

NOTES FROM THE PRAIRIE.

THE best lesson I have had for a long time in the benefits of contentment and of the value of one's own nook or corner of the world, however circumscribed it may be, as a point from which to observe nature and life, comes to me from a prairie correspondent, an invalid lady, confined to her room year in and year out, and yet who sees more and appreciates more than many of us who have the freedom of a whole continent. Having her permission, why should I not share these letters with my readers, especially since there are other house-bound or bed-bound invalids whom they may reach and who may derive some cheer or suggestion from them? Words uttered in a popular magazine like *THE CENTURY* are like the vapors that go up from the ground and the streams: they are sure to be carried far and wide, and to fall again as rain or dew, and one little knows what thirsty plant or flower they may reach and nourish. I am thinking of another fine spirit, couch-bound in one of the northern New England States, who lives in a town that bears the same name as that in which my Western correspondent resides, and into whose chamber my slight and desultory papers have also brought something of the breath of the fields and woods, and who in return has given me many glimpses of nature through eyes purified by suffering.

Women are about the best lovers of nature, after all; at least of nature in her milder and more familiar forms. The feminine character, the feminine perceptions, intuitions, delicacy, sympathy, quickness, etc., are more responsive to natural forms and influences than is the masculine mind.

My Western correspondent sees existence as from an altitude, and sees where the complements and compensations come in. She lives upon the prairie, and she says it is as the ocean to her, upon which she is adrift, and always expects to be, until she reaches the other shore. Her house is the ship which she never leaves. "What is visible from my window is the sea, changing only from winter to summer as the sea changes from storm to sunshine. But there is one advantage,—messages can come to me continually from all the wide world."

One summer she wrote she had been hoping to be well enough to renew her acquaintance with the birds, the flowers, the woods, but instead was confined to her room more closely than ever.

"It is a disappointment to me, but I decided long ago that the wisest plan is to make the

best of things; to take what is given you, and make the most of it. To gather up the fragments that nothing may be lost, applies to one's life as well as to other things. Though I cannot walk, I can think and read and write; probably I get my share of pleasure from sources that well people are apt to neglect. I have learned that the way to be happy is to keep so busy that thoughts of self are forced out of sight; and to live for others, not for ourselves.

"Sometimes, when I think over the matter, I am half sorry for well people, because, you see, I have so much better company than they can have, for I have so much more time to go all over the world and meet all the best and wisest people in it. Some of them died long ago to the most of people, but to me they are just as much alive as they ever were; they give me their best and wisest thoughts without the disagreeable accompaniments others must endure. Other people use their eyes and ears and pens for me; all I have to do is to sit still and enjoy the results. Dear friends I have everywhere, though I am unknown to them; what right have I to wish for more privileges than I have?"

There is philosophy for you—philosophy which looks fate out of countenance. It seems that if we only have the fortitude to take the ills of life cheerfully and say to fortune, "Thy worst is good enough for me," behold the worst is already repentant and fast changing to the best. Love softens the heart of the inevitable. The magic phrase which turns the evil spirits into good angels is, "I am contented." Happiness is always at one's elbow, it seems, in one disguise or another; all one has to do is to stop seeking it afar, or stop *seeking* it at all, and say to this unwelcome attendant, "Be thou my friend," when, lo, the mask falls, and the angel is disclosed. Certain rare spirits in this world have accepted poverty with such love and pride that riches at once became contemptible.

My correspondent has the gift of observation. In renouncing self she has opened the door for many other things to enter. In cultivating the present moment, she cultivates the present incident. The power to see things comes of that mental attitude which is directed to the now and the here: keen, alert perceptions, those faculties that lead the mind and take the incident as it flies. Most people fail to see things because the print is too small for their vision; they read only the large-lettered events like the newspaper headings, and are apt

to miss a part of these, unless they see in some way their own initials there.

