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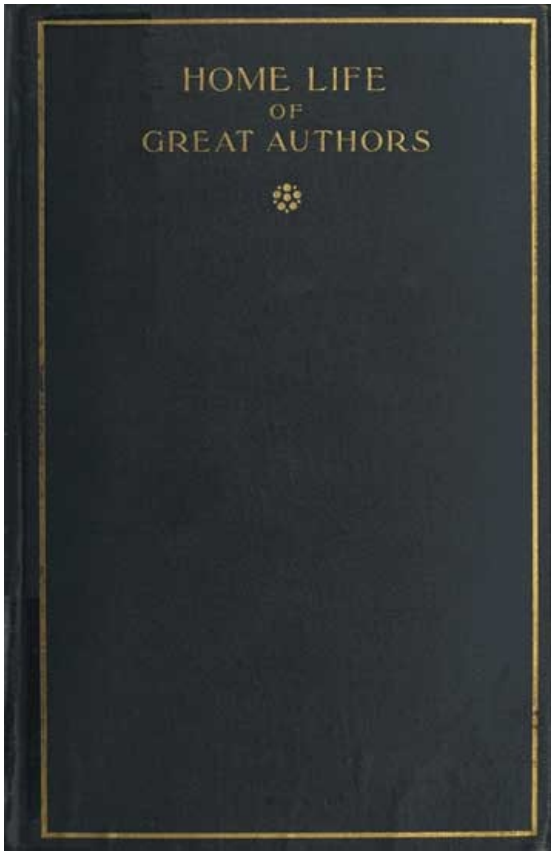

HOME LIFE OF GREAT AUTHORS

BY

HATTIE TYNG GRISWOLD

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PREFACE.

The author of these sketches desires to say that they were written, not for the special student of literary biography, who is already familiar with the facts here given, but rather for those busy people who have little time for reading, yet wish to know something of the private life and personal history of their favorite authors. The sketches are not intended to be critical, or to present anything like complete biographies. They are devoted chiefly to the home life of the various authors,—which, though an instructive and fascinating study, seems commonly neglected in popular biographies. [Pg 5]

It should be added that a few of these sketches have already appeared in print, but they have been rewritten to adapt them to their present purpose.

H. T. G.

Columbus, Wis., October, 1886.

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Home Life of Great Authors.

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GOETHE.

In an old, many-cornered, and gloomy house at Frankfort-on-the-Main, upon the 28th of August, 1749, was born the greatest German of his day, Wolfgang Goethe. The back of the house, from the second story, commanded a very pleasant prospect over an almost immeasurable extent of gardens stretching to the walls of the city, but the house itself was gloomy, being shut in by a high wall. Over these gardens beyond the walls and ramparts of the city, stretched a long plain, where the young Wolfgang, serious and thoughtful, was wont to wander and to learn his lessons. He had the sort of superstitious dread which is usually the inheritance of children with a poetic nature, and suffered greatly in childhood from fear. He was obliged by his father, who was a stern and somewhat opinionated old man, to sleep alone, as a means of overcoming this fear; and if he tried to steal from his own bed to that of his brothers, he was frightened back by his father, who watched for him and chased him in some fantastic disguise. That this did not tend to quiet his nerves may well be imagined, and it was only through time and much suffering that he overcame his childish terrors. His mother was a gay, cheerful woman, much younger than his [Pg 10] father, and as she was only eighteen years old when Wolfgang was born, always said that they were young together. She had married with little affection for her elderly husband, and it was in her favorite son that she found all the romance and beauty of her life. She was a woman of strong character, and presents one of the pleasantest pictures in German literature. With a warm, genial nature, full of spirit and enthusiasm, she retained to the last days of her life an ardent interest in all the things which delighted her in youth. She read much, thought much, and observed much,

for one in her sphere of life, and many great people who came to know her through her son learned to value her very highly for herself alone. She corresponded long with the Duchess Amalia, and her letters were much enjoyed at the Court of Weimar. Princes and poets delighted to honor her in later life, and her son was enthusiastic in his devotion to her till the last. She comforted him through his rather fanciful and fantastic childhood as much as she could without directly interfering with the discipline of the didactic father. Goethe and his mother were both taught by this father, who considered her almost as much of a child as the boy himself. She was kept busy with writing, playing the clavichord, and singing, as well as with the study of Italian, in which the father much delighted; and the boy had grammar, and the Latin classics, and a geography in memory-verses. The boy soon got beyond his teacher, but without being well-grounded in anything, and learned, as such children are apt to do, much more from his own desultory reading than from any instruction which was given him. In the library were the beautiful Dutch editions of the Latin classics and many works relating to Roman antiquities and jurisprudence. There were also the Italian poets, and many books of travel, and many dictionaries of various languages, and encyclopædias of science and art. Through all these the boy searched for himself, and took what was suited to his taste, astonishing the slow father very much by his [Pg 11] readiness, and soon becoming famous in the neighborhood for his acquirements. Of course he wrote poetry from the earliest age, and of course many people predicted his future greatness. Most of all, his mother believed in him, and watched him with adoring solicitude. His love for art showed itself very early, and he made friends with artists, and visited their studios frequently when a mere boy. His father had a fondness for pictures, and had some good views of Italian scenery and art in his own house; and it was probably from him that the boy derived his earliest liking for such things. His passion for the theatre also made itself known at the earliest age, and gave him his most intense youthful pleasures.

His taste for natural science was also very strong in early childhood, and he analyzed flowers, to see how the leaves were inserted into the calyx, and plucked birds to see how the feathers were inserted in the wings, when a mere infant, as it appeared to his mother. Indeed, all the strong tastes of the man showed themselves in a decided manner in this precocious child, and his hap-hazard training allowed his genius to develop along its own natural lines in a healthy manner.

He even exhibited at a very youthful period his fatal facility for falling in love, and naturally enough, with a girl older than himself, named Gretchen. He was cured of his first passion only by finding out that the girl regarded him as a child, which filled him with great indignation. He says: —

> "My judgment was convinced, and I thought I must cast her away; but her image!—her image gave me the lie as often as it again hovered before me, which indeed happened often enough.
>
> "Nevertheless, this arrow with its barbed hooks was torn out of my heart; and the question then was, how the inward sanative power of youth could be brought to one's aid. I really put on the man; and the first thing instantly laid aside was the weeping and raving, which I now regarded as childish in the highest degree. A great stride for the [Pg 12] better! For I had often, half the night through, given myself up to this grief with the greatest violence; so that at last, from my tears and sobbing, I came to such a point that I could scarcely swallow any longer; eating and drinking become painful to me; and my chest, which was so nearly concerned, seemed to suffer. The vexation I had constantly felt since the discovery made me banish every weakness.
>
> "It seemed to me something frightful that I had sacrificed sleep, repose, and health for the sake of a girl who was pleased to consider me a babe, and to imagine herself, with respect to me, something very like a nurse."

Poor Goethe! but many a man since has fallen in love with a woman older than himself, and has afterward felt himself fortunate if he has been treated as Goethe was. The real unfortunates are the ones who have been for some reason encouraged in their passion, and married by these mature women while mere boys. Taking into consideration the welfare of both parties, there is scarcely a more unfortunate occurrence in life than such a marriage. Soon after this first love episode Goethe went up to Leipsic to enter the University. He was sixteen years old, well-favored by nature, even handsome, and full of sensibility and enthusiasm. But he appeared to the inhabitants of Leipsic like a being from another world, on account of the grotesqueness of his costume. His father, who was of an economical turn of mind, always bought his own cloth, and had his servants make the clothing for the family. He usually bought good but old-fashioned materials, and trimmings from some forgotten epoch in the world's history. These trimmings, of the Paleozoic period or some still remoter date, together with the unprofessional and antiquated cut of the garments, made up such a grotesque appearance that Goethe was received with undisguised mirth wherever he went in Leipsic, until he discovered what was the matter with his dress. He had not been noticed at home on this account, and he thought himself very well dressed when he first arrived in the city; but his chagrin and mortification knew no bounds when [Pg 13] he discovered how he had been laughed at. It was not until he had visited the theatre and seen a favorite actor throw the audience into convulsions of laughter by appearing in a costume almost identical with his own, that he begun to suspect that he was ill-dressed. He went out and sacrificed his entire wardrobe, in the first tumult of his feelings, remorselessly leaving no vestige of it remaining, and supplying himself with a complete new outfit, not so ample as the old but much more satisfactory. In this act also he will find many sympathizers. Few things are recalled

with more acute mortification than the outfit in which people leave their early homes, if they are in the country, and make their first visit to the city. Hundreds of men groan in spirit as they bring up before themselves the appearance they presented upon that momentous day. Comparatively few are able to do as Goethe did, and get rid of the whole vile accoutrement at one stroke. The majority are obliged, suffer as they may, to wear the obnoxious garments long after they have discovered their true character. When Goethe had clothed himself anew he was received with more favor at his boarding-house, and proceeded immediately to fall in love with the landlady's daughter. The thought of Gretchen was buried away out of sight, and the thought of Annette filled his whole heart. This Annette was young, handsome, sprightly, loving, and agreeable, and he saw her daily in the most unrestrained manner.

He says of her:—

> "But since such connections, the more innocent they are, afford the less variety in the long run, I was seized with that wicked distemper which seduces us to derive amusement from the torment of a beloved one, and to domineer over a girl's devotedness with wanton and tyrannical caprice. By unfounded and absurd fits of jealousy I destroyed our most delightful days, both for myself and her. She endured it for a time with incredible patience, which I was cruel enough to try to its utmost. But to my shame and despair, I was at last forced to remark that her heart was alienated from [Pg 14] me, and that I might now have good ground for the madness in which I had indulged without necessity and without cause. There were terrible scenes between us, in which I gained nothing; and I then first felt that I had truly loved her, and could not bear to lose her. My passion grew and assumed all the forms of which it is capable under the circumstances; nay, I at last took up the *rôle* which the girl had hitherto played. I sought everything possible in order to be agreeable to her, even to procure her pleasure by means of others; for I could not renounce the hope of winning her again. But it was too late. I had lost her really; and the frenzy with which I revenged my fault upon myself, by assaulting in various frantic ways my physical nature, in order to inflict some hurt on my moral nature, contributed very much to the bodily maladies under which I lost some of the best years of my life: indeed, I should perchance have been completely ruined by this loss, had not my poetic talent here shown itself particularly helpful with its healing power."

His next adventure was with the daughters of his dancing-master, both of whom seemed inclined to draw unwarranted conclusions from the freedom of his intercourse with them. The closing scene of this little drama must be given in Goethe's own words:—

> "Emilia was silent, and had sat down by her sister, who became constantly more and more excited in her discourse, and let certain private matters slip out which it was not exactly proper for me to know. Emilia, on the other hand, who was trying to pacify her sister, made me a sign from behind to withdraw; but as jealousy and suspicion see with a thousand eyes, Lucinda seemed to have noticed this also. She sprang up and advanced to me, but not with vehemence. She stood before me and seemed to be thinking of something. Then she said, 'I know that I have lost you; I make no further pretensions to you. But neither shall you have him, sister.' So saying, she took a thorough hold of my head, thrusting both her hands into my locks and pressing my face to hers, and kissed me repeatedly on the mouth. 'Now,' cried she, 'fear my curse! Woe upon woe, for ever and ever, to her who kisses these lips for the first time after me! [Pg 15] Dare to have anything more to do with him! I know Heaven hears me this time. And you, sir, hasten now, hasten away as fast as you can.' I flew down the stairs, with a firm determination never again to enter the house."

This conclusion, though doubtless very trying to an ardent young man who enjoyed the adoration of women, seems to have been an eminently wise one under the circumstances, and we believe the resolve was faithfully kept. The dramatic Lucinda appears no more in his reminiscences.

Quite different was the next occupant of his heart. Frederika was the daughter of a country clergyman whom Goethe was taken to visit by his friend Weyland. The hospitality and agreeableness of the family had been highly praised by this friend, also the beauty and charms of the daughters. And indeed this Frederika does seem to have been a most beautiful and charming girl. Goethe constantly compares the family to that of the Vicar of Wakefield, and the daughters to Olivia and Sophia. The affection which Goethe conceived for this beautiful and innocent maiden was one of the strongest and most enduring of his life, and even on into old age he was fond of talking of her and their youthful romance. Why he ever left Frederika at all has never been made clear, for it is plain that at last he truly loved,—the other passions being mere boyish episodes, soon forgotten, while this one exerted a lasting influence upon his life. He writes:—

> "Frederika's answer to my farewell letter rent my heart. It was the same hand, the same tone of thought, the same feeling, which had formed itself for me and by me. I now for the first time felt the loss which she suffered, and saw no means to supply it, or even to alleviate it. She was completely present to me; I always felt that she was wanting to me; and what was worst of all, I could not forgive myself for my own misfortune. Gretchen had been taken away from me, Annette had left me; now for the first time I was guilty. I had wounded the most lovely heart to its very depths; and the [Pg 16] period of a gloomy repentance, with the absence of a refreshing love to which I had

grown accustomed, was most agonizing, nay, insupportable."

Even after eight years he revisits Frederika, with much of the old feeling still alive, although he had in the mean time had at least two new loves. One of these was the Charlotte immortalized in "Werther." She was already engaged when he made her acquaintance, but this did not preclude the possibility of his devoting himself assiduously to her, and her betrothed seems to have laid no obstacles in the way. She was married in due time, and read "Werther" after its publication, not seeming to object to the part she is there made to play. She retained her friendship for Goethe throughout life; and to her husband the poet wrote many, many years after: "God bless you, dear Kustner, and tell Lottie that I often believe I can forget her, but then I have a relapse, and it is worse with me than ever."

Immediately following his infatuation with Lottie came the connection with Lili, which reconciled him to Lottie's marriage. It was of Lottie that he said, in the language of "The New Heloïse," "And sitting at the feet of his beloved, he will break hemp; and he will wish to break hemp to-day, to-morrow, and the day after,—nay, for his whole life." Whether he would have been as willing to break hemp with Lili we are not told; but he wrote a great deal of poetry addressed to her,—more perhaps than to any of his other loves,—much of which he reproduces in the "Autobiography."

"Heart, my heart, oh, what hath changed thee?
  What doth weigh on thee so sore?
What hath thus from me estranged thee,
  That I know thee now no more?
Gone is all which once seemed dearest,
Gone the care which once was nearest,
Gone thy toils and tranquil bliss!
Ah! how could'st thou come to this?

"Does that bloom, so fresh and youthful,
  That divine and lovely form,
That sweet look, so good and truthful,
  Bind thee with unbounded charm?
If I swear no more to see her,
If I man myself to flee her,
Soon I find my efforts vain,
Back to her I'm led again."

[Pg 17]

But even this love affair, which went as far as a betrothal, came to nothing,—Goethe drawing back at the last through a pretended or real fear that he could not support the lady in the style she had been accustomed to; though it is more reasonable to believe that his usual repugnance to marriage overcame all the fervor of his love, and made him feel a real relief when the whole affair was over. This was just previous to his removal to Weimar at the invitation of Carl August, and it was there that the remainder of his life-drama was enacted.

Soon after his arrival there he made the acquaintance of the Frau Von Stein. She was the wife of the Master of Horse at Weimar, and Goethe, who had now passed thirty years of age, for the first time loved a mature woman. She was the mother of seven children and was thirty-three years old. With moral deficiencies which were securely covered up, she was a thoroughly charming woman, and retained her charm even to old age. She was said to have remarked when asked if she would be presented to Goethe, "With all my heart. I have heard as much about him as I ever did about Heaven, and I feel a deal more curiosity about him." She completely ensnared his heart, and held it in undisputed sway for more than ten years; which, considering his proverbial inconstancy, speaks very highly for her charms.

The connection was well known and perfectly understood at Weimar, and appears to have caused no scandal. The love on Goethe's part seemed to have begun even before seeing her; as it is recorded that at Pyrmont he first saw her portrait, and was three nights sleepless in consequence. And when he came to see her, instead of a raw girl such as he had hitherto fancied, he found an elegant woman of the world, whose culture and experience had a singular fascination for him, tired as he was of immaturity and overfondness. She sang well, played well, sketched well, talked well, and showed her appreciation of the poet, not like a gushing girl, but with the delicate tact of a woman of the world. Some years after her first acquaintance with Goethe, Schiller thus writes to his friend Körner:—

[Pg 18]

> "She is really a genuinely interesting person, and I quite understand what has attached Goethe to her. Beautiful she can never have been, but her countenance has a soft earnestness and a quite peculiar openness. A healthy understanding, truth, and feeling lie in her nature. She has more than a thousand letters from Goethe, and from Italy he writes her every week. They say the connection is perfectly pure and blameless."

Even before he went away from Weimar at all, the letters were incessant, often trivial, and sometimes made up of homely details of eating and drinking, but loving always. The reader who remembers Charlotte cutting bread and butter will not be shocked at the poet eloquently begging his true love to send him a sausage. All the years of his life in the Gartenhaus are intimately associated with her. The whole spot speaks of her. She was doubtless the grand passion of his life. But even this wore itself out, and after his absence in Italy he never seemed to feel the full ardor of his former love. He returned to Weimar still grateful to her for the happiness she had

given, still feeling for her a sincere affection, but retaining little of the passion which for ten years she had inspired. The feeling seemed to have died a natural death. It is not recorded that she had ever really shared his fervor, but she greatly resented his defection, and considered him ungrateful and disloyal to the end.

It was about this time that he first made the acquaintance of Christine Vulpius, who afterwards became his wife. She was the daughter of one of those men whose drunkenness slowly but surely [Pg 19] brings a whole family to want. She was at this time very young. He thought her beautiful, and, although uneducated, she had a quick wit, a lively spirit, a loving heart, and great aptitude for domestic duties. She had no social position, and is often spoken of as his servant. Although never really occupying that position, her standing was not much above that plane. She fascinated Goethe as so many young faces had done before, and it seemed to be a thraldom of the mind as well as of the senses. There are few poems in any language which approach the passionate gratitude of those in which he recalls the happiness she gave him.

George Henry Lewes in his life of the poet has this passage, which will be read with peculiar interest, considering his own relations with the highest genius of her day, George Eliot. He says:—

> "Why did he not marry her at once? His dread of marriage has already been shown; and to this abstract dread must be added the great disparity of station,—a disparity so great that it not only made the liaison scandalous, but made Christine herself reject the offer of marriage. There are persons now living who have heard her declare that it was her own fault that the marriage was so long delayed. And certain it is that when she bore him a child, he took her, with her mother and sister, to live in his house, and always regarded the connection as marriage. But, however he may have regarded it, public opinion has not forgiven this defiance of its social laws. The world blamed him loudly; even his admirers cannot think of the connection without pain. But let us be just. While no one can refrain from deploring that Goethe, so eminently needing a pure domestic life, should not have found a wife whom he could avow, no one who knows the circumstances can refrain from confessing that there is also a bright light to this dark episode."

He goes on to say:—

> "The judgments of men are curious. No action in Goethe's life has excited more scandal than his final marriage with Christine. It is thought disgraceful enough for him to have [Pg 20] taken her into his home, but for the great poet to actually complete such an enormity as to crown his connection with her by marriage was, indeed, more than society could tolerate. I have already expressed my opinion of this unfortunate connection, but I most emphatically declare my belief that the redeeming point in it is precisely this which caused the scandal. Better far had there been no connection at all; but if it was to be, the nearer it approached real marriage, and the further it was removed from a fugitive indulgence, the more moral and healthy it became."

He was in his fifty-eighth year when he married her. She had changed much in the passing years. From the bright, lively, pleasure-loving girl, she had grown into a coarse and almost repulsive woman. Her father, as we know, had ruined himself by intemperance, her brother also, and she herself had not escaped the fatal appetite. She was not restrained by the checks which refined society imposes, for in Weimar she had no society, and as the years went by she became openly and shamelessly given over to intemperance. This tragedy in Goethe's life would have been little suspected by those who saw how calmly he bore himself in public. The mere mention of the fact, however, tells its own tale of humiliation and woe. It is often asked why Goethe did not part from her at once. In answer we might ask, Why do not all the noble and right-principled women who wear out wretched lives as drunkards' wives part at once from their debauched husbands? The answer would no doubt be similar in the two cases. He was too weak to alter his position, he was strong enough to bear it. And he did bear it to the bitter end. And when that end came he mourned for her with sincere affection. Says Lewes:—

> "She who had for twenty-eight years loved and aided him; who, whatever her faults, had been to him what no other woman had been, could not be taken from him without his feeling her loss. His self-mastery was utterly shaken. He knelt by her bedside, [Pg 21] taking her cold hands in his, and exclaiming, 'Thou wilt not forsake me, thou must not forsake me,' and sobbing aloud. He had been to her the most tender of devoted husbands throughout all those weary years."

Many accounts of her vulgarity and repulsiveness have been circulated; but in making up our estimate of her, the fact that she held Goethe in loyal bonds for eight and twenty years must not be passed over lightly. Fickle as he was in youth, and admiring as he did brilliant women in his manhood, Christine Vulpius must have had charms, and not of a light order, to have held him thus her willing slave. No mere fat and vulgar Frau without mind or sensibility could have done this. It is not in the nature of things. We often see men of brilliant minds in our own day choosing to marry women who are not intellectual or cultured,—women who have only beauty, or style and social elegance; but they are women who have some charm, and if the charm remains, the attraction holds indefinitely. But sad indeed is the case of the man of mind who has married a mere doll, and who, when youth has flown, finds he has a wife who is not capable of being

companion or friend to him. Many a man holds himself steadfast to duty under these circumstances through a long life, but if the woman whom his maturity would have chosen—the sweet, companionable woman, with a mind that can sympathize with and appreciate his own—chances to dawn upon him, too late, there is apt to be a struggle which is long and hard.

Indeed, it is never the part of wisdom for the intellectual man or woman to marry one who is consciously an inferior. He or she who does this makes a high bid for an unhappy life. As regards Christine Vulpius, it is certain that, although not an intellectual woman, she was not without some taste for pursuits in consonance with those of Goethe. It was for her that he wrote the "Metamorphoses of Plants," and in her company he pursued his optical and botanical researches. [Pg 22] Had she shown no comprehension of these things, assuredly Goethe would never have persisted in instructing her in them. It was for her, too, that he wrote the "Roman Elegies," which shows that he did not esteem her a mere drudge.

Whatever may be our general estimate of Goethe's character, it will certainly be conceded that he showed great capacity for domestic love and domestic happiness in continuing loyal for so many years to one who degraded herself as did Christine. He certainly cannot be counted among the sons of genius with whom it is found difficult, almost impossible even, to live. Rather must we rank him high among those genial and warm-hearted men who love too much, rather than too little, and who are easily led by the women to whom they give their devotion. Irregular and faulty, even immoral as he was, he yet possessed the redeeming domestic virtues in a large degree. Away beyond his seventieth year we find women still madly loving him, and him capable of reciprocating their affections. And well was it that this should be so, for otherwise he would have stood alone and friendless. One by one the companions of his youth and his manhood were taken from him, until, upon the death of Carl August, he could truthfully exclaim, "Nothing now remains." It was well that the end drew near.

When one can say, "Nothing now remains," it is surely time for the angel with the brazen trumpet to proclaim, "For him let time be no more."

Lightly let the silver cord be loosed and the golden bowl broken, rather than that the lonely life linger on, with its eyes fixed only on the past, which has become but a dim mirage where ghostly figures are seen walking but from which all warmth and light have fled. Happy indeed is he who, when the allotted years have been passed, and he lingers waiting on the stage for the signal which shall cause the curtain to fall forever on his little life drama, has something which to him is real and tangible to look forward to in the near future. The bitterness of a lingering death must [Pg 23] be in all old age without this hope.

Let us trust that after that last low cry of Goethe for "more light," the morning dawned upon the great intellect and great heart which had been watching for it so long. Let us hope, also, that the world may yet learn to see him as did Emerson, who found him "a piece of pure nature, like an oak or an apple, large as morning or night, and virtuous as a brier-rose."

[Pg 24]

ROBERT BURNS.

"Oh, ye wha are sae guid yoursel',
Sae pious and sae holy,

Ye've nought to do but mark and tell
Your neebors' fauts and folly,—
Whase life is like a weel-gaun mill,
Supplied wi' store o' water,
The heapèd happer's ebbing still,
And still the clap plays clatter,—

"Hear me, ye venerable core,
As counsel for poor mortals,
That frequent pass douce Wisdom's door
For glaikit Folly's portals!
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes,
Would here propone defences,
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes,
Their failings and mischances."

Alas for it! we must all say, in dwelling upon the life of poor Burns, that he so frequently needed to appear as counsel for poor mortals—in his own behoof; and that "their donsie tricks, their black mistakes, their failings and mischances" should form so large a portion of the record of that life, which under other circumstances might have been one of the most brilliant and beautiful of all in the annals of genius. For Burns, although born to such a lowly life, and having in his youth so few advantages of education or general culture, might by sheer force of genius have attained as proud a position as any man of his time, had he but learned to rule over himself in his youth, [Pg 25] and not given full rein to those passions which his "veins convulsed," and which "still eternal galloped."

Could he but have governed himself—

"When social life and glee sat down
All joyous and unthinking,
Till, quite transmogrify'd, they've grown
Debauchery and drinking,"—

there would have been a far different story to have told of the life of Robert Burns.

What ripe fruits of his genius we might have had, had he not burned out the torch of that brilliant intellect at the early age of thirty-eight. What poems he might have written—he who did immortal work with all his drawbacks—had he kept his brain clear and his life sweet even for the short span of life allotted him! How high might he have soared in the years which he might have hoped from life, had he but moved at a slower pace, in those reckless years, the record of which is so painful to the great world of admiring and pitying friends, who cherish his memory so tenderly. Yet there is in his case everything to mitigate a severe judgment upon his youthful follies; and the great world has always judged him leniently, knowing the story of his early life, and the temptations which at that day must have surrounded a youth of his temperament among the peasants of Scotland. Of the strength of those temptations we probably can form but a slight idea.

"What's done we partly may compute,
But know not what's resisted."

And surely, there must have been much that was worthy of honor and esteem, even of reverence, in the heart of the man, to have brought the whole world to his feet, in spite of the faults and follies to which we allude in passing, but upon which we have no disposition to dwell. As a [Pg 26] friendly hand long ago wrote, after visiting his poor, mean home and his unhonored burial place: —

> "We listened readily enough to this paltry gossip, but found that it robbed the poet's memory of some of the reverence that was its due. Indeed, this talk over his grave had very much the same effect as the home-scene of his life, which we had been visiting just previously. Beholding his poor, mean dwelling and its surroundings, and picturing his outward life and earthly manifestations from these, one does not so much wonder that the people of that day should have failed to recognize all that was admirable and immortal in a disreputable, drunken, shabbily-clothed, and shabbily-housed man, consorting with associates of damaged character, and as his only ostensible occupation gauging the whiskey which he too often tasted. Siding with Burns, as we needs must, in his plea against the world, let us try to do the world a little justice too. It is far easier to know and honor a poet when his fame has taken shape in the spotlessness of marble, than when the actual man comes staggering before you, besmeared with the sordid stains of his daily life. For my part, I chiefly wonder that his recognition dawned as brightly as it did while he was still living. There must have been something very grand in his immediate presence, some strangely impressive characteristic in his natural behavior, to have caused him to seem like a demigod so soon."

To do even faintest justice to the memory of the poet, we must go to Ayr, and look upon the humble cottage which was his birthplace. It consisted of but two small rooms paved with flag-stones, and with but one window of four small panes, while the thatched roof formed the only ceiling. The whole place is inconceivably small for the dwelling of a family, for there is not even

an attic-room, or any other spot where children could have been hidden away. In such a hut as this it is hard to conceive of a family being reared in purity and delicacy, even though the parents should have done their best by their children, and been, like the father of Burns, prudent and well-disposed. [Pg 27]

This housing of the poor is of immense moral significance in all cases; and it is growing to be a recognized fact that no help which can be rendered them is of much avail, when they are left in these little, one or two room dwellings.

There were seven children in the Burns household, and during the childhood of Robert the family were very poor; and he and his brother were expected to do the work of men, at the age of thirteen. He had some schooling before that age, and must have improved his time, for he could read and spell well, and had some knowledge of English grammar.

Near by the cottage flows the beautiful Bonny Doon, through deep wooded banks, and across it is an ancient ivy-covered bridge with a high arch, making a very picturesque object in the landscape, which is one of great loveliness. Kirk Alloway is not far away,—the smallest church that ever filled so large a place in the imagination of the world. The one-mullioned window in the eastern gable might have been seen by Tam O'Shanter blazing with devilish light as he approached it along the road from Ayr, and there is a small square one on the side next the road; there is also an odd kind of belfry, almost the smallest ever made, with a little bell in it,—and this is all. But no grand and storied cathedral pile in all Europe is better known, and to no shrine of famous minster do more pilgrims journey than to this wee kirk immortalized by the pen of Burns.

The father of Burns has been thus described by one who knew him well:—

> "He was a tender and affectionate father; he took pleasure in leading his children in the path of virtue, not in driving them as some parents do to the performance of duties to which they are themselves averse. He took care to find fault but seldom; and therefore when he did rebuke, he was listened to with a kind of reverential awe. A look of disapprobation was felt; a reproof was severely so; and a stripe even on the skirt of the coat, gave heartfelt pain."

He was, indeed, a frugal, industrious, and good man, and his wife seems to have been a woman of good report; so that the little group of children, in spite of their poverty, were really happily situated in life, compared with many of their neighbors. There was always a tinge of melancholy in Robert's disposition, however, and in his earliest youth he used to embody it in verse. The sensibility of genius was his by birthright, and the depressions and exaltations of spirit which marked his later life began at a very early day. He himself describes his earliest years thus:— [Pg 28]

> "I was by no means a favorite with anybody. I was a good deal noted for a retentive memory, a stubborn, sturdy something in my disposition, and an enthusiastic, idiot piety."

Again he says:—

> "This kind of life—the cheerless gloom of a hermit, with the unceasing toil of a galley-slave—brought me to my sixteenth year; a little before which period I first committed the sin of rhyme."

It was at this time that he first fell in love, and it may be added that after this he was never out of that interesting state. He says:—

> "My scarcity of English denies me the power of doing her justice in that language; but you know the Scottish idiom,—she was a bonnie, sweet, sonsie lass. In short, she, altogether unwittingly to herself, initiated me into that delicious passion, which in spite of acid disappointment, gin-horse prudence, and book-worm philosophy, I hold to be the first of human joys, our dearest blessing here below! I did not know myself why I liked so much to loiter behind with her when returning in the evening from our labors; why the tones of her voice made my heartstrings thrill like an Æolian harp; and particularly, why my pulse beat such a furious rattan, when I looked and fingered over her little hand to pick out the cruel nettle-stings and thistles. Thus with me began love and poetry, which at times have been my only, and till within the last twelve months, have been my highest enjoyment." [Pg 29]

To a later period than this belongs the episode of Highland Mary, of which the

"Banks and braes and streams around
The castle of Montgomery"

still whisper to the lovers of Burns, as they keep a solemn tryst with old-time recollections there.

"How sweetly bloomed the gay green birk,
How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As underneath their fragrant shade
I clasped her to my bosom!
The golden hours on angel wings
Flew o'er me and my dearie;

For dear to me as light and life
  Was my sweet Highland Mary."

It was the sweetest and tenderest romance of his life; and it is with unbidden tears that the world still remembers that there

  "fell death's untimely frost,
That nipt my flower sae early!
Now green's the sod and cauld's the clay
  That wraps my Highland Mary."

After a hundred years there are still hearts that take a tender interest in poor Mary's fate, and that feel for poor Robbie as he wrote:—

"Oh, pale, pale now those rosy lips
  I aft hae kissed sae fondly,
And closed for aye the sparkling glance
  That dwelt on me sae kindly!
And mouldering now in silent dust
  That heart that lo'ed me dearly!
But still within my bosom's core
  Shall live my Highland Mary."

In the monument to Burns, near his old home, are deposited the two volumes of the little pocket Bible which Burns gave to Mary when they pledged their faith to one another. It is poorly printed on coarse paper. A verse of Scripture is written within each cover by the poet's hand, and [Pg 30] fastened within is a lock of Mary's golden hair. It is fitting that some memorial of her should find a place in that splendid monument which the Scottish people erected to his memory, after his life of poverty and sorrow had been brought to an untimely end.

Burns in his twenty-third year took the farm at Mossgiel, where he first became acquainted with Jane Armour. This lady was the daughter of a respectable mason in the village of Mauchline, where she was the reigning beauty and belle. It was almost love at first sight upon the part of both, and a close intimacy soon sprung up between them. Burns was very handsome at this time, gay and fascinating in manners, and a more experienced and highly-placed woman than Jane Armour might have been excused for loving the wild young poet. For wild he undoubtedly was, even at this time,—so much so that her parents objected to the friendship. He was nearly six feet high, with a robust yet agile frame, a finely formed head, and an uncommmonly interesting countenance. His eyes were large, dark, and full of ardor and animation. His conversation was full of wit and humor. He was very proud, and would be under pecuniary obligation to no one. He was also very generous with his own money. Of the first five hundred pounds which he received for his poems, he immediately gave two hundred to his brother Gilbert to help toward the support of their mother; and he was always as ready to share whatever sum he had with those he loved.

The consequences of the intimacy between the poet and Jane Armour were soon such as could not be concealed, and the farm having been a disastrous speculation in the hands of Burns, he was not in a situation to marry, although extremely anxious to do so. It was therefore agreed upon between them that he should give her a written acknowledgment of marriage, and then sail for Jamaica, and push his fortunes there. This arrangement, however, did not suit the lady's father, who had a very poor opinion of Burns's general character, and he prevailed upon Jane to [Pg 31] destroy this document. Under these circumstances she became the mother of twins, and great scandal followed Burns even to Edinburgh, where he had been induced to stop instead of sailing for Jamaica. But his poems, which he succeeded in publishing at this time, gave him a name and some money, and he returned to Mossgiel, and getting her father to consent, married Jane, and moved on to a farm six miles from Dumfries. He had become a lion, and the tables of the neighboring gentry were soon open to him, as the houses of the great had been in Edinburgh. Those were the days of conviviality, and Burns took his part in the hilarity of the table, soon with very direful consequences to himself and his family. He made many resolutions of amendment; but temperance was a very rare virtue in those days, and Burns, who could not bear it, was expected to drink just as much as those who could bear it, and who could afford it. His genius suffered from this irregular life, and in a little while he was not capable of doing justice to himself in his writings; but he continued to be good company at table, and to be invited with the local magnates, long after he had become a confirmed drunkard. The farm was given up, and he soon depended entirely upon his seventy pounds a year, the pay of an exciseman. He felt his degradation very deeply, and had fearful struggles with his temptation, but was always overborne. The horrible sufferings of genius in such thraldom have never been adequately represented, nor indeed can they ever be. When the will has become so enfeebled that no real resistance can be made, while yet pride and kind-heartedness survive, the agony of such a man is appalling. He loves his family, he knows better than any other all they suffer for his sake; he determines a thousand times to reform, only to find himself powerless to do so. He strives with more than the heroism of a martyr many times, but he is beaten. We often blame him for his defeat, but there comes a time to such a man when defeat is inevitable. Happy he who makes his [Pg 32] manful struggle while there is yet time. Poor Burns, alas, did not. He went from bad to worse, while his wife and five small children suffered as the families of such men always suffer. From October, 1795, to the January following, an accident confined him to his house. A few days after he began to go out, he dined at a tavern, and returned home about three o'clock of a very cold morning, benumbed and intoxicated. This was followed by rheumatism. He was never well again,

though he lived until the end of June. His mind during all this time was wrung with the most poignant agony in regard to the family he must leave,—for he knew he should not recover. It is heart-rending to read of his sufferings and remorse, and to know that on the morning of her husband's funeral Mrs. Burns gave birth to another child. It is pleasant to learn that a subscription was immediately taken up for the destitute family, which placed them in comparative comfort.

"Fight who will," says Byron, "about words and forms, Burns's rank is in the first class of his art;" and this has long been the deliberate judgment of the world. No finer flower of genius than that of Robert Burns has ever blossomed, and it will be long before the world will see another as fair. But, as Mr. Lockhart observes, "To accumulate all that has been said of Burns, even by men like himself, of the first order, would fill a volume." Not even the most carping critic has ever questioned his genius. The "Cotter's Saturday Night," and "Tam O'Shanter," and "Highland Mary," would stand before the world to refute such a critic; and it would be a venturesome man indeed who would care to contend for such a proposition as that Robert Burns was not a great poet. That he was a great wit is also as well established, and that he might have been a great master of prose is equally unquestionable. That he was great in his life we dare not affirm, but that his life has a great claim upon our charity we will gladly allow. Few writers have been better loved than he. There is a personal warmth in all that he wrote, and we feel that we knew him in a [Pg 33] sort of personal way, as if we had shaken hands with him, and heard his voice; and we always have a feeling that he is addressing us in our own person. All of the many pilgrims who visit the places he made immortal have something of this feeling, and the banks of Doon are as classic now as the lovely Avon. And whenever we are tempted to look upon the darker sides of his life-picture, we may well refrain, and repeat his words:—

"Then gently scan your brother man,
  Still gentler, sister woman;
Though they may gang a kennin' wrang,
  To step aside is human;
One point must still be greatly dark,—
  The moving why they do it;
And just as lamely can ye mark
  How far perhaps they rue it."

[Pg 34]

MADAME DE STAËL.

That must indeed have been a thrilling life—a life of startling dramatic interest—which covered the period occupied by the career of Madame de Staël, even had the person living the life been but an obscure observer of passing events. For the time was big with the most astounding things the world has known in these later centuries. But to a person like the daughter of Necker, with intellect to comprehend the prodigious events, and with the power oftentimes to influence them to a greater or less extent, the wonderful drama which was then enacted upon the stage of France must have appeared as of even overwhelming importance. It must have dwarfed individual life, until one's own personal affairs, if they would press upon the attention, seemed impertinence, to be disposed of as quickly as possible, that one might give every thought and every emotion to one's country. She saw the commencement and the close of that great social earthquake which overthrew the oldest dynasty in Europe; she saw the rise, the culmination, and

the setting of Napoleon's meteor-star; she witnessed the return of the Bourbons after their long absence, and the final death in defeat and exile of her dreaded enemy—the great soldier-Emperor —on the rocky ocean isle. This series of events is not to be paralleled for magnitude and meaning in any period of modern time, and Madame de Staël was something more than a spectator during [Pg 35] much of the great miracle-play.

Her father, Necker, was the Controller-General of Finances under Louis XVI., and a man worthy of honor and long remembrance, although he was called during those perilous times to a work he was unable to do, and which perhaps no man could have done. The corrupt and meretricious court had brought France, financially as well as morally, to a point where no one man, had he been ever so great and so noble, could save her—could even retard the period of her ruin. Necker made a noble struggle, but was overborne by fate; and had his genius been even more commanding than it was, he would doubtless have been thus overborne. History tells us of many greater statesmen than he, but of few better men. Disinterested almost to a fault, stainless in his private character as well as unquestioned in his public integrity, truly religious in a time given over to atheism and impiety, conscientious even to the smallest matters in public as well as private life, and moderate when everything about him was in extremes,—well might Madame de Staël be proud of her father, and fond to effusion of his memory.

Her mother was a woman to be held in reverent remembrance. She was both beautiful and accomplished, possessed of fine talents, as well as spotless character. She had been engaged to Gibbon in her youth, and the attachment between them was a strong one. But the marriage was prevented by his father; and, after a long period of mournful constancy, she married M. Necker, and took her place among the great ones of the earth. The friendship between herself and Gibbon was afterwards very tender and sacred, although she was a faithful and devoted wife to Necker, and really warmly attached to him. Necker, on his part, was her worshipping lover to the end of his life.

The daughter of such parents could scarcely fail to be remarkable in some way. It is not from such sources that the mediocrities are recruited. But the child was utterly unlike her parents, and [Pg 36] never showed much likeness to either in after life. Her genius was unquestioned even from her precocious babyhood, and she was the wonder and admiration of all the brilliant circle of her father's friends. Her temperament was most vehement and impulsive, and her vivacity a wonder even to the Parisians. She seemed to know everything by intuition, and made light of the hardest tasks which could be given her. The streams of her childish eloquence seemed to flow from some exhaustless fountain. The celebrated men who were her father's guests were never weary of expressing their astonishment at her powers of conversation.

Gibbon, the Abbé Raynal, Baron Grimm and Marmontel were among these friends, and they undoubtedly did much to stimulate the childish intellect, although Madame Necker, troubled at the precocity of her darling, frowned upon all attempts to unduly excite her mind. But great themes were constantly discussed in her presence; the frivolity of the old *régime* was being rapidly displaced by the intense earnestness of the men of the new era, and the most momentous questions of life and death, of time and eternity, were the subjects of the conversations to which the young genius listened with such rapt attention. Doubtless it was in listening to these profound discussions in her earliest years that she acquired that confidence which in after years never deserted her, but which always led her to believe that she could save both her country and the world, if people would only let her manage things in her own way. Charles X. used to tell the story of her calling upon him, after the return of the Bourbons to France, and offering him a constitution ready-made, and insisting upon his accepting it. He says:—

> "It seemed like a thing resolved—an event decided upon,—this proposal of inventing a constitution for us. I kept as long as I could upon the defensive; but Madame de Staël, carried away by her zeal and enthusiasm, instead of speaking of what presumably concerned herself, knocked me about with arguments and crushed me with threats and [Pg 37] menaces; so, tired to death of entertaining, instead of a clever, humble woman, a roaring politician in petticoats, I finished the audience, leaving her as little satisfied as myself with the interview."

Perhaps something of this kind may have influenced Napoleon in banishing her from the Empire.

Necker himself idolized his daughter, and was naturally very proud of her youthful triumphs, while she in turn made him her one hero among men. Throughout life her devotion to him continued, and she wrote of him as one might write of a god. She frequently lamented that he had been her father and not one of her own generation, that there might have been a man of her time worthy of the love which she could have lavished upon him. The fervor of this devotion, although it seems unnatural, belonged to her intensely impulsive temperament, and in her case we must make some allowance for the excesses of her passionate expressions of affection. Although she talked much and in the grandest manner of love, even when young and unmarried, —which is a very indelicate thing to do in the eyes of the French,—she did not appear to have any youthful romance of a serious sort. She had a great reputation as a wit and a genius, but few admirers who could be classed as lovers. Many men were her friends, and she was much sought after; but she was far from beautiful, which goes a great way in matters of the heart, and many disliked the manner in which she trampled upon the conventionalities, while doubtless many others objected to her strong-mindedness and the aggressiveness of her opinions.

She made a marriage *de convenance* at the age of twenty, apparently without much thought of

love upon either side, and entered upon her new career with all the confidence which characterized her. Baron de Staël was a man of good character and noble birth, an *attaché* of the Swedish Embassy, and, as she had money enough for both, the match was regarded favorably by her friends. Although the Baron was a handsome man and of pleasing address, one, it seems, who [Pg 38] might have touched a maiden's heart, Mademoiselle Necker, it is said, never made even a pretence of love, but took the whole affair as a matter of business. It was necessary that she should be married,—it is only thus that French women achieve their independence,—and this man would do as well as another; that seemed to be all there was of this remarkable occurrence. Remarkable in our eyes, but of the usual sort in the eyes of the French. For domestic happiness she seemed to care little. The excitement of Parisian society was her heaven, and into this she entered with all the ardor of her nature. Her marriage had given her every freedom, although it does not appear that she was much restrained before,—for a French girl; and she dashed into the whirlpool of the gayest society in the world with a sort of intoxication. Her vivacity and enthusiasm knew no bounds, and she held her own little court in every assembly, at which the envious and unnoticed looked askance. She was regarded as a dangerously fascinating woman, although personally she was so entirely unattractive.

For three years she enjoyed her triumphs to the utmost. Then came the earthquake which dissolved the fair fabric of her dreams. The Reign of Terror began, and Paris was in the wildest ferment. Of course, she was in the very midst of those exciting events, and her influence was of moment in the terrific crisis. Her position gave her influence, and she worked with all the strength and enthusiasm of her nature to aid the escape of her friends and to succor the endangered. All the powers of her remarkable mind were put into active service, and she seems never to have thought of herself. To be sure, she was as inviolable as any one could be considered in that fearful time, but she had a rare courage and unbounded fortitude, and would have worked as she did even at personal hazard. She prevailed upon the ferocious Revolutionists to show mercy in some cases where they were bound to have blood. She concealed her friends and even [Pg 39] strangers in her house, and she used all the powers of her marvellous eloquence to turn the tide of revolution backward. But it was in vain. Her father was deposed, her friends were murdered, her king was slain, all of her society were under surveillance, she herself everybody thought in danger, but she would not leave her beloved Paris. Her husband was in Holland, and thought she was subjecting her children to needless peril; but she still had hope that somehow she might be useful to her country. The sublime confidence which she had in her own powers did not desert her. She saw the streets flow with blood, one might say,—for the murders of the Revolutionists were of daily occurrence,—but it was not until all hope of being of use was gone that she took her children to England.

Here a little colony of French exiles were already established, and she became at once the centre of the group. She pined in the exile and mourned with ever-increasing sorrow for her country. Her interest in the events of the time was cruelly intense, and burned out her life. M. de Narbonne, whose life she had saved, was one of her consolations in the dreadful exile, as was the friendship of Talleyrand and of Benjamin Constant.

She returned to France after quiet was restored, and lived in Paris something after the old way. Then came Napoleon, whom she hated with all the ardor of her nature, and who returned her hate with interest. He banished her from France, and would not permit her return during his entire reign. "She carries a quiver full of arrows," he said, "which would hit a man were he seated upon a rainbow." It was a purely personal dislike on his part, and a piece of his most odious despotism to allow his personal feelings to influence him in such a matter. There are few things recorded of him more utterly inexcusable than this. She passed fourteen years in exile,—the best years of her life,—and exile to her had all the bitterness of death; she could never really live except in Paris. We hear little of her husband during all this time, but it is not likely that she [Pg 40] derived much consolation from domestic life. She had no taste for it, and found it the supreme bore. She consoled herself as much as she could with literature, and wrote those books which, wonderful and brilliant as they are, all who knew her personally unite in saying, never did justice to her genius. The gloom of exile was over them all. She suffered a great variety of petty persecutions at the hands of Napoleon during all those years, and these added to the inevitable miseries of her lot.

After the fall of the Napoleonic empire she returned to Paris, and there passed the remainder of her life. It was at this time that she presented the constitution to Charles X. She was never remarkable for her taste in dress, and that Prince thus describes her on that occasion:—

> "She wore a red satin gown embroidered with flowers of gold and silk, a profusion of diamonds, rings enough to stock a pawnbroker's shop; and I must add that I never before saw so low cut a corsage display less inviting charms. Upon her head was a large turban, constructed on the pattern of that worn by the Cumean sybil, which put the finishing touch to a costume so little in harmony with the style of her face. I scarcely can understand how a woman of genius can have such a false, vulgar taste."

It can be easily comprehended how she might have bored the Prince by pressing upon him at such length her ideas of the reconstruction of the empire, for she often bored even those who really admired and appreciated her by the torrents of her talk. She was not witty, but full of rhetorical surprises, and had boundless stores of information upon every subject. People do not like to be instructed, nor do they like to be preached to, even by eloquent lips, and her great conversational powers often made her dreaded rather than admired in general society. While she

was in Germany Goethe, who must be allowed the capability of appreciating her, was wont to run away from her whenever he could, and bore up under her eloquence with rather an ill grace when he could not escape it. Schiller also, in whom she much delighted, was ungallant enough to dislike her extremely. On the contrary, Talleyrand and many other famous Frenchmen seemed never to weary of her, and have handed down the tradition of her wonderful eloquence to a later generation. It is probable that her excessive vivacity was more pleasing to the French mind than to that of the English and Germans, and her lack of repose did not weary them to the same extent. She retained her friends to the end of her life, and they were the source of her greatest satisfaction. She was loyal and devoted in the extreme to all whom she favored with her friendship, and all such loved her with deep affection. Indeed, it may be said that human nature was the only thing which much interested her. She had no love for Nature, and would scarcely take the trouble to see the Alps when in Switzerland, and said that if she were left to her own feelings she would not open her window to see the bay of Naples for the first time, but that she would travel five hundred leagues at any time to see a great man she had not met before. She cared little for art, and not much for literature as such, though she had a passion for ideas. Her ideal life was a life of intellectual excitement,—constant intercourse with minds of her own order. The improvisations of Corinne give one a little idea what her conversation was like. Still she has been quoted as saying that she would have exchanged all her talent for the one gift of beauty which was denied her. [Pg 41]

In the life of William Cullen Bryant we find the following passage relating to Madame de Staël, occurring in one of his letters; it gives the last glimpse that we get of the close of her career, and is interesting also as showing his estimate of a great but faulty woman. He says:—

> "What a life! Passionate, for she was brought up not to control her passions; almost always unhappy; marrying an old man whom she did not care for, after being twice refused by young men whom she did love, and to whom she offered herself, if not formally yet in a manner not to be misunderstood; forming, after her marriage, intimate relations with Benjamin Constant, to her father's great grief; and when he deserted her, marrying, after her husband's death, a half-dead Italian named Rocca; and finally wearing out her life by opium-eating." [Pg 42]

This marriage with Albert Jean-Michel de Rocca took place at Geneva, and was for a time concealed from the world, causing some scandal. But her children and intimate friends knew of it, although much opposed to it. Rocca was a young Italian officer, just returned from the war in Spain, with a dangerous wound. He was of a poetic temperament and exceedingly romantic, and fell violently in love with Madame de Staël, although she was forty-five years old and he but twenty-three. During the years of her first marriage she used to say that she would force her own daughter to marry for love if that were necessary, and it is supposed that at last she herself made a marriage of real affection. Despite the disparity of their years, they seemed to be really happy in this marriage, and her friends were at last reconciled to it. But her new-found happiness was of short duration,—she being but fifty years old at the time of her death.

[Pg 43]

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

Mr. Swinburne quotes the following passage from a description given by one of the daily papers of a certain murderer who at the time was attracting great attention in London:—

"He has great taste for poetry, can recite long passages from popular poets,—Byron's denunciations of the pleasures of the world having for him great attraction as a *description of his own experiences*. Wordsworth is his favorite poet. He confesses himself a villain."

At this day the two latter facts will not necessarily be supposed to have any logical connection; but there was a time when the violence of the opponents of Wordsworth's claim to be a poet might have suggested the most intimate relation between these two statements. For many years he was looked upon as an "inspired idiot" by a large part of the reading world; and his place in literature has not been definitely settled to this day. Such extravagant claims have always been made for him by his friends that they have called forth just as extravagant denunciations from those who do not admire his works; and violent controversies arise concerning his merits among first-class scholars and critics. It is always noticeable, however, in these discussions that his panegyrists always quote his best efforts, those sublime passages to which no one denies transcendent merit, and that his opponents never get much beyond "Peter Bell," and other trivialities and absurdities, which his best friends must admit that he wrote in great numbers. That his best work ranks next to Shakespeare, Milton, and Shelley, can scarcely be doubted by [Pg 44] any true lover of poetry; and he certainly has the right to be judged by his best, rather than by his inferior work.

Wordsworth was born in 1770, in Cumberland, and received his early education there, being noted for his excellence in classical studies and for his thoughtful disposition. He graduated from St. John's College, Cambridge, and immediately after began his literary labors, which were continued through a long and most industrious life.

In 1803 he married Miss Mary Hutchinson of Penrith, and settled at Grasmere, in Westmoreland, where he passed the remainder of his life, and where he lies buried in the little churchyard where so many of his family had preceded him. He helped to make the Lake district famous the world over, and himself never wearied of its charms. He was pre-eminently the poet of Nature, and it was from the unrivalled scenery of this part of England that he caught much of his inspiration. Mrs. Wordsworth, who was as fond of it as her husband, used to say in extreme old age, that the worst of living in the Lake region was that it made one unwilling to die when the time came. The poet's marriage was an eminently happy one, although Miss Martineau hints that it was not first love on his part, but that the lines, "She was a phantom of delight," so often quoted as relating to Mrs. Wordsworth, were really meant to indicate another person who had occupied his thoughts at an early day. At any rate, he did address the following lines to his wife after thirty-six years of married life, which is certainly a far higher compliment to her:—

"Morn into noon did pass, noon into eve,
And the old day was welcome as the young,
As welcome, and as beautiful,—in sooth, more beautiful,
As being a thing more holy."

