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SOUTHERN POETRY NOT ALL MEDIOCRE

The North to Claim Allen Poe

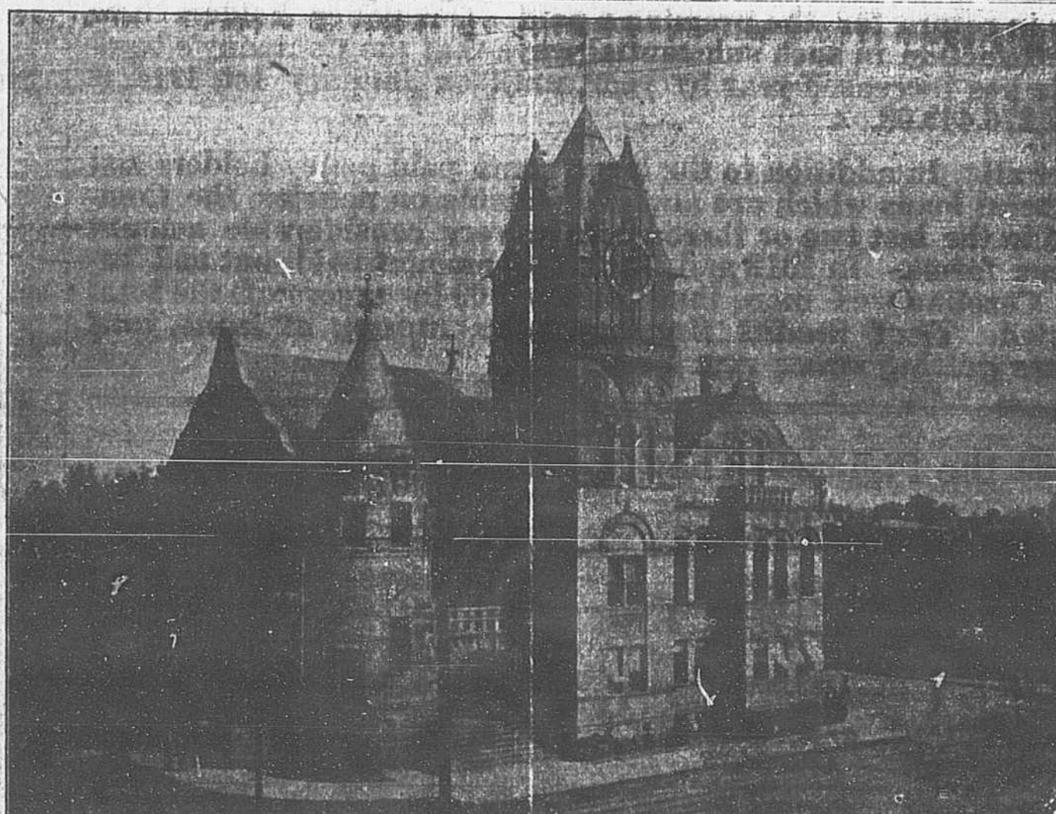
LANIER, HAYNE AND TIMROD Poe's Genius Was Unlimited,

Bounded By No Time Or Place and Ruled a World

Baltimore Sun. A literary critic has said that among Southern Poets there is a dead level of mediocrity, from which but one name (that of Poe) may be excepted. It is not for even the most enthusiastic admirers of poets of the south to claim for them preeminence in this quality. This would be as idle as to claim for all the postmasters of New England the fulness of the gift of Longfellow for all the rhymesters of England the genius of Tennyson. We may, however, whether we are of north, east, west or south, yield to our native poets, love and admiration. This given, a critical examination of the qualities of poetical excellence is not to disparage but to grade in our regard the objects of our affection. By the comparison of our poets with those of other people we may estimate our values. The correctness of this valuation is not to be ascertained except through the meeting of many minds.