The small type of the lives of bird and beast about her is easily read by this cheerful invalid. "To understand that the sky is everywhere blue," says Goethe, "we need not go around the world"; and it would seem that this woman has got all the good and pleasure there is in natural history from the pets in her room, and the birds that build before her window. I had been for a long time trying to determine whether or not the blue-jay hoarded up nuts for winter use, but had not been able to settle the point. I applied to her, and, sitting by her window, she discovered that jays do indeed hoard food in a tentative, childish kind of way, but not with the cunning and provident foresight of the squirrels and native mice. She saw a jay fly to the ground with what proved to be a peanut in its beak and carefully cover it up with leaves and grass. The next fall, looking out of my own window, I saw two jays hiding chestnuts with the same blind instinct. They brought them from a near tree and covered them up in the grass, putting but one in a place. Subsequently, in another locality, I saw jays similarly employed. It appears to be simply the crow instinct to steal, or to carry away and hide any superfluous morsel of food. The jays were really planting chestnuts instead of hoarding them. There was no possibility of such supplies being available in winter, and in spring a young tree might spring from each nut. This fact doubtless furnishes a key to the problem why a forest of pine is usually succeeded by a forest of oak. The acorns are planted by the jays. Their instinct for hiding things prompts them to seek the more dark and secluded pine woods with their booty, and the thick layer of needles furnishes an admirable material with which to cover the nut. The germ sprouts and remains a low slender shoot for years, or until the pine woods are cut away, when it rapidly becomes a tree.

My correspondent thinks the birds possess some of the frailties of human beings; among other things, fickle-mindedness. "I believe they build nests just for the fun of it, to pass away the time, to have something to chatter about and dispute over." (I myself have seen a robin play at nest-building late in October, and have seen two young bluebirds ensconce themselves in an old thrush's nest in the fall and appear to amuse themselves like children, while the wind made the branch sway to and fro.) "Now my wrens' nest is so situated that nothing can disturb them, and where I can see it at any time. They have often made a nest and left it. A year ago, during the latter part of May, they built a nest, and in a few days they

kicked everything out of the box and did the work all over again, repeating the operation all July, then left the country without accomplishing anything further. This season they reared one brood, built another nest, and, I think, laid one or more eggs, idled around a few weeks, and then went away." (This last was probably a "cock-nest," built by the male as a roosting-place.) "I have noticed, too, that blue-jays build their apology for a nest, and abandon it for another place in the same tree." Her jays and wrens do not live together on the most amiable terms. "I had much amusement while the jay was on the nest, watching the actions of the wrens whose nest was under the porch close by the oak. Perched on a limb over the jay, the male wren sat flirting his tail and scolding, evidently saying all the insulting things he could think of; for after enduring it for some time, the jay would fly off its nest in a rage, and, with the evident intention of impaling Mr. Wren with his bill, strike down vengefully and—find his bill fast in the bark, while his enemy was somewhere else, squeaking in derision. They kept that up day after day, but the wren is too lively to be caught by a large bird.

"I have never had the opportunity to discover whether there was any difference in the dispositions of birds of the same species; it would take a very close and extended observation to determine that; but I do know there is as much difference between animals as between human beings in that respect. Horses, cats, dogs, squirrels,—all have their own individuality. I have had five gray squirrels for pets, and even their features were unlike. Fred and Sally were mates, who were kept shut up in their cages all the time. Fred was wonderfully brave, would strut and scold until there was something to be afraid of, then would crouch down behind Sally and let her defend him, the sneak! He abused her shamefully, but she never resented it. Being the larger, she could have whipped him and not half tried; but she probably labored under the impression, which is shared by some people, that it is a wife's duty to submit to whatever abuse the husband chooses to inflict. Their characters reminded me so strongly of some people I have seen that I used to take Fred out and whip him regularly, as a sort of vicarious punishment of those who deserved it. Chip was a gentle, pretty squirrel, fond of being petted, spent most of her time in my pocket or around my neck, but she died young; probably she was too good to live.