The other poems, "Let other bards of angels sing," and "Oh, dearer far than life and light are dear," were also addressed to her. [Pg 45]

It was through her early friendship for Wordsworth's sister that she first came to know the poet, and she was not at that time a person whom a poet would be supposed to fancy. She was the incarnation of good-sense as applied to the concerns of the every-day world, and in no sense a dreamer, or a seeker after the ideal. Her intellect, however, developed by contact with higher minds, and her tastes after a time became more in accordance with those of her husband. She learned to passionately admire the outward world, in which he took such great delight, and to admire his poetry and that of his friends. She was of a kindly, cheery, generous nature, very unselfish in her dealings with her family, and highly beloved by her friends. She was the finest example of thrift and frugality to be found in her neighborhood, and is said to have exerted a decidedly beneficial influence upon all her poorer neighbors. She did not give them as much in charity as many others did, but she taught them how to take care of what they had, and to save something for their days of need. Miss Martineau, who was a neighbor, says: "The oldest residents have long borne witness that the homes of the neighbors have assumed a new character of order and comfort and wholesome economy, since the poet's family lived at Rydal Mount." She took the kindest and tenderest care of Wordsworth's sister Dorothy, who was for many years a helpless charge upon her hands. This sister had ruined her health, and finally dethroned her reason, by trying to accompany her brother on his long and tiresome rambles among the lakes and up the mountains. She has been known to walk with him forty miles in a single day. Many English women are famous walkers, but her record is beyond them all. Such excessive exercise is bad for a man, as was proved in the case of Dickens, who doubtless injured himself much by such long pedestrian trips after brain labor; but no woman can endure such a strain as this, and the adoring sister not only failed to be a companion to her idolized brother, but became a care and burden for many years. She lies now by her brother's side in the crowded [Pg 46] little churchyard, and doubtless the "sweet bells jangled" are in tune again. A lovely group of children filled the Wordsworth home, some of whom died in childhood; but one daughter and two sons lived, as loving companions for their parents, until near the end of the poet's life, when the daughter Dora preceded him a little into the silent land. Wordsworth was utterly inconsolable for her loss; and used to spend the long winter evenings in tears, week after week, and month after month. Mrs. Wordsworth was much braver than he, and bore her own burdens calmly, while trying to cheer his exaggerated gloom. He was old and broken at this time, and never recovered from the shock of his daughter's death. Mrs. Wordsworth survived him for several years, being

over ninety at the time of her death, and having long been deaf and blind. But she was very cheerful and active to the last, and not unwilling to live on, even with her darkened vision. The devotion of the old poet to his wife was very touching, and she who had idolized him in life was never weary of recounting his virtues when he was gone.

The character of Wordsworth is getting to be understood as we recede from the prejudices of the time in which he lived, and begins to assume something like a consistent whole, compared to the contradictions which at one time seemed to be inherent in it. He says of his own childhood:—

> "I was of a stiff, moody, and violent temper; so much so that I remember going once into the attic of my grandfather's house at Penrith, upon some indignity having been put upon me, with an intention of destroying myself with one of the foils which I knew were kept there. I took the foil in my hand, but my heart failed."

De Quincey says of his boyhood:—

> "I do not conceive that Wordsworth could have been an amiable boy; he was austere and unsocial, I have reason to think, in his habits; not generous; and above all, not self-denying. Throughout his later life, with all the benefits of a French discipline, in the [Pg 47] lesser charities of social intercourse he has always exhibited a marked impatience of those particular courtesies of life. . . . Freedom,—unlimited, careless, insolent freedom, —unoccupied possession of his own arms,—absolute control over his own legs and motions,—these have always been so essential to his comfort that in any case where they were likely to become questionable, he would have declined to make one of the party."

Wordsworth has been accused of excessive penuriousness, of overwhelming conceit, and of being slovenly and regardless of dress. For the first accusation there seems little warrant, other than that he was prudent and thrifty, and knew the value of money. His most intimate friends exonerate him from meanness of any sort, and often praise his kindness to the poor and dependent. As regards conceit there can probably be no denial, though doubtless the stories told of it are much exaggerated. He is said never to have read any poetry but his own, and to have been exceedingly ill-natured and contemptuous in his estimate of his contemporaries. His estimate of Dickens is well known:—

> "I will candidly avow that I thought him a very talkative, vulgar young person,—but I dare say he may be very clever. Mind, I don't want to say a word against him, for I have never read a word he has written."

He greeted Charles Mackay thus, when the latter called upon him:—

> "I am told you write poetry. I never read a line of your poems and don't intend to. You must not be offended with me; the truth is, I never read anybody's poetry but my own."

Even James T. Fields, whose opinion of the poet was high, remarks:—

> "I thought he did not praise easily those whose names are indissolubly connected with his own in the history of literature. It was languid praise, at least; and I observed that [Pg 48] he hesitated for mild terms which he could apply to names almost as great as his own."

Carlyle testifies on the same point:—

> "One evening, probably about this time, I got him upon the subject of great poets, who I thought might be admirable equally to us both; but was rather mistaken, as I gradually found. Pope's partial failure I was prepared for; less for the narrowish limits visible in Milton and others. I tried him with Burns, of whom he had sung tender recognition; but Burns also turned out to be a limited, inferior creature, any genius he had a theme for one's pathos rather; even Shakespeare himself had his blind sides, his limitations. Gradually it became apparent to me that of transcendent unlimited, there was to this critic probably but one specimen known,—Wordsworth."

As regards eccentricities of dress, we will give but a single testimony. William Jordan says:—

> "On his visits to town the recluse of Rydal Mount was quite a different creature. To me it was demonstrated, by his conduct under every circumstance, that De Quincey had done him gross injustice in the character he loosely threw upon him in public, namely, 'that he was not generous or self-denying, . . . and that he was slovenly and regardless in dress.' I must protest that there was no warrant for this caricature; but on the contrary, that it bore no feature of resemblance to the slight degree of eccentricity discoverable in Cumberland, and was utterly contradicted by the life in London. In the mixed society of the great Babylon, Mr. Wordsworth was facile and courteous; dressed like a gentleman, and with his tall commanding figure no mean type of the superior order, well-trained by education, and accustomed to good manners. Shall I reveal that he was often sportive, and could even go the length of strong expressions, in the off-hand mirth of his observations and criticisms?"

Wordsworth had the fondness of many poets for reading his poetry to his friends, and even of

reciting it like a schoolboy. When Emerson visited him he was already an old man, and it struck [Pg 49]
the philosopher so oddly, as he tells us in his "English Traits," to see "the old Wordsworth, standing apart, and reciting to me in a garden walk, like a schoolboy declaiming, that I at first was near to laugh; but recollecting myself, that I had come thus far to see a poet, and he was chanting poems to me, I saw that he was right and I was wrong, and gladly gave myself up to hear."

Another story is told of his being in a large company, and seeing for the first time a new novel by Scott, with a motto taken from his poems; and of his going immediately and getting the poem, and reading it entire to the assembled company, who were waiting for the reading of the new novel.

Literary biography is full of such anecdotes as these, going to show his absorption in himself, and his comparative indifference to the works of others; but they prove at most only a trifling weakness in a great man's character; such weaknesses being so common as to cause no surprise to those familiar with the lives of men of genius. He was a strong man, massive in his individuality, full of profound feeling and deep spirituality, and dominated by a powerful will. He was no mere sentimentalist and versifier, but a student at first hand of Nature and all her mysteries,—a man whose profound meditations had pierced to the centre of things, and who held great thoughts in keeping for a waiting and expectant world. His outward life was full of proofs of the wide and deep benevolence of his nature; and it was only shallow minds who dwelt upon some petty defects of his character. The deep wisdom gained by contemplation comes forth whenever he talks of childhood. This subject always possesses inspiration for him, as when he says:—

"Our birth is but a sleep and forgetting;
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
    Hath had elsewhere its setting,
        And cometh from afar. [Pg 50]
    Not in entire forgetfulness,
    And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
    From God who is our home.
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
    Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,—
    He sees it in his joy.
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
    And by the vision splendid
    Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day."

This conception of the nearness of the child to the unseen made all children sacred in his eyes, and he always felt that he learned more from them than he could teach them. He expresses this thought often, as thus:—

"Oh dearest, dearest boy; my heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
  Of what from thee I learn."

And again:—

"Dear child; dear girl; thou walkest with me here;
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine;
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worship'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not."

His own children he loved almost to idolatry, and after the lapse of forty years, would speak with the deepest emotion of the little ones who had died. Indeed, he was a man of profound feeling, passionate and intense in his loves, though outwardly calm and self-contained. He himself says:—

> "Had I been a writer of love-poetry, it would have been natural for me to write it with a degree of warmth which could hardly have been approved by my principles, and which might have been undesirable for the reader."

His sister Dorothy frequently refers to the intensity of his passionate affection for the members of [Pg 51]
his family, and of the full and free expression he gave it. Greatly indeed have they erred who have imagined him as by nature cold or even tranquil. "What strange workings," writes one, "are there in his great mind! how fearfully strong are all his feelings and affections! If his intellect had been less powerful they would have destroyed him long ago." Indeed, no one who had ever known him well could doubt this intensity of nature, this smothered fire. It leaped out in bursts of anger at the report of evil doings; in long and violent tramps over the mountains, in exaggerated grief at

the death of loved ones; and in almost unnatural intensity of devotion, to his sister first, and his daughter Dora afterwards. It took the form of passionate adoration of Nature in his poems, and of passionate patriotism as well, and it gave strength and fire to the best of all his literary work.

Let us dwell for a moment more upon the married life of the poet,—that calm and quiet and happy life which made it possible that he should be the poet he was, unvexed by worldly cares or vanities. His late biographer, Mr. Myers, tells us:—

> "The life which the young couple led was one of primitive simplicity. In some respects it was even less luxurious than that of the peasants about them. They drank water, and ate the simplest fare. Miss Wordsworth had long rendered existence possible for her brother, on the narrowest of means, by her unselfish energy and skill in household management; and plain living and high thinking were equally congenial to the new inmate of the frugal home. Wordsworth gardened; and all together, or oftenest the poet and his sister, wandered almost daily over the neighboring hills. Narrow means did not prevent them from offering a generous welcome to their few friends, especially Coleridge and his family, who repeatedly stayed for months under Wordsworth's roof. Miss Wordsworth's letters breathe the very spirit of hospitality in their naïve details of the little sacrifices gladly made for the sake of the presence of these honored guests. [Pg 52] But for the most part the life was solitary and uneventful. Books they had few, neighbors none, and their dependence was almost entirely upon external nature."

The cottage in which they lived was very small, but they covered it with roses and honeysuckles, and had a little garden around it. Inside, all was the perfection of simplicity, but the soul of neatness and thrift pervaded everything, and love glorified it all. They had a little boat upon the lake, and rowing and walking were their pleasures.

They lived in this simple fashion that the poet might pursue his high vocation, and not be put into the treadmill of any steady work. In after years, through bequests from friends and a pension from Government, they were made more prosperous, and their declining years were cheered by an assured abundance. Rydal Mount has been described so often that it is familiar to most readers. The house stands looking southward, on the rocky side of Nab Scar above Rydal Lake. The garden is terraced, and was full of flowering alleys in the poet's time. There was a tall ash-tree in which the thrushes always sung, and a laburnum in which the osier cage of the doves was hung. There were stone steps, in which poppies and wild geraniums filled the interstices; and rustic seats here and there, where they all sat all day during the pleasant weather. The poet spent very little time in-doors. He lived constantly in the open air, composing all his poems there, and committing them to paper afterwards. Their friends grew more numerous in later life, and Wordsworth much enjoyed their companionship, being himself very bright and delightful company when in the mood for talk. Here that strange being, Thomas De Quincey, came and lived, purposely to be near the poet. Coleridge was always at call, genial Kit North paid loyal court to the great man from the first, and loving and gentle Charles Lamb came at times, sadly missing the town, and almost afraid of the mountains. Here Dr. Arnold of Rugby came often from [Pg 53] Fox How, his own house in the neighborhood; hither Harriet Martineau walked over from Ambleside, with some new theory of the universe to expound; and here poor Hartley Coleridge passed the happiest hours of his unfortunate life. Wordsworth's kindness and tenderness to this poor son of his great friend were well known to his little world, and show some of the most pleasing traits of his character. This amiable and gifted man, Hartley Coleridge, ruined himself through the weakness of his will, finding it utterly impossible to leave wine alone, even when he knew it was ruining his life, and so sorely afflicting his friends. Wordsworth dealt with him like a father, recognizing the weakness of his character, and perhaps being able to trace it to inherited tendencies,—the elder Coleridge's devotion to opium being well known. Poor Hartley lies with Wordsworth's own family in the little churchyard at Grasmere, and we trust in that quiet retreat sleeps well, at the foot of his friend and master.

Wordsworth's last years were of great solemnity and calm. He lived in retrospection, and dwelt much upon the unseen world. The deep spirituality of his nature was shown in all his later life. He was absorbed, as it were, in thoughts of God, and of the ultimate destiny of man. All worldly interests died out, and he was able to write even of his fame:—

> "It is indeed a deep satisfaction to hope and believe that my poetry will be, while it lasts, a help to the cause of virtue and truth, especially among the young. As for myself, it seems now of little moment how long I may be remembered. When a man pushes off in his little boat into the great seas of Infinity and Eternity, it surely signifies little how long he is kept in sight by watchers from the shore."

[Pg 54]

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

The Florentines used to point Dante out to strangers in these words: "There goes the man who has been in hell." With much truth could these words have been spoken of Thomas De Quincey, at any time after he began to suffer from his excess in opium eating, which was while he was still a young man,—and especially would these words have been true of him, after he began his struggles to free himself from the thraldom of that most seductive vice. James Payn thus describes his appearance:—

> "Picture to yourself a very diminutive man, carelessly—very carelessly—dressed; a face lined, care-worn, and so expressionless that it reminded one of 'that dull, changeless brow, where cold Obstruction's apathy appalls the gazing mourner's heart,'—a face like death in life. The instant he began to speak, however, it lit up as though by electric light; this came from his marvellous eyes, brighter and more intelligent (though by fits) than I have ever seen in any other mortal."

Another writes:—

> "Conceive a little, pale-faced, woe-begone, and attenuated man, with short indescribables, no coat, check shirt, and a neck-cloth twisted like a wisp of straw, opening his door, and advancing toward you with hurried movement and half-recognizing glance, saluting you in low and hesitating tones, and without looking at you, beginning to pour into your willing ear a stream of learning and wisdom, as long as you are content to listen. . . . His head is small; how can it carry all he knows? His brow [Pg 55] is singular in shape, but not particularly large or prominent; where has nature expressed his majestic intellect? His eyes—they sparkle not, they shine not, they are lustreless; there is not even the glare which lights up sometimes dull eyes into eloquence; and yet, even at first, the *tout ensemble,* strikes you as that of no common man, and you say, ere he has opened his lips, 'He is either mad or inspired.'"

In all literary history there is scarcely a man about whose life and character hang so peculiar an interest and fascination as about De Quincey. He has himself given a most vivid account of his childhood, in his "Autobiographic Sketches," and in the "Opium Eater." From these we learn that he was born in Manchester, August 15, 1785. His father was a very wealthy merchant of that city, who was inclined to pulmonary consumption, and lived mostly abroad, in the West Indies and other warm climates. Thomas had several brothers and sisters, all of whom seem to have been rather peculiar and remarkable children. He was a very precocious child himself, sensitive, excitable, and given to dreams and visions,—living largely in a world of imagination, and for many years ruled over with absolute despotism by an older brother. The loss of a favorite sister in very early childhood seems to have been a blow from which it took him years to recover. He writes of it thus:—

> "Inevitable sometimes it is, in solitude, that this should happen to minds morbidly meditative,—that when we stretch out our arms in darkness, vainly striving to draw back the sweet faces that have vanished, slowly arises a new stratagem of grief, and we say, 'Be it that they no more come back to us, yet what hinders but we should go to *them*?' Perilous is that crisis for the young. In its effect perfectly the same as the ignoble witchcraft of the poor African *Obeah*, his sublimer witchcraft of grief will, if left to follow its own natural course, terminate in the same catastrophe of death. Poetry, which neglects no phenomena that are interesting to the heart of man, has sometimes touched a little
>
> 'On the sublime attractions of the grave.'
>
> [Pg 56]
>
> But you think that these attractions, existing at times for the adult, could not exist for the child. Understand that you are wrong. Understand that these attractions do exist for the child; and perhaps as much more strongly than they *can* exist for the adult by the whole difference between the concentration of a childish love and the inevitable distraction upon multiplied objects of any love that can affect any adult. . . . Could the Erl-king's Daughter have revealed herself to me, and promised to lead me where my sister was, she might have wiled me by the hand into the dimmest forests upon earth."

But a beatific vision rose before him, one day in church, and he saw the beautiful sister borne away in the clouds of heaven on a bed of filmy whiteness, surrounded by a celestial throng; and

he was somewhat comforted. After twelve years, while he was a student at Oxford, the vision returned to him, and he writes of it:—

> "Once again, the nursery of my childhood expanded before me; my sister was moaning in bed; I was beginning to be restless with fears not intelligible to myself. Once again the nurse, but now dilated to colossal proportions, stood as upon some Grecian stage with her uplifted hand, and, like the superb Medea towering amongst her children in the nursery at Corinth, smote me senseless to the ground. Again I am in the chamber with my sister's corpse, again the pomps of life rise up in silence, the glory of summer, the Syrian sunlights, the frost of death. Dream forms itself mysteriously within dream; within these Oxford dreams remoulds itself continually the trance in my sister's chamber,—the blue heavens, the everlasting vault, the soaring billows, the throne steeped in the thought (but not the sight) of '*Who* might sit thereon;' the flight, the pursuit, the irrecoverable steps of my return to earth. Once more the funeral procession gathers; the priest, in his white surplice, stands waiting with a book by the side of an open grave; the sacristan is waiting with his shovel; the coffin has sunk; the *dust to dust* has descended. Again I was in the church on a heavenly Sunday morning. The golden sunlight of God slept amongst the heads of his apostles, his martyrs, his saints; the fragment from the litany, the fragment from the clouds, awoke again the lawny beds that went up to scale the heavens,—awoke again the shadowy arms that [Pg 57] moved downward to meet them. Once again arose the swell of the anthem, the burst of the Hallelujah chorus, the storm, the trampling movement of the choral passion, the agitation of my own trembling sympathy, the tumult of the choir, the wrath of the organ. Once more I, that wallowed in the dust, became he that rose up to the clouds. And now all was bound up into unity; the first state and the last were melted into each other as in some sunny, glorifying haze. For high in heaven hovered a gleaming host of faces, veiled with wings, around the pillows of the dying children. And such beings sympathize equally with sorrow that grovels and with sorrow that soars. Such beings pity alike the children that are languishing in death, and the children that live only to languish in tears."

This extract is important as showing that when a mere child, knowing nothing of the fatal drug, he had visions similar to those which filled his after years. At Oxford he had begun the use of opium—but his first vision was a repetition of one of his childish years, and it leads us to infer that his own vivid imagination bore an important part in the brilliant dreams which followed his taking of opium. No person of ordinary mind could induce those gorgeous and bewildering dreams by its use. In his case the drug acted upon a mind fitted to see visions and dream dreams even without its use; and the result was that gorgeous and bewildering phantasmagoria which he so eloquently describes.

The causes of his first indulging in opium may be briefly glanced at here. At seventeen, he ran away from the school at which he had been placed by his guardians, his father now being dead. He wished to enter college at once, and it appears was well prepared to do so, and had made earnest representations to his guardians upon the subject, as he was unhappy where he was, and under a very unsuitable master. But they would not consent, and, like one of his brothers who ran away from school and went to sea, he borrowed a little money and stole quietly away to Wales. [Pg 58]

The brother had left school, it appears, with good reason, being brutally treated; but in the case of Thomas there seems to have been no complaint of real ill-usage. It was simply one of the wilful freaks of a precocious and fantastic boy. He wandered in Wales for a few weeks, until his money was nearly spent, and then contrived to get to London, where he suffered the cruellest pangs of poverty, although he was a young gentleman of independent fortune. It is difficult for a matter-of-fact and well-balanced mind to conceive of an experience just like that of De Quincey. Why he should have allowed himself to starve rather than communicate with his friends, we are not told, —it could scarcely have been pride, for he accepted help even from strangers when it was offered,—and why he did not seek some of the friends of his family in the city we are not informed, but such was the fact.

He tells the story thus:—

> "And now began the later and fiercer stage of my long sufferings; without using a disproportionate expression, I might say of my agony. For I now suffered for upwards of sixteen weeks the physical anguish of hunger in various degrees of intensity, but as bitter, perhaps, as ever any human being can have suffered who has survived it. I would not needlessly harass my readers' feelings by a detail of all that I endured; for extremities such as these, under any circumstances of heaviest misconduct or guilt, cannot be contemplated, even in description, without a rueful pity that is painful to the natural goodness of the human heart. Let it suffice to say that a few fragments of bread from the breakfast table of one individual, and these at uncertain intervals, constituted my whole support. . . . I was houseless, and seldom slept under a roof."

After a time, however, he slept in an unoccupied house, or unoccupied save by a child of ten years,—as forlorn as himself. She slept here, and was much tormented by the fear of ghosts. She hailed his advent with great pleasure as a protection from supernatural visitants; and when the weather became cold, he used to hold her in his arms that she might gain the additional comfort [Pg 59] of a little warmth. He says they lay upon the floor "with a bundle of cursed law papers for a

pillow, and no covering save an old cloak." He slept only from exhaustion, and could hear himself moaning in his sleep; but his little companion, relieved of fear, and perhaps a little better fed than he, slept soundly and well at all times. He learned to love the poor child as his partner in wretchedness. He made also one other friend, a girl of the streets, named Ann, who was kind to him, and whom he remembered with gratitude to the end of his life. He says of her:—

> "This person was a young woman, and one of that unhappy class who subsist upon the wages of prostitution. . . . Yet, no! let me not class thee, O noble-minded Ann, with that order of women; let me find, if it be possible, some gentler name to designate the condition of her to whose bounty and compassion—ministering to my necessities when all the world had forsaken me—I owe it that I am at this time alive. . . . She was not as old as myself. . . . O youthful benefactress! how often in succeeding years, standing in solitary places and thinking of thee with grief of heart and perfect love,—how often have I wished that, as in ancient times the curse of a father was believed to have a supernatural power, and to pursue its object with a fatal necessity of self-fulfilment,—even so the benediction of a heart oppressed with gratitude might have a like prerogative,—might have power given it from above to chase, to haunt, to waylay, to overtake, to pursue thee into the central darkness of a London brothel, or (if it were possible) into the darkness of the grave, there to awaken thee with an authentic message of peace and forgiveness and final reconciliation!"

The youthful wanderer was finally discovered by his friends, and placed by his wish at Oxford, where about a year after, in 1804, he began the occasional use of opium. He did this merely as a means of pleasure at first, like the drinking of wine, and took it only at stated intervals for a period of eight years. He seemed to experience no harm from its use in this way; but a very severe neuralgic affection of the stomach (caused, it is supposed, by his privations in London primarily) developed itself at the end of that time, and he resorted to the habitual use of opium as a relief from pain. [Pg 60]

He was married in 1816 to Miss Margaret Simpson, and lived with her in a cottage at Grasmere. Of this wife, with whom he lived for twenty-one years, he thus writes:—

> "But watching by my pillow, or defrauding herself of sleep to bear me company through the heavy watches of the night, sat my Electra; for thou, beloved M., dear companion of my later years, thou wast my Electra! and neither in nobility of mind nor in long-suffering affection would'st permit that a Grecian sister should excel an English wife. For thou thoughtest not much to stoop to humble offices of kindness, and to servile ministrations of tenderest affection; to wipe away for years the unwholesome dews upon the forehead, or to refresh the lips when parched and baked with fever; nor even when thy own peaceful slumbers had by long sympathy become infected with the spectacle of my dread contest with phantoms and shadowy enemies that oftentimes bade me 'sleep no more'—not even then did'st thou utter a complaint or any murmur, nor withdraw thy angelic smiles, nor shrink from thy service of love, more than did Electra of old. For she too, though she was a Grecian woman, and the daughter of the king of men, yet wept sometimes, and hid her face in her robe!"

Hard indeed, no doubt, was the wife's lot through all those years; but the world will never have more than this mere glimpse of her sorrow and her devotion. Yet to a person gifted with imagination, it is enough. He can reconstruct from it that long period of patient watchfulness and unwearied devotion; he can share her hopes when her loved one makes a battle with his enemy, her tears when he is defeated, her rapture when he makes a seeming conquest, the bitterness of her anguish when he again falls. For all this was gone through, not once, but three times, in the course of De Quincey's life. It was not until he felt that death was inevitable if he continued the use of opium (which he was then taking in enormous quantities) that he ever resolved to give up its use. He knew he must die if he kept on, he thought he should die if he gave it up, but he determined to make the effort. His studies had long been abandoned; he could not even read. For two years he had read but one book; he shrank from study with a sense of infantine powerlessness that gave him great anguish when he remembered what his mind had formerly been. From misery and suffering, he might almost be described as being in a dormant state. His wife managed all the affairs of the household, and attended to necessary business. He did not lose his moral sensibilities or aspirations, as so many opium eaters do, but his intellect seemed dead. His brain had become a theatre, which presented spectacles of more than earthly splendor, but as often painful as pleasurable. He had no control now of the dreams which haunted him. He learned now the awful tyranny of the human face. [Pg 61]

> "Upon the rocking waters of the ocean, the human face began to appear: the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens,—faces imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries; my agitation was infinite, my mind tossed and surged with the ocean. . . . I was buried for a thousand years in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed with cancerous kisses by crocodiles; and laid confounded with all unutterable slimy things, among reeds and Nilotic mud. . . . The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than almost all the rest. I was compelled to live with him for centuries."

The struggle was a long and hard one, and of it he says:—

"Jeremy Taylor conjectures that it may be as painful to be born as to die. I think it probable; and during the whole period of my diminishing opium I had the torments of a man passing out of one mode of existence into another. . . . One memorial of my former condition still remains; my dreams are not yet perfectly calm; the dread swell and [Pg 62] agitation of the storm have not wholly subsided. My dreams are still tumultuous, and like the gates of Paradise to our first parents when looking back from afar, it is still, in the tremendous line of Milton,

'With dreadful faces thronged, and fiery arms.'"

It is sad to learn that after all his struggles he never really succeeded in freeing himself from the spell of opium. We learn that "after having at one time abstained wholly for sixty-one days, he was compelled to return to its moderate use, as life was found to be insupportable; and there is no record of any further attempt at total abstinence." His indulgence was, however, very limited in his later years. Weakly as he was, and with a stomach which could digest but the smallest quantity of food, he lived in tolerable health until he was seventy-four years old. His wife died over twenty years before he passed away; and his daughters made a home for him during that time, and cared for him, as his wife had done. He could never be trusted with any practical matters whatever. He had a nervous horror of handling money, and would give away bank-notes to get them out of his way. He was very generous when young, and gave Coleridge three hundred pounds at one time, insisting upon making it five hundred, which was not allowed. He never had a friend who was not welcome to his purse. While he had no care whatever about his dress, and would frequently enter the drawing-room, even when company was there, with but one stocking on, or minus some other very necessary adjunct of dress, he was very dainty and neat about many things. The greasy, crumpled, Scotch one-pound notes annoyed him. He did his best to smooth and cleanse them, before parting with them, and he washed and polished shillings up to their pristine brightness before giving them away. He used to complain of Wordsworth, because of a lack of neatness, and describes somewhere his agony at seeing the old poet cut the leaves of a new book with a knife taken from the supper-table, where buttered toast had been eaten. [Pg 63] Coleridge was also distressed over Wordsworth's treatment of books, and says that one would as soon trust a bear in a tulip-garden as Wordsworth in a library.

De Quincey was a very charming companion and a most brilliant talker. He says of himself and Lamb, that they both had a childish love of nonsense,—headlong nonsense. While much given to reverie, and somewhat shy, he had a great fund of humor, drollery, and effervescent wit, which made his society much liked by all fortunate enough to be acquainted with him. He was a very abstemious man, and his tastes were of the simplest. His whole manner and speech were imbued with a high-bred courtesy, though he sometimes loved to run counter to the ordinary conventionalities of life. He could never be depended upon for keeping any sort of engagement, and if a friend wanted him to dinner, he must go for him with his carriage, and take him away. His manner to his daughters was the perfection of chivalrous respect, as well as affection.

What he might have been had he never contracted his fatal habit of opium eating, it is perhaps useless to conjecture; but in his youth he was thought to be one who might do anything,—all things. What he really did do, of permanent value, is very little compared to the expectations of his friends.

Blameless as was his life in every other respect, the pity of this weakness seems infinitely great, and we mourn over his lot with the same unavailing sorrow with which we weep over the graves of other men of great gifts, but some fatal defect of will, which allows them to be bound and held captive all their lives in the chains of some darling vice. Mingled with the rosemary of our remembrance for such, must be the fennel and the rue.

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WALTER SCOTT.

"Day set on Norham's castled steep,
And Tweed's fair river, broad and deep,
  And Cheviot's mountains lone.
The battled towers, the donjon keep,
The loop-hole grates, where captives weep,
The flanking walls that round it sweep,
  In yellow lustre shone.
The warriors on the turrets high,

Moving athwart the evening sky,
Seemed forms of giant height;
Their armor, as it caught the rays,
Flashed back again the western blaze,
In lines of dazzling light."

Who does not remember the ring of the opening lines of "Marmion,"—pronounced by Horace Greeley to be the finest verse of descriptive writing in the language? How often were they declaimed from the school rostrums in the days, dear reader, when you and I were young! What do school boys and girls declaim now, we wonder, equal to the selections from Scott, which formed the greatest part of our stock in trade? Have "Marmion," and "The Lady of the Lake," and the immortal "Lay" been superseded by the trivialities and inanities of modern poetasters? or do the good old lines still hold their own? Does the orator of the class still rise and electrify the whole school, as in the former days, by drawing his cloak around him, like the noble Douglas, and declaring:— [Pg 65]

"My manors, halls, and bowers shall still
Be open to my Sovereign's will,—
To each one whom he lists, howe'er
Unmeet to be the owner's peer.
My castles are my King's alone,
From turret to foundation-stone:
The hand of Douglas is his own;
And never shall in friendly grasp
The hand of such as Marmion clasp."

And is the whole school lost in breathless admiration still as he continues:—

"Burned Marmion's swarthy cheek like fire,
And shook his very frame for ire,
And—'This to me!' he said;
'An 'twere not for thy hoary beard,
Such hand as Marmion's had not spared
To cleave the Douglas' head!'"

We wonder does the—

"Minstrel come once more to view
The eastern ridge of Benvenue."

And if he still sees—

"the dagger-crest of Mar,
Still sees the Moray's silver star,
Wave o'er the cloud of Saxon war,
That up the lake comes winding far!"

And does the blood of the youthful listener still thrill as he thinks of the glory of that cavalcade, till he feels, as we used of old, that—

"'Twere worth ten years of peaceful life,
One glance at their array."

And does he still throw the old pathos into the lines,—

"Where, where was Roderick then!
One blast upon his bugle horn
Were worth a thousand men."

Probably he does not. This is all doubtless very old-fashioned, and we doubt if the modern school would quite rise to the situation, even when Roderick makes himself known to Fitz-James, "And, [Pg 66] stranger, I am Roderick Dhu;" but in the days we wot of, you and I, this was the most thrilling climax in all literature. Have the boys outgrown "Ivanhoe" too? And do they prefer to hear Du Chaillu tell about the gorillas he invented, or go with Jules Verne twenty thousand leagues under the sea? We hope not, for their sakes, but wish that they may enjoy the tournament as we did, and delight in the "clang of the armor," "the lifting of the vizor," and everything connected with "the lists." We trust, too, that they will walk with Sir Walter everywhere throughout the Highlands, until every mount and loch and ruined castle has become their own; that they will follow poor Jeanie Deans through the "Heart of Mid-Lothian;" that they will shed true, heartfelt tears over "Kenilworth," and love as did the older generations the "Bride of Lammermoor."

Let us be steadfast in our love of the old books; let us never grow weary of the world-read classics. Who cares for the books of the year? Next twelvemonth we shall not know whether we have read them or not; but what a fadeless possession is the memory of one of the world-books! Life is too brief to be spent upon ephemera; let us go back from our wanderings in the wilderness of new books, and draw nearer to the wells of English undefiled.

To this end let us study this man "than his brethren taller and fairer,"—this kingly Sir Walter of the ancient line.

He says that "every Scotchman has a pedigree." It is a national prerogative, as inalienable as his pride and his poverty. Sir Walter's pedigree was gentle, he being connected, though remotely, with ancient families upon both sides of the house. He was lineally descended from Auld Watt, an ancient chieftain whose name he often made ring in border ballads. He was one of twelve children, and was not specially distinguished through childhood; though, being lame, he got much comfort from books. He took the usual amount of Latin, but obstinately rebelled at the [Pg 67] Greek, and even in his college days would have none of it. He was distinguished there by the name of "The Greek Blockhead," and even his excellent professor was betrayed into saying that "dunce he was and dunce he would remain,"—"an opinion," says Scott, "which my excellent and learned friend lived to revoke over a bottle of Burgundy after I had achieved some literary distinction." He read everything he could lay hands on, in English, all through his youth, and his reading seems to have been entirely undirected. He tells about discovering "some odd volumes of Shakspeare," and adds: "Nor can I forget the rapture with which I sat up in my shirt reading them by the light of a fire in my mother's apartment, until the bustle of the family rising from supper warned me it was time to creep back to my bed, where I was supposed to have been safely deposited since nine o'clock." He soon after became enamoured of Ossian and Spenser, whom he thought he could have read forever.

His first acquaintance with the Highlands he was to immortalize was made in his fifteenth year. The same year he became apprenticed to the law in his father's office. The Highland visits were repeated nearly every year thereafter, and from the first afforded him the greatest delight. Of this first visit he says: "Since that hour the recollection of that inimitable landscape has possessed the strangest influence over my mind and retained its place as a memorable thing, while much that was influential on my own fortunes has fled from my recollections."

His appearance at this time was very engaging. He had outgrown his early sallowness and had a fresh, brilliant complexion. His eyes were clear, open, and well set, with a changeful expression; his teeth were dazzling white, and his smile delightful. In very early youth he formed a strong attachment for a young lady very highly connected, and of position far above his own, and of great personal attractions. Their acquaintance began in the Grey Friars Churchyard, where, rain beginning to fall one Sunday as the congregation were dispersing, Scott happened to offer his [Pg 68] umbrella, and, the offer being accepted, he escorted her to her residence. The acquaintance proved pleasant to both, and they met frequently, until it became an understood thing that he should escort her home from church. When Scott's father learned of it he deemed it his duty to warn the young lady's father of the interest the young pair were taking in each other, but the gentleman did not think it necessary to interfere. This affection was nourished through several years, and Scott had no thought but that marriage would be its final result, as the young lady warmly reciprocated his attachment, and the parents apparently threw no obstacles in the way. But the little romance, like so many other youthful dreams, was destined to be rudely broken, and the lady was married in due time, by her friends, to a gentleman of high rank and character, who later in life acted the part of a generous patron to his early rival. His hopes of marriage with this lady had rendered him very industrious and devoted to business, and kept him from all youthful follies. These things were certainly clear gains to the young man from the connection, if we say nothing of the pleasant store of memories with which it furnished his whole after-life. But the blow was a severe one when the parting came, and Scott could not refer to it without emotion even after many years. But he was still quite young—not over twenty-five years of age—and he soon saw a lady in whom he grew much interested. Riding, Lockhart tells us, "one day with Ferguson, they met, some miles from Gilsland, a young lady taking the air on horseback, whom neither of them had previously remarked, and whose appearance instantly struck them both so much they kept her in view until they had satisfied themselves that she also was one of the party at Gilsland. The same evening there was a ball, at which Captain Scott appeared in regimentals, and Ferguson also thought proper to be equipped in the uniform of the Edinburgh Volunteers. There was no little rivalry among the young travellers as to who should first get presented to the unknown beauty of the morning's ride; but though both the gentlemen in scarlet had the [Pg 69] advantage of being her dancing-partners, young Walter succeeded in handing the fair stranger to supper; and such was his first introduction to Charlotte Margaret Carpenter." She was very beautiful,—a complexion of clearest and lightest olive, eyes large, deep-set, and dazzling, of the finest Italian brown, and a profusion of black hair. Her manners had the well-bred reserve of an Englishwoman, and something of the coquetry of the French from whom she was descended. She spoke with a slight accent, and with much vivacity. Madame Charpentier had made her escape to England during the Revolution,—her husband having been a devoted Royalist and Government officer,—and she had brought up her children as Protestants. No lovelier vision than that of Margaret had ever dazzled the eyes of our young hero, and he became her devoted cavalier at once.

He thus describes her to his mother when announcing his engagement:—

> "Without flying into raptures,—for I must assure you that my judgment as well as my affections are consulted upon this occasion,—without flying into raptures, then, I may safely assure you that her temper is sweet and cheerful, her understanding good, and, what I know will give you pleasure, her principles of religion very serious. Her fortune is five hundred pounds a year."

These are a few extracts from Miss Carpenter's letters:—

> "Before I conclude this famous epistle I will give you a little hint,—that is, not to put so

many 'musts' in your letters, it is beginning rather too soon; and another thing is that I take the liberty not to mind them much, but I expect you to mind me. You must take care of yourself; you must think of me and believe me yours sincerely. . . . I am very glad that you don't give up the cavalry, as I love anything that is stylish. Don't forget to find a stand for the old carriage, as I shall like to keep it in case we have to go a journey; it will do very well until we can keep our carriage. What an idea of yours was that to mention where you wish to have your bones laid! If you were married I should think you had tired of me. A pretty compliment before marriage! If you always have those cheerful thoughts, how very pleasant and gay you must be. Adieu, my dearest friend. Take care of yourself if you love me, as I have no wish that you should visit that beautiful and romantic scene, the burial place! . . . Arrange it so that we shall see none of your family the night of our arrival. I shall be so tired, and such a fright, I should not be seen to advantage."

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All of which reads as though the young ladies of 1797 were not very different from those of our own day. After the marriage they went to reside in Edinburgh, and enjoyed some of the gayeties of that time. They were most particularly attracted by the theatres. Mrs. Scott had a great fondness for the shows and pomps of the world, as she had not concealed from him before marriage, and she never recovered from such fondness; but she accommodated herself well to her surroundings, and the young couple were very happy.

In 1814 "Waverley" was published, and received with wonder and delight by the whole reading world. "Guy Mannering" followed closely upon it, and was said to have been written in six weeks' time. It intensified the interest already aroused, and made men wonder anew who this great new light could be. The tragical "Bride of Lammermoor" composed at white heat in a fortnight, added greatly to the sensation, and the whole country was in a fever of excitement over the creations of this enchanted pen. The secret of the authorship of the novels was kept for a long time even from Scott's intimate friends. During the great success of these works, Scott began the building of his house at Abbotsford, and put into the vast and imposing structure so much money that he became very much embarrassed in his finances, and the serious troubles of his life began. The extravagance of his outlay upon his estate, together with liabilities he had assumed for others, led finally to financial ruin, to overwork, and probably to premature death. Let us make a few extracts from his diary written when these misfortunes were fresh upon him.

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"What a life mine has been! Half-educated, almost wholly neglected or left to myself; stuffing my head with most nonsensical trash, and undervalued by the most of my companions for a time; getting forward, and held to be a bold and clever fellow, contrary to the opinion of all who had held me a mere dreamer; broken-hearted for two years, my heart handsomely pieced again,—but the crack will remain till my dying day. Rich and poor four or five times; once on the verge of ruin, yet opened a new source of wealth almost overflowing. Now to be broken in my pitch of pride and nearly winged (unless good news should come) because London chooses to be in an uproar, and in the tumult of bulls and bears a poor, inoffensive lion like myself is pushed to the wall. Nobody in the end can lose a penny by me, that is one comfort. I have the satisfaction to recollect that my prosperity has been of advantage to many, and to hope that some at least will forgive my transient wealth on account of the innocence of my intentions, and my real wish to do good to the poor. . . . How could I tread my hall again with such a diminished crest? How live a poor, indebted man, where I was once the wealthy, the honored? I was to have gone there Saturday in joy and prosperity to receive my friends. My dogs will wait for me in vain. It is foolish, but the thoughts of parting from these dumb creatures have moved me more than any of the painful reflections I have put down. Poor things, I must get them kind masters. I must end these gloomy forebodings, or I shall lose the tone of mind with which men should meet distress. I feel my dogs' feet on my knees; I hear them whining and seeking me everywhere. . . .

"I feel neither dishonored nor broken down by the bad—now really bad—news I have received. I have walked my last on the domains I have planted; sat the last time in the halls I have built. But death would have taken them from me if misfortune had spared them. My poor people whom I loved so well! There is just another die to turn up against me in this run of ill-luck,—that is, if I should break my magic wand in the fall from the elephant, and lose my popularity with my fortune.

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"Read again and for the third time Miss Austen's story of 'Pride and Prejudice.' That young lady has a talent for describing the involvements, the feelings, and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going, but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary commonplace things interesting is denied to me."

Troubles had indeed come thick and fast upon poor Scott, and the heaviest blow was yet to fall. In 1826 Lady Scott was taken from him, and about the same time a number of his old friends. He felt his desolation extremely, but kept up bravely for the most part, and worked prodigiously for many months. There is a grandeur about the way he bore his misfortunes which casts into shade all that was fine in his character during his prosperous years. Most men, even of brave and noble natures, would have been overcome by misfortunes so overwhelming as were his, and would never have thought of extricating themselves; but he seemed to rise to the occasion in a quite unexampled manner, and to fight with the utmost bravery and fortitude to the last. The wound to

his affections was, however, very hard to recover from, and he broke more rapidly after Lady Scott's death than ever before. He writes:—

> "A kind of cloud of stupidity hangs about me, as if all were unreal that men seem to be doing and talking about."

After the burial he writes:—

> "The whole scene floats as a sort of dream before me,—the beautiful day, the gray ruins covered and hidden among clouds of foliage, where the grave even in the lap of beauty lay lurking and gaping for its prey. Then the grave looks, the hasty, important bustle of the men with spades and mattocks, the train of carriages, the coffin containing the creature that was so long the dearest on earth to me, and whom I was to consign to the very spot which in pleasure parties we so frequently visited. It seems still as if it could not be really so. But it is so, and duty to God and to my children must teach me patience." [Pg 73]

His pecuniary troubles were greeted with the liveliest sympathy from all quarters. The Earl of Dudley but voiced the general thought when he exclaimed, on first hearing of them: "Scott ruined! the author of 'Waverley' ruined! Good God! Let every man to whom he has given months of delight give him a sixpence, and he will rise to-morrow morning richer than Rothschild." When, after a time, he rallied and went on a journey to London, the deep sympathy with which he was received, and the kindness of all with whom he associated, cheered his heart a great deal, and he went back to his unparalleled labors quite refreshed. But he had set himself a task which it was impossible that any man could do, and although he worked himself mercilessly to the end, he failed of accomplishing it. His nervous system became completely shattered, and he had several strokes of paralysis; but it was not until his mind also began to fail in serious fashion that he would give over his work. He seemed determined to die a free man, but the task was too prodigious. He labored like a giant, but he failed.

The record of those closing days is very sad. The pity they excite is too deep even for tears. One turns from them with a heavy burden at the heart, which nothing can for a time relieve. The only comfort is that he was surrounded by the kindest and tenderest friends, and that he bore everything which came to him with unflinching fortitude and the kindliest spirit. His last words spoken to Lockhart are characteristic of the man: "Be a good man, my dear; be virtuous, be religious, be a good man. Nothing else will give you any comfort when you come to lie here." There is nothing in the record of Sir Walter's life which any friend would wish to blot. One can but be pained to excess by the record of his business troubles, so hopeless in their entanglements, but through all these even, his character glows with undiminished brightness, [Pg 74] and we love him ever more and more. He was a man built on a large scale, both in intellect and heart, and, although he doubtless had his failings, there is little that is recorded of him that detracts in any way from his innate nobility. Such a funeral as his has seldom been witnessed.

> "The court-yard and all the precincts of Abbotsford were crowded with uncovered spectators as the procession was arranged; and as it advanced through Darnick and Melrose, and the adjacent villages, the whole population appeared at their doors in like manner,—almost all in black. The train of carriages extended more than a mile; the yeomanry followed in great numbers on horseback, and it was late in the day ere we reached Dryburg. Some accident, it was observed, had caused the hearse to halt for several minutes on the summit of the hill at Bemerside,—exactly where a prospect of remarkable richness opens, and where Sir Walter had always been accustomed to rein up his horse. The day was dark and lowering, and the wind high. The wide enclosure at the Abbey of Dryburg was thronged with old and young; and when the coffin was taken from the hearse and again laid on the shoulders of the afflicted serving-men, one deep sob burst from a thousand lips."

The heart of Scotland was broken at her great loss. And well might she mourn. The sceptre which the great Wizard of the North had so long held was broken, and no successor has yet risen to uphold the fame of Auld Scotia. Nor will a successor arise. No hand like his will ever touch the harp of his native land; no strains such as he evoked ever again sound through the rocky glens and passes, and echo from the mountain-heights of Scotland.

CHARLES LAMB.

If there is a tender and touching story in all the annals of genius, it is surely the life-history of Charles Lamb. Search where we will, there is nothing to equal the pathos of this gentle and lovable life. Nowhere else can we find a record of such deep devotion, such heroic endurance, such uncomplaining suffering, such geniality and cheerfulness under almost unbearable burdens. The world admires many of its men of letters,—it loves Charles Lamb. Save Carlyle's, no voice among all his literary brethren has ever said a bitter or an unkind word of the gentle humorist. And when we compare the lives of the two men, how brightly glows the page whereon is written the record of Lamb's untiring and unselfish love, exacting nothing for himself, but giving all with lavish prodigality, compared with the pages given to the account of the selfish and exacting life which Carlyle lived with the woman who was his wife, and whom he really loved, but over whom he tyrannized in so petty a manner! Carlyle's characterization of Lamb is really the most damaging thing to himself of the many bitter and biting sarcasms which he has left in regard to the men and women of his day. That he did not know Lamb—had not the slightest appreciation of the man—is evident at a glance. And perhaps this is not to be so much wondered at, for there was very little in common between the two; but it does seem that some hint of the heroism of Lamb's apparently commonplace and perhaps vulgar life might have penetrated even to the heart of the crusty Scotchman, for he could not have been ignorant of the tragic life-story of gentle Elia.

They were very humble people, the Lambs,—poor and obscure, and unfortunate to a degree. No pretensions to gentility had ever been in the family, but an acceptance of their commonplace lot, with little striving for higher things. There was something more, too, than poverty and obscurity and vulgarity in their antecedents; a fearful curse was in the family, the heritage of almost every generation,—the curse of madness. What the contemplation of this frightful inheritance must have been to a youth like Charles Lamb, gifted with the fatal sensibility of genius, and endowed with that imagination which can conceive of a horror before it falls, we can form some sort of conception, but probably a very vague and inadequate one indeed.

The family were very poor, living in humble lodgings. The father was in his dotage, the mother was a paralytic, and Charles with his pen, and his sister Mary with her needle, worked to support the family. They both overworked themselves fearfully, and lived in apprehension of the doom which hung over them. They were very fondly attached to each other, and the only pleasure they had in their cheerless youth was their intercourse. They were both gifted, and of gentle and kind disposition, and their affection for each other was more sympathetic and filled with a deeper insight into each other's characters and feelings than is common between brothers and sisters. In little intervals between their varied labors they wrote and read to each other many things which would have a rare value in these days had they been preserved; and this, with wandering together through the streets in the evenings and looking at the outside of the theatres, seems to have constituted their only youthful pleasure. At the age of twenty-one Charles showed symptoms of the family curse, and his sister herself almost lost her reason in unavailing sorrow over his condition. So young, so gifted, and threatened with such dread disaster,—his loving Mary could not have it so. She even rebelled against Heaven in the extreme of her agony, and called upon God to relieve them both from such ill-fated life. But all her prayers and tears and rebellious risings up against destiny did not avail, and Charles was placed in a mad-house, where he passed a portion of the year 1796. In one of his lucid intervals he wrote a sonnet, "Mary, to thee, my sister, and my friend," which is a touching and tender tribute to her love. Long afterward he was able to write of the experience quite cheerfully:—

> "I look back upon it at times with a gloomy kind of envy; for while it lasted I had many, many hours of pure happiness. Dream not, Coleridge, of having tasted all the grandeur and wildness of fancy till you have gone mad!"

But there is a painful commentary upon the bitterness of after-life to him in the thought that he could look back upon this dreadful season as a period when he had some happiness. The attack in his case was of brief duration, and it never recurred, which, considering all the sorrows and all the irregularities of his life, seems remarkable. He had not been long in a condition to be responsible when the tragedy took place which cast its blight upon his life. In September of the year 1796 Mary Lamb, "worn down to a state of extreme nervous misery by attention to needle-work all day and by watching with her mother at night, broke into uncontrollable insanity, and seizing a knife from the table spread for dinner, stabbed her mother to the heart. The coroner's jury brought in a verdict of lunacy." Charles writes to Coleridge:—

> "With me the former things are passed away, and I have something more to do than to feel. God Almighty has us well in his keeping."

The horror of the event made so deep an impression upon his mind that he thought he never fully recovered from it. For many, many years it hung over him like a pall, casting a sort of despairing darkness over all that might have been bright in life. Think of that tender and sensitive soul in

the awful solitude of the nights which followed the tragedy: the sister he loved removed from him to an asylum; the mother sleeping in her unhonored grave; the father, worse than dead, in almost drivelling idiocy, to be cared for at his hands; the awful doom of the family ever hanging over his own head,—what depths of passionate sorrow must he have waded through in those bitter hours, what unavailing tears he must have shed, what rebellious thoughts may there not have been in his heart!

But he kept a cheerful front, and went about his daily toil, as he needs must, with as little outward show of pain as possible.

Mary soon grew better, and he exerted himself to have her released from confinement. He succeeded in doing so by entering into a solemn agreement to make her his charge for life, and to watch over her that she should do no harm. When she was returned to him he was almost happy again, in spite of the shadow caused by the memory of what had happened, as well as by the uncertainty of the future. He had but one hundred pounds a year from his clerkship, and there was a maiden aunt as well as the father to be cared for. But he says cheerfully:—

> "If my father, my aunt, my sister, and an old maid servant cannot live comfortably on one hundred and twenty or one hundred and thirty pounds a year, we ought to burn by slow fires; and I almost would, that Mary might not go to a hospital."

And he hoped to earn the twenty or thirty pounds by literature. His father had to be amused by cribbage; and many were the weary hours that Charles would sit playing with him, to the neglect of his correspondence, his friends, the thousand-and-one private interests which filled up his little leisure. Sometimes he would try to be let off, but the old man would say, reproachfully, "If you won't play with me, you might as well not come home at all;" and the dutiful son set to afresh. [Pg 79] There is a sort of heroism in this which only those people can appreciate who really value their time. These people will give all else cheerfully,—money, strength, the heart's deep devotion,—but they give very grudgingly their precious moments; they feel as though they were being robbed in every hour thus lost. Oh, the agony of impatience! oh, the restlessness of the fever which consumes them when they feel the moments fleeing away, and the unconscious thief perhaps deriving little pleasure or profit from the loss! Rebellion against fate is often a virtue under such circumstances; and we are inclined to think it would have been so in the case of poor Elia, even though the poor old man should have gone to his grave with a few less games of cribbage recorded against him.

Think of the delicious essays which might have been written in those misspent hours, in those days of youth when Elia was at his best, before the sorrowful touches of Time had been left upon his genius; think of the exquisite letters his friends might have received, and which would have enriched all the coming time; think of the inimitable drolleries which would have sent a smile over the face of the world; think of the little pathetic touches he would have given in sketches of characteristic humor, all with the freshness of his dawn upon them,—and mourn, O world of letters, for your loss! But the old man,—he for whom the light had gone out in darkness; over whose brain the cobwebs had been woven; who had no joy in the great things of this life; who saw no beauty or splendor in the outer world; who had no treasure in the world of thought; who could not be stirred again by any of the absorbing passions of life; who knew no love, no hate, no ambition, no great impulse to do or to dare; who could not enter into the realm of books or art or music; who had not even a friend in all the universe of God; think of the old man who had only this one thing,—cards,—and pause a moment before you say that gentle Elia did not well. [Pg 80]

Finally the old man, too, went his way, and there were only Charles and Mary left. He had long since given up the hope of there being a third in their life-drama, although there had been one to whom his heart was given, and whose presence had been with him always, even in his days of madness,—sweet Alice W., as he always called her, but of whom the world has lost all trace save this, that she was Charles Lamb's early and only love, and that he treasured her memory until all were gone, "the old familiar faces." Long after she was married to another, Lamb used to be seen at evening pacing up and down in front of her house, hoping to catch a glimpse of her through the windows. But after he had taken Mary to be his charge it was impossible to think of marriage. He could not ask another to share his sad vigils with the afflicted sister, nor hope that another would look upon her with his eyes; so he buried his romance out of sight, and never turned to that phase of a man's life again. At twenty-two one does not easily give up the thoughts of love, or the hopes of home with wife and children,—and Charles had his struggle, as any strong man would have had; but he conquered himself once again, and went bravely on. Day by day he toiled at the India House, never losing time, never taking a vacation, ever at his post till he was fifty years old, when he "came home forever."

