

ГОРАЦИЙ

ECHOES FROM
THE SABINE
FARM

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Echoes from the Sabine Farm

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Echoes from the Sabine Farm:

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Horace

Echoes from the Sabine Farm

INTRODUCTION

One Sunday evening in the winter of 1890 Eugene Field and the writer were walking in Lake View, Chicago, on their way to visit the library of a common friend, when the subject of publishing a book for Field came up for discussion.

The Little Book of Western Verse and The Little Book of Profitable Tales had been privately printed the year before at Chicago, and Field had been frequently reminded that the writer was ready and willing to stand sponsor for any new volume he, Field, might desire to bring out.

"The only thing I have on hand that might make a book," said Field, "are some few paraphrases of the Odes of Horace which my brother, 'Rose,' and I have been fooling over, and which, truth to tell, are certainly freely rendered. There are not enough of them, but we'll do some more, and I'll add a brief Life of Horace as a preface or introduction."

It is to be regretted that Field never carried out his intention with respect to this last, for he had given much thought and study to the great Roman satirist, and what Eugene Field could have said upon the subject must have been of interest. It is my belief

that as he thought upon the matter it grew too great for him to handle within the space he had at first determined, and that tucked away within the recesses of his literary intentions was the determination, nullified by his early death, to write, *con amore*, a life of Quintus Horatius Flaccus.

This determination to write separately an extended account of Horace greatly reduced the bulk of the material intended for the Sabine Echoes, and it was with respect to this that Field apologetically and, as was his wont, humorously wrote:

"The volume may be rather thin *in corpore*, but think how hefty it will be intellectually."

When it came to the discussion of how many copies should be printed it was suggested that the edition be an exceedingly limited one, in order to cause as much scrambling and heartburning as possible among our bibliophilic brethren. And never shall I forget the seriousness of the man's face, nor the roars of laughter that followed, when he suggested that fifty copies only should be made, and that we should reserve one each and burn the other forty-eight!

It was a biting cold night and we had been loitering by the way, stopping to debate each point as it arose—but now we plunged on with excess of motion to keep ourselves warm, breaking out with occasional peals of laughter as we thought of our plan to make the publication what the booksellers call "excessively rare."

Field, elsewhere, has said he did not know why the original intention as to the destruction of the forty-eight copies was not

carried out, but the answer is not far away. As the time for publication approached it was found impossible that such and such a friend should be forgotten in the matter of a copy, and so it went on until it was deemed prudent to add fifty to the number originally intended to be issued, and that decision, in the light of what followed, proved to be an eminently wise one. More than once some to me unknown friend of Field would write a pleasant lie as a reason to gain possession of the book, and up in a corner of the letter would be found an endorsement of the request after this fashion:

What's writ below
I'd have you know
Nor falsehood nor romance is;
It's solemn truth,
So grant the youth
The boon he seeks, dear Francis.

EUGENE FIELD.

It is perhaps unnecessary to add that, however flimsy the pretext upon which the request for a copy was made, it never failed of its object if it brought with it Field's endorsement. Among many pleasant utterances on this subject Field has said that but for the writer the Horatian verses would not have been given to the world—and this has been taken to mean more than was intended, and much unearned praise has been bestowed. But, in allusion to the original issue of the Odes, Field added, "in this

charming guise," which places quite another construction upon the matter.

It may be that the enthusiasm displayed not only pleased Field, and incited him and his brother Roswell to perform that which, otherwise, might have been indefinitely deferred, but there is no question but that they intended to publish the Horatian odes at some time or another. Field was greatly delighted with the reception of this work, and I once heard him say it would outlive all his other books. He came naturally by his love of the classics. His father was a splendid scholar who obliged his sons to correspond with him in Latin. Field's favorite ode was the Bandusian Spring, the paraphrasing of which in the styles of the various writers of different periods gave him genuine joy and is perhaps the choice bit of the collection. The Echoes from the Sabine Farm was the most ambitious work Field had attempted up to the time of its issue. He was not at all sure that the public for whom he wrote, what following he then felt was his own, would accept his efforts in this direction with any sort of acclaim. Unquestionably, Field, at all times, believed in himself and in his power ultimately to make a name, as every man must who achieves success, but he was as far from believing that the public would accept him as an interpreter of Horatian odes as was Edward Fitzgerald with respect to Omar Khayyám. In short, he looked upon his work in the original publication of Echoes from the Sabine Farm as a labor of love—an effort from which some reputation might come, but certainly no monetary remuneration.