It is interesting to examine the estimate put upon some of the Southern poets by critics who are not in entire sympathy because of the birth or inclination, with the south. The detail of such an examination would be here tedious. The general result can, however, be briefly here stated. In a previous article we have spoken of a host of singers whose voices have rung clear and true, but we will now speak of men whose voice has won a more wide-spread recognition than their fellows. First among them stands Edgar Allan Poe (of whom, with Lanier, we shall speak in a future article). Of Poe, Barrett Wendell, in his recently published "Literary History of America," says: "To turn only to the bibliography in the last volume of Steadman & Woodruff's admirable edition of Poe, it appears that between 1870 and 1895, there were at least ten translations of his works in the foreign languages—among others Swedish, Italian, Danish and South American Spanish. Certainly among the literary classes of Europe no American author has created more attention than Poe, whose influence still seems extending." This is the distinguished professor of English at Harvard college but voices the sentiment of most critics and it lifts one post above the dead level of mediocrity.

In the later years with the forgetfulness of personality in the thing that surrounds the name of Poe, there has arisen the claim that Poe was not of the south, and today this opinion finds expression in the statement that Poe must rightly be considered of New York. This assertion will not however, receive the assent of many Southerners. Poe's genius, however, was not unlimited; it was truth seemed bounded by no time or place; it ruled a world of its own, it was king in the room of imagination. The name of Sydney Lanier is gathering glory with the rolling years, and the name of Poe is still the name of the poet of the South. And today by one of the most critical as well as one of the most official of northern critics it is said that "the most gifted of Southern poets was Sydney Lanier." This estimate now, for the sake of Poe, for the sake of the South, does not class Poe as a northern poet. The works of Lanier are today more frequently in demand and more widely read than at any previous date. Their beauty and beauty have been appreciated, and though



ANDERSON COUNTY COURT HOUSE

Where Some of the Overflow Meetings of the State Reunion Will Be held.

appreciation has not yet reached its zenith, we may say that in Lanier another southern poet has risen above "the dead level of mediocrity" but has achieved what will be world-wide fame. Two other poets of ante-bellum days now claim our attention. These are Henry Timrod and Paul Hamilton Hayne. Henry Timrod born in Charleston in 1829, educated at the University of Georgia, was destined for the bar. Literature claimed him and he gave his life to the service. His poems at times possess a power that at other times are lacking, but every poem is a finished representation of a beautiful thought. Timrod's style," says Henry Austin, "midway between the elaborates of Tennyson and the weedy naturalness of Wordsworth bears a great resemblance to Lovell's but has more grace perhaps and less power."

In the opinion of W. P. Trent, the most finished and more nearly perfect of Timrod's poems is the ode he wrote for the occasion of the dedication of the Confederate graves in Magnolia cemetery, "that approximate perfection—the perfection of Collins, not that of Lovelace." In this poem occurs the stanza: Steep angels hither from the skies! There is no holier spot of ground Than where defeated valor lies. By mourning beauty crown'd.

Small sphere! (By dusky fingers brought this morning here. And shown with boastful smiles), I turned thy cloven sheath, Through which the soft white fibres peer. That with their gossamer bands, Unite like love, the sea divided lands. And slowly thread by thread, Draw forth the folded strands, Than which the trembling line, By whose frail help you ris'd to rider's seat. Down the tall spear-grass from his awning bed, Is scarce more fine; And as the tangled skein Unravels in my hands, Betwixt me and the noonday light, A veil seems lifted and for miles and miles, The landscape broadens on my sight, As in the little boat there lurks a spell. Like that which in the ocean shell, With hyacinth sound Breaks down the narrow walls that hem us round, And turns some city lane Into the restless main With all its capes and isles! But Timrod strikes a stormy, a more inspiring and as true note in the conclusion of this, his greatest poem, oris of criticism, words of praise, not add to the effect of the poem itself. Not even the growing, vigorous stanzas of "Carolina," in which From Sachem's head to Sumter's wall, Resounds the voice of hut and hall, Can equal the fervent beauty of the close of "The Cotton Boll." As men who labor in that mine Of cornwall hollowed out beneath the bed Of ocean when a storm rolls over head.

