

Selected Poetry.



THE CLOSING SCENE,

BY T. MCGARAN. REED.

The North British Review pronounces this poem the best that has ever been written by an American author:

Within this sober realm of leafless trees,
The russet year inhaled the dreamy air,
Like some tanned reaper in his hour of ease,
When all the fields are lying brown and bare.

The gray bars, looking from their hazy hills
O'er the dim water widening in the vales,
Sent down the air a greeting to the mills,
On the dull thunder of alternate flails.

All sights were mellowed, and all sounds subdued,
The hills seemed farther, and the streams sang low;

As in a dream, the distant woodman hew'd
His winter log with many a muffled blow.

Th' embattled forests, erewhile armed in gold,
Their banners bright with every martial hue,
Now stood, like some sad beaten host of old,
Withdrawn star in Time's remotest blue.

On plum-brown wings the vulture tried his flight;

The dove scarce heard his sighing mate's complaint.

And like a star slow drowning in the light,
The village church-vane seemed to pale and faint,

The sentinel cock upon the hill-side crew;
C thrice, and all was stiller than before—
Silent till some replying wanderer blew

His alien horn, and then was heard no more

Where erst the jay within the elms tall crest
Made garrulous trouble round the unflagged young,

And where the oriole hung her swaying nest
By every light wind like a censer swung;

Where sang the noisy masons of the eve.

The busy swallow circling over near,
Foreboding, as the rustic mind believes,
An early harvest and a plenteous year.

Where every bird which charmed the vocal feast.

Shock the sweet number from its wings at more,
To warn the repose of the rosy east.

All now was gloom, empty, and forlorn.

Alone, from out the subtle pipe the quail,
And croak'd the crow through all the dreary gloom;

Alot the pheasant drumming in the vale,
Made echo to the distant cottage loon.

There was no bus, no bloom upon the bowers
The spiders wove their thin silks night by night.

The thistle-down, the only ghost of flowers,
Sailed slowly by—passed noiseless out of sight.

Amid all this—in this most cheerless air,
And where the woodbine sheds the porch
Its crimson leaves; as if the year stood there,
Fixing the floor with his inverted torch—

Amid all this, the centre of the scene,

The white-haired matron, with monotonous tread,
Plied the swift-wheel and, with her joyless mien

Sat like a fate, and watched the flying thread.

She had known sorrow. He had walked with her,

Often stopped, and broke with her the calm crust.

And in the dead leaves, still she heard the stir
Of his black mantle trailing in the dust.

While yet her cheek was bright with summer bloom,

Her country summoned, and she gave her all,

And twice war bowed to her his sable plume;

He gave the swords to rest upon the wall.

She gave the sword—but not the hand that drew.

And struck for liberty the dying blow;

For him, who to his sire and country true,
Held mid the ranks of the invading foe,

Long, but not sad, the drooping wheel went on.

Like the low murmur of a bee at noon.

Long, but not loud, the memory of the gone.

Breathed through her lips a sad and tremulous sound.

At last the thread was snapped, her head was bowed;

Life dropped the distaff through his hands

across;

And loving neighbor smoothed her careful bairn.

While Death and Winter closed the autumn scene.

THE CREATURE CALLED A BOY.

A very uncertain, mysterious, inexplicable being is a boy—who can doubt it?

I really, a boy is the spirit of toads of darkness, a certain leviathan creeping through the woods of magic over every earth made of the bones, roots, and hair of the dead, and the bones and hair of the living.

to dig worms for bait, and loses them; hunts up the molting crab, the sugar barrel, searches for all the pie and preserves left from supper, and eats them; goes to the apes every ten minutes; hides his old cap in order to wear his new one; cuts his clothes for fun, and for dittos marks the carpet; marks your furniture, pinches the baby, worries the nurse, ties fire-crackers to the kitten's tail, drops his books in the gutter while he fishes with a pin, pockets his schoolmaster's spec, and finally turns a sober household upside down if he cuts his little finger.

Agricultural.



