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Armaments of Antiquity

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American Sonnets.

BY A. AHLRICHS, '92.

Coleridge once said: "An English sonnet on Italian models is the most difficult and artificial of all kinds of composition; and when at last the poor thing is toiled and hammered into fit shape, it is in general racked and tortured prose rather than anything resembling poetry." It can scarcely be denied that Coleridge's own sonnets, as well as those of his contemporaries, deserved this biting condemnation. For this reason Coleridge believed the Petrarchan sonnet uncongenial to the English language, and advocated the utmost looseness of structure. The falsity of his opinions is easily proven by the history of American sonnets, which have become more poetical with every increase in the strictness of form.

While Petrarch's number and arrangement of rhymes in the sonnet have been commonly adopted, the air and burden of his song have altogether changed. He warbled love-ditties, sang of the sun, the nightingale, the olive and the myrtle, or "piped his native drawing-room notes." His sonnets ripple with banter and glee; they pour from an overflowing, fervid heart and a luxuriant fancy, only found in those who look at the world with bright eyes and glowing cheeks.

Alas! how sad are most of our lays to-day! In the collection of the best American sonnets, by T. W. Higginson and E. H. Bigelow, one will search uselessly for mirth, jollity, or the delightful humor of Goldsmith; and will meet instead austerity, earnestness, deep thought, close observation, and a melancholy enthusiasm. After forsaking "the enchanted isles," and "haunted brooks," and "purple peaks" of fantasy, our poets have turned to the serious, demure and solemn regions of reflection, contemplation and profound imagination. They regard the sonnet no longer as a pastime and a recreation, but as an instrument of their own philosophy and ethics, and an expounder of their frequently grotesque theories.

In full sympathy with the *depressed* spirit of our age, Mr. Gilder answers to the question "What is a Sonnet?"—

> "'Tis the tear that fell
> From a great poet's hidden ecstasy;
> A two-edged sword, a star, a song—ah me!
> Sometimes a heavy-tolling funeral bell."

Why tears, swords, funeral bells, and not "wreathed smiles," garlands, and chimes, which are verily more potent to enter the human breast and fortify it with cheerfulness and courage against the manifold struggles of life? Is it not a lamentable fact that none of our sonneteers show less pessimism and more of the sport of the romantic ages, and the sprightliness and merriment of happy souls, like Moore and Bayley? Perhaps we are committing the old folly of finding fault with "a thing for not being something else." Therefore, let us rather be content with the beautiful sonnets we have, and confidently hope that among the next harvest of poets there will be a Bertram de Born, an Anacreon, or a Horace, free from sensuality. Meanwhile let us take a swift flight over the smooth lawns, placid rills and well-kept parks of Aldrich, the roaring seas and the "burning, awful deeps" of Gilder; the idyllic districts of Thompson, and the motley realms of other kings of the "harp with fourteen strings."

A writer of admirable grace and ease is Thomas Bayley Aldrich. Some one has re-

her of which George Elliot has an abundance, and Mr. Copeland puts it pertly in remarking that Mrs. Humphrey Ward writes ably and well, but has no style; and at her best George Elliot is a master of style.

Armaments of Antiquity.*

The history of almost every age, from the earliest date of recorded events to the present, is marked by war and battles. And each war in the bloody catalogue seems to have suggested changes and improvements in the enginery of slaughter.

The first weapons used in the savage state were clubs and stones. Weapons of offense were evidently in use before implements of defense or armor. The next step naturally led to the adoption of stone axes, metallic cutting instruments, and the like. Stimulated by increasing experience, and groping even in the dark for means of acquiring greater power and knowledge — as mankind still is — it became an easy gradation for the primitive man to substitute the sling for the hand as a more effective agency for throwing stones at his enemies or the game he sought for his subsistence. In like manner, his stone and metallic cutting instruments developed into swords, while his club became a mace, and his dagger lengthened out into a javelin or spear. In a different line of development the arrow, which could be projected from the long bow with prodigious power of flight and accuracy of aim, grew out of the primitive thrusting implements.

The defensive motive was the more inventive and enterprising in devising and introducing these improvements. The reason may readily be understood. Men numerous and powerful enough to attack successfully with stone axes, daggers and cutting instruments would see less occasion for increasing the effectiveness of these weapons than the weaker bodies in danger of being attacked and defeated. The defensive principle would suggest to the latter the advisability of making the cutting instrument a sword and the dagger a pike or spear. And once both sides had become armed with like weapons, or weapons equally effective, the weaker side, or the side acting on the defensive, would naturally seek the protection of shields, helmets, armor, fortifications and walled towns. However, in some instances tribes and nations sought immunity from aggression and disturbance in being well equipped and prepared for the adoption in retaliation of offensive measures. But that state of things was exceptional. Cruelty, inhumanity and warfare marked the condition of primitive man. Might was proud of conquest, no matter how weak the victim.