Hear the dull booming of the world of brins Above them and a mighty muffled roar. Of winds and waters yet toll calmly on And split the rocks and pile the mass. Or carve a niche or shape the arch'd roof. So, I, as calmly weave my woof Of song chanting the days to come, Unsilenced though the quiet summer air. Stir with the fruit of battles and each dawn Wakes from its starry silence to hum Of many gathering armies, still, In that we sometimes hear the voice of war. Upon the Northern winds the voice of woe Not wholly drowned in triumph, though I know. The end must crown us and a few brief years Dry all our tears, I may not sing too gladly to thy will. Resigned, O, Lord, we cannot all forget That there is much even victory must regret. And therefore, not too long From the great burthen of our country's wrong Delay our just release! And if it may be save These sacred fields of peace From stain of patriot or hostile blood! Oh, help us Lord! to roll the crimson flood Back on its course and while our banners wave Northward strike with us till the cloth shall cling To big, own blasted altar stones and crows. Mercy, God we shall grant it and dictate The kindest future of his race.

There where some rotting ships and crumbling quays Shall one day mark the Port that ruled the Western seas. With such lines as these, grate not of the "dead level of mediocrity" in southern poetry. Of the great poets of the south, the past Paul Hamilton Hayne stands in the fore rank. Born, as was many another southern genius, in Charleston, S. C., he became an adopted son of Georgia. He died at Copas Hill (Groves) in that state, July 8, 1895. Of the singer we read in "The Poets of America" by Clarence Steadman, that "Hayne's vitality, courage and native lyrical impulse have kept his voice." At this time an appreciation of his work by Maurice Thompson, (author of "Alice of Old Vincennes") is particularly interesting. "The Mountain of the Moors," "The Macrobian Epic," "MacDonald's Raid," "Unwieldy," "The Vengeance of the Goddess Diana" and "The Solitary Lake" are works worth the closest attention. As a sonneteer, Hayne was strong and his descriptive verse is often very melodious and full of warm, harmonious color. * * * What luxury of southern rights, sounds and tastes, perfumes and colors we enjoy in his poem "Muscadine" than which ever opened a better or richer?" Reading this, we can see little attention to the assertion that there is a "dead level of mediocrity" in southern poetry. But when we read of the poems themselves presenting ripeness into conviction. Of his sonnets, we choose to illustrate Hayne's style, "Pate or God," the poem selected by Steadman and Hutchinson in "American Literature" of the same Barrett Wendell says: "Few American sonnets seem more sincere." Beyond the record of all efficient things,

Beyond the rule and region of past time From out antiquity's hoary-headed time, Looms the dead phantom of a King of kings; Round the vast brow the glittering circlets of a crown; beneath Him climb, O'er Atlantean limbs and breath sublimed. The sombre splendors of mysterious wings; Deep calms of measureless power in awful state, Gird and uphold Him; a miraculous red, To heal or smite, arms His infallible hands; Known in all ages; worshipped in all lands, Doubt names this half-embodied mystery—Pate, Whose faith with lowliest reverence, whispers—God!

This is but one of a host of sonnets, some of which seem to us to exceed in quality that quoted. Of these we can give but one. It is entitled "The Pine's Mystery." Listen! the sombre foliage of the Pine, A swart Gitana of the woodland trees, Is answering what we may but half divine, To those soft whispers of twilight breeze!

Passion and mystery murmur through the leaves, Passion and mystery touched by deathless pain, Whose monotone of long, low anguish grieves For something lost that shall not live again!

BIVOUAC OF THE DEAD

(Written by Theodore O'Hara in 1817)

The muffled drum's sad roll has beat, The soldier's last tattoo; No more, on life's parade shall meet, That brave and fallen foe. Their silent tents are spread, And silent guards with solemn round, The bivouac of the dead.