During those thirty years of steady toil he went through many sad experiences with Mary; but he must earn their daily bread, and he never left his post. Many were the nights he spent in anxious watchings with her,—for she had periodical returns of her insanity during all this time,—when, sleepless and harassed to the point of exhaustion with her dangerous vagaries, he must still rise in the morning and go to his desk. Many were the days when he ran in hot haste the moment he was released, to see that she was still safe; even many hand-to-hand encounters he had with her in her dangerous hours,—but no murmur ever escaped his lips at all this. When she became very bad he took her back to the asylum, and she remained sometimes for weeks, sometimes for [Pg 81] months; but he always eagerly reclaimed her the moment she was better. He took her with him on little journeys,—a strait-jacket always safely packed in her portmanteau by herself,—and one time she went mad while they were travelling in the diligence and far from home. Often he wrote

to their friends in the later days, when he had become somewhat famous and friends had grown plenty, to apologize for not keeping engagements or accepting invitations, "My sister is taken ill." As George W. Curtis once wrote,—

> "In those few words how much tragedy lies hidden! What a life of patient heroism do they suggest!—in comparison with which the career of Lamb's huge contemporary, Bonaparte, shrinks into the meanest melodrama; while the misanthropic mouthings of Lord Byron become maudlin when we recall the sweet, life-long, heroic silence of Charles Lamb."

"What sad, large pieces it cuts out of life," Lamb writes in 1809,—"out of *her* life, who is getting rather old; and we may not have many years to live together." Once again when she was in confinement he writes:—

> "It cuts out great slices of the time—the little time—we shall have to live together. But I won't talk of death; I will imagine us immortal, or forget that we are otherwise. By God's blessing, in a few weeks we may be taking our meal together, or sitting in the front row of the pit at Drury Lane, or taking our evening walk past the theatres, to look at the outside of them at least, if not to be tempted in. Then we forget that we are assailable; we are strong for the time as rocks,—the wind is tempered to the shorn Lambs."

Then away on in 1833 he writes to Wordsworth:—

> "Mary is ill again. Her illnesses encroach yearly. The last was three months, followed by two of depression most dreadful. . . . I look back upon her earlier attacks with longing, —nice little durations of six weeks or so, followed by complete restoration,—shocking as they were to me then."

This sister was a woman quite worthy of his devotion. Possessed of genius somewhat akin to that of her brother, she also handled a delicate pen, and but for her misfortune would have been well known in the world of books. She was in complete sympathy with her brother, in heart as well as in mind. And the record of their lives is one of the most beautiful pictures of brotherly and sisterly affection in all literature. [Pg 82]

Let us turn from the dark picture, and see some of the brighter sides of this life, sketched so far in Rembrandt-like color. Throughout all this darkness and dread, he had joked and jested his way on, amusing his friends in private, and entertaining the world of letters by his genial humor. It welled up as from a hidden fountain, and that fountain never failed but with life. So easily and spontaneously did it flow, that if he wanted an order to see the play, for some friends, he would scribble something like this to Ayrton:—

"I would go to the play
In a very economical sort of a way,
Rather to see
Than be seen;
Though I'm no ill sight
Neither—
By candle-light,
And in some kinds of weather,
You might pit me for height
Against Kean;
But in a grand tragic scene
I'm nothing.
It would create a kind of loathing
To see me act Hamlet;
There'd be many a damn let
Fly
At my presumption,
If I should try,—
Being a fellow of no gumption."

And so on through half a dozen verses of exquisite nonsense. And in every little note to his many friends there was always some characteristic touch to excite their ready smiles; as in the note to Coleridge, who had carried off some of his books:—"There is a devilish gap in my shelf where you have knocked out the two eye-teeth," and where he goes on to beg him in a whimsical way to return them—because, although he had himself borrowed them of somebody else, they had long adorned his shelf. Truly, most people who own books at all can sympathize with Lamb in this, though they may think he got off lightly to have only the two eye-teeth knocked out. We have known of cases where cuspids, bicuspids, and molars have all been extracted. These letters are all exquisitely droll, the most of them containing a gentle oath or two, as where he wrote "Some d——d people have come in, and I must stop;" and then recollecting that he was writing to a "proper" person, making a postscript which says, "when I wrote d——d I only meant deuced." But one would as soon think of dropping out Shakspeare's adjective, and saying (as a very prim lady we once knew did in reading Lady Macbeth's soliloquy), "Out, spot!" as to drop out any of Lamb's qualifying words. He was sometimes accused of being irreverent, as in his article upon "Saying Graces," where he affirms that he is more disposed to say grace upon twenty other occasions in [Pg 83]

the course of the day than before his dinner, and inquires why not say them over books, those spiritual repasts. But he was very far indeed from being irreverent, and had much of genuine religious feeling.

His hospitality was unbounded, and the evenings at his home have become as well known in literature as the grand evenings at Holland House.

His friends were the first literary men of the day,—Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, Barry Cornwall, Talfourd, Hazlitt, Southey, Coleridge,—all the giants of that day and generation, and he was loved by them all. Not that they did not know and deplore his faults,—or his one fault; for if he could have conquered his fondness for wine he would have had none of much moment left. But even this was overlooked by his friends at the time, and has not been considered as entirely inexcusable by posterity. That he smoked much and drank hard, even for that day, may be true; [Pg 84] but it can scarcely justify the bitter sneers of Carlyle, or the holding of him up as an awful warning without putting in any plea in mitigation, as is sometimes done by severe moralists in our own day. He abased himself in awful shame over it many a time in life, and suffered in his own person all the fearful retribution which such habits bring in their train. Let this be sufficient for us, and let us but pity and pass on. One of the most beautiful things in his later life was his fatherly tenderness toward a friendless young girl whom he and Mary had befriended and finally adopted,—Emma Isola, who was afterwards married to Moxon, the publisher. He was extremely fond of her, and she brightened his home much in the later years, although she married before his death. It is sad to think that he should have died before his sister. He had often prayed that this might not be. But he provided for her tenderly, and gave her to the care of his friends.

Lamb is described as having a face of "quivering sweetness, nervous, tremulous, and so slight of frame that he looked only fit for the most placid fortune."

Fit or not, he had to contend with the hardest thing a man can have in life,—he had to live a life-long witness of the sufferings of one he dearly loved, and whom he was entirely powerless to help, the daily and hourly pathos of whose sufferings he was fitted to appreciate keenly, and for whom in all this wide weltering chaos of a world there was no hope. He renounced everything else in life to try to mitigate this dreadful lot. His kindness was unceasing, his pity was both fatherly and motherly; it was more,—Godlike; and yet it was of small avail. He toiled physically that she might live at ease. He exerted his mind constantly when in her presence, that she might be cheerful. He watched over her with the tenderness of both brother and lover; and this shall be his justification, if he needs one: he loved much.

[Pg 85]

CHRISTOPHER NORTH.

Hazlitt has a long paper "On Persons One would Wish to have Seen." And surely, if he had lived at this time, he would have added genial and lovable Kit North to the list of those thus honored. There are few of those who belonged to his day and generation to whom we should have a stronger wish to be presented, than to Wilson,—the student, the Bohemian, the bookworm, the sportsman, the professor, the kindliest, merriest, and most entertaining of genial companions,—the great hero of the "Noctes Ambrosianæ."

Not even Lamb—the quaint and merry companion, so full of quips and puns that laughter lingered with any company he graced with his pathetic little body and quizzical countenance—could rival Christopher as a fountain of merriment and eternal good-cheer. His humor was not quiet and subtle like Lamb's, but broad, rich, bordering on farce, and of "imagination all compact." And Lamb could by no means rival him in splendor of description, vivacity of retort, energy of criticism, or in riotous and uproarious mirth. De Quincey alone could match the splendor of his diction when describing outward sights and sounds, and De Quincey had not a tithe of his intense love of Nature, and appreciation of her glory and magnificence. Ruskin alone equals him in this, and he scarcely reaches the height of rhetorical eloquence to which Wilson soars so easily. [Pg 86]

In these same "Noctes" we have descriptions of some of those nights when, as Carlyle would have said, "there was much good talk." And Wilson was mainly the talker. The chief characteristic of his discourse was its prodigality of humor and its infinite variety. His imagination too ran riot, and his wit sparkled ever and anon with a radiance all its own.

His memory was prodigious, and in his conversation he taxed it for anecdotes and illustrations drawn from the four quarters of the globe, and from the most remote and unusual stores of

literary hoarding. His mind was many-sided as well as keen, and he kept all his faculties in full play, not excepting his sympathies, which were as broad as the world of men.

Can we wonder that those who crowded the table where he sat, lingered on till the daylight drove them from the board? or that no man who had had him for a boon companion could ever be satisfied with another? Can we wonder that the students who crowded his lecture-room after he became a professor thought every other lecturer commonplace and dull? Not that he gave them more information than others—perhaps he did not give them as much; but he excited and inspired them. He quickened their minds, and wakened their dormant faculties. Some of the white heat of his own enthusiasm he communicated to their colder natures, and they enjoyed the unusual warmth. Those who listened to those wonderful discourses can never be persuaded that eloquence did not die with Christopher North. They were all addressed to the hearts of his listeners, and thrills, and tears, and laughter that was not loud but deep, accompanied his speech from the beginning to the very end. Let one who thus listened to him speak:—

> "We have heard him in the assembly-rooms, speaking on the genius of Scott, a little after the death of the Wizard, and in the tremble of his deep voice could read his sorrow for the personal loss, as well as his enthusiasm for the universal genius. We have heard him in his class-room, in those wild and wailing cadences, which no [Pg 87] description can adequately re-echo, in those long, deep-drawn, slowly expiring sounds, which now resembled the moanings of a forsaken cataract, and now seemed to come hoarse and hollow from the chambers of the thunder, advocating the immortality of the soul, describing Cæsar weeping at the grave of Alexander, repeating, with an energy which might have raised the dead, Scott's lines on the landing of the British in Portugal, and discovering the secret springs of laughter, beauty, sublimity, and terror, to audiences whom he melted, electrified, subdued, solemnized, exploded into mirth, or awed into silence, at his pleasure."

His eloquence gained little from his personal appearance, about which there was something savage, leonine, massive, but little that was refined or attractive in the usual sense of that word. Still his face is described by some as magnificent, and his gray, flashing eyes, as being remarkably expressive. In his dress he was exceedingly slovenly except upon state occasions. His professor's gown, as he stalked along the college-terraces, flew in tattered stripes behind him, his shirts were usually buttonless, and his hat like a reminiscence of a pre-historic age. His yellow hair always floated over his shoulders, in confusion worse confounded, and he wore immense unkempt whiskers hanging upon his breast. Dickens thus describes him:—

> "At his heels followed a wiry, sharp-eyed shaggy devil of a terrier, dogging his steps as he went slashing up and down, now with one man beside him, now with another, and now quite alone, but always at a fast rolling pace, with his head in the air, and his eyes as wide open as he could get them. A bright, clear-complexioned, mountain-looking fellow, he looks as if he had just come down from the Highlands, and had never taken a pen in hand."

His carelessness of appearances extended to his rooms, which looked like small sections from the primeval chaos. The book-shelves were of unpainted wood, knocked together in the rudest fashion, and the books were many of them tattered and without backs. A case containing foreign [Pg 88] birds was used also as a wardrobe, and all of his rare possessions in natural history were mixed up with a most motley collection of books and papers,—these latter consisting of all sorts of scraps, of which no one else could have made anything. He always seemed to be able to find them when wanted, even in the worst confusion; but how he did it was a mystery to his friends. "Here and there, in the interstices between books, were stuffed what appeared to be dingy, crumpled bits of paper, but they were in reality bank-notes, his class fees; which he never carried in a purse, but stuffed away wherever it seemed most convenient at the moment." He never, even in the coldest weather, had a fire in his room.

No account of Kit North would be complete that left out entirely the convivialities of the table, though we should make a great mistake if we took the humorous caricatures of the "Noctes Ambrosianæ" for accounts of literal feats in that line. This has sometimes been done, and he is frequently represented as a glutton and a drunkard. He was neither, although he did perform some remarkable feats both of eating and drinking in his day. His life of constant out-of-door exercise gave him a keen appetite, and a perfect digestion, and he loved the hilarity of the table as well as any man of his day. But in his later life he became a *teetotaller*. Even in his earlier days it was often the excitement of company which quickened all of his powers to their utmost tension, when the effect was attributed to wine. So fond was he of all sorts and kinds of out-of-the-way company, that he was at one time in the habit of going at midnight to the Angel Inn, where many of the up and down London coaches met, and there to preside at the passengers' supper, carving for them, inquiring all about their respective journeys, and astonishing them with his wit and pleasantry. He would also linger about with coachmen and guards, and was present at, and took a hand in, many a street row, unknown by those with whom he mingled. [Pg 89]

He is said to have remained for three months in the back room of a Highland blacksmith, strolling daily about the hills, and performing some of his prodigious pedestrian feats, to the great surprise of the rustics. He is also said to have followed the lady who became his wife all over the lake country of Scotland in the disguise of a waiter, serving her at table wherever the party happened to be, until the suspicions of her father were aroused by seeing the same waiter at

every inn. Wilson then made himself known, declared his admiration for the lady, and finally became her accepted suitor. After their marriage he took her with him all over the Highlands on foot, assuring her that only so could she become really acquainted with their beauties. No man perhaps ever loved the Highlands as Christopher North loved them,—with the possible exception of Walter Scott.—and we can truly envy his young bride to be thus escorted through their deepest labyrinths, and introduced to their most delicate and hidden beauties. Here he introduced his beloved also to the cottages of the peasants, and made her acquainted with the poetry of that life which has inspired some of the finest of modern literature. He knew as well as Hogg, or Scott, or Lockhart, that the characteristic romance of a people like the Scotch is to be sought chiefly in the cottages of the poor, and that the finest poetry of such a people has for the most part a like inspiration. And these same peasants showed to their best advantage always when Christopher was around. They loved him instinctively, although they knew him only as a sportsman, or in some cases, perhaps, as a naturalist. But his large heart always shone forth in his intercourse with the poor, and he seemed conscious of no superiority to them, meeting them always on the common ground of humanity, and sympathizing, in his hearty and genial way, in all their joys and sorrows. They *took to him* just as dogs and children did.

And his descriptions of their cramped and narrow lives, enlivened by his characteristic humor, are among the best pictures the world has cherished of Scottish rural life. He did not spare their [Pg 90] vices, but gave many dramatic pictures of the darker sides of peasant life, with which he gained a close acquaintance during those long foot-journeys which he was so fond of making, living really what we would call the life of a tramp, for long periods. Sometimes he camped with gypsies for weeks, and at all times was intimate with all of the so-called lower classes. Tinkers, cairds, poachers, were his familiar roadside acquaintances, and he extracted great amusement from their peculiarities. Sometimes he had to win the respect of these worthies by knocking them down in the beginning of the acquaintance, but after that they usually stood by him to the end. He usually figured as the champion of the weak in these games at fisticuffs, but sometimes he managed things on his own account.

Although he loved to wander in the Highlands, he made his home among the lakes at Elleray. This home was a rambling, mossy-roofed cottage, of very picturesque appearance, overhung by a giant sycamore.

> "Never," he says, "in this well-wooded world, not even in the days of the Druids, could there have been such another tree. It would be easier to suppose two Shakspeares. Oh, sweetest and shadiest of sycamores, we love thee beyond all other trees."

And he thus discourses of the lakes amid which he lived,—and about whose borders he wandered so continually:—

> "Each lake hath its promontories, that every step you walk, every stroke you row, undergo miraculous metamorphoses, accordant to the change that comes o'er the spirit of your dream, as your imagination glances again over the transfigured mountains. Each lake hath its bays of bliss, where might ride at her moorings, made of the stalks of water-lilies, the fairy bark of a spiritual life. Each lake hath its hanging terraces of immortal green, that along her shores run glimmering far down beneath the superficial [Pg 91] sunshine, where the poet in his becalmed canoe, among the lustre, could fondly swear by all that is most beautiful on earth, and air, and water, that these three are one, blended as they are by the interfusing spirit of heavenly peace."

Lover of beauty as he was, yet he was well content with what he could find in Scotland; he cared little for England, and nothing for the Continent. There was enough to exhaust the seeing possibilities of a lifetime in his own little land, with its rocks and lakes and heathery hills. This was because he really had the poet's eye and heart. Such do not need to traverse the whole wide world to find enough of beauty; it is only the mediocre and the commonplace who care to gaze superficially at the landscapes of two continents. But Wilson knew his land not only with the eye of a poet, but also with that of a naturalist. His favorite pastime was ornithology, and he made fine collections of specimens in this line.

He was a great sportsman, and a story is told by his daughter, Mrs. Gordon, of his travelling seventy miles in one day, to fish in a certain favorite loch among the braes of Glenarchy, called Loch Toila. He was also a good shot, and very enthusiastic in sport even to old age. Boating was another favorite pastime; and engaged in one or another of these out-of-door pursuits, he passed a very large portion of his whole life. When he did write, he did it with great rapidity, composing one of the "Noctes" at a sitting. His love for the animal creation was very deep, and he would never submit to seeing any creature abused. He one day saw a man cruelly beating his horse, which was overloaded with coals, and could not move. He remonstrated with the driver, who, exasperated at the interference, took up the whip in a threatening way, as if with intent to strike the professor. In one instant the well-nerved hand of Wilson, not new to these encounters, twisted the whip from the coarse fist of the driver, and walking up to the cart, he unfastened the *trams* and hurled the whole weight of the coals into the street. He then took the horse and led it away, depositing it in the hands of the authorities, with injunctions to see that the beast was [Pg 92] better treated in future.

He made great pets of game-birds, the aristocracy of the species, with their delicate heads and exquisite plumage, and kept at one time no less than sixty-two in the back yard of his house. The noise was simply unendurable to all but Wilson, who was never annoyed by it in the least. He

kept one lame sparrow for eleven years, caring for it with the tenderest solicitude.

He was always well known in the houses of the poor, and he never gave up one of his humble friends. He was tender and gentle always to these, as to the members of his own household, where it was said the very strength of his hand was softened, that he might caress the infant, or play with the little ones at his feet. With all children he was a prime favorite, and in his declining years his grandchildren were his daily playmates. Noah's ark, trumpets, drums, pencils, puzzles, dolls, were all supposed by them to possess interest in his eyes equal to their own.

He was thrown much upon these children for his pleasures near the close of his life. That frame of gigantic build and of gigantic strength became almost helpless from paralysis, and he was cared for till death by his daughter, the mother of these favored little ones. Oh, it is sad to think of it! Poor Christopher,—the active, the alert, the keen-sighted, the fleet-footed, the gay and rollicking sportsman, the famous angler, the champion boxer, too, upon occasions,—laid low, and propped helpless upon pillows within walls, which he had always hated so sincerely. He writes:—

> "Our spirit burns within us, but our limbs are palsied, and our feet must brush the heather no more. Lo, how beautifully those fast-travelling pointers do their work on that black mountain's breast; intersecting it into parallelograms and squares and circles, and now all a-stoop on a sudden, as if frozen to death. Higher up among the rocks and cliffs and stones, we see a stripling whose ambition it is to strike the sky with his forehead, and wet his hair in the misty cloud, pursuing the ptarmigan. . . . Never shall eld deaden our sympathies with the pastimes of our fellow-men, any more than with their highest raptures, their profoundest griefs."

[Pg 93]

It is safe to say that he kept his word, and was to the last, the same genial, warm-hearted, impulsive, wayward man who had by these and other engaging qualities made for himself so large a place in the heart of his countrymen, during the long years he had wandered over her moors and hills, seeing all her beauties, and describing them as no other had done.

He was almost the last of that band of strong men who cast such lustre over the beginning of this century. Coleridge had gone before, and Wordsworth, Byron, and Campbell, Shelley, and Canning, and Peel, and Jeffrey, and Moore, and he lingered on in a solitude made greater by that last stroke of calamity which deprived him of motion for a time that was weary and heart-breaking to him, and over which the world yet sheds its sympathizing tears. He died at the age of sixty-eight.

[Pg 94]

LORD BYRON.

So many volumes have been written about the domestic life and the loves of Lord Byron, that it would be a hopeless undertaking to attempt to say anything new about them. But the story of Byron's life will never lose its fascination, and to every new generation of readers the romance will be fresh. Marvellously beautiful, wonderfully gifted, unfortunately constituted man; wronged by his birth, wronged by his education, wronged most of all by himself, the world will never cease to wonder and to weep when his tragic story is told. While the language remains his words will live. Immortal poetry for youth!—new generations will learn it by heart, when the older generations are forgetting; and long after all memory of his waywardness and folly has faded

from the world, his deathless songs will still sing on.

In any attempt to understand Byron, his ancestry must be much considered. It will never do to compare him with cool-headed, calm-blooded, matter-of-fact people. He was the peculiar product of a peculiar race. Coming through generations of hot, turbulent blood, which was never once mastered or tamed by its possessors, he entered the world with a temperament and disposition which made it simply impossible that he should lead the ordinary life of the British Philistine of his day.

As far back as they have been traced, the family were violent, passionate, high-spirited, but unrestrained in the indulgence of their desires by any of the cardinal principles of morality. [Pg 95] Byron's father, one of Byron's biographers tells us, had outraged in his previous family life not only the principles of religion, but also the laws of society; and when, in 1783, he married Catherine Gordon, the wealthy heiress of Gight, Aberdeenshire, it was chiefly for the purpose of paying off his debts with her fortune. Within two years after the marriage the heiress of Gight was reduced to a pittance of one hundred and fifty pounds a year. In 1790, for economy's sake, they removed from London to Aberdeen, but soon separated.

Even after this, Captain Byron was mean-spirited enough to solicit money from his wife, and she had not the heart to refuse him. With a small supply thus obtained he crossed the channel, and in 1791 died in Valenciennes, in the North of France. Of the violent temper of Byron's mother many stories are told, and of her heartless treatment of him in his early years; so that upon neither side can we find much upon which we could expect to build a very noble or well-balanced character, and the fact seems to be that the eccentricities of the Byron family were so great as to be dangerously near the point called insanity.

A youth inheriting such blood as this, and brought up without even a pretence of moral or religious training, could hardly be expected to develop many of the domestic virtues. Neither could high-mindedness or lofty principle be predicted of him. And in truth, Byron possessed neither of these things. With this fiery Norman blood flowing in his veins, restlessness was the habitual condition of his existence, such restlessness as drove him to seek excitement at whatever cost,—quiet, as he expressed it, to the quick bosom being hell. This restlessness led him into all sorts of folly and excess, in the pursuit of new excitements. Then he was cursed with an exaggerated sensibility, which, while it gave him many rare delights in life, inflicted upon him also the keenest tortures. His massive egotism was the cause, doubtless, of many of his most marked eccentricities. He was so anxious to have the world's gaze fixed upon him that he said [Pg 96] and did things continually for the mere purpose of holding its attention. In this way he frequently made himself appear worse than he really was. Society was held willingly in the thrall of his personality. A dull world likes to have laid bare for its inspection the pulses of a vivid existence. Byron may have been no worse than many other men of his day, for it was a time of general immorality, but he never concealed even his worst vices. While hypocrisy is a national vice in England, Byron, though essentially English in most things, never possessed this marked characteristic of his countrymen. He flaunted his vices in the light of day; and the world took a speedy revenge upon him for his audacity. The little episode of his love for Mary Chaworth occurred at so early an age that it seems scarcely probable that it affected him as seriously as he claimed; yet he was a very precocious child, and his account of the strength of his passion, and its disappointment, may not be wholly an affectation. It is difficult, too, to arrive at his real feeling toward Miss Milbank, there was so much of contradiction both in his words and in his conduct. Miss Milbank probably loved him but feared to marry him, having heard of the irregularities of his life. And certainly the sort of life which Byron had led was a very poor preparation for happiness at the fireside, and if all other causes of unhappiness had been wanting would doubtless have wrecked his union with Miss Milbank. But there were not wanting numberless other sources of misery to this ill-mated couple, first among which was the complete incompatibility of their tastes, feelings, characters. That she was a noble, intelligent, and high-principled woman, none have ever denied. The wonder was, not that she would not live with such a man as Byron, but that she could ever have married him. In charity we must decide that she was ignorant of the unspeakable degradation of such an act. That he was a famous man of genius, the most wonderfully gifted poet of his time, might have been a temptation, but it was no [Pg 97] excuse, if she entered into the contract with her eyes open. But aside from the question of vice or virtue, there was nothing in common between them. She felt that she had fallen from the unalterable serenity and dignity of her existence, into chaos. Her natural reserve and his natural frankness were the occasion of continual clashings. Her formality and his bluntness caused constant unrest. Accustomed to the regularity of a well-ordered English household, she was miserable at the utter demoralization of their home,—of which the bailiff had possession nine times during the short year they occupied it. Formed for a calm, domestic life, she would probably have been a most admirable wife to a man suited to her virtuous tastes, but her very virtues irritated Byron.

Lady Caroline Lamb, who had loved him so madly, and on whom he had expended a temporary passion, was in her ardent nature and erratic genius much better suited to his tastes; and yet it had not taken him long to tire of her, beautiful as she had been. And were ever such bitter and cruel words addressed to a wronged woman, even though she had herself been fearfully to blame in the matter, as those sent by Byron to this poor creature, who had sent him a last touching appeal to remember her? He wrote:—

> "Remember you! remember you! Until the waters of Lethe have flowed over the burning torrent of your existence, shame and remorse will cry in your ears, and pursue

you with the delirium of fever. Remember you! Do not doubt it, I will remember. And your husband will also remember you. Neither of us can ever forget you. To him you have been an unfaithful wife, and to me—a devil!"

Terrible words, which apparently changed her love to hate, for she was his relentless enemy for many years. But one day the great poet died, in Greece, the death of a hero. His body was taken back to England for burial, and Caroline Lamb stood at her window and saw the procession go [Pg 98] by. The coffin was followed by a dog, howling piteously. Caroline uttered a heartrending cry, and sunk to the floor insensible. They raised her and placed her in her bed, from which she never rose; she was borne from it to her grave.

Such was the devotion which his fatal beauty and fascination won from women, from many women, in his brief life. It is not probable that his wife ever loved him in this way, but had she done so it seems very unlikely that they could have lived a happy life together.

For one reason, he had no faith in women. "False as a woman or an epitaph" expressed his deliberate opinion of the sex; and it must be confessed that the sort of women with whom he had best acquaintance were not calculated to give him high ideas upon the subject. This low estimate of women would have stood in the way of domestic happiness under any circumstances.

He was not ignorant of this, and in "Childe Harold" states the case thus:—

"For he through sin's long labyrinth had run,
Nor made atonement when he did amiss;
Had sighed to many, though he loved but one,
And that loved one, alas! could ne'er be his.
Ah, happy she! to 'scape from him whose kiss
Had been pollution unto aught so chaste!
Who soon had left her charms for vulgar bliss,
And spoiled her goodly lands to gild his waste,
Nor calm domestic bliss had ever deigned to taste."

It has been thought by some that had Byron had the good fortune to meet his latest love, the Countess Guiccioli, in his youth, all his stormy life might have been changed and redeemed. However this may be, she seems, so far as we can judge of her, to have been more likely to be a poet's one great love than any of the others who for a time held his wandering fancy. Beautiful as a poet's wildest dream, young, ardent, gifted, and passionately devoted to him, what more could even his exacting nature demand?— [Pg 99]

"Educated in the gloom of the convent, the notes of the organ, the clouds of incense, the waxen tapers burning at the feet of the Virgin, the litanies of the nuns,—all this had filled her mind with the poetry of the cloister, and with that mystic and indefinable love which at the first contact with the world was ready to change into a violent passion when it should meet with an object upon which to fix itself."

Married as soon as she left the convent to a man selected by her parents, whom she had barely seen, and who was old enough to be her father, she was at the time Byron first saw her a melancholy and unhappy woman, much given to the reading of poetry and of the immoral novels of that time and place.

That she should love Byron at first sight was inevitable, and that which followed was almost as inevitable. She herself thus describes her first acquaintance with him:—

"His noble and exquisitely beautiful countenance, the tone of his voice, his manners, the thousand enchantments that surrounded him, rendered him so different and so superior a being to any by whom I was surrounded or had hitherto seen that it was impossible he should not have left the most profound impression upon me. From that evening, during the whole of my subsequent stay at Venice, we met every day."

Almost the only glimpses of quiet happiness which Byron ever enjoyed came from this association. The lovers seemed to be admirably adapted to each other, and their love knew no diminution during the short remainder of his life. And she cherished his memory with the utmost fondness throughout a long life, writing of him with unbounded enthusiasm, in her own account of her acquaintance with him, many years after his death. Byron has probably exaggerated his own unhappiness, yet there can be no doubt that much of what he describes was very real. The nobler elements of his character were constantly at war with the lower, and although he did not have sufficient strength of character to lead the noble life of which he had frequent visions, he [Pg 100] had enough innate nobility to despise himself for the life he did lead. Doubtless there was much of truth in what he wrote in his journal in Switzerland:—

"But in all, the recollections of bitterness, and more especially of recent and more home desolation, which must accompany one through life, have preyed upon me here; and neither the music of the shepherd, the crashing of the avalanche, or the torrent, the mountain, the glacier, the forest, or the cloud, have for one moment lightened the weight upon my heart, or enabled me to lose my own wretched identity in the majesty, and the power, and the glory around, above, and beneath me."

The close of Byron's life, in Greece, seems to have been one of peculiar desolation. There is

something really tragic in the utter loneliness of such a death-bed. Years before, he had written concerning his death:—

"When time or soon or late shall bring
  The dreamless sleep that lulls the dead,
Oblivion! may thy languid wing
  Wave gently o'er my dying bed.

"No band of friends or heirs be there
  To weep, or wish the coming blow;
No maiden with dishevelled hair
  To feel, or feign, decorous woe.

"But silent let me sink to earth,
  With no officious mourners near;
I would not mar one hour of rest
  Or startle friendship with a tear."

Never was wish more literally fulfilled than this. There were none but servants about him in his last hours:—

> "In all these attendants," says Parry, "there was an over-officiousness of zeal; but as they could not understand each other's language their zeal only added to the confusion. This circumstance, and the want of common necessaries, made Byron's apartment such a picture at distress and even anguish during the last two or three days of his life as never before beheld, and have no wish to witness again." [Pg 101]

His remains were taken to England and interred in the family vault in the Church of Hucknall. His poems are his imperishable monument.

[Pg 102]

SHELLEY.

The beautiful face of Shelley is one that is familiar to all students of literary biography, and contends with that of Byron for the distinction of being the handsomest among the men of letters of his day. Burns was also a picture of manly beauty, whose features have long been familiar in engravings; but Byron and Shelley look the ideal poet far more than their sturdier Scottish brother. The face of Schiller was also one of great charm, and Tennyson and Longfellow in their youth were also beautiful; but the world is more familiar with the representations of their later years, and has almost forgotten the alluring eyes and the flowing locks of the youthful bards.

Shelley always had a girlish look, caused perhaps by a feeble constitution, and he suffered much from poor health, which added to the delicacy of his face. But there was a wonderful charm about his countenance even in childhood, and his eyes seemed like wells into which one might fall. There was rare sweetness in his smile, too. He was a tall man and very slender, with a certain squareness of shoulder, and great bodily litheness and activity. He had an oval face and delicate features. His forehead was high. His fine dark-brown hair disposed itself in beautiful curls over his brow and around the back of his neck. The eyes were brown, and the coloring of his face as

soft as that of a girl's, in youth, though he bronzed somewhat during his life in Italy. [Pg 103]

His countenance changed with every passing emotion; his usual look was earnest, but when joyful he was very bright and animated in expression. When sad there was something peculiarly touching in his face, and there was sometimes expressed in his look a mournful weariness of everything. But there was something noble and commanding in his aspect through all changes, something hinting of his high and noble birth, as well as of his genius. He had a peculiar voice, not powerful, but musical and expressive, and fine agreeable manners when once the shyness of youth had worn off.

That youth was a period of great unhappiness in many ways. He was irritable and sensitive, and much given to reading and brooding, at which the other children—or, as he called them "the little fiends—scoffed incessantly." He had thoughts beyond his years, and found in these his greatest happiness. He was impatient and full of impulse, with a strong dash of egotism, like most men of genius.

That he was eccentric beyond the usual eccentricities of genius is known to all the world. That he set out fully determined to live the ideal life and to reform the world, is as well known; also, that he failed in both these attempts,—partly through the limitations of his own nature, and partly that the contract was too large, even for a man of his undoubted genius.

Shelley was born in the County of Sussex, on the 4th of August, 1792. His most characteristic childish amusement seems to have been the making of chemical experiments; and his brothers and sisters were often terrified at the experiments in electricity which he tried upon them. He was also fond of making the children personate spirits or fiends, while he burned some inflammable liquid.

He was full of cheerful fun, and had all the comic vein so agreeable in a household. His benevolent impulses displayed themselves in his earliest childhood in his wish to educate some child; and he talked seriously of purchasing a little girl for that purpose, and actually entered into [Pg 104] negotiations to that effect with a tumbler who came to the back door. His hatred of tyranny also showed itself at the earliest age, in rebellion against the rule of the old schoolmistress who educated his sisters.

He was exceedingly precocious, and was thus sent to Eton at an age much younger than other boys. He was perhaps a little proud of his birth and breeding; but it was probably more from his inborn hatred of tyranny than from the former reason, that he utterly refused to "fag" for the older boys, and in this way got himself at once into trouble in the school. Neither the cruel vituperation of his fellows nor menaces of punishment upon the part of his superiors could bend his will to an obedience which could only be yielded at the expense of self-respect. He was soon withdrawn from Eton, and was afterwards sent to Oxford. Here his first great enthusiasm was for chemistry; and the appearance of his room is thus described by a fellow-student:—

> "Books, boots, papers, shoes, philosophical instruments, clothes, pistols, linen, crockery, ammunition, and phials innumerable, with money, stockings, paints, crucibles, bags, and boxes, were scattered on the floor and in every place; as if the young chemist, in order to analyze the mystery of creation, had endeavored first to reconstruct the primeval chaos. The tables, and especially the carpet, were already stained with large spots of various hues, which frequently proclaimed the agency of fire. An electrical machine, an air-pump, the galvanic trough, a solar microscope, and large glass jars were conspicuous amidst the mass of matter. More than one hole in the carpet could elucidate the ultimate phenomena of combustion,—especially a formidable aperture in the middle of the room, where the floor had also been burned by spontaneous combustion; and the horrible wound was speedily enlarged by rents,—for the philosopher as he hastily crossed the room in pursuit of truth, was frequently caught in it by the foot."

No student ever read more assiduously than he; and one of his chums said to him, after he had literally read all day:— [Pg 105]

> "If I read as long as you read, Shelley, my hair and my teeth would be strewed about on the floor, and my eyes would slip down into my waistcoat pockets."

It was only by attracting his attention by some extravagance that he could be drawn away from his books. He seldom stopped to take a regular meal, but would have his pockets stuffed with bread, from which he ate from time to time, anywhere he chanced to be. When he was walking in London he would suddenly run into a baker's shop, purchase a supply, and breaking a loaf, offer half of it to his companion; if it was refused he would wonder that his friend did not like bread, and could scarcely appreciate the joke when they laughed at him for devouring two or three pounds of dry bread in the streets.

Very early in life he began to have decided opinions upon religious topics; and for some of his so-called atheistic tendencies, embodied in his writings, he was expelled from Oxford at the age of seventeen, without a word of friendly remonstrance upon the part of the authorities, or any attempt whatever to counteract the errors which he had imbibed from the reading of French philosophy. We can scarcely believe it at this day, but it was true.

> "At seventeen," says Mrs. Shelley, "fragile in health and frame, of the purest habits in

morals, full of devoted generosity and universal kindness, glowing with ardor to attain wisdom, resolved at every personal sacrifice to do right, burning with a desire for affection and sympathy, he was treated as a reprobate, cast forth as a criminal."

Even his father cast him off on account of his impious opinions, and added his curse; and had he been in the way of procuring a *lettre de cachet*, like Mirabeau's father, he would certainly have sent him to Newgate and kept him there. As it was, all his friends deserted him, and he lived in lodgings in London, in a very irregular manner, for some time. Even his cousin Harriet Grove, with whom he had been in love in his boyish way for a long time, gave him up, and soon after married another. The affair was not a serious one upon the part of either; but it cost Shelley some [Pg 106] tears at the time. He soon consoled himself, however, with a schoolmate of his sisters whom he sometimes met when he went to visit them. Harriet Westbrook was empowered by his sisters to convey to Percy such sums of money as they could gather for him; for his father had refused to assist him, and he was in absolute want at this time. She appeared to Shelley in the guise of a ministering angel, and his imagination at once took fire. She was a comely, pleasing, amiable, ordinary girl, who felt herself oppressed because obliged to go to school, and excited Shelley's sympathy by appearing unhappy. He soon became entangled with her and her sister, who was older, and who is accused of furthering the intrigue out of ambition, thinking that the son of a baronet must be a great match. He writes to a friend in May, 1811:—

"You will perhaps see me before you can answer this; perhaps not; Heaven knows. I shall certainly come to York, but Harriet Westbrook will decide whether now or in three weeks. Her father has persecuted her in a most horrible way by endeavoring to compel her to go to school. She asked my advice; resistance was the answer,—at the same time that I essayed to mollify Mr. W. in vain. And in consequence of my advice, *she* has thrown herself upon *my* protection."

The whole history of Shelley's courtship of Harriet—or of her courtship of him, as many of his friends put it—will probably never be written. It seems to have been promoted by others quite as much as by themselves. That her father was not averse to her marriage with the eldest son of a baronet may be taken for granted, and Shelley was the very man to be duped by designing parties; of this there can be no doubt. He was but nineteen years old, and she but sixteen, when they eloped,—of which proceeding there does not seem to have been any especial need,—and proceeded to Edinburgh, where they were married. By the time they reached Edinburgh their money was gone, and Shelley laid the case before his landlord, and asked him to advance money [Pg 107] enough so that they might be married. To this the landlord consented, and the ceremony was performed. But the landlord, it appears, presumed somewhat upon the aid he had rendered, and in the evening, when Shelley and his bride were alone together, he knocked at the door and told them it was customary there for the guests to come in, in the middle of the night, and wash the bride with whiskey.

"I immediately," says Shelley, "caught up my brace of pistols, and pointing them both at him, said to him, 'I have had enough of your impertinence; if you give me any more of it I will blow your brains out;' on which he ran or rather tumbled downstairs, and I bolted the doors."

Even before the honeymoon was over, Harriet's sister Eliza, the evil genius of the pair, appeared upon the scene. The friend who was with them at the time thus describes her advent:—

"The house lay, as it were, under an interdict; all our accustomed occupations were suspended; study was forbidden; reading was injurious; to read aloud might terminate fatally. To go abroad was death; to stay at home the grave. Bysshe became nothing; I of course much less than nothing,—a negative quantity of a very high figure."

That Harriet already had peculiar notions of her own was soon evident. The same friend writes:—

"'What do you think of suicide?' said Harriet one day. 'Did you ever think of destroying yourself?' It was a puzzling question, for indeed the thought had never entered my head. 'What do you think of matricide, of high treason, of rick-burning? Did you ever think of killing any one? of murdering your mother? or setting rick-yards on fire?' I replied."

But Harriet often discoursed at great length, in a calm, resolute manner, of her purpose of killing herself some day or other. Of their after-housekeeping in London lodgings Hogg writes:— [Pg 108]

"Our dinners therefore were constructive, a dumb show, a mere empty idle ceremony; our only resource against absolute starvation was tea. Penny-buns were our assured resource. The survivors of those days of peril and hardship are indebted for their existence to the humane interposition and succor of penny-buns. A shilling's worth of penny-buns for tea. If the purchase was intrusted to the maid, she got such buns as none could believe to have been made on earth, proving thereby incontestably that the girl had some direct communication with the infernal regions, where they alone could have been procured."

The married life was on the whole, when not a roaring farce, almost a tragedy. Harriet's sister was, like the poor, always with them. Shelley grew to hate her, and tried in every way to be

delivered from her presence, but in vain. Harriet would not live without her, and paid little attention to anybody else when she was present. Two children were born to them, but even the children Shelley was not permitted to enjoy without the constant supervision of Eliza. He became nearly frantic from the constant annoyance, and finally a separation came about between the ill-mated pair. The women themselves became tired of the moping and inefficient youth, who still remained poor and unsettled, with a father desperately healthy and inexorable. They grew tired and went away,—the wife, like Lady Byron, refusing to go back to such an aimless, rhapsodizing husband. And in truth, the hardship of living with such a man as Shelley, for a woman like Harriet, must have been very great. It is easy to understand how a limited nature like hers should be worn out by the exaction and impracticability of one like Shelley; for to her, most impracticable would seem his lofty and ideal requirements. The parting was not unfriendly, and Shelley always spoke of her with deep kindness and pity, and she continued to write to him for some time after he had formed his connection with Mary Godwin, of which she did not seem to disapprove. He had found a sort of comfort in his intercourse with Mary from his first acquaintance with her, and she was probably the first woman he had ever known who in any way [Pg 109] understood or appreciated him. Some lines have been given in the "Relics," written to her at this time, which run thus:—

"Upon my heart thy accents sweet
Of peace and pity fell like dew
On flowers half-dead. . . .

"We are not happy, sweet! our state
Is strange and full of doubt and fear;
More need of words that ills abate;—
Reserve or censure come not near
Our sacred friendship, lest there be
No solace left for thee or me."

Shelley and Mary seem to have been very happy with each other from the first, although they felt the keenest sorrow at his being deprived by the Court of Chancery of the guardianship of his children, on the alleged grounds of his atheism, and although they were inexpressibly pained and shocked at the suicide of Harriet, which occurred about two years after the separation.

Her death seems to have had no immediate connection with any act of Shelley's, but he mourned over it with great bitterness to the end of his life. He married Mary in a legal manner soon after Harriet's death, and of course a most violent storm of detraction and denunciation burst upon his head. He soon retired to Italy, where he first met Byron, and he passed nearly all the rest of his life there. Poor Harriet was only twenty-two at the time of her tragic death. Whatever may have been the errors of her life, she had suffered much in their expiation. After her return to her father's house it appears that she was treated with unkindness, and fell into some irregularities of life,—how great, remains still a disputed point. But no one charges anything against her up to the time of her separation from Shelley, except that she was almost as foolish and impracticable as himself.

Shelley's fancy for her was that of a mere boy, and his friend Mr. Peacock thus describes the conflict of his feelings after meeting Mary Godwin:— [Pg 110]

> "Between his old feelings towards Harriet, from whom he was not then separated, and his new passion for Mary, he showed in his looks, in his gestures, in his speech, the state of a mind suffering, like a little kingdom, the nature of an insurrection. His eyes were bloodshot, his hair and dress disordered. He frequently repeated the lines from Sophocles,—

'Man's happiest lot is not to be;
And when we tread life's thorny steep,
Most blest are they who, earliest free,
Descend to death's eternal sleep.'"

Godwin, it appears, tried hard to re-unite Shelley and Harriet, and disapproved entirely of the new connection. Mary was but seventeen years old, very beautiful, and possessed of genius; and her father, moral considerations entirely aside, did not look upon Shelley as a suitable husband for her. But Shelley had conceived for her the one violent, uncontrollable passion of his life, and she was very easily brought under his influence, in spite of the disapproval of her father. Mary had not been brought up with conventional ideas upon the subject of marriage (her own mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, having had very unusual opinions upon that subject), and she fell an easy victim to Shelley's impassioned eloquence, when he urged her to flee with him from an uncongenial home. Shelley appeared to Mary as almost a divine being, and her worshipful love never waned, even during her long widowhood of thirty years' duration. For Shelley, in the whole matter, there seems to be no valid excuse. He deliberately defied the world and the world's ways, and even his memory must bear the fatal consequences. If we allow his genius to excuse his acts, we are setting up a precedent which we have only to imagine universally carried out to produce not only moral revolution but chaos throughout the social world. He sinned like an ordinary mortal, he suffered also in the same wise, and in the memory of man he must be held to the same responsibility as his fellows. But his unworldliness may well be taken into the account. He lived in a sort of dreamworld of his own, and the thoughts and opinions and feelings of ordinary men [Pg 111] upon matters of life and conduct were so different from his that he could hardly comprehend the

value they had in the eyes of their possessors. Born to rank and wealth, he desired to induce every rich man to despoil himself of superfluity, and to create a brotherhood of property and service, and was ready to be the first one to lay down the advantages of his birth. Born with the most fanatical love of liberty, he looked upon all the conventionalities of the world as tyranny, and defied all restraints of authority from his earliest youth. He believed the opinions he entertained to be true, and he loved truth with a martyr's love; he was ready to sacrifice station and fortune and his dearest affections at her shrine. With the rashness of youth he proclaimed all the wildest of his opinions, and upheld them with uncompromising zeal. In his acts he rushed into the face of the world in the same defiant manner; and the world did not fail to take her revenge upon him. But posterity will do him justice; it will see him, noble, kind, passionate, generous, tender, brave, with an unbounded and unquestioning love for his fellow-men, with a holy and fervid hope in their ultimate virtue and happiness, and an intense and passionate scorn for all baseness and oppression.

Already about his grave in a foreign land there gather many pilgrims, not only from his own country, but from beyond the sea; and as they read the inscription there,—

"Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea change into something rich and strange,"—

they think that the misconceptions which hung over him during life are gradually suffering such a change, and they thank God amid their tears.

[Pg 112]

WASHINGTON IRVING.

It is a little over one hundred years since Washington Irving was born; and it is nearly thirty years since he ceased to charm the reading world by the work of his genial and graceful pen. For fifty long and fruitful years he was our pride and boast, and his memory will for many a long year yet be green in the hearts of his countrymen. He was our first and best humorist. Before his advent, what little writing had been done in this country was mostly of the sentimental and tearful sort. And for many years after he began to write, it was much the same. Weeping poetesses filled whole columns with their tears, and in every local sheet new Werthers were trying to tell of the worthlessness of life and the beauties of dying. Young bards were inditing odes to melancholy, and everybody was chanting in chorus, if not the words, at least the sentiment of, "how sublime a thing it is to suffer and be strong." There was no laughter in the land.

Could a collection of these mournful melodies have been made, and these lorn lyrists have been induced to glance over it, it seems to us that they must have received it with inextinguishable laughter. Each delicate little wail when taken by itself was not so bad, but the united wail of this band of broken-hearted singers would have produced, instead of tears, laughter both long and deep. This doleful period lasted long after Irving had begun to write in a different vein, and has lasted in too large a measure even to this day; but he began the corrective process, and has had [Pg 113] more influence for good in that direction than any of our other writers. At a later day Dr. Holmes began to write almost, if not quite, "as funny as he could." Charles G. Leland, in his "Sunshine-in-Thought" series, in the old "Knickerbocker," ridiculed the prevailing weakness so forcibly and effectually that some stopped groaning through sheer shame. Charles Dudley Warner sent a smile over the set features of the nation when he wrote of his "Summer in a Garden;" and Willis told in his "Fun Jottings" about some of the laughs he had taken a pen to. But none of these had the magic touch of Irving, although each in his own way was inimitable; and during these later years, when the professional humorist has become one of our established institutions, no writer has arisen to wear the mantle which fell from the shoulders of Washington Irving. Bret Harte, doubtless, made us laugh more. Irving could by no possibility ever have written the "Heathen Chinee," or those other bits of compressed humor called Poems; but Bret Harte is not exactly a lineal descendant of Irving. Mark Twain also can produce a roar, a thing which Irving never did.

But, though it has been a good thing for the American people to roar with Mark Twain, we are all desirous to see some writer arise who, with as keen an eye as his for the humorous side of life, shall have a delicacy of touch which he lacks, and a refinement of expression to which he is a stranger.

Washington Irving was born in the city of New York in 1783, the youngest of eleven children born to his parents. At that time New York was a rural city of twenty-three thousand inhabitants clustered about the Battery. The Irvings were descendants of the old Scotch Covenanters, and were strict Presbyterians. The home rule was one of austerity and repression. The children were brought up on the catechism and the Thirty-Nine Articles. As they grew older all were repelled from the church of the father by the severity of its dogmas, and all except one attached [Pg 114] themselves to the Episcopal Church. Washington, we are told by Mr. Warner, "in order to make sure of his escape and feel safe, while he was still constrained to attend his father's church, went stealthily to Trinity Church at an early age and received the rite of confirmation." He was of a joyous and genial temperament, full of life and vivacity, and not at all inclined to religious seriousness. He was born with a passion for music, and was also a great lover of the theatre. These things, in the eyes of his father, were serious evils, and he felt great anxiety for the son's spiritual welfare. The gladsomeness and sportiveness of the boy's nature were things which he could not understand, and he feared that they were of the Evil One. There was no room in the darkness of his religions creed for anything that was simply bright and joyous. To save one's soul was the business of life; all things else were secondary and of small importance. Of course, he worried much over this handsome, dashing, susceptible, music-loving, laughter-loving son, and doubtless shed many tears over his waywardness. Yet there was nothing wild about the boy. The writing of plays seems to have been his worst boyish offence. His first published writings were audacious satires upon the theatre, the actors, and the local audiences. They had some promise, and attracted some attention in the poverty of those times.

At the age of twenty-one he was in such delicate health that a voyage to Europe was looked upon as the only means of saving his life. He accordingly embarked for Bordeaux and made an extended tour of Europe, loitering in many places for weeks at a time, and laying up a store of memories which gave him pleasure throughout life. In Rome he came across Washington Allston, then unknown to fame. He was about three years older than Irving, and just establishing himself as a painter. Irving was completely captivated with the young Southerner, and they formed a very romantic friendship for each other. [Pg 115]

Irving even dreamed of remaining in Rome and turning artist himself, that he might always be near his friend. He had a great dread of returning to the New World and settling down to the uncongenial work of the law, and he fancied he had some talent for art. He certainly had one essential qualification,—a passionate love of color, and an eye for its harmonies. This love was a great source of pleasure to him throughout life. He always thought that he might have succeeded as a landscape painter. However this might be, the gift of color-loving is in itself a rich endowment to any mind. There are few purer and higher sources of enjoyment in this life than this love of color, and it is a possession which ought to be cultivated in every child.

But the art scheme was soon abandoned, and he went on to London, where he began his literary work. His name of Washington attracted considerable attention there, and he was frequently asked if he was a relative of General Washington. A few years later, after he had written the "Sketch Book," two women were overheard in conversation near the bust of Washington in a large gallery. "Mother, who was Washington?" "Why, my dear, don't you know?" was the reply, "he wrote the 'Sketch Book.'"

Soon after the book was published Irving was one night in the room with Mrs. Siddons, the Queen of Tragedy. She carried her tragic airs even into private life, it is said, and when Irving was presented to her, he, being young and modest, was somewhat taken aback on being greeted with the single sentence, given in her grandest stage voice and with the most lofty stateliness, "You have made me weep." He could find no words to reply, and shrank away in silence. A very short time after he met with her again, and, although he sought to avoid her, she recognized him and repeated in tones as tragic as at first, "You have made me weep;" which salutation had the effect of discomfiting Irving for the second time. [Pg 116]

He returned to New York in 1806, and was much sought after in society from that time on. It was a very convivial company, that of old New York in the early part of the century, and Irving entered into its pleasures with the rest of his friends. Late suppers and good wine sometimes rendered these young men rather hilarious, and one evening, going home, Harry Ogden, Irving's chum, fell through a grating into a vault beneath. He told Irving next day that the solitude was rather dismal at first, but in a little while, after the party broke up, several other guests came along and fell in one by one, and then they all had a pleasant night of it, "who would have thought," said Irving to Governor Kemble, in alluding, at the age of sixty-six, to these scenes of high jollity, "that we should ever have lived to be two such respectable old gentlemen!"

It was during these years that he made the acquaintance and learned to love so deeply Matilda Hoffman, a beautiful young girl, daughter of one of his older friends. She was a most lovely person, in body and mind, and in his eyes the paragon of womanhood. He was young, romantic, full of sensibility, and his love for this beautiful girl filled his whole life. He was poor and could not marry, but he had many arguments with himself about the propriety of doing so even without an income. "I think," he finally writes, "that these early and improvident marriages are too apt to break down the spirit and energy of a young man, and make him a hard-working, half-starving,

repining animal all his days." And again: "Young men in our country think it a great extravagance to set up a horse and carriage without adequate means, but they make no account of setting up a wife and family, which is far more expensive." But while he was looking about on every side for some way to better his fortunes, that he might take to his home this woman he loved so tenderly, her health began to fail, and in a short time he was deprived by death of her companionship. His sorrow was life-long, and it was a sorrow which he held sacredly in his own heart. He never [Pg 117] mentioned her name, even to family friends, and they learned to avoid any allusion to her, he was so overcome with emotion when merely hearing her name spoken. This was in his early youth, and throughout a long life he held himself faithful to her memory,—never, it is believed, wavering once in his allegiance. Thackeray refers to this as one of the most pleasing things he knew of Irving.

It was at this time that he was writing the "History of New York." He wrote afterward:—

> "When I became more calm and collected I applied myself by way of occupation to the finishing of my work. I brought it to a close as well as I could, and published it; but the time and circumstances in which it was produced rendered me always unable to look upon it with satisfaction."

His countenance long retained the trace of his melancholy, and he was ever after a more subdued and quiet man. After his death a beautiful picture and lock of hair were found among his private papers marked in his hand-writing, "Matilda Hoffman." He also kept by him throughout life her Bible and Prayer-Book. He lay with them under his pillow in the first days of his anguish, and carried them with him always in all lands to the end of his life. In a little private notebook intended only for his own eye were found these words after his death: "She died in the beauty of her youth, and in my memory she will ever be young and beautiful." Truly, not an unhappy fate as the world goes,—to live thus in the memory of such a man. What would years and cares and the commonplace of existence have done for such a love as this, we wonder? We shall never know. But we have all seen loves apparently as pure and as strong, worn away by the attritions of life,—by the daily labor for daily bread, by little incessant worries and faults and foibles upon the part of one or both,—until there was nothing left of the early color of romance; only a faded web of life where once was cloth of gold. How sweet to many a faded and careworn woman would be the [Pg 118] thought of being always young and beautiful to the man she loved. Fortunate Matilda Hoffman of the olden time!