It was because he so regarded it that he permitted the work to be first issued under the bolstering influence of a patron. It was, so he thought, an excellent opportunity to show his friends and acquaintances that his Pegasus was capable of soaring to classic heights, and he little dreamed that the paraphrasing of the Odes of Horace over which "Rose and I have been fooling" would be required for a *popular* edition. With the announcement of the Scribner edition of *The Sabine Echoes* came also the intelligence of Field's death.

I have found people who were somewhat puzzled as to the exact intentions of the Fields with respect to these translations and paraphrases. However, there can be no chance for mistake even to the veriest embryonic reader of Horace, if he will but remember that, while some of these transcriptions are indeed very faithful reproductions or adaptations of the original, others again are to be accepted as the very riot of burlesque verse-making.

The last stanza in the epilogue of this book reads:

Or if we part to meet no more
This side the misty Stygian river,
Be sure of this: On yonder shore
Sweet cheer awaiteth such as we—
A Sabine pagan's heaven, O friend—
And fellowship that knows no end.

FRANCIS WILSON.

January 22, 1896.

TO M.L. GRAY

Come, dear old friend, and with us twain
To calm Digentian groves repair;
The turtle coos his sweet refrain
And posies are a-blooming there;
And there the romping Sabine girls
Bind myrtle in their lustrous curls.
I know a certain ilex-tree
Whence leaps a fountain cool and clear.
Its voices summon you and me;
Come, let us haste to share its cheer!
Methinks the rapturous song it sings
Should woo our thoughts from mortal things.
But, good old friend, I charge thee well,
Watch thou my brother all the while,
Lest some fair Lydia cast her spell
Round him unschooled in female guile.
Those damsels have no charms for me;
Guard thou that brother,—I'll guard thee!
And, lo, sweet friend! behold this cup,
Round which the garlands intertwine;
With Massic it is foaming up,
And we would drink to thee and thine.
And of the draught thou shalt partake,
Who lov'st us for our father's sake.

Hark you! from yonder Sabine farm
Echo the songs of long ago,
With power to soothe and grace to charm
What ills humanity may know;
With that sweet music in the air,
'T is Love and Summer everywhere.
So, though no grief consumes our lot
(Since all our lives have been discreet),
Come, in this consecrated spot,
Let's see if pagan cheer be sweet.
Now, then, the songs; but, first, more wine.
The gods be with you, friends of mine!

E.F.

AN INVITATION TO MÆCENAS

Dear, noble friend! a virgin cask
Of wine solicits your attention;
And roses fair, to deck your hair,
And things too numerous to mention.
So tear yourself awhile away
From urban turmoil, pride, and splendor,
And deign to share what humble fare
And sumptuous fellowship I tender.
The sweet content retirement brings
Smooths out the ruffled front of kings.

The evil planets have combined
To make the weather hot and hotter;
By parboiled streams the shepherd dreams
Vainly of ice-cream soda-water.
And meanwhile you, defying heat,
With patriotic ardor ponder
On what old Rome essays at home,
And what her heathen do out yonder.
Mæcenas, no such vain alarm
Disturbs the quiet of this farm!

God in His providence obscures
The goal beyond this vale of sorrow,

And smiles at men in pity when
They seek to penetrate the morrow.
With faith that all is for the best,
Let's bear what burdens are presented,
That we shall say, let come what may,
"We die, as we have lived, contented!
Ours is to-day; God's is the rest,—
He doth ordain who knoweth best."

