

A YANKEE LAUREATE.

Well-Known American Writers Discuss Such a Possibility Pro and Con.

AMELIE RIVES IS NAMED

By Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Who Thinks a Woman Deserves the Honor.

OTHER CANDIDATES MENTIONED.

Some Authors Look at the Matter from a Humorous Standpoint.

A GREAT DIVERSITY IN THE OPINIONS

It having been suggested, apropos of the current discussion regarding the succession to the English poet laureate, that America should also have a poet laureate, a number of leading poets and authors were recently invited to give their views on this subject. Their answers follow and will be found both pertinent and timely. It will be noted that Holmes, Stedman and one or



Bret Harte.

two other leading poets have refrained from an expression of their opinions, but when it is observed that they are all prominent candidates for the laureate'ship their modesty will be understood.

Does Not Favor the Idea.

I take only a general interest in the matter of an American poet laureate and do not wish to stand in opposition to any poet who has a chance of being selected, if the question of an appointment should be seriously considered, but my own prejudices are opposed to such an imitation of monarchic institutions.

F. MARION CHAPFORD.

Robert W. Crawford Would Discourage Poets.

If we are to have English free trade, let it go at that without aping the English custom of a poet laureate, a government official of even less use than a civil service commissioner. The Greeks, who originated the idea of an official poet, gave it up several centuries ago and are not the better for it. We can see why any sensible and sentimental people like the old Greeks should wish to include a poet in their civil list, but there is no reason why a practical people like the English and Americans should imitate one. What we want to do in America particularly is to discourage poets instead of encouraging them. Editors have been doing this for some time by throwing them downstairs; but the general public ought to assist. The poet's mind is too narrow to get into the magazines to-day. Just at this critical time I would suggest that we keep extremely steady on the laureate'ship question. If President Cleveland were to crown a poet, it would probably be his soulful friend, Richard Watson Gilder, and I do not think Mr. Gilder is much of a laureate. Mr. Gilder is much of a laureate in an uprising and overthrow of the government.

ROBERT W. CRAWFORD. (Author of "The New Shakespeares.")

Little Devereux Blake Says "Certainly Not."

A poet laureate in this country? Why, certainly not! We no more need a laureate here than we do a court jester. Such an institution belongs only to a monarchy, and an ancient one at that—it ought to be as obsolete as the office of the strolling minstrel or the Scotch harper. What would a laureate do here? Chant the praises of "Baby McKee" or sing sonnets to Mrs. Cleveland? Would he set the McKinley bill to music, or turn the President's message into verse?

Only to imagine one of our great poets as an appointed and paid laureate is to degrade him in thought. But the people, oh yes, the people have had many laureates. How the gifted ones of our land have turned their lives at the right moment, to embody in sublime poems the hopes, the fears, the passions and the victories of the Union. Longfellow, Whitier, Mrs. Howe—they have written the burning words that have phrased the struggles, the aspirations and the triumphs of the nation. There is but one man who deserves the title of the national poet laureate to-day—Oliver Wendell Holmes. Gentle scholar, keen wit, exquisite versifier, he is the people's laureate; but to think of him as a laureate is to do violence to the dear image of the loyal and beloved poet. LILLIE DEVEREUX BLAKE.

No Living Poet Worthy of the Honor.

Regarding a poet laureate in America, I would say that I do not see how such an office could be created or maintained in this country, unless it was merely an honorary title. The laureate'ship is created by the crown of England, and was said to have originated in the reign of Edward IV. I hardly think the Government of the United States would recognize any necessity for such an office. In the Society of Amateur Journalists I have seen the name of the laureate chosen by competition a poet laureate every year. On this plan an organized literary society might elect a permanent laureate. In my opinion there is no living poet in America whose genius is broad enough and deep enough to fill the office. Either Longfellow or Poe in the past would have been worthy of the laureate. But if America must have a poet laureate, I would suggest Thomas Bailey Aldrich as best fitted to wear the honor.

MINNA IRVING.

Oliver Wendell Holmes the World's Poet.