Egypt had the first army of which we have knowledge. It was divided into an active and a reserve force. Young men composed the former, while in the latter were the older men and veterans who had been long in the service. In time of peace the army was settled in military colonies scattered throughout the country, although mainly on the southern frontiers. It had no cavalry. Its chief strength was in its infantry and archers. War chariots also were used in battle when the ground was level and the occasion favorable. These formed the nearest approach to cavalry in the Egyptian service. In a war chariot were two men, one of whom drove, while the other made such use as he could of his bow and arrows. The defensive armor of the men consisted of helmets, breast-plates, coats-of-mail and shields. Battering rams and scaling ladders were used by the Egyptians in sieges. Each soldier was given an equivalent for his services in land in the military colony to which he was assigned, and upon that land he made his home. Even in the earliest dawn of history defensive armor was used by the soldiers of Egypt.

The Assyrians and Babylonians were among the first to make use of cavalry. Their infantry was armed much the same as the Egyptian soldiery, although their weapons were generally lighter and betokened greater skill in workmanship. Their favorite weapons were the spear, sword, dagger and bow. However, some of them carried iron-mounted clubs. War chariots were used in battle when the conformation of the ground would permit. But whenever the horses became unmanageable they were likely to do as much harm to those in the way on their own side as to the enemy. And so it was when elephants were taken into battle to trample down the enemy and break through his lines. On being threatened with fire they broke away and ran among their friends, crushing or wounding all in the way. The defensive armor of these people was sometimes elaborately ornamented and finished. They were among the most neatly clad and effectively equipped soldiers of antiquity.

In Persia horsemen took a predominant rank in the army. In fact, such was the case in all Oriental armies, and so it continued to be until the introduction of the European drill. The

* Synopsis of the Address delivered March 12, by PROF. WILLIAM HOYNES, LL. D.

Persian army was unwieldy and disorderly. The troops composing it were armed and clad according to the customs of their respective countries, and there was a notable want of uniformity in their dress and weapons. These comprised bows, javelins, spears, slings, clubs, swords and daggers. The Medes and Bactrians were the *élite* of the army. But even these never proved to be a match for the Greeks in any of their contests. Darius Hystaspes was the first to organize a standing army among them. It was divided into different bodies, and these were placed in the several provinces, in order to keep them in subjection. The government was weak and corrupt, and the army shared in its demoralization.

The bow and javelin were long the favorite weapons of the Parthians, Persians, Assyrians, Medes, Bactrians and other Oriental nations. In close quarters daggers were used.

The Greeks preferred the spear. It was a formidable weapon. It had a length of 24 feet, and was held in both hands. The men carried also short swords, which were used in hand-to-hand contests. Every young man in Athens had to serve in the army. He was liable to be called on for service at any time between his 18th and his 60th year. The Grecian phalanx was formed in various degrees of depth, as from eight to twenty-five lines or ranks of men. The Greeks had no cavalry in early days. They depended upon infantry. The history of infantry tactics begins with them.

The Roman army presented the most perfect system of infantry tactics known to antiquity. In fact, modern warfare has not greatly improved upon it. The heavy infantry was its main dependence. This seemed to be almost invincible. It overthrew, with comparative ease, the Macedonian phalanx and the Numidian horse. The drill was exceptionally severe. The men were required to take exercise in running, jumping, wrestling, swimming in full armament, etc. On the march they were expected to make four miles an hour. Every legion comprised 4500 men. They stood in three ranks, each numbering 1200. The first of these were the hastati or spearmen; then came the principes, and the triarii formed the third line. The velites served on the wings, with the cavalry, who numbered about 300 in each legion. The main armament of the Roman legions consisted in the pilum, javelin and sword. They affected to despise the bow, and it was never popular with them. The pilum was a massive javelin 6 feet in length. It was set off with a triangular steel head 18 inches in length. When the Roman soldier was within 10 paces of the enemy he hurled his pilum against the antagonist he selected, and then rushed forward to finish the work with his short, double-edged sword. Under ordinary circumstances the pilum penetrated either shield or breastplate and usually stunned or knocked down the person whom it struck.

In ancient times archery was the most general appliance of war and the chase in the Oriental nations. In later times the Romans employed against them Cretan and Scythian archers, Rhodian and Balearic slingers and the Gallic cavalry, but nevertheless the Orient maintained its superiority in the use of archery. By it Crassus was slain. From it Mark Antony hardly escaped with his legions. By it Julian fell, and Jovian struggled against it almost despairingly. His legions found it difficult indeed to maintain their footing against the thousands of horse-archers that fell upon them along the Asiatic frontiers.