Dame Fortune plays me many a prank.
When she is kind, oh, how I go it!
But if again she's harsh,—why, then
I am a very proper poet!
When favoring gales bring in my ships,
I hie to Rome and live in clover;
Elsewise I steer my skiff out here,
And anchor till the storm blows over.
Compulsory virtue is the charm
Of life upon the Sabine farm!

CHLORIS PROPERLY REBUKED

Chloris, my friend, I pray you your misconduct to forswear;
The wife of poor old Ibycus should have more *savoir faire*.
A woman at your time of life, and drawing near death's door,
Should not play with the girly girls, and think she's *en rapport*.

What's good enough for Pholoe you cannot well essay;
Your daughter very properly courts *the jeunesse dorée*,—
A Thyiad, who, when timbrel beats, cannot her joy restrain,
But plays the kid, and laughs and giggles *à l'Américaine*.

'T is more becoming, Madame, in a creature old and poor,
To sit and spin than to engage in an *affaire d'amour*.
The lutes, the roses, and the wine drained deep are not for
you;
Remember what the poet says: *Ce monde est plein de fous!*

TO THE FOUNTAIN OF BANDUSIA

O fountain of Bandusia!
Whence crystal waters flow,
With garlands gay and wine I'll pay
The sacrifice I owe;
A sportive kid with budding horns
I have, whose crimson blood
Anon shall dye and sanctify
Thy cool and babbling flood.

O fountain of Bandusia!
The Dog-star's hateful spell
No evil brings into the springs
That from thy bosom well;
Here oxen, wearied by the plow,
The roving cattle here
Hasten in quest of certain rest,
And quaff thy gracious cheer.

O fountain of Bandusia!
Ennobled shalt thou be,
For I shall sing the joys that spring
Beneath yon ilex-tree.
Yes, fountain of Bandusia,
Posterity shall know

The cooling brooks that from thy nooks
Singing and dancing go.

TO THE FOUNTAIN OF BANDUSIA

O fountain of Bandusia! more glittering than glass,
And worthy of the pleasant wine and toasts that freely pass;
More worthy of the flowers with which thou modestly art hid,
To-morrow willing hands shall sacrifice to thee a kid.

In vain the glory of the brow where proudly swell above
The growing horns, significant of battle and of love;
For in thy honor he shall die,—the offspring of the herd,—
And with his crimson life-blood thy cold waters shall be
stirred.

The Dog-star's cruel season, with its fierce and blazing heat,
Has never sent its scorching rays into thy glad retreat;
The oxen, wearied with the plow, the herd which wanders
near,
Have found a grateful respite and delicious coolness here.

When of the graceful ilex on the hollow rocks I sing,
Thou shalt become illustrious, O sweet Bandusian spring!
Among the noble fountains which have been enshrined in
fame,
Thy dancing, babbling waters shall in song our homage claim.

THE PREFERENCE DECLARED

Boy, I detest the Persian pomp;
I hate those linden-bark devices;
And as for roses, holy Moses!
They can't be got at living prices!
Myrtle is good enough for us,—
For *you*, as bearer of my flagon;
For *me*, supine beneath this vine,
Doing my best to get a jag on!

A TARDY APOLOGY

I

Mæcenas, you will be my death,—though friendly you
profess yourself,—

If to me in a strain like this so often you address yourself:
"Come, Holly, why this laziness? Why indolently shock you
us?

Why with Lethean cups fall into desuetude innocuous?"

A god, Mæcenas! yea, a god hath proved the very curse of
me!

If my iambs are not done, pray, do not think the worse of
me;

Anacreon for young Bathyllus burned without apology,
And wept his simple measures on a sample of conchology.

Now, you yourself, Mæcenas, are enjoying this beatitude;
If by no brighter beauty Ilium fell, you've cause for gratitude.
A certain Phryne keeps me on the rack with lovers numerous;
This is the artful hussy's neat conception of the humorous!

