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WILMINGTON, N. C.

SUNDAY, AUGUST 7, 1898.

MARGINALIA

There is a growing opinion both in the north and in England favorable to Walt Whitman. Poets of much distinction and critics of decided ability have praised him. So great a poet as Tennyson had a good opinion of his poetic powers, and so delightful a writer and satisfying a critic as Edmund Gosse has written in admiration of the muscular, rioting poet of the north.

"I know I am august. I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood. I see that the elementary laws never apologize."

That may be poetry of a fine order but to us it is doggerel and full of banality. The fault is in us. Take two more lines from another favorite poem of many:

"Youth, large, lusty, loving—youth full of grace, force, fascination. Do you know that Old Age may come after you with equal grace, force, fascination."

We love Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, Tennyson, but we do not love that kind of poetry. It does not appeal to us. His free rhythms make but little melody for our ears, accustomed to the glorious workmanship of inspired singers who wrote masterpieces and who reached the sublime or ascended in graceful ease to a light of pure lyric elevation and rapture. We read with exceeding delight the great masters of versification and melody and whose productions have a most peculiar, exquisite charm "which is exhaled from the best poetry like a perfume."

Professor Brander Matthews has a very interesting critical paper in the New York Forum for August. It is on "New Trials for Old Favorites." It is independent, bold and full of surprises. His contention seems to be that many "old favorites" are greatly exaggerated. While he says a good many striking things it is not probable that the literary men of 1890-1900 are better equipped for opinion than the scores of the truly eminent authors and scholars of 1800-1850. There was been an attempt for a dozen or twenty years to reverse the judgment of the past as to distinguished authors and men of acknowledged genius. Scott, Thackeray, Dickens, Macaulay, Landor, Hazlitt and other very popular and very gifted authors were shoved aside by certain critics, but the best educated men would not have it so, and edition after edition of the first three named have appeared year after year and intellectual men and women delight to read and enjoy. Just now a new and fine edition of Macaulay is to come out in England, showing a reviving demand for one of the most entertaining writers who ever wielded the English tongue. He is not as trustworthy as some of the later, historical Dryadusts, but he is infinitely more engaging. He is even more entertaining, more readable than Gibbon, who

is par excellence the foremost modern historian. The present taste may reject the great writers in the first half of the century, but it does not prove itself sound by rushing after the dozen or twenty novelists of the present day whose writings are read by the tens of thousands. Mr. Matthews is not generally extreme in his statements of the case as to "old favorites," and in some of his contentions he is probably correct. He credits the poet Rogers with the saying that whenever a new book came out he read an old one. We have seen New Englanders crediting this to Emerson. Which is correct? We are disposed to agree with him as to the superiority of "Huckleberry Finn" to "Gil Blas" in richness of humor and in downright fun and amusing adventure. We were gratified to see his liberality and soundness of judgment, as it seems to us, in what he says of Lord Byron as a poet. It is conceded by all men of culture capable of framing a correct judgment that Byron was an unsurpassed letter writer. He is simply superb, a great master in that domain. None of the English letter writers surpassed him. As a poet he has been greatly underrated by Swinburne and certain other poets of the latter-day and by critics either sorely deficient in taste and insight or brave in trying to say something that will amaze and perhaps amuse. Byron may not be so great as Tom Moore and other contemporaries held him to be. He may not be classed by Wordsworthians with their idol whose dullness to them is agreeable as well as his splendid and stately inspirations. The school who put Shelley first, or that other school who give the palm to Keats above all nineteenth century poets, may not admit Byron's equality, and so it may be with the lovers of Coleridge's exquisite art and his lyrical perfection, and so with the Tennysonians who prefer him to all English poets after Shakespeare and Milton, (and this writer begs to be admitted into this circle) may not accord to Byron the right to sit with them in the great Valhalla of poets on the same range of seats, but that Byron was a great poet, and of all moderns the most eloquent in verse, will have to be admitted in spite of all scoffers and gainsayers. Professor Matthews says this:

"Fifty years later Byron was ranked by most British critics below Shelley and Keats and Wordsworth, no one of whom has ever had any vogue outside of his own language. Now, again, as the century draws to an end, there are plentiful signs of a revolution in Byron's favor. But if Byron ever reconquers a fame like that which he possessed just before his death, it will be by virtue of his real qualities and not by favor of accompanying faults—although his earlier notoriety seemed to be due almost as much to the latter as to the former."