In 1817 he went again to Europe, and while there definitely made up his mind to look upon literature as his profession,—an almost unheard of thing in America at that time. He writes to his brother:—

> "For a long while past I have lived almost entirely at home, sometimes not leaving the house for two or three days, and yet I have not had an hour pass heavily; so that if I could see my brothers around me prospering, and be relieved from this cloud that hangs over us all, I feel as if I could be contented to give up all the gayeties of life; I certainly think that no hope of gain, however flattering, would tempt me again into the cares and sordid concerns of traffic. . . . In protracting my stay in Europe, I certainly do not contemplate pleasure, for I look forward to a life of loneliness and of parsimonious and almost painful economy."

Some time after this he wrote to a friend:—

> "Your picture of domestic enjoyment indeed raises my envy. With all my wandering habits, which are the result of circumstances rather than of disposition, I think I was formed for an honest, domestic, uxorious man; and I cannot hear of my old cronies snugly nestled down with good wives and fine children round them, but I feel for the moment desolate and forlorn. Heavens! what a hap-hazard, schemeless life mine has been, that here I should be at this time of life, youth slipping away, and scribbling month after month, and year after year, far from home, without any means or prospect of entering into matrimony, which I absolutely believe indispensable to the happiness and even comfort of the after-part of existence."

He was thus described at this time:—

> "He was thoroughly a gentleman, not merely in external manners and looks, but to the innermost fibres and core of his heart; sweet-tempered, gentle, fastidious, sensitive, and gifted with warmest affections; the most delightful and invariably interesting companion; gay and full of humor, even in spite of occasional fits of melancholy, which [Pg 119] he was, however, seldom subject to when with those he liked; a gift of conversation that flowed like a full river in sunshine,—bright, easy, and abundant."

In his fiftieth year he returned to America, far from rich, though he had made money from his books. Although he had thought he could not support a family of his own, he found himself with two brothers and several nieces upon his hands for whom he must provide. He was very fond of them all; and, being the least selfish of men, enjoyed making them all comfortable. But to do so he had to be industrious with his pen, and he never gave himself much rest. He bought a home at Tarrytown, upon the Hudson, which he called Sunnyside, and where he resided till his death. The farm had on it a small Dutch cottage, built about a century before, and inhabited by the Van Tassels. This was enlarged, still preserving the quaint Dutch characteristics; it acquired a tower

and a whimsical weathercock, the delight of the owner, and became one of the most snug and picturesque residences on the river. A slip of Melrose ivy was planted, and soon overrun the house; and there were shaded nooks and wooded retreats, and a pretty garden.

It soon became the dearest spot on earth for him; and although it ate up his money almost as fast as he could earn it, he never thought of parting with it. The little cottage soon became well stocked. He writes:—

> "I have Ebenezer's five girls, and himself also whenever he can be spared from town, sister Catherine and her daughter, and occasional visits from all the family connection."

Thackeray describes him as having nine nieces on his hands, and makes a woful face over the fact. He dispensed a charming hospitality here, and no friend who ever visited him forgot the pleasure. He was a most genial and cordial host, and loved much to have his friends bring the children, of whom he was passionately fond. His nieces watched over his welfare with most [Pg 120] tender solicitude; and the cottage at Sunnyside, although without a mistress, was truly a home.

It was with great reluctance that he left it after his appointment as minister to Spain, and all the pleasure he received from that high mark of the appreciation of his country did not compensate him for the hardship of leaving home. During this third visit to Europe "it is easy to see that life has grown rather sombre to Irving,—the glamour is gone, he is subject to few illusions. The show and pageantry no longer enchant; they only weary." He writes home: "Amidst all the splendors of London and Paris I find my imagination refuses to take fire, and my heart still yearns after dear little Sunnyside." Those were exciting times in Spain, and Irving entered into all the dramatic interest of the situation with a real enthusiasm, and wrote most interesting letters to friends at home, describing the melodrama in which he had sometimes an even perilous interest. Throughout his four years' stay the excitement continued, and the duties of minister were sometimes perplexing enough. From the midst of court life, in 1845, he wrote:—

> "I long to be back once more at dear little Sunnyside, while I have yet strength and good spirits to enjoy the simple pleasures of the country, and to rally a happy family group once more around me. I grudge every year of absence that rolls by. To-morrow I shall be sixty-two years old. The evening of life is fast drawing over me; still I hope to get back among my friends while there is a little sunshine left."

In 1846 he did return, and enjoyed thirteen years more of happy life there.

George W. Curtis thus delightfully sketches the man:—

> "Irving was as quaint a figure as Diedrich Knickerbocker in the preliminary advertisement of the 'History of New York.' Thirty years ago he might have been seen on an autumnal afternoon, tripping with an elastic step along Broadway, with low-quartered shoes neatly tied, and a Talma cloak,—a short garment that hung from his [Pg 121] shoulders like the cape of a coat. There was a chirping, cheery, old-school air in his appearance, which was undeniably Dutch, and most harmonious with the associations of his writings. He seemed, indeed, to have stepped out of his own books; and the cordial grace and humor of his address were delightfully characteristic."

Through all the honors which he received—and he was one of the most honored men of his day—he was always modest, unassuming, and even diffident. He was the most cheerful of men, and seemed to diffuse sunshine wherever he went. He was essentially lovable, and could hardly be said to have made an enemy during his life. Indeed, one of his lacks was that of aggressiveness; it would have given a deeper force to his character and brought out some qualities that were latent in him.

He died on the 28th of November, 1859, at the close of a lovely Indian-summer day, and was buried on a little elevation overlooking Sleepy Hollow. Near by winds the lovely Hudson, up and down which go the white-winged boats bearing tourists to view the river he so loved, and over which hangs the blue haze he has so often described, softening everything in its gauzy folds. The feet of those he loved go in and out at Sunnyside, and his memory is a benediction.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT.

In a fragment of autobiography which Mr. Bryant left among his papers, he speaks thus of his childhood:—

> "So my time passed in study, diversified with labor and recreation. In the long winter evenings and the stormy winter days I read with my brother books from my father's library,—not a large one, but well chosen. I remember well the delight with which we welcomed the translation of the Iliad by Pope when it was brought to the house. I had met with passages from it before, and thought them the finest verses ever written. My brother and myself, in emulation of ancient heroes, made for ourselves wooden shields, swords, and spears, and fashioned old hats in the shape of helmets, with plumes of tow; and in the barn, when nobody observed us, we fought the battles of the Greeks and Trojans over again.
>
> "I was always, from my earliest years, a delighted observer of external nature,—the splendors of a winter daybreak over the wide wastes of snow seen from our windows; the glories of the autumnal woods; the gloomy approaches of the thunderstorm, and its departure amid sunshine and rainbows; the return of spring with its flowers; and the first snowfall of winter. I cannot say, as some do, that I found my boyhood the happiest part of my life. I had more frequent ailments than afterward; my hopes were more feverish and impatient, and my disappointments were more acute; the restraints on my liberty of action, although meant for my good, were irksome, and felt as fetters that galled my spirit and gave it pain. After-years, if their pleasures had not the same zest, were passed in more contentment, and the more freedom of choice I had, the better, on the whole, I enjoyed life."

Among the prayers of his childhood he mentions that he often prayed that he might be endowed with poetic genius, and write verses which should endure. And he began at a very early age to make attempts in this direction, which seem somewhat less crude than the mass of such productions. He was taught Latin by the Rev. Thomas Snell, his uncle, and Greek by the Rev. Moses Hallock, a neighboring minister, who boarded and instructed him for a dollar a week. He continued his studies at Williams College, although he never was graduated, being taken from college from motives of economy.

The town of Cummington, where he was born, is a little hamlet among the hills in Hampshire County in western Massachusetts. The country around is mountainous, and the valleys very beautiful. The poet was always much attached to the region, and when he had become an old man bought the old family home and fitted it up as a summer residence, where he used to gather together the remaining members of the family, and enjoy himself highly in exploring the country round about as he had done in the days of his boyhood. Many stories are told of his pedestrian feats, even after he was seventy-five years old; and he sometimes walked ten or twelve miles when in his eightieth year. He retained his boyish love for plants and flowers, and was as enthusiastic as in youth over a rare specimen or a beautiful bit of landscape. He further evinced his interest in the old home by presenting the town with a fine library of six thousand volumes, and building a suitable house for its accommodation upon a beautiful site which he purchased for that purpose.

Upon leaving school Mr. Bryant pursued the study of law, and entered upon its practice, first in Plainfield, and afterward in Great Barrington, a pleasant village in Berkshire County, on the banks of the Housatonic. While studying at Worthington, a distinguished friend of his father came from Rhode Island upon a visit, bringing with him a beautiful and accomplished daughter, to whom the young poet at once lost his heart. The passion seems to have been reciprocated, if we can judge by the assiduity with which the correspondence was carried on after her return; but some unknown cause seems to have broken off the fascinating romance, and after a year or two we hear of it no more. That the end was painful to Mr. Bryant, we have reason to suspect from his poems and letters; but as to how the lady felt, we have no evidence. The verses show little promise of the work which the young poet soon afterward did, but they are not entirely without charm:—

"The home thy presence made so dear,
I leave,—the parting hour is past;
Yet thy sweet image haunts me here,
In tears as when I saw thee last.

"It meets me where the woods are deep,
It comes when twilight tints depart,
It bends above me while I sleep,
With pensive looks that pierce my heart."

In another little poem we are informed,—

"The gales of June were breathing by,
The twilight's last faint rays were gleaming,
And midway in the moonless sky
The star of Love was brightly beaming.

"When by the stream, the birchen boughs
Dark o'er the level marge were playing,
The maiden of my secret vows
I met, alone, and idly straying.

"And since that hour,—for then my love
Consenting heard my passion pleaded,—
Full well she knows the star of Love,
And loves the stream with beeches shaded."

The poet had quite a lengthened season of darkness and despair after this love-dream came to an end, and it must be confessed wrote a good deal of very bad poetry, none of which he placed in collections of his poems, but some of which have been published by his biographer. They are rather worse than the usual run of such poems, which may indicate that the feeling was really deeper,—too deep for expression in verse,—or that it was not as deep and lasting as some of the first loves of poets. As he had already written "Thanatopsis" and other fine poems, it is rather surprising that there are so few gleams of the true poetic fire in these amatory verses. [Pg 125]

As is usual in such cases, he did not recover from the old love until he had discovered a new one, and he did this in his new residence, not long after his arrival there. The second lady of his choice was Miss Fanny Fairchild, daughter of a well-to-do and respectable farmer on the Green River. She was nineteen years old at the time, a "very pretty blonde, small in person, with light-brown hair, gray eyes, a graceful shape, a dainty foot, transparent and delicate hands, and a wonderfully frank and sweet expression of face." She was as sensible as beautiful, and had great charm of manner, which she retained to the end of her life. He soon engaged himself to Miss Fairchild, and the course of their love ran smoothly throughout a long life. To show with what deep feeling and earnestness they entered upon their new relations, the following prayer, dated 1820, has been printed, which was found among Mr. Bryant's private papers after his death:—

> "May God Almighty mercifully take care of our happiness here and hereafter. May we ever continue constant to each other, and mindful of our mutual promises of attachment and truth. In due time, if it be the will of Providence, may we become more nearly connected with each other, and together may we lead a long, happy, and innocent life, without any diminution of affection till we die. May there never be any jealousy, distrust, coldness, or dissatisfaction between us, nor occasion for any,—nothing but kindness, forbearance, mutual confidence, and attention to each other's happiness. And that we may be less unworthy of so great a blessing, may we be assisted to cultivate all the benign and charitable affections and offices, not only toward each other, but toward our neighbors, the human race, and all the creatures of God. [Pg 126] And in all things wherein we have done ill, may we properly repent our error, and may God forgive us, and dispose us to do better. When at last we are called to render back the life we have received, may our deaths be peaceful, and may God take us to his bosom. All which may He grant for the sake of the Messiah."

If ever a prayer was granted, it seems to have been so in this instance, for in every detail it was fulfilled in the lives which followed. So rarely beautiful a marriage has seldom been seen, as the one which was entered into in this solemn and lofty manner, by this young and high-minded couple. The days of their pilgrimage were many, but they grew more and more beautiful until the final parting; and when the separation at last came, in the fulness of time, the old poet mourned, with a grief which could not be comforted, for the companion of his youth, the delight of his mature years, and the idol of his old age. Forty-five years they lived together, and after her death he wrote to his brother:—

> "We have been married more than forty-five years, and all my plans, even to the least important, were laid with some reference to her judgment or her pleasure. I always knew it would be the greatest calamity of my life to lose her, but not till the blow fell did I know how heavy it would be, and what a solitude the earth would seem without her."

To another brother he said:—

> "Her life seemed to me to close prematurely, so useful was she, and so much occupied in doing good; and yet she was in her seventieth year. It is now more than forty-five years since we were married,—a long time, as the world goes, for husband and wife to live together. Bitter as the separation is, I give thanks that she has been spared to me so long, and that for nearly a half-century I have had the benefit of her counsel and her example."

In a brief memoir of their intercourse, prepared for the eyes of his daughters alone, he said:— [Pg 127]

"I never wrote a poem that I did not repeat to her, and take her judgment upon it. I found its success with the public to be precisely in proportion to the impression it made upon her. She loved my verses, and judged them kindly, but did not like them all equally well."

One who knew her well thus describes her character:—

"Never did poet have a truer companion, a sincerer spiritual helpmate, than Mr. Bryant in his wife. Refined in taste, and elevated in thought, she was characterized alike by goodness and gentleness. Modest in her ways, she lived wholly for him; his welfare, his happiness, his fame, were the chief objects of her ambition. To smooth his pathway, to cheer his spirit, to harmonize every discordant element of life, were purposes for the accomplishment of which no sacrifice on her part could be too great."

Another who visited them familiarly in their home wrote:—

"In the autumn of 1863, we visited Mr. and Mrs. Bryant at West Point, where they occupied Mr. John Bigelow's charming cottage, 'The Squirrels.' From there we accompanied them to Roslyn, and spent a week under their own roof-tree. How much we enjoyed those days, I need not say. Mrs. Bryant's health was very delicate, and she sat much in her large arm-chair by the open wood-fire which blazed under the old tiles of the chimney-place. Mr. Bryant sat at her feet when he read in the autumn twilight those exquisite lines, 'The Life that Is.' Such was our last meeting with our dear Mrs. Bryant. I never saw her again, but the thought of her dwells like a sweet strain of music amid the varied notes of human life, and will be ours again when 'beyond these voices there is peace.' The union between Mr. and Mrs. Bryant was a poem of the tenderest rhythm. Any of us who remember Mr. Bryant's voice when he said 'Frances' will join in his hope that she kept the same beloved name in heaven. I remember alluding to those exquisite lines, 'The Future Life,' to Mrs. Bryant, and her replying, 'Oh, my dear, I am always sorry for any one who sees me after reading those lines, they must be so disappointed.' Beatrice and Laura have not received such tributes from their poets, for Mrs. Bryant's husband was her poet and her lover at seventy as at seventeen." [Pg 128]

After Mrs. Bryant had been dead seven years, Mr. Bryant wrote the following poem, showing how tenderly he cherished her memory:—

The morn hath not the glory that it wore,
  Nor doth the day so beautifully die,
Since I can call thee to my side no more,
    To gaze upon the sky.

For thy dear hand, with each return of Spring,
  I sought in sunny nooks the flowers she gave;
I seek them still, and sorrowfully bring
    The choicest to thy grave.

Here, where I sit alone, is sometimes heard,
  From the great world, a whisper of my name,
Joined, haply, to some kind commending word,
    By those whose praise is fame.

And then, as if I thought thou still wert nigh,
  I turn me, half-forgetting thou art dead,
To read the gentle gladness in thine eye
    That once I might have read.

I turn, but see thee not; before my eyes
  The image of a hillside mound appears,
Where all of thee that passed not to the skies
    Was laid with bitter tears.

And I, whose thoughts go back to happier days
  That fled with thee, would gladly now resign
All that the world can give of fame or praise
    For one sweet look of thine.

Thus ever, when I read of generous deeds,
  Such words as thou didst once delight to hear,
My heart is wrung with anguish as it bleeds
    To think thou art not near.

And now that I can talk no more with thee
  Of ancient friends and days too fair to last,
A bitterness blends with the memory
    Of all that happy past.

That past had, indeed, been happy and most successful from every worldly point of view. He had published his poems, while still a young man, and they had made him famous at once. For more [Pg 129] than fifty years he was honored as one of the first of the poets of America, and for a large part of that time he was held as indisputably the first in rank. His work received honors and commendation over the sea as well as at home, almost from the first. It seems very curious to us now to think of his selling the very finest of his poems for two dollars apiece; yet he did that, and seemed satisfied with the compensation. In later life, when two hundred dollars would have been gladly paid him for such poems, he declined to write, saying that no man should write poetry in old age. The greater part of his poetry was written before he went to New York and became editor-in-chief of the "Evening Post." After that time he was always driven by newspaper work and involved in political controversy, and rarely wrote verses. In old age he made his translations of the "Iliad" and the "Odyssey," which were very remarkable works for a man of his years; but he seldom wrote an original poem, although what he did write scarcely showed a falling off from the work of his prime.

He was very conscientious in his work as an editor, and was honored by the entire nation for the noble and patriotic course he took at the time of the anti-slavery excitement, and throughout the Civil war. Men will long remember the brave and spirited utterances of his paper during that time that so tried men's souls. He did much, during his long career as an editor, for American literature, for American art, and for the general culture of his countrymen. In his numerous visits to Europe he learned much of the workings of the institutions of the Old World, and gave his readers the benefit of his studies of the comparative merits of Old and New World methods; and while always fair in his judgments, he was always patriotic, and stood gallantly by his own land. He was much honored while abroad, as well as at home, and made acquaintance with many [Pg 130] distinguished men in foreign lands. Mr. Bryant had been brought up a Unitarian, and he maintained his connection with that church throughout life. Many of his dearest friends were among the ministers of that denomination, and he wrote many of his most beautiful hymns for occasions connected with that church. He was always a devoutly religious man, but grew even more so in later life. During a long sickness which his wife had in Naples in 1858, his thoughts became more and more fixed upon this subject; and meeting with an old friend there, the Rev. Mr. Waterson, he opened his mind to him as perhaps he had never done to any one before. Mr. Waterson tells us:—

> "At this time I received a note from him stating that there was a subject of interest upon which he would like to converse with me. On the following day, the weather being delightful, we walked in the Villa Reale, the royal park or garden, overlooking the Bay of Naples. Never can I forget the beautiful spirit that breathed through every word he uttered,—the reverent love, the confiding trust, the aspiring hope, the rooted faith. Every thought, every view, was generous and comprehensive. Anxiously watching, as he had been doing, in that twilight boundary between this world and another, over one more precious to him than life itself, the divine truths and promises had come home to his mind with new power. He said he had never united himself with the Church, which with his present feelings he would most gladly do. He then asked if it would be agreeable to me to come to his room on the morrow, and administer the Communion,—adding that as he had not been baptized, he desired that ordinance at the same time. The day following was the Sabbath, and a most heavenly day. In fulfilment of his wishes, in his own quiet room, a company of seven persons celebrated together the Lord's Supper. With hymns, selections from the Scripture, and devotional exercises, we went back in thought to the large upper-room where Christ first instituted the Holy Supper in the midst of his disciples. Previous to the breaking of bread, William Cullen Bryant was baptized. With snow-white head and flowing beard, he stood like one of the [Pg 131] ancient prophets; and never, perhaps, since the days of the Apostles, has a truer disciple professed allegiance to the Divine Master."

A purer and nobler life than Mr. Bryant led has hardly been chronicled in our day; and the quiet and calm of his closing years was a fitting end to such a life. He was tenderly cared for during these years by his daughters, to whom he was most devotedly attached. His son-in-law, Parke Godwin, thus writes of the closing years:—

> "It was very curious to his friends to observe how he had mellowed with time. The irritabilities of his earlier days had been wholly overcome; his reluctance to mingle with men was quite gone; and old age, which makes so many of us exacting and crabbed, if not morose, imparted to him additional gentleness and sweetness. He had learned to live more and more in the happiness of others, and was rewarded for his unconscious devotion by new streams of happiness constantly opening in his bosom."

He even learned to take good-naturedly what had annoyed him a good deal in an earlier time, namely, the results of his fame. He writes thus to a friend in extreme old age:—

> "Is there a penny-post, do you think, in the world to come? Do people there write for autographs to those who have gained a little notoriety? Do women there send letters asking for money? Do boys persecute literary men with requests for a course of reading? Are there offices in that sphere which are coveted, and to obtain which men are pestered to write letters of recommendation? If anything of this kind takes place in the spirit-world it may, perhaps, be of a purgatorial nature, or perhaps be the fate of the incorrigible sinner. Here on earth this discipline never ends; and if it exists at all in

the other world, it is of a kind which will, of course, never cease. On this account I am inclined to believe that the punishment for sin may be of endless duration; for here the annoyances and miseries which I have mentioned only cease with death, and in the other world, where there is no death, they will, of course, never come to an end."

To another correspondent he writes:— [Pg 132]

"How is it in the world to come? Will patience have had her perfect work in this sphere, or is the virtue to be exercised there, until we shall have acquired an evenness of temper which no possible provocation can disturb? Are the bores to be all penned in a corner by themselves, or are they to be let loose to educate the saints to the sublimest degree of patience of which our nature is capable? These are deep questions. I do not remember that you have given any special attention to the use of bores in the moral government of the world in your book on 'The Problem of Human Destiny.' I admit their utility as a class: they serve a most excellent purpose; but whether we are to be annoyed with them in the next world is the doubt. Some of them are most worthy people, and capital Christians, and cannot be kept out of Paradise; but will they be allowed to torment the elect there?"

Probably the title of the Great American could be as fittingly applied to Bryant as to any man our nation has produced. He has been happily called the Puritan Greek; and this epithet applies equally well to his life and to his writings. If he was a Stoic in his earlier years, he was as unmistakably a Christian in later life. During both periods he was pure as ice, lofty in thought, noble in deed,—an inspiration toward the True Life to all who watched his course. No errors of passion or of overheated blood did he have to mourn over, even in youth; yet he was not cold or unimpassioned, as his deep devotion throughout life to the woman of his choice proved. He led emphatically the intellectual life, with as little admixture of the flesh as possible; yet the warm currents of feeling were never dried up in his nature, but bubbled up freshly to the end. He lived largely on the heights of life, yet he was not uncharitable to the weaknesses and follies he saw everywhere about him, but rather looked upon them with a half-pitying tenderness; and he dropped a tear occasionally where the integrity of his own nature counselled a stern reproof.

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RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

"I have seen Emerson, the first man I have ever seen," wrote George Eliot in her diary many years ago. Carlyle uses similar expressions in his letters at least a score of times. Sentences like the following appear very often:—

"It remains true and will remain, what I have often told you, that properly there is no voice in this world which is completely human to me but your voice only."

Again:—

"In the whole world I hardly get to my spoken human word any other word of response that is authentically *human*. God help us, this is growing a very lonely place, this distracted dog-kennel of a world."

Indeed, the personality of Emerson seems to have produced a very marked effect upon all the great men and women with whom he came in contact. We find that he was often described as an angel in appearance in his younger days. Here are one or two instances: Of his appearance to them in their stony solitude at Craigenputtoch Carlyle afterwards wrote to Emerson:—

"Among the figures I can recollect as visiting us in our Nithsdale hermitage,—all like apparitions now, bringing with them airs from heaven, or else blasts from the other region,—there is perhaps not one of a more undoubtedly supernal character than yourself,—so pure and still, with intents so charitable; and then vanishing, too, so soon into the azure inane, as an apparition should."

Mrs. Carlyle always spoke of this visit of Emerson to them there as a visitation from an angel. [Pg 134]

Mr. Charles Congdon thus writes in the "Reminiscences of a Journalist:"—

"One day there came into our pulpit the most gracious of mortals, with a face all

benignity, who gave out the first hymn and made the first prayer as an angel might have read and prayed. Our choir was a pretty good one, but its best was coarse and discordant after Emerson's voice."

The ancestors of Emerson were all of clean pure blood. Behind him were many generations of fine old New England ministers, and he was but the natural product of his race in character,—though from what source sprang the consummate flower of his genius it is hard to tell. He was brought up to all good things, under the immediate eyes of a superior mother and a gifted aunt. He was a fine scholar during his college days, and entered the Unitarian ministry when quite young. He also married young, but early lost his wife, and soon afterward retired from the ministry to devote himself to literature.

In September, 1835, Emerson was married for the second time, to Miss Lydia Jackson of Plymouth. The wedding took place in the fine old mansion known as the Winslow house. After the marriage they went to reside in Concord, in the house where he passed the rest of his life, and where his family still live. This is the plain, square, wooden house, with horse-chestnuts in the front yard and evergreens around it, which has often been described by visitors to Concord. Near by is the orchard planted by Emerson, and two miles away his wood-lot, which he describes to Carlyle as his new plaything, and where he proposed to build a tower to which to flee from intrusive visitors. Of the planting of the orchard he thus writes:—

> "You are to know that in these days I lay out a patch of orchard near my house, very much to the improvement, as all the household affirm, of our homestead. Though I have little skill in these things, and must borrow that of my neighbors, yet the works of the garden and orchard at this season are fascinating, and will eat up days and weeks; and a brave scholar should shun it like gambling, and take refuge in cities and hotels from these pernicious enchantments. For the present I stay in the new orchard." [Pg 135]

In due time came the little troop of children, to gladden the home and to be a perpetual wonder and delight to the father. In his essay on "Domestic Life" he thus talks of the little one:—

> "The size of the nestler is comic, and its tiny beseeching weakness is compensated perfectly by the happy, patronizing look of the mother, who is a sort of high reposing Providence toward it. Welcome to the parents the puny struggler, strong in his weakness,—his little arms more irresistible than the soldier's, his lips touched with persuasion which Chatham and Pericles in manhood had not. His unaffected lamentations when he lifts up his voice on high, or, more beautiful, the sobbing child, soften all hearts to pity and to mirthful and clamorous compassion. His ignorance is more charming than all knowledge, and his little sins more bewitching than any virtue."

Emerson was never a rich man, and his home was always so ordered as to come within the scope of his limited income; but it was always attractive and charming, and pervaded by an air of dignity and repose. And that in it he could dispense hospitality in the old royal manner is shown by the many times he invites Carlyle to come and spend a year with him, and seriously urges him to do so. Thoreau availed himself of such invitation, and spent months at a time in Emerson's home. One wonders if Mrs. Emerson received such instruction as her husband gives in the essay just mentioned, and if she profited by it:—

> "I pray you, O excellent wife, not to cumber yourself and me to get a rich dinner for this man or this woman who has alighted at our gate, nor a bed-chamber made ready at too great a cost. These things, if they are curious in, they can get for a dollar at any village. But let this stranger, if he will, in your looks, in your accent and behavior, read your heart and earnestness, your thought and will,—which he cannot buy at any price in any village or city, and which he may well travel fifty miles, and dine sparely and sleep hard, in order to behold. Certainly let the board be spread, and let the bed be dressed for the traveller, but let not the emphasis of hospitality lie in these things. Honor to the house where they are simple to the verge of hardship, so that there the intellect is awake and reads the law of the universe, the soul worships truth and love, honor and courtesy flow into all deeds." [Pg 136]

If the American people had heeded such wise words as these the old-fashioned virtue of hospitality would not have become so rare among us. The "emphasis of hospitality" has been placed upon the material things to such an extent that one hardly dares to invite his friend now, unless it be to an elaborate feast; and the labor, to say nothing of the expense, of preparing the elaborate feast is so great that more and more we neglect to call our friends around us, and to bind their hearts to ours by loving and tender ministrations.

Let us learn of Emerson the meaning of economy. He says:—

> "Parched corn eaten to-day that I may have roast fowl to my dinner Sunday is a baseness; but parched corn and a house with one apartment, that I may be free of all perturbations, that I may be serene and docile to what the mind shall speak, and quit and road-ready for the lowest mission of knowledge or good-will, is frugality for gods and heroes."

This was the sort of frugality that Thoreau practised in his hut on Walden Pond, and it is a frugality which has made him famed throughout the hero-worshipping world.

The charm of Emerson's home life lay largely in his manners, which were simple, yet faultless. He greeted his friends with all the mildness and serenity of the very god of repose, and induced in them that most enjoyable sensation, a feeling of entire contentment with all the world. No heat, no fret, no hurry, no great call to strenuous exertion to appear well or make a fine impression. All [Pg 137] was ease, calm, unstudied attention to every little want, and talk fit for the noblest and the best. He was an example of what he himself honored most.

> "I honor that man whose ambition it is, not to win laurels in the state or the army, not to be a jurist or a naturalist, not to be a poet or a commander, but to be a master of living well, and to administer the offices of master or servant, of husband, father, and friend."

In all these relations Emerson shone resplendently, and in the old-fashioned relation of neighbor he was always at his best. To the family of his old friend Alcott he was as a special providence for many years, and beautiful indeed was the affection in which he was held by them. When, during Emerson's absence in Europe, his house was partly burned, his neighbors promptly rebuilt it, ready for his return. Of these helpers Emerson wrote, in accepting their gift:—

> "Judge Hoar has up to this time withheld from me the names of my benefactors; but you may be sure I shall not rest till I have learned them, every one, to repeat to myself at night and at morning."

Emerson's personal appearance was that of a scholar and the descendant of scholars,—tall, slender, and with the complexion which is bred in the alcove and not in the open air. His hair was brown, fine, and thick. His eyes were of the deepest blue. His mode of living was very simple, but he was constitutionally fastidious, and very much averse to vulgar or commonplace companionship. He loved all children and simple-minded people, and the very babies in Concord knew and loved him. "Incorrigible spouting Yankee" he called himself; but he was rather a silent man in reality, and did not care to talk excepting when he had somewhat to say. He did not prate eternally of silence, as Carlyle did, while wreaking himself upon speech in the most frantically vehement manner all his days, but he knew when and how to be silent. The glimpses he gives of [Pg 138] Mrs. Emerson, in the long correspondence with Carlyle, are all of the most pleasing nature, and his home life was apparently as perfect as music all his life long. Of the boy Waldo, who died, he was fond of speaking, and he evidently mourned him very deeply for a long time. Of his other children he never boasted, but always spoke most kindly. The most entire revelation that Emerson ever made of himself was doubtless in the letters to Carlyle; and it must be said that nowhere else has Carlyle appeared to so good advantage as in this correspondence with Emerson. One loves the grim, sardonic old man better after seeing that he could love his friend faithfully and loyally for so many years, and after reading all the tender and touching things he puts into his letters to him. Especially is this the case in the later days, when both had grown to be old men, and had been saddened by their life experience. Carlyle's letters after his wife's death are very touching. In the first after the sad event he says:—

> "By the calamity of last April I lost my little all in this world, and have no soul left who can make any corner of this world into a *home* for me any more. Bright, heroic, tender, true, and noble was that lost treasure of my heart, who faithfully accompanied me in all the rocky ways and climbings; I am forever poor without her. She was snatched from me in a moment as by a death from the gods. Very beautiful her death was; radiantly to those who understood it, had all her life been: *quid plura?*"

This which follows in the same letter, written while Carlyle was still in the unbroken possession of his faculties, makes us not only sad but indignant that his determination had not been allowed to be carried out; and that the poor old man, when broken down by age, should have been permitted to expose to view all those sacred things which, when sane and sound, he would so carefully have covered from the prying eyes of the world. He says:—

> "All summer last my one solacement in the form of work was writing and sorting of old documents and recollections; summoning out again into clearness old scenes that had [Pg 139] now closed on me without return. Sad, and in a sense sacred; it was like a kind of worship,—the only devout time I had had for a great while past. These things I have half or wholly the intention to burn out of the way before I myself die; but such continues still mainly my employment, to me if to no other useful. To reduce matters to writing means that you shall know them, see them in their origins and sequences, in their essential lineaments, considerably better than you ever did before. To set about writing my own life would be no less than horrible to me; and shall of a certainty never be done. The common, impious, vulgar of this earth—what has it to do with my life or me? Let dignified oblivion, silence, and the vacant azure of eternity swallow me; for my share of it, that verily is the handsomest or one handsome way of settling my poor account with the *canaille* of mankind, extant and to come."

How would his sad old heart have been torn could he have foreseen that in the weakness of senility he would expose to the 'impious vulgar' all the most sacred secrets of his home life! Oh, the pity of it! As a slight offset to the sad revelations thus made, let us accept this little note in Emerson's diary during one of his visits to Chelsea:—

> "C. and his wife live on beautiful terms. Their ways are very engaging, and in her

bookcase all his books are inscribed to her as they came, year by year, each with some significant lines."

Emerson's regard for Mrs. Carlyle was very great, and there is not one of the many letters but sends a kindly and a warm greeting to her over the sea.

For the rest, this correspondence exhibits Emerson in the light of a true and very useful friend to Carlyle,—taking infinite trouble in the early days to introduce Carlyle's books in America, and to secure to the author in his poverty some return for their publication here. In this he was successful, and sent with great delight little sums of money to his friend. The books met with a [Pg 140] quicker recognition in America than in England; and after Emerson had said something to Carlyle of a new edition of "Sartor Resartus," Carlyle writes:—

> "As for Fraser, however, the idea of a new edition is frightful to him, or rather ludicrous, unimaginable. Of him no man has inquired for a 'Sartor.' In his whole wonderful world of Tory pamphleteers, Conservative younger brothers, Regent-street lawyers, Crockford gamblers, Irish Jesuits, drunken reporters, and miscellaneous unclean persons (whom water and much soap will not make clean), not a soul has expressed the smallest wish that way. He shrieks at the idea."

There is also much writing, on both sides, of Carlyle's coming to America. For years this was the most enchanting topic, of which they never grew weary. In one of his saddest moods, while yet almost unknown and very poor, Carlyle wrote:—

> "In joy, in grief, a voice says to me, 'Behold, there is one that loves thee; in thy loneliness, in thy darkness, see how a hospitable candle shines from far over seas, how a friendly heart watches!' It is very good and precious to me."

There is, of course, a great deal of mutual admiration of each other's work, very genuine, ever pleasant to hear about, expressed in the warmest language,—even in those superlatives which Emerson derided.

There are also lovely bits of home life upon both sides,—faultless interiors over which the mind will linger with delight in times far away from these, when the students of another age strive to make to themselves a picture of what sort of men these the great of the nineteenth century really were. There is nothing told in these volumes that will detract from the fame of either, but much that will add to the kindly impression which they have made upon their time. One cannot but think, as the letters grow more infrequent, and are written with greater labor, of how old age was a weariness to these great men as to others,—how the very grasshopper became a burden, and [Pg 141] how inexpressibly sad was the decay of their great powers. Emerson begins to lag first, although a few years younger than Carlyle, and Carlyle implores him, almost piteously, to write. There is an interval of one, two, and even three years in the correspondence toward the end; and after Emerson's last visit to England they wrote no more. Carlyle's gentleness and tenderness show themselves very beautifully in these last letters to his one best friend. When he finds that it has become hard for Emerson to write, he begs at first that he be not forsaken, but after a little says in effect: Never mind, my friend, if it wearies you to write, write to me no more. I will still write to you, and thus our friendship shall not lack for a voice. When the sweet bells had become a little jangled in Emerson's brain, when memory had left him or played him false, and there was a weakening of all his powers,—he sat still in his own home among his friends and kindred, his household intact, and surrounded by the fondest care and affection; while his old friend over the seas—the broken giant, the god of thunder, now grown silent—sat in utter desolation in the home he had reared after infinite struggle and endeavor, and wrapped in a solitude so utter and so black that the heart which can look upon it without pity must be a heart of stone. Carlyle died on the 5th of April, 1881, being eighty-five years old. Emerson died on the 27th of April, 1882, at the age of seventy-nine. In death they were not long divided.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

Carlyle is one of the many great men who have suffered severely at the hands of their biographers, and from the pen clan in general. When the world knew him alone or chiefly through the lurid splendors of "The French Revolution,"—that book which, as he himself would have expressed it, was a truth, though a truth written in hell-fire,—or through the uncanny labyrinths of "Sartor Resartus," or the subtle analysis of the "Hero-Worship," or the more pleasing pages of his "Burns," or "Milton," or the "Characteristics," it would stand aloof in wonder, in admiration, almost in awe. But when with his own hand—for he was primarily the cause of all—he stripped away the privacy which he had guarded so jealously through life, and through the "Reminiscences" and his wife's letters, which he prepared for publication, took, as we may say, the roof off from the house, that all the world might look in, then indeed he fell from his lofty pedestal and became like one of us. Hero-worship was no longer possible, but loud abuse and recrimination, or apology and a cry for charitable construction, became the order of the day. We may say that he had only himself to thank for it; but who can help regretting that the man in his old age should so have destroyed the fair fabric of his own fame? We are not so rich in heroes that we can afford to lose even the least of the kingly band; and we have felt that we have sustained an irreparable loss ever since the luckless day when we took up the first of the intensely interesting but most painful books relating to this great life.

Let us look a little at this hero's domestic life. What was its foundation, what its outcome? That there was something wrong at the foundation seems to be clear. And it was not so much the fact that neither party married the first choice of the heart,—though it is true that Jane Welsh loved with all the ardor of her nature Edward Irving first, and that Carlyle undoubtedly would have married his first love, the fair and amiable Margaret Gordon, the original of Blumine in "Sartor Resartus," had not poverty prevented,—but rather was it their unsuitability to each other. She was a lady, delicately reared, and with a taste for society and the refinements of life; with a love for admiration, too, and a wish to shine in her little sphere. He was a peasant, coarsely bred, and scorning the amenities of life to which he was unaccustomed,—scorning, too, the chivalric feeling with which better bred men look upon women and treat their wives. He told her this, bluntly and brutally, before marriage. They two were to be one, and he that one. He had the peasant idea of being master, and to the end of his days held fast to it. They were never, to his mind, equals, but he was the chief and she the subject. This was what put her down intellectually. In her youth she had literary tastes and ambitions, and doubtless much ability; but after marriage we hear no more of that. Even in the seven years at Craigenputtoch, when one would think that out of sheer weariness and want of occupation she would have written or studied, we hear nothing of any such attempts. Her married life seems to have quenched all this utterly.

Then all the domestic drudgery, which to her seemed such a burden, and appears to have afflicted her to the end of life, seemed to him to be the natural and proper thing for a woman. He had all his life been accustomed to see his mother and sisters at their tasks, naturally and uncomplainingly, and he could never understand why all women should not feel in the same way. Then he was fond of solitude, and looked upon a visitor as an emissary of the devil; and he failed to see that a gay, pleasure-loving, volatile, sparkling girl could not share his feelings. So he shut her up remorselessly,—never dreaming that he was cruel. That she was fond of admiration was nothing to him, though he was fond of it himself in his own grim way; *he* was the central figure of this household, and if she was deprived of a natural enjoyment it seemed a trifle to him. In short, their whole philosophy of life was different, their characters unsuited to each other, and their tempers of the order described as "difficult." It is not necessary to blame one or the other entirely for what followed. He saw everything in one light, she in another; what but disappointment and unrest could ensue?

Had she clung to her original determination not to marry him, would it have been better? Doubtless, yet it is certain that she learned to love him, even too much for her peace of mind; and it is foolish to picture her, as some have done, as a loveless wife. Probably at marriage she was not what is usually styled "in love" with him, but that she did love him through life is not to be doubted. And that, spite of all his neglect and harshness and selfishness, he truly loved her and was essentially loyal to her is as little to be doubted. Whence then came the unhappiness,—an unhappiness which, we think, has in some places been greatly exaggerated? As we said before, from their different points of view. Take, for instance, the hardships of Craigenputtoch. They seemed nothing to him, brought up as he had been, but much to her, who from her youth had been the petted darling of a handsome home. This terrible place, which has been described as worse than a desert island, was a large and recently renovated old manor-house standing in fields of its own, only fifteen miles from where her mother lived, and twelve miles from Dumfries.

Everything had been made comfortable for them by her mother, and in the farm-cottage near were his brother and sister, Jane and Alexander Carlyle, who had three men and two women; and [Pg 145] Mrs. Carlyle herself always one servant. Much has been written of her hardships here,—and they were very real hardships to her; but from his point of view they did not seem so bad. She did some work, but one cannot help thinking that with so many about her, if she habitually did such drudgery as is represented, it was her own fault. There will come domestic crises in all households, when the hands of the mistress must take hold to save from chaos; but on the whole it would seem that she was not so very great a martyr in this.

The lack of society was the real evil; and this Carlyle did not feel, absorbed as he was in his mighty work, his brain burning with the great thoughts to which he must give utterance. How could he appreciate the vacuity of her life,—who had always had young and cheerful company about her, and a mother to pity and cheer her smallest sorrow? It was very pitiful that he could not see, but not so very strange. Many another man would have been equally obtuse.

His sisters would not have minded it; he did not mind it, and it was not given him to see that she minded it as much as she really did. For it is certain that those seven years left marks upon her which she never outgrew. They almost seem to have changed her very nature. Yet Carlyle with his peasant nature did not see it, but wrote cheerfully upon a time, "Jane is far heartier, now that she has got to work." A mistake, says Froude: "Mrs. Carlyle had not strength for household work, and doing it, she permanently broke down her health."

And again Carlyle writes, with a little more appreciation of the situation:—

> "Her life beside me, constantly writing here, is but a dull one; however, she seems to desire no other. . . . I tell her many times there is much for her to do, if she were trained for it,—her whole sex to deliver from the bondage of frivolity, dollhood, and imbecility, into the freedom of valor and womanhood."

Of the solitude which had nearly killed his wife, he after a time wearied himself; and then he [Pg 146] effected a change. One laughs to think of the second moving, and wonders if it was as bad as the first, which he thus described:—

> "In this mansion we have had a battle like that of Saint George and the dragon. Neither are we yet conquerors. Smoke, and wet, and chaos! May the good Lord keep all Christian men from moving."

If it seemed as bad as this to him, what did it seem to her, delicately reared and hating the disagreeables of life? Still she did not complain, but wrote to his mother about this time: "I could wish him a little less yellow, and a little more peaceable; otherwise he is perfect." And she soon learned, compelled to it possibly by dire necessity, to take upon herself all of the practical and prosaic part of the management of their affairs.

It is painful, although it is also comical, to read of her domestic battles and defeats. She put infinite wit and talent into her descriptions of them in her letters to her friends, and the whole world has read them with smiles and tears; but they were not light troubles to her, as they would have been to many commonplace women. Probably upon a majority of wives, even if they have not men of genius for husbands, fall nearly as great a part of the domestic duties and cares as upon Mrs. Carlyle; yet few consider this a great hardship, and the sympathies of the world are not invoked in their behalf. It was not this so much in Mrs. Carlyle's case as it was the moodiness and fault-finding and general irascibility of the husband which aggravated everything, and made little things seem great.

That her spirits were entirely gone and her whole vivacious nature changed at the end of the Craigenputtoch period is proved by sentences from her letters, To his mother she writes:—

> "It is my husband's worst fault with me that I will not or cannot speak. Often when he has talked to me for an hour without answer, he will beg for some sign of life on my [Pg 147] part, and all that I can give him is a little kiss."

And she was a woman who loved to talk, and he the best and most brilliant talker of his day. Surely, this is pitiful. But after they went up to London this aspect of things was improved for her, and had it not been that thereafter she suffered from constant ill-health she would doubtless have been quite comfortable. But her health was bad, and in the ignorance of the day the dosing was bad; and when we read of the medicine which she took as she took her daily bread, we only wonder that she lived to tell the tale. It speaks a great deal for her Scotch constitution that she survived her remedies.

Carlyle was soon in the zenith of his fame, and the great men of the day sat at his feet, figuratively speaking, and would literally have done so had not his growl been so fierce that it kept them at bay. Of those who did "beard the lion in his den, the Douglas in his hall," many were immolated in his diary; and we see them, now that it has been published, like so many flies with pins stuck through them, fastened to the paper. Poor Charles Lamb stands there, bloodless, fleshless; but we think scarcely the less of gentle Elia as we look upon him, but far less of the cruel perpetrator of the atrocity. Leigh Hunt, too, has a pin quite through his warm heart; and Stuart Mill, and many others. One wonders sometimes if Froude himself escaped, or if he were there too, like a giant bluebottle, desiccated as the rest; and was that the reason why he did not suppress all the damaging letters and recollections, but maliciously gave them to the world?

Mrs. Carlyle's pen could be dipped in acid also, as has been proved in her comments upon the men and women of her time. These, to be sure, are very brief and fragmentary, and it has been a source of much wonder that, knowing intimately as she did many of the notable persons of her time, she has not left behind in any single letter a valuable portrait or even sketch of any of these [Pg 148] great people. What priceless words of Darwin she might have gathered up, which all the world would have eagerly read; what characteristic anecdotes she could have told of Tennyson,—what an insight she might have given into the man behind the poet; what noble things she must have known of Stuart Mill; what inimitable *facetiæ* concerning the Hunts; what spirited stories she could have told of Jeffrey; what a light she could have cast over dark places in the life of Edward Irving! Why did she not do this, we wonder. Did the dread of assassination hover over her? For Charles Buller, Carlyle's friend, had just made his plea for the man who killed his wife for keeping a diary: "What else could a poor fellow do with a wife who kept a diary, but murder her?"

We cannot but regret that the sketches were not written. They would have been immortal; for her power in this line has been unequalled by any one who has written in these later days. As it is, she has, unconsciously to herself, left a picture of the greatest of all the men she knew—Carlyle himself—which can never be blotted out. The portrait is full-length, full of Rembrandt-like light and shadow, and remorselessly faithful. Painted not for the public eye, but sketched in a thousand little parts, in matter-of-fact every-day letters to humble friends, with no remotest thought that other eyes would ever see them,—it is this by which Carlyle as a man will be known to all coming time. Not a hero, not a monster, as some have claimed, but a faulty man, with the defects of his qualities, described by a woman faulty like himself. A constitutional growler, with a warm heart withal, and infinite capacities for tenderness; selfish it may be, but inexorably just; cold to all the outside world, but warm-hearted and generous and magnificently loyal to his family, throughout all his distinguished career. No trace of snobbery or false shame in him. Not liking the reformers of his own day, but almost deifying the reformers of the past, and himself making it his mission, from earliest youth to hoary age, to reform the world in his own particular [Pg 149] Carlylean way; fiercely assailing much that passed for religion, but being always deeply and truly religious at heart. What a vast contradictory Titan he seems in it all! If a lovely wind-flower, fresh and fragrant as the breath of morning, was crushed in the arms of this god of thunder, what shall we say? Shall we reject the god of thunder, who gave us the "Heroes," and the "Cromwell," and the "Frederick," and wish that he might have been a gentle poet singing to a lute; or shall we thank God for him, even as he was, though we give a tear to the wind-flower?

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VICTOR HUGO.

The times of Napoleon and the First Empire seem to be more than a lifetime away from us; and yet it was in that day that Victor Hugo lived as a child in the old convent of the Feuillantines so graphically described in "Les Misérables." Here he and his two brothers lived with their mother in the strictest seclusion, while the father, General Hugo, a soldier of the Empire, was off with the Grand Army at some distant point, either in garrison or in the field. The child, who was afterwards to hold Napoleon the Little up to the execration of the world, felt his earliest emotions of patriotism stirred by the glorious conquests of Napoleon the Great. General Hugo was one of

the most gallant soldiers of the day, and placed in many positions of trust and of responsibility, as well as of danger, by Napoleon. He it was who conducted the terrible retreat from Spain just before the fall of Napoleon. His soldiers were the only protection to the lives of twenty thousand French fugitives, who were fleeing from Madrid wild with terror; for the pursuing Spaniards would not have hesitated to massacre the helpless multitude, had they found it in their power to do so. From every bush projected the muzzle of a gun, charged with the death of an invader; every pass concealed an ambush; every height bristled with guns in the hands of the patriots. But General Hugo conducted the fugitives through in safety, and proceeded to take command of the [Pg 151] fortress at Thionville, soon to be besieged.

He defended this outpost of the Empire with great gallantry, and it was the last citadel over which the tri-color waved. But at last General Hugo was forced to surrender it to the Allies, and the star of Napoleon had set forever. Madame Hugo had been a royalist always, although she had not been allowed to influence the minds of the children in that direction; but after the fall of the Emperor she openly proclaimed her sympathy with the Bourbons, and was so demonstrative in her enthusiasm that it led to a complete estrangement between herself and her husband. Victor as a boy sided with his mother, and was royalist to the core; but as soon as he became a man he gravitated at once to his father's side. The years which he passed with his mother and brothers, and the priest who was their tutor, in the old garden of the Feuillantines, were as peaceful and happy as the years of childhood should always be. It was in an almost deserted quarter of Paris, and the grounds were spacious, being the remains of a park once attached to the convent. They were, however, neglected; and everything had run wild here, until it seemed to the city children almost like a forest. A ruined chapel was in this wood, which always excited the imagination of the boys, who were thoughtful and fanciful beyond their years. Beautiful horse-chestnut trees cast their shadows round this ruin, and were the home of innumerable birds who nested there. Upon the walls among the cankered and unnailed espaliers were niches for Madonnas and fragments of crucifixes; and vines hung there in ragged festoons to the ground. Through these dismantled cloisters and spacious abbey-chambers the imagination of the boys ran riot, and it cast a sort of poetic glamour over their young and solitary lives.

To this secluded place came, at one period of Victor's childhood, General Lahorie, his godfather, hiding from the authorities, who had set a price upon his head; and here he was securely hidden [Pg 152] by Madame Hugo for two years, as Victor Hugo afterwards pictured Jean Valjean as being concealed there by the old gardener. Lahorie was implicated in Moreau's plot against Napoleon, and was being diligently sought after by the police all the time he occupied the ruined chapel in the old convent-garden. His camp bed was under the shelter of the altar; in a corner were his pistols; and although the rain and snow came in through the dilapidated windows, he bivouacked here in winter as well as summer. The children never knew who he was; he was called simply "the General," and was much loved by the boys, to whom he talked much of their country and of liberty. After a time, under the promise of pardon if he came forward to receive it, he was betrayed into giving himself up; was arrested at once, cast into prison, and afterward shot,—one of the most infamous of the acts of Napoleon, noted throughout his whole career for treachery and insatiable bloodthirstiness.

This devilish betrayal of his early friend did not fail to impress the mind of such a boy as Victor Hugo, and to add to his natural hatred of tyrants and their deeds. It was perhaps the most lasting and impressive lesson that he ever learned, and the world has seen its results in his life. Throughout all the varied years of a long and eventful career, it was ever at the shrine of liberty that he paid his devotions, ever her praises that he sung in his loftiest verse, ever for her that he struck the strongest blows of which his arm was capable.

Almost solitary as were the lives of the children under Madame Hugo's watchful eyes, the one visitor who was admitted to their companionship was welcomed with more than the accustomed warmth of children. This was a little girl named Adèle Foucher (about thirteen or fourteen years old when she first visited them), who used occasionally to spend the day with the boys in the garden. Victor soon felt for her the most tender and chivalric regard. He has himself described it once and again, the first time in the story of Pepita, in "Le Dernier Jour d'un Condamné," where [Pg 153] "he sees her in all her charms, just fourteen years of age, with large lustrous eyes and luxuriant hair, with rich golden-brown skin and crimson lips; he dwells on the proud emotion which he felt as she leaned upon his arm; he recounts how they wandered, talking softly, along the shaded walks; he tells how he picked up for her the handkerchief she had dropped, and was conscious of her hands trembling as they touched his own. And he recollects how they talked about the birds, the stars, and the golden sunset,—sometimes, too, about her school-fellows, her dresses, and her ribbons; they blushed together over the most innocent of thoughts." Again, in "Les Misérables," Victor Hugo reverts to the scenes of his youth, and to his child-love.

"Marius" is but a free variation of himself; the circumstances are changed, but the character is the same, and the garden scenes between Marius and Cosette are but faint reproductions of passages in the courtship of the poet and Mlle. Foucher. Victor had begun to write poetry by this time, and some of his earlier efforts had attracted considerable attention. His whole ambition lay in this direction. We are told by his biographer that—

> "his greatest pleasure was to accompany his mother to M. Foucher's house, and there spend long evenings in unspoken admiration of the maiden to whom his whole heart was devoted. It was not long before these admiring glances were noticed by the parents, to whom the danger of encouraging such a passion was apparent, as both the young people were of an age when marriage was out of the question. By mutual

> consent the two families broke off their intimacy for a time. Victor Hugo found expression for his grief at the separation, in a poem that is full of sad and gentle dignity. . . . In spite of apparent resignation, the obstacles placed in the way of his passion only increased its intensity, and absence, instead of extinguishing his love, served only to increase it. His fevered imagination devised a thousand means by which he might catch a glimpse of one without whom he felt it impossible to exist. Numberless are the stratagems he contrived, and incredible the ingenuity with which they were executed; the freshness of his romance was itself an exquisite idyl. . . . Victor never despaired; but in the midst of his anticipations he was overwhelmed by a terrible blow."