"Dick, lazy and a glutton, also died young, from overeating. Chuck, the present pet, has Satan's own temper—very ugly—but so intelligent that she is the plague of our

lives, though at the same time she is a constant source of amusement. It is impossible to remain long angry with her, however atrocious her crimes are. We are obliged to let her run loose through the house, for when shut up she squeals and chatters and rattles her cage so we can't endure it. From one piece of mischief to another as fast as she can go, she requires constant watching. She knows what is forbidden very well, for if I chance to look at her after she has been up to mischief, she quickly drops down flat, spreads her tail over her back, looking all the time so very innocent that she betrays herself. If I go towards her, she springs on my back, where I cannot reach her to whip her. She never bites *me*, but if others tease her she is very vicious. When I tease her she relieves her feelings by biting any one else who happens to be in the room; and it is no slight matter being bitten by a squirrel's sharp teeth. Knowing that the other members of the family are afraid of her, she amuses herself by putting nuts in their shoes, down their necks, or in their hair, then standing guard, so that if they remove the nuts she flies at them.

"Chuck will remember an injury for months, and take revenge whenever opportunity offers. She claims all the nuts and candy that come into the house, searching Mr. B——'s pockets on *Sundays*, never on other days. I don't see how she distinguishes, unless from the fact that he comes home early on that day. Once when she caught one of the girls eating some of her nuts, she flew at her, bit her, and began carrying off the nuts to hide as fast as she could. For months afterward she would slip slyly up and bite the girl. She particularly despises my brother, he teases her so, and gives her no chance to bite; so she gets even with him by tearing up everything of his she can find,—his books, his gloves, etc.; and if she can get into the closet where I keep the soiled clothing, she will select such articles as belong to him, and tear them up! And she has a wonderful memory, never forgets where she puts things; people whom she has not seen for several years she remembers.

"She had the misfortune to have about two inches of her tail cut off by being caught in the door, which made it too short to be used for wiping her face; it would slip out of her hands, making her stamp her feet and chatter her teeth with anger. By experimenting, she found by backing up in a corner it was prevented from slipping out of her reach. Have had her five years; wonder how long their lives usually are? One of my neighbors got a young squirrel, so young that it required milk; so they got a small nursing-bottle for it. Until that squirrel was over a year old,

whenever he got hungry, he would get his bottle and sit and hold it up as if he thought that quite the proper way for a squirrel to obtain his nourishment. It was utterly comical to see him. We have no black squirrels; a few red ones and a great many gray ones of different kinds."

I was much interested in her pet squirrel, and made frequent inquiries about it. A year later she writes: "My squirrel still lives and rules the house. She has an enemy that causes her much trouble,—a rat that comes into the wood-shed. I had noticed that whenever she went out there, she investigated the dark corners with care before she ventured to play, but did not understand it till I chanced to be sitting in the kitchen door once, as she was digging up a nut she had buried. Just as she got it up, a great rat sprung on her back; there ensued a trial of agility and strength to see which should have that nut. Neither seemed to be angry, for they did not attempt to bite, but raced around the shed, cuffing each other at every opportunity; sometimes one had the nut, sometimes the other. I regret to say my squirrel, whenever she grew tired, took a base advantage of the rat by coming and sitting at my feet, gnawing the nut, and plainly showing by her motions her exultation over her foe. Finally the rat became so exasperated that he forgot prudence and forced her to climb up on my shoulder.

"In an extract from a London paper I see it asserted that birds and snakes cannot taste. As to the snakes I cannot say, but I know birds can taste, from observing my canary when I give him something new to eat. He will edge up to it carefully, take a bit, back off to meditate; then if he decides he likes it, he walks up boldly and eats his fill. But if there is anything disagreeable in what I offer him, acid, for instance, there is such a fuss! He scrapes his bill, raises and lowers the feathers on the top of his head, giving one the impression that he is making a wry face. He cannot be induced to touch it a second time.

"I have taught him to think I am afraid of him, and how he tyrannizes over me, chasing me from place to place, pecking and squeaking! He delights in pulling out my hair. When knitting or crocheting, he tries to prevent my pulling the yarn by standing on it; when that fails, he takes hold with his bill and pulls with all his little might.