The Normans carefully cultivated archery in England. In fact, by means of it, they conquered the Saxons and killed Harold when they originally invaded the kingdom. By them it was subsequently raised to so high a degree of perfection that it maintained its popularity for many years after the introduction of fire-arms. Throughout Europe they became famous as archers, and during the Crusades the Saracens learned to know and fear them. The Saracens shunned them as among the most formidable enemies under the Cross. It is generally believed that the Norman-English could have made no serious impression upon France when they attacked and invaded that country, were it not for the proficiency of their infantry in the use of the long bow. Until less than three hundred years ago that was the principal arm of the British soldier. At two hundred yards their arrows could pierce any armor, except that made of the best Spanish or Milan steel-plate. But this was so nearly impenetrable, it is said, that on one occasion two large armies, the soldiers of which were protected by coats-of-mail and helmets of that manufacture, fought from early morning till late in the afternoon, under Italian skies, with a loss of only one man wounded.

The Middle Ages were barren in the development of tactics. The Feudal system was unfavorable for the organization of an efficient foot soldiery. The infantry of that period were mainly pikemen. Knights on caparisoned and panoplied horses, themselves clad in steel or covered with iron, might ride almost with impunity against the infantry of that time. These knights carried

lances, swords, battle-axes and maces. The regulation lance of the time was eighteen feet in length, and extended in a charge ten or twelve feet ahead of the horse.

From Hastings in 1066, which gave England to the Norman invaders, to Pavia in 1525, so fatal to the hopes of Francis I. and the flower of his army, the lance was the favorite weapon of the chivalry of Europe, although the Anglo-Normans were archers in the main; the Scotch carried spears and maintained the ancient phalanx; the Irish were horsemen, and used spears and bows; the Swiss carried pikes and halberts, and the Genoese were armed with the cross-bows. But at Pavia the Spanish infantry used firearms with terrible effect, and sounded the death-knell of the old-time system of warfare. Cannon had been used as early as 1280 at the siege of Cordova; but it was not until the rude firearms at Pavia proclaimed a new era that the fate of the old order of warfare was sealed. Then disappeared in the increasing darkness of a departing era the mace, the spear and the terrifying lance; the steel-clad knights, with their caparisoned and panoplied horses; the deadly bow, with its barbed and galling shafts; the walled town, the battering ram, the scaling ladder and well-nigh all the instrumentalities of mediæval warfare. Infantry then resumed precedence, and ever since it has composed the bulk of armies, stood the brunt of battle and achieved the honors of victory. However, a properly equipped army must have its due complement of artillery and cavalry, as well as infantry.

Rambling Remarks.

Though it goes against my better feelings to discourage a youthful bard, I must say that the brief effusion which appeared the other day in the SCHOLASTIC, entitled "Spring Longings," was far from satisfactory—at least to me. Among the objections that may be urged against it is its untruthfulness to nature. The author may wish and long until he becomes a Longfellow, and yet never have the happiness of seeing a sky-lark "seek the skies" in this land of ours; and he may wander through many a "verdant vale," without being greeted by a festive cowslip "adorning the meadow." The only lark I have ever seen in American fields is the meadow lark, a plain, cheery bird, with no pretentions to the high-flying propensities or the glorious song of its English cousin. Our cowslips are vulgar, yellow flowers, growing in damp and swampy places, and unworthy of comparison with the English cowslip, to which no doubt, the poet alluded.

If our poets wish to sing of nature why not take the birds and flowers of our own land for the themes of their song? We do not need to go to Europe for beauties of field and forest; America should not yield in this respect to any country. Many of our birds, such as the mocking-bird, wood-thrush, bobolink, oriole and others, rival those of Europe in song and plumage; while the wild flowers,—the may-flower, blood-root, lupine, the flowers of the wild grape vine and of the may-apple—are superior to those found in Europe. Any primary text-book of botany or ornithology would broaden the ideas of our young poets and open to them many beauties now undreamt of; and, in addition, they might strengthen their newly-acquired knowledge and learn wisdom and poetry by sallying forth to the "wood's low rustle, and the meadows kindly page." I hope the poets will consider these few remarks in their future effusions; practical people may then think them sensible beings; at any rate, they will be patriotic.

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In this wide world of ours there are many narrow-minded men; and none more so than those individuals who persist in running every good joke into a premature grave by too frequent and lavish use. The sharpest points in the best of witticisms they will so change and blunt by constant use, that persons to whom they try to show their borrowed wit, think, on hearing it, that they have been struck with the broad side of a barn. Instances might be given of many good jokes, which, like poor McGinty, were sunk to the bottom of the sea; these might have reached a venerable old age, and given joy and pleasure to the risibilities of many yet unborn; but they fell on hard times, and met an inglorious foe. The *Allright* joke is now going to a like evil end. It will suffer a partial eclipse from its conjunction with the annual spring fever and spring poetry jokes, and then be on the decline until Commencement, after which we shall be rid forever of its troublesome reign. And when this "consummation most devoutly to be wished" shall have taken place, we will breathe in peace; sooner than evolve such another from his busy brain, may its author be gathered to his fathers, unwept, unhonored, and by some stroke of good fortune, unstrung.

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There is a great lack of originality nowadays. Young men have a tendency to adopt and develop the ideas of others, rather than originate