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Madame Hugo died very suddenly in the summer of 1821, and the grief of her son was deep and lasting. He could no longer remain away from the one being he felt could afford him comfort, and he went boldly to the house of M. Foucher and declared his love for Mlle. Adéle, asking of her parents her hand in marriage. Although both were so young, and they had as yet no means of living, the parents did not deny the suit, only stipulating that there should be no present thought of marriage. Victor was very poor at this time, his allowance from his father having been withdrawn, and he having no settled employment; so the lovers were unwillingly forced to accept these terms. They were very happy at this time, despite his privations, which were very real, and hard for one brought up in comfort, as he had been, to endure. For a whole year he lived on seven hundred francs, which he earned by his pen, cooking his own meals in his humble lodgings, and finding them sometimes scanty and unsatisfactory. He tells us he had but three shirts at this time, and sometimes found it difficult to be as neat as he desired. It was not long, however, before the verses of the young poet attracted the attention of the king, who bestowed a pension upon him of one thousand francs, from his private purse. This enabled the poet to consummate his marriage with Mlle. Foucher, which was done in October, 1822. The bridegroom, whose fortune consisted of eight hundred francs, presented his bride with a wedding dress of French cashmere. The brightness of the occasion was destroyed by a sudden attack of insanity which overtook Victor's brother Eugene,—an attack from which he never recovered. Victor now began in earnest his literary work, and soon published his first novel, "Han d'Islande," which is said to bear a marked resemblance to the works of Walter Scott. He soon followed this with his plays, "Marion Delorme" and "Hernani," the former of which was soon prohibited by the Government.

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The first representation of "Hernani" was an event long remembered in Paris. It was supposed that the classical school would receive the new drama with little favor, and would perhaps drive it from the stage; so the friends of the new movement in literature determined to organize for its defence; and as Victor Hugo had decided against having the usual paid *claquers*, they determined to form themselves into such a body and carry the play through at all hazards. Fired with zeal, all the young *litterateurs* of the day organized in companies, each under a captain of its own, and at an early hour in the afternoon of the day set for the performance, appeared before the theatre. Among those selected as captains was Théophile Gautier, then but nineteen years old. He determined to appear in a dress worthy of the occasion, and demanded such a costume of his tailor as that worthy man had never before prepared for a human being,—not even a poet. The waistcoat was of scarlet satin, and, according to Gautier's directions, it was made to open behind. The trousers were of a pale-green tint, with a stripe of black velvet down the seams, a black coat with broad velvet facings, and a voluminous gray overcoat turned up with green satin. A piece of watered ribbon did duty both for collar and neck-tie. With his long hair streaming down his back, and in this remarkable costume, Gautier must certainly have presented a picturesque appearance. Many other of the "Hernani" partisans appeared in costumes quite as eccentric. The passers-by stopped and stared at them in astonishment. Some of them wore soft felt hats, some appeared in coats of velvet or satin, frogged, broidered, or trimmed with fur; others were enveloped in Spanish cloaks, and the array of caps was quite miraculous. Most of them wore prodigious beards and long hair, at a time when every well-regulated citizen was closely cropped and shaven. They waited more than six hours in the street, and the moment the doors were opened rushed in and took possession of the theatre. They had brought their lunches; and eggs, sausages, and bottles of wine were consumed in the seats of the theatre where the fine ladies usually sat. The evening was tumultuous in the extreme; but whenever the classics hissed, the disciples of Romanticism not only cheered, but rose to their feet and howled. When the groans of the Philistines became unbearable, the enthusiasts of the pit would drown them by shouting "To the guillotine with the sycophants." But though the evening was a continual uproar, no doubt was entertained at its close that the victory was with the Romanticists; and at the conclusion of the performance the name of the author was proclaimed as that of a victorious general, and the shouts of acclamation overwhelmed the storm of hisses. Victor Hugo was the great star of the French capital from that day.

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Meanwhile, all was happiness in the poet's household. The wife of his youthful dreams presided with tact and grace over his home and her dark Spanish beauty was much admired by the crowds of youthful friends who now began to frequent the house. This type of beauty appears almost as constantly in Victor Hugo's books as the head of La Fornarina did in the pictures of Raphael. He seems constantly to seek to immortalize her whom he had chosen for his own. Madame Hugo's picture was painted for the *Salon* by their friend M. Louis Boulanger, and was thus described at the time:—

> "A full, well-developed bust, white arms of perfect form; a pair of plump, delicate hands that a queen might envy; the hips high, and setting off a figure that was faultless in its contour and flexibility."

She performed her duties as hostess with infinite grace, and her *salon* was filled with celebrities like Lamartine, who would write verses in her album, and with women like Madame de Girardin. The house was always filled with visitors, attracted by the fascinations of the hostess as much as [Pg 157] by the joyousness of the poet. As Victor Hugo's fame increased, we are told that—

> "the calm serenity of his early years of married life was somewhat disturbed by the cares and anxieties that glory brings; but at the time of his residence in the Place Royale, of which we have been speaking, there was great happiness in the household, with the young and beautiful children."

The beautiful Madame Drouet, then an actress upon the Parisian stage, was said to have come between the poet and his wife at a later day; and it is certain that she shared his banishment, assisting him much in his literary labor, and finally, after the death of the poet's wife, came to preside over his home in the last days, cherishing her love for him to the very close of his life. She is said to have been very beautiful, even in old age, when her hair, Alphonse Daudet tells us, was as white as swan's-down.

It is not our purpose to deal with the public life of Victor Hugo, and we pass over all that occurred up to the time of the exile, after the *coup d'état* of Louis Napoleon. The historian tells us that—

> "Victor Hugo had asked the Assembly whether, having had a Napoleon the Great, they were now to have a Napoleon the Little; he had inquired of the Royalists how it was that they entered into such strange fellowship with the Empire, pointing out significantly how the Imperialists who had murdered the Duc D'Enghien, and the Legitimatists who had shot Murat, were now grasping each other's blood-stained hands. From the tribune he had proclaimed that the Republic is invincible, and that in France it would prove itself indestructible, as being identical on the one hand with the age, on the other with the people. In lofty language, alike prophetic of the future and condemnatory of the present, he had poured out his indignation in the ears of the nation. The result of all this was that Bonaparte wrote his name at the head of the list of the proscribed."

Feeling that if he remained in Paris his life would be sacrificed to no purpose, he endeavored to [Pg 158] get away from the city. This was no easy matter to accomplish, and had it not been for the active and skilful assistance of Madame Drouet, he would doubtless have been imprisoned, with his many friends, who crowded all the jails of Paris. A price was set upon his head; twenty-five thousand francs was offered to any one who would either kill or arrest him, and there were many assassins lurking about in waiting for him. Madame Drouet took him in a *fiacre*, and secretly started out to seek for him a refuge. She thought she had friends who would shelter him, as Madame Hugo had sheltered Lahorie during the troublous times of the first Empire. She applied to friend after friend in vain. She wept, she implored, she tried to bribe,—in vain. The citizens were too much intimidated to dare shelter one of the proscribed,—even Victor Hugo, perhaps the most honored man in the nation. Madame Drouet, however, would not yield to despair, but pursued her way with undaunted determination. The drive was terrible,—past ruined barricades and pointed cannon, through bloody patrols, and among the police so thoroughly accustomed to the hunting of men. They passed more than one Javert in that fearful ride; and when Victor Hugo afterwards described the sensations of a man pursued like Jean Valjean, he did not have to draw very strongly upon his imagination. The horrible feeling of doubt and distrust, and the cold thrills of dread at every change of circumstance, were well known to his own soul. Madame Drouet's perseverance was at last rewarded by finding a temporary retreat for her charge under the roof of a distant relative of the poet, where he remained five days, filled with the most harrowing anxiety for the friends whom he was endangering, as well as for himself. His two sons were already in prison, and fears for their safety were added to his other burdens. But he escaped at last, in disguise, and fled to Brussels, now filled with French exiles. He managed to communicate [Pg 159] with his wife, but his sons in their prison-cells could only conjecture as to his fate. But they heard the roar of cannon and the rattle of musketry outside the walls, and knew that the prison was overflowing with victims; and they feared the worst. Madame Hugo soon joined her husband in Brussels, and he immediately set to work to write "L'Histoire d'un Crime," and completed it in five months. With the power of a Tacitus he describes the scenes of the great historical drama he has taken part in, and with the pen of a Juvenal lashes the betrayers of the Republic. The book was not published till 1877, but it will tell the story of a shameful epoch in French history to the remotest time. He was not allowed to enjoy his refuge in Brussels long; almost as soon as he had printed his "Napoleon the Little," which book he wrote after completing the "History of a Crime," he was requested by the Belgian government to leave the country.

He repaired to the Island of Jersey, where he was joined by his sons upon their release, and by quite a party of friends. He took a small house known as Marine Terrace, on the sea-shore, and there set up his household gods once more. The house was only one story high, but it had a balcony, a terrace, and a garden; and it overlooked the sea, which seemed more than all to Victor Hugo. His income was now but seven thousand francs, and he had nine persons to provide for. No more money could be expected from France, and probably no more from literature, at present. But his busy pen kept at its work, trusting to the future; and the time passed not altogether unpleasantly to the little body of exiles. Jersey is of itself delightful, and the poet found great pleasure in its climate, its scenery, and its luxuriant vegetation. But Napoleon did not at all enjoy the proximity of his great enemy, and soon took measures to drive him from his retreat.

Hearing of the new move against him, Victor Hugo took occasion to defy Napoleon, and to "warn [Pg 160] him that whether it be from France, from Belgium, from England, or from America, my voice shall never cease to declare that sooner or later he will have to expiate the crime of the 2d of December. What is said is true: there is a *personal quarrel* between him and me; there is the old quarrel of the judge upon the bench and the prisoner at the bar." They were ordered to quit the Island of Jersey, and were treated to some scenes of violence before departing, which they did with considerable regret, having found life in that favored region comfortable, if not inspiring. They received a warm welcome at Guernsey, whither they retreated, and soon made a new home on that hospitable shore. A large and convenient residence, known as Hauteville House, situated on the top of a cliff, was rented and repaired, and served as a home for the poet and his friends during all the remaining years of his exile, which were destined to be many. Victor Hugo changed and beautified the house according to his own ideas, doing much of the work with his own hands; and the result is something eminently characteristic of the man.

On the third story is the study, a kind of belvedere, with its sides and roof composed of glass. In this study, which overlooked the little town of St. Sampson and its picturesque promontory, the poet did his work. Here he finished "Les Misérables," which had been begun in the Place Royale; here was produced the magnificent essay on Shakspeare; and here he worked almost literally from morning until night. The house became a refuge for exiles from many lands, and a chamber, still known as "Garibaldi's room," was fitted up expressly for that hero, under the expectation that he would accept the invitation of Victor Hugo to share his home, at a time when his fortunes were at their lowest ebb. Many literary men were here at different times, generously cared for by the host, who called the retreat "the raft of Medusa." There were many pets also, especially dogs, as Victor Hugo almost shared the sentiment of Madame de Staël concerning these animals, "The [Pg 161] more I know men, the better I love dogs."

The wonderful success of "Les Misérables," when it was published in 1862, called the attention of the whole world to the illustrious exile on the sea-girt isle, and after that time he was overwhelmed with visitors from all parts of the earth, anxious to see one who had come to be looked upon as the greatest man of his time. The success of the book was unprecedented, the sales were enormous, and the enthusiasm of readers and critics almost without a parallel.

Madame Hugo died in 1868, and it was always a great grief to her husband that she could not have lived to share his return to his native land, which took place after the downfall of Louis Napoleon in 1870. After nineteen years of exile, he returned to his country only to find it in the hands of the Prussians first, and of the Commune afterward. One of his companions on that eventful journey thus describes the feelings of the returned exile:—

> "Making good their retreat from Mézières, on their way to Paris, the remnant of Vinoy's corps, poor, harassed creatures, covered with dust and discolored with powder, pale with exertion and discouragement, were lying all along the road. Close behind them were the Uhlans. There was no alternative for them but flight, if they would escape the disaster that had befallen the army at Sedan. Defeat was written in their faces, demoralization was evident in their attitude, they were dejected and dirty, they were like pebbles driven along by a hurricane. But what of that? Anyhow, they were soldiers of France; their uniform proclaimed their nationality: they wore the blue tunic and the red trousers,—but what was of infinitely more consequence, they were carrying their colors back with them. Their defeat did not prevent them bringing back the tri-color safe and sound.
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> "Great tears rolled from Victor Hugo's eyes. He leaned from the carriage-window, and with a voice thrilling in its earnestness, he kept shouting: 'Vive la France, vive l'armée, [Pg 162] vive la patrie!' Exhausted as they were with hunger and fatigue, the bewildered soldiers looked up. They scarcely comprehended what he said, but he continued his shouting, and it was almost like an order of quick march to them all, when they made out that they were being assured that they had done their duty, and that it was by no fault of theirs that they had sustained defeat.
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> "And so the train went on. The tears still lost themselves in Victor Hugo's snowy beard. He had lived in the proud illusion that France was invincible; he was a soldier's son, and could not conceive that the soldiers of his country were not pledged to glory."

It was ten o'clock when the train reached Paris, but a great crowd which had been gathering for hours was there to receive him. With continued acclamations they bore him to the house of his friend Paul Meurice, where he was to stay, and called upon him continually for a speech. He said a few words to the crowd, at the station and at the house, but gladly sought the seclusion of his new home, being completely overcome with emotion. This was at the beginning of the investment of the city by the Prussian troops, and he witnessed the whole of the siege of Paris, and endured its privations with the people. He also witnessed the terrible deeds of the Communists, but—sympathizing, as he always had done, with the poor and the downtrodden—only to condemn them with the utmost vehemence of his nature. Still, he desired their pardon when all was over, feeling for the ignorance which had caused their misguided zeal. About this time his son Charles died very suddenly, which was a great blow to him, and he began to feel that all things were falling away from him.

The death of his youngest son, François, in 1873, removed the last prop of his age, and only two young grandchildren remained of all who had composed his beloved family. The mother of these

children, and her second husband, however, were very much loved by the old poet, and watched very tenderly over his declining years. The children were a source of constant interest and pleasure to him, and have become well known to the world through his work upon "The Art of being a Grandfather." Of the honors which were showered upon him from every side in his closing years, it is useless to write. All are familiar with them, as with the magnificent demonstrations after his death. It is safe to say that few men have been so honored while living, or held in such sacred remembrance after death. [Pg 163]

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GEORGE SAND.

Upon no woman of the century has the public fixed its eye with a more eager interest and curiosity than upon Aurore Dudevant, known to the world as George Sand.

The utmost heights of panegyric and adulation have been scaled in describing her and her work; also the lowest depths of denunciation and of calumny. Her admirers describe her as being not only the greatest genius of her time, which perhaps few will dispute, but as being the most magnificent and adorable of women as well; while her detractors can find no language in which to express the depths of their loathing both for her life and some of her works. As usual, a just estimate of such a character as this will be found between the two extremes. She was neither a monster nor a saint, but a woman of magnificent qualities and of defects upon a corresponding scale. As with her life, so with her works. Some are undoubtedly pernicious to an alarming degree, while the influence of others cannot by any stretch of imagination be called bad. The two kinds may perhaps be divided under the head of earlier and later works. When the tumultuous feelings and wild visions of youth were calmed by age, a new kind of literary product came forth. And her life in its latter years was as quiet as her books, and ran as little against the traditions and usages of mankind. [Pg 165]

George Sand was born in 1804, and descended from Marshal Saxe, the natural son of the King of Poland. This Marshal Saxe was one of the bravest but most licentious men of his time,—a time not noted for its domestic virtues. She was brought up in the country until fifteen years of age, in the midst of the elegancies of an aristocratic home. But her unbounded vitality called loudly for an out-of-door life, and she lived the life of a boy, never wearying of its rude sports, and enjoying its sometimes dangerous excitements. At the close of her fifteenth year she was taken to the Augustine Convent in Paris, where she remained for three years, and where she passed through a very intense religious experience and came near becoming a nun. It is a curious piece of speculation to try to imagine what her life as a nun would have been, had this design been carried out. Would the prayers and litanies, the penances and the fasts, have tamed her wild blood? Would her nature have still asserted itself under the cap of the sister? would she have led a revolt against authority within the church as she did without? Are there any such fierce, tumultuous natures as hers to-day kneeling on stony cloister floors? Can matins and vespers, the odors of incense, and the sacred ceremonial of the church fill up for an ardent nature all that the service of the world supplies? We shall never know; for the real history of a faithful daughter of the church will never be written. The story of the three years of George Sand's convent life is very charming, full of variety and sincerity, and matchless in point of style; but it is a fragment.

She came out of the convent a young woman knowing absolutely nothing of real life. The object of all who have charge of young girls in France is to keep them in perfect ignorance of the world. The safety that lies in knowledge is utterly forbidden to them. They are supposed to be children,

and are watched over as such until a marriage can be arranged. And this marriage, whatever it may be, is usually accepted by the girl as an escape from a sort of slavery. She is always told that [Pg 166] she may only do the things she desires to do after marriage. And it is very unusual for any girl to object to the wishes of her friends in this matter. The whole system of marriage in France is so utterly abominable that no other civilized land would tolerate it; and this sacrifice of the young and ignorant is only one of its diabolical features. Aurore Dudevant did not seem to object more than the rest. She was married, and lived for eight years with her husband, becoming the mother of two children.

She then left him and her estate of Nohant, and went up to Paris, taking her two children with her. She sacrificed her personal fortune—which was considerable—in doing so, and was obliged to earn her own living. She tried various things in the artistic line before she essayed the writing of books. At last with one grand bound she leaped before the world in "Indiana." Of course she had written some things of small value before this, but that wonderful book was really her introduction to the world. And it brought the whole literary world to her feet. Thereafter her friends were the first men of France. De Lamennais, Pierre Leroux, Michel, Alfred de Musset, Chopin, Liszt, Delacroix, Béranger, Sainte-Beuve, Gustave Planche, Mazzini, were her friends, her intimates, or her lovers.

Alfred de Musset was the first who found favor with her heart, it appears; and they were inseparably associated for about three years. This brilliant young poet, so sceptical, so sad, so audacious, so dissolute, was the first of this famous coterie of men to become madly infatuated with George Sand,—but far from the last. It is asserted that each in turn, and many more besides, were the victims of her luring wiles. For many years the wildest stories were afloat concerning her and her enchantments. And the fact that two or three of her most ardent worshippers ended their lives for her sake only added to the interest and the horror with which the world of [Pg 167] respectability and morality looked upon this strange woman. She had broken once for all with the world of conventionality, and was free to follow whatever inclination seized upon her, unrestrained by aught but conscience,—for we are far from thinking that she ever parted permanently with that disagreeable but useful monitor.

So she lived out her brief romance with De Musset, and, apparently unmindful of his tragic end, entered upon a new epoch of her life with that most remarkable modern musical genius, Chopin.

Poor Alfred de Musset has had the sympathy of all classes and conditions of men, apparently, from that day to this. She tried to vindicate herself in the affair by publishing a book entitled "Elle et Lui," "wherein she depicted the sufferings of an angelic woman, all tenderness, love, and patience, whose fate was joined to that of a man all egotism, selfishness, sensuousness, and eccentricity." How grandly the woman suffered, and how wantonly the man flung happiness away, is told with all the impassioned fervor of George Sand in her early writings. The taste of the whole proceeding was revoltingly low, and no more than matched by that of the rejoinder, which was made in a book called "Lui et Elle," written by Paul de Musset after his brother's death. In this book the picture is reversed: "a hideous woman is portrayed, utterly selfish, dissolute, heartless; and her lover, who is easily recognized as Musset himself, is described as having almost all of the heroic virtues." Both books were thoroughly French,—thoroughly execrable.

Chopin at first feared Madame Sand very much, and refused to be presented to her; but as she persisted in her desire to make the acquaintance of so fine and delicate a genius, they at last met, and the fate of poor Chopin was at once sealed. He was consumed from the very first by an absorbing passion, to which no other name but morbid infatuation could be applied. Madame Sand herself describes it in "Lucrezia Floriani" thus:— [Pg 168]

> "For it seemed as if this fragile being was absorbed and consumed by his affection. . . . Others seek happiness in their attachments; when they no longer find it, the attachment gently vanishes. But he loved for the sake of loving. No amount of suffering was sufficient to discourage him. He could enter upon a new phase, that of woe; but the phase of coldness he could never arrive at. It would have been indeed a phase of physical agony,—for his love was his life, and, delicious or bitter, he had not the power of withdrawing himself a single moment from its domination."

Chopin, suffering from severe sickness, was ordered to a warmer climate; and in the fall of 1837 Madame Sand accompanied him to the Island of Majorca, where she nursed him back to life, although his friends at the time of his departure never thought to see him again, and although he was dangerously ill for a long time after their arrival. This solitude, surrounded by the blue waves of the Mediterranean, and shaded by groves of orange, seemed fitted by its exceeding loveliness for the ardent vows of youthful lovers, still believing in their naïve and sweet illusions, sighing for happiness in some desert isle. In this case it was the refuge of those who had grown weary and disenchanted with life, but who hoped in deep devotion to each other to find some solace for their sadness. The memory of those days, like the remembrance of an entrancing ecstasy which Fate grants but once in a lifetime to her most favored children, always remained dear to the heart of Chopin. When he was restored to health they returned to Paris, where their friendship was continued for about eight years. She then severed her connection with him. Liszt asks in regard to this, in his life of Chopin:—

> "Has genius ever attained that utter self-abnegation, that sublime humility of heart which gives the power to make those strange sacrifices of the entire Past, of the whole

Future; those immolations as courageous as mysterious; those mystic and utter holocausts of self, not temporary and changing, but monotonous and constant,— through whose might alone tenderness may justly claim the higher word devotion? Has not the force of genius its own exclusive and legitimate exactions, and does not the force of woman consist in the abdication of all exactions? Can the purple and burning flames of genius ever float over the immaculate azure of a woman's destiny?" [Pg 169]

Liszt also tells us that—

"Chopin spoke frequently and almost by preference of Madame Sand, without bitterness or recrimination. Tears always filled his eyes when he named her; but with a kind of bitter sweetness he gave himself up to the memories of past days, alas, now stripped of their manifold significance. . . . All attempts to fix his attention upon other objects were made in vain; he refused to be comforted, and would constantly speak of the one engrossing subject. . . . He was another great and illustrious victim to the transitory attachments occurring between persons of different character, who, experiencing a surprise full of delight in their first sudden meeting, mistake it for a durable feeling, and build hopes and illusions upon it which can never be realized. It is always the nature the most deeply moved, the most absolute in its hopes and attachments, for which all transplantation is impossible, which is destroyed and ruined in the painful awakening from the absorbing dream. . . . Chopin felt, and often repeated, that the sundering of this long friendship, the rupture of this strong tie, broke all the cords which bound him to life."

Her friends say, upon her part, that he was a morbid, dreary invalid, jealous beyond endurance, and that she suffered much at his hands, and separated from him only when she could endure his exactions no longer. He did not long survive the sundering of their relations, and died in Paris in 1849, very deeply deplored by all admirers of his genius. Chopin was a wonderfully gifted and very remarkable man, exceedingly reserved, and with little of the egotism of genius. His eyes were blue and dreamy, his smile very sweet, his complexion very fair and delicate, his hair light in color, soft and silky, his nose slightly aquiline. His bearing was so distinguished, and his manners stamped with so much high breeding, that involuntarily he was always treated *en prince*. His gestures were many and graceful, yet he was on the whole serene in his bearing, and generally gay in company, though subject to moods of deep melancholy. He was passionately devoted to Poland all his life, and when he was dying requested the Countess Potocka to sing to him the melodies of his country. He was deeply religious in nature, a devout Catholic. [Pg 170]

It was during the years of which we have been speaking that George Sand produced her most famous works. "Indiana" was followed by "Valentine," "Lelia," and "Lettres d'un Voyageur." Others followed in quick succession, many of them dealing with the subject of marriage in such a manner as to raise a most violent storm about her head. People who had never read these books described them as being of revolting indecency; and that impression prevails in many quarters even yet. In point of fact, she is no more open to the charge of indelicacy than any prominent English novelist of the day. The opinions are bad enough many times, but the style is always pure and perfect. This is the answer she herself made to her critics:—

"I was astounded when a few Saint Simonians, conscientious and sincere philanthropists, estimable and sincere seekers of truth, asked me what I would put in the place of husbands. I answered them naïvely that it was marriage; in the same way as in the place of priests who have so much compromised religion, I believe it is religion which ought to be put. . . . That *love* which I erect and crown over the ruins of the infamous, is my Utopia, my dream, my poetry. That love is grand, noble, beautiful, voluntary, eternal; but that love is marriage such as Jesus made it, such as Saint Paul explained it. This I ask of society as an innovation, as an institution lost in the night of ages, which it would be opportune to revive, to draw from the dust of æons, and the shrine of habits, if it wishes to see real conjugal fidelity, real repose, and the real sanctity of the family, replace the species of shameful contract and stupid despotism bred by the infamous decrepitude of the world."

It must always be remembered that she wrote of French marriages, in which there is no pretence of having love to start with; and if we remember this, her language can scarcely be considered too strong. The system is utterly vile, and her hatred of it an honor to her in every sense. Had she done nothing worse than to protest against this form of marriage few would condemn her; her condemnation comes rather from the life she felt it consistent with her theories to live for many years. [Pg 171]

What the world said was: "The welfare of the human family demands that a marriage legally made shall never be questioned or undone. Marriage is not a union depending on love, or congeniality, or any such condition. It is just as sacred when made for money, or for ambition, or for lust of the flesh, or for any other purpose, however ignoble or base, as when contracted in the spirit of the purest mutual love." Against all this, George Sand, both with pen and life, protested. She contended that it was love alone which made marriage anything but a disgusting sin. We have heard much of this in these latter days, even in our own country, but it was George Sand who first struck the keynote; the doctrine is essentially hers in all its parts. That she denounced the whole system of marriages of convenience, is an honor to her; that she proclaimed love as the only true foundation for marriage, is equally an honor; but that she assailed the institution of

legal marriage as a whole, and overleaped its bounds and became a law to herself in the matter, is her weakness and her shame. It is frequently denied that she did this. It is said that she did not assail the institution of marriage, but only the things that are perpetrated in its name.

> "But all the same [as another has well said], her eloquent expositions of ill-assorted unions, her daring appeals from the obligations they impose to the affections they outrage, her assertion of the rights of nature over the conventions of society, have the final effect of justifying the violation of duty on the precarious ground of passion and inclination. [Pg 172]
>
> "Nobody who knows what the actual life of George Sand has been can doubt for a moment the true nature of her opinions on the subject of marriage. It is not a pleasant subject to touch, and we should shrink from it if it were not as notorious as everything else by which she has become famous in her time. It forms in reality as much a part of the philosophy she desires to impress upon the world as the books through which she has expanded her theory. It is neither more nor less than her theory of freedom and independence in the matter of passion (we dare not dignify it by any higher name) put into action,—rather vagrant action, we fear, but on that account all the more decisive."

Society and she were naturally at war from the beginning of her career; and she suffered from it, though she dealt many bitter blows at it even while she suffered. "What has it done," she says in one place,—

> "what has it done for our moral education, and what is it doing for our children, this society shielded with such care? Nothing. Those whom it calls vain complainers, and rebels, and madmen, may reply: Suffer us to bewail our martyrs, poets without a country that we are, forlorn singers well versed in the causes of their misery and of our own. You do not comprehend the malady which killed them; they themselves did not comprehend it. If one or two of us at the present day open our eyes to a new light, is it not by a strange and unaccountable good Providence? and have we not to seek our grain of faith in storm and darkness, combated by doubt, irony, the absence of all sympathy, all example, all brotherly aid, all protection and countenance in high places? Try yourselves to speak to your brethren heart to heart, conscience to conscience! Try it! but you cannot, busied as you are with watching and patching up in all directions your dykes which the flood is invading: the material existence of this society of yours absorbs all your cares, and requires more than all your efforts. Meanwhile the powers of human thought are growing into strength and rise on all sides around you. Among these threatening apparitions there are some which fade away and re-enter the darkness, because the hour of life has not yet struck, and the fiery spirit which quickened them could strive no longer with the horrors of the present chaos; but there [Pg 173] are others that can wait, and you will find them confronting you, up and alive, to say, 'You have allowed the death of our brethren, and we, we do not mean to die.'"

But she rises after a while out of her depths of passionate contention with a world out of joint, with the reign of stupidity and the tyranny of convention, into serener heights; and in her later books she gives us exquisite pictures of nature, with which she has the closest sympathy; lovely stories of rural life and gentle tales of perfectly pure love. Her passionate resentment against the world has worn itself out, and she is calmer, wiser now. Her daughter, too, Solange, has grown to be a woman and has a lover of her own, and the household thoughts and cares, and the tenderness of a serious and unselfish cast which creep into a mother's heart upon such occasions, shed their sweetness upon this wayward soul, and inspire it with congenial utterances. Now she looks back and says:—

> "My poor children, my own flesh and blood, will perhaps turn upon me and say: 'You are leading us wrong; you mean to ruin us as well as yourself. Are you not unhappy, reprobated, evil spoken of? What have you gained by these unequal struggles, by these much-trumpeted duels of yours with Custom and Belief? Let us do as others do; let us get what is to be got from this easy and tolerant world.' This is what they will say to me. Or at best, if, out of tenderness for me, or from their own natural disposition, they give ear to my words and believe me, whither should I guide them? Into what abysses shall we go and plunge ourselves, we three? for we shall be our own three upon earth, and not one soul with us. What shall I reply to them, if they come and say to me: 'Yes, life is unbearable in a world like this. Let us die together. Show us the path of Bernica, or the Lake of Sténio, or the glaciers of Jacques'?"

Again, in the later times, she said:—

> "Let us all try to be saints, and if we succeed we will know all the more how difficult a thing it is, and what indulgence is owed to those who are not yet saints. Then we shall [Pg 174] acknowledge that there is something to be modified, either in law or opinion; for the aim of society should be to render perfection accessible to all, and man is very feeble when he struggles alone against the mad torrent of custom and of ideas."

A very wise, saying truly, written out of her own experience. Sad, too, as is much of her later writing, though there is not in it the passionate despair of her earlier work.

She lived to be seventy-two years old, and had known and experienced many phases of life,—the

tumultuous passions and the wild revolt of youth, the cooler and more self-contained life of middle age, and the sombre color of a rather hopeless old age. Even in age she had her pleasures, however. She delighted in her grandchildren, in books, in pictures, in nature, and in work. Her unwearied pen moved until the last, and did not lose its cunning. There was much of the old strength and power to the last. But she had ceased to desire to destroy; she sought at last to build up.

Here are two descriptions of her as she appeared to different observers, in youth and in later life. Heine, who saw with the eye of an artist and wrote with the pen of a critic, described her in youth:—

> "George Sand, the greatest of French writers, is a woman of remarkable beauty. Like the genius revealed in her writings, her countenance may rather be called beautiful than fascinating. The face of George Sand has precisely the character of Grecian regularity. The cut of her features has not exactly the severity of antique models; her face is softened by modern sentiment, which veils it with sadness. Her forehead is not high, and her rich and luxuriant brown hair falls from either side of her head upon her shoulders. Her eyes are not brilliant; has their fire gone out under frequent tears, or only in her writings? George Sand's eyes are soft and tranquil. Her nose is neither aquiline, nor spiritual, nor pugged; it is a straight and ordinary nose. Around her mouth habitually plays a smile of kindness and benevolence, but not very bewitching: her [Pg 175] inferior lip protrudes a little, and seems to reveal a fatigue of the senses. Her chin is finely formed. Her shoulders are magnificent; also her hands, her arms, her feet, which are very small. George Sand is beautiful like the Venus of Milo."

Now hear one who described her in old age:—

> "She was not at all like the woman of my imagination; she looked very little like the bold and vigorous thinker she is; one would have taken her at first sight for a gentle, serene old grandmother. She is short, and inclined to *embonpoint*. Her hair, which is still abundant, though faded by time, was simply arranged. Her features are not striking; her eyes have that vague, dreamy look which she herself refers to in her 'Histoire de Ma Vie' as one of her marked characteristics."

Most people in her youth found her beautiful, though some thought her face heavy, and even coarse; but she had a matchless charm of manner which had far more effect than any mere beauty. She seemed to enslave men at her will. Poets, artists, statesmen, and priests, were all at her side, or at her feet. Her manner, at least in later life, was very retiring, and she was singularly modest and free from literary vanity. When asked once which of her works she preferred, she answered, apparently quite sincerely, "Mon Dieu, I detest them all."

Let us close with Matthew Arnold's tribute of respect:—

> "It is silent, that eloquent voice; it is sunk, that noble, that speaking head; we sum up as we best can what she said to us, and we bid her adieu. From many hearts, in many lands, a troop of tender and grateful regrets converge toward her humble churchyard in Berry. Let them be joined by these words of sad homage from one of a nation which she esteemed, and which knew her very little and very ill. Her guiding thought, the guiding thought which she did her best to make ours too, 'the sentiment of the ideal life, which is none other than man's normal life as we shall one day know it,' is in [Pg 176] harmony with words and promises familiar to that sacred place where she lies."

Over her grave might well be written those words over another grave in Père-la-Chaise:—

HE KNOWETH.

THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.

In the beginning of the eighteenth century the great-grandfather of the famous Lord Macaulay, the author of the glowing and impassioned History of England, was minister of Tiree and Coll, when his stipend was taken from him at the instance of the Laird of Ardchattan. The slight inconvenience of having nothing to live upon did not seem to incline the old minister in the least degree to resign his charge and to seek a flock who could feed their shepherd. He stayed valiantly on, doing his duty faithfully by his humble people. But after some time had elapsed, "his health being much impaired, and there being no church or meeting-house, he was exposed to the violence of the weather at all seasons; and having no manse or glebe, and no fund for communion elements, and having no mortification for schools or other pious purposes in either of the islands, and the air being unwholesome,"—he was finally compelled to leave, much to his own regret and that of his poor little flock.

The reasons enumerated certainly seem sufficient to us in these later days for a change of parishes; and indeed some modern ministers have been known to change upon provocations less than these. There was fine stuff in the old Scotch ministers of that day, and it is pleasant to hear that this one found a new charge to which he ministered for half a century. There were many other ministers in the Macaulay family during several generations; but Zachary Macaulay, the [Pg 178] father of the historian, seemed born with a taste for business, and was accordingly sent out to Jamaica to learn mercantile affairs, when quite young. Here he saw much of negro slavery, and became so much impressed with its horrors, and so filled with sympathy for the black race, that he resolved to devote himself to their interests. He accordingly resigned his position in Jamaica and returned to Scotland, where until his death he labored in the unpopular and misunderstood ranks of the abolitionists. A colony was projected in Sierra Leone for freed slaves, and young Macaulay was appointed a member of the council, and sailed for Africa to take practical part in the work for the negro. Soon after his arrival there he succeeded to the position of Governor, and for some time worked heroically in that capacity. But in the very midst of the Reign of Terror in France, a French fleet bore down upon the little colony and almost wiped it out of existence. Zachary Macaulay stayed for a year after the attack, heroically trying to rehabilitate the little colony, and partially succeeded in doing so, when, his health failing, he returned to England, where he gave almost the entire remaining years of his life to the work of negro emancipation in one form or another.

Thomas Babington Macaulay was born the 25th of October, 1800, the day of St. Crispin and the anniversary of Agincourt. He drew in the love of freedom with his earliest breath, and he was reared with the utmost care by those high moralists, his noble parents. He was a prodigy from babyhood. From the time he was three years old he read incessantly, for the most part lying on the rug before the fire. Many laughable stories are told of his precocity, particularly of the fine language he used when a mere infant. For instance, when four years old some hot coffee was spilled on his legs, and after a little time a lady inquired of him if he felt better now, when the phenomenon replied, "Thank you, madam, the agony is abated." Of course so quaint and [Pg 179] remarkable a child was much petted and spoiled, and probably rendered somewhat conceited and priggish. But he was docile and affectionate, and was then, as always thereafter, the idol of his family.

After he left Cambridge he went up to London, and soon after wrote his article on Milton for the "Edinburgh Review." Like Byron, he awoke one morning and found himself famous. Compliments and enthusiastic letters poured in upon him from all sides. The one compliment which he said gave him the most pleasure was Jeffrey's word at the end of a business note: "The more I think, the less I can conceive where you picked up that style." And no wonder; that style was not a thing to be picked up every day. Jeffrey did well to wonder. Macaulay at once became the fashion, and invitations were showered upon him from every side, many of which he accepted. The first flush of such a success as Macaulay's must have been very sweet to a young man of his genial nature. He was thus described by Praed:—

> "There came up a short, manly figure, marvellously upright, with a bad neckcloth, and one hand in his waistcoat pocket. Of regular beauty he had little to boast; but in faces where there is an expression of great power or of great good-humor, or both, you do not regret its absence."

He had a massive head, and features powerful and rugged, but peculiarly expressive. His face was oftentimes all aglow with emotion. He dressed badly but not cheaply; indeed, his wardrobe, Trevelyan tells us, was always enormously overstocked. "Later in life he indulged himself in an apparently inexhaustible succession of handsome embroidered waistcoats, which he used to regard with much complacency."

Among the first places to which the new lion was invited was of course the famous resort of celebrities, Holland House; and in his letters to his two younger sisters,—to whom he was always the most devoted of brothers,—he frequently narrates his experiences there. Let us glance at a [Pg 180]

few of these pictures:—

> "Well, my dear, I have been to Holland House. I took a glass coach, and arrived, through a fine avenue of elms, at the great entrance about seven o'clock. The house is delightful, the very perfection of the old Elizabethan style,—a considerable number of very large and very comfortable rooms, rich with antique carving and gilding, but carpeted and furnished with all the skill of the best modern upholsterers. Lady Holland is certainly a woman of considerable talent and great acquirements. To me she was excessively courteous; yet there was a haughtiness in her courtesy which, even after all that I had heard of her, surprised me. The centurion did not keep his soldiers in better order than she keeps her guests. It is to one, 'Go,' and he goeth; and to another, 'Do this,' and it is done. 'Ring the bell, Mr. Macaulay.' 'Lay down that screen, Lord Russell; you will spoil it.' 'Mr. Allen, take a candle and show Mr. Cradock the picture of Bonaparte.' Her ladyship used me as well, I believe, as it is her way to use anybody. . . .
>
> "I had a good deal of pleasant conversation with Rogers. He was telling me of the curiosity and interest which attached to the persons of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron. When Scott dined at a gentleman's house in London not long ago, all the servant-maids in the house asked leave to stand in the passage and see him pass. He was, as you may conceive, greatly flattered. About Lord Byron, whom he knew well, he told me some curious anecdotes. When Byron passed through Florence, Rogers was there. The inn had fifty windows in front. All were crowded with women, mostly Englishwomen, to catch a glimpse of their favorite poet. Among them were some at whose houses he had been in England oftentimes, and with whom he had lived on friendly terms. He would not notice them or return their salutations. Rogers was the only person he spoke to. The worst thing that I know about Lord Byron is the very unfavorable impression which he made on men who certainly were not inclined to judge him harshly, and who were not personally ill-used by him. Sharp and Rogers both speak of him as an unpleasant, affected, splenetic person. I have heard hundreds and thousands of persons who never [Pg 181] knew him rant about him, but I never heard a single expression of fondness for him fall from the lips of any one who knew him well. Yet even now there are those who cannot talk a quarter of an hour about Charles Fox without tears—after twenty-five years. . . .
>
> "In the evening Lord John Russell came, and old Talleyrand. I had seen Talleyrand before. I now had the pleasure of listening to his conversation. He is certainly the greatest curiosity I ever fell in with. His head is sunk down between two high shoulders. One of his feet is hideously distorted. His face is pale as that of a corpse, and wrinkled to a frightful degree. His eyes have an odd, glassy stare. His hair, thickly powdered and pomatumed, hangs down his shoulders on each side as straight as a pound of tallow candles. His conversation, however, soon makes you forget his ugliness and infirmities."

One more glimpse of Lady Holland:—

> "Her ladyship is all courtesy and kindness to me; but her demeanor to some others, particularly to poor Allen, is such as quite pains me to witness. He is really treated like a negro slave. 'Mr. Allen, go into my drawing-room and bring my reticule.' 'Mr. Allen, go and see what can be the matter that they do not bring up dinner.' 'Mr. Allen, there is not turtle-soup enough for you. You must take gravy-soup or none.' Yet I scarcely pity the man. He has an independent income, and if he can stoop to be ordered about like a footman I cannot so much blame her for the contempt with which she treats him."

Here are one or two touches of nature:—

> "Get Blackwood's new number. There is a description of me in it: 'A little, splay-footed, ugly dumpling of a fellow, with a mouth from ear to ear.' Conceive how such a charge must affect a man so enamoured of his own beauty as I am."
>
> "After the debate I walked about the streets with Bulwer till near three o'clock. I spoke to him about his novels with perfect sincerity, praising warmly and criticising freely. He took the praise as a greedy boy takes an apple-pie, and the criticism as a good, dutiful boy takes senna-tea. At all events I shall expect him to puff me well. I do not see why I should not have my puffers as well as my neighbors."

Here is a glimpse of the domestic economy of the great Holland House:— [Pg 182]

> "The dinner was not as good as usual, and her ladyship kept up a continued lamentation during the whole repast. I should never have found out that everything was not as it should be, but for her criticisms. The soup was too salt; the cutlets were not exactly *comme il faut*; and the pudding was hardly enough boiled. I was amused to hear from the splendid mistress of such a house the same sort of apologies which —— made when her cook forgot the joint and sent too small a dinner to table."

All these artless details were given to amuse his young sisters at home,—the beings he loved best on earth, not only at this time but throughout life. If he ever had any deeper love for another, there is no hint given of it in his life or letters. Probably for many reasons he never contemplated marriage. When he was young he was too poor to think of it; when he was older he had his own

family upon his hands, and cared for them munificently to the end. He was very generous with his money and never learned the art of saving. It would seem scarcely possible that a man of his warm heart and ardent temperament could have gone through life with no romance; but if he had any such experience it has not been given to the world. He loved his sisters, and his nephews and nieces, with the most passionate devotion, and was in turn idolized by them. His nephew says:—

> "It must be acknowledged that where he loved, he loved more entirely and more exclusively than was well for himself. It was improvident in him to consecrate such intensity of feeling upon relations who, however deeply they were attached to him, could not always be in a position to requite him with the whole of their time and the whole of their heart. He suffered much for that improvidence, but he was too just and kind to permit others to suffer with him; and it is not for one who obtained by inheritance a share of his inestimable affection to regret a weakness such as this."

This refers to his grief at the marriage of his sisters, which was really great and enduring. He had [Pg 183] planned to have them in his home, and not to be in theirs; and when it turned out otherwise he could not at first be reconciled to it. His sister Nancy went out with him to India after his appointment there, and soon fell in with young Trevelyan,—to whom she became engaged, with her brother's approval but to his great grief. He calls it "a tragical denouement to an absurd plot." After the marriage they formed one household during his stay in India, and her home was to all intents and purposes his own during life. His youngest sister died during his stay abroad, and of her he thus writes:—

> "The last month has been the most painful I ever went through. Indeed, I never knew before what it was to be miserable. Early in January letters from England brought me news of the death of my sister. What she was to me no words can express. I will not say that she was dearer to me than anything in the world, for my sister who was with me was equally dear; but she was as dear to me as one human being can be to another. Even now, when time has begun to do its healing work, I cannot write about her without being altogether unmanned."

His only solace was found in books. He could at any time bury himself in these and forget all the world. Probably there never was such a reader before. He devoured books like a gourmand. He read everything—Greek, Latin, German, Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese; and books of all kinds in these languages,—history, *belles-lettres*, poetry, novels, old chronicles. He seemed to have a passion for all. He would read a book in an hour which it would take any one else half a day to get through in the poorest shape. And he would know what was in it, too. He read enormous quantities of novels always, and was very fond of poor ones,—none too poor for him were written at that time. It is a question whether if he had lived till this day the same thing could have been said of him. It is not recorded whether he ever encountered any of Anthony [Pg 184] Trollope's works during his life.

If Macaulay had not been known as a great man of letters he would probably have been known as a great orator. He was, indeed, one of the best speakers of his day, and the House of Commons, that listens to so few speakers, always gave its attention to him. It seems a great pity that he should have given so many years of his life to Parliament, and to official work, when his true career undoubtedly was literature pure and simple, for which no man of his time was so splendidly equipped, both by nature and by preparation. We ought to have had from him more enduring historical works, and more of his masterly estimates of the works of other men. After his retirement into private life, in 1847, he enjoyed his freedom intensely, and much regretted that he had not obtained it sooner. He enjoyed the pleasures of society greatly at this time. He was the centre of a gifted circle of men—the most brilliant of their time—all of whom were his close friends and admirers. How brilliantly these men talked is already a matter of tradition. Macaulay was the most wonderful conversationalist, probably, since Dr. Johnson, not even excepting Carlyle, or Sydney Smith, or Coleridge. Very laughable stories are told, of course, of a man who would talk three hours without pause, and undoubtedly there were many people sadly bored by him in his day; but to those who could appreciate the remarkable stores of information he possessed, and the lucidity with which he could deal them forth,—to say nothing of his rhetorical splendors,—those discourses of his were never tedious, but full of supreme interest. To be sure, Sydney Smith sneered at his "wonderful stores of very accurate—misinformation," but he was one who did not like a rival near the throne; and in Macaulay's absence he was himself the sun around which the social universe revolved. Thackeray wrote after Macaulay's death:— [Pg 185]

> "Now that wonderful tongue is to speak no more, will not many a man grieve that he no longer can listen? To remember the talk is to wonder, to think not only of the treasures he had stored, but of the trifles which he could produce with equal readiness. What a vast, brilliant, wonderful store of learning he had; what strange lore would he not fetch at your bidding."

No report of these conversations exists, except such as is found scattered in private diaries. In these there are records of many an Attic night, and still more agreeable morning. Lord Carlisle's journal contains as many of these records, perhaps, as any one's. He makes glowing mention of Macaulay and his eloquence, after nearly every meeting of the famous circle. The only criticism he made, and it is one that was frequently made on Macaulay, was that it was remarkable what quantities of trash he remembered. He could repeat pages of the very dreariest stuff that ever was written, and was in danger of doing so on small provocation,—an infliction it must have been

hard for his friends to have endured sometimes. Great stories are told of his remarkable memory,—one seldom equalled by any man. He was always willing to accept a friendly challenge to a feat of memory. One day in the board-room of the British Museum he handed to Lord Aberdeen a sheet of foolscap covered with writing arranged in parallel columns down each of the four pages. This document, on which the ink was still wet, proved to be a full list of the Senior Wranglers at Cambridge, with their dates and colleges for the hundred years during which the names of Senior Wranglers had been recorded in the University Calendar. On another occasion Sir David Dundas asked:—

> "'Macaulay, do you know your Popes?' 'No,' was the answer; 'I always get wrong among the Innocents.' 'But you can say your Archbishops of Canterbury?' 'Any fool,' said Macaulay, 'could say his Archbishops of Canterbury backwards;' and he went off at a score, drawing breath only once in order to remark on some oddity."

He was easily bored in general society, and in later life rarely went beyond his little circle of intimates. Children were the only people of whom he never tired, and he was a royal companion to them always. He was unrivalled in the invention of games, and never wearied of repeating them. He had an inexhaustible repertory of small dramas for his nieces, and sustained a great variety of parts with much skill. An old friend of the family writes:— [Pg 186]

> "There was one never-failing game of building up a den with newspapers behind the sofa, and of enacting robbers and tigers; we shrieking with terror, but always begging him to begin again, of which we never grew weary."

He writes to a friend concerning Dickens, that he did not think it possible for fiction to affect him as the death of little Nell had done, and adds:—

> "Have you seen the first number of 'Dombey'? There is not much in it, but there is one passage which made me cry as if my heart would break. It is the description of a little girl who has just lost her mother, and is unkindly treated by everybody. Images of that kind always overpower me even when the artist is less skilful than Dickens."

In truth, his extreme sensibility was often a great annoyance to him. He strove very hard to overcome it, but in vain; and he was moved to tears upon a great many occasions, when he would have given much to be able to control himself.

Let us quote a little more from Thackeray's tribute to him.

> "All sorts of successes were easy to him. As a lad he goes down into the arena with others, and wins all the prizes to which he has a mind. A place in the Senate is straightway offered to the young man. He takes his seat there, he speaks when so minded, without party anger or intrigue, but not without party faith and a sort of heroic enthusiasm for his cause; and speech is also a success to him. Still he is a poet and philosopher even more than orator. . . . Years ago there was a wretched outcry raised because he dated a letter from Windsor Castle, where he was staying. Immortal gods! was not this man a fit guest for any palace in the world, or a fit companion for any man or woman in it? The place of such a natural chief was among the first in the land." [Pg 187]

Macaulay died, in 1860, a sudden and painless death, and lies buried in Westminster Abbey, in the Poet's Corner, near the west wall of the South Transept, at the feet of Addison.

EDWARD BULWER LYTTON.

The British aristocracy has given to literature a few names which the world will not willingly let die. But its contribution to the world's genius has not been great in proportion to its numbers, its exceptional opportunities for culture, and the great prominence which has naturally been given to its achievements. From out its ranks have come few of the great names in English literature.

Among these the name of Lord Lytton, or Bulwer, as he is more generally known in literature, holds a prominent place. For the period of a long life he lived in the world's eye, and the world feels a great interest in the character of the man as well as in his writings.

His paternal ancestors had been settled in Norfolk since the Conquest. The name of Bulwer attests the Scandinavian origin of the Norman soldier. The great-grandfather of Edward Bulwer married the heiress of the Earles of Heydon Hall, which became the family residence. Our hero's father "contracted a romantic, if illicit, attachment to a young person of great beauty, who eloped with him from a boarding-school in which she was a teacher, and, though too haughty a man to marry beneath him, he had at least the justice to say that while she lived he would never marry any one else. And when the hand of a great and noble heiress was offered him, although a very [Pg 189] ambitious man, he refused her upon the ground that he was not quite satisfied with the shape of her ladyship's nose." General Bulwer built for his mistress a villa in the neighborhood of London, and as he was driving into the yard on his return from some military duties which had detained him longer than usual, she ran out to meet him. In this hurried action she received a kick from one of the horses, and died of the injury.

After this, the General, who is described by his son as being of a very powerful, self-willed nature, wholly uncultivated by literature, but with that ability for action which takes lessons from life,—married the mother of our hero, a delicate girl, with intelligent, dark-blue eyes, with shy sensitive temper, passionately fond of poetry, and deeply under the influences of religion. Her family was as ancient as that of the Bulwers, the Lyttons having intermarried with many houses famous in history. But family concord was not one of the characteristics of the Lytton family, and Bulwer's grandfather and grandmother had lived stormily together for a few years, and separated by mutual consent. The essential faults are said to have been all on the side of the grandfather. The only daughter of the uncongenial pair was not permitted to dwell permanently with either. She was sent at the age of five to a large school, where she lived a sad life for a long time, without any of the tender care and affection which such a child craves, and must have, for anything like a healthful child-life. After a while she went to live with her father, and still later with her mother, from whose house she was married to General Bulwer. He was not a man who could appreciate the rarer qualities of Miss Lytton. He could have no share in her intellectual life and no sympathy with her religious nature. But the elegance of her manners satisfied his pride, her domestic habits gave him promise of a peaceful home, and, greatest merit of all, her features suited him. He liked an aquiline nose. A nose that turned up the least bit, his son tells us, would have disgusted him with a Venus. The lady's nose in this instance proving satisfactory, a happy [Pg 190] marriage was anticipated, although the bridegroom had buried his heart in the grave of a mistress, and the bride had but partially recovered from an unhappy attachment for a man beneath herself in rank,—in fact, a merchant's son. But the marriage proved far from a happy one, and was closed after a few years by the sudden death of General Bulwer. Our hero thus writes of him:—

> "Peace to thy dust, O my father! Faults thou hadst, but those rather of temper than of heart,—of deficient education and the manlike hardness of imperious will than of ungenerous disposition or epicurean corruption. If thou didst fail to give happiness to the woman whom thou didst love, many a good man is guilty of a similar failure. It had been otherwise, I verily believe, hadst thou chosen a partner of intellectual cultivation more akin to thine own,—of hardier nerve and coarser fibre,—one whom thy wrath would less have terrified, whom thy converse would more have charmed; of less moral spirit and more physical courage."

Verily we are tempted to ask when we read of this marriage—as well as of the son's own marriage and the marriages of many other members of the English aristocracy whose domestic lives have latterly seen the light of day—whether less of moral spirit and more of physical courage is not the great need among women who aspire to the peerage. Strong nerves and a martial spirit, if they could not secure peace, would at least place the combatants upon a more equal footing, and the world would be spared the spectacle of the mild-mannered and meek bullied by the overbearing and violent.