Some persons have a special gift or quality that enables them to sustain more intimate relations with wild creatures than others. Women, as a rule, are ridiculously afraid of cattle and horses turned loose in a field, but my correspondent, when a young girl, had many a lark with the prairie colts. "Is it not strange," she says, "that a horse will rarely

hurt a child, or any person that is fond of them? To see a drove of a hundred or even a hundred and fifty unbroken colts branded and turned out to grow up, was a common occurrence then [in her childhood]. I could go among them, catch them, climb on their backs, and they never offered to hurt me; they seemed to consider it *fun*. They would come up and touch me with their noses and prance off around and around me; but just let a man come near them, and they were off like the wind."

All her reminiscences of her early life in Iowa, thirty years ago, are deeply interesting to me. Her parents, a Boston family, moved to that part of the State in advance of the railroads, making the journey from the Mississippi in a wagon. "My father had been fortunate enough to find a farm with a frame house upon it (the houses were mostly log ones) built by an Englishman whose homesickness had driven him back to England. It stood upon a slight elevation in the midst of a prairie, though not a very level one. To the east and to the west of us, about four miles away, were the woods along the banks of the streams. It was in the month of June when we came, and the prairie was tinted pink with wild roses. From early spring till late in the fall the ground used to be so covered with some kinds of flowers that it had almost as decided a color as the sky itself, and the air would be fragrant with their perfume. First it is white with 'dog-toes' [probably an orchid]; then a cold blue, from being covered with some kind of light-blue flower; next come the roses; in July and August it is pink with the 'prairie pink,' dotted with scarlet lilies; as autumn comes on it is vivid with orange-colored flowers. I never knew their names; they have woody stalks; one kind that grows about a foot high has a feathery spray of little blossoms [golden-rod?]. There are several kinds of tall ones; the blossom has yellow leaves and brown velvety centers [cone-flower, or Rudbeckia, probably, now common in the East]. We youngsters used to gather the gum that exuded from the stalk. Every one was poor in those days, and no one was ashamed of it. Plenty to eat, such as it was. We introduced some innovations in that line that shocked the people here. We used *corn meal*; they said it was only fit for hogs. Worse than that, we ate 'greens'—weeds, they called them. It does not seem possible, but it is a fact, that with all those fertile acres around them waiting for cultivation, and to be had almost for the asking, those people (they were mainly Hoosiers) lived on fried salt pork, swimming in fat, and hot biscuit all the year round; no variety, no vegetables, no butter saved for winter use, no milk after cold weather began, for it was too

much trouble to milk the cows—*such* a shiftless set! And the hogs they raised—you should have seen them! 'Prairie sharks' and 'razor-backs' were the local names for them, and either name fitted them; long noses, long legs, bodies about five inches thick, and no amount of food would make them fat. They were allowed to run wild to save the trouble of caring for them, and when the pork-barrel was empty they *shot* one.

"Everybody drove oxen and used lumber-wagons with a board across the box for a seat. How did we ever endure it, riding over the roadless prairies! Then, anyone who owned a horse was considered an aristocrat and despised accordingly. One yoke of oxen that we had were not to be sneezed at as a fast team. They were trained to trot, and would make good time too." [I love to hear oxen praised. An old Michigan farmer, an early settler, told me of a famous pair of oxen he once had; he spoke of them with great affection. They would draw any log he hitched them to. When they had felt of the log and found they had their match, he said they would nudge each other, give their tails a kink, lift up their heads, and say *ch-h-h-h!* then something had to come.]