No rumor of the foe's advance, No gull's wing upon the wind, No troubled thoughts at midnight haunts, Of loved ones left behind; No vision of the morrow's strife, The warriors dream alarms, No braying horn nor screaming bugle, At dawn shall call to arms. Their shivered swords are red with rust; Their stained hands are bowed; Their tattered banner trailed in dust, Is now their martial shroud, And plentiful funeral tears have washed The recastains from each brow, And the proud forms by battle gashed, Are free from anguish now.

The neighbor's troops, the flashing blades, The bugle's stirring blast; The charge, the dreadful carnage, The din and shout are passed; Nor war's wild notes nor glory's peal, Shall thrill with fierce delight Those breasts that nevermore will feel The rapture of the fight. Like the fierce northern hurricane That sweeps his great plumes, Flashed with the triumph yet to gain, Came down the serried foe Who heard the thunder of the fray, Break o'er the field beneath, Knew well the war watchword of that day— "Victory or death." Long had the doubted conflict raged, O'er all the stretched plain; For ever fiercer fight had waged, And ever fiercer it had waged, Still swelled the glory tide.

Not long our stout old chieftain knew Such odds his strength could bide.

'Twas in that hour his stern command Called to a martyr's grave, The flower of his beloved land, The nation's flag to save. By rivers of their father's gore, His first-born laurels grew, And well he deemed the sons would pour Their lives for glory too.

Full many a norther's breath was swept, O'er Angostura's plain— And along the pitying sky has wept, Above its mouldered slain, The raven's scream or eagle's flight, Or shepherd's pensive lay, Alone awakens each sullen height, That frowned o'er that dreary fray.

Sons of the Dark and Bloody Ground, Ye must not slumber there, Where stranger's steps and tongues resound, Along the heedless air Your own proud land's heroic soil, Shall be your fitter grave; She claims from war his richest spoil; The ashes of the brave.

Thus 'neath their parent turf they rest, Far from the gory field, Born to a Spartan mother's breast, On many a bloody shield; The sunshine of their native sky Smiles sadly on them here, And kindred eyes and hearts watch by The hero's sepulchre.

Rest on embalmed and sainted dead; Dear as the blood we gave; No impious steps here shall tread The herbage of your grave; Nor shall your glory be forgot, While the world's record keeps, Or honor paints the hallowed spot Where valor proudly sleeps.

Yon countless and voiceless stones In their silent, small tell, When many a ramparted age has flown The story how ye fell, Nor wreck nor change nor winter's blight, Nor time's remorseless doom, Shall dim one ray of glory's light That glides your deathless tomb.

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Schedule Effective Jan. 15, 1914

N. B. The following schedule figures are published only as information and are not guaranteed. Arrival and departure of trains from Anderson, S. C. Arriving From Title No. Greenville and Belton... 8:30 a. m. Belton and Greenville... 11:50 a. m. 15 Charleston, Columbia and Belton, through sleeper to Belton... 11:50 a. m. 13 Atlanta, Wallhalla and Seneca... 6:31 a. m. 16 Greenville and Belton... 1:25 p. m. 10 Atlanta, Wallhalla, and Seneca... 4:52 p. m. 17 Charleston, Columbia and Belton, through coach from Columbia to Wallhalla... 6:03 p. m. Leaving For 16 Belton, Greenville... 7:40 a. m. 23 Belton and Greenville... 9:20 a. m. 24 Belton and Greenville... 3:25 p. m. 10 Belton, Charleston, Greenville and Columbia... 6:52 p. m. 12 Belton, Columbia, Charleston and Greenville... 8:51 a. m. 13 Atlanta, Wallhalla and Seneca... 11:50 a. m. 11 Seneca, Wallhalla through coach from Columbia... 6:03 p. m. No baggage will be handled on motor cars Nos 20, 24, 25, 26, 27. Connection is made at Belton for Southern trains and at Seneca for trains to Atlanta and beyond. For further information apply to ticket agent.