"ONE BLANK" OF WINDSOR.

REVELATIONS OF A LITTLE WORN SHEEPSKIN VOLUME.

Interesting Light on an Old Connecticut Tragedy—Pathetic Incident of Witchcraft Days.

(By Annie Eliot Trumbull.)

There has come into my possession a little old volume which with its shabby binding of worn sheepskin, promises to be one of the many didactic or theological or historical treatises in which material our early printing presses did so much abound. Instead, its contents are distinctly personal, and have an atmosphere of their own since they are in the crabbed, eccentric, but by no means entirely illegible handwriting of the former owner, Matthew Grant of Windsor, progenitor of many descendants, more or less distinguished, among whom, one at least, is sure of his place in the pantheon of heroes.

The little book is, in short, the manuscript diary of said Matthew Grant, resident from 1635 to 1681 of the town of Windsor, Connecticut, subsequently seat of learning, and always home of the rugged, patient and enlightened, if not lenient, virtues which have made New England. One of the emigration from Dorchester, Grant became Recorder, and to his painstaking diligence, local history owes much of its information regarding the village on the east bank of the Connecticut River, part of one of that not unimportant trinity of towns established through the exodus from Massachusetts. Now, it is East Windsor and has fallen into the quiet shadiness of elms and grassy streets and wide, fertile fields about which linger pungent memories connected with the brimstone element of prominent theological sympathies. Save for the disorganizing and ubiquitous trolley car which flashes according to the laws of its pervasive orbit, East Windsor is now rather apart from the currents of communication and of comment, but in those earlier days, it throbbed with the pulses of an hour which was making a new people—a people which reasoned high of fixed fate, free will and knowledge absolute, but also kept in mind the 18 properties of an Humbel Soule, as is witnessed by the words of Mr. Thomas Brookes, herein preserved. For Matthew Grant and his neighbors heard much good preaching and had time to think it over even as late as Monday morning, else never could have been prepared such extensive notes as this volume contains of the sermons of that godly divine, Thomas Hooker and of Pastor Warham and other saintly men. They would be patient eyes which would decipher the closely written pages in order to glean such sheaves of Hooker's and Warham's wisdom as appear here under their own names, together with the stray fruitage of other "Extracts." Such eyes were those of the possessor of the Diary to whose patience, information and ingenuity the present writer owes all the knowledge derived from the "Table of Contents" which he prefixed.

Not as notable as that memorable sermon upon the rights of a free people, but undoubtedly to edification are the addresses of Thomas Hooker here reported—one delivered at Windsor, June 20th, 1647, to the notes of which is appended the statement, "Mr. Hooker was buried 18 dayes after he preached this sermon." Another is a Thanksgiving sermon of October 4, 1638, and breathes in its text the proud confidence of the brave little settlement then only two years old: "Then Samuel took a stone and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

Matthew Grant was a conscientious scribe and had, as we have hinted, a fine taste in theology: he preserves the utterances of Rev. John Warham on "the matter and form of a church" a subject of some political importance in 1647: of the Rev. Mr. Reyner of Plymouth and the Rev. T. Hanford of Norwalk and by Mr. Thomas Brookes, all in the firm if cryptic character which defies cursory examination. Indeed these are intended for no trivial, fond records to meet the eye of the cursory. Instead they were transcribed for those who had a deep interest in ascertaining "Some Rules how we shall discover any Doctrine delivered, whether it be of God or no," and who would prayerfully and thoughtfully consider the five principles implicit in the "Questions propounded by the Ministers of the Bay and answers made to them by Mr. John Cotton," in 1637.

The first of these searchings of the understanding was "What is ye seale of ye Spirit?" and the fifth, "Wheather ye witnesse of ye spirit be so cleare as to witness immediately by itself without respect of any work of Christ in a man so constant as being once obtained a man doth never after question his state." Well enough for Mr. John Cotton and other giants of debate to wrestle with these problems: it only kept their theological sinews in good condition. But when one thinks of a Puritan infant striving on his little knees, to discover if haply, having once had it, he may have lost ye witnesse of ye Spirit, the questions take on a shade of pathos. Thus though the candlestick has been removed, Mr. Matthew Grant is evidence that it still concerned the founders of Connecticut to profit by the illumination and learning of the accomplished and godly clergymen of the Bay.