His "Chambered Nautilus" excels Keats' "Skylark," and (and the other end of the blue) "One Less—Shay" surpasses Hood's "Tale of a Trumpet."

The day of long-windedness has gone by. This is the era of brevity—condensation. The flash of sunlight on a sensitive plate has taken the place of the laborious work of the burin on steel.

Let us crown our beloved Dr. Holmes, and do it quickly, while we can, offer the laurel with an emile, for the sad day approaches when we must bestow it wet with our tears.

JOSEPH KIRKLAND.

Julian Ralph Favors Eugene Field.

I had never given a thought to the possibility of America's having a poet laureate, but an instance's reflection convinces me that I am for having one as quickly as possible. The man for the honor is Eugene Field, of Chicago—the most American, the most gifted and versatile of our poets, and as royal a fellow as ever put laurels on a poet's brow.

JULIAN RALPH.

Let Each Man Choose His Own Laureate.

My impression is that we have borrowed enough of anything from our friends across the water, and can afford to elect any American poet, who is worthy, rest content with the bay-leaves of the public opinion of a people who are the greatest on earth, when they find themselves alone. Such an office is never in England, where every man owes duty and allegiance to his sovereign. We live in a republic; each man is a sovereign. Let each man's heart choose and crown his own laureate, who shall be his friend, his guide, his helper—not his Olympian butler. In heaven's name while we are passing laws to keep out articles of foreign manufacture, as prices the high upon office that to us would mean nothing.

HENRY C. DEMILLE.

Inappropriate, if Not Impossible.

To my mind it would be manifestly inappropriate, if not impossible, for America to have a poet laureate. Our literature is far too young for the crowning of any poet with such an honor, and when we are a hundred or two years older it may be wise to consider the wisdom of such a course. By that time England will have, in our opinion, a poet laureate, and our laureate'ship will be a very good one for America to follow.

EDWARD W. BOE.

Another Vote for Oliver Wendell Holmes.

Regarding a poet laureate for America, I have not given the question much thought, but it would seem as if we were too democratic in our tendencies to make the appointment of anyone to such a position advisable. But were any one of our American poets to be made poet laureate, my vote would be cast for Oliver Wendell Holmes.

EBEN E. REKFOR.

The Views of Ella Wheeler Wilcox.

I do not think America now possesses a living poet who has written enough great poems to merit a laureate'ship. The grandest poems in literary construction and richness of language written by any American poet is, to my thinking, "Herod and Miriamne," by Amelie Rives. It is the creation of great genius—a genius yet in its early dawn. If it is not crushed by the bludgeons of the mob, it should in 15 years' time fit this author for the crown of laureate'ship.

I do not say this because she is a woman! Indeed, my preference in all things is to see men lead. Had a man written "Herod and Miriamne" I would accord him the same praise. But I know of no other American poet, living or dead, who has so nearly approached the Shakespearean standard; no other poem so rich with remarkable and universal lines of beauty.

ELLA WHEELER WILCOX.

An Admirer of Joaquin Miller.

In regard to the American laureate'ship: If it were to be given to the only American who has ever possessed the true poetic fire, who has ever crossed the border-line between high talent and genius, I should recommend Joaquin Miller. It is true that he has done more bad work than good; that his best is suggestive of jewels in a dust heap, yet the divine gift goes for more than the exquisite art of the mediocrities.

Following Joaquin Miller, it seems to me that the American poet who possesses the most dramatic fire and imagination is Helen Gray Cone. And of course her art is more even. But neither she nor any contemporary poet of any land has given to letters a finer or nobler poem than Miller's "Passing of Tenyson."

GERTRAUDE A. THERTON.

No Man Worthy of the Office.

If America is to have a laureate he should be a man who is full of true American spirit

and destitute of bias. Some unconfessional pupil of James Russell Lowell would fill the bill—I wish he would appear in print.

JOHN HANDBERT.

