WHO CAN READ THEM

Correspondence That Sheds Light on Whittier's Life.

HIS DYING HANDS WROTE

Words That None Can Read, and His Last Lines, Though Undecipherable, Are Now Given.

Outside a dreary rain was falling from a gray November sky. The wind swept the dead leaves against the rattling panes and went moaning everywhere. It was just such a day, two Novembers before, that I had visited poor, old Walt Whitman, in his garret at Camden, where I found the venerable poet living in neglect and want, cooking soup in a yellow bowl, on a short-iron stove, near by. Whenever his strength permitted he rose from his armchair with the rough bear's robe thrown over the back, fumbling vainly here and there in dark corners, among masses of literary plunder, books and papers unnumbered, seeking the verses Tennyson wrote to him on a recent birthday, that I might be permitted to know of the friendship between the two bards. Like Father Time appeared the noble old writer, with his long, flowing, snowy beard, his high, majestic forehead, and the marks of great age furrowed in his withered face. At parting, I could not but wonder what might become of the poet's literary remains, for, in the junkshop jungle of those lonesome rooms there must be much of value which would be lost simply because of the carelessness of the owner, who considered not the nearness of death.

All this was brought forcibly back to my memory, when, dripping from the rain, I entered the hospitable home of the custodian of the literary fragments of that other of America's distinguished poets, whose death has recently been mourned by the nation, whose tomb, by the way, daily receives the desecrating marks of relic-hunters, who despoil the cedars and the hedges—John Greenleaf Whittier. Whatever differences there may be in the artistic value of the works of Whittier and of Whitman, certain it is that the widest distinction existed between them in the ordinary affairs of their lives. Whitman was poor and needy to the last, and was supported, I have always understood, in his final infirmities, by the kind interest of friends, who subscribed each his mite that the little old frame house in Camden might shelter the snowy head of its bard to the end. Whitman, furthermore, left his papers in such confusion, in his garret, where it was his custom to pile them, helter-skelter, here and there, that the availability of many of them is questionable, if not hopeless. But with Whittier order and business-like care had its part, his whole life long. Instead of being poor, his estate, Mr. Pickard tells me, was worth one hundred and thirty thousand dollars. For years he had anticipated the inevitable end of all human life, and had prepared for it with caution and with full instructions as to the disposition, value and whereabouts of his letters, writings and papers; and when he died, yes, even before his death, his literary custodian had already entered fully and freely into his appointed work.

Mr. Pickard is one eminently fitted for the delicate task assigned to him by John Greenleaf Whittier. His years of experience in journalism, his literary tastes, his ample fortune, which assures him of leisure, and, above all, the companionship of his wife, the niece of the poet, who, in her turn, was for years the daily confidante of her famous uncle, looking after him in her tender womanly fashion; all these circumstances have aided S. T. Pickard in the labor of compiling and finally disposing of the Whittier literary fragments.

I found Mr. and Mrs. Pickard in a plain, two-story house, in Portland, Me., on one of the pleasantest streets, near the Longfellow statue. Everywhere in that house, in the large, airy and unpretentiously furnished rooms, are the indefinable marks of the hand of a woman of taste and culture, which means much when a New England woman is concerned and New England domestic arrangements are referred to. I might almost say that this is another of the many Whittier homes. In his life, it was hard to say where Mr. Whittier lived. He had houses all up and down the seacoast of Massachusetts and up and down the coast. He visited in Amesbury. He frequently drove with Judge Cole, whose a room was set apart for him, for he came and went as whim. He had another home in Haverhill. He had still another at Danvers, a spacious, old-fashioned house set on a hill. He had still another home in Newburyport where he spent so much time with Dr. Cutbush, that, it has been written, "you never would know who owned the house, the doctor or the poet, for both were equally at home there." Mr. Pickard has created another Whittier home, and has filled it with Whittier relics, each of which is more interesting than the last, from oil painting of the poet, to his famous cherry writing desk, which stands in a cosy corner, his homely gold watch, his books, letters and papers.

After we had chatted awhile on the life and purposes of the poet, Mr. Pickard excused himself for a moment and went upstairs to his study, soon returning with a small black box studded with brass nails. In a rest room, Mrs. Pickard lighted a lamp, for evening was coming on, and brought ink, pen and paper. The kindness of these people was to me very touching.