Oddly enough, in the midst of the pale colors of the sermonizing—colors, vivid enough, then, perhaps, but grown somewhat pallid in the light of subsequent theology—there glows suddenly from the yellow pages, the warm imagery of the Canticles—Ainsworth's version with a "Rap sodia." More oddly, it would seem, must it have thrilled through the pallor of the Puritan meeting-house and brightened with a touch of Oriental bloom the rugged framework of the Puritan discourse.

"With kisses of his mouth let him kisse me,
Because thy love than mine much better be.

Lo, thou art fayre O thou my dearest love,
Lo, thou art fayre, thy eyes are as the dove."

It is as far from the chill and the mother of pearl tints of the New England winter landscape as was Solomon in all his glory from the hymn writers of the early church.

The Windsor Church convenant is also here, dated October 23, 1647, the cruse of which—"Submission in the lord of all our superiours" did not so darken the knowledge of later communicants that they were unable to put a free construction upon "superiours." There are notes of a sermon by E. H." probably the initials of Ephraim Hull, clergyman of Windsor, according to the suggestion of the "Table of Contents."

But beyond the interest of these items and abridgements, more human, more tragic—still vibrant with a forgotten anguish, the swift terror of a heart long quiet—is another entry, not made on the decorous pages which memorize the saints, but scrawled on the inside of the cover, where it might be the sinner might escape detection. But the furtive note found a comprehending reader.

Many speculations have clustered about the brief entry made by Winthrop in his history: "One (blank) of Windsor arraigned and executed at Hartford for a witch." Says Mr. James Savage in his note upon this statement: "Nothing of this is found in the History of Connecticut by Dr. Trumbull, yet it is deserving of melancholy commemoration as the First instance of delusion in New England, too soon infectious. We may presume the unhappy woman was tried as well as arraigned before execution if the wretched ceremonies in such cases deserve the name of trial." Savage goes on to quote Benjamin Trumbull to the effect that "after the most careful researches, no indictment of any person for that crime nor any process relative to that affair can be found. "Perhaps," he adds, "there was sense enough early in the colony to destroy the record."

If this be so, we get again that alarming realization of the indestructibility of the written word, for Matthew Grant, in the privacy of his own desk, thought it not amiss to jot down the name of the neighbor who knew too well the powers of evil. Who, then, was the "witch" with whose execution Connecticut stepped into the dark shadow of persecution? She has been called Mary Johnson, but no Mary Johnson has been identified as this earliest victim. Whose is that pathetic figure shrinking in the twilight of that early record? We could think of her with no less kindly compassion could we give a name to the unhappy victim of the misread Word of God, who was led forth to a death stripped of dignity as of consolation: who, to an ignorance and credulity, brought from an old world and not yet sifted out by the enlightenment and experience of a new, yielded up her perhaps miserable but unforfeited life. Here is the note which in all probability establishes the identity of the One of Windsor, arraigned and executed as a witch. "May 26.47 Alse Young was hanged," and there follows the statement of the later executions of John Newbery and "Carington and his wife."

To the copy of this observation is added by "J. H. T." "The first entry supplies the nome of the "One (blank) of Windsor arraigned and executed at Hartford for a witch"—the first known execution for witchcraft in New England. I have found no mention elsewhere of this Alse Young."

Alse Young! There is something pitifully appealing in the very name. It is so far off—that frenzy of panic and perversity, that it is difficult to bring back with any emotional veracity the picture of that May day of 1647. There is painful irony in the very season: May, the month when the miracles of the Spring have been performed to the benefaction of man! May, when the powers of darkness that governed the long winter, and taunted man in the bitterness of early Spring, had been finally banished! May, when, if ever, the witchcraft of sun and scent and blossom has turned a barren New England into a wonder of beauty! May, when if ever, life is precious and earth is dear, Alse Young was brought across the blue, broad, benignant river, to be executed for the sin of witchcraft for was it not written in the Capital Laws that one should not suffer a witch to live.

