

THE CRUTCH.

Charles N. Burnham. Publisher.

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Signs of the Times.

It is seed-time, rather than harvest, in the world of literature; but in looking over our exchanges we have not unfrequently been surprised to find so much good judgment, ability and intelligence manifested in the reading matter of the present day. The war on the whole, seems favorable to the development of sound principles and correct sentiment among readers. We feel this to be good ground for rejoicing, since the newspaper is conceded to be one of the most powerful agencies towards determining the tastes, convictions, and in fact, the *morale* of a people like ours. While we have experienced much to stimulate rancor and persecution in our midst, the weather-glass of popular sentiment indicates everything fair, and any interested observer must have noticed, that the trifling and pernicious works which have of late years degraded popular reading literature rapidly giving place, to those of real merit and standard value. We rejoice to find our soldiers as well as our public and general circulating libraries, sifted of the "yellow covered trash," and the lives of our heroes in its place. A great writer has remarked that there is no surer way of testing the civilization of a nation than by the character of its books, since they constitute the medium through which the heart and brain of the people flows, and in which the great vital interests centre. We have no fear of getting too much learning in these busy days but must confess, judging by the high tone of our contemporary journals, that what we get is good, and more reliable than in former days.

Perhaps it is as well for the future history of our literature, that we do not get time, to write as much as formerly, we say this advisedly and not by way of discouragement to any living thinker, only we wish to whisper a word in the ear of our young literary aspirant to be very sure he has plenty of silver thoughts to write before he commences, or else keep the golden silence, that everybody has. The demand of the times is for thought and action, not words. The greatest book of the age, used to be written two or three times a year before the war. We want no more of them; but the hand will be immortalized that truthfully records any of the lofty deeds, fulfilled in that grand and stirring prophecy, the spontaneous utterance of a free loyal people, that,

"God is marching on!"

For the Crutch.

What I see from my Window.

By chance I occupy a seven by nine room in this Hospital, which room has one window, I call my Stereoscope; it overlooks a grass plat, and a neat little garden bordered with box. For several weeks the weather kept me under arrest, being an old victim to the chills, then, the rheumatism followed, so my companions were reduced to the four walls of my room with its bedstead, table, chair and wood cut of General McClellan. Extreme loneliness, set me to thinking of the heroes of my youth, the "Prisoner of Chillon," and the Count Charney, whose long imprisonment, was brightened by the most trifling incidents that presented themselves. The recollection of their fortitude and patience not only strengthened me to bear my own ills, but caused me to question if any circumstances could utterly defraud a man of happiness, if his aim was to have it? My comrades complained of the darkness, narrowness and sunless location of my room, and at last, finding me rather unsocial, they ceased to visit me, and I was indebted to my low diet agent, and attendant physician for all the companionship I had. Weak eyes denied me the satisfaction of reading, lying on my back, I could see a narrow strip of sky, which finally widened into a sea of blue where my ships went sailing all hours in the day. Wonderful masses of white clouds floated there, sometimes whirling themselves into cruel shapes, or trailing out in graceful scarfs, of color warm and delicate as sea-shells; suddenly the north wind would drive them into line.

and away they would fly, like shafts of light, or a flock of white doves, bearing messages to the beyond. But the pictures that pleased me most, were produced by the atmospheric changes at early dawn, and twilight. The faint blush of morn, and the amber tints that circled over my celestial ocean, before the golden footed stars, appeared, are hung in my own gallery, fresh from the master hand, untransferable by human processes. It was well for me that the fickle but brilliant skies of March were fast lowering into a dull vapory atmosphere betokening rain: for I found myself sadly deploring my want of artistic power, just as the heavens opened, and my visions were submerged for three wet weeks. In the mean time, a new revelation was at hand. I could sit at my window and see it working in the gray earth within arms reach. Something had come over the spirit of my little garden; its dark green had put on a faint bloom; I am no sentimentalist—am not acquainted with the language of flowers, as construed by "Floras Interpreter;" but confess that scarcely any sum of money per annum, offered me by Government, would compensate for the pleasure I receive from these "Ministering Children" of the earth, children of royal lineage, clad in gold, purple and pearl, breathing incense everywhere. When I was with the army down South, surrounded by a hoard of troublesome insects, and wading ankle deep in yellow sand, half paralyzed by sun-stroke, I used to dream of cool fresh spring flowers filling the highways of the north, with scarcely a grain of dust to dim their shining; of the thousand tented violets, twinkling star flowers, and lustrous leafed lilies of the valley, drinking in strength and freshness from the unfathomable wells of moist meadow lands, or in pastures where dark green beds of moss never grow brown and crisp.—Peering from my window, I half imagined the dream was about to be realized. A great mystery had been wrought since the rain had fallen; grouped, or rather crowded in sweet confusion, was a cunning little company of wild wake-weed flowers, saintly white, and half hidden by the wave of brown earth from which they had just emerged. In close proximity, throve the hardy, sleepless, periwinkle, which a friend of mine significantly calls "a right pearte kind of greens." It is indeed a smart flower, full of strength and beauty, and scarcely inferior to the violet, for grace of form and richness of color; and yet, one can hardly feel secure, in comparing any flower, however regal with the pet of all climes and classes, the violet; I beg everybodys pardon for slipping into such an error, no sensible person should be guilty of it, who had ever had the privilege of parting away the long grasses from the edge of a fresh limpid brook, or bubbling spring, and discovering a cluster of these amethysts, steeped in fragrance, and marked with a golden star, so delicate, so translucent, that it paled before the first glance of the sun. Its leaves are here, and a few pale ambassadors, but not the heavenly blue, just tinted with purple, that makes up the great glory of the flower further north. Thinking of the clear defined beauty of this immortalized flower, we almost lose sight of the gay daffodil and bewilderingly sweet hyacinth, robed in pink and purple, and springing up exultingly on every side. But is it reasonable to suppose one frame can contain many pictures that has cost nature a whole season to paint? I have given my readers but a slight clue to the secret of my content, with my dark room, which has become my palace, since it has its garden.

