Probably all during this time the idea which was to cost him his life, was gaining definite form and strength. It is thought that he had for ten years been considering how best to free the slaves by their own exertions. After the slave stealing escapee, with a price set on his head by the government, he went through New England trying to obtain aid for his plan of making the tenure of slaves unsafe, and never at that time did he disguise his identity. He obtained substantial aid from some of the most prominent abolitionists of Massachusetts. All did not approve of his plan, but after talking with him and finding every objection met, and that Brown could not be turned from his purpose, they decided that it would be better to try to make the daring attempt successful, than to let him, unaided, make a failure.

Many things helped to make it difficult to carry out the long cherished plan of the determined old man. In spite of little money, desertion of friends, threats of exposure to the government, and all else that hindered, the untiring perseverance and energy of this one man carried the plan into execution.

The intentions of Brown have been much misunderstood. He did not intend to rebel against the government. The seizure of the arsenal was not for the purpose of getting the arms so much as by the boldness of the stroke to rouse the whole country to a realization of the greatness of his plans. His idea of what could be done by a few men had been gained by actual experience in Kansas. He hoped to rouse the negroes to a desire for freedom, and had they been prepared to make the resistance Brown expected, it is quite possible that all he anticipated would have taken place. The blow had to be struck some four months before the appointed time because of the growing suspicions of the Virginians among which his little, well disciplined army of twenty-two men were living. Thus he did not have time to inculcate his doctrines as he wished. The negroes were afraid to come out boldly and desert their masters. Then Brown had not realized what an opposition he would arouse, an unreasoning rage which could kill a man advancing with a flag of truce, and slaughter in cold blood a prisoner taken.

Nearly all have heard something of that wonderfully valiant defense, and the heroic conduct of Brown himself; with one son lying dead in his sight, holding another by the hand and feeling the pulses die away, he grasped his musket still and encouraged his men to sell their lives as dearly as possible. He made no complaint at the treatment he received after capture, or of the unfairness of his trial. He had but one regret, he said, that he had not succeeded better.

One cannot read of the always noble bearing of this man without feeling sincere admiration. Ever the same, ever striving towards the one great purpose of his life from which he himself could expect nothing but hardship and suffering, his was a life sacrificed for the good of others, and in spite of his lowly station, was clothed with true nobility. He failed in his immediate object, but who can say that his act was not one of the greatest factors in causing that mighty conflagration which swept slavery from our land.

#### COMMUNICATION.

The eighth annual state convention of the Y. M. C. A. of Nebraska, convened at Nebraska City last week, was one of the most interesting and profitable and perhaps the most important ever held. It will without doubt be dated back