"One phrase you used in your last letter—'the start from the stump'—shows how locality governs the illustrations we use. The start was not from the *stump* here, quite the reverse. Nature made the land ready for man's hand, and there were no obstacles in the shape of stumps and stones to overcome. Probably in the East a pine-stump fence is not regarded as either particularly attractive or odd; but to me, when I first saw one in York State, it was both. I had never even heard of the stumps being utilized in that way. Seen for the first time, there is something grotesque in the appearance of those long arms forever reaching out after something they never find, like a petrified octopus. Those fences are an evidence of Eastern thrift—making an enemy serve as a friend. I think they would frighten our horses and cattle, used as they are to the almost invisible wire fence. 'Worm' fences were the fashion at first. But they soon learned the necessity of economizing wood. The people were extravagant, too, in the outlay of power in tilling the soil, sixteen yoke of oxen being thought absolutely necessary to run a breaking-plow; and I have seen twenty yoke used, requiring three men to drive and attend the great clumsy plow. Every summer you might see them in any direction, looking like 'thousand-legged worms.' They found out after a while that two yoke answered quite as well. There is something very queer about the boulders that are sup-

posed to have been brought down from northern regions during the glacial period; like Banquo's ghost they refuse to stay down. Other stones beside them gradually become buried, but the boulders are always on top of the ground. Is there something repellent about them, that the earth refuses to cover them? They seem to be of no use, for they cannot be worked as other stone; they have to be broken open with heat in some way, though I did see a building made of them once. The boulders had been broken and put in big squares and little squares, oblong pieces and triangles. The effect was curious, if not fine.

"In those days there were such quantities of game-birds, it was the sportsman's paradise, and during the summer a great many gunners from the cities came there. Prairie-chickens without number, as great a nuisance as the crows in the East, only we could eat them to pay for the grain they ate; also geese, turkeys, ducks, quail, and pigeons. Did you ever hear the prairie-chickens during the spring? I never felt sure spring had come to stay till, in the early morning, there came the boom of the chickens, *Poor old boof*. It is an indescribable sound, as if there were a thousand saying the same thing and keeping perfect time. No trouble then getting a child up early in the morning, for it is time for hunting prairie-chickens' nests. In the most unexpected places in the wild grass the nests would be found, with about sixteen eggs in them, looking somewhat like a guinea-hen's egg. Of course an omelet made out of them tasted ever so much better than if made out of home-laid eggs; now I should not like the taste so well, probably, for there is a wild flavor to the egg, as there is to the flesh of the bird. Many a time I've stepped right into the nest, so well was it hidden. After a prairie fire is a good time to go eggng, the nests being in plain sight, and the eggs already roasted. I have tried again and again to raise the chickens by setting the eggs under the tame hens, but it cannot be done; they seem to inherit a shyness that makes them refuse to eat, and at the first opportunity they slip off in the grass and are gone. Every kind of food, even to live insects, they will refuse, and will starve to death rather than eat in captivity. There are but few chickens here now; they have taken Horace Greeley's advice and gone West. As to four-footed game, there were any number of the little prairie-wolves and some big gray ones. Could see the little wolves running across the prairie any time a day, and at night their continual *yap, yap* was almost unendurable. They developed a taste for barn-yard fowl that made it necessary for hens to roost high. They are cowards in the

daytime, but brave enough to come close to the house at night. If people had only had foxhounds, they would have afforded an opportunity for some sport. I have seen people try to run them down on horseback, but never knew them to succeed.

"One of my standard amusements was to go every little while to a den the wolves had where the rocks cropped out of the ground and poke in there with a stick, to see a wolf pop out scared almost to death. As to the big wolves, it was dangerous sport to meddle with them. I had an experience with them one winter that would have begotten a desire to keep a proper distance from them, had I not felt it before. An intensely cold night three of us were riding in an open wagon on one seat. The road ran for about a mile through the woods, and as we entered it four or five gray wolves sprang out at us; the horse needed no urging, you may be sure, but to me it seemed an age before we got out into the moonlight on the prairie; then the wolves slunk back into the woods. Every leap they made it seemed as if they would jump into the wagon. I could hear them strike against the back of it and hear their teeth *click* together as they barely missed my hand where I held on to the seat to keep from being thrown out. My most prominent desire about that time was to sit in the middle and let some one else have the outside seat.