Really those days were not so destitute of color, so barren of all emotion, as they would have us believe, who find in them only fasts, and long sermons and perverse renunciation. There is human emotion enough in this one sentence to make the shabby old record vital with the elements of tragedy, to paint a picture of fear and pain, of cruelty, and it must have been—remorse. It would be easy to speculate concerning Alse Young. Her name inevitably wears a suggestion of youth which is not the obvious one of the name itself; it has a certain, appealing, innocent rhythm. It may only have been that she bewitched some one's cow or stuck pins into a virtuous good wife or a bawling child, but, since we know no more than her name, it may be permitted us to guess that her death was ennobled by something in the grand manner—that she was too fair to be safe from jealousy—too young to have lost the magic of voice and laughter. To some minds such a victim, snatched from warmth and color, may seem the sadder picture, but it is not so: for it has the swift brightness of one whom the gods love; it is not so heartbreaking as such a fate overtaking a friendless, helpless weak old woman, whose companions have left her behind them upon an unfriendly earth which has no room for her cowering figure: for whom a younger generation has become frightened persecutors: whose kin, if she has them, and grown even, before the accusation found her out, hostile, out, at the best indifferent, as to a creed outworn. What if a younger woman would have had longer to live, more to renounce? If so, there were sure to be some compassionate hearts made rebellious, even in the crowd that watched her progress to the gallows. It was an unhappy and a mad world that she was leaving, but in the going from it, thus prematurely, she may—nay, she must—have caught a glimpse of something that was not all black with bitterness. It is incredible that she should not have left behind her the perfume of a regret. But the other picture—that of the old, wind-driven, shuddering, half childish, broken, unpitied, dazed and shaken creature—unmourned, unmissed—no, we cannot bear that! Alse Young shall die, still fair, still youthful, still carrying some hearts with her, until there arises one to say us nay on the strength of another record!

And had Alse Young sat in the tabernacle, we wonder, and heard expounded any of the rules "how we shall discover any doctrine delivered whether it be of God or no" before she must listen to the awful commentary upon their interpretation which overtook her on that May morning? Had she basked in the sensuous beauty of the apostrophe "Thy lips are as a scarlet lane," and had she even fancied perchance, that she had one or more of the "18 properties of a Humbel Soule" and so might hope for the leniency of a just God? Truly God was more merciful than man to this humbel soule. It is not to be dismissed as altogether fanciful if we believe that, when Matthew Grant copied the Church's covenant of Windsor, dated October 23, 1647, he permitted himself a sigh for the Alse Young who had not been permitted to live to see the glories of the departing year, illuminating the thick woodlands of the Connecticut and veiling the stretches of the river in the gentleness of a purple haze, even while he strengthened himself with the tonic consolations of his creed. It would seem a marvellous paule, this that shook those rugged reasoners in its iron grasp, and led to such insanity as this displayed towards Alse Young, did we not know that it was but the result of a normal confidence in human law, confirmed by a belief in the divine; the direct legacy of England, the unquestionable utterance of Church and State. Who were they of East Windsor and Hartford to abolish the Mosaic dispensation, reaffirmed by the English church?

Those misunderstandings are over, but their consequences have something sentient still. One turns away from the hard knots of theological discussion, from the "Extracts" that must be singularly valuable since they are worthy of being cherished; even from the "rapsodia" of the Canticles, to this still vivid entry of human pain, and breathes a sigh which is the privilege of a later humanity, for the hard fate of Alse Young.—"one that was a woman, sir, but rest her soul she's dead."

POETRY AND THE DRAMA.

