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THE ROANOKE NEWS.

THURSDAY, APRIL 28, 1910.

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TEN long years ago an Ohio girl married a rich old man with one foot in the grave—so she thought—but he is still buying his shoes by the pair.

DR. GILBERT ROWE, pastor of Tryon Street Methodist Church, Charlotte, is a bold one. He has asked the women of his congregation to take off their hats during services.

THE Dupont trophy, a silver cup, has been awarded to the Lumber Bridge Company of the State troops for making the highest score at the indoor target shoot of any company in the State Guard. The score was 332 out of a possible 350 points.

THE most important case decided by the Supreme Court of North Carolina this term is the case of Barden vs. Railroad Company, handed down last week, the opinion written by Justice Manning.

The question which gives importance to the case is this: Can a railroad by the establishment of relief departments governed by the railroads, and which have certain stipulations governing its members, who are limited to employes of the railroad, release itself from suits for damages when the injury was caused by its negligence? Judge Manning in the opinion for the Court, says: "In our opinion, this stipulation is an ingenious scheme devised by the company to avoid responsibility for its negligence, and as such is inequitable and void."

"MARK TWAIN" died at his home in Redding, Conn., Wednesday evening, April 21st at 6:30 o'clock. Samuel Langhorn Clemens, America's foremost humorist, and known the world over as "Mark Twain," was born in Hannibal, Mo., on November 30, 1835. He began his first regular literary work in 1862, and in 1867 he published his first book, "The Jumping Frog of Calaviros County." Later followed some of his best known works. "Roughing It," "Tom Sawyer," "Innocents Abroad," etc. In a recent biography of himself he wrote pathetically of the death of his daughter Susie, and on the day before Christmas of 1909 the last crushing blow came when his daughter Jean was found dead in a bath tub. The young woman had been a victim of epileptic fits, and had been seized with one while in the bath tub, which resulted in her death.

While his humor made the world happier, outworn by grief and agony, he died of a broken heart.

Make Your Carriage or Buggy New

Get about one dollars worth of L. & M. Carriage Paint in any color. You can make a buggy look as fresh and new as when just from the maker. Get it from E. CLARK, Weldon.

A man marries a woman to carry all her burdens for her, and what happens is she spends all her life trying to keep him well fed.

Children Cry
FOR FLETCHER'S
CASTORIA

A man who is willing to confess he is wrong wouldn't be if he really thought he was.

JOHN HENRY BONER.

Interesting Sketch of a Gifted Son of the Old North State, Prepared and Read by Mrs. Ida T. Wilkins, at a Recent Meeting of the Book Club.

THE truly great man is the poet. The poet speaks to the souls of men—he puts in beautiful language the sentiments that other men feel but cannot express. He reads the messages that God has written in his great book of Nature. He is the interpreter between God and man and his message lives forever in the hearts of men.

We have lately discussed a genius of this class and one to whom we could by virtue of birth lay claim to, as our very own. We are fortunate in being able at this time to study something of the life of another gifted son of the Old North State and one whose life while bounded with a greater number of years, these years were so full of suffering from ill health and the sting of poverty as to render them tragic in their sadness. We are supposed to be familiar with the facts that John Henry Boner was born at Salem, N. C., in 1845; that his schooling was had there; that he learned the printers trade; that he worked on newspapers in Salem and in Asheville; that he was reading clerk in the North Carolina Constitutional Convention in 1868; that he was chief clerk in the North Carolina House of Representatives in 1869-70; that he was in the United States printing office from about that time till 1886, and again in the last years of his life. But about this time his greatest life began, and it is of this later life we would speak today. A recent writer says:

"Dr. Benjamin, a man of letters who, with Boner and others, was a member of the Authors Club in New York and is now editor of publications of the National Museum, says of Boner that he awaits resurrection into fame, that will come as surely as it did to Poe, the greatest of all American poets."

He calls Boner the first man of creative genius who has lived in N. C. To hear Boner read by Dr. Benjamin is to be startled into a sense of our poet's power. We have all read those little things he wrote, because a North Carolinian wrote them, but how few of us have thought it worth while to study, to probe, to find the strength and sweetness beneath, as we should do if the work of a writer from the North or from England were put into our hands! Some of us at home are apt to think that "no good thing can come out of Nazareth." We pronounce nothing fine which is brought forth upon North Carolina soil, until a critic from outside informs us that it is worth while. And so this man sleeps and is almost forgotten. But may we not hasten the resurrection Dr. Benjamin speaks of by giving these few thoughts to his memory?

Mr. Boner would never speak much about his boyhood days. Sometimes he gave glimpses of them in his verses. In one he tells of "A Boy in the Piney Woods," and in another he recalls "A Memory of Boyhood," how he hunted "ripe delicious muscadines,"

Floating on the gentle Yadkin, in an
Olden time canoe
Singing old plantation ballads,
I and charming blue eyed Sue,
Blue eyed golden tress'd Sue,
Now we row from dappled shadows
Underneath the tangled vines,
Up the sunny stream where all
The radience of the morning shines,
On the purple muscadines."

It was while at work in the Government Printing office in Washington City that he published his first book and won fame. He called his little volume "Whispering Pines" and in it he wrote of the

"Fields of corn and crumbling vines,
Along the golden Yadkin,"

where with one he loved, "We walked among the whispering pines."

His best verses were of his own beloved Southland and the Old North State.