"Grandfather was very fond of trapping, and used to catch a great many wolves for their skins and the bounty; also minks and muskrats. I always had to help skin them, which I considered dreadful, especially skinning the muskrats; but as that was the only condition under which I was allowed to go along, of course I submitted, for I wouldn't miss the excitement of seeing whether we had succeeded in outwitting and catching the sly creatures for any consideration. The beautiful minks, with their slender satiny bodies, it seemed a pity to catch them. Muskrats I had no sympathy for, they looked so ratty, and had so unpleasant a smell. The gophers were one of the greatest plagues the farmers had. The ground would be dotted with their mounds, so round and regular, the black dirt pulverized so finely. I always wondered how they could make them of such a perfect shape, and wished I could see way down into their houses. They have more than one entrance to them, because I've tried to drown them out, and soon I would see what I took to be my gopher, that I thought I had covered so nicely, skipping off. They took so much corn out of the hills after it was planted that it was customary to mix corn soaked with strychnine with the seed corn. Do they have pocket

gophers in the East? [No.] They are the cutest little animals, with their pockets on each side of their necks, lined with fur; when they get them stuffed full they look as broad as they are long, and so saucy. I have met them and had them show fight, because I wouldn't turn out of their path—the little impudent things!

“One nuisance that goes along with civilization we escaped until the railroad was built, and that was *rats*. The railroads brought other nuisances too, the weeds; they soon crowded out the native plants. I don't want to be understood as calling *all* weeds nuisances; the beautiful flowers some of them bear save their reputations—the dandelion, for instance; I approve of the dandelion, whatever others may think. I shall never forget the first one I found in the West; it was like meeting an old friend. It grew alongside of an emigrant road, about five miles from my home; here I spied the golden treasure in the grass. Some of the many ‘prairie schooners’ that had passed that way had probably dropped the one seed. Mother dug it up and planted it in our flower-bed, and in two years the neighborhood was yellow with them—all from that one root. The prairies are gone now, and the wild flowers, those that have not been civilized to death like the Indians, have taken refuge in the fence-corners.”

I had asked her what she knew about cranes, and she replied as follows:

“During the first few years after we came West, cranes, especially the sand-hill variety, were very plentiful. Any day in the summer you might see a triangle of them flying over, with their long legs dragging behind them; or if you had sharp eyes, could see them stalking along the sloughs sometimes found on the prairie. In the books I see them described as being brown in color. Now I should not call them brown, for they are more of a yellow. They are just the color of a gosling, should it get its down somewhat soiled, and they look much like overgrown goslings set up on stilts. I have often found their nests, and always in the shallow water in the slough, built out of sticks, much as the children build cob-houses, about a foot high, with two large flat eggs in them. I have often tried to catch them on their nests, so as to see how they disposed of their long legs, but never quite succeeded. They are very shy, and their nests are always so situated as to enable them to see in every direction. I had a great desire to possess a pet crane, but every attempt to raise one resulted in failure, all on account of those same slender legs.

“The egg I placed under a ‘sitting hen’ (one was as much as a hen could conveniently

manage); it would hatch out all right, and I had no difficulty in feeding the young crane, for it would eat anything, and showed no shyness—quite different from a young prairie-chicken; in fact, their tameness was the cause of their death, for, like Mary's little lamb, they insisted on going everywhere I went. When they followed me into the house, and stepped upon the smooth floor, one leg would go in one direction and the other in the opposite, breaking one or both of them. They seemed to be unable to walk upon any smooth surface. Such ridiculous looking things they were! I have seen a few pure white ones, but only on the wing. They seem more shy than the yellow ones.