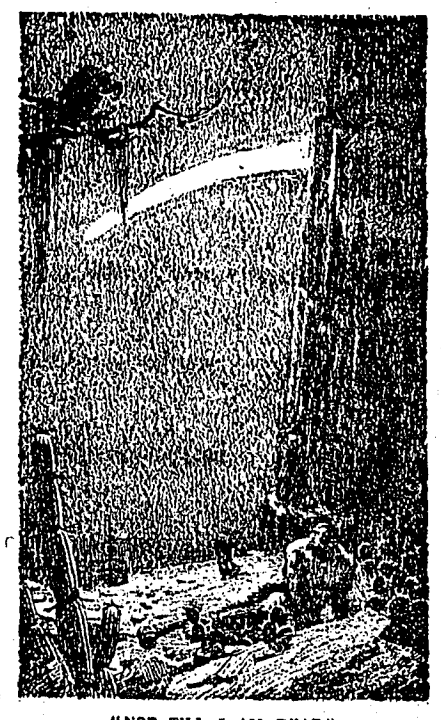
Some Volumes of Verse.

It is almost as difficult to give any sort of description of Edward Peple's art in "The Prince Chap," as it would be impossible to deny or belittle it. He thanks Mr. Walter Lawrence "for assistance in the construction of the play on which this story is founded."

We have had the dramatized novel and this is, for want of a better word a novelized drama. That the author intended to retain the march of a play is evident from his giving it the subtitle of "A Story of Three Curtains and Several Scenes." That he succeeds fully in realizing such intent is manifest from the fact that the most obvious comment of the reviewer would be "how well it would dramatize!" did not the history of its inception both anticipate and forbid. Whether "the love story, humor, pathos and sentiment are" as the publisher's advertisement announces "mingled in just the right proportions" need not be determined: the exact adjustment of so imponderable components not being reliable to understand what is meant; he is so stupidly and ludicrously blind as to ask what the meaning of the advice is from just the wrong lady. And the author's power of conveying eloquent meaning, most serious appeal, in compressed and reticent speech, and with a joke to enforce, not mar it, is seen in what it is hoped will not quite lose its force, though isolated here. After he and Peyton are alone "the Englishman, with a sigh, replaced his hat upon the table, removed his monocle, breathed on its surface, and began to polish it. Then, suddenly, he snapped its frail, black cord and placed the glass in Peyton's hand. "Take that old fellow . . . it's better . . . than none at all."

("The Prince Chap," Edward Peple, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London, Sept. 1904.)

Poems by Walter Malone have many of them been previously published under other titles, and recenter ones are judged in this collection. Acknowledgment is made to the publishers of Harper's Weekly, The Arena, The Bookman, The Critic, The Independent, The Outlook, Leslies Weekly and Popular Monthly, Judge, The Criterion and The New Orleans Times-Democrat.



"NOT TILL I AM DEAD"

ferable to an accepted standard and in this book par excellence they are so instantly changing and delicately shaded, that the one quality is more than in other books undistinguishable from the others. The "humor, pathos and sentiment" however are all there, in "the love story," or stories, and of a quality not to be questioned. There is more; there is wit, rollicking fun, amusing, closely imitated and varied dialect, tragedy, slang of three nations, puns, Bohemian palaver of the studios, poetry in verse and prose, the latter sometimes in hidden rhythm, "as when we linger beside a mound . . . to drop a rose . . . then pass along our way."

The variety of moods and expression, lightening the way for so simple a plot, would in clumsier treatment produce a medley, a jumble, at the worst, a muddle. It would not be difficult to regard the book as wonderful; and, if that were the verdict, the wonder would be that the introduction of so much variety should be made consistent with unity and a harmonious progress. The characters, the persons of the play, of the story, stand out from the canvass distinct individual, and however briefly described, real. There are two noblemen, one by law and title, both—in fact, who amuse, interest, win love and profound respect; a "slavey" who might give points to one of Dickens, an English combination butler, valet and clay-mixer for the sculptor, whose portrait would not look out of place as a pendant to Thackeray's Jeems.

There is a little girl who goes to the heart like the Eva in Uncle Tom, and a broken woman who reminds us of Hood's Song of the Shirt. Does all this sound like exaggeration, or, unfortunately, of burlesque, on which exaggeration so closely burdens? It is not given to the critic to be wise, to look into the future; and it would be presumption to predict that Claudia or Pucker's, Runion, Peyton or Jack, Earl of Huntington, will survive in other generations alongside these other historical persons of fiction, to dictate to public opinion that they ought.