Under the glow of the evening lamp, the conservator of the literary remains of John Greenleaf Whittier, with his kindly face and his snowy beard, was himself somewhat suggestive of a poet. Mrs. Pickard, the niece of Whittier, a woman of middle life, plump, brown-eyed and cheerful, sat near by, from time to time interposing a word or suggestion about her uncle, whom she never mentioned without a quiver in her sympathetic voice.

Mr. Pickard referred directly to the contents of his box, saying:

"I have selected a few unique relics for your perusal. I would like to show you everything pertaining to Whittier, but, necessarily, that is impossible. I have thousands of letters, trunks filled with miscellany, whole libraries of books, and fragmentary papers of all kinds, sufficient to occupy your time and attention for a year.

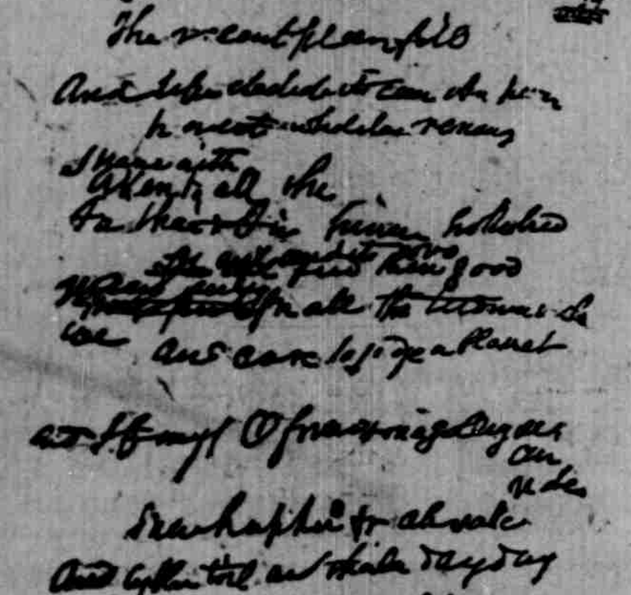
"I have here," continued the speaker, unfolding a musty sheet of common note paper, "the original manuscript of 'In School Days,' in the form in which it was submitted to Miss Lucy Larcom, the poetess and editor of 'Our Young Folks.' In my judgment it is the best-known of Whittier's shorter pieces, and so I will let you take a fac simile. There are some interesting details connected with this bit of paper," said the host, holding it before him and looking at it affectionately. "At the time it was written Miss Larcom had asked Whittier for a poem suitable for children, and had sent him some pictures, around which he was to weave his verses. In this, however, Whittier was not successful. Instead of doing as she requested, he paid no attention to her pictures, in due time sending 'In School Days,' as you have it here. On the last page is the letter to Miss Larcom. I will read it to you, as it throws a strong light on one of the poet's characteristics. It is as follows:

"'I cannot make verses for the pictures, but I send thee herewith a bit, which, I am sure, is childish, if not childlike. Be honest with it, and if it seems too spoony for a grave Quaker, like myself, don't compromise me by printing. When I get a proof, I may see something to mend or mar.'

"Now," continued the speaker, "this note is written in a strain ofttimes repeated, in one form or another, in hundreds of Whittier's letters. He shows his quaint humor. He is always criticising himself. He underscored the *ist*, at the end of child, also the *like*, in childlike. He enjoyed cutting himself up in this fashion. Seldom did he send a poem to a publisher without some personal criticism. True to his suggestion, he did find something to mend or mar; for, with the final copy of the poem, submitted to Miss Larcom, he included eight new lines, four of which he scratched out, illustrating the way in which he composed. The added verse or verses, are the third and fourth, and were originally written on a small piece, evidently torn from a sheet of letter paper."

The host picked up an old magazine, and, opening it, pointed to the first page, saying:

"This is a volume of the 'New England Magazine' for 1885. I found there in on a blank page, written in lead pencil, the first copy of the poem called: 'To a Cape Ann Schooner.' Now, the verses were not published till thirty years later! This is a most interesting fact. It shows how cautious Whittier was. Furthermore, he has written many poems, anonymously, which he never, in his long life, saw fit to claim. I doubt not, there may be some such floating around in the press to this day. Why between 1830-31, he



WHITTIER'S LAST POEM; WHO CAN READ IT?

face he kindly whispered 'in the sanctuary sense, I have discovered that he wrote, for a period of three years, a poem a week. And of all these, only twenty appeared in his books. This is much more signal from the fact that the discarded verses were, generally, upon itinerary, the very theme on which he gained his first great distinction."

