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"AMERICAN HISTORY IN BALLADS."

Interesting Lecture by Rev. Dr. E. E. Hale
Last Friday Evening.

A large audience gathered in the Village Hall last Friday evening to hear Rev. Dr. Edward Everett Hale lecture on "American History in Ballads." The lecture was very interesting and was appreciated by all present. During the evening Miss Eugenie Upham rendered two vocal solos in a very pleasing manner. A collection amounting to \$28.00 was taken for the benefit of the "Lend a Hand" society of Boston.

Below is a portion of the doctor's lecture:

"Fletcher I. Saltoun says that if he might write the ballads of a country he does not care who should make the laws. And this statement of his is often repeated. It may have been true of Scotland that the people were governed by their ballads more than by their laws, but for one I do not believe that it was true of Scotland. It certainly was never true of New England.

New England was born after the last of the real ballads had been composed, if one may use that word. For no real ballad was ever written. The ballad is the work of an age when very few people could read and when fewer still could write, and fewer yet did write. In truth, the reason why the immortal ballads of the past ever existed is to be found in the condition of life which made a class of men such as their authors were.

Mr. Lowell says, in his admirable lecture on "The Ballads" which has just now been rediscovered, that the authors of the English and Scotch ballads had these advantages which are almost unattainable today.

1. They were not encumbered with information.

2. They sang well because they never thought about it.

3. In repeating their poems they had the magnetism of their hearers' sympathy. They saw their faces as they spoke.

4. They plunge at once into deep water without preface.

5. They lived when and where there were no newspapers.

6. They state things. They neither harangue nor describe.

7. The ballads are really folk-songs and they are the only true folk-songs.

8. Traveling from place to place as they did, the ballad singers had that education for uplifting which comes from life in the open air and from that only.

For such reasons, he says, I think they did stand face to face with life in a way impossible to us. He also says what is also true, that the old English ballads are models of narrative poetry.

Now it is painfully true that the New

Englander from the beginning has enjoyed very few of these conditions, and also that there was never any such audience in New England as the ballad singers had. The Uncle Remus stories of the South are often models of good narrative. But they are only possible where those to whom they are told could not read. Now there never was any tramp in New England who went about telling stories in poetry, because there was never any group of people who could not read.

These are the reasons why it has been said of New England that 'as for ballads, she has none, and what she has are not good ballads.' There are two exceptions—perhaps three or four. But even when our best 'makers' have tried their hands, the result as compared with the genuine ballad has been like a wax rose when compared with one freshly cut from the garden. Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, Lowell himself, have tried their hands. Longfellow and Whittier have best succeeded in throwing over the hamper of literary training, in plunging into deep water and swimming for life. But their best narrative poems are not ballads.

There are, however, some forty or fifty poems, more or less narrative, which ought to be read in any thoughtful study of New England history. Perhaps it will help teachers, or better yet, young people who have the courage to lay out their own courses of reading, if we bring together a few of the forty and indicate where the rest of them may be found. I know of no single book which contains them. I think it is singular that there is none. Perhaps some clever reader of this article may take such a book in hand. If not, I will do it myself, if there should ever be seventy-two weeks in a year.

When there were perhaps only fifty white people in New England, William Bradford, the governor of Plymouth, wrote some verses descriptive of New England. That is, perhaps he wrote some of them. What I know is that before 1640 and after the 25th of December, 1620, he had written his versified description of New England.

Now would come in for the readers I am caring for Mr. Longfellow's courtship of Miles Standish and Dr. Holmes' references to Pecksnot and Massasoit. There are some very few verses which the revellers of that sad place called Merry Mount left behind them. But they are hardly worth the hunting them up. Anne Dudley, a nice bright girl of eighteen, landed at Charlestown in 1630 with her father and the rest of Winthrop's party. She was afterwards called The Tenth Muse, and there are verses of hers which I could slip into any of the monthlies of today, I think, where the editor was on the lookout for exaggerated expression. But you have to read a good many of the Tenth Muse's poems before you would guess that she had ever tasted sassafras or wintergreen.

that she knew how to pop corn and to make hasty pudding, or that she had ever seen a sashem or a beaver or a blue jay or a rattlesnake, that she had ever worn a moccasin or coasted on a toboggan. Yes! the young reader may hunt up Anne Dudley, afterwards Anne Bradstreet, but he will find no New England narrative and very little New England life.

She died in 1672. Three years after Philip's war broke out. I think that this nice bright Anne Dudley must have liked to hear that nice bright transcendental Anne Hutchinson when she had her charming ladies' club in Boston only two or three miles from her home and when this nice Tenth Muse was twenty-two years old. But her father didn't like Anne Hutchinson's talks and he and his sort sent her and her husband and her babies into exile. Here is a so-called ballad of that exile. The scene of it is between Wash Pond and the Driftway that goes to the cut off behind Point Judith.

ANNE HUTCHINSON'S EXILE.

Home, home—where's my baby's home?
Here we seek, there we seek my baby's home to find.

Come, come, come, my baby, come!
We found her home, we lost her home, and home is far behind.
Come my baby, come!
Find my baby's home!

The baby clings, the mother sings; the pony stumbles on;
The father leads the beast along the tangled, muddy way;
The boys and girls trail on behind, the sun will soon be gone,
And starlight bright will take again the place of sunny day.

"Home, home—where's my baby's home?
Here we seek, there we seek, my baby's home to find.

Come, come, come, my baby, come!
We found her home, we lost her home, and home is far behind.
Come, my baby, come!
Find my baby's home!

The sun goes down behind the lake; the night fogs gather chill,
The children's clothes are torn; and the children's feet are sore.

"Keep on, my boys, keep on, my girls, till all have passed the hill;
Then ho, my girls, and ho, my boys, for fire and sleep once more!"

And all the time she sings to the baby on her breast,

"Home, my darling, sleep, my darling, find a place for rest;
Who gives the fox his burrow, will give my bird a nest.
Come, my baby, come!
Find my baby's home!

He lifts the mother from the beast; the hemlock boughs they spread,
And make the baby's cradle sweet with fern leaves and with bays.

The baby and her mother are resting on their bed;

He strikes the flint, he blows the spark, and sets the twigs ablaze.

"Sleep, my child; sleep, my child!
Baby, find her rest,
Here beneath the gracious skies, upon her father's breast;

Who gives the fox his burrow will give my bird a nest.

Come, come, with her mother, come!
Home, home, find my baby's home!

The guardian stars above the trees their loving vigil keep;

The cricket sings her lullaby, the whippoorwill his cheer.

The father knows his Father's arms are around them as they sleep;

The mother knows that in his arms her darling need not fear.

"Home, home, my baby's home is here
With God we seek, with God we find the place for baby's rest.

Hist, my child, hist, my child; angels guard us here.

The God of heaven is here to make and keep my birdie's nest.

Home, home, here's my baby's home!"

Philip's war was a hand-to-hand fight for their very existence by the whites. Philip had 40,000 Indians and whose warriors knew the whole country, every thicket and every swamp. They had good guns and knew how to use them, and they had plenty of powder and shot. The whites were not so many in number. Many of them had no training in woodcraft, and they had not seen war for nearly forty years. If Anne Bradstreet had lived to that time, we might have had a narrative poem from her. But no! she had died three years before the hot summer day when the hurried message came from Plymouth to Boston to say that war had begun. The saddest slaughter of that war was at the Narragansett Fort in Christmas week of 1675. But I do not remember any verses which describe it. On our side the heaviest loss was when the 'Flower of Essex' died at Bloody Brook. And here is the lamentable Ballad of the Bloody Brook.

It does not need a critical eye to see that it is modern.

BALLAD OF BLOODY BROOK.

Come listen to the Story of brave Lathrop and his men,—

How they fought, how they died,
When they marched against the Red Skins in the Autumn Days, and then
How they fell, in their pride,
By Pocumtuck Side.

"Who will go to Deerfield Meadows and bring the ripened grain?"
Said old Mosely to his men in Array.

"Take the Wagons and the Horses, and bring it back again;
But be sure that no man stray
All the day, on the way.

Then the Flower of Essex started, with Lathrop at their head,
Wise and brave, bold and true.

He had fought the Pequots long ago, and now to Mosely said,

"Be there many, be there few,
I will bring the Grain to you.

They gathered all the Harvest, and marched back on their way

Through the woods which blazed like Fire.
No Soldier left the line of march to wander or to stay,
Till the Wagons were stalled in the Mire,
And the Beasts began to tire.

The Wagons have all forded the Brook as it flows,
And then the Rear-Guard stays
To pick the Purple Grapes that are hanging from the Boughs,

When crack!—to their Amaze,
A hundred Fire-locks blaze!

Brave Lathrop, he lay dying; but as he fell cried,
"Each man to his Tree," said he,

"Let no one yield an Inch;" and so the soldiers died: