

THE CRUTCH.

Charles Boswell, - - - - - Publisher

U. S. GEN'L HOSPITAL, DIV. 1, SATURDAY, DEC. 31, 1864

Poetry.

In no direction has the spirit of the times been more strikingly manifested, than through that medium of thought called poetry. The heroic incidents of war have taken a tragic and powerful hold on the heart and imagination of our poets, adding fire to the richness and force of Longfellow's pure, true measure, loftiness to Holmes' fantasy, grace to Emerson's severe strain, and a solemn sweetness and melody to Bryant's and Whittier's soul-stirring verse; while Boker, Stoddard, Aldrich and a host of lesser poets have invested the idyllic character of their songs with the *animus* of war, rounding their plastic melodies into peans, almost unequalled in the minor poems of any country.

The poetry of four years ago reads like a fairy-tale woven of the shadowy and fabulous, or wrought from tender, beautiful scenes in nature, made visible by clear, faithful eyes, while there was no cloud in the sky, no breath of moral tempest in the atmosphere. Now, essays, pictures and poems are touched with tragedy and romance worthy the chivalric ages, when the glory and exploits of individuals were versified as fast as the brain of the poet could keep pace with them. The emotions of the heart have their own language, but its dialect varies with the influences surrounding us. The sweet, gleeful note calling us to the shade of trees and the field-side, blends with the bugle-call now, urging with sublime invocation, the sacred claims of humanity, or holding up to the mirror of the times, freedom, transfigured in the reflected light that already pervades the atmosphere of our regenerated land. These songs have thrown no meretricious glare around the terrors of war; though exultant, they do not veil the solemn or momentous issues of it, but, comprehending its grandeur, seek to lift us above the hateful spirit of revenge and bravado.—“Our Maryland” has shared largely in the poetic eulogy of the day; her advent from darkness to light, has been heralded by eloquent tongues all through the land. We give below a few lines of greeting, from an impromptu poem, written by a lady in Massachusetts, after reading of the adoption of the New Constitution of Maryland:

“Maryland's free! Maryland's free!
Spread the glad tidings from sea to sea;
From far Florida's reefs to the forests of Maine,
Let the whole nation hear it, and swell the refrain;
No grander psalm hath Liberty—
Maryland's free! Maryland's free!”

Not less majestic in breadth of imagery, though devoid of the patriotic element, is the sentiment contained in some purely descriptive verses we have been privileged to read, entitled “Maryland Heights,” from which we take the liberty of extracting the following *morceau*:

“While standing on this mountain's brow,
I seemed to reach yon dazzling height,
That smiles upon me, even now,
And mocks as then, proud fancy's flight.
The brothers of this giant peak,
Are Bolivar and Loudoun proud,
Whose giant tongues in thunders speak,
When blazing lightnings rend the cloud,
And flash along night's midnight shroud!”

The next verse is less stately in measure, perhaps, but so even and flowing, that one can almost hear the murmuring waters, as the motive power of love impels them on to the same destiny:

“Between this mount and Loudoun high,
Two rivers mingle their waters into one,
Whispering in unison beneath the sky.
As seek o'er golden sands their ocean-home,
The Shenandoah and Potomac's wave
Flow 'neath this giant's star-lit height
Eleven hundred feet! The sea-birds lave
Their snowy wings from weary flight,
And upward soar through realms of light!”

The fancy with which the poet elaborates the same ideas in the next verse, evinces a luxuriant tendency, restrained and tempered by the truest taste, giving to each line a character of its own, highly classical, and worthily expressed in the burnished beauty, of the choicest English:

“But morn awakes! The portals wide
Of eastern monarch swing slowly round,
While foaming couriers upward through the tide
Of ether, 'bove its waves profound.
Clears the Horizon's sun-lit verge!
Whilst dew-drops from their manes they shake,
As high 'bove earth, in flames they urge
The chariot of the sun, whose axles make
The trembling realms of nature quake!”

Our memory serves us no further; else we would transcribe for our readers the whole of the lofty tribute, of which we have given a few examples.

Expansive as may be the power of ancient song, fine as were the conceits of Milton and Spenser, the vivifying power of poetry is not extinct, and we can safely believe that even this day of complicity, policy and sectional struggle, has its diviners of the beautiful, and its improvisadores in verse.

For the Crutch.

Christmas Day in our Hospital.

For several weeks past a darker shade than usual has come over the picture of distress and suffering that we are accustomed to witness in the hospitals in Annapolis. Death has been doing his work at a fearful rate. The hundreds recently escaped from the inhuman and barbarous treatment of the “boasted chivalry” of the South, and received for medical care, have been passing away to the spirit world, by scores. The funeral cortege, bearing the remains of twenty, thirty, forty, and even sixty of these men to the cemetery, has been a sight witnessed almost daily, for nearly a month.

