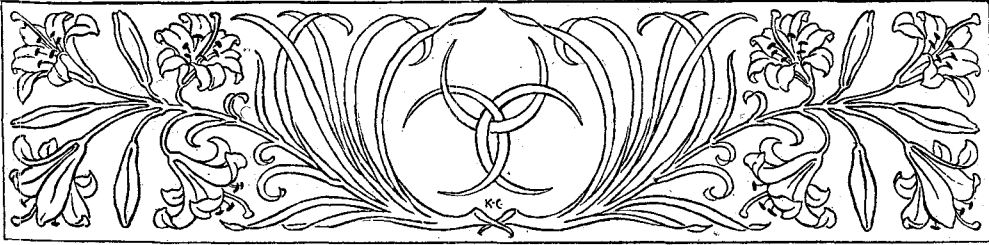


slang, and telling more to the syllable than they do anywhere else.

So the Southwest is becoming a distinct entity and the Southwesterner a personage. Character is here building, with the promise of virgin power and new ideas in statecraft, in economics, in agriculture. Men are laying deep and strong the foundations for an immense future population, and preparing for

the responsibilities which that population will entail. The region is weak yet, and seemingly far off, rude, unformed, but its weakness is of the sort that cannot awaken scorn; it is that of a healthy, hopeful, ambitious boy who will stir the world when he reaches his majority. That is the Southwest. May her accomplishments equal her promise.

(To be continued.)



A NOTEWORTHY LETTER OF WHITTIER'S.

BY WILLIAM LYON PHELPS.

MR. SAMUEL T. PICKARD, in his "Life and Letters of John Greenleaf Whittier," published in 1894, says:

It has often been a matter of speculation whether passages in "The Last Eve of Summer," "A Sea Dream," "Memories," and other poems, were not the expression of a tender emotion which had been sacrificed to adverse circumstances. If there were ever any doubt that the sweet and tender poem "Memories" was inspired by a romance of the poet's youth, that doubt was dispelled by the position Whittier has given these charming verses in his collected works. It was not without thought and deliberation that in 1888 he directed this poem should be placed at the head of his "Subjective and Reminiscent" poems. He had never before publicly acknowledged how much of his heart was wrapped up in this delightful play of poetic fancy. The poem was written in 1841, and although the romance it embalms lies far back of this date, possibly there is a heart still beating which fully understands its meaning. The biographer can do no more than make this suggestion, which has the sanction of the poet's explicit word. To a friend who told him that "Memories" was her favorite poem, he said: "I love it, too; but I hardly knew whether to publish it, it was so personal and near my heart."

As this poem is really the sole expression of Whittier's early love, it may be well to repeat a few stanzas:

MEMORIES.

A BEAUTIFUL and happy girl,
With step as light as summer air,
Eyes glad with smiles, and brow of pearl,
Shadowed by many a careless curl
Of unconfined and flowing hair;
A seeming child in everything,
Save thoughtful brow and ripening charms,
As Nature wears the smile of Spring
When sinking into Summer's arms.

How thrills once more the lengthening chain
Of memory, at the thought of thee!
Old hopes which long in dust have lain,
Old dreams, come thronging back again,
And boyhood lives again in me;
I feel its glow upon my cheek,
Its fullness of the heart is mine,
As when I leaned to hear thee speak,
Or raised my doubtful eye to thine.

Ere this, thy quiet eye hath smiled
My picture of thy youth to see,
When, half a woman, half a child,
Thy very artlessness beguiled,
And folly's self seemed wise in thee;
I too can smile, when o'er that hour
The lights of memory backward stream,
Yet feel the while that manhood's power
Is vainer than my boyhood's dream.

Years have passed on, and left their trace,
 Of graver care and deeper thought;
 And unto me the calm, cold face
 Of manhood, and to thee the grace
 Of woman's pensive beauty brought.
 More wide, perchance, for blame than praise,
 The school-boy's humble name has flown;
 Thine, in the green and quiet ways
 Of unobtrusive goodness known.

Whittier's extreme reticence concerning this youthful affair of the heart is shown by his prolonged and eloquent silence both in his poetry and in his letters and conversation. No one ever seems to have obtained from him the real reason for his celibacy. He seems to have felt, with Browning, that while he was alive the public had no right to be admitted to certain chambers of his "House."

"For a ticket, apply to the publisher."

No: thanking the public, I must decline.

A peep through my window, if folk prefer;

But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine!

A pitying friend wrote to him about his lonely bachelor life, and had the temerity to ask for an explanation. The poet simply replied: "Circumstances—the care of an aged mother, and the duty owed to a sister in delicate health for many years—must be my excuse for living the lonely life which has called out thy pity. It is some, if a poor, consolation, to think that, after all, it might have been a great deal worse." Not one of his biographers has ever been able to establish the real facts in the case, and the latest article on Whittier that I have seen, published only a few weeks ago, leaves the question an insoluble one.