A TARDY APOLOGY

II

You ask me, friend,
Why I don't send
The long since due-and-paid-for numbers;
Why, songless, I
As drunken lie
Abandoned to Lethean slumbers.

Long time ago
(As well you know)
I started in upon that carmen;
My work was vain,—
But why complain?
When gods forbid, how helpless are men!

Some ages back,
The sage Anack
Courtied a frisky Samian body,
Singing her praise
In metered phrase
As flowing as his bowls of toddy.

Till I was hoarse
Might I discourse

Upon the cruelties of Venus;
'T were waste of time
As well of rhyme,
For you've been there yourself, Mæcenas!

Perfect your bliss
If some fair miss
Love you yourself and *not* your minæ;
I, fortune's sport,
All vainly court
The beauteous, polyandrous Phryne!

TO THE SHIP OF STATE

O ship of state
Shall new winds bear you back upon the sea?
What are you doing? Seek the harbor's lee
Ere 't is too late!

Do you bemoan
Your side was stripped of oarage in the blast?
Swift Africus has weakened, too, your mast;
The sailyards groan.

Of cables bare,
Your keel can scarce endure the lordly wave.
Your sails are rent; you have no gods to save,
Or answer pray'r.

Though Pontic pine,
The noble daughter of a far-famed wood,
You boast your lineage and title good,—
A useless line!

The sailor there
In painted sterns no reassurance finds;
Unless you owe derision to the winds,
Beware—beware!

My grief erewhile,
But now my care—my longing! shun the seas
That flow between the gleaming Cyclades,
Each shining isle.

QUITTING AGAIN

The hero of
Affairs of love
By far too numerous to be mentioned,
And scarred as I'm,
It seemeth time
That I were mustered out and pensioned.

So on this wall
My lute and all
I hang, and dedicate to Venus;
And I implore
But one thing more
Ere all is at an end between us.

O goddess fair
Who reignest where
The weather's seldom bleak and snowy,
This boon I urge:
In anger scourge
My old cantankerous sweetheart, Chloe!

SAILOR AND SHADE

SAILOR

You, who have compassed land and sea,
Now all unburied lie;
All vain your store of human lore,
For you were doomed to die.
The sire of Pelops likewise fell,—
Jove's honored mortal guest;
So king and sage of every age
At last lie down to rest.
Plutonian shades enfold the ghost
Of that majestic one
Who taught as truth that he, forsooth,
Had once been Pentheus' son;
Believe who may, he's passed away,
And what he did is done.
A last night comes alike to all;
One path we all must tread,
Through sore disease or stormy seas
Or fields with corpses red.
Whate'er our deeds, that pathway leads
To regions of the dead.

SHADE

The fickle twin Illyrian gales
Overwhelmed me on the wave;
But you that live, I pray you give
My bleaching bones a grave!
Oh, then when cruel tempests rage
You all unharmed shall be;
Jove's mighty hand shall guard by land
And Neptune's on the sea.
Perchance you fear to do what may
Bring evil to your race?
Oh, rather fear that like me here
You'll lack a burial place.
So, though you be in proper haste,
Bide long enough, I pray,
To give me, friend, what boon shall send
My soul upon its way!

LET US HAVE PEACE

In maudlin spite let Thracians fight
Above their bowls of liquor;
But such as we, when on a spree,
Should never brawl and bicker!

These angry words and clashing swords
Are quite *de trop*, I'm thinking;
Brace up, my boys, and hush your noise,
And drown your wrath in drinking.

Aha, 't is fine,—this mellow wine
With which our host would dope us!
Now let us hear what pretty dear
Entangles him of Opus.

I see you blush,—nay, comrades, hush!
Come, friend, though they despise you,
Tell me the name of that fair dame,—
Perchance I may advise you.

O wretched youth! and is it truth
You love that fickle lady?
I, doting dunce, courted her once;
Since when, she's reckoned shady!

TO QUINTUS DELLIUS

Be tranquil, Dellius, I pray;
For though you pine your life away

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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