One would hardly suppose therefore, that Christmas, at such a time and under these circumstances, would be observed with us as a day of festivity and gladness.—But we kept it in its accustomed way, and we felt that its observance amid these scenes of suffering was especially appropriate. Do any ask why? We answer, that the employment of every innocent means calculated to excite mirth and cheerfulness in a hospital, should be encouraged. If men are dying all around us, we must not forget that there are living all around us too. To cheer, comfort, and encourage them, is the duty of all who labor to relieve them. In Division Hospital No. 1, the day was kept in its time-honored sense. Every arrangement was made with a view to the enjoyment and mirth of all within its precincts. No effort was spared by the Surgeon in charge, who is always on the alert as these holiday periods roll around, that they may be appropriately remembered, to have an abundant supply of everything in the eatable line. From the farm attached to the hospital, where large supplies of vegetables, during the summer were received for the patients, we were furnished with turkeys, geese, chickens and pork. And not only from the farm, but one flock of forty or fifty that used to greet us in our morning walks through the grounds of the hospital, we suppose must have also fallen victims to this season of festivity. We have not seen them since the day before Christmas. Doubtless they have been slain and eaten for their country's good. We thought we saw these familiar denizens of the grass-plots, scattered through the grounds of the hospital, on the tables, spread in the Full-Diet Hall, just before the doors were opened to admit the hungry throng without. They had been kept for this event, and well fed, as we have since learned. Their appearance on the tables, roasted and stuffed, reminded us so much of that expressive French word *embonpoint*, that were sure they must be members of that same old feathered tribe. Our acknowledgments are also due to several benevolent associations for their liberal aid, in providing this Christmas dinner. Turkeys, chickens, butter and hams, were sent by the “Patriot Daughters” of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and also by friends connected with the Christian Commission in Philadelphia. We return them many thanks. Their liberal gifts made many hearts glad, and afforded a Christmas day, with all its home associations to many a true, brave and worthy soldier of the Union. The chapel was decorated with great taste. An arch, with scrolls inserted equi-distant, bearing in glittering letters, the names of some of the most prominent battles, was erected over the pulpit, it was beautifully festooned with evergreen. Above and in the center of the arch the

American flag was handsomely arranged, while just under, was a fine representation of the sun, the rays displaying a very brilliant effect in the evening. The windows and the panel work of the organ-loft, were all decorated in good taste with wreaths of cedar and box-wood. The whole arrangement and work was certainly creditable to those engaged in it. Services appropriate to the day were conducted in the afternoon and evening. We noticed also that the general Dining-Hall where all the well men gather, at the sound of the bugle, to appease their appetites, was handsomely adorned with evergreens and beautiful engravings. But we will not enter further on a description of the day with us. It passed away in the most pleasant manner. All were satisfied and felt that the war with its scenes of suffering, had not deprived, them although in the army, of the enjoyment of a good old fashioned Christmas; such as in times of peace they were wont to pass among friends at home.

COMPLETION OF THE CAPITOL.—From the present indication, the magnificent extensions of the capitol, and the massive dome which crowns it, will be completed by the 4th of March, next. When President Lincoln was inaugurated he was surrounded by unfinished piles of masonry, blocks of marble and piles of iron castings. Croakers predicted that the work would be suspended, and that the building would gradually fall into decay, as the confederates would fix their respective capitol at interior cities. But the administration knew no such word as fail. The military superintendence of the capitol, established by Jeff. Davis, was wisely abolished and practical civilians took control of the work. Although the rebels in arms have at times been within sight of the dome, the work has been steadily carried on. Piece by piece the magnificent dome, which contains about eight millions of iron castings, was raised, and the whole was finally crowned by Crawford's gigantic statue of Freedom. The eastern portico of the Senate wing is completed and ready for use; that of the House is nearly finished; the scaffolding will soon be removed from the interior of the dome, disclosing the noble proportions of the rotunda; and our diplomatic visitors can see that, while conquering rebellion, the government of the United States has continued to adorn and embellish its metropolis.

THE FAMILY OF OLD JOHN BROWN.—The widow of John Brown of historic fame, with several of the family, started overland during the past season, with a drove of cattle and sheep, for California. There have been painful rumors for some weeks past that the family have been robbed and murdered by hostile Indians or rebel guerrillas. The Akron Beacon, says it is enabled to state, from letters recently received in that vicinity, that it has been ascertained that the family, though unable to reach their destination this fall, are in a safe position for wintering, with their flocks, and will resume their journey in early spring.

LONESUM.—My dear boy, did you ever go out at night and lean on the fence for hours in spring-time, when the frogs was singing in the marshy ground, and the spotted night-hawks was a glancing in the air, and the bats was playing tag, and gaze up into the heavens at the grate round moon, and the winking stars, and sigh and want sumthin, and have your ize filled with the juce of your hart, and not think of ennything all the time, and couldn't tell wat ails yu? Did yu ever steal out in a big woods just as the sun fell behind the hill, and set down aginst a tree, and dream ov nothing till the twilight goster begin tu hurry past yu, and the warm air begins tu thicken with the first dark ov the night, and the owl awa orph in the distanze began tu call out the toads, and the slippery snakes, and still set there till fears set you a thinking? Did yu ever draw yure cheer up before the harth stone az the brands began to grow white with ashes, and the krikets had grown tired ov their songs and gone into their holes, and look stiddy at the dieing fire, waiting for yure thoughts tu come back from the weary distanze and put yu to bed? Have yu did all this and didn't know what ailed yu? I can tell yu, mi deer boy, what ailed yu?—it was Lonesum! 'twas yure hart that was thinking!—JOSH BILLINGS.