"Show him the book!" put in the poet's niece.

"Oh, yes, here it is!"

Mr. Pickard then handed me what appeared to be an old note book, in size about fourteen inches long and

S. T. PICKARD.

twelve wide, containing, I should think, perhaps two hundred musty leaves. This book was crowded from end to end with the discarded verses to which the speaker had just alluded. They were written in a beautiful old-fashioned style of penmanship, as fine and as clear as copper plate. Not a letter was missing. Not a line betrayed haste. Not a word was slighted nor slurred. There it was, page on page, in its artistic showing, a silent rebuke from a generation gone to the heedless, rushing men and women of the present, who never would take the time to copy a whole book with such scrupulous fidelity. Then an idea came to me.

"It is beautiful! But who did this?"

"Ah, a Philadelphia friend; a lady."

"I wish," I said, "you would tell me the last literary work done by Whittier."

"The very last thing written by Whittier must always remain a riddle, for the reason that it would take the voice of the dead to set us right, and our beloved friend's lips are sealed in eternal silence. He wrote, a few weeks before he died, three letters on the same day; but which one he wrote first I have no way of knowing. All I can say is that I found them among his papers after the funeral, when we laid him away in the Friend's little half-acre beside his family."

"But his last poem?"

A look of sadness came into the host's face, and was reflected in the quick glances of his wife. I felt sure that something of extraordinary interest was about to be revealed. With deliberation, worthy of the theme, the conservator of the literary relics of the venerable bard said:

"The last poem written by Whittier was penned in August, 1892, about four weeks before he died. It is to Oliver Wendell Holmes, a birthday offering, and begins thus:

"Among the thousands, who, with hall and cheer,
Will welcome thy new year;
How few of all hath passed, as you and I,
So many mile stones by."

"This poem, the original of which I will now show you, is almost illegible, because Whittier's hand trembled so when he penned it; and, additionally, from the fact that he composed, erased and inserted, again and again, line on line, so that it is very, badly cut up. However, a version of it has been studied out, and is now to be found in his latest editions.

"But, to my mind, the very last poetical work of Whittier must always remain a mystery! Here is an original of verses which I believe are the very last ones on which he was engaged. Some of the lines are found in the Holmes birthday testimonial, at least there is a suggestion of the same idea in them. I will give you the lines; perhaps, somewhere, some admirer of Whittier may be able to study them out."

I took in my hand a mere fragment of a sheet of note paper. I studied the well-nigh illegible scrawl, and mused for a long time on its message, coming as it did, like a voice from the grave—the sweet, kind voice of a master singer whose harping is dumb in death.

"They rest in God's peace, taken from work,
The vacant place is filled—"

Was my translation correct so far as it went? I looked up from my work. The niece of the poet had gone into another room. A light was kindled where one had not been before, and its soft illumination shed a star-like luster upon the grand old oil painting of John Greenleaf Whittier. Singing softly to herself, the good woman was arranging in a vase underneath the portrait some bright golden chrysanthemums. It was a picture whose tenderness and beauty will not soon fade from memory.

John Greenleaf Whittier, whose memory lives in the hearts of a grateful people, sleeps in the little half-acre of the Friends, beside his Uncle Moses, his Aunt Mercy, his sisters Mary and Lizzy, and his father and his mother.

PRACTICAL PHILANTHROPY.

Institution for the Training of Jewish Youth at Hanover.

A novelty in practical philanthropy is described by W. C. Fox, formerly consul to Brunswick, Germany, who has just returned to Washington.

"During my visit to Hanover," said Mr. Fox in the course of a recent conversation with a St. Louis Globe-Democrat correspondent, "I examined an institution for the training of Jewish youth. The institution is something entirely new. It has been established by Alexander Moritz Simon. Mr. Simon is the American vice consul at Hanover, where he is also a prominent banker. Those who have knowledge of the situation in Russia and Germany to-day fully understand that one of the chief causes of the anti-Semitic movements in those countries is that the Jews are solely dealers and traders. This is because children naturally acquire a taste for and follow the occupation of their parents and other relatives.