As for Bulwer himself, he had the hot blood, imperious temper, and remorseless will of the combined Bulwers and Lyttons; and, it must be added, a vanity and egotism so boundless as to be peculiarly his own, and an arrogance and superciliousness which throughout life were a constant drawback, and which interfered materially with the acknowledgment by the world of his really

great powers. [Pg 191]

At the early age of seventeen this precocious young man, who had already been several years in society, felt his first sensations of love; and he talked of it to the end of his days as being the one genuine passion of his life. He tells the pretty story very feelingly, and no doubt it was a genuine boyish romance. Hear him:—

> "Ah, God! how palpably, even in hours the least friendly to remembrance, there rises before me when I close my eyes that singularly dwarfed tree which overshadowed the little stream, throwing its boughs half-way to the opposite margin. I dare not revisit that spot, for there we were wont to meet (poor children that we were!), thinking not of the world we had scarce entered, dreaming not of fate and chance, full only of our first-born, our ineffable love. It was so unlike the love of grown-up people; so pure that not one wrong thought ever crossed it, and yet so passionate that never again have I felt any emotion comparable to the intensity of its tumultuous tenderness."

When the meetings so feelingly described became known to the lady's father, she was sent away at once, and Bulwer never saw her again. Very soon after, she was forced into a marriage against which her heart protested. For three years she strove to smother the love which consumed her; and when she sunk under the conflict, and death was about to relieve her, she wrote to Bulwer informing him of the sufferings she had undergone, affirming her deathless love, and begging him to visit her grave.

His son says:—

> "The impressions left on my father by this early phantom of delight were indelible and colored the whole of his afterlife. He believed that far beyond all other influences they shaped his character, and they never ceased to haunt his memory. Allusions to it are constantly recurring in all his published works, and in none of them more than in the last of all. He was much affected by them, and not knowing to what they referred, we wondered that the creations of his fancy should exercise such power over him. They were not creations of fancy, but the memories of fifty years past."

After the abrupt end of his first romance he conceived a sort of friendship for Lady Caroline Lamb, which came very near the verge of love. Lady Caroline was between thirty and forty years old at this time, it being subsequent to her intrigue with Lord Byron. She looked much younger than her age,—thanks, perhaps, to a slight rounded figure and a child-like mode of wearing her pale golden hair in loose curls. She had large hazel eyes, good teeth, and a pleasant laugh. She had to a surpassing degree the qualities that charm, and never failed to please. Her conversation was remarkable, and she was the only woman, Byron said, who never bored him. She was a creature of caprice, and impulse, and whim, and had been known to send a page around to all her guests at Brocket at three o'clock in the morning to say that she was playing the great organ on the staircase, and requested the pleasure of their company. And it is added that the invitation was never refused, and that daylight would find them listening, spellbound and without a thought of bed. Here is Bulwer's own account of the close of this little episode with Lady Caroline. He was staying at her house, and had become very jealous of a Mr. Russell. [Pg 192]

> "I went downstairs. Russell sat opposite me. He wore a ring. It was one which Lord Byron had given Lady Caroline: one which was to be worn only by those she loved. I had often worn it myself. She had wanted me to accept it, but I would not, because it was so costly. And now *he* wore it. Can you conceive my resentment, my wretchedness? After dinner I threw myself upon a sofa. Music was playing. Lady Caroline came to me. 'Are you mad?' said she. I looked up. The tears stood in my eyes. I could not have spoken a word for the world. What do you think she said aloud? 'Don't play this melancholy air,—it affects Mr. Bulwer so that he is actually weeping.' My tears, my softness, my love were over in a moment. When we broke up in the evening I said to her, 'Farewell forever. It is over. Now I see you in your true light. Instead of jealousy I only feel contempt. Farewell. Go and be happy.'"

This account reads very much like a page from "Pelham" or "Devereux," and the whole account of his affairs of the heart is written in a similar manner. [Pg 193]

All this had passed before he was twenty-two. At that age he first met Rosina Wheeler, at an evening party. He was talking busily to his mother when she suddenly exclaimed: "O Edward, what a singularly beautiful face! Do look. Who can she be?"

An elderly gentleman was leading through the room in which they sat a young lady of remarkable beauty, who, from the simplicity of her costume, seemed to be unmarried. He turned his head languidly, as he says, with a strangely troubled sensation, and beheld his fate before him,—in other words, his future wife.

Rosina Wheeler was at this time twenty-three, and in the full blossom of a very remarkable beauty. Her father was an Irish squire, who at the age of seventeen had married a very beautiful girl two years younger than himself. The natural result of this marriage was a separation, after the birth of two children, one of them the future Lady Lytton. Domestic infelicity seems to have been the heritage of every one connected with the Bulwer family even in the remotest manner.

And now it appears again in the family of the woman to whom the latest scion of the old house is

to be united. Bulwer's mother opposed the match strenuously from the first. Her pride, her prudence, her forebodings, and her motherly susceptibilities all rose up against it. And she never gave her consent to it, or became really reconciled to it after it had taken place. Although very unwilling to displease his mother in so vital a matter, Bulwer seems to have gone steadily on to such a consummation; not borne away certainly by strong passion, but rather influenced, it would seem, by a tender regard for the feelings of Miss Wheeler, who had grown much attached to him. Not without many a struggle with himself, however, did he yield. He was tenderly attached to his mother, and it was a great grief to him to do so important a thing without her approval; and, [Pg 194] moreover, his income and all his worldly prospects depended upon her. He does not seem to have been particularly happy over his own prospects, for in one of the last letters he wrote before marriage he says:—

> "My intended is very beautiful, very clever, very good; but, alas! the human heart is inscrutable. I love and am loved. My heart is satisfied, my judgment, too. And still I am wretched."

There have been published within a few years a great number of the love-letters written by Bulwer to Miss Wheeler about this time. His son publishes none of them in the late biography, and it is safe to say that in all the range of literature there are no other letters filled with such drivelling idiocy as these. Had they been written by some Cockney coachman to some sentimental housemaid, they should stand as the finest specimens of that grade of literature extant; but that they should have been written by one of the foremost literary men of his time is a marvel, and seems to show to what extremes of imbecility love may reduce even wise men. As for Lady Lytton herself, one cares to know little more than that she could have married a man who habitually addressed her as his "sugar-plum," his "tootsy-wootsy," and his "sweety-weety." A woman clothed and in her right mind, who could deliberately accept such a personage for a life-long companion, calls for small sympathy from a matter-of-fact world, unless, indeed, it be that we bestow our sympathy simply upon the grounds of her feeble-mindedness.

In less than three years began the vulgar quarrels which finally ended the marriage. Bulwer is described by a visitor to the house about this time as appearing "like a man who has been flayed and is sore all over." His temperament was by nature extremely sensitive and irritable. And the combined Bulwer and Lytton blood was hot, turbulent, and at times quite uncontrollable. There [Pg 195] are records of scenes of absolute personal violence against his wife, and one instance is given where at dinner, during the momentary absence of the servant, he bit her cheek till the blood flowed freely. After marriage, his income being cut off by his mother, he for a time wrote for his bread; and the work, close and confining as it was, told very much upon his health.

> "His feelings became morbidly acute, and all the petty household worries were to his exasperated brain what frictions and jostlings are to highly inflamed flesh. His wife had little of his society. He was nearly always writing or making preparation for writing, and when they were together his nervous irritability vented itself at every unwelcome circumstance in complaints, or taunts, or fits of anger. To harsh words and unjust reproaches his wife returned meek replies. Any distress his conduct occasioned her she concealed from him. She was studious to please him, and endeavored to anticipate every want and wish. Her gentleness and forbearance increased his gratitude and devotion to her, and whenever he perceived that she was wounded he was full of remorse."

So says her son, and continues:—

> "The mischief was aggravated by the unfortunate occurrence that my mother being unable to suckle her first-born child, it had been nursed out of the house. Her maternal instinct, thus thwarted in its origin, never revived. The care of children was ever after distasteful to her. Losing this satisfaction to her affections, unless she had company in the house she was lonely. As it was, neither of them saw the issue to which the divided life was tending."

That issue, as all the world knows, was a separation of the husband and wife, and a life-long quarrel of almost unimagined bitterness. No wonder that Bulwer's hand faltered when be tried to write of it, and that, having brought his autobiography up to this point, he laid it by, not daring to go on. He always cherished the intention of resuming it, but could never bring himself to the point of doing so. He could not tell the story; but Lady Lytton could, and did, continuing to do so [Pg 196] till her dying day. The picture of her which her son has given does not seem like that of a woman who would do all the things which she notoriously did. But doubtless she had her amiable and engaging side, and was half maddened by her wrongs. Justin McCarthy says:—

> "I do not know whether I ought to call it a quarrel. Can that be called a quarrel, piteously asks the man in 'Juvenal,' where my enemy only beats and I am beaten? Can that be called a quarrel in which, so far as the public could judge, the wife did all the denunciation, and the husband made no reply? Lady Lytton wrote novels for the purpose of satirizing her husband and his friends,—his parasites, she called them. Lady Lytton attributed to her husband the most odious meannesses, vices, and cruelties; but the public, with all its love of scandal, seems to have steadfastly refused to take her ladyship's word for these accusations. Dickens she denounced and vilified as a mere parasite and sycophant of her husband. Disraeli she caricatured under the title of

Jericho Jabber. This sort of thing she kept always going on. Sometimes she issued pamphlets to the women of England, calling on them to take up her quarrel, which, somehow, they never did. Once, when Sir Edward was on the hustings addressing his constituents at a county election, her ladyship suddenly appeared, mounted the platform, and 'went' for him. I do not know anything of the merits of the quarrel, but have always thought that something like insanity must have been the explanation of much of her conduct. But it is beyond doubt that her husband's conduct was remarkable for its quiet, indomitable patience and dignity."

Let the veil drop over the blighted lives, knowing as we do that the human heart is so dark and intricate a labyrinth that we cannot claim to understand it by half knowledge, and that however we might judge these two with any light which we can possibly have in our day, we should be in danger of doing each a grievous wrong.

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ALFRED TENNYSON.

It is related by Miss Thackeray that the grandfather of Alfred Tennyson, when that poet was young, asked him to write an elegy on his grandmother, who had recently died, and when it was written gave him ten shillings, with the remark, "There, that is the first money you have ever earned by your poetry, and, take my word for it, it will be the last." How little he foresaw at that time the fame and fortune which the youth's poetry was to bring him, and the lasting honor he was to bestow upon the family name! That name was already an honorable one, for the Tennysons were an old family, and had good blood in their veins. The home was the old rectory of Somersby, where George Clayton Tennyson, LL.D., held sway in the old-time priestly fashion for a lifetime. He is described as a man of strong character and high principle, full of accomplishments, and gifted withal; a strikingly handsome man, with impressive manners. Twelve children were given to his hands, of whom Alfred was the third. The eldest, Frederick, and the second, Charles, were both poets, and not without merit,—especially Charles, who published a volume of sonnets, which gave great pleasure to so good a judge as Coleridge; and the Laureate is himself very fond of his brother's work.

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The children led a very free and unconstrained life in that beautiful part of Lincolnshire, and had a few friends to whom they attached themselves for life. Arthur Hallam was Alfred's intimate, and later on he became engaged to one of his sisters. Young Hallam's early death was the first shadow upon their lives. But who would not willingly die at twenty-three to be immortalized in such a poem as "In Memoriam"?

Of Arthur Hallam's own quality as a poet we get a pleasant glimpse in the sonnet addressed to his betrothed when he began to teach her Italian:—

"Lady, I bid thee to a sunny dome,
Ringing with echoes of Italian song;
Henceforth to thee these magic halls belong,
And all the pleasant place is like a home.
Hark, on the right, with full piano tone,
Old Dante's voice encircles all the air;
Hark yet again, like flute-tones mingling rare

Comes the keen sweetness of Petrarca's moan.
Pass thou the lintel freely; without fear
Feast on the music. I do better know thee
Than to suspect this pleasure thou dost owe me
Will wrong thy gentle spirit, or make less dear."

After Tennyson had made his first literary successes, and after the family life at Somersby was broken up, we next hear of him through a warm and life-long friend. Away back in 1844 Carlyle in one of his letters to Emerson gives the following description of the then young and rising poet. It is an authentic glimpse of the real man, as he then appeared to one of the shrewdest and most critical of the men of that day.

> "Tennyson is now in town, and means to come and see me. Of this latter result I shall be very glad: Alfred is one of the few British or Foreign Figures (a not increasing number I think) who are and remain beautiful to me,—a true human soul, or some approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, Brother! However, I doubt he will not come; he often skips me, in these brief visits to Town; skips everybody indeed, being a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom,—carrying a bit of Chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into Cosmos! [Pg 199]
>
> "Alfred is the son of a Lincolnshire Gentleman Farmer, I think; indeed, you see in his verses that he is a native of 'moated granges,' and green fat pastures, not of mountains and their torrents and storms. He had his breeding at Cambridge, as if for the Law or Church; being master of a small annuity, on his Father's decease, he preferred clubbing, with his mother and some sisters, to live unpromoted and write Poems. In this way he lives still, now here, now there; the family always within reach of London, never in it; he himself making rare and brief visits, lodging in some old comrade's rooms. I think he must be under forty, not much under it. One of the finest looking men in the world. A great shock of rough dusty-dark hair; bright, laughing hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive, yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musical metallic,—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous: I do not meet in these decades such company over a pipe! We shall see what he will grow to. He is often unwell; very chaotic—his way is through Chaos and the Bottomless and Pathless; not handy for making out many miles upon."

To this graphic description little need be added of the Tennyson of that time. He was in the midst of his greatest literary successes, and just beginning to reap some of the rewards of his labors. His fame increased rapidly from that time forward, and his fortune with his fame. For many years he has been a rich man, being a sharp and shrewd manager of his worldly affairs. His investments have always proved to be paying ones; and for a long time he has had whatever prices he named for his poems. He has a beautiful place at Farringford, Isle of Wight, and another country seat at Aldworth, in Surrey. He also owns a house in London, although he spends very little time there. He kept up his visits to the Carlyles during his occasional stays in the metropolis, until the death of his old friends. He was very fond of Mrs. Carlyle, her sharp wit [Pg 200] amusing him, and her appreciation of his own work flattering him. She gives occasional pleasant mention of him in her letters. Over his later work Carlyle was not enthusiastic, although he retained his friendship for the man. In 1867, after the death of his wife, he gives us his last glimpse of the poet, which is as characteristic as the other:—

> "We read at first Tennyson's 'Idyls,' with profound recognition of the finely elaborated execution, and also of the inward perfection of vacancy—and, to say truth, with considerable impatience at being treated so very like infants though the lollipops were so superlative. We gladly changed for one Emerson's 'English Traits;' and read that with increasing and ever increasing satisfaction every evening; blessing heaven that there were still books for grown-up people too."

According to Carlyle, what Tennyson needed was a Task; and wanting that, he almost lost his way among the will-o'-wisps. High art, in the eyes of Carlyle, was but a poor "task" for a man like Tennyson. Upon this point the world will not be likely to agree with him, nor in his judgment of the wonderful "Idyls of the King." Although Tennyson, like Carlyle himself, has written too far into the shadows of age, he will not be judged by the labors of his old age, but by the matchless products of his prime. These are surely a priceless possession for the readers of the future, as well as for the men of his own time.

In the autobiography of Sir Henry Taylor we have this glimpse of the poet, in a letter from Mrs. Cameron to that gentleman:—

> "Alfred has grown, he says, much fonder of you since your last visit here. He says he feels now he is beginning to know you and not to feel afraid of you; and that he is beginning to get over your extreme insolence to him when he was young and you were in your meridian splendor and glory. So one reads your simplicity. He was very violent with the girls on the subject of the rage for autographs. He said he believed every crime and every vice in the world was connected with the passion for autographs and [Pg 201] anecdotes and records; that the desiring anecdotes and acquaintance with the lives of

> great men was treating them like pigs, to be ripped open for the public; that he knew he himself should be ripped open like a pig; that he thanked God Almighty with his whole heart and soul that he knew nothing, and that the world knew nothing, of Shakspeare but his writings."

All of which sounds not unlike what Carlyle himself might have said in those days; and yet what personal revelations he made to the world before his death!

The news that Lord Tennyson is writing his autobiography may be sent by cable almost any day now, and the world will not receive it with any great surprise, but with very great interest and pleasure. This dislike of being lionized and overrun by celebrity hunters is probably one great reason why the poet prefers the solitude of the country to a residence in London. His servants and family guard him very securely from unwelcome visitors in his country home. The injunctions against disturbing him while at his work are so strong, that one day during the life of Prince Albert that distinguished *attaché* of royalty was refused admittance at the door. The poet formed a friendship with the Prince, however, later in life, and is now an occasional visitor to the Queen at Windsor. He is also a favorite with the Princess of Wales and other members of the royal family. But even such august friends as these do not draw him often from his solitude. Mr. Gladstone begs him in vain for a visit, and his invitations to the houses of the great lords are of course many and importunate; but of late he refuses them all. He says he will never again voluntarily pass a week in London, and he is not more fond of visits to country houses than to the city. Nor can we wonder much at this. He has never been a society man, and now that he is old, and growing somewhat feeble, the effort to conform to the demands of a conventional life is harder than ever. He tried taking a house in London and spending the season there, not many years ago, but wearied of it very quickly, and gave up the idea forever. While in London at that [Pg 202] time he always appeared in public in the picturesque wide-awake hat of the Italian bandit, and always, even in warm weather, wore a cloak. The costume is very becoming, and the poet can afford to indulge his individual tastes in the matter of dress; so everybody said how poetical he looked, and, on the whole, his eccentricity was a success. He has always had a great contempt for the conventionalities of dress, and many laughable anecdotes have been told concerning his appearance at the Isle of Wight. When young he was really handsome, though he always wore his hair long, and looked as if he would be the better for a barber; but now he is very gray and wizened, stoops badly, and shows that he has smoked, as Carlyle said, infinite tobacco. Tennyson has always exercised a judicious hospitality, but never overburdened himself with company. His favorite time for guests is from Saturday until Monday, and those who are so fortunate as to be invited enjoy very greatly the distinction. Among his favorite guests is Henry Irving. A few years before his death Garibaldi paid the poet a visit, which was much enjoyed by both. Years ago, when the poet was more in London than now, a little knot of literary friends had a standing engagement to dine together once a month, and the parties were almost the ideal of unconventional friendliness. Among the number were Carlyle, Cunningham, Mill, Thackeray, Forster, Stirling, Landor, and Macready. Here the conversation was of the best, Carlyle always coming out strong, and all the rest content to listen. However, Carlyle, unlike many great conversers, never monopolized the conversation. It was always dialogue and not monologue with Carlyle in any mixed company, though he would discourse at length to one or two visitors. Tennyson, like many men of letters, loves to talk about his own work, and is very fond of reading his poems to his friends. This is, of course, very delightful to those friends, if the reading be not too prolonged, although he is said to chant them in rather a disagreeable manner. He is a great [Pg 203] egotist, and does not like to listen to other people when they talk about themselves. We are told that Charles Sumner once paid him a visit, and bored him very much by a long talk upon American affairs in which Tennyson took no interest. When Sumner finally made a sufficient pause, Tennyson changed the subject by inquiring if his visitor had ever read "The Princess." Sumner replied that it was one of his favorite poems, whereupon Tennyson handed him the book and asked him to read. Sumner began, but was soon stopped by Tennyson, who wished to show him how a passage should be read. He went on reading aloud in his high nasal voice, until Sumner grew very weary, but did not dare to move for fear of being thought unappreciative. On and on read the poet, page after page, never making a moment's pause or giving Sumner any chance to escape, until he had read the whole poem. It is said that Sumner never dared pay him another visit. Being a decided egotist himself, it was painfully hard for the distinguished American to subordinate himself for so long a time, and his friends amused themselves very much at the idea.

Tennyson undoubtedly has a high opinion of his work; but he does not go quite to the length of Wordsworth in such self-admiration, as Wordsworth would read no poetry but his own, while Tennyson is a generous admirer of the work of fellow-poets.

Tennyson's married life has been one of the happiest on record. He addresses his wife in these lines:—

> "Dear, near, and true—no truer Time himself
> Can prove you, though he make you evermore
> Dearer and nearer."

One cannot think, when he witnesses the devotion of the poet to his wife, that he ever regrets the "Amy shallow-hearted," the "Amy mine no more," of his youth; and the reader certainly cannot regret her, if it is really to her that we owe "Locksley Hall." Mrs. Tennyson has been something of an invalid, and the poet and his sons, Hallam and Lionel, may often be seen wheeling her on the [Pg 204] lawn at Farringford. Of the house at Farringford Miss Thackeray, who is an old friend of the

family, as was her father before her, tells us:—

> "The house itself seemed like a charmed palace, with green walls without and speaking walls within. There hung Dante with his solemn nose and wreath; Italy gleamed over the doorways; friends' faces lined the way; books filled the shelves, and a glow of crimson was everywhere; the great oriel window in the drawing-room was full of green and golden leaves, of the sound of birds, and of the distant sea."

She continues:—

> "I first knew the place in the autumn, but perhaps it is even more beautiful in spring-time, when all day the lark trills high overhead, and then when the lark has flown out of our hearing the thrushes begin, and the air is sweet with scents from the many fragrant shrubs. The woods are full of anemones and primroses; narcissus grows wild in the lower fields; a lovely creamy stream of flowers flows along the lanes, and lies hidden in the levels; hyacinth-pools of blue shine in the woods; and then with a later burst of glory comes the gorse, lighting up the country round about, and blazing round about the beacon hill. The beacon hill stands behind Farringford. If you follow the little wood of nightingales and thrushes, and follow the lane where the blackthorn hedges shine in spring-time (lovely dials that illuminate to show the hour), you come to the downs, and climbing their smooth steps you reach 'Mr. Tennyson's Down,' where the beacon-staff stands firm upon the mound. Then following the line of the coast you come at last to the Needles, and may look down upon the ridge of rocks that rises crisp, sharp, shining, out of the blue wash of fierce delirious waters."

Since Tennyson's elevation to the peerage there has been an infinite amount of squibbing at his expense, and some very good parodies upon his poems have been circulated. The "Pall Mall Gazette" parodies "Lady Clara Vere de Vere" thus:— [Pg 205]

"Baron Alfred Vere de Vere,
  Of me you win no new renown:
You thought to daze the country-folk
  And cockneys when you came to town.
See Wordsworth, Shelley, Cowper, Burns,
  Withdraw in scorn, and sit retired;
The last of some six hundred earls
  Is not a place to be desired.

"Baron Alfred Vere de Vere,
  We thought you proud to bear your name;
Your pride is yet no mate for ours,
  Too proud to think a title fame.
We had the genius—not the lord;
  We love the poet's truer charms,
A simple singer with his dreams
  Is worth a hundred coats-of-arms."

And so on to the close:—

"Alfred, Alfred Vere de Vere,
  If time be heavy on your hands,
Are there no toilers in our streets,
  Nor any poor in all these lands?
Oh, teach the weak to strive and hope;
  Oh, teach the great to help the low;
Pray Heaven for a noble heart,
  And let the foolish title go."

There was undoubtedly much disappointment that Tennyson did not refuse the title bestowed upon him, as he had previously declined to be knighted, and was looked upon as something of a liberal. He probably was this when young, judging by some things in his writings; but he is now looked upon as a tory of the tories.

Tennyson has probably received higher prices for his poems than any other poet. When he was paid ten pounds a line for "Sea Dreams," it was considered a fabulous price; but he has received much more than that since.

During his long literary life—for he has been writing over fifty years—he has of course written a great deal; yet he is very slow and laborious in composition, and spends much time in rewriting and polishing. The garden song in "Maud" was rewritten fifty times, and almost as great labor has been given to other famous bits of writing. He was seventeen years in writing "In [Pg 206] Memoriam," and he brought it almost to perfection of finish; but he has spent laborious years upon poems which are comparative failures. After the inspiration has waned, or if the inspiration is wanting in the first place, the pains taken in revision go for little in the making of a poem which will live. Given the inspiration, and the labor usually, though not always, adds to its chances for immortality. Tennyson, with all his fastidious delicacy in writing, is a robust, manly man,—strong, healthy, active, fond of out-of-door life, and not greatly given to study. He spends

whole days in the open air, and has all an Englishman's fondness for walking. He is martial in spirit, too, and rejoices in the heroic deeds of his countrymen. He can write a spirited war song, as he proved a few years ago when he thrilled all England with the lyric:—

"Form, form, riflemen, form;
Ready, be ready to meet the storm."

On the whole, Tennyson must be said to have had a very prosperous and well-ordered life. He has enjoyed more of the blessings of this world than almost any one of his famous contemporaries; and his name is likely to live after that of most of the others shall have passed away. He has had the appreciation and the applause of all of the great men of his time, and the friendship of such as he desired; and his old age is full of honor, and ministered unto by loving and faithful hands. May it still be long before an admiring world shall read at the end of his life's story the words, "IN MEMORIAM, ALFRED TENNYSON."

[Pg 207]

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE.

"Come to Concord," wrote Ellery Channing to Hawthorne once upon a time; "Emerson is away, and nobody here to bore you;"—which sentence contains a gentle hint to the posterity of the two most distinguished men of letters America has produced that even the mystic and the seer sometimes palled upon the appetites of his personal friends. If any man could be supposed to be a hero to his valet, that man was surely Emerson; but his gifted neighbor seems not to have had any strong relish for his society. Neither did Hawthorne really enjoy Thoreau, who would seem to have been a sufficiently original person to have interested him, merely as a study of character. But it does not appear that Hawthorne was ever particularly fond of the society of men of letters, even though they were also men of genius. He refused to go to the Saturday Club of Authors, but would play cards with sea-captains in the smoking-room of his boarding-house in Liverpool, evening after evening. Indeed, he liked the piquant flavor of what is commonly called low society, when he required any society outside his home, better than that which would have seemed more adapted to his taste. We mean simply by this the society of back-woodsmen, sailors, laborers, and old hard-headed farmers of New England stock, with their strong provincial dialect.

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Mr. Emerson himself liked the raciness of the conversation of such men, and, indeed, we think almost all men of genius have something of the same taste. When we read what Mrs. Hawthorne says of the manner of conversation between her husband and Emerson, it can scarcely be considered remarkable that Hawthorne should not have cared to confine himself to the society of the sage. She says, speaking of Hawthorne:—

> "Mr. Emerson delights in him; he talks to him all the time, and Mr. Hawthorne looks answers. He seems to fascinate Emerson. Whenever he comes to see him he takes him away, so that no one may interrupt him in his close and dead-set attack upon his ear."

There is a one-sidedness to a conversation of this nature which might well weary a person in the body; and only a disembodied spirit, it may be surmised, could thoroughly enjoy it. A fine thing to do would be to put two of those great conversationalists against each other, as was sometimes done with Sydney Smith and Macaulay. It is said that the two would sit glaring at each other and maintain perfect silence; whereas either one of them apart from the other would discourse for three hours without taking breath. Imagine the horrible agony of those among the auditors who were not interested in the subject of the oration!—and there must always have been some among the number so situated.

One remembers how Shelley got rid of the old woman down in Conway, and wonders why the ruse was never tried upon Macaulay by some of his victims. Shelley, it is said, was once riding in a stage in that region, and the only passenger beside himself was an old woman with two huge baskets filled with onions and cabbage respectively. She was huge herself and much incumbered

with fat, and the day was excessively warm. Shelley was one of those delicate mortals who have been known to "die of a rose in aromatic pains," and after a while the presence of the old woman nearly drove him to distraction. He pretended that it had quite done so, and suddenly throwing [Pg 209] himself into the bottom of the stage he glared at the old woman and shouted:—

"For God's sake let us sit upon the ground,
And tell sad stories of the death of kings:
How some have been deposed, some slain in war,
Some haunted by the ghosts they have deposed,
Some poisoned by their wives, some sleeping killed,—
ALL MURDERED."

Before the last two words—which he rendered with more than an actor's effect—were fairly out of his mouth, the old woman by her shrieks had summoned the guard, and was released from the company of the madman. Shelley was often induced by his friends to show them how he got rid of the old woman, and the exhibition always called for uproarious applause. There is a hint in it for any well-bred company who may be bored to the point of extinction by a distinguished member. The only wonder is that in some cases the sudden madness is not real rather than assumed.

Hawthorne was eminently capable of being bored to this point of desperation, and his mother and elder sister saved themselves from any danger of this kind by voluntarily living the lives of recluses. Julian Hawthorne tells us:—

> "His mother, a woman of fine gifts but extreme sensibility lost her husband in her twenty-eighth year; and from an exaggerated, almost Hindoo-like, construction of the law of seclusion which the public taste of that day imposed upon widows, she withdrew entirely from society and permitted the habit of solitude to grow upon her to such a degree that she actually remained a strict hermit to the end of her long life, or for more than forty years after Captain Hawthorne's death. Such behavior on the mother's part could not fail to have its effect upon the children. They had no opportunity to know what social intercourse meant; their peculiarities and eccentricities were at least negatively encouraged; they grew to regard themselves as something apart from the general world. It is saying much for the sanity and healthfulness of the minds of these [Pg 210] three children, that their loneliness distorted their judgment—their perception of the relation of things—as little as it did."

The sister is described as having in many respects an intellect as commanding and penetrating as that of her brother, and yet she followed in the way of her mother and passed her life in almost complete seclusion, caring for nothing but the reading of books and the taking of long walks, sleeping always until noon, and sitting up until two or three o'clock in the morning in perfect solitude. She boarded for many years after her mother's death at a farm-house on the seashore, and could not be induced to come out, even to attend the funeral of her brother at Concord, although he was her pride and idol throughout life.

Had Hawthorne himself been less fortunate in his marriage, there is little doubt that his own peculiarities would have become exaggerated, perhaps even to the extent of those of his sister. But he married a woman who both understood and appreciated him, and whom he idolized. From this union grew all the happiness and success of his life. His son says:—

> "To attempt to explain and describe his career without taking this event into consideration would be like trying to imagine a sun without heat or a day without a sun. Nothing seems less likely than that he should have accomplished his work in literature independently of her sympathy and companionship. Not that she afforded him any direct and literal assistance in the composition of his books and stories: her gifts were wholly unsuited to such employment, and no one apprehended more keenly than she the solitariness and uniqueness of his genius, insomuch that she would have deemed it something not far removed from profanation to have offered to advise or sway him in regard to his literary productions. She believed in his inspiration, and her office was to promote, as far as in her lay, the favorableness of the conditions under which it should manifest itself."

It was to this that she devoted her life,—to comfort, to cheer, to soothe, to inspire, to guard from [Pg 211] all outward annoyances, the poetical and sensitive man who believed in her so implicitly and leaned upon her so confidently. They led a very quiet and secluded life during the most of his literary career, and seemed almost to resent any intrusion of the outside world upon them, not only as regarded persons, but even as regarded agitating questions and pressing ideas.

They took very slight interest in the questions which stirred New England life in their day, and held entirely aloof from the reforms which shook the social life around them from centre to foundation-stone. Indeed, he had a deep-seated dislike to the genus Reformer, and presented his picture of the whole race in "Hollingsworth." Perhaps he had known some individual reformer of that odious type, and out of this grew his dislike of the whole species. At any rate, the men—of whom New England was full at that time—who

"Blew the fiery breath of storm
Through the hoarse trumpet of Reform"

never received much aid or sympathy from Nathaniel Hawthorne or his wife. Nor will they,

apparently, from his son, who says of his father, "He was not a teetotaler any more than he was an abolitionist or a Thug."

But if their sympathies did not go out very widely to the outside world, there was the most perfect sympathy and companionship in the home life, and no more beautiful record of a perfect marriage has ever been made than this life of the Hawthornes presents. Yes, it was a happy life they led, these two in their married isolation, despite poverty and obscurity and a lack of appreciation in the early time, and of trial, from ill-health and other causes, in later years. He lived like Carlyle, a good deal in the shadows of his famous books, and was sometimes for months in the possession of the demon of composition. While composing "The Marble Faun" he thus writes in a letter: [Pg 212]

> "I sternly shut myself up, and come to close grips with the romance which I am trying to tear from my brain."

He was always discouraged about his work, and needed a deal of cheering regarding it. He says in one place:

> "My own individual taste is for an altogether different class of books from what I write. If I were to meet with such books as mine by another writer, I do not believe I should be able to get through with them."

And again:—

> "I will try to write a more genial book, but the Devil himself always gets into my inkstand, and I can only get him out by penfuls."

Still again:—

> "Heaven sees fit to visit me with the unshakable conviction that all this series of articles is good for nothing. I don't think that the public will bear with much more of this sort of thing."

His letters are often full of this moody discouragement, though lighted up always by some gleams of his humor. For instance, he writes to Fields:—

> "Do make some inquiries about Portugal,—in what part of the world it lies, and whether it is a Kingdom, an Empire, or a Republic. Also the expenses of living there, and whether the Minister would be much pestered with his own countrymen."

And later, when he was in Rome:—

> "I bitterly detest this Rome, and shall rejoice to bid it adieu forever; and I fully acquiesce in all the mischief and ruin that has ever happened to it from Nero's conflagration downward. In fact, I wish the very site of it had been obliterated before I ever saw it."

His complaints about his pens are really very amusing to those people—and their name is legion —who have had a like difficulty in pleasing themselves. He writes to Fields:— [Pg 213]

> "If you want me to write you a good novel, send me a good pen; not a gold one, but one which will not get stiff and rheumatic the moment I get attached to it. I never met with a good pen in my life."

To this last sentiment we think that a great multitude which no man can number will respond Amen. He says of them again:—

> "Nobody ever suffered more from pens than I have, and I am glad that my labor with the abominable little tool is drawing to a close."

In private conversation he enlivened his more serious thoughts often with vivid surprises of expression; and he had a mild way of making a severe remark, which reminded Charlotte Cushman of a man she once saw making such a disturbance in the gallery of a theatre that the play could hardly proceed. Cries of "Throw him over!" arose from all parts of the house, and the noise became furious. All was tumultuous chaos until a sweet and gentle female voice was heard in the pit, when all grew silent to hear:—

> "No, I pray you, my friends, don't throw him over. I beg that you will not throw him over, but—kill him where he is!"

It was only in the company of intimate personal friends, from whom all restraint was removed, that Hawthorne ever indulged in his natural buoyancy of spirits. Among them he occasionally condescended to uproarious fun. But he was like Dr. Johnson, who, when indulging in a scene of wild hilarity, suddenly exclaimed to his friends, as Beau Brummel approached, "Let us be grave; here comes a fool." If there was the slightest suspicion of there being a fool in the company Hawthorne always wore his armor. The pretentious and transcendental fools he hated worst of [Pg 214] all; and the young man who had no taste for the finite, but thought the infinite was the thing for him, always left him with a feeling as of asphyxia.

Hawthorne's atmosphere was really unhealthy for transcendentalists. No doubt his dislike of Margaret Fuller arose from this feeling of his that she was always acting a part, always straining after an effect. He loved simple, natural, unaffected people, and the part of a sibyl was very distasteful to him. He suspected the inspiration of green tea in much that Margaret said, and very ungallantly pronounced her a humbug. But as he did this only upon the paper of his own private diary, with no thought of it ever being paraded before a critical and captious world, we should not blame him too severely. And if he was mistaken in what he wrote concerning her husband and her life in Rome, as seems to be the fact, no doubt he was deceived by gossip-loving friends in Rome concerning the matter. One does not write gratuitous falsehoods upon the pages of one's private notebook about acquaintances, as a general rule. If he had desired to injure Margaret he would have put his supposed facts in a different place, no doubt, and not merely written them in a moment of spleen where he never expected them to be seen.

The publication of such comment as this, and Carlyle's mention of Charles Lamb and others, seems to be due entirely to the total depravity of literary executors. As George Eliot says, it is like uncovering the dead Byron's club-foot, when he had been so sensitive about it through life, as his friend Trelawny boasts that he did. Margaret Fuller was a large-brained, big-hearted woman, but that she and Hawthorne could not thoroughly fraternize is not a strange thing. We see another instance of such lack of appreciation of each other's qualities in Henry James and the Bostonians of the present time. Even the admirers of the Boston type get a little quiet amusement from his delicious satire, although their admiration of the reformers may remain unshaken. That the world [Pg 215] has got a little weary of the mutual admiration of the Boston coterie is an open secret. We have had a trifle too much of it from the day of Fields, who apparently invented Hawthorne, and would have put a patent upon him if possible, down to the present era of worship of that real hero, Emerson who, if he survives the laudations of his present army of admirers, may well hope for immortality.

The wife of Hawthorne was so different a person from the noble army of literary and artistic women who are so numerous to-day, but who in his time had just begun to assert themselves, that, believing her to be the perfect flower of womanhood, as he did, he could scarcely be expected to appreciate the Zenobias of that or of the present time.

Mrs. Hawthorne's sister, Elizabeth Peabody, was one of the women of the new era, and has spent her entire life in noble efforts to improve the world into which she was born; and who shall say whether Mrs. Hawthorne or Miss Peabody was the higher type of woman?

If we were obliged to compare Mrs. Hawthorne with the caricatures of the strong-minded woman in which novelists so delight,—those "housekeepers by the wrath of God,"—like Mrs. Jellaby and similar monstrosities, then the answer would not be hard. We could all cry, Mrs. Hawthorne, now and forever! But when we compare her to the strong-minded women like George Eliot, perfect wives, perfect home-makers, perfectly sympathetic and loyal comrades of their husbands, and lacking nothing of womanly softness or tenderness with all their strength, then the answer is not so simple. But doubtless the fact that God created both types may be accepted as evidence that He saw uses for both, and that even the women whom He made "fools to match the men" are not without their purpose in the economy of the universe.

Such thoughts as the following in regard to her husband, written by Mrs. Hawthorne after eight years of marriage, sound not unlike the rhapsodies of George Eliot concerning Mr. Lewes:— [Pg 216]

> "He has perfect dominion over himself in every respect, so that to do the highest, wisest, loveliest thing is not the least effort to him, any more than it is for a baby to be innocent. It is his spontaneous act, and a baby is not more unconscious of its innocence. I never knew such loftiness so simply borne. I have never known him to stoop from it in the most trivial household matter any more than in the larger or more public ones. If the Hours make out to reach him in his high sphere their wings are very strong. Happy, happiest is the wife who can bear such and so sincere testimony to her husband after eight years' intimate union. Such a person can never lose the prestige which commands and fascinates. I cannot possibly conceive of my happiness, but in a kind of blissful confusion live on. If I can only be so great, so high, so noble, so sweet as he, in any phase of my being, I shall be glad. I am not deluded nor mistaken, as the angels know now, and as all my friends will know in open vision."

We will quote but this one passage from her letters about him, though the Life is filled with similar ones, and will give but one of his love-letters to her, and that not entire. He says:—

> "Sometimes during my solitary life in our old Salem house it seemed to me as if I had only life enough to know that I was not alive, for I had no wife then to keep my heart warm. But at length you were revealed to me in the shadow of a seclusion as deep as my own. I drew nearer and nearer to you, and opened my heart to you, and you came to me, and will remain forever, keeping my heart warm, and renewing my life with your own. You only have taught me that I have a heart; you only have thrown a light deep downward and upward into my soul. You only have revealed me to myself, for without your aid my best knowledge of myself would have been merely to know my own shadow —to watch it flickering on the wall, and mistake its fantasies for my own real actions. . . . If the whole world stood between us we must have met; if we had been born in different ages we could not have been sundered!"

What was poverty and obscurity and isolation unto these two souls, so complete in each other that nothing else was desired? How deep a lesson might the young of these later days, who hesitate to take each other unless all things else may be added unto them, learn from this perfect marriage! How much, too, could they learn from the dignity and the refinement and the charm of that early home, where all was so simple, so humble, and yet so rich and satisfying! Would that we had more such homes of royal poverty in these days of vulgar pretence and showy unreality. More homes where there is no shamefacedness over the want of the luxuries of their neighbors, but a simple content with what it is possible to have honorably; where plain living is a religion, and where there is no insatiable longing for the unattainable. The worship of wealth, the feeling that there is no other good than money, is one of the most degrading features of our modern life. It is a falsehood, too. There is everything good in the world, and the most of the things which are best in life can be had with but a little money. No man is poor unless he feels poor. If a family are willing to live their own noble life, pitched in a high key, and with little regard for what their neighbors may say and think, it is still possible to be happy in this goodly world, though the bank account may be small, or there be no bank account in the case. The Ways and Means Committee of which Mrs. Hawthorne was chairman in her day could impart a world of wisdom to the fretful and ambitious wives of a generation of young men now upon the stage of action, who strive so hard to live like the people who have wealth at their command that they spoil the beautiful homes they might enjoy by an unceasing strife to appear to live better than they can afford to do. [Pg 217]

When Fortune began to smile upon the Hawthornes, after the immortal "Scarlet Letter" had been written and "The Blithedale Romance" had been added to it, they received her favors with thankful hearts, and knew how to spend wisely and well what came to them. But, as so often happens, it does not appear that they were any happier in their easier circumstances than in their poverty; probably not as happy, for the glamour of youth was gone, and the first zest of being had become dulled. Ill health, too, had come upon him, once so strong and perfect in body; and their home was measurably broken up after they first went abroad. The days at the Old Manse comprised the idyl of their lives. [Pg 218]

Here is what Hawthorne himself says of this time:—

> "My wife is in the strictest sense my sole companion, and I need no other; there is no vacancy in my mind any more than in my heart. In truth, I have spent so many years in total seclusion from all human society that it is no wonder if now I feel all my desires satisfied by this sole intercourse. But she has come to me from the midst of many friends and acquaintances; yet she lives from day to day in this solitude, seeing nobody but myself and our Molly, while the snow of our avenue is untrodden for weeks by any footstep save mine. Yet she is always cheerful. Thank God that I suffice for her boundless heart."

And, again, to her he writes:—

> "Dear Little Wife,—After finishing my record in the journal, I sat a long time in grandmother's chair thinking of many things; but the thought of thee, the great thought of thee, was among all other thoughts, like the pervading sunshine falling through the boughs and branches of a tree and tinging every separate leaf. And surely thou shouldst not have deserted me without manufacturing a sufficient quantity of sunshine to last till thy return. Art thou not ashamed?"

Concord was never the same to them after their return from Rome. The shadow of the coming separation was already around them. He writes, after the appearance of Longfellow's poem: "I, too, am weary, and look forward to the Wayside Inn." And, spite of the most loving ministrations of family and friends, he was soon brought to the rest which awaited him there. None could really regret that he had found the peace he sought; but the world seemed more thinly populated when it was known that the hand which had written "The Scarlet Letter," "The House of the Seven Gables," and "The Marble Faun" would write no more. "We carried him," said Fields, "through the blossoming orchards of Concord, and laid him down under a group of pines on a hill-side overlooking historic fields; the unfinished romance which had cost him such anxiety laid upon his coffin." And there, upon that Concord height which he has rendered world-famous, made a Delphian vale or a Mecca to so many pilgrims from his own land and from over sea, he sleeps well. There the sweet spring flowers of dear old New England bloom for him; there the Mayflower pierces the melting snow, and the shy, sweet violet gems the earliest green; there the dandelion glows in golden splendor, and the snowy daisies star the grass, and all the sweet succession of summer flowers troop in orderly array, until Autumn waves her torch, and the sumach and the goldenrod blaze out in wild magnificence, and the blue-fringed gentian hides in secret coverts. These are the fitting decorations of that grave. Piled marble or towering granite would lie too heavy on the heart of this child of Nature. And as the years shall pass, still will the humble grave continue to be visited. "Forgotten" will never be written upon the tombstone of Nathaniel Hawthorne. Still through the clear brilliance of New England winter nights will the stars look down tenderly upon it. Arcturus will stand guard over it, golden-belted Orion will send down quivering lances of light to illumine it, the pomp of blazing Jupiter shall envelop it, and the first radiance of the dawn shall silver its sacred slopes forever. [Pg 219]

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HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

In the city of Portland, that "beautiful town that is seated by the sea," in the year 1807 Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born, and in the delightful old ancestral home there he passed his youth. The house had been his mother's home since early childhood; in it she was married, and in it passed almost her entire life. It had been built by Mrs. Longfellow's father, General Peleg Wadsworth, in the year 1784, and was one of the finest mansions in the city at that time, standing, not as now, in the heart of the city, but out in the open fields. Mr. and Mrs. Longfellow passed here a long, beautiful, and happy life, devotedly attached to each other, fond and proud of their children, and much given to good works. Mr. Longfellow was a man of consequence in the community, much honored for his learning and ability, and much esteemed for his integrity, his cordial and kind manners, and his generous hospitality. He had graduated at Harvard College when very young, where he was a classmate of Dr. Channing, Judge Story, and other distinguished men, and much esteemed by them for the same qualities which made him popular in after-life. He was regarded as one of the purest and most high-minded youths who had at that time honored the college and been honored by it. Mrs. Longfellow was a very beautiful woman, fond of poetry and music, of dancing and social gayety, and a profound lover of Nature in all her [Pg 221] varied aspects. She was a tender and faithful wife and a most devoted mother. From her Mr. Longfellow doubtless inherited his poetic temperament and much that was most pleasing in his disposition.

Longfellow's childhood seems to have been a very happy one, passed in this beautiful home, with such parents, and surrounded by a delightful group of young friends. He was very fond of reverting to it, and all through his life cherished the memory of

"The friendships old, and the early loves"

which used to come back to him

"With a Sabbath sound as of doves
In quiet neighborhoods."

He remembered, too, more vividly than many men of mature years,

"The gleams and glooms that dart
Across the school-boy's brain;
The song and the silence in the heart
That in part are prophecies and in part
Are longings wild and vain."

When only fifteen years of age he entered Bowdoin College, with a brother two years older than himself, and graduated fourth in his class in 1825. His Commencement oration was upon "The Life and Writings of Chatterton." He was also invited to deliver a poem the day after Commencement, as he had already begun to write verses which had been printed in the local newspapers. Almost immediately after his graduation he was offered a professorship in the college, and requested to visit Europe to prepare himself for its duties, making further studies in the modern languages for that purpose.

The proposal was eagerly accepted, and he sailed the following spring in a packet-ship from New York. The voyage occupied a month, and was a remarkably pleasant one, thoroughly enjoyed by the young traveller. There is nothing remarkable in the letters he wrote home during this first [Pg 222] trip to Europe, when he visited France, Spain, Germany, Italy (where he spent a year), and

England. He assumed the duties of his professorship immediately upon his return, at a salary of one thousand dollars a year. He was very popular with the students from the first, and became quite a power in the University. At this time he became a contributor to the "North American Review," and may be said to have fairly begun his literary career. In the year 1831 he was married to Mary Storer Potter, a young lady of Portland, to whom he had long been attached. She was one of the famous beauties of that town, noted for its beautiful women, and a member of the social circle in which the Longfellows moved. The marriage was in every way suitable, and pleasing to the friends of both parties. She was a lady highly educated for that day, and possessed of a mind of unusual power. She was also of a most cheerful and amiable disposition; and the world opened very brightly before the young professor. They began housekeeping in Brunswick in a house still standing in Federal Street. He gives this picture of a morning there:—

> "I can almost fancy myself in Spain, the morning is so soft and beautiful. The tessellated shadow of the honeysuckle lies motionless upon my study floor, as if it were a figure in the carpet; and through the open window comes the fragrance of the wild-brier and the mock-orange. The birds are carolling in the trees, and their shadows flit across the window as they dart to and fro in the sunshine; while the murmur of the bee, the cooing of doves from the eaves, and the whirring of a little humming-bird that has its nest in the honeysuckle, send up a sound of joy to meet the rising sun."

Here was passed a very busy and happy period of Mr. Longfellow's life. He was young, gifted, fortunately situated, and beloved, and as yet no shadow had darkened his life. He employed his leisure in writing a series of sketches of travel which were afterwards published as "Outre-Mer," and he began to write poetry again after an interval of nearly eight years. He also began a scrap-book devoted to notices of his writings, which he christened "Puffs and Counter Blasts," and kept for the greater part of his life. [Pg 223]

He passed five and a half years in Brunswick, perhaps the happiest years of his life, for he had youth and health and high hope at this time; and then he began to long for a somewhat wider sphere. Very opportunely came the offer of a professorship in Harvard University, which was at once accepted, in April, 1835. He sailed for Europe to make himself familiar with the Scandinavian tongues and to pass some further time in Germany. He was accompanied by his wife and two of her young lady friends. They remained in London for a few weeks, and made acquaintance with many distinguished people,—among others the Carlyles, to whom they had brought an introduction from Mr. Emerson. They paid a visit to the seer at Chelsea, of which Mrs. Longfellow wrote:—

> "Mr. Carlyle of Craigenputtock was soon after announced, and passed a half-hour with us much to our delight. He has very unpolished manners, and a broad Scottish accent, but such fine language and beautiful thoughts that it is truly delightful to listen to him. He invited us to take tea with them at Chelsea, where they now reside. We were as much charmed with Mrs. C. as with her husband. She is a lovely woman with very simple and pleasing manners. She is also very talented and accomplished; and how delightful it is to see such modesty combined with such power to please!"

They left London for Copenhagen and Stockholm in June, and were much delighted with the new land they visited. To read in the public square at midnight; to pass through groves of pine and fir with rose-colored cones; to hear the watchman call from the church tower four times toward the four quarters of the heaven, "Ho, watchmen, ho! Twelve the clock hath stricken. God keep our town from fire and brand, and enemy's hand;" to have boys and girls run before to open the gates; to hear the peasants cry, "God bless you," when you sneezed,—all these little things gave them the delight which young travellers alone can experience. [Pg 224]

But alas! that delight was of short duration. Mrs. Longfellow was taken sick in Amsterdam in October, and they were detained there for a month. She seemed to recover, and they journeyed on to Rotterdam, where she fell ill again and died the 29th of November. Her husband wrote of her that "she closed her peaceful life by a still more peaceful death, and though called away when life was brightest, went without a murmur and in perfect willingness to the bosom of her God." Mr. Longfellow immediately resumed his journey, going on to Dusseldorf and from there to Bonn. He took a carriage and journeyed along the banks of the Rhine, by the "castled crag of Drachenfels" and the other storied places of that famous river, in complete silence, though with a pleasant companion by his side. They visited castles and cathedrals, and wonderful ruins, and some of the most picturesque points of that picturesque land, but in a gloom which nothing could break or even lighten. So on to Heidelberg, where they were to sojourn for a time, and where Mr. Longfellow was to pursue his studies. Here he found Mr. Bryant, whom he had never met, but who cheered and soothed him as only a fellow-countryman and a man like-minded with himself could have done. Mr. Bryant did not remain long in Heidelberg, however, though his wife and daughters stayed through the winter and continued to cheer Mr. Longfellow's loneliness. He made work his chief consoler, however, and accomplished a great deal in the line of his chosen career.

Like Paul Fleming, into whose story he wove many of the experiences of this part of his life, "he buried himself in books, in old dusty books. He worked his way diligently through the ancient poetic lore of Germany into the bright sunny land where walk the modern bards and sing." Into the Silent Land he walked with Salis; he wept with the melancholy Werther, or laughed with the gentle Meister; he pondered deeply over the congenial Schiller, but delighted most of all in Jean [Pg 225]

Paul the Only, in whose prodigal fancy he lost for a time the memory of his sorrows. But ever at his side, as he walked on the banks of the beautiful Neckar and gazed up at the lofty mountains which surround Heidelberg, there seemed to walk the Being Beauteous who had whispered with her dying breath, "I will be with you and watch over you." Many years afterwards he embalmed the memory of this young and beautiful wife in the poem called "The Footsteps of Angels." The summer following his bereavement he started on a tour through Switzerland, finding at the very outset of that journey the tablet containing the inscription which he made the motto of "Hyperion" and of his future life: "Look not mournfully into the Past, it comes not back again; wisely improve the Present, it is thine; go forth to meet the shadowy Future without fear and with a manly heart." At Interlachen he met Miss Frances Appleton, and in the pages of "Hyperion" the world has read of the romance which followed that meeting. We also read, in the journals published recently, some records of those days. Here is one of the earliest:—

> "A day of true and quiet enjoyment, travelling from Thun to Entelbuch on our way to Lucerne. The time glided too swiftly away. We read the 'Genevieve' of Coleridge, and the 'Christabel,' and many scraps of song, and little German ballads of Uhland, simple and strange. At noon we stopped at Langnau, and walked into the fields, and sat down by a stream of pure water that turned a mill; and a little girl came out of the mill and brought us cherries; and the shadow of the trees was pleasant, and my soul was filled with peace and gladness."

And a little later:—

> "Took a carriage to St. Germain-en-Laye to see the *Fête des Layes*. The day was pleasant, with shifting clouds and sunshine. They told me I was in good spirits. It was the surface only, stirred by the passing breeze and catching the sunshine of the moment. I have often observed, amid a chorus of a hundred voices and the sound of a hundred instruments, amid all this whirlwind of the vexed air, that I could distinguish the melancholy vibration of a single string touched by a finger. It had a mournful, sobbing sound. Thus amid the splendor of a festival,—the rushing crowd, and song, and sounds of gladness, and a thousand mingling emotions,—distinctly audible to the mind's ear are the pulsations of some melancholy chord of the heart, touched by the finger of memory. And it has a mournful, sobbing sound."