He called the South "The moon loved land and thought"

"No lovelier song was ever heard,
Than the notes of the Southern mockingbird,"

and during the long cold winter days in the northern city his thoughts turned to

"A great log fire, a great hearthstone,
A cheering pipe of cob or briar
And a red, leaping, light'ood fire."

But of all places on earth his heart turned first to the beautiful little city in which he was born—the quaint old houses, the shady trees, the beautiful avenues, the venerable old church, the sacred city of the dead, these scenes crowded on his mind as he went to his daily tasks far away from home.

"No more have I in that dear place a home,
And saddest memories cling about it,
But by God's good grace
Beneath those trees in whose dark shade,
The first loved of my life are laid
I want to lie."

Soon after he published his little book of poems called "Whispering Pines" he lost his place in the United States printing office on account of his politics, but his work received recognition from his literary friends at the North, who never failed him. In the storm and stress that followed, one of the foremost literary men in the United States, Edmund Clarance Steadman, of New York City, was delighted with Boner's poetry and secured work for him in New York. During the next few years, he worked on several important literary productions. Among these were the Century Dictionary and the Standard Dictionary. Then he was made editor of the Literary Digest, which was so improved through his critical judgment and excellent taste that he was soon recognized as one of the first men of letters in New York. But the Niagara like thunder of Broadway so distressed both him and Mrs. Boner that the longed for something like their old home among the Carolina hills. They sighed for the trees, the grass, the birds, the katydids, and the song of the cricket on the hearth. At the suggestion of Dr. Benjamin they built a home on Staten Island and called it "Cricket Lodge."

Here he hoped to pass "life's declining years happier than the past had been," but it was not to be. Like too many high strung men of genius, Boner was a man of temper and stubborn will. He differed with the publishers of the Digest about some trivial matters and rather than yield he resigned his position. Then it was that the wolf sought his dwelling where poverty had entered, that Boner heard this sniff, sniff, sniffing at his door, with the "white plague" which he then began to fight the pathos of his life.

The following poem appeared in the Century Magazine for January 1901:

"The wolf came sniffing at my door,
But the wolf had prowled on my track before,
And his sniff, sniff, sniff at my Lodge door sill
Only made me laugh at his devilish will."

"I stirred my fire and read my book,
And joyed my soul at my ingle nook,
His sniff and snarl were always there
But my heart was not the heart of a hare."

"I cursed the beast and drove him away,
But he came with the fall of night each day,
And his sniff, sniff, sniff the whole night through
I could hear between the winds that blew."

And the time came when I laughed no more,
But glanced with fear at my frail lodge door,
For now I knew that the wolf at bay
Would sooner or later have his way."

"The fates were three and I was one,
About my life a net was spun,
My soul grew faint in the deadly snare
And the shrewd wolf knew my heart's despair."

"A crash! and my door flew open wide,
My strength was not as the beast's at my side,
That night on my hearthstone cold and bare,
He licked his paw and made his lair."

"Broken in health and weakened in spirit" he received the aid of his friends to secure again his position in the government printing office. But disease had fastened upon him. Every stricken son of the Old North State turns to her when the end draws near and in Boner the wish was so strong that his friends aided him to raise the means for a trip home. He wrote to a friend: "Am going south next week—in bad shape—Doctor says consumption." Then it was that he came—

"Back to the place of his birth
To the dearest place on earth."

He suffered greatly from pain and poverty but he never lost his cheerfulness. To his friends who were with him while in the hospital in Raleigh he spoke of how he loved that city and its people and hoped to spend his last days there. But he did not, for from dire necessity he was soon up and back at work in Washington. Here in March 1903 he died. He was laid to rest in the old Congressional cemetery by the friends who knew and loved him best. Like most of those who think on higher things the affairs of the world did not gain many of his thoughts and when the sad eyes closed on earth it was found that the wolf was still in its lair on the poet's hearthstone. "The boys" in the printing office bought the lot in the cemetery and raised a fund for necessary expenses. The Author's Club in New York sent material aid to the widow and so among them these men of the North gave to their Southern brother an honored and honorable bed in the earth which held the bones of Calhoun, of Clinton and other heroes of peace and war.

Soon after his death some of his friends began to collect a fund to pay for removing his body from Washington to Salem and place a suitable marble slab over it. Among these friends were some of the most famous men in the United States. His body arrived at Salem on Sunday morning. At the close of a peaceful Sabbath day while the evening shadows were lengthening, with a great concourse of sympathetic friends, gathered near, and with the grave lined with boughs from the cedars about which he wrote so lovingly, the sweet singer was laid to rest. During the service, the old church, whose

"One simple spire points to the skies
Above the lofty trees,"

was filled with friends. Bishop Rondthaler, of the Moravian Church, Governor Glenn and his old friend, Mr. Benjamin, of New York, and other prominent men were present and paid their tributes to this true North Carolina poet. Then he was carried to the place which had been prepared for him in God's Acre and laid to rest, over his grave was placed a simple white marble slab on which is the following inscription, the last lines being written by the famous poet and scholar, Boner's warm friend, Edmund Clarence Steadman:

JOHN HENRY BONER
BORN IN SALEM, N. C.
JANUARY 31, 1845
DIED IN WASHINGTON, D. C.
MARCH 6, 1903.
THAT GENTLEST OF MINSTRELS
WHO CAUGHT HIS MUSIC
FROM THE WHISPERING PINES.

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