But when a comparatively new writer can keep a critic alternately shaking with laughter and pulling his collar button away from the lump in his throat, he is entitled to a record of the impressions he makes. It would be hardly possible to justify any anticipation of a readers' pleasure by attempting to tell the salient features of the story; and the style of the book depends on so much delicacy in the shading from one thought to another, that quotations can give only feeble notions of the value of the phrases when in their proper settings or as Huntington says "in another frame." After the fifth scene and the lapse of three years, in the interlude "the curtain lifts! The crowds—we wish them in their graves come scrambling back. The last belated male who roves, sinks in his seat—refreshed—and redolent of cloves."

"Puckers covered her mouth with both hands to suppress her unholy glee, some of which oozed out between her fingers." Dialects shift rapidly:

"Have an ordar . . . for a painting . . . from a churchh. Rungo! . . . having an ordar . . . from a churchh."

"I'n, yes—it would be still more rummy though if you had it from a saloon." "Er, beg pardon." "The earl polished his monocle, replaced it in his noble eye, and regarded his friend critically."

"Tell Mr. Santy Claw 'e better stick a apple in me stockin' first, 'cause if 'e don't the nuts an' other prezence will come arattlin h'out of the 'ole in the toe. Good night!"

"You zee," says Vritzy, alias "old Gotterdammerung," with a mouth like an O and eyes that made an umbaut just over it," "Ven I mage dat pouch, I migs in a pan soin r'rum und sooker und a leedle yarmoot, vich I puds den on de flar . . . und leds dem simper," "preparatory to taking a smile, suggested Peyton."

If the art of the author is unequal to the demand upon it in any part of the narrative, it is in Peyton's persistent blindness on one delicate subject, though the blindness of modesty and great love. Harington has already advised him to get spectacles and Peyton has not been possibly true as he asserted in an earlier verse?

"Her name is surely Porphyrogene,
And she's the dearest ever!
Our hearts are bound by fate's frail skein—
Oh pray it may not sever!"

Though indeed that must have been a past incident altogether; Porphyry Jane must have severed her claim or skein for in the very next verse he said:

"Fairest of Eve's countless daughters
Hero or gone before—
Heart and art and mind and music
Has my Isadore!"

It must be that Mr. Byram is susceptible and not wholly accountable for a roving propensity; it may seem indeed true to him that:

"Not the mighty clash of battle
Not the graveyard's midnight hush
E'er can thrill men's souls so deeply
As love's holy virgin blush.
Not Niagara's awful journey,
Not the anger of the sea,
Not a thing of earth, o'woman,
Stand beside the power of thee!"

Mr. Byram is not incapable of ingenious rhymes.

"Boys who were a trifle green
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Seeking a new sacophagus"

might pass muster in the Ingoldsby legends. He is not destitute of a sense of meter as his first poem shows on shadows.

JUST OUT

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J. J. BELL

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For whom are those glances, languid passion,
And that corsage in the newest fashion?"
(The plural verb is a slip but let it pass.)
"Ay who can tell? Who stay love's seasons?
Who weigh in a balance love's soft treasons?
Who mend again with subtle surgery
The hearts love breaks with love's gentle perjury?"

("The Heart's Quest," Burton Grey, G. P. Putnam's Sons, Sept. 1904.)

Mr. Walter Allen Rice has many praiseworthy sentiments, and succeeds in setting some of them in quite respectable verse. Appropriate to the season is

"The secret of true happiness in living
Is not in hoarding dollars but in giving.
God save the millionaire, his turkey carving,
While thousands of his fellow men are starving."

He does not seem to be fond of other men's poems unless like the good Indian they, the men, are dead. He approves Tennyson, Holmes, Whittier, Browning and Whitman, as he suggests in "The Editor to the Poet," but ridicules Field, Riley, (who has "No meter, no rhythm, but strange how it takes Stanton, Foss and Carleton.

"Dear poet, there's money in writing such stuff."

He seems to have been on very familiar terms with Tennyson.