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But tearing himself away from the sadness of the old memory and the fascination of the new presence alike, Mr. Longfellow returned to America in December, 1836, and assumed the duties of his professorship at Cambridge. Here he soon formed those friendships which were to him a life-long blessing and delight. They fall naturally into two groups, the earlier and later, though some of the most intimate of these friendships formed in youth lasted until near the close of Mr. Longfellow's life. Among the early friends were George W. Greene, with whom he corresponded most affectionately for many years; Mr. Samuel Ward, a brother of Mrs. Julia Ward Howe; Professor Felton; Hilliard, Mr. Sumner's law partner; Cleveland, a scholar living at ease in Brookline; Hawthorne; and always and ever Mr. Sumner himself. Emerson, also, and Prescott were his friends, but not so intimate as the others. Here is a glimpse of the author of that series of fascinating histories, since so popular, in a letter to Greene:—

> "This morning, as I was sitting at breakfast, a gentleman on horseback sent up word that I should come down to him. It was Prescott, author of 'Ferdinand and Isabella.' He is an early riser, and rides about the country. There on his horse sat the great author. He is one of the best fellows in the world, and much my friend; handsome and forty; a great diner-out; gentle, companionable, and modest; quite astonished to find himself famous."

Then comes a glimpse of the as yet unknown author of "The Scarlet Letter:"—

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> "I shall see Hawthorne to-morrow. He lives in Salem, and we meet and sup together to-morrow evening at the Tremont House. Your health shall be remembered. He is a strange owl; a very peculiar individual, with a dash of originality about him very pleasant to behold. How I wish you could be with us! Ach! my beloved friend, when I one day sit with you in Italy again, with nothing on the snow-white tablecloth save bread still whiter, and fruit, and that most delicate wine 'in beakers full of the warm South,' will we pledge the happy present time and those sorrows and disappointments which are our schoolmasters. Sumner is the nearest and warmest thing I can send you. When you have him you will think you have me, he can tell you so much of me."

To this early group were added, later on, Agassiz, Lowell, Dana, James T. Fields, Norton, Dr. Holmes, and others; but those mentioned were his real intimates throughout life. With Emerson he maintained a calm and admiring friendship, but saw less of him than of the others. Bryant and Whittier and George W. Curtis he loved and admired, but they were more distant and not his every-day companions. Dr. Samuel G. Howe belonged, if not exactly to the earliest group of friends, yet among friends both early and late. These men are all historic now, and it seems strange to find Longfellow writing of them as he does in letters and journals. For instance:—

> "Also Mr. Emerson, a clergyman, with new views of life, death, and immortality; author of 'Nature,' and friend of Carlyle. He is one of the finest lecturers I ever heard, with magnificent passages of true prose poetry. But it is all dreamery, after all."

Strange, too, to find Carlyle writing to the young poet after the receipt of a volume of his poems, before reading them, as is said to be the fashion of great men when they wish to let unknown authors down easily and gracefully:— [Pg 228]

> "About the same time there came an indistinct message that a copy of your poems had been left for me at Fraser the bookseller's. It now beckons to me from one of my shelves, asking always, 'When wilt thou have a cheerful, vacant day?'"

Very natural it seems, though, to find that Carlyle is already writing from "a hideous immeasurable treadmill, a smoky, soul-confusing Babylon," and that he addresses "only one prayer to the heavens,—that he were well out of it before it takes the life out of him."

Pleasantest and strongest perhaps of all his friendships was that for Charles Sumner, who was lecturing at the Law School when Mr. Longfellow first came to Cambridge. Begun when both were young men just launching forth on their great but so different career, it continued until death separated them, without a shadow of estrangement or disloyalty, but with ever increasing ardor of affection. Sumner was inclined to literature at that time, and indeed for many years afterwards, his political career being rather forced upon him by the stormy times. A club was formed at this time, called the "Five of Clubs," consisting of Longfellow, Sumner, Hilliard, Cleveland, and Felton. They read and criticised each other's writings, and enjoyed a hearty social intercourse. Awhile afterwards, when they began to speak well of each other's articles in the reviews, the newspapers gave them the name of the "Mutual Admiration Society." Not inapplicable, probably, but applicable to the literary men of all time. What is the great literary guild anywhere but a mutual admiration society? What a large portion of our best literature would be blotted out if what one great writer has said of another should be destroyed! Would we have this so? Nay, verily! Certainly there was no lack of warm admiration, and warm expression of it, among this little group of friends; and between Sumner and Longfellow, at least, these [Pg 229] expressions continued throughout life, and were heartily sincere to the last. One after another Longfellow's poems were submitted to his friends' criticism, and each received its due meed of praise or gentle censure. Mr. Sumner's speeches were received by Longfellow with great enthusiasm always, and praised heartily and unreservedly. Every step in his career was watched with the most eager interest and intense sympathy. It is one of the most beautiful friendships on record. One wonders in reading the journal what Longfellow's life would have been without these constant visits and letters from Sumner. Every Sabbath was spent by the statesman at the poet's house, when the former was in the vicinity of Boston, and many and many are the records during the week,—Sumner to dine, Sumner to tea, Sumner to pass the night, and always some note made of the late and pleasant talk the pair had together. When Sumner goes to Washington he is sadly missed, and such little notes as this sent after him in tender remembrance:—

> "Your farewell note came safe and sad; and Sunday no well-known footstep in the hall, nor sound of cane laid upon the table. We ate our dinner somewhat silently by ourselves and talked of you far off, looking at your empty chair. Away, phantoms! I will not think of this too much for fear that which you say may prove truer than I want it to be. Let us not prophesy sadness."

When Sumner was expected to make a speech all were alert at Craigie House, and often his friend would send him some such greeting as this:—

> "It is now eleven o'clock of the forenoon, and you have just taken your seat in the Senate and arranged your artillery to bombard Nebraska! We listen with deepest interest, but shall not hear the report of your guns till to-morrow, you are so far off. If, after all, the enemy prevails, it will be one dishonest victory more in the history of the world. But the enemy will not prevail. A seeming victory will be a real defeat."

Then, after the speech was read:— [Pg 230]

> "All this morning of my birthday, my dear Senator, I have devoted to your speech on Nebraska, which came by the morning's mail. It is very noble, very cogent, very eloquent, very complete. How any one can get over it or under it or through it or round it, it is impossible to imagine."

Then, after the cowardly and fiendish attack upon Sumner in the Senate Chamber:—

> "I have no words to write you about this savage atrocity; only enough to express our sorrow and sympathy for yourself. We have been in great distress. Owen came to tell us of this great feat of arms of the 'Southern chivalry.' He was absolutely sobbing. I was much relieved on seeing your despatch to your mother, and to hear that George was going to you directly. A brave and noble speech you made, never to die out of the memories of men."

Then, a day or two later:—

> "I have just been reading again your speech. It is the greatest voice on the greatest subject that has been uttered since we became a nation. No matter for insults—we feel them with you; no matter for wounds—we also bleed in them."

But in the days of which we are writing, all these stormy troublous times were yet far in the

future, and the world looked bright and pleasant to these afterward saddened friends. The acquaintance with Miss Appleton had been renewed after her return to Boston, and the poet was by this time deeply devoted to her, and hopeful of one day winning her for his own. He became something of a dandy in those days, and showed a fondness for color in coats, waistcoats, and neckties; and the ladies looked at him a little doubtfully, thinking perhaps, as they had done of Paul Fleming, that "his gloves were a shade too light for a strictly virtuous man." Six years passed after the first meeting with Miss Appleton in Europe before Mr. Longfellow finally claimed her for his bride. He had been a patient as well as an ardent lover, and was rewarded in 1843 by the hand of her he sought. She was now a woman of twenty-five, of stately presence, cultivated [Pg 231] mind, and calm but gracious manners. Her face was not "faultily faultless" nor "icily regular," but both beautiful and expressive. Mr. Longfellow was now thirty-six years old, and a man of rapidly widening fame. Mr. Appleton purchased for the newly married couple the old Craigie House in Cambridge, which had been Mr. Longfellow's home ever since his arrival there. Most visitors to Cambridge are familiar with this old Colonial mansion which had once been the headquarters of General Washington. It stands far back in the ample grounds which surround it, and is painted in yellow and white. It is on Brattle Street as one goes from Harvard College to Mount Auburn. The front is about eighty feet in length, including the verandas, and a wooden railing extends around the roof. There is an Italian balustrade along the first terrace, and a hedge of lilacs leads up to the door. Old historic elms throw their broad arms all about the place. The interior of the house is very handsome, and is considered a fine specimen of the old Colonial style. Altogether it made a most delightful home for the poet and his bride, and there they spent the remainder of their lives.

About the time of his marriage Mr. Longfellow's eyes failed him on account of overstraining them, and one of Mrs. Longfellow's first wifely duties was to furnish eyes for her husband. She read to him and wrote for him a great deal for several years, and the close companionship which this required was very pleasant to both. He was a very busy man in those days; for, contrary to the popular impression, Mr. Longfellow did a great deal of hard work at the college for a good many years. His was no honorary position, but a genuine working professorship, involving the preparation of a great number of lectures during each year and close class-work besides. He enjoyed this work very much for the first few years, but long before he resigned his position it became exceedingly burdensome to him. The college should have relieved him of the drudgery of [Pg 232] his professorship, and allowed him time for the preparation of special lectures upon really scholarly themes; but it had not the wisdom to do so, and exacted the labors of a dray-horse from this chained Pegasus. In the journal are many entries like the following:—

> "I seriously think of resigning my professorship. My time is so fully taken up by its lectures and other duties that I have none left for writing. Then my eyes are suffering, and the years are precious; and if I wish to do anything in literature it must be done now. Few men have written good poetry after fifty."

Again:—

> "I get very tired of the routine of this life. The bright autumn weather draws me away from study, and the brown branches of the leafless trees are more beautiful than books. We lead but one life here on earth. We must make that beautiful. And to do this, health and elasticity of mind are needful, and whatever endangers or impedes these must be avoided."

And again:—

> "The day of rest—the 'truce of God' between contending cares—is over, and the world begins again to swing round with clash and clang, like the wings of a windmill. Grind, grind, grind."

Some hint of real work may be found in this:—

> "The seventy lectures to which I am doomed next year hang over me like a dark curtain. Seventy lectures! who will have the patience to hear them? If my eyes were strong I should delight in it. But it will eat up a whole year, and I was just beginning so cheerily on my poem and looking forward to pleasant work on it next year."

Oh, the pity of it! Many men could have lectured to college boys on the modern languages and literature, if not as well as Longfellow, at least well enough; but who was there who could write his poems? That he should drudge on through his best years, giving only the odds and ends of his [Pg 233] time to his real life-work, seems an infinite pity. What might he not have done in those earlier years could he have gone fresh and untired to his musings and his dreams?

Emerson was wiser than he, when early in life he resolved to be content with the most modest means and to have possession of himself. He never drudged in a profession, but gave his full strength to his literary work. Longfellow should have done this at least ten years before he did. But five children had come into the family during the years of his last marriage, and poetry has not long been a paying investment in this country, although Longfellow in the later years received large sums for his work. He probably dropped his college work as soon as he felt that he could afford to do so; and after that, much of his important work was done. But it was not done with the buoyancy and freshness which the earlier years might have furnished, although some of his best poems were written after the change.

But the last twenty years of Mr. Longfellow's life were saddened inexpressibly by the loss of his wife, and all his later work is of a sombre hue, filled through and through, unconsciously, with his own sadness. Unconsciously we say, for he never intentionally rhymed his own sorrows. There is no personal mention of his griefs in all his later poems. The death of his wife occurred on the 9th of July in 1861, and was caused by burns received from having her clothing ignited by a match upon which she trod in their library, where she had been sealing up some packages of the children's curls, which she had just cut. Mr. Longfellow was badly burned in trying to save her, and when the funeral took place was confined to his bed. She was buried upon the anniversary of her marriage-day, and was crowned with a wreath of orange blossoms. She was long remembered in Cambridge as the most beautiful woman of her time,—beautiful not alone in body, but in spirit and life. Mr. Longfellow never recovered from the tragedy, but mourned her in [Pg 234] silence for twenty years. Heart-breaking are the entries in the journal during all this time,—entries telling at frequent intervals of his ever increasing desolation. Little was known of all this by the world until the publication of his journal, for it was one of the peculiarities of his grief that he could speak of it to no one. Only after months had passed did he allude to it in his letters even to his brothers, and then in the briefest fashion: "And now of what we both are thinking I can write no word. God's will be done." The first entry in the journal after the break made at the time of her death is this:—

"Sleep sweetly, tender heart, in peace!
  Sleep, holy spirit, blessed soul!
While the stars burn, the moons increase,
  And the great ages onward roll."

The entries in the journal are all brief, but they are frequent and like these: "Walk before breakfast with E—— and afterward alone. The country is beautiful, but oh, how sad! How can I live any longer!" "The glimmer of golden leaves in the sunshine; the lilac hedge shot with the crimson creeper; the river writing its silver S in the meadow; everything without full of loveliness. But within me the hunger, the famine of the heart!" "Another walk under the pines, in the bright morning sunshine."

"Known and unknown; human, divine:
  Sweet human hand and lip and eye;
  Dear heavenly friend, who canst not die:
Mine, mine forever; ever mine."

"How inexpressibly sad are all holydays! But the dear little girls had their Christmas-tree last night, and an unseen presence blessed the scene!"

No mention of his loss was ever made in his published verse, though the whole of his poetry was much sadder after that loss; but after his own death the following poem was found in his desk, [Pg 235] written eighteen years after his wife's death:—

"In the long, sleepless watches of the night
A gentle face—the face of one long dead—
Looks at me from the wall, where round its head
The night lamp casts a halo of pale light.
Here in this room she died, and soul more white
Never through martyrdom of fire was led
To its repose; nor can in books be read
The legend of a life more benedight.
There is a mountain in the distant West
That, sun-defying in its deep ravines,
Displays a cross of snow upon its side:
Such is the cross I wear upon my breast
These eighteen years, through all the changing scenes
And seasons changeless since the day she died."

It was a long time before he could work again. When he felt that he could do so, he began his translation of Dante, and frequently produced a canto in a day, finding in this absorbing occupation the first alleviation of his sorrow. In a sonnet "On Translating Dante," he said:—

"I enter here from day to day,
And leave my burden at this minster gate."

But when his work was done he always found that his burden was still awaiting him on the outside, and he took it up and bore it as patiently as he could. But he began earnestly to long for

"The Wayside Inn,
Where toil should cease and rest begin,"

and to feel that the approach of old age without the beloved companionship was hard indeed to contemplate. But his children were beautiful and promising and affectionate, and he a most loving and conscientious father; so they gradually came to occupy his thoughts and much to cheer his solitude. He was a famous man too by this time, indeed long before; and the world made demands upon him which could not always be disregarded, and he began to mingle with it [Pg 236] somewhat again. But the little group of friends to whom allusion has been made were his best comforters, and were more and more prized as the years went on. During the translation of Dante they assembled at very short intervals to listen to the reading of the work, and to criticise,

and suggest such changes as were deemed advisable; and these occasions were much enjoyed. As the years went by, one after another of the early friends fell by the way, leaving gaps in his life which could never be filled. Felton was the first to go, and he was very deeply mourned by Longfellow, who felt "as if the world were reeling and sinking under his feet." His death made, as his friend expressed it, "a chasm which not only nothing can fill up, but which nothing has a tendency to fill up." Hawthorne and Agassiz followed soon after Felton; and later Charles Sumner, most deeply mourned of all. He said, in allusion to these friends, in one of his most beautiful sonnets:—

"I also wait! but they will come no more,
Those friends of mine, whose presence satisfied
The thirst and hunger of my heart. Ah me!
They have forgotten the pathway to my door!
Something is gone from Nature since they died,
And summer is not summer, nor can be."

Mr. Longfellow made a final visit to Europe in 1868, accompanied by his children, two sisters, and a brother, and his brother-in-law Thomas Appleton. This journey was much enjoyed by all, although Mr. Longfellow was not a very good sight-seer, and impatient of delays. The remainder of his life passed placidly at his old home, and he died at the age of seventy-five, in the midst of his family and friends. Upon his coffin they placed a palm-branch and a spray of passion-flower,—symbols of victory and the glory of suffering; and he was buried at Mount Auburn, beside her he had so long mourned. What his work was we may tell in the eloquent words of his brother poet and most appreciative critic, Mr. Stedman:— [Pg 237]

> "His song was a household service, the ritual of our feastings and mournings; and often it rehearsed for us the tales of many lands, or, best of all, the legends of our own. I see him, a silver-haired minstrel, touching melodious keys, playing and singing in the twilight, within sound of the rote of the sea. There he lingers late; the curfew-bell has tolled and the darkness closes round, till at last that tender voice is silent, and he softly moves unto his rest."

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JOHN G. WHITTIER.

The poet Whittier always calls to mind the prophet-bards of the olden time. There is much of the old Semitic fire about him, and ethical and religious subjects seem to occupy his entire mind. Like his own Tauler, he walks abroad, constantly

"Pondering the solemn Miracle of Life;
As one who, wandering in a starless night,
Feels momently the jar of unseen waves,
And hears the thunder of an unknown sea
Breaking along an unimagined shore."

His poems are so thoroughly imbued with this religious spirit that they seem to us almost like the

sacred writings of the different times and nations of the world. They come to the lips upon all occasions of deep feeling almost as naturally as the Scriptures do. They are current coin with reformers the world over. They are the Alpha and Omega of deep, strong religious faith. Whoever would best express his entire confidence in the triumph of the right, and his reliance upon God's power against the devices of men, finds the words of Whittier upon his lips; and to those who mourn and seek for consolation, how naturally and involuntarily come back lines from his poems they have long treasured, but which perhaps never had a personal application until now! To the wronged, the down-trodden, and the suffering they appeal as strongly as the Psalms of David. He [Pg 239] is the great High Priest of Literature. But few priests at any time have had such an audience and such influence as he. The moral and religious value of his work can scarcely be overstated. Who can ever estimate the power which his strong words had in the days that are now but a fading memory,—in the great conflict which freed the bodies of so many million slaves? And who can ever estimate the power his strong words have had throughout his whole career in freeing the minds of other millions from the shackles of unworthy old beliefs? His blows have been strong, steady, persistent. He has never had the fear of man before his eyes. No man has done more for freedom, fellowship, and character in religion than he. Hypocrisy and falsehood and cant have been his dearest foes, and he has ridden at them early and late with his lance poised and his steed at full tilt. Indeed, for a Quaker, Mr. Whittier must be said to have a great deal of the martial spirit. The fiery, fighting zeal of the old reformers is in his blood. You can imagine him as upon occasion enjoying the imprecatory Psalms. In his anti-slavery poems there is a depth of passionate earnestness which shows that he could have gone to the stake for his opinions had he lived in an earlier age than ours. That he did risk his life for them, even in our own day, is well known. During the intense heat of the anti-slavery conflict he was mobbed once and again by excited crowds; but he was not to be intimidated by all the powers of evil, and continued to speak his strong words and to sing his inspiring songs, whether men would hear or whether they would forbear. And those Voices of Freedom, whatever may be thought of them by mere critics and litterateurs, will outlast any poems of their day, and sound "down the ringing grooves of Time" when much that is now honored has been forgotten. He will be known as the Poet of a great Cause, the Bard of Freedom, as long as the great anti-slavery conflict is remembered. He is a part, and an important part, of the history of his country, a central figure in the battalions of the [Pg 240] brave. Those wild, stirring bugle-calls of his cheered the little army, and held it together many a time when the cause was only a forlorn hope; and they came with their stern defiance into the camp of the enemy with such masterful power that some gallant enemies deserted to his side. They were afraid to be found fighting against God, as Whittier had convinced them they were doing. There is the roll of drums and the clash of spears in these stirring strains; there are echoes from Thermopylæ and Marathon, and the breath of the old Greek heroes is in the air; there is a hint of the old Border battle-cries from Scotland's hills and tarns; from Jura's rocky wall we can catch the cheers of Tell; and the voice of Cromwell can often be distinguished in the strain.

There is also the sweep of the winds through the pine woods, and the mountain blasts of New England, and the strong fresh breath of the salt sea; all tonic influences, in short, which braced up the minds of the men of those days to a fixed and heroic purpose, from which they never receded until their end was achieved. It has become the fashion in these days of dilettanteism to say that earnestness and moral purpose have no place in poetry, and small critics have arisen who claim that Mr. Whittier has been spoiled as a poet by his moral teachings. To these critics it is only necessary to point to the estimation in which Mr. Whittier's poetry is held by the world, and to the daily widening of his popularity among scholars and men of letters as well as among the people, to teach them that this ruined poetry is likely to live when all the merely pretty poetry they so much admire is forgotten forever. The small poets who are afraid of touching a moral question for fear of ruining their poems would do well to compare Poe, who is the leader of their school and its best exponent, with Mr. Whittier, and to ask themselves which is the more likely to survive the test of time. Let them also ponder the words of Principal Shairp, one of the finest critics of the day, when he says of the true mission of the poet, that "it is to awaken men to the [Pg 241] divine side of things; to bear witness to the beauty that clothes the outer world, the nobility that lies hid, often obscured, in human souls; to call forth sympathy for neglected truths, for noble and oppressed persons, for down-trodden causes; and to make men feel that through all outward beauty and all pure inward affection God himself is addressing them." They would do well also to ponder the words of Ruskin, who believes that only in as far as it has a distinct moral purpose is any literary work of value to the world. Is not the opinion of such men as these to be considered of weight in this matter? And is it not an impertinence in little men like some of those who have lately written of Mr. Whittier, to speak in a patronizing and supercilious tone of his work, as if the very qualities which distinguish it from the work of the weaklings had ruined it as poetry?

It is perhaps to Mr. Whittier's ancestry that we may trace this intense consecration of life to all its higher purposes; for he came of a people who had endured persecution for conscience' sake for generations, and who had loved liberty with a love passing that of woman, and sacrificed much for her sake. The depths of feeling which Mr. Whittier has always sounded when the persecutions of the Quakers have risen before his vision can only be understood by those who are thoroughly familiar with the details of these persecutions, and who know the harmless character of the men and women thus outraged. Mr. Whittier knows this well, and it stirs his blood to this day, as it stirred the blood of his father and mother when they recounted these things to his childish ears. Though so much deep feeling was latent in their natures, the outward lives of his parents were serene and calm. Mr. Whittier has, in that exquisite little idyl "Snowbound," given us a graphic and authentic picture of his childhood's home, and in a measure of the life lived there. It is a quiet little New England interior, painted by a master's hand from love of his work.

It is every whit as delightful as "The Cotter's Saturday Night;" and it is realistically true in every detail. Here we have the family portraits drawn to life,—the father, who [Pg 242]

"Rode again his ride
On Memphremagog's wooded side;
Sat down again to moose and samp
In trapper's hut and Indian camp;
Lived o'er the old idyllic ease
Beneath St. François' hemlock trees;"

and showed how

"Again for him the moonlight shone
On Norman cap and bodiced zone;
Again he heard the violin play
Which led the village dance away,
And mingled in its merry whirl
The grandam and the laughing girl."

The mother,

"While she turned her wheel
Or run the new-knit stocking-heel,
Told how the Indian hordes came down
At midnight on Cocheco town,
And how her own great-uncle bore
His cruel scalp-mark to fourscore.
Recalling in her fitting phrase,
So rich and picturesque and free,
(The common unrhymed poetry
Of simple life and country ways,)
The story of her early days."

The uncle,

"Innocent of books,
Was rich in lore of fields and brooks,—
The ancient teachers never dumb
Of Nature's unhoused lyceum.
In moons and tides and weather wise,
He read the clouds as prophecies,
And foul or fair could well divine
By many an occult hint and sign,
Holding the cunning-warded keys
To all the woodcraft mysteries."

The picture is very attractive of this

"Simple, guileless, childlike man,
Content to live where life began;
Strong only on his native grounds,
The little world of sights and sounds."

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Next,

"The dear aunt, whose smile of cheer
And voice in dreams I see and hear,—
The sweetest woman ever Fate
Perverse denied a household mate,
Who, lonely, homeless, not the less
Found peace in love's unselfishness."

Then the elder sister,

"A full, rich nature, free to trust,
Truthful and almost sternly just,
Impulsive, earnest, prompt to act,
And make her generous thought a fact,
Keeping with many a light disguise
The secret of self-sacrifice."

The youngest sister, with "large, sweet, asking eyes," and the

"Brisk wielder of the birch and rule,
The master of the district school,"

make up the customary group; and it is safe to say that they were royal company on that winter night.

Another description of the life of his boyhood may be found in "The Barefoot Boy." No other language will describe so well those careless, happy years of the genuine country boy.

"Oh for boyhood's time of June,
Crowding years in one brief moon,
When all things I heard or saw,
Me, their master, waited for.
I was rich in flowers and trees,
Humming-birds and honey-bees;
For my sport the squirrel played,
Plied the snouted mole his spade;
For my taste the blackberry cone
Purpled over hedge and stone;
Laughed the brook for my delight
Through the day and through the night,
Whispering at the garden wall,
Talked with me from fall to fall;
Mine the sand-rimmed pickerel pend,
Mine the walnut slopes beyond,
Mine, on bending orchard trees,
Apples of Hesperides!

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"Oh for festal dainties spread,
Like my bowl of milk and bread,—
Pewter spoon and bowl of wood,
On the door-stone, gray and rude!
O'er me, like a regal tent,
Cloudy-ribbed, the sunset bent,
Purple-curtained, fringed with gold,
Looped in many a wind-swung fold;
While for music came the play
Of the pied frogs' orchestra;
And, to light the noisy choir,
Lit the fly his lamp of fire.
I was monarch: pomp and joy
Waited on the barefoot boy."

Is not this an accurate picture of what a poet's childhood should be?

In his early youth we have the one hint of a romance which his life contains, and he shall give us that also in his own words:—

"How thrills once more the lengthening chain
Of memory, at the thought of thee!
Old hopes which long in dust have lain,
Old dreams, come thronging back again,
And boyhood lives again in me;
I feel its glow upon my cheek,
Its fulness of the heart is mine,
As when I leaned to hear thee speak,
Or raised my doubtful eye to thine.
I hear again thy low replies,
I feel thy hand within my own,
And timidly again uprise
The fringèd lids of hazel eyes,
With soft brown tresses overblown.
Ah! memories of sweet summer eves,
Of moonlit wave and willowy way,
Of stars and flowers and dewy leaves,
And smiles and tones more dear than they."

It is very tender, very beautiful and touching, and, doubtless, it left on him "an impress Time has worn not out." And we doubt if even yet, when the shadows of age are gathering very deeply around the gentle poet, that memory has faded.

"Not yet has Time's dull footstep worn
To common dust that path of flowers."

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We cannot but wonder who the favored "Playmate" of the poet was, and we sympathize with him when he asks,—

"I wonder if she thinks of them,
And how the old time seems,—
If ever the pines of Ramoth wood
Are sounding in her dreams.

"I see her face, I hear her voice:
Does she remember mine?
And what to her is now the boy

Who fed her father's kine?"

And we feel an intense interest in knowing whether or not she cares, when he tells her,—

"The winds so sweet with birch and fern,
A sweeter memory blow;
And there in spring the veeries sing
The song of long ago.

"And still the pines of Ramoth wood
Are moaning like the sea,—
The moaning of the sea of change
Between myself and thee!"

Mr. Whittier has never married, and his favorite sister long presided over his home in Amesbury, where his mother and the dear aunt also came after the father's death. It was the bitterest loss of his life when this beautiful sister died, and he has written nothing more touching than his tribute to her in "Snowbound":—

"With me one little year ago,
The chill weight of the winter snow
For months upon her grave has lain;
And now, when summer south winds blow
And brier and harebell bloom again,
I tread the pleasant paths we trod,
I see the violet-sprinkled sod
Whereon she leaned, too frail and weak
The hillside flowers she loved to seek,
Yet following me where'er she went
With dark eyes full of love's content.
The birds are glad; the brier-rose fills
The air with sweetness; all the hills
Stretch green to June's unclouded sky;
But still I wait with ear and eye
For something gone which should be nigh,
A loss in all familiar things,
In flower that blooms, and bird that sings.

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And while in life's late afternoon,
Where cool and long the shadows grow,
I walk to meet the night that soon
Shall shape and shadow overflow,
I cannot feel that thou art far,
Since near at need the angels are;
And when the sunset gates unbar,
Shall I not see thee waiting stand,
And, white against the evening star,
The welcome of thy beckoning hand?"

This sister Elizabeth was herself a remarkable woman, and one of whom the world would have heard more but for her great modesty. She was gifted with a fine poetic taste, and was not only appreciative, but might have been creative as well. A few of her poems appear in her brother's collected works. She was beautiful in person, delicate and dark-eyed, and possessed of exquisite taste in everything. The village of Amesbury still cherishes her memory and recounts her virtues. The tie between the sister and brother was of the closest kind, and their home life together for so many years as beautiful as any recorded in literature. After her death a niece kept his house for some time; but though she was all devotion to him, the old home was never home after the dear sister had left it.

Mr. Whittier is a man to feel very much the loneliness of his later life, bereft as he has been of all his family friends except one brother. But he is very lovingly and tenderly cared for by some distant relatives, who live at Oak Knoll, Danvers, Mass., where he has passed the most of his time the last few years. It is a most beautiful place, and the poet takes great delight in it, preferring it even to his own home at Amesbury, where he lived so long and where the greater part of his literary work was done. The house and grounds remind one of an old English manor-house and its surroundings. The old forest trees still beautify it, while clumps of evergreens have been planted here and there, with many shrubs and flowers. In the distance rise the blue hills of Essex and Middlesex, and near at hand babbles a noisy brook, seeking the not distant sea. All the beautiful [Pg 247] trees of New England grow here,—hickories, chestnuts, maples, birches, pines, and beeches; and Whittier, who is a famous lover of trees, passes much time in these shady coverts.

Mr. Whittier's own house at Amesbury is a plain white painted wooden house, consisting of an upright and ell, like many old-fashioned farm-houses, and surrounded by a picket-fence. It is roomy and comfortable, and the study is a very cosey and attractive place, with its open wood-fire and its well-filled book-shelves. One familiar with its appearance thus describes it:—

"One side is filled with a desk and books, among which Irish ballads have a place of

> honor; and an old-fashioned Franklin fireplace with polished brasses throws its cheerful blaze over carpet, lounge, and easy-chairs, and on walls covered with many souvenirs, —a water-color of Harry Fenn's, Hill's picture of the early home, fringed gentians painted by Lucy Larcom, and other trifles which give character to the room. In this nook the 'lords of thought' have been made welcome; here came Alice and Phœbe Cary on their romantic pilgrimage, and here have come many others of the illustrious women of the day, most of whom he reckons as his friends in this generation as he did Lydia Maria Child and Lucretia Mott and their contemporaries in the last."

Mr. Whittier's personal appearance is thus described by George W. Bungay in his "Crayon Sketches:"—

> "His temperament is nervous bilious; he is tall, slender, and straight as an Indian; has a superb head; his brow looks like a white cloud under his raven hair; eyes large, black as sloes, and glowing with expression, . . . those star-like eyes flashing under such a magnificent forehead."

Another writer tells of:—

> "The fine intellectual beauty of his expression, the blending brightness and softness of the clear dark eye, the union of manly firmness and courage with womanly sweetness and tenderness alike in countenance and character."

That clear and bright observer Mr. Wasson says:— [Pg 248]

> "The high cranium, so lofty, especially in the dome; the slight and symmetrical backward slope of the whole head; the powerful level brows, and beneath these the dark, deep eyes, so fun of shadowed fire; the Arabian complexion; the sharp-cut, intense lines of the face; the light, tall, erect stature; the quick, axial poise of the movement,—all these traits reveal the fiery Semitic prophet."

His smile is spoken of by all as irradiating his whole face. He is the most modest and one of the shyest of men. He can rarely be exhibited as a lion in Boston, though the celebrity-hunters often try to induce him thus to show himself. His fame has been a great surprise to him, and he can scarcely believe in it even now. When his seventieth birthday was celebrated by the publishers of the "Atlantic Monthly" by a Whittier Banquet, to which all the great writers in the country were invited, and where many fine tributes were paid to his genius, he especially wondered that all this honor was for him. The "Literary World" at the same time published many fine poems from distinguished authors addressed to him, and he replied in that journal to them, saying:—

> "Beside that mile-stone where the level sun
> Nigh unto setting sheds his last low rays
> On word and work irrevocably done,
> Life's blending threads of good and ill outspun,
> I hear, O friends, your words of cheer and praise,
> Half doubtful if myself or otherwise.
> Like him who in the old Athenian days
> A beggar slept, and crownèd Caliph woke."

Although shy in formal society, Mr. Whittier is of a social nature, and very much enjoys unrestrained intercourse with his friends. Visitors were always made welcome at Amesbury, and while his sister presided there the house was very attractive to those who enjoyed its hospitality. She was a witty and bright woman, who enlivened every social circle she graced; and Mr. Whittier himself has a fund of delicate humor, which lights up his conversations with those with [Pg 249] whom he is on familiar terms, and he has a quiet way of drawing out the best there is in others, which causes every one to appear well in his presence. Children are his loyal and enthusiastic friends everywhere; and he was known among them in Amesbury as "the man with the parrot," that remarkable bird "Charlie" serving as a sort of connecting link between the poet and the little ones. He is always ready for a game of romps with the children even now, and they very much admire the stately old man who condescends to them so kindly. Long ago, when his little niece wanted the scarlet cape which other children wore, and there was objection upon the part of her Quaker mother, Mr. Whittier pleaded so well for the little one that she was allowed to indulge in the bright trappings of her mates. Mr. Whittier himself has never gone to the extremes of Quaker dress, and could hardly be distinguished from the world by that alone. But he uses the "thee" and "thou" of the Friends, and it is very charming to hear them from his lips. He has always been a faithful attendant, also, upon their meetings.

The kindliness of Mr. Whittier's nature has always led him to help others, especially young literary aspirants, and he has spent a great deal of his valuable time upon this class. He cannot bear to leave a letter unanswered or a request ungranted, and his correspondence has become very burdensome these latter years. He has long been subject to very severe neuralgic headaches, and can write now but a few minutes at a time; and those few precious minutes he often wastes on some impertinent stranger who has sent a great mass of manuscripts to him for criticism. The little time which these insatiable correspondents leave to him, he occupies very pleasantly in and about the grounds at Oak Knoll. He enjoys working in the fine flower-garden, feeding the squirrels, playing with the dogs, and driving the fine horses. He has many friends within a morning's drive,—Harriet Preston, Gail Hamilton, and others,—and driving about the

country has always been one of his choice diversions. He is now seventy-eight years old,—a cheerful, kindly, essentially lovable old man. He still goes up to Boston occasionally to meet friends and look about the city, and runs over to Amesbury, where friends occupy his house and make him welcome; but for the most part he remains in his quiet retreat, cheerfully awaiting the change which must be near. [Pg 250]

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OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

The genial "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" was born in the city of Cambridge, in Massachusetts, in the year 1809, upon the day given to the Commencement exercises of Harvard College. It was the day of small things in that institution, and the day of small things in American literature. The child who was born that day was destined to add much to the estimation in which both were held. He occupied a professor's chair in the University for thirty-five years, and did good work in it too; and he is one of the little group of illustrious men who have helped to make a distinctively American literature, which is now honored throughout the world. As we believe with Dr. Holmes that "it is an ungenerous silence which leaves all the fair words of honestly-earned praise to the writer of obituary notices and the marble-worker," we shall endeavor to set forth in this paper some of the good points in the character and work of this distinguished man,—perhaps the best beloved of our native authors.

The Rev. Abiel Holmes, the father of our hero, was one of the typical New England ministers of that day; the mother, Sarah Wendell, was from a Dutch family, who came to Boston from Albany in the eighteenth century. The old gambrel-roofed house where the poet was born stood close to the buildings of Harvard University, and to the south flows the Charles River, so often celebrated [Pg 252] by Holmes and Longfellow and Lowell. The environs of Cambridge are particularly beautiful, and have been the subjects of many charming descriptions by all these writers. The old yellow hip-roofed house was about one hundred and sixty years old when it was moved away to make room for modern improvements. The New England colonists knew how to build a house, and the work of their hands puts to shame the sham edifices of the present day, which come up like Jonah's gourd in a night. The mansion-houses of New England are among her most precious inheritances; and we can scarcely blame the families, in whose hands they have remained until this time, for feeling a certain pride in them.

The study was the great attraction to Oliver and his brother John. It was a large heavy-beamed room, lined upon all sides with books,—which was almost an unheard-of thing in this country at that time. Here the boys were allowed to choose for themselves what they would read, and here they doubtless formed the scholarly tastes of after-days. The contrast between this library and that of the Whittier household, with its less than a dozen books, is a great one, and has something to do with the distinctive flavor of the work of the two men. There is a wild woodsy flavor about Whittier to this day, pungent and stimulating; and about all that Holmes has written is the atmosphere of books,—a smell of Russia-leather, as it were, and the mustiness of old tomes. The childhood of Oliver was very happy, and the memory of it has lingered with him through life; he has always been very fond of talking of it and writing about it. Of the old garden surrounding the manse, he has written eloquently, and one can almost see it for himself from his description,—

with its lilac-bushes, its pear-trees, its peaches (for they raised peaches in New England in those days), its lovely nectarines, and white grapes. Old-fashioned flowers grew in the borders,—hyacinths, coming up even through the snow; tulips, adding their flaming splendor to the spring, [Pg 253] although they are so much more like autumn flowers; peonies, of mammoth size and gorgeous coloring; flower-de-luce, lilies, roses—damask, blush, and cinnamon,—larkspurs, lupines, and royal hollyhocks. Then there were the vegetables growing with the flowers,—"beets, with their handsome dark-red leaves, carrots, with their elegant filagree foliage, parsley, that clung to the earth like mandrakes, radishes, illustrations of total depravity, a prey to every evil underground emissary of the powers of darkness."

The Holmes boys were lively and frolicsome, not unlike what we have been accustomed to hear of ministers' sons in general, and some of their pranks were remembered in Cambridge for many a year. In one of Dr. Holmes's college poems he hints at some of these "high old times:"—

"I am not well to-night; methinks the fumes
Of overheated punch have something dimmed
The cerebellum or pineal gland,
Or where the soul sits regnant."

Still, there was nothing worse than boyish fun in any of their larks, and they were studious beyond their years.

Among their schoolmates was Margaret Fuller. Dr. Holmes says of her:—

> "Her air to her schoolmates was marked by a certain stateliness and distance, as if she had other thoughts than theirs, and was not of them. I remember her so well, as she appeared at school and later, that I regret that she had not been faithfully given to canvas or marble in the day of her best looks. None know her aspect who have not seen her living. Margaret, as I remember her at school and afterwards, was tall, fair-complexioned, with a watery aquamarine lustre in her light eyes, which she used to make small, as one does who looks at the sunshine. A remarkable point about her was that long flexible neck, arching and undulating in strange sinuous movements, which one who loved her would compare to those of a swan, and one who loved her not, to those of the ophidian who tempted our common mother. Her talk was affluent, [Pg 254] magisterial, *de haut en bas*, some would say euphuistic, but surpassing the talk of women in breadth and audacity."

In due time young Holmes was graduated from Harvard, with a class which he has helped to make well known by his annual college poems. The boys of '29 were a noble and talented set of men, and quite a number of them still live, among our most honored citizens. Some of his well-known humorous poems were written for the college papers, among them "The Dorchester Giant," "Evening, by a Tailor," "The Spectre Pig," and "The Height of the Ridiculous." For a few years after he left college he went on "writing as funny as he could," then discontinued his literary work for some time, and only permanently renewed it with the starting of the "Atlantic Monthly" in 1857. Here he began "The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table," and followed it with that brilliant series of papers and of novels which made him known the world over, as one of our most original and characteristic writers. Long before this he had been married, and settled down for life in the city of Boston. His wife, to whom he was united in 1840, was Amelia Lee Jackson, daughter of Judge Jackson of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. They lived in one house for over twenty years, in Montgomery Place, near Bromfield Street. Holmes says of it, in "The Professor at the Breakfast Table:"—

> "When he entered that door, two shadows glided over the threshold; five lingered in the doorway when he passed through it for the last time,—and one of the shadows was claimed by its owner to be longer than his own. What changes he saw in that quiet place! Death rained through every roof but his; children came into life, grew into maturity, wedded, faded away, threw themselves away; the whole drama of life was played in that stock-company's theatre of a dozen houses, one of which was his, and no deep sorrow or severe calamity ever entered his dwelling. Peace be to those walls forever, for the many pleasant years he passed in them."

The three children born to him were Oliver Wendell, Amelia Jackson, and Edward. They all live [Pg 255] near the old home, and the second generation is beginning to be a prominent factor in the family affairs. The daughter is Mrs. John T. Sargent, of Beverly Farms, near Boston, where Dr. Holmes has passed the summer months for several years past. All readers will remember the Doctor's famous "Hunt after the Captain," published in the "Atlantic" during the war, and the thrilling interest the country took in it. The "Captain" was the elder son, then just graduated from Harvard, and belonging to the Fourth Battalion of Infantry. He was thrice wounded, and the terror and anxiety of his friends at home cannot be described in words. He is now an associate justice of the Supreme Court of Massachusetts.

For a few years Dr. Holmes was much in demand as a lecturer; but he never enjoyed that business very well, and after a while refused to go upon any terms. In 1856 he thus defined his terms to an applicant for a lecture:—

> "My terms, when I stay over night, are fifteen dollars and expenses, a room with a fire in it, in a public-house, and a mattress to sleep on,—not a feather-bed. As you write in

your individual capacity, I tell you at once all my habitual exigencies. I am afraid to sleep in a cold room; I can't sleep on a feather-bed; I will not go to private houses."

In the "Autocrat" there is an account of his lecturing experiences by the landlady, which gives a pretty good idea of some of his personal traits:—

> "He was a man who loved to stick around home, as much as any cat you ever see in your life. He used to say he'd as lief have a tooth pulled as go anywheres. Always got sick, he said, when he went away, and never sick when he didn't. Pretty nigh killed himself goin' about lecterin' two or three winters; talkin' in cold country lyceums; as he used to say, goin' home to cold parlors and bein' treated to cold apples and cold water, and then goin' up into a cold bed in a cold chamber, and comin' home next mornin' with a cold in his head as bad as a horse distemper. Then he'd look kind of sorry for havin' [Pg 256] said it, and tell how kind some of the good women was to him; how one spread an edderdown comforter for him, and another fixed up somethin' hot for him after the lecter, and another one said, 'There, now you smoke that cigar of yours after the lecter just as if you was at home,'—and if they'd all been like that, he'd have gone on lecterin' forever; but as it was, he got pooty nigh enough of it, and preferred nateral death to puttin' himself out of the world by such violent means as lecterin'."

In fact, Holmes is eminently a Bostonian, and has never been really happy off his native pavements. He, however, studied medicine in Paris in his youth, and has made one or two visits to Europe since.

The Atlantic Club for a long time furnished Holmes excellent company, and he in turn furnished the club with the wittiest and most sparkling talk which this country probably has known:—

"Such jests, that, drained of every joke,
The very bank of language broke;
Such deeds that laughter nearly died
With stitches in his belted side."

Among those who took part in these delightful re-unions were Emerson, Longfellow, Felton, Holmes, Agassiz, Lowell, Whipple, Motley, Charles Eliot Norton, Edmund Quincy, Francis H. Underwood, Judge Hoar, J. Elliot Cabot, and others. Lowell and Holmes were the wits *par excellence*, though Judge Hoar did not fall far behind. Emerson sat always with a seraphic smile upon his face, and Longfellow thoroughly enjoyed every good sally, though not adding to the mirth-making himself. Dr. Appleton, who met Dr. Holmes at the Saturday Club, writes:—

> "Dr. Holmes was highly talkative and agreeable; he converses very much like the Autocrat at the Breakfast Table,—wittily, and in a literary way, but perhaps with too great an infusion of physiological and medical metaphor. He is a little deaf, and has a [Pg 257] mouth like the beak of a bird; indeed, he is, with his small body and quick movements, very like a bird in his general aspect."

When Charles Kingsley was in Boston he met Holmes, who came in, frisked about, and talked incessantly, Kingsley intervening with a few words only occasionally. At last Holmes whisked himself away, saying, "And now I must go." "He is an insp-sp-sp-ired j-j-j-h-ack-daw," said Kingsley.

Mr. Kennedy, in his life of the poet, thus describes him:—

> "In person Holmes is a little under the medium height, though it does not strike you so when you see him, especially on the street, where he wears a tall silk hat and carries a cane. As a young man, he was, like Longfellow, a good deal of an exquisite in dress; and he has always been very neat and careful in his attire. He is quick and nervous in his movements, and conveys, in speaking, the impression of energy and intense vitality; and yet he has a poet's sensitiveness to noises, and a dread of persons of superabundant vitality and aggressiveness. When the fountain of laughter and smiles is stirred within him his face lights up with a winning expression, and a laughing, kindly glance of the eye. When he warms up to a subject in conversation he is a very rapid, vivacious speaker."

Dr. Holmes has been accused of being an egotist, and he undoubtedly does like to talk of himself; but he talks always in such charming fashion that nobody regrets the subject of his discourse, but would fain have him go on and on without pause or limit. He is a hearty, happy man, who is a good deal in love with life, and seldom dwells upon its darker side. But he has a very earnest and serious side to his nature, and is far from being a mere laughing philosopher. He enjoys out-of-door life, as every poet must, and though he likes best to live in the city, he takes great delight in the country also. He spent seven summers upon a farm of his own in the enchanting Berkshire [Pg 258] region, near Pittsfield, and he says these seven summers stand in his memory like the seven golden candlesticks seen in the beatific vision of the holy dreamer. He loves rowing, racing, and walking through green country lanes. The New England wild-flowers are especially dear to him, and he has all a poet's love for that shyest and most beautiful of all, the trailing arbutus. He is very fond also of perfumes, and likes the odorous blossoms best. He has always had his dream of fair women, and he is a great favorite with women of all ages. He is not averse to the pleasures of the table, and likes plenty of friends around him, with mirth and good cheer, at his dinner hour.

He has been accused of being somewhat aristocratic in his feelings, and is doubtless a lover of the best society, as he interprets that word,—not mere wealth or fashion, but good blood, generous culture through more than one generation, and a general refinement in manners and in thought. What he calls the Brahmin caste of New England is doubtless very good society indeed; and who shall blame the good Autocrat if he visits in that circle by choice? He would not, perhaps, like the old scholar of whom he tells, give as his toast "to all the people who on the earth do dwell," but he would select some very choice and rare little coterie of those people, and toast them with the most contagious enthusiasm.

That he is a man of fastidious tastes goes without saying, and rather critical of men and women, in manners as well as morals. An acute observer of small social phenomena, he does not deem it beneath his dignity to criticise the man who cannot pronounce "view," and the woman, even if it be Margaret Fuller, who says "nawvels." That he is a sensitive man he told us long ago, and that —

"There are times
When all this fret and tumult that we hear
Do seem more stale than to the sexton's ear
His own dull chimes.

"From crib to shroud!
Nurse o'er our cradle screameth lullaby,
And friends in boots tramp round us as we die,
Snuffling aloud.

"Children with drums
Strapped round them by the fond paternal ass,
Peripatetics with a blade of grass
Between their thumbs.

"Cockneys that kill
Thin horses of a Sunday,—men with clams,
Hoarse as young bisons roaring for their dams,
From hill to hill.

"Soldiers with guns,
Making a nuisance of the blessed air,
Child-crying bellmen, children in despair,
Screeching for buns.

"Storms, thunders, waves!
Howl, crash, and bellow, till ye get your fill.
Ye sometimes rest; men never can be still
But in their graves."

Sometimes these daily trials are exaggerated to a quite unbearable point, as in the case of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle, who suffered intense tortures in later life from the ordinary every-day noises; but in the case of Dr. Holmes, as with most people with healthy nerves, these things only give a whimsical annoyance. The battles of Mrs. Carlyle with Chanticleer, as she depicts them, have all the interest of a new Iliad, and the days before Troy have not been studied with more breathless interest than some of her encounters with the makers of the many noises with which London is filled. Dr. Holmes, too, has had his battle with the music-grinders, as who has not? Do we not all know "these crusaders sent from some infernal clime"? and have we not all felt with him the relief when "silence like a poultice comes to heal the blows of sound"? Do we not all know the "Treadmill Song," also, in practical life? and are we not intensely weary of it sometimes? Not many of us can say with him, at the close of one of our "treadmill" days,—

"It's pretty sport; suppose we take
A round or two for fun."

or add,—

"If ever they should turn me out
When I have better grown,
Now hang me but I mean to have
A treadmill of my own."

But this has been the good Doctor's spirit through life. He has taken his troubles lightly, and his labors have sat easily upon him. He has laughed where many would have wept, and he has joked where some would have been serious, if not savage. But that he has done serious work, and that it has been work which has borne fruit, who can doubt? His professional labors are perhaps least known of any of his various activities, but they were many and varied, and not barren of good results. As a single illustration, take his treatise upon "The Contagiousness of Puerperal Fever," concerning which he has said:—

> "When, by permission of Providence, I held up to the professional public the damnable facts connected with the conveyance of poison from one young mother's chamber to

> another's,—for doing which humble office I desire to be thankful that I have lived, though nothing else good should ever come of my life,—I had to bear the sneers of those whose position I had assailed, and, as I believe, have at last demolished, so that nothing but the ghosts of dead women stir among the ruins."

He fought Homœopathy in the liveliest manner for many years, and latterly threw some hot shot into the ranks of the Allopathists themselves, in an attack upon the excessive use of drugs in medical practice. The Medical Society were considerably excited by this vigorous onslaught, the ripe result of thirty years' study and experience, and disclaimed all responsibility for its sentiments.

> "Throw out opium," said Dr. Holmes: "throw out a few specifics which a physician is hardly needed to apply; throw out wine, which is a food, and the vapors of ether producing anæsthesia; and then sink the whole materia medica, *as now used*, to the bottom of the sea: the result would be all the better for mankind, and all the worse for the fishes."

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Of his life-long battle against the Calvinistic theology all his readers know. He has never lost an opportunity of declaring his antipathy to the theology of his fathers, and of pouring sarcasm and ridicule upon it. His father was a Calvinistic divine of the strictest sect; but Dr. Holmes himself has been a life-long Unitarian, and an aggressive one. He owns a pew in King's Chapel and is a regular attendant. Perhaps he is a little of a fatalist. At any rate he always has eyes for—

THE TWO STREAMS.

Behold the rocky wall
  That down its sloping sides
Pours the swift rain-drops, blending as they fall
  In rushing river-tides.

Yon stream, whose sources run
  Turned by a pebble's edge,
Is Athabasca, rolling toward the sun
  Through the cleft mountain-ledge.

The slender rill had strayed,
  But for the slanting stone,
To evening's ocean, with the tangled braid
  Of foam-flecked Oregon.

So from the heights of will
  Life's parting stream descends,
And, as a moment turns its slender rill,
  Each widening torrent bends.

From the same cradle's side,
  From the same mother's knee,—
One to long darkness and the frozen tide,
  One to the Peaceful Sea.

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JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

In the old manor-house of Elmwood in Cambridge, close to what is now mount Auburn Cemetery, our finest representative man of letters, James Russell Lowell, was born and bred. His father and his grandfather before him lived here, the former a Unitarian clergyman of the old school, well read, earnest, somewhat narrow, but an essentially religious man. His mother was a gifted woman, and a woman of high culture for those days. She read foreign languages, was a musician, and a woman of high breeding, and she stamped her own individuality strongly upon at least three of her children.

The house is a large three-story structure, built of wood, and is eminently picturesque. The tone of the rooms is sombre, and the furniture is antique and solid. Nearly everything remains as it was in the poet's childhood; although the study has been removed from the second floor to two connected rooms on the first, spacious and impressive, and lined with well-selected books. The poet has lived in this house throughout his entire life,—a thing which seldom happens to an American citizen. In the hall are ancestral portraits, a stately Dutch clock, and the portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Lowell taken by Page in their youth. The grounds about Elmwood have been kept as nearly as possible in a state of nature. They are ample, and filled with magnificent trees. The [Pg 263] elms of Cambridge are among the most beautiful to be found anywhere, and on this estate, though not very numerous, there are fine specimens. In front of the house are splendid ash-trees, and a thick hedge of trees surrounds the whole enclosure. This hedge bristles with pines, droops with willows, and is overtopped by gigantic horse-chestnuts. Near the house are pines, elms, lilacs, syringas; and at the back, apple and pear trees. Huge masses of striped grass light up the thick turf here and there; and all over the grounds the birds, unmolested from time immemorial, build and sing in perfect freedom and content. Long ago Longfellow sang of the herons of Elmwood, and they are still to be found in the wooded slopes behind the house, where the Lowell children played in their happy childhood.

Mr. Lowell entered Harvard College in his sixteenth year, and, though never what was called a brilliant student, was graduated in due time, and entered upon the study of law. He passed through the usual course and took his degree of LL. B., but he was not noted for his love of study in the law school, more than in college. He was noted for his love of reading in both places, but it was of books outside the established course. His literary bent was strongly marked from the first, and his poetic talent developed itself at an early day. When only twenty-two years of age he published his first volume of poems, much like the youthful poems of other bards, and far inferior to the work of Bryant at the same age. Three years later he put forth a volume of verses much more worthy of his genius, some of them being favorites still,—like the "Shepherd of King Admetus," "The Forlorn," "The Heritage," which achieved the immortality of the school-books, and a few others.

