

these Shropshire songs, wandered to London town and dwelt there a comfortless exile.

"Far in a western brookland,
That bred me years ago,
The poplars stand and tremble
By pools I used to know.

"There, in the windless night-time,
The wanderer, marvelling why,
Halts on the bridge to harken
How soft the poplars sigh.

"He hears: long since forgotten
In fields where I was known,
Here I lie down in London
And turn to rest alone.

"There, by the starlit fences,
The wanderer halts and hears
My soul that lingers sighing
About the glimmering wiers."

That is true poetry, and there is a touch as genuine as Heine's, an expression simple, complete, perfect; a mood, a personality, a lifetime in sixteen short lines. But here is a little poem which Mrs. Ethelbert Nevin had me copy in her own edition of Mr. Nevin's "Narcissus."

"Look not in my eyes! for fear
They mirror true the sight I see;
And there you find your face too clear,
And love it, and be lost like me.
One the long nights thro' must lie,
Spent in star-defeated sighs;
But why should you, as well as I,
Perish? Gaze not in my eyes.
"A Grecian lad, as I hear tell,
One that many loved in vain,
Looked into a forest well,
And never looked away again.
There where turf in springtime flowers,
With downcast eye and gazes sad,
Stands amid the glancing showers
A jonquil, not a Grecian lad."

For exquisite grace of form and delicacy of fancy I scarcely know its equal. This is Mr. Housman's first volume of poetry, but he seems to have learned the important thing at the beginning. There is not one lyric in the collection which has not this absolute genuineness. This Shropshire lad has an existence in literature as actual and indisputable as Childe Harold's. This homesick boy is one of the dwellers on Helicon. But hear him further, and at his best:

"On your midnight pallet lying,
Listen, and undo the door!
Lads that waste the light in sighing,
In the dark should sigh no more.
Night should ease a lover's sorrow;
Therefore, since I go tomorrow,
Pity me before.

"In that to which I travel,
That far dwelling, let me say;
Once, if here the couch be gravel,
On a kinder bed I lay;
And the breast the darning-mothers,
Rested once upon another's,
When it was not clay."

That is what it means to write poetry: to be able to say the oldest thing in the world as though it had never been said before, to make the old wounds of us all bleed fresh, to give a new voice to the *welt-schmerz*, that, perhaps, is the most exalted lyric of the entire collection. Yet he can be as light as he is sad:

"When I was one and twenty
I heard a wise man say:
'Give crowns and pounds and guineas,
But not your heart away.
Give pearls away and rubies,
But keep your fancy free.'
But I was one and twenty,
No use to talk to me.

"When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again:
'The heart out of the bosom
Was ever given in vain.
'Tis paid with sighs a plenty,
And sold for endless rue.'
And now I'm two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true!"

But after all, it is the homesick songs that I love the best:

"'Tis time, I think, by Wenlock town
The golden broom should blow;
The hawthorne, sprinkled up and down,
Should charge the land with snow.

"Spring will not wait the loiterer's time
Who keeps too long away;
So others wear the broom, and climb
The hedgerows heaped with May.

"O tarnish late on Wenlock Edge,
Gold that I never see!
Lie long, high snowdrifts in the hedge
That will not shower on me."

Of this lyric Louise Imogene Guiney—and ah! what songs she has sung herself, that sad, little New England woman!—has said:

"O *Sancta Simplicitas!* Lovely verbal austerity, heroic, quiet, better than dramatic feelings! As old Basse, in his elegy, sweetly invited Spenser and Beaumont, in their Abbey graves, to lie nearer and make room for a greater third, so may our minor bards stand back a little for a young stranger who, in quality, has hardly a rival among them, and touch their rusty lances to the rim of his shining shield."

Here is another, exquisite as it is brief:

"The winds out of the west land blow,
My friends have breathed them there;
Warm with the blood of the lads I know
Comes east the sighing air.

"It fanned their temples, filled their lungs
Scattered their forelocks free,
My friends made words of it with tongues
That speak no more to me."

Sometimes I wonder whether this man is old or young, whether these verses are the first output of youth and loneliness, or whether they are the slow secretions of long, lonely, dreamful years, the cry of an un happiness that has well high exhausted the singer's life; whether he will have more to say, or whether, having told of his solitude, he will be silent, and in this volume has given his whole heart. Well, if he should never be heard from again, there is more poetry in this little book than in any half-dozen volumes of contemporary verse I know of. Again I wonder who and what this man Housman may be. But at least I know that he has eaten the bitter bread of exile, and trod the hostile streets of great cities and hungered for the little village where he was a boy and suffered in the lives of the lads he knew in the years ago and died in their dead. I know that he has dwelt among thousands more solitary than the last man will be, that he has tramped the desert of brick and stone and seen such monstrous distortions of life that he has wept for the west wind and the brown fields and the quiet country stars. And in so far, many of us are his brothers in exile. I only hope that he too, at last, has found how delightful companionship is after loneliness, and how kind Destiny can be in the way least looked for, and how much better life can be than song; that that has come to him which can make exile sweet and rob distance of its weary pain and set the maddening tramp in the streets to music; that an infinite kindness has made him forget the long, black loneliness of those first London years, and that in eyes that look summer into his he sees his Shropshire skies again, and once again believes in life a little.