“Once I saw a curious sight; I saw seven or eight cranes dance a cotillion, or something very much like it. I have since read of wild fowl performing in that way, but then I had never heard of it. They were in a meadow about half a mile from the house; I did not at all understand what they were doing, and proceeded to investigate. After walking as near as I could without frightening them, I crept through the tall grass until I was within a rod of the cranes, and then lay and watched them. It was the most comical sight to see them waltz around, sidle up to each other and back again, their long necks and legs making the most clumsy motions. With a little stretch of the imagination one might see a smirk on their faces, and suspect them of caricaturing human beings. There seemed to be a regular method in their movements, for the changes were repeated. How long they kept it up I do not know, for I tired of it and went back to the house, but they had danced until the grass was trampled down hard and smooth. I always had a mania for trying experiments, so I coaxed my mother to cook one the men had shot, though I had never heard of any one's eating crane. It was not very good, tasted somewhat peculiar, and the thought that maybe it was poison struck me with horror. I was badly scared, for I reflected that I had no proof that it was *not* poison, and I had been told so many times that I was bound to come to grief, sooner or later, from trying to find out things.”

I am always glad to have the views of a sensible person, outside of the literary circles, upon my favorite authors, especially when the views are spontaneous. “Speaking of Thoreau,” says my correspondent, “I am willing to allow most that is said in his praise, but *I do not like him*, all the same. Do you know I feel that he was not altogether human. There is something uncanny about him. I guess that instead of having a human soul, his body was inhabited by some

sylvan deity that flourished in Grecian times; he seemed out of place among human beings."

Of Carlyle, too, she has an independent opinion. "It is a mystery to me why men so universally admire Carlyle; women do not, or if there is occasionally one who does, she does not *like* him. A woman's first thought about him would be, 'I pity his wife!' Do you remember what he said in answer to Mrs. Welsh's proposal to come and live with them and help support them? He said they could only live pleasantly together on the condition that she looked up to him, not he to her. Here is what he says: 'Now, think, Liebchen, whether your mother will consent to forget her riches and our poverty and uncertain, more probably scanty income, and consent in the spirit of Christian meekness to make me her guardian and director, and be a second wife to her daughter's husband?' Now, isn't that insufferable conceit for you? To expect that a woman old enough to be his mother would lay aside her self-respect and individu-

ality to accept him, a comparatively young and inexperienced man, as her master? The cheekiness of it! Here you have the key-note of his character — 'great I and little u.'

"I have tried faithfully to like him, for it seemed as if the fault must be in me because I did not; I have labored wearily through nearly all his works, stumbling over his superlatives (why, he is an adjective factory; his pages look like the alphabet struck by a cyclone. You call it picturesqueness; I call it grotesqueness). But it was of no use; it makes me tired all over to think of it. All the time I said to myself, 'Oh, do stop your scolding; you are not so much better than the rest of us.' One is willing to be led to a higher life, but who wants to be pushed and cuffed along? How can people place him and our own Emerson, the dear guide and friend of so many of us, on the same level? It may be that the world had need of him, just as it needs lightning and rain and cold and pain, but must we *like* these things?"*

John Burroughs.

* My correspondent was Mrs. Beardslee of Manchester, Iowa. She died in October, 1885.

UNDYING LIGHT.

I.

WHEN in the golden western summer skies
 A flaming glory starts, and slowly fades
 Through crimson tone on tone to deeper shades,
 There falls a silence, while the daylight dies
 Lingering,— but not with human agonies
 That tear the soul, or terror that degrades;
 A holy peace the failing world pervades
 Nor any fear of that which onward lies;
 For well, ah well, the darkened vale recalls
 A thousand times ten thousand vanished suns;
 Ten thousand sunsets from whose blackened walls
 Reftamed the white and living day, that runs,
 In light which brings all beauty to the birth,
 Deathless forever round the ancient earth.

II.

O thou the Lord and Maker of life and light!
 Full heavy are the burdens that do weigh
 Our spirits earthward, as through twilight gray
 We journey to the end and rest of night;
 Though well we know to the deep inward sight
 Darkness is but thy shadow, and the day
 Where thou art never dies, but sends its ray
 Through the wide universe with restless might.
 O Lord of Light, steep thou our souls in thee!
 That when the daylight trembles into shade,
 And falls the silence of mortality,
 And all is done,— we shall not be afraid,
 But pass from light to light; from what doth seem
 Into the very heart and heaven of our dream.

R. W. Gilder.