There was not a large sale for books of poetry in this country at that time, and these first ventures of Lowell fared much like other books of that day. If he was not quite as badly off as [Pg 264] poor Thoreau, who, a year after his first thousand was printed, wrote to a friend that he was now the owner of a library of about a thousand volumes, over nine hundred of which he wrote himself, he certainly was not far ahead of that original writer in the matter of sales. His books, however, attracted some attention, and could hardly be classed under the head he proposes for certain books, in the "Fable for Critics," namely, "literature suited to desolate islands,"—

"Such as Satan, if printing had then been invented,
As the climax of woe would to Job have presented."

Mr. Lowell was married in 1844 to Miss Maria White, of Watertown near Cambridge, the lady to whom some of his first poems were addressed, and who was herself a writer of very sweet and tender verse. Mrs. Lowell was most beautiful and accomplished, a fit wife for a poet, and the maker of a restful but inspiring home. Beautiful children came to them to gladden their lives for a little season; but all except one were recalled in early infancy, and the grief of the parents was both acute and lasting. Many a time, as he tells us, he—

"looked at the snow-fall,
And thought of the leaden sky
That arched o'er our first great sorrow
When that mound was heaped so high."

And only in after-years he—

"Remembered the gradual patience
That fell from that cloud like snow,
Flake by flake, healing and hiding
The scar of our deep-plunged woe."

For many years a pair of tiny baby-shoes, half-worn, hung over a picture-frame in the poet's study, and told their sad tale of the little feet that had gone on before. Like Sydney Smith, Lowell learned to think that "children are horribly insecure,—that the life of a parent is the life of a gambler;" and he held the one who still remained to him with a trembling grasp for a long time. [Pg 265] Happily, she was spared to him, and still adds interest and pleasure to his life.

Mr. and Mrs. Lowell went to Europe in 1851, and spent a year in travel, partly for the benefit of Mrs. Lowell's health, which was always delicate. They spent the greater part of their time in Italy, although they made brief tours in France, Switzerland, and England. About a year after their return Mrs. Lowell died, and another little mound in Sweet Auburn was

"Folded close under deepening snow."

During the nine years of their married life all had been peaceful and beautiful, and now there seemed nothing left but—

"To the spirit its splendid conjectures,
To the flesh its sweet despair,"

and many hopeless tears over—

"the thin-worn locket
With its anguish of deathless hair."

For a long time the heart of the poet would admit of no consolation. He replied to every attempt to soften his grief,—

"There's a narrow ridge in the graveyard,
Would scarce stay a child in his race;
But to me and my thought it is wider
Than the star-sown vague of Space.

"Your logic, my friend, is perfect,
Your morals most drearily true;
But since the earth clashed on *her* coffin,
I keep hearing that, and not you.

"Console if you will, I can bear it;
'Tis a well-meant alms of breath;
But not all the preaching since Adam,
Has made Death other than Death.

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"It is pagan; but wait till you feel it,—
That jar of the earth, that dull shock,
When the ploughshare of deeper passion
Tears down to our primitive rock.

"Communion in spirit! forgive me,
But I, who am earthy and weak,
Would give all my incomes from dream-land
For a touch of her hand on my cheek.

"That little shoe in the corner,
So worn and wrinkled and brown,
With its emptiness confutes you,
And argues your wisdom down."

On the same day that Mrs. Lowell died a child was born to Mr. Longfellow, who sent to his friend the beautiful poem, "The Two Angels."

"'T was at thy door, O friend, and not at mine,
The angel with the amaranthine wreath
Pausing, descended, and with voice divine
Whispered a word that had a sound like death."

In 1854 Mr. Lowell was appointed as Mr. Longfellow's successor to the chair of *belles-lettres* in Harvard University,—a place for which he was most admirably fitted by nature and by training. He went abroad again and studied for two years, chiefly in Dresden, when he returned and began his lectures, which were much enjoyed by his cultivated audience. He dwelt with loving care upon Dante, Chaucer, Shakspeare, and Cervantes, in particular, and made a deep impression upon all who listened to him.

In 1857 Mr. Lowell was married for the second time, to Miss Frances Dunlap of Portland, Maine, who had had charge of the education of his daughter while he was abroad. They returned to the ancestral home at Elmwood soon after the marriage, and continued to reside there until the poet was appointed Minister to Spain by President Hayes, when they repaired together to that country. Upon his transfer to the Court of St. James, they removed to London, where both were [Pg 267] universally and justly popular. Few ladies have received such warm encomiums in England as Mrs. Lowell, and few have as richly deserved them. No man whom our nation has sent to represent us in England has been so highly praised by the English press as Mr. Lowell, and probably no one has been so much liked by the class of people with whom he came chiefly in contact. There seemed to be much wonder in court circles there that America could produce so finished a gentleman as Mr. Lowell; and perhaps they had had some reason to doubt this, if they judged by the average American tourist. They wondered, too, at his delightful public speaking,—a thing to which Englishmen are not as much accustomed as Americans. They have a heavy, labored way of speaking, extremely painful to listeners accustomed to the ease of American speakers; and they were never weary of listening to the pleasing and graceful oratory of Mr. Lowell. He was called upon constantly to address the people, upon all sorts of occasions, and invariably received the highest praise for his efforts. Much regret was felt in England when he was called home; much also in this country by those who had the honor of the nation at heart, although the whole people were glad to welcome him back to his native land once more. Mrs. Lowell died during their residence in London, and the sympathies of the world went out to the husband in his affliction.

Mr. Lowell came to the aid of the despised Abolitionists at an early day. While it was still inviting social ostracism and public indignity to do so, he bravely lifted up his voice in their defence, and began lending his vigorous and powerful pen to the cause they represented. All the traditions of

his life seemed to bind him to the conservative classes; but he broke away from them, and boldly faced their derision and their sneers, to do what seemed right in his own eyes. As far back as the publication of the "Fable for Critics," he had dared to praise Whittier, whom all the conservatives affected to despise,— [Pg 268]

"For singing and striking in front of the war,
And hitting his foes with the mallet of Thor."

It still required bravery as well as kindliness to say of the despised Quaker:—

"All honor and praise to the right-hearted bard
Who was true to The Voice when such service was hard;
Who himself was so free he dared sing for the slave,
When to look but a protest in silence was brave!
All honor and praise to the women and men
Who spoke out for the dumb and the down-trodden then!"

And greater bravery still was required in those days to dare introduce the name of Parker into literature without denunciation or derision. Of the church which had put its ban upon "the Orson of parsons" he said:—

"They had formerly damned the Pontifical See,
And the same thing, they thought, would do nicely for P.;
But he turned up his nose at their murmuring and shamming,
And cared (shall I say) not a d—— for their damning.
So they first read him out of their church, and next minute
Turned round and declared he had never been in it.
But the ban was too small, or the man was too big;
For he recks not their bells, books, and candles a fig
(He don't look like a man who would *stay* treated shabbily,
Sophroniscus' son's head o'er the features of Rabelais);
He bangs and bethwacks them,—their backs he salutes
With the whole tree of knowledge torn up by the roots."

He concluded his long description of the great arch-heretic in these words:—

"Every word that he speaks has been fierily furnaced
In the blast of a life that has struggled in earnest.
There he stands, looking more like a ploughman than priest,
If not dreadfully awkward, not graceful at least;
His gestures all downright, and some, if you will,
As of brown-fisted Hobnail in hoeing a drill;
But his periods fall on you, stroke after stroke,
Like the blows of a lumberer felling an oak:
You forget the man wholly, you're thankful to meet
With a preacher who smacks of the field and the street;
And to hear, you're not over particular whence,
Almost Taylor's profusion, quite Latimer's sense."

The first of the Biglow Papers had appeared even before this,—as early as 1846, during the progress of the Mexican war,—and had showed his countrymen very plainly where he was to be [Pg 269] found in the coming struggle. These brilliant coruscations of wit were the first gleams of light which irradiated the sombre anti-slavery struggle. The Abolitionists were men too much in earnest to enliven their arguments with wit or humor, and the whole conflict thus far had been stern and solemn in the extreme. This had prevented much popular enthusiasm, except in natures as earnest as their own; and many men who had before been indifferent to the subject were at once attracted and interested by the raillery and satire of Lowell. They enjoyed his keen thrusts, and began to talk with one another about them, and unconsciously imbibed a little of their spirit. Some of the more jingling rhymes caught the ear of the street, and in a little while

"John P.
Robinson he
Sez he wun't vote for Governor B."

was heard on every hand. And even across the sea, we are told, travellers would hear some one repeating the catch,—

"But John P.
Robinson he
Sez they didn't know everything down in Judee."

The first series of these papers undoubtedly had a powerful influence in forming public opinion upon the subject of the abolition of slavery; and the second series exerted a still more potent influence in favor of sustaining the government in the prosecution of the war, and in urging it to the emancipation of the slaves. Early in the war he wrote,—

"It's slavery that's the fangs and thinkin' head,
And ef you want salvation, cresh it dead."

He suffered much in his own family from the war, three of his favorite nephews being killed,—one

at Winchester, one at Seven Pines, and one at Ball's Bluff. Another relative was the gallant Colonel Shaw, who led the colored troops in the assault on Fort Wagner, and who there gave up [Pg 270] his heroic life. In the "Commemoration Ode"—the greatest poem which Lowell has ever written—he celebrates the death of these young heroes in fitting verse, and gives their names to immortality. The effect of the poem at the time was simply overpowering, so many other hearts were bleeding with his own; and it at once took its place as one of the noblest poems in the language. The poet William W. Story came over from Rome purposely to hear Lowell deliver this ode, and felt abundantly paid for the journey by the pathos and sublimity of the scene, which has seldom been equalled in this country.

Mr. Underwood tells us that—

> "In person Lowell is of medium height, rather slender, but sinewy and active. His movements are deliberate rather than impulsive, indicating what athletes call staying qualities. His hair at maturity was dark auburn or ruddy chestnut in color, and his full beard rather lighter and more glowing in tint. The eyes of men of genius are seldom to be classified in ordinary terms, though it is said their prevailing color is gray. . . . Lowell's eyes in repose have clear blue and gray tones, with minute, dark mottlings. In expression they are strongly indicative of his moods. When fixed upon study, or while listening to serious discourse, they are grave and penetrating; in ordinary conversation they are bright and cheery; in moments of excitement they have a wonderful lustre. Nothing could be finer than his facial expression while telling a story or tossing a repartee. The features are alive with intelligence; and eyes, looks, and voice appear to be working up dazzling effects in concert, like the finished artists of the Comédie Française."

As a conversationalist Mr. Lowell is unrivalled. His wit is apparently inexhaustible, and irradiates his whole conversation, as it does all his writing except his serious poetry. His "Fireside Travels" was pronounced by Bryant the wittiest book ever written; and it is not more witty than much of his conversation. The brilliancy of his conversation and the charm of his manners unite to make [Pg 271] him one of the most fascinating companions in the world; and this charm is felt by all who come in contact with the man, and is not a thing reserved for his more favored companions. One who has witnessed an encounter of wit between Lowell and Dr. Holmes has witnessed one of the finest exhibitions of mental pyrotechnics of the day. His reading has been wide and varied, and he has all his resources at command. His observation of men and things has also been keen, and every variety of anecdote and illustration come forth from apparently inexhaustible sources as the needs of the moment demand. His love of Nature and his observation of all her finer moods make him a most delightful out-of-doors companion. In the beautiful environs of Cambridge he used to take those long walks which furnished him with such a fund of accurate observation of the sights and sounds of the natural world. No man has a keener eye for a bird than he, nor a quicker ear to distinguish between their songs; and no unusual sound of insect life escapes his scrutiny,—he is keenly alert to know what is going on under his feet as well as over his head. The most modest flower does not escape his eye, nor any peculiarly marked leaf, nor any rich bed of leafy mould. He sees everything with his poet's eye, even to "those rifts where unregarded mosses be." He has never been what is called a society man, though latterly he has gone more into general society. Formerly, dinner-parties and balls were his pet aversions, as one might suspect from his poem "Without and Within:"—

"My coachman, in the moonlight there,
  Looks through the sidelight of the door;
I hear him with his brethren swear,
  As I could do,—but only more.

"Flattening his nose against the pane,
  He envies me my brilliant lot;
Blows on his aching fists in vain,
  And dooms me to a place more hot.

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"Meanwhile, I inly curse the bore
  Of hunting still the same old coon;
And envy him outside the door,
  In golden quiets of the moon.

"I envy him the ungyved prance
  By which his freezing feet he warms,
And drag my lady's chain and dance,—
  The galley-slave of dreary forms.

"Oh, could he have my share of din,
  And I his quiet!—past a doubt,
'T would still be one man bored within,
  And just another bored without."

But he was always fond of good company, and collected around him in Cambridge, in the old days, a brilliant circle of congenial friends. Of these, Longfellow, and Professor Felton, and

Agassiz, and Dr. Estes Howe his brother-in-law, were perhaps the closest; but John Holmes and Edmund Quincy and Robert Carter were very warm friends,—members of the famous Whist Club, and royal companions all. Dr. Holmes was not far away, and always a constant visitor at Cambridge; and James T. Fields was a cherished friend. William Page, the painter, and W. W. Story, the sculptor, were also among his earlier friends. It was to the latter that the series of letters collected under the title of "Fireside Travels" were addressed. But there is scarcely a man of note in the literary world whom he has not known in the course of his life; and he has made friends of nearly all he has known. He has been a busy worker, too, all his life,—industrious, concentrated, and indefatigable. A man who could write the whole of "Sir Launfal" in two days knows how to toil, and has been accustomed to concentrate his faculties. Mr. Lowell has an utter disbelief in the materialistic theory of the Universe, and expresses it many times in his later poems. He at least —

"envies science not her feat
To make a twice-told tale of God."

And to his reverential eyes— [Pg 273]

"The Ages one great minster seem,
That throbs with praise and prayer."

And his hope for the world is expressed in "Godminster Chimes," where he says:—

"O chime of sweet Saint Charity,
Peal soon that Easter morn
When Christ for all shall risen be,
And in all hearts new born!
That Pentecost when utterance clear
To all men shall be given,
When all shall say *My Brother* here,
And hear *My Son* in heaven!"

Of his own personal trust he gives a picture in "Sea-Weed:"—

"The drooping sea-weed hears, in night abyssed,
Far and more far the wave's receding shocks,
Nor doubts, for all the darkness and the mist,
That the pale shepherdess will keep her tryst,
And shoreward lead again her foam-fleeced flocks.

"For the same wave that rims the Carib shore
With momentary brede of pearl and gold,
Goes hurrying thence to gladden with its roar
Lorn weeds bound fast on rocks of Labrador,
By love divine on one sweet errand rolled.

"And though Thy healing waters far withdraw,
I too can wait, and feed on hope of Thee
And of the clear recurrence of Thy law,
Sure that the parting grace my morning saw
Abides its time to come in search of me."

ROBERT AND ELIZABETH BROWNING.

Comparatively little has been known of the lives of these poets. The fact of their having lived in Italy throughout their married life kept them somewhat aloof from the gossip-loving writers of their own country; and the tourists, both from England and America, who were so fond of calling upon them there, seldom succeeded in establishing anything like intimate relations with them.

The little that is known can be briefly stated. Browning's father was a gentleman of wealth and of original character, who allowed the striking individuality of his son Robert to develop itself in a natural way instead of attempting to cramp him into the mould of the other young Englishmen of his rank and time. At an early age he went to Italy, where he passed several years in diligent study of the institutions and art of that favored land as well as of her literature both ancient and modern. Young Browning had a great passion for these studies, and a great fondness for Italian life, with which he familiarized himself in all the different provinces and all the principal cities, living for long periods in each favorite resort where there was anything either in art or nature to please his fine critical taste. He studied both painting and music, and has always been a fine amateur in each. He wrote poetry from childhood, but published nothing until he was about [Pg 275] twenty-three years old, when "Paracelsus," a dramatic poem, appeared. The genius of the writer was recognized at once, as well as those faults which have clung to him persistently through life. Two years after, a tragedy entitled "Strafford" was produced, and a little later, "Sordello." We are interested in these, for the purposes of this article, only as they made him known to Elizabeth Barrett, a young invalid in England, who at once felt the power of the high genius which had appeared in the literary world. She had written some poems herself, but was almost unknown, and, indeed, expected to live but a very short time. Returning to England at this time, Browning, through some knowledge of her poems, made her acquaintance, and a mutual attachment followed, which proved very strong and lasting. This love between two poets of such high rank is unique in the annals of literature. At first she is afraid of her own love, and bids him

"Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forebore . . .
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream, include thee as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine
And sees within my eyes the tears of two."

The whole outlook of life soon changed to the gentle invalid, as she tells him later.

"The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I who thought to sink
Was caught up into love and taught the whole [Pg 276]
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, sweet with thee anear.
The name of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shalt be, there or here;
And this . . . this lute and song . . . loved yesterday
(The singing angels know) are only dear
Because thy name moves right in what they say."

The wonder of how she could have been able to live without him impresses her much.

"Beloved, my beloved, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sat alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
No moment at thy voice . . . but link by link

Went counting all my chains as if that so
They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand . . . why, thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder. Wonderful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech, nor ever cull
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight."

But in order to tell the whole story we should have to quote all the "Sonnets from the Portuguese,"—and they would make an alluring chapter certainly,—but we must refrain. The result was that,

"As brighter ladies do not count it strange
For love to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
My near, sweet view of Heaven for earth with thee."

The two poets were married, and removed at once to Italy, where the lady's health improved, and where they passed many years of happy married life. Miss Barrett's father did not approve the marriage, and he cast her off in consequence, and never became reconciled to her, which was the one great grief of her happy and fortunate life. She had before marriage lost a favorite brother by drowning, for whom she had mourned so deeply as seriously to affect her health. These were the [Pg 277] only abiding sorrows of her life, as far as the world knows. The perfect companionship of these two gifted souls has been described by Browning himself:—

"When if I think but deep enough
You are wont to answer prompt as rhyme,
And you too find without a rebuff
The response your soul seeks, many a time
Piercing its fine flesh stuff."

Their perfect union he describes thus:—

"My own, see where the years conduct.
At first 't was something our two souls
Should mix as mists do; each is sucked
Into each now, on the new stream rolls,
Whatever rocks obstruct.

"Think when our one soul understands
The great Word which makes all things new,
When earth breaks up and heaven expands,
How will the change strike me and you
In the house not made with hands?

"Oh, I must feel your brain prompt mine,
Your heart anticipate my heart,
You must be just before in fine,
See and make me see for my part
New depths of the Divine."

The whole poem "By the Fireside" should be quoted to tell the story from his side; but we will select only the close for our purpose. After describing how their love had led on to its own consummation, he says:—

"I am named and known by that hour's feat,
There took my station and degree.
So grew my own small life complete
As Nature obtained her best of me—
One born to love you, sweet!

"And to watch you sit by the fireside now,
Back again, as you mutely sit
Musing by fire-light, that great brow
And the spirit-small hand propping it
Yonder, my heart knows how! [Pg 278]

"So the earth has gained by one man more,
And the gain of earth must be Heaven's gain too,
And the whole is well worth thinking o'er
When the autumn comes; as I mean to do
One day, as I said before."

The autumn time has come now to Browning, and he has had ample time to think it o'er; for the "perfect wife," the "Leonor," has lain under the grasses and violets of the English burying-ground in Florence for twenty-five years. In the same poem from which we have quoted, he says:—

"How well I know what I mean to do
When the long dark autumn evenings come!
And where, my soul, is thy pleasant hue?
With the music of all thy voices dumb
  In life's November, too!

"I shall be found by the fire, suppose,
O'er a great wise book as beseemeth age,
While the shutters flap as the cross wind blows,
And I turn the page, and I turn the page,
  Not verse now, only prose!"

It is sad to think that he should be left solitary by his fire and with his books, but he has much that is beautiful to look back upon,—much, too, that is beautiful to look forward to, let us hope; and he is surrounded by many friends, and devotedly attached to the one son who was the only fruit of this royal marriage of genius.

The house where the poets lived together for fourteen years in Florence has been thus described:—

> "Those who have known 'Casa Guidi' as it was can never forget the square anteroom with its great picture and piano-forte at which the boy Browning passed many an hour,—the little dining-room covered with tapestry, and where hung medallions of Tennyson, Carlyle, and Robert Browning,—the long room filled with plaster casts and studies, which was Mr. Browning's retreat,—and dearest of all, the large drawing-room where *she* always sat. It opens upon a balcony filled with plants, and looks out upon the old iron-gray church of Santa Felice. [Pg 279]
>
> "There was something about this room which seemed to make it a proper and especial haunt for poets. The dark shadows and subdued light gave it a dreamy look, which was enhanced by the tapestry-covered walls and the old pictures of saints that looked out sadly from their carved frames of black wood. Large bookcases constructed of specimens of Florentine carving were brimming over with wise-looking books. Tables were covered with more gayly-bound volumes, the gifts of brother authors. Dante's grave profile, a cast of Keats's face and brow taken after death, a pen-and-ink sketch of Tennyson, little paintings of the boy Browning, all attracted the eye in turn, and gave rise to a thousand musings. A quaint mirror, easy-chairs and sofas, and a hundred nothings, which always add an indescribable charm, were all massed in this room. But the glory of all, and that which sanctified all, was seated in a low arm-chair near the door. A small table strewn with writing-materials, books, and newspapers, was always by her side."

Here Mrs. Browning held her small court, and here she entertained in the course of these years many of the most famous men and women of her time. Almost all visitors to Florence, especially English and American, sought her acquaintance, and all were kindly received by her. The conversation was always earnest there; she demanded a great deal of a person,—one felt it instinctively; and few came to waste her time upon trifles. Her own conversation was especially earnest, sometimes vivid, and lighted up by a humor peculiarly her own. She cared nothing for talk about people. Books and humanity, great deeds, and the great questions of the day, were the staple of her conversation. Religion, too, was an ever present topic. She was one of the most religious women of her day, and she interwove it in all her conversation, as she did in her writings. Indeed, her religion was a part of herself, and whoever knew her must know of this strong, deep feeling. One cannot conceive of Mrs. Browning apart from her religion. She would not have been herself, but another. It was a rare sight, indeed, to see this frail, spiritual-looking woman, when she talked upon some phase of her favorite theme, with her great expressive eyes [Pg 280] fairly glowing with the intensity of her feeling, and a light shining through her face, as from the soul beyond. Her other great theme was Italy, and upon this she was always eloquent. Indeed, both Mr. and Mrs. Browning may almost be said to have adopted Italy for their home, and to have transferred their home affections to her soil. Many great Englishmen have loved Italy, but none more warmly than the Brownings. They suffered with her through all those dark hours which preceded her final emancipation from the foreign yoke, and they aided by their strong, brave words in bringing about that emancipation. Their pens were used in her behalf, perhaps too much for their own fame, because many of the subjects on which they wrote were of somewhat transient interest and more political than poetical. They were both friends and helpers to the great statesman Cavour in all his labors for the reconstruction of Italy, and one of the deepest interests of their lives was that reconstruction. Mrs. Browning's frail health was really injured at times by the serious grief she felt for temporary reverses, and by the absorbing interest she took in the cause.

The dream of her life, a free and united Italy, was fulfilled in Napoleon's formal recognition of Italian freedom and unity, the very week she died. It is given to few in this world thus to see the fruition of their fondest desires, and to pass away just as the clear morning light is dispelling the shadows of a long night of watching and waiting. The Napoleonic poems added nothing to her reputation as a poet, and were much regretted by some of her friends; but her literary reputation was nothing to her compared with her love for Italy, and she at least had faith in Napoleon's promises.

Mr. Hilliard, in his "Six Months in Italy," says of the home behind the Casa Guidi windows:—

> "A happier home and a more perfect union than theirs it is not easy to imagine; and this completeness arises not only from the rare qualities which each possesses, but from [Pg 281] their perfect adaptation to each other. . . . As he is full of manly power, so she is a type of the most sensitive and delicate womanhood. . . . I have never seen a human frame which seemed so nearly a transparent veil for a celestial and immortal spirit. She is a soul of fire enclosed in a shell of pearl. . . . Nor is she more remarkable for genius and learning than for sweetness of temper, tenderness of heart, depth of feeling, and purity of spirit. It is a privilege to know such beings singly and separately; but to see their powers quickened and their happiness rounded by the sacred tie of marriage, is a cause for peculiar and lasting gratitude."

The boy Browning was very beautiful in his childhood, and occupied a large place in the lives of his parents, who felt great pride in showing him to their visitors. It is a pleasant story told of the street beggars who walked through the Via Maggio in those days, under the windows of Casa Guidi, that they always spoke of Mrs. Browning, simply and touchingly, as "the mother of the beautiful child." But her love for this one beautiful darling taught her the whole possibility of motherhood. It made her heart go out in deepest sympathy to all mothers, as "to the friends unknown, and a land unvisited over the sea," to whom she writes:—

"Shall I speak like a poet, or run
  Into weak woman's tears for relief?
Ah, children! I never lost one,—
Yet my arm's round my own little son,
  And love knows the secret of grief."

In the Italian poem "Mother and Poet," she has expressed a mother's feelings as truthfully and vividly as any writer who has ever touched that great theme. She can describe, too, in language that almost blisters the page on which it is written, that other class of mothers which it is bitter to feel that the earth does contain,—the monsters who would sell their daughters for gold. In that most powerful story of Marian in "Aurora Leigh," she writes thus:— [Pg 282]

"The child turned round
And looked up piteous in the mother's face
(Be sure that mother's death-bed will not want
Another devil to damn, than such a look).
'Oh, mother!' then with desperate glance to heaven,
'God free me from my mother,' she shrieked out,
'These mothers are too dreadful.' And with force
As passionate as fear, she tore her hands,
Like lilies from the rocks, from hers and his,
And sprang down, bounded headlong down the steep,
Away from both, away if possible,
As far as God—away. They yelled at her
As famished hounds at a hare,
                She heard them yell,
And felt her name hiss after her from the hills
Like shot from guns."

The whole of that wonderful poem of "Aurora Leigh" is full of such impassioned sympathy with womanhood, and shows the great heart of the poet as perhaps none of her other poems do. Written in the maturity of her powers, and after she had learned much of life in all its intricate depths, it contains perhaps more passion and power and fiery-burning eloquence than any other poem in the English language. Only an inspired womanly hand, which had sounded all the deeps of the world's scanty wisdom, could have penned it.

But Mrs. Browning shows great wealth of human sympathy in all her poems. Oppression and wrong sink into the very depths of her nature, and she cannot bear that they shall go unreproved in the universe while she exists. Her sympathy with our labors for the emancipation of the slaves was well known, in a time when little sympathy was to be found among the English, and her feeling for the poor and oppressed of her native land was always deep and strong. Her "Cry of the Children" will never be forgotten while there are suffering children in the world, and while there are human hearts to listen to their wail. It is as sacred a piece of inspiration as the Psalms of David; and the need for such an expression of the woe of the outcast poor of England is almost as great to-day as when the immortal poem was written. Still can we ask of the English people:— [Pg 283]

"Do you hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
  Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their heads against their mothers,
  And that cannot stop tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows;
  The young birds are chirping in their nest;
The young fawns are playing with the shadows;
  The young flowers are blowing toward the west.
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
  They are weeping bitterly;

They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free."

This poem, Hood's "Song of the Shirt," and a few others, have added their mite to the influence of Dickens in benefiting a little the poorest of England's poor; yet how much remains to be done is shown in the present deplorable condition of the lower orders in that country. What might not such a poet as Robert Browning have done, could he have emancipated himself from his involved and difficult style, and written in a manly and straightforward way of the world of men and women around him, instead of going off in his exasperating manner into the Red Cotton Night-Cap Country, to tell us of Prince Hohenstiel Tebwangan Saviour of Society. The pity of it is beyond expression, when so great a poet as Browning makes himself so needlessly unintelligible, and loses the vast influence he might exert over the minds of his generation and the minds of posterity. But the thoughts hidden in his rugged verse are worth delving for, and already societies are being formed in England and America to study them. These societies will do something to popularize him, but he can never be made what he was really capable of being, the poet of the people. His circle of readers will always be small, but it will be of the world's best. The thinkers will never make a vast throng in this world, while the highways of folly will always swarm with a great multitude which no man can number. But there is a day after to-day, and sometime, when the thought of the world shall have risen to a higher level, the name of Robert Browning will be oftener than now upon the lips of men. [Pg 284]

Personally, Browning is almost unknown to his countrymen; his name even has never been heard by the multitude. He is never pointed out to strangers, as are other men of letters, and never attracts any notice in a public place. But he is well known to a select circle, where he is a favorite, and he goes a good deal into society in London these later years. He is a great favorite with women everywhere; and he deserves to be, for he has always shown himself capable of sympathizing with what is truest and best in womanhood. He has been loyal to the memory of his wife during all his long years of solitude, and it still seems that she holds her old place in his heart. He is now seventy-four years old,—a fine, well-preserved man, with a light step and an easy carriage. He was a handsome man in his prime, with a charmingly expressive face and a good figure. His hair is now snow-white, but otherwise he is not old in his looks. His manners are somewhat precise, and after the old school. He is fond of admiration, and is accounted egotistical, although reserved in general society. His talk, like his writings, is a good deal upon out-of-the-way subjects, and is often deemed unintelligible by those unfamiliar with his thought. To his enthusiastic admirers it seems like inspiration. He is still busy with his pen, although his volumes of poetry now number twenty or more. He has really created a literature of his own. How life appears to him now, from the vantage-ground of his almost fourscore years, it would be interesting to know. Many years ago he wrote, a little wearily:—

"There's a fancy some lean to and others hate,—
That when this life is ended begins
New work for the soul in another state,
Where it strives and gets weary, loses and wins,—
Where the strong and the weak this world's congeries
Repeat in large what they practised in small,
Through life after life in an infinite series,—
Only the scale's to be changed, that's all. [Pg 285]

"Yet I hardly know. When a soul has seen
By the means of Evil that Good is best,
And through earth and its noise what is heaven's serene,—
When its faith in the same has stood the test,—
Why, the child grown man, we burn the rod;
The uses of labor are surely done.
There remaineth a rest for the people of God,
And I have had troubles enough for one."

CHARLOTTE BRONTÉ.

In the crowded little churchyard at Haworth, in the wild, bleak Yorkshire region, are eight mounds which mark the extinction of a family whose genius and sorrows have made them known the world over. In the little church there is a mural tablet which tells the names of this illustrious group, and the many visitors to this little out-of-the-way house of worship read with a melancholy interest these sad inscriptions. First we are told of Maria Brontë, the mother, who died in 1821, when only thirty-nine years old, leaving the six children whose names follow, all in the helplessness of early childhood. Next to her come Maria and Elizabeth, both of whom followed her in 1825; then Branwell and Emily, who died in 1848, and Anne, who lived one year longer. But it is to the last of the inscriptions that all eyes are turned with the greatest interest, for there we read—

CHARLOTTE,
WIFE OF THE REV. ARTHUR BELL NICHOLS, A. B.
AND DAUGHTER OF THE REV. E. P. BRONTÉ, A. M., INCUMBENT.
SHE DIED MARCH 31ST, 1855, IN THE 39TH YEAR OF HER AGE.

There is no sadder history in all literature than the history of this gifted family and their early doom. A pathos clings about it which is really painful, so few are the gleams of light which are thrown upon the dark picture. From the time when the Rev. Patrick Brontë (himself a gifted but somewhat erratic man) brought his young wife into the solitude of this moorland parsonage and [Pg 287] shut her up in a seclusion from which she was only removed by death, all the way down through the lonely childhood of the little motherless children, and on into their no less lonely and more afflicted womanhood, even to the deaths of all the gifted group, there is a depth of sombre gloom from which the sympathetic heart must turn away with a bitter pain and almost a feeling of hot rebellion against Fate.

The utter loneliness of that part of Yorkshire at the time when Mr. Brontë settled there can hardly be imagined to-day. In winter all communication with the outside world was cut off by almost impassable mud or entirely impassable snow. Travellers whom actual necessity compelled to start forth were often snowed in for a week or ten days within a few miles of home, and nobody thought of stirring from that shelter except through the pressure of absolute necessity. Isolated as were the little hill villages like Haworth, they were in the world, compared with the loneliness of the gray ancestral houses to be seen here and there in the dense hollows of the moors.

The inhabitants of this rough country were themselves of wild, turbulent nature, much given to deadly feuds and really dangerous in their enmities. Their amusements were all of the lowest order, and hard riding and deep drinking were the characteristics of all the male population, while cock-fighting and bull-baiting were thought refined amusements for both sexes.

The ministers were not much above their flocks in general culture, and the incumbents of Haworth had been noted for their eccentricities for generations. Many of them attended the horse-racings and the games of football which were played on Sunday afternoons, and took as deep a part as any of the flock in the drunken carouse which always followed a funeral. Mr. Brontë was a very different man from his predecessors, but was many years in subduing his congregation to an even nominal observance of common moralities. He was, however, a man of [Pg 288] high spirit and imperious will, and, bending himself to the task with all his powers, made a decided impression upon the life around him. The gentle mother soon passed away, and Mr. Brontë became a stern and silent man who kept his children at a distance from himself and allowed them little intercourse with the outside world. They were allowed to walk out on the wild heathery moors, but not down in the village street; and they acquired a passionate love of those purple moors, which remained with them through life. When angry, Mr. Brontë would say nothing, but they could hear him out at the door firing pistol-shots in quick succession as a relief to his feelings. The children were unnaturally quiet and well-behaved. The old nurse says:—

> "You would never have known there was a child in the house, they were such noiseless, good little creatures. I used to think them spiritless, they were so different from any children I had ever seen."

They used to read the newspapers, write little stories, and act plays, and at one time conducted a magazine of their own. Like all imaginative children, they played in stories, each one taking part in the stirring romances they invented. They were great believers in the supernatural, too, and the denizens of the adjoining churchyard played quite a prominent part in their childish lives. This churchyard, which was so near the parsonage, added much to the gloom and unhealthiness of the old manse, and many people have attributed the ill health of all the girls to its close

proximity. It was depressing, to say the least, to such imaginative children as those of Mr. Bronté.

It was not long after the mother's death that the two older girls, Maria and Elizabeth, were taken to a school at Cowan's Bridge, a small hamlet in the north of England, and the younger children were left more lonely than ever. This school, which had been selected on account of its cheapness, had been established for the daughters of clergymen, and the entire expenses were fourteen pounds a year. Cowan's Bridge is prettily situated, just where the Leck-fells sweep into [Pg 289] the plain; and by the course of the beck, alders and willows and hazel bushes grow. This little shallow, sparkling stream runs through long green pastures, and has many little falls over beds of gray rocks. The school-house had been made from an old bobbin-mill, and the situation proved to be remarkably unhealthy. This is the school so realistically described by Charlotte in "Jane Eyre." "Helen Burns" is an exact transcript of Maria Bronté, and every scene is a literal description of events which took place at this school. The whole thing was burned into Charlotte's memory so indelibly that she reproduced it with photographic exactness. Emily and Charlotte had followed the other sisters there, after a year or two, so that all of them suffered to a greater or less extent from the privations and abuses they underwent in that female Dotheboys Hall. The eldest sister died, and the second became very ill; yet still Mr. Bronté, who believed in the hardening process for children, kept them there until the health of each one failed in turn, and they were permanently injured by their privations. The food, which would perhaps have been wholesome enough if properly cooked, was ruined by a dirty and careless woman, who served it up in such disgusting messes that many a time the fastidious little Brontés could not eat a mouthful, though faint with hunger. There was always the most delicate cleanliness in the frugal Bronté household, and the children had early learned to be dainty in such matters. Their fare at home was of the simplest nature, but always well cooked; and they simply fasted themselves ill at Cowan's Bridge because they could not eat what was set before them.

There was another trial of health to the girls, and that was being obliged in all kinds of weather to attend church, which was two miles away. The road was a very bleak and unsheltered one, where cutting winds blew in winter and where the snows were often deep. The church was never warmed, as there was no provision made for any heating apparatus; and when the ill-fed and half- [Pg 290] clothed girls had reached its shelter, they were often in actual chills from the exposure, and could not hope to gain any additional warmth there. Colds were taken in this way, from which the girls never recovered. They also suffered from cold in the school itself, and from the tyranny of one of the teachers, whom Charlotte has mercilessly depicted as Miss Scatcherd in "Jane Eyre." To the day of Miss Bronté's death, she would blaze with indignation at any mention of this school; and who can wonder?

After the death of the second daughter, Elizabeth, Charlotte and Emily were taken from Cowan's Bridge, and spent some time at another school, where they were much happier, and where they made a few life-long friends, particularly Miss Woolner, the principal. One of her schoolmates gives this description of Charlotte's arrival at the school:—

> "I first saw her coming out of a covered cart, in very old-fashioned clothes, and looking very cold and miserable. When she appeared in the school-room her dress was changed, but just as old. She looked a little old woman, so short-sighted that she always appeared to be seeking something, and moving her head from side to side to catch a sight of it. She was very shy and nervous, and spoke with a strong Irish accent. When a book was given her she dropped her head over it till her nose nearly touched it; and when she was told to hold her head up, up went the book after it, still close to her nose, so that it was not possible to help laughing."

She was a close student here, and a favorite with the girls, whom she would frighten half out of their senses by her wonderful stories. So great was their effect at times, that her listeners were thrown into real hysterics. After leaving this school, Charlotte returned home, and began keeping house and teaching her sisters. Here several quiet years were passed, busy but monotonous. The girls spent their time in study, in household tasks, walking, and drawing, of which they were very fond. They also read very thoroughly the few books which were accessible to them. At nineteen [Pg 291] Charlotte went as a teacher to Miss Woolner's school, where she was very happy, and remained until her health failed. It was a nervous trouble, which seemed at one time like a complete breaking down, but from which she gradually recovered after her return home. Emily now took her turn in teaching, going to a school at Halifax, where she came near literally dying from homesickness. Emily could never live away from Haworth and her moors; and in this school she labored incessantly from six in the morning till eleven at night, with only one half-hour for exercise between. To a free, wild, untamable spirit like Emily's, this was indeed slavery. She returned home after a time, and Charlotte again went out to teach. They felt the necessity of earning money, as their father's stipend was small, and he was both liberal and charitable,—and there was their brother Branwell to be provided for. Of this brother we have not before spoken; but he occupied an important place in their home and in their lives. He had been the pride and the hope of the family from early youth. He was possessed of brilliant talents, and was full of noble impulses, but was very fond of pleasure, and soon formed irregular habits, which were the ruin of his life and the source of unmeasured grief to his whole family. They had desired to send him to study at the Royal Academy, as he had the family's fondness for drawing, and they fancied he would develop great talent as an artist. Had his habits been good, their hopes might have been realized; but he fell so early into profligacy, that the idea of becoming an artist was given up, and he took a place as a private tutor. He had formed his intemperate habits when a mere boy, at the public house in Haworth village, where he was esteemed royal company,—as no doubt

he was, with his brilliant conversational powers,—and was often sent for to entertain chance guests, in whom he delighted, as they could tell him so much of that distant world beyond the confining hills, for which he yearned. The pity of it was infinite; for had he been kept in regular [Pg 292] courses for a few years longer, his own ambition and love of the good opinion of others might have restrained him altogether from excess. As it was, before his judgment was matured or he had any real knowledge of the fatal effect of the habits he was forming, he was firmly fixed in the chains of a degrading habit from which death alone could free him. His struggles with this fatal fascination, and his sufferings, were cruel in the extreme, and inflicted pangs bitterer than death on all who loved him. He was rather weak of will, and had been allowed to grow up self-indulgent, through the over-fondness of his family, who were almost ascetic in their own habits, but could deny him nothing. He had great power of attracting people and of attaching them to him,—a power almost wanting in other members of the family, and which might have been of great advantage to him through life, had he started on the right course. As it was, it only helped to drag him down. He had enough of Irish blood in him to make his manners frank and genial, with a kind of natural gallantry about them. He was generally esteemed handsome. His forehead was massive, his eyes good, his mouth pleasant though somewhat coarse, his hair and complexion sandy. Mrs. Gaskell, in her life of Charlotte Brontë, thus tells of the second great grief he caused his family:—

> "Branwell, I have mentioned, had obtained a situation as a private tutor. Full of available talent, a brilliant talker, a good writer, apt at drawing, ready of appreciation, and with a not unhandsome person, he took the fancy of a married woman twenty years older than himself. It is no excuse for him to say that she began the first advances, and 'made love' to him. She was so bold and hardened that she did it in the very presence of her children, fast approaching maturity; and they would threaten her that if she did not grant them such and such indulgences, they would tell their bed-ridden father how she went on with Mr. Brontë. He was so beguiled by this mature and wicked woman that he went home for his holiday reluctantly, stayed there as short a time as possible, [Pg 293] perplexing and distressing them all by his extraordinary conduct,—at one time in the highest spirits, at another in deepest depression,—accusing himself of blackest guilt and treachery, without specifying what they were; and altogether evincing an irritability of disposition bordering on insanity. Charlotte and her sister suffered acutely from his mysterious behavior. They began to lose all hope in his future career. He was no longer the family pride; an indistinct dread was creeping over their minds that he might turn out the family disgrace.
>
> "After a time the husband of the woman with whom he had intrigued, died. Branwell had been looking forward to this with guilty hope. After her husband's death his paramour would be free; strange as it seems, the young man still loved her passionately, and now imagined the time had come when they might look forward to being married, and might live together without reproach or blame. She had offered to elope with him; she had written to him perpetually; she had sent him money, twenty pounds at a time,—he remembered the criminal advances she had made; she had braved shame and her children's menaced disclosures for his sake; he thought she must love him; he little knew how bad a depraved woman can be. Her husband had made a will, in which he left her his property solely on the condition that she should never see Branwell Brontë again. At the very time the will was read, she did not know but that he might be on his way to her, having heard of her husband's death. She despatched a servant in hot haste to Haworth. He stopped at the Black Bull, and a messenger was sent to the parsonage for Branwell. He came down to the little inn, and was shut up with the man some time. Then the groom went away, and Branwell was left in the room alone. More than an hour elapsed before sign or sound was heard; then those outside heard a noise like the bleating of a calf, and on opening the door he was found in a kind of fit, succeeding to the stupor of grief which he had fallen into on hearing that he was forbidden by his paramour ever to see her again, as, if he did, she would forfeit her fortune. . . . Let her live and flourish. He died, his pockets filled with her letters, which he carried about his person perpetually in order that he might read them as often as he pleased. He lies dead, and his doom is only known to God's mercy."

But he did not die at once. He lived as an abiding care and sorrow and disgrace to his family for [Pg 294] three years. He began taking opium, and drank more than ever. "For some time before his death he had attacks of delirium tremens, of the most frightful character; he slept in his father's room, and he would sometimes declare that either he or his father would be dead before morning." The trembling sisters, sick with fright, watched the night through before the door, in such agony as only loving hearts can feel at the ruin of a loved one. The scenes at the old manse at this time would serve to answer the question so often asked, Where did three lonely women like the Brontë sisters ever form their conceptions of such characters as they depicted? How their pure imaginations could conceive of such beings as Heathcote and the Tenant of Wildfell Hall may perhaps be guessed by those who learn what sort of a man Branwell Brontë had grown to be. But the long agony was over at last, and Branwell found his rest; and the sisters, although they could not but feel the relief of his death, mourned for him with passionate sorrow.

Let us turn to pleasanter glimpses of the life at Haworth, some of them preceding the events of which we have been writing. Charlotte had spent a year or two in Brussels, teaching in a school there, and gaining some of those experiences which she afterwards embodied in her novels. Then she had returned home, and the sisters had talked of establishing a school. None of the famous

books had yet been written. To show some of Charlotte's ideas at this time, one or two extracts from her letters may be of interest. She writes in 1840:—

> "Do not be over-persuaded to marry a man you can never respect,—I do not say *love*; because I think if you can respect a person before marriage, moderate love at least will come after; and as to intense *passion*, I am convinced that that is no desirable feeling. In the first place it seldom or never meets with a requital; and in the second place, if it did, the feeling would be only temporary; it would last the honeymoon, and then perhaps give place to disgust. Certainly this would be the case on the man's part; and on the woman's—God help her if she be left to love passionately and alone.

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> "I am tolerably well convinced that I shall never marry at all. Reason tells me so, and I am not so utterly the slave of feeling but that I can *occasionally* hear her voice."

This does not sound much like the woman who could write of Jane Eyre and Rochester; but there were depths of passion in the little woman, probably unsuspected by herself.

Again she writes, in 1845:—

> "I know that if women wish to escape the stigma of husband-hunting, they must act and look like marble or clay,—cold, expressionless, bloodless; for every appearance of feeling, of joy, sorrow, friendliness, antipathy, admiration, disgust, are alike construed by the world into an attempt to hook a husband. Never mind! well-meaning women have their own consciences to comfort them, after all. Do not therefore be too much afraid of showing yourself as you are, affectionate and good-hearted; do not harshly repress sentiments and feelings excellent in themselves, because you fear that some puppy may fancy you are letting them come out to fascinate him; do not condemn yourself to live only by halves, because if you showed too much animation some pragmatical thing in breeches might take it into his pate to imagine that you desired to dedicate your life to inanity. Write again soon, for I feel rather fierce and want stroking down."

That the sisters were not without their own perturbations and heart troubles, even in the deep seclusion of their lonely home, may be judged by some extracts from a poem written by Emily, who never confided anything to any friend but her own sombre muse.

"Cold is the earth, and the deep snow piled above thee,
Far, far removed, cold in the dreary grave.
Have I forgot, my only love, to love thee,
Severed at last by Time's all-severing wave?

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"Now, when removed, do my thoughts no longer hover
Over the mountains on that northern shore,
Resting their wings where heath and fern leaves cover
Thy noble heart forever, evermore?

"Cold in the grave, and fifteen wild Decembers
From these brown hills have melted into spring;
Faithful indeed the love is that remembers
After such years of change and suffering."

That Charlotte had some admirers among her father's curates is well known, and that Mr. Nichols paid court to her eight years previous to the time of her marriage with him. That she was capable of intense and passionate devotion there can be no doubt, but we have no hint as to whom she had lavished it upon, in any of her letters.

She was always extremely sensitive about her personal appearance, considering herself irredeemably ugly, and always thinking that people must be disgusted with her looks. She purposely made her heroine in "Jane Eyre" unattractive, as she felt it an injustice that a woman must always be judged by her looks, and she felt that novelists were somewhat to blame in the matter, as they always made their heroines beautiful in person, however unattractive in mind or character. She was extremely short,—"stunted," as she herself calls it,—never having grown any after the days of her starvation at Cowan's Bridge. She had soft brown hair, and good and expressive eyes, though she was so near-sighted; a large mouth; and a broad, square, somewhat overhanging forehead. Her voice was very sweet, and she was not at all the unattractive person she fancied herself, though by no means beautiful. She was exquisitely neat in her dress, and dainty about her gloves and shoes. She had a keen and delicate touch, and could do any difficult work with her hands, which were the smallest perhaps ever seen upon a grown woman. Her needlework was marvellous, and she was an exquisite housekeeper, attending to the minutest details herself. Her circle of friends and acquaintances was a very narrow one all her life, though after the publication of "Jane Eyre" it of course widened and improved.

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Harriet Martineau and Mrs. Gaskell proved themselves warm and enthusiastic friends to Charlotte; and Thackeray, who met her in London, where she visited her publishers, was much pleased with her, and wrote very kindly of her after her death. Sir James and Lady Kay Shuttleworth became much interested in her, and she enjoyed her visits to them in Westmoreland very highly. The Lake country was a revelation to her, though she was somewhat oppressed by

seeing it all in company. She writes:—

> "If I could only have dropped unseen out of the carriage, and gone away by myself in amongst those grand hills and sweet dales, I should have drunk in the full power of this glorious scenery. In company, this can hardly be."

Again she writes to another:—

> "Decidedly I find it does not agree with me to prosecute the search for the picturesque in a carriage. A wagon, a spring-cart, even a post-chaise might do; but a carriage upsets everything. I longed to slip out unseen, and to run away by myself in amongst the hills and dales. Erratic and vagrant instincts tormented me; and these I was obliged to control, or rather suppress, for fear of growing in any degree enthusiastic, and thus drawing attention to 'the lioness,' the authoress."

The fact of her having sprung into sudden fame immediately after she was known as the author of "Jane Eyre"—the most wonderful book of her day—was a matter of great surprise to her, and would doubtless have afforded her very keen pleasure, only that she was so overburdened with home cares and sorrows at that time. Even the sweetness of her literary triumph was embittered by the sadness of the home life. "Jane Eyre" had been written during their worst trials with Branwell, and "Shirley" just after his death and during the illness of Emily and Anne, both works being the product of the very darkest hours of her darkened life. If these works are morbid and unhealthy, as has been asserted, is it any wonder, when we consider what must have been the [Pg 298] state of her mind while writing them? She was most devotedly attached to her sisters; indeed, her very life may be said to have been bound up in theirs; and it was peculiarly hard for her to lose them just when success appeared to be at hand, and they might have looked forward to something of happiness during the remainder of their lives. Charlotte gives her own affecting account of Emily's death, which throws some light upon the character of that remarkable woman, as remarkable perhaps as Charlotte herself, although she did not live to do any work as lasting as that of her elder sister. She says:—

> "But a great change approached. Affliction came in that shape which to anticipate is dread; to look back on, grief. In the very heat and burden of the day the laborers failed over their work. My sister Emily first declined. . . . Never in all her life had she lingered over any task that lay before her, and she did not linger now. She sank rapidly. She made haste to leave us. Day by day, when I saw with what a front she met suffering, I looked on her with an anguish of wonder and love. I have seen nothing like it; but indeed I have never seen her parallel in anything. Stronger than a man, simpler than a child, her nature stood alone. The awful point was that, while full of ruth for others, on herself she had no pity; the spirit was inexorable to the flesh; from the trembling hands, the unnerved limbs, the fading eyes, the same service was exacted as they had rendered in health. To stand by and witness this, and not dare to remonstrate, was a pain no words can render."

Emily never left the house after Branwell's death. She made no complaint, but her friends could see that she was deadly ill. Yet she would have no doctor, and insisted upon going on with her work as usual. This she did until she was actually dying. Branwell had insisted upon standing up to die; and poor Emily had scarcely consented to lie down, when she was gone. Their will-power in their last agonies was something almost fearful to contemplate. As the old bereaved father and [Pg 299] Charlotte and Anne followed the coffin to the grave, Emily's old, fierce, faithful bull-dog, to which she had been so much attached, came out and walked beside them. When they returned he lay down by Emily's door, and howled pitifully for many days. Charlotte recurred to this death-scene continually. In one letter she says:—

> "I cannot forget Emily's death-day; it becomes a more fixed, a darker, a more frequently recurring idea in my mind than ever. It was very terrible. She was torn, conscious, panting, reluctant, though resolute, out of a happy life. But it will not do to dwell on these things."

Anne Brontë did not long survive her sister, and Charlotte was now alone except that she had the care of her aged father, who was feeble and nearly blind. The awful loneliness of the old house almost crazed her, but she went faithfully to work, and bore up with unheard of fortitude. Two or three solitary years went by, when Mr. Nichols, her father's curate, renewed his suit to Miss Brontë. Mrs. Gaskell tells us that he was one who had known her intimately for years, and was not a man to be attracted by any kind of literary fame. He was a grave, reserved, conscientious man, with strong religious feeling. In silence he had watched and loved her long.

She thus describes the meeting:—

> "Instead I heard a tap, and like lightning it flashed upon me what was coming. He entered. He stood before me. What his words were you can imagine; his manner you can hardly realize, nor can I forget it. He made me for the first time feel what it costs a man to declare affection when he doubts response.... The spectacle of one ordinarily so statue-like, thus trembling, stirred, and overcome, gave me a strange shock. I could only entreat him to leave me then, and promise a reply on the morrow."

Mr. Brontë, when consulted, was so displeased with the whole proceeding, and was so weak at

this time, that Charlotte, fearing ill consequences to him, gave Mr. Nichols a refusal, whereupon [Pg 300] he resigned his curacy and left the country. But a year or two after, seeing that Charlotte was unhappy, and fearing for her health, her father withdrew his opposition; Mr. Nichols was recalled, and the marriage finally took place. Mrs. Gaskell says:—

> "She expressed herself as thankful to One who had guided her through much difficulty and much distress and perplexity of mind; and yet she felt what most thoughtful women do, who marry when the first flash of careless youth is over, that there was a strange, half-sad feeling in making announcements of an engagement, for cares and fears come mingled inextricably with hopes. One great relief to her mind at this time was derived from the conviction that her father took a positive pleasure in all the thoughts about and preparations for her wedding. He was anxious that things should be expedited, and much interested in preparations for Mr. Nichols's reception into the household."

Again:—

> "The news of the wedding had slipt abroad before the little party came out of the church, and many old and humble friends were there, seeing her look 'like a snowdrop' as they say. Her dress was white embroidered muslin, with a lace mantle, and white bonnet trimmed with green leaves, which perhaps might suggest the resemblance to the pale wintry flower."

Her married love and happiness were of very brief duration; a few short months, and she lay upon the bed from which she would rise no more. Waking for an instant, we are told, "from this stupor of intelligence, she saw her husband's woe-worn face, and caught the sound of some murmured words of prayer that God would spare her. 'Oh,' she whispered forth, 'I am not going to die, am I? He will not separate us, we have been so happy.'" But love or prayer could not stay the hand of death, which had marked all of this family for an