"The last of the lot (Stanton's) in his 'Lost at the Ball,' preferred by our reader's to Tenn's Locksley Hall."

("A National Poem," Walter Allen Rice, Boston, Richard G. Badger, The Gorham Press, 1901, $1.50.)

An opportunity is offered by a poet to the right lady. His signature is Wm. Milton Byram and, as his portrait (frontispiece) shows he is a very young and quite a nice looking man with a trim little mustache, quite a refined and intellectual look and firm though good-humored mouth and jaw. He dedicates his book of poems "to one woman whom the author has never met" "in the hope and belief that the Providence will guide aright earth's wanderers and finally cause her to stay for him there!—he will not fail to meet her in that hollow vale."

What awaits the one woman if she stays, may be conjectured from other lines in the poems, but materializes perhaps more definitely than elsewhere in the "Honeymooning" railroad journey described on the very last page:

"The radiant maid knows joy supreme—
Love lights her wondrous eye:
They pledge for every rail they pass
A kiss for every tie!"

Mr. Byram gives color however to the suspicion that he is not treating the feminine contingent of the public fairly in leaving it supposable from the language of his dedication, that the competition is still open. He knows the name of the dedicatee, and probably has her address. He sings a four-page poem to her, praising her grace, her forehead, eyes, her "long dark hair, almost black," her "divine" lips, her nose, her chin, her ideality and her shoe; and repeats on three pages.

"Oh Miss Virginia Byron.
Whom I have never met!
I'll seek you till my life-day's sun
Is set—forever set."

The logical inference from this would be to the effect that the entries are closed and that Miss Byron is to have a "walk-over." But such an inference would be premature: it is to be feared that Mr. Byram is fickle, or has been; for he goes on, and in only a half-dozen lines down the same page we find him rhymning of "Mary."

"She is a rustic maiden fair,
Deep charming as the sea:
With pure, deep eyes and wondrous hair
And a heart that beats for me.
Ah yes 'tis sweet this life to live
When living for another.
For of all dear words that tongue can give
The best are wife and mother."

This is a mystery, a problem poem. Which is the maiden fair and which is the wife and mother? Is it for another life that Mr. Byram is living or for another person; and if another person is that person Mary or Miss Byron, or is it possibly true as he asserted in an earlier verse?

"Her name is surely Porphyrogene,
And she's the dearest ever!
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Though indeed that must have been a past incident altogether; Porphyry Jane must have severed her claim or skein for in the very next verse he said:

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might pass muster in the Ingoldsby legends. He is not destitute of a sense of meter as his first poem shows on shadows.

From "Thomas Nast: His Period and His Pictures," by Mr. Albert Bigelow Paine.

These are fine lines in "Then and Now."

"When forest nuts were falling with the frost
And sere October's brush had touched the wood
With magic colors . . .
And I had come once more where as a boy
I watched the dauntless mallard's steady flight."

"Rural Practice" is a well sustained bit of verse, though its opening lines are the best:

"Jim Jinks has fell down on his leg
And broke it half into-o
He says ter bring yer surgin tools
And fix it P. D. Q."

Mr. Byram is no stranger to noble and religious sentiments or to poetic aspirations and conceptions, as is seen in many of his lines, among others in "The Flood of Dreams." But in his expression of them they are apt to appear hackneyed and commonplace. It would be the height of unkindness did not reviewers open Mr. Bryum's eyes to the appreciation that he has much to learn of form, of life, of fitness of words, of correct meter, to be a poet.

("Poems" by William M. Byram, Richard G. Badger Boston. The Gorham Press. 1904. Price $1.50.)

C. H. O.

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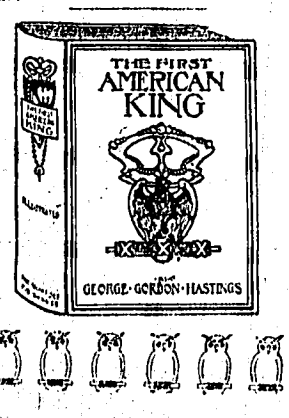

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