Glad to see you, old man. How is your health these days?

I really don't know. It has not been near me all winter.—Town Topics.

Ed. Courier,

Lincoln, Nebr.:

I have read with much interest and pleasure your courageous defense of England in its present war with the Boers. Ever since the war of independence, it has been the popular thing for the press, political demagogues, comic papers, comedians on the stage, and clowns in the circus, in season and out of season, to fling abuse and mean jokes at England until the masses have unconsciously become prejudiced and biased against everything English.

Realizing this condition of the public mind, the press as well as the politicians (of both parties) lack the courage to speak openly, fearing the loss of circulation or votes. Wherever England rules one is sure to find civilization, liberty (not license), the protection of life and property, trial by jury, a competent and fearless judiciary, speedy trial and conviction of criminals—in fact, law, order and justice to all, the best conditions under which civilized society may thrive and reach its highest ideals, the educated and cultured being in control.

The conditions under Boer rule are just the reverse. The people of the Transvaal will be immeasurably better off under English rule, which they will discover as soon as they become enlightened. England's cause being just and in the interest of humanity and fair play, will be victorious. Under existing popular prejudice your heroic and fearless defense of our cousin's cause is very refreshing; you are to be congratulated.

Yours very truly, ADOLPH NATHAN.

Chicago, March 2, 1900.

The site tendered the city of Lincoln by Mr. D. E. Thompson, upon which to build the Andrew Carnegie library, was refused by the library board, some say for political reasons; and now a popular subscription is being taken to raise the price of a site. This is to certify that if Mr. Thompson will go in cahoots with Mr. Carnegie and furnish a building and site for a library in Fremont, no questions will be asked.—From Fremont Tri-Weekly Tribune.

THE OLD TOWN ON THE RIVER FLORA BULLOCK.

Sousa, the magician, deigned to stop over for a few hours at the Old Town on the River, to show the people how he waved his wand and what came of it. He was on his way to a better town I wot of and, of course, he must have been in a hurry to reach its gracious portals. So it was a delightful condescension in him to pause in his flight and play his band for us. An afternoon crowd greeted him—an audience chiefly of women and school-girls and boys—for the schools enjoyed a half-holiday. Probably half the crowd were out-of-town folks. A large delegation of Peru normal school students was on hand. Still the house was not overcrowded, and probably it did not pay the band to stop with us. But as for us—well, it always pays to hear and see Sousa play his band.

His published program was the same as that advertised for Lincoln—but encore numbers were granted with Sousa's usual liberality, and so the program degenerated into just an ordinary Sousa march display. I say degenerated, but in the same breath will confess that the encores were acceptable. Sousa would not be Sousa without them.

A town that is just set up over the recent visit of Paderewski and Clarence Eddy might have accepted and enjoyed a much more classical program—one, say, not so plastered with that really unnecessary sign, "new." Let us hope that mangle of Haydn will always re-

main new. There were plenty of us who could take the Haydn straight, even here in the Old Town. Let them compose all the new things they want to, but save the old inviolate, and not be everlastingly trimming them with modern furbelows. It is like "making over" your great-grandmother's wedding dress. And then "A Dream of Wagner"—it was a rather vociferous dream; pardon my bluntness, but I thought it was more like a hash of Wagner. I remember last year they played a majestic "Grand Scene from Parsifal" so that it was not to be forgotten. But that was in the fair city on Salt Creek, and even there the unmusical were uninterested. So Sousa, being wise rather than strictly artistic, gives his audiences the classics in diluted and newly arranged doses. He charms, gives everyone his money's worth, and, so far as he goes, shows us what approximate perfection in music may be. But because one feels that the big band is such a finely constructed and effective instrument he wishes that for a little space in a program it could be made to satisfy especially all who really enjoy fine classical music. I don't recollect that there was anything advertised as "new" in Paderewski's program. Newness is no detriment to a musical composition of real merit, but then it isn't a crown of glory either. It is just that we trust Beethoven, Mozart, Haydn and all because they are old friends. Their names are better than a golden seal. But who, for pity's sake, is—Jones, who wrote something or other "new?"

The name of Mrs. J. R. Sausley has been added to the list of old residents of The Town on the River who have heard the final summons this winter. She passed away at the home of a daughter in Lowville, New York, Monday last, after a long and severe illness. Bright hopes for her recovery had been entertained by her family and friends during the last two weeks, so that the news of her death came as a severe shock to all. Her daughter, Miss Gertrude, a musician who is well known in Lincoln, has gone to St. Louis, where the interment will be made.

There is a special tier of griddles in Hades for painless dentists.—Town Topics.

A suggestion for a new arrangement of current events comes from the North Carolina Sorosis of Wilmington. The events are grouped under a definite head for each month. Music and drama is discussed in January when the season is at its height. For February, March and April, "New Sciences," "Inventions," and "Arts and Artists;" for November, "National Affairs;" December, "Foreign Policies."

J. F. HARRIS,

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