SENSIBILITY OF PLANTS.

Certain motions are observed in plants, which as they are not to be referred to the operation of any mechanical laws, must be attributed to the existing vitality under the influence of peculiar conditions, or to the presence of a certain sensibility, which plants as well as animals inherit by virtue of their life. But the latter being destitute of muscular fibre, have nothing in common with that property in animals which has been defined as voluntary motion; yet they often exhibit movements which have certain correspondence with it. These are kinds, general and special. The first belong to all plants; the last only to certain orders, "Tribes," or individuals. Among the first may be reckoned the universal determination of the Root to descend, and of the stem to ascend in germination, the trimming of the upper surfaces of leaves to the light, and seeds which have been buried from times unknown will germinate, and often present entirely different species from any in the neighborhood. Within a few years grains of Wheat, obtained from the Egyptian catacombs, where they had lain not less than three thousand years, have been planted in England, germinated, and produced abundantly.—*Green's Botany.*

LONGEVITY OF SEEDS.

Some seeds lose their vitality almost as soon as they fall from the plant, but many are very tenacious of life. The seeds of Grasses often preserve their vitality for a long period. Maize and Rye will germinate after thirty or forty years, and Kidney Beans retain their life principle for a century. Seeds with hard and thick covers, generally keep much longer; while those of fleshy and pulpy fruits are extremely perishable. Dr. Lindley, the great Botanist, raised Raspberry plants from seeds which were taken from the stomach of a man, whose skeleton was found thirty feet below the surface of the earth. The body had been buried with some coins of the Emperor Hadrian, and it is probable the seeds were about seventeen hundred years old. When a deep layer of earth is turned up to the air, seeds which have been buried from times unknown will germinate, and often present entirely different species from any in the neighborhood. Within a few years grains of Wheat, obtained from the Egyptian catacombs, where they had lain not less than three thousand years, have been planted in England, germinated, and produced abundantly.—*Green's Botany.*

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Cheraw, S. C., June 12, 1856.

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The leaves of many plants, assume certain positions, with the decline of day.

Plants with very delicately winged leaves,

appear more sensible to this influence of

light, such as the white Locust tree and

Wood sorrel. The sensibility appears to

reside in the joint of the leaf-stalk, which

is usually bent down in the natural position.

These habits, collectively, were by

Linnæus poetically denominated the "Sleep of Plants."

Many flowers expand their wings to the

air and light in fine weather; but many of

the tribe close their petals at night, and in

cloudy weather. The white pond Lilly,

rises and expands with the sun; but on

the approach of night, closes its numerous

petals and sinks below the surface of the

water, to rise and re-expand them on the

following morning; and this it continues

so until the germ is fertilized, and the

flowers fall. The Evening Primrose begins to unfold its flowers directly after sunset. The leaves of the cyclamen burst

and fly open with an audible report, emitting

at the same time an agreeable odor.

The straw colored petals open more definitely, and the flower fades during the

next day. The Morning Glory and some

of the Portulaca tribe, open with the

early dawn, and close at evening: the

Mirabilis is generally out about the middle

of the afternoon, whence its common name of four-o'clock; while the flower of the Goat's beard regularly, expands in the

morning without regard to weather, and

closes about twelve o'clock—for this rea-

son it is called go-to-bed at noon. Many

species of Clover fold their leaves on the

approach of a storm, while the Sun Thistle

opens them.

One of the most remarkable instances of

motion caused by touch, is the Sensitive

plant, if one of the leaves be touched, it

seems to spring from the hand, and rises

with the corresponding leaflet, each closing

on its mid-rib, and the petiole being folded

together the motion is communicated to

the adjacent pairs, until the whole leaf is

closed, when it sticks close on the stalk.

The Venus Flytrap exhibits a very remark-

able instance of irritability, if an insect alights

on the leaves of the plant, which are

covered with sensitive hairs, the

petioles close, and the lobes close

over like the jaws of a trap, and

swallow the insect.

—*Green's Botany.*

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