J. W. Riley the Man for Post Laureate.

By all means let us have an American poet laureate! It is precious little that any Government can or will do to give encouragement to literature; and if we are ever going to begin, now is the time. My Government, and especially this Government, should not give out of the half billion dollars spent every year, and often questionably spent, some little gratuity to encourage literature in its higher grades, is a puzzling question. Greece, Rome, England, Germany, Spain and Italy have their writers thus rewarded. France has her Academy, and the "Forty Immortals," certainly reflect credit upon the country, quite as much as her soldiers, artists, scientific men or inventors, and much more than her politicians. Ever since Dr. Johnson, the ura-majors of English literature, refused the "patronage" that had been refused him when he was struggling in the garret of Grub street, and was now offering him, there has been urgent need of assistance to struggling authors.

have forced their way into public life through salon influence, and over the heads of worthy men, and whose unworthy names fill the plethoric pages of the Government reports, would not be missed. A bluish come, over the cheek of a true American when he remembers poor Poe, buttoning his coat up, as he handed in his MS, to hide the lack of an undergarment; or Halleck, he of "Fanny" and "Marco Polo," attempted a choice. Of course it could not be a woman, because, not being a voter, she would have no "pull." Let him, therefore, be chosen by a vote of the authors of the United States, aided by the college professors and professional readers.

As to individual choice, I might choose the soaring and expansive Joaquin Miller, the reminiscent Will Carleton, the tender and dreamy Watson Gilder, the perennial

the dilapidated poems, such as "Orphan Annie" and that rare study, "Gladness," quite capture my sympathies. By all means let us have a poet laureate and let the State show some appreciation of literary talent, pure and simple, and so reflect credit on itself.

Edgar Fawcett Favours the Idea.

It seems to me that an American poet laureate'ship would be an office in every way consistent with our democratic usage, while at the same time hissing most wholesomely and handsomely of that great literary and artistic debt which we owe to the mother country. There is nothing monarchical, however, in such an idea, and it might well be made one of the crowning graces of a mighty Republic like our own.

Of all our living singers, I should say, Oliver Wendell Holmes first deserves the honor. Like Horace—the laurier Horatius—whom in many ways he resembles, Dr. Holmes has always been the prince of "occasional" poets. In his noble and sweet old age the gift would be a glorious one, and from my heart I wish that his white hairs might be crowned with such a civic wreath, gathered from the bay-bushes that thrive so hardily among the dells and glades of his own dear New England hills.

EDGAR FAWCETT.

The Office an Odious One.

I do not see that anything is gained by the laureate'ship of a poet; a true poet honors the laureate'ship; the laurel adds nothing to him. Now that patent medicines and rival sales have each a poet laureate the office has become odious. Poems written to order are seldom worth printing.

CHARLES WARREN STODDARD.

Should the Honor Go to Stoddard?

Any step which tends toward the social and literary elevation of a man, indirectly affects the social and literary elevation of a community. The appointment of a poet laureate in this country would tend to rouse an interest in verified literary work, which is, to a great extent, on the decrease. In all matters of national interest, the poet of the hour is the poet of the future. In fact, scores of seasons can be found in favor of such an appointment to counterbalance whatever objections might arise. It seems to me that there are but two men left from the grand old group of which Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell and Whitier were representatives, and these are Holmes and Stoddard. While granting to Holmes all the sweetness and humor which is his due, Stoddard surely bears the palm of vividness of conception, dignity of thought and fluency of expression. He is the master of the ode and yet is possessed of that versatility which makes it possible for him to write, in lyric song, the warbling of a bird or the sigh of a lover. The people of this country, it seems to me, have not realized how true a singer this man has been, and even at this late day to lay the laurel of the laureate'ship upon his silver hair, would be an honor to those who gave, as well as to him who should receive.

JAMES CLARENCE HARVEY.

Grover Cleveland and Edward IV.

The question of a poet laureate is out of date and not worth a thought. Any great national event makes our whole country break out into song. There are laureates of average capacity in every community. The magazines and newspapers select, pay

and do it quickly, while we can, offer the laurel with an emile, for the sad day approaches when we must bestow it wet with our tears.