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For the Crutch.

"Stonewall" Jackson.

In these days of civil strife when every printed page should be a spur to a thorough going loyalty to the great cause for which we suffer, it may seem unwise to seek to set forth the fairer lines of a character so eminent among traitors as his whose name stands at the head of this article. But since I have the example of one so illustrious and good as our poet Whittier to sustain me, I think I may venture on giving a word of just praise to an enemy. Few but have read the thrilling poem of "Barbara Frietchie," and surely none ever listened to its rendering by Mr. Murdoch, the great Tragedian, who

has lately favored the inmates of this Hospital with some of his Readings—and failed to

"let a tear
Fall for her sake on Stonewall's bier."
* * * * *
"Who touches a hair of yon gray head,
Dies like a dog! March on! he said."

The poet by his magic power, has so entwined the bright threads of the Rebel leader's humanity, reverence for age, and admiration of her devotedness to the imperiled flag, with the self-sacrificing patriotism—the sublime heroism of Barbara, that linked with hers, his name will descend to posterity—a ray of light pointing amid the mournful darkness surrounding it, to the splendor which might have been reflected upon it. Now, per-chance, from the fragrant blossoms springing spontaneously from Barbara Frietchie's grave some seeds may be wafted into the mound 'neath which his dust was laid, to send by and by, for him, also a sweet offering to heaven. Of General Jackson in his military capacity I did not intend to speak. His bravery, skill, and successful leadership have all been sufficiently attested. He seldom failed in any undertaking. Bold in his designs—deterred by no difficulties—ever on the alert—he snatched a victory whenever and wherever he chose and at length came to be regarded by North and South alike, as almost invincible. But on nobler traits than these I prefer to dwell. Many a Union Soldier remembers the kindness shown him by the brave "Stonewall." One was telling me a few days since of his own capture by some of Jackson's men and what harsh treatment he and his comrades received till the facts became known to the General. And what did "Stonewall" do? To his honor be it said—he promptly ordered the arrest of the merciless rebel guards and caused the prisoners to be properly cared for during the remainder of the time they were under his authority.

Passing through one of the wards of this Hospital, rather more than a year ago, just after an arrival of released prisoners from Belle Isle, the honest face of a grey haired veteran attracted my notice. He seemed ready to talk and in reply to some remark of mine respecting his age, he said, "Yes, I told the boys in our village that I was a little older than they, but I had a pretty strong arm yet, and I would volunteer to defend the old flag as long as I was able, so says I, boys come along with me and I'll take good care of you, if any of ye get hurt. Well, we raised a company right off and we done mighty well for awhile, but one day we got into a hard fight with old Stonewall Jackson, and at last had to retreat—most of the boys got off and so might I, for I was only scratched on the shin but there was one of my poor boys shot down right at my side. I could'nt leave him, so I dragged him off the field and got him into a shanty near by and dressed his wounds. Pretty soon up came some of the Rebs and told me I was their prisoner.— They carried me off to old "Stonewall." I shall never forget how he looked at me and said, "Old man, what brought you here?" Then I told him how I was taking care of my poor boy in yonder house—I could not leave him to die alone—so I was captured. "It was an act of humanity," said he, "go back and take care of your friend and I will send a Surgeon and whatever you need." And he did, and I watched over my poor boy 'till he died, three days afterwards. I'm a strong Union man (added he,) and I mean to fight for the old flag as long as I live, but some how, since then I never can bear to hear any body say anything agin Stonewall Jackson."

I have taken pleasure in giving the above testimony to the humanity of this noted Rebel chief, and trust it will help our enemies to see that we can perceive the good as well as the evil which they exhibit. But how fair does his conduct appear in contrast with that of his associates in command! Perhaps his, will be the single bright example in the whole dismal record of meanness, treachery and cruelty which the faithful historian must give of the traitors who held power during the great rebellion.

PETER.

"Ma, why is a postage stamp like a bad scholar?" "I can't tell you my son; why is it?" "Because it gets licked and put in a corner." "Susan, put that boy to bed."