"Mr. Simon told me," continued Mr. Fox, "that in his visits to the United States in 1888 and 1890, he remarked the distressing conditions of the Jewish immigrants, arising mainly from the fact that they were unable to perform such work as they could obtain from labor. Knowing no mechanical trade, they were of necessity driven to peddling. Mr. Simon, some time ago, became convinced that if many of the Jewish youth in Russia and Eastern Prussia were properly taught trades, it would be the best answer to the chief argument of the anti-Semitic agitators. Actuated by this belief, he founded this institution. He has purchased some seventy acres of land near the city of Hanover. The necessary buildings have been erected so that sixty boys can be accommodated. The prime object is to teach agriculture, gardening and fruit culture in all their branches. Carpentering, locksmithing, shoemaking, baking and other trades will be taught. The movement and the institution have already received the hearty indorsement and assistance of prominent Israelites in Europe. There is every evidence that the experiment will prove successful and pioneer the way for similar institutions in other parts of Europe."

THE "AUDISON."

An Invention to Bring About a Needed Reform in Telegraphy.

At a competitive trial of skill between the telegraph operators a boardly called a tournament, which took place recently, one of the most interesting features was a test of the capacity of a receiving machine technically known as the "Audison"—a small instrument fitted to the head of the operator, giving a sound which, although perfectly distinct to him, is wholly inaudible to anyone else. It is high time, says the Engineering Magazine, that the use of a receiving instrument of this character became general in the telegraph service.

Under the present condition of affairs it is almost literally true that he who runs may read. Hundreds of telegraphic stations in hotels, railroad depots and other equally public places are equipped with noisy sounders, enabling every message that goes over the wire, to or from that or any other station, to be read by any person within hearing who is able to do so. There is not the slightest attempt to preserve the secrecy of communication, which ought to be one of the all-important requirements of the service.

There are thousands of ex-operators and other persons in the community who can read these signals as easily as they could read a bulletin board, and there is obviously nothing whatever to prevent any one of them from obtaining information of other persons' business or personal matters in this way and using it to their own advantage. It is a state of affairs which calls loudly for immediate reform.

SCHOOLBOY PHILOSOPHY.

Answers for Every Question the Teacher Can Ask.

The schoolboy has queer ideas sometimes, says the Great Divide, as is demonstrated by the following answers given to teachers in search of information: A poor boy was asked: "What is a gentleman?" "A fellow that has a watch and chain," he replied, adding, when he saw that his answer was not perfectly satisfactory, "and loves Jesus." "Medieval is a wicked man who has been tempted." "A demagogue is a vessel containing beer and other liquids." "Tom, use a sentence with responsibility in it." Tom said: "When one suspender button is gone there is a great deal of responsibility on the other one."

"What is a lad?" inquired the teacher. A very small girl answered: "A thing for courting with." "Give the future of drink." "Present, he drinks; future, he will be drunk." "The plural for pillow." "Bolster." "Compare ill." "Ill, worse, dead." This recalls the answer of the boy who said: "Masculine, man; feminine, woman; neuter, corpse." "Who was the first man?" said a teacher.

"Washington," promptly answered the young American.

"No," said the teacher, "Adam was the first man." "Oh, well, I suppose you are right," replied the undaunted patriot, "if you refer to furriners." "How did that blot come on your copybook, Sam?" "I think it is a tear, Miss Wallace." "How could tear be black, Sam?" "It must have been a colored boy who dropped it," suggested the reflective Samuel. "What made the tower of Pisa lean?" "The famine in the land."

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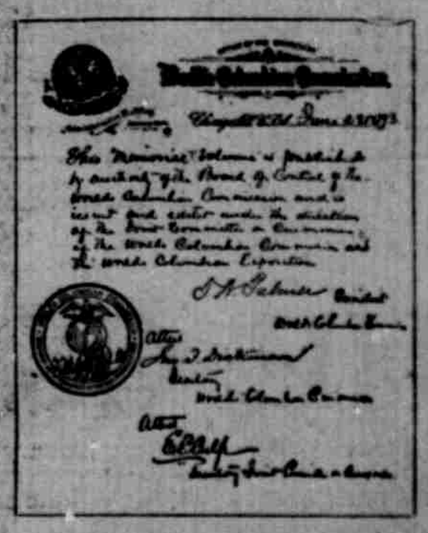

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