He is too competent a critic and endowed with too much of taste to lend himself to deifying Scott, who was, as Wilkie Collins wrote when nearing the end of life, "greater than all of us." He is the world's best story teller, and his only possible rival is Dumas (the elder). But how much purer and wiser was Scott in his wonderful books. Professor Matthews is precisely just in ridiculing the attempt to glorify Scott because of "his tournaments or for his pinchbeck chivalry," but his true fame rests "on his vigorous and veracious portrayal of human character, on his truthful representation of the shrewd and sturdy men and women whom he knew so well and loved so dearly." Scott had the great creative intellect—the greatest doubtless since Shakespeare. His gallery of immortals is richer than that of any other novelist. There was a sanity, a breadth, an insight, a rich fancy, a fund of inexhaustible humor, a splendid imaginative resource in him which united with other gifts made him the great novelist he was. His poetry now laughed at by wittlings and seriously despised by Wordsworth, who said all he wrote was not worth an English penny, has in it a genuine fire and an ardor and spirit more Homeric than that of any modern unless some rival to it may be found in some of Byron's poems.

BREVITIES.

Bismarck left a great fortune—\$7,000,000. He brewed. General J. Wheeler is writing a book on the war. If he writes as well as he fights it will be worth reading, for it will be full of spice.

Our authorities were warned time and again as to the serious dangers from disease attending campaigning in Cuba in the summer. Men who knew implored them to defer until October an advance. But no, the army must go. Now it is being decimated and the troops are to be brought back as fast as possible. A nation at war needs a head.

It looks as if there would be sharp fighting in Porto Rico. General Fitzhugh Lee is billed for an inning when Havana is to be moved against. But if peace comes soon, he will gain no war laurels and have to be content with what he won in the confederate army.

RELIGIOUS EDITORIALS FOR SUNDAY.

It is observable that the usual summer discussions in the north are on as to clerical outings and closing of churches. While some censure the "vacation" business and declare that "pastors are recreant to duty"—that "people are taking a rest from religion because the parson is gone"—that "there will be no gospel here till the cool weather" and even severer things, there are religious and secular newspapers that advocate the long holidays of the preacher. The main plea is that schools, colleges, etc., are shut up so it is well to close churches and take a rest. Another defense is that preaching so much is not necessary as many members do not "make church going the supreme and only test of Christianity." The New York Tribune is strong for a vacation for all preachers. It says "every man is the better for taking a rest, and the pastor, like the banker or business man, returns to his duties with renewed vim and enthusiasm when he comes home from his vacation. His rest benefits not only himself, but his people." Just how much force there is in that we will not undertake to say. The habit or custom is fixed, and now pulpit athletes must have an annual outing. Do the editors of the Tribune and other newspapers favoring the new thing act upon it? Do they shut down presses and all hands go off on a long leave of absence? This writer begins on first January and closes on last day of December to begin next day, and he has not had an "outing" of two days length in over ten years, and physically he is not particularly vigorous and has age with it. He doubts if he is any the worse off because of steady work, although he has lost much pleasure. We do not think the preachers are in any danger of injuring their health from over-work. John Wesley preached eight or ten times a week, and lived to be nearly eighty-seven. There is more danger of a collapse from indolence than from over-work.

A member of a church writes us for our views as to why congregations are small now and for the most part composed of women. He says a great majority of the male members "seem to take no interest in worship, and especially in the mid-week prayer meetings, but will attend regularly and sit up late in hot halls attending lodge meetings, and men and women on Sunday nights prefer their piazzas and gossip to the church and the worship of Almighty God." We do not know why this is unless it be for a want of true religion and piety. With profounder religious life will come profounder views of duty. Men who really love God will love to honor and serve Him. When men really prefer other things to the service of God they show that the religions work in the soul is shallow and defective. We find this in a newspaper clipping, but do not know whence it comes or by whom. The writer says:

"A man of God necessarily means one who has undergone decisive repentance for sins, and one being emptied is enabled to say No. He must also be a man of sacrifice, as well as of obedience and faith. As examples: Those of Moses and Abraham. A man of God must also be a man of prayer, as that of Elijah. He must be a man of service, of work, of activity. A man of God is a man with God."