The name of the heroine of "Memories" was, so far as I know, first given in a letter to the "Springfield Republican," printed in 1895. As this letter, in spite of the important material it contained, attracted scarcely any attention, it may be well to state that the name of the girl Whittier loved was given correctly as Miss Cornelia Russ, of Hartford. The correspondent also mentions the fact that the letter which contained Whittier's proposal of marriage is still in existence. She says:

I have not myself read the letter, which is still in existence, but one who has read it, the present possessor, writes to me as follows: "The letter was short, simple and manly, as you would know. He evidently expected to call the next day and learn his fate." Another who has seen the letter writes: "It was somewhat stiff,—such a letter as

a shy Quaker lad would be likely to write, for that he was, in spite of his genius. He begged her, if she felt unable to return his affection, to keep his secret, for he said: 'My respect and affection for you are so great that I could not survive the mortification if your refusal were known.'"

We shall see that this last alleged quotation is by no means correct.

In 1830 Whittier went to Hartford to edit the "New England Review." During his brief stay in that city, lasting less than two years, he became acquainted with Judge Russ, one of the ablest and most influential citizens of the town. His youngest child, Cornelia, was a strikingly beautiful girl, about seventeen years old, when the young poet met her and fell desperately in love. Why she did not reciprocate, we do not know, but it is not difficult to conjecture. About to leave Hartford, he wrote to her an offer of marriage. This letter is deeply interesting, not only because it finally settles the question of Whittier's only romance, but for another even more important reason. The youthful literary aspirant, aged twenty-four, who had published at this time only one volume of poems, which he afterward did his utmost to suppress, and with only a small local reputation, distinctly prophesies his future renown—a prophecy fulfilled beyond his furthest aspirations. Through the kindness of Mr. Charles C. Russ, a grand-nephew of Cornelia, I am now able to print this highly interesting document for the first time.

Thursday afternoon.

MISS RUSS,

I could not leave town without asking an interview with you. I know that my proposal is abrupt—and I cannot but fear that it will be unwelcome. But you will pardon me. About to leave Hartford for a distant part of the country, I have ventured to make a demand, for which under any other circumstances I should be justly censurable. I feel that I have indeed no claims on your regard. But I would hope, almost against any evidence to the contrary, that you might not altogether discourage a feeling which has long been to me as a new existence. I would hope that in my absence from my own New England, whether in the sunny South or the "Far West," one heart would respond with my own—one bright eye grow brighter at the mention of a name, which has never been, and I trust never will be, connected with dishonor,—and which, if the Ambition which now urges onward shall continue in vigorous exercise, shall yet be known widely and well—and whose influence shall be lastingly felt.—

But this is dreaming,—and it may only call forth a smile. If so—I have too high an opinion of your honorable feelings to suppose even for a

moment that you would make any use of your advantage derogatory to the character of a high-minded, and ingenuous girl—

—I leave town on Saturday. Can you allow of an interview this evening or on that of Friday? If however you cannot consistently afford me the pleasure of seeing you—I have only to resign hopes dear to me as life itself, and carry with me hereafter the curse of disappointed feeling.—

A note in answer will be waited for impatiently. At least you will not deny me this.

Yrs most truly—

J. G. WHITTIER—

The above letter was written on the last day of the old year 1831. On Saturday, January 2, "with winter in his soul beyond the world's," Whittier left Hartford forever. His disappointment he never revealed to any one, and the girl faithfully kept his secret. Though much sought after, she was never married, and died in 1842, a few months after Whittier had written the poem "Memories."

There are several interesting points to be noted in this love-letter: Whittier did not use the Quaker pronouns, his almost universal custom, thinking, perhaps, the plural was more respectful. Although a declaration of undying love, it is curious that the letter is almost all about himself, and scarcely at all about the person to whom it was written. It affords another instance of the old proverb that "faint heart never won fair lady," for the note of despair is even more evident than the pitch of passion. Its cold reserve, however, but ill conceals the overwhelming love in the man's heart, the constancy of which sixty years of solitary life were abundantly to prove.

Whittier's contemplated travels in the "Far West" were not to be. Ill health broke off his purpose, and all but a very few years of his life were spent in his "own New England."



TO MARY.

A HITHERTO UNPUBLISHED POEM.

BY JOHN G. WHITTIER.

SUGGESTING less of earth than heaven
Where'er its sound is known,
The sweetest name to mortal given,
Dear Mary, is thine own.

If I, who need myself a prayer,
For thee might dare to pray,
If I, so blind myself, might dare
To point another's way;

Methinks that I would ask for thee
That heavenly favor sweet,
Like Mary once at Bethany,
To sit at Jesus' feet.