Thomas Bailey Aldrich.

for and preserve the best of their citizens. Why then should the Government worry about a laureate? Edward IV. found one an advantage; Grover Cleveland would consider one a bore. It is a long cry between Edward IV. and Grover Cleveland. We might, I was going to say, have a poet laureate, but a moment's reflection shows this office to be still more useless. Are we not blessed with the illustrated newspapers, and do they not kindly show us every week our most obvious shortcomings?

AMELIA E. BARR.

Thomas W. Knox Would Vote for Stedman.

Under our system of government, the appointment of a poet laureate would most probably be made on political grounds and the poet who could bring the greatest amount of influence would secure the honor, provided, of course, his views upon the tariff and other great questions were in accord with those of the ruling powers. The poet laureate of the United States should be subject to change, like the postmaster or collector of customs, in order to avoid disagreeable contingencies. It would be manifestly awkward for a Harrison appointee to write a Cleveland panegyric, or vice versa, and a rank free-trader could not be trusted to compose an ode to protection, even though he might be willing to write its obituary. On the whole, I don't think it practicable to have an official poet laureate in America. But if we are to have one, I should vote for Stedman, who certainly stands in the foremost rank of American poets, is a genial and most agreeable gentleman, and belongs to the same political party that I do.

THOMAS W. KNOX.

A Good Poet Needs No Laurel.

A poor poet deserves no laurel, and a

poor poet needs none. So I see no logical reason for the existence of a poet laureate, either in America or in any other country.

Even if it were desirable to have a poet laureate in this country, there is no practical method of selecting him. The great poet has no advertisement upon his forehead announcing his genius to the world. In the absence of this announcement, to what official shall be given the responsibility of selecting the laureate? The kings and the prime ministers of England, with one or two recent exceptions, have made wretched selections to England's laureate'ship. Is it probable that American Presidents would do much better? It would be more in consonance with our institutions to have our laureate elected by a popular vote. But it is not probable that the greatest poet would be uniformly selected in this manner, for popular estimate, in this respect, is seldom sanctioned by posterity—the infallible court of final resort. Though it is desirable that American poetry should be encouraged as much, for instance, as American steamships, or American sugar, or American tin, the laureate'ship trade, planted into American soil, I fear, would not accomplish this purpose.

RAM WALTER FOSS.

The Honor Should be Conferred on Holmes.

I see no reason for instituting an official poet, but manifestly Dr. Oliver Wendell



Edward C. Stedman.

Holmes should have the honor if it were to be conferred upon anyone.

ALBERT SEAY.

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EDITOR BOYD KILLED

By a Far-Western Woman Who Says He Had Long Ceased to Love Her.

SHE WAS HIS PROMISED BRIDE.

The Victim a Son of the Pennsylvania R. R.'s Former President.

THE MURDERESS KISSES THE CORPSE

SEATTLE, WASH., Dec. 3.—Thomas Henderson Boyd, editor of the *Olympian*, at Olympia, was shot at a late hour last night by a woman who was first thought to be his wife who lives here. Boyd came here from Olympia yesterday and spent the evening in a saloon drinking. About 10:30 o'clock his wife came after him and took him home in a hack and 30 minutes later she shot him. The murderer was arrested shortly after the crime had been committed. In response to questions she said she shot Boyd because he had ceased to love her.

The murdered man was a son of Colonel A. E. Boyd, of Philadelphia, at one time Vice President of the Pennsylvania Railroad. Boyd, who was 35 years of age, came to Tacoma about four years ago, when he engaged in newspaper work. Later reports show that the woman was not Boyd's wife, although she has passed as such. She was a Miss Burns, living in this city. She telegraphed Boyd yesterday afternoon to come over from Olympia, which he did, and registered at the Occidental Hotel. She met him there, and together they went to the house where the murder was committed, and where she has her home. Hardly had the man entered the room when the woman fired four shots at him. Officers who heard the report of the shots responded at once, and found the murderer leaning over the dead man, kissing him and calling him her husband. Miss Burns is of Spanish descent, and bears a bad reputation. She admitted that she had never been married to Boyd, but declares that he took her from a disorderly house with the understanding that he would make her his wife.

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