Is there any thing wrong in that? If a man will live according to that statement he will love the sanctuary and be only happy in trying to glorify God.

The contrast is time and eternity. It is now with you. Tomorrow may never come to you. Time is very short—uncertain, fleeting. Eternity is just beyond, just ahead, is inevitable, inexorable, irresistible. Today passes and that may be the end. Beyond time, beyond today, begins eternity. It will not be long delayed in any event. It is certain, perhaps almost present with you. Solemn thought! "Be ye also ready." The great poet Dante thought so much, wrote so much of the great beyond, the invisible world, the unending, that as he grew older he appeared to carry eternity in his stern, rugged, wrinkled countenance, "lined with passion, scarred with thought," that he was gazed upon by men as he walked the streets of a city as one who had passed at one time beyond earth's confines—that he had been even into hell, and seen unspeakable things, "of so much of which he wrote in his 'Divine Comedy,' as he told of the infernal regions, the middle place according to his religion, the reign of purgatorial fires, and of the paradise of God where he met again the lovely woman of his dreams, Beatrice, the Florentine saint in glory. If men daily lived knowing that they have soon to die, to go to a now unseen and unknown but none the less real world, or place or state—if men daily realized the nearness of eternity, and lived under the imminency of such a conviction, holding it vividly and constantly be-

fore their eyes, how it would affect their lives, influence them for better things and nobler ways and purer ideas and loftier aspirations. Men would abstain from sin, would be intensely in earnest, would be far more faithful, pure and holy.

There is sectionalism in churches in the United States. It dates back more than half a century. The north is the cause of it. What ever disfiguring scars remain, the northern people are responsible. It is so in regard to the Methodists and Presbyterians. The north has been cock-sure all the time and has treated southern Christians with discourtesy and arbitrariness often, and have made declarations that were far more satanic than Christian. If the present war has with it any healing power let it be felt. Unity among brethren "of like faith and order" is always to be desiderated and accepted, but there can be no genuinely hearty union and love while one end of the union makes faces, utters curses and strains in fancied superiority of wisdom, knowledge and rectitude and says to the other end—"We are the Lords."

A GOOD AND NOBLE WOMAN

One of the greatest benefactors that this world has ever had is the aged Baroness Burdett-Coutts, of England. She inherited some \$3,000,000 a long time ago, and she has used her great wealth with much wisdom and liberality. She has done wonders for the amelioration and comfort of the poor of her country. An interesting sketch of her benevolence in London Tit-Bits says that "one of her first good works was to sweep away a nest of thieves and murderers in Bethnal Green, and build in the place three hundred modest homes." For forty years she has been an active dispenser of blessing. In cholera times she has proved herself a blessing. She is liberal to all, but a member of the established state church. She helps all poor. In Ireland she has been of great service and in all Britain she has built many reformatories for women. She built a church costing \$50,000, and a bishopric costing her \$100,000. She is 85, five years older than the queen. Tit-Bits says:

"She has lived in four reigns, and was one of the most notable figures at the coronation of the queen. The Duke of Wellington was her intimate friend and adviser; Dickens—as already stated—was her esteemed companion. It is not surprising that honors have fallen thickly on this noble woman. She holds the freedom of London, being the first woman on whom such an honor has been conferred, and is also a 'free-woman' of Edinburgh. She is also the only woman who was at the Sultan's Order of the Medjidieh."

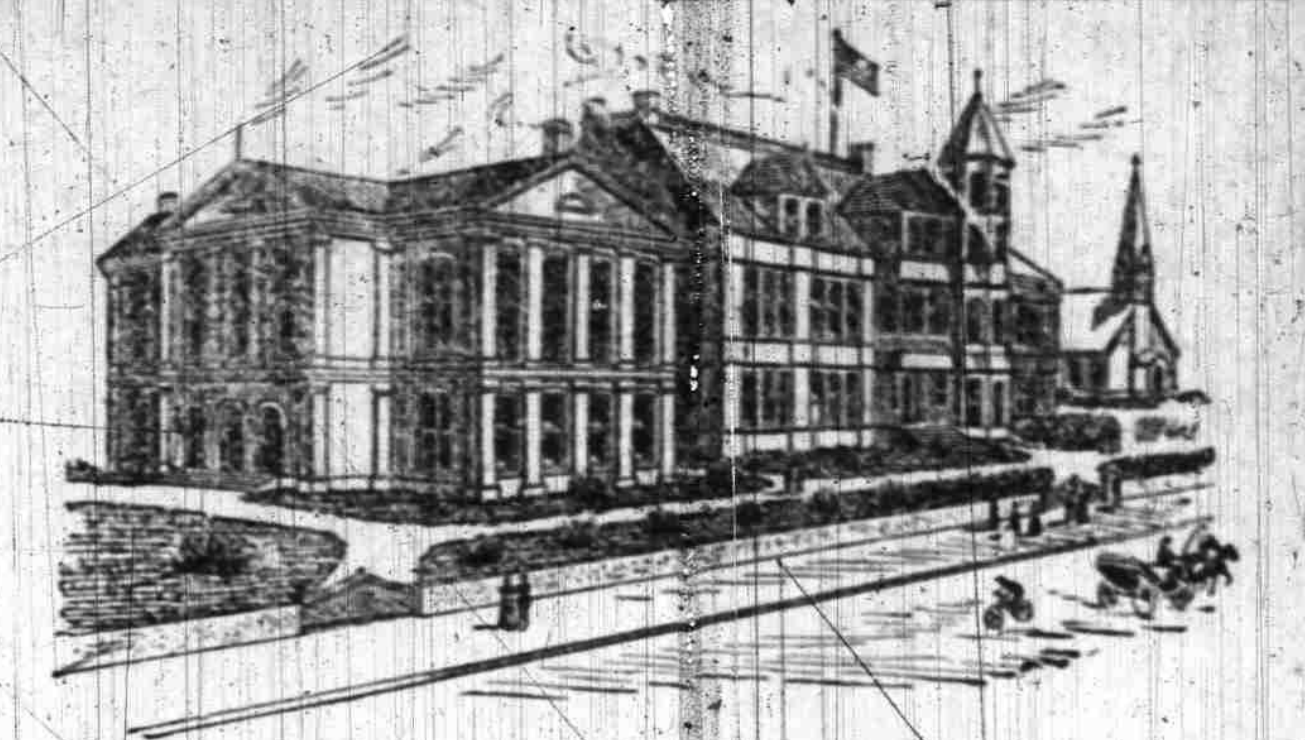
"Sixteen years ago the queen elevated Miss Coutts to the peerage, a royal honor which, if ever royal honor did, gave universal satisfaction."

HOME FOLKS

So far as this town is concerned there is hardly any appearance of government. Robberies occur both in the day and in the night. In the broad day time residences are entered and pillaged, and no one gets hurt. A few killings or hangings would have a salutary effect. There is a general sense of uneasiness, and people are increasing, applies in the home arsenal for siege of gally. In the years immediately succeeding the great war the conditions were such here that a company of Minute Men was organized and the soldiers were armed with sixteen repeating Spencer rifles. The late General M. E. was at the head of it, but the captain is still living in the city. If lawlessness continues to reign an organization for defence of some kind will have to be formed, and if formed it should be strong, composed of at least 500 men of nerve.

Every campaign the talk as reported in democratic newspapers is always favorable and from everywhere. But like some wars the deeds do not correspond with the pronouncement. The democrats get licked at the count. Let everybody be cautious and conservative this year in statements. Too much blarney misleads all the way. The state in campaigns overruns with great orators, able statesmen, consummate masters in debate. Let us be moderate. The truth will not hurt, and if debate comes it will not be so unbearable.

It seems that negroes are so much addicted to thieving that they cannot withhold their hands even when going on excursions. Yesterday's Messenger got of how the Sambo on one train rode a white excursionists bound to this city. Thieving is not exactly a fine art with Sambo, but he keeps in good practice and lives upon the world. He thinks under the present government in North Carolina, that the authorities as his friends and there is no danger in pilfering. He will wake up some fine morning to find that power is greater than thieving. But in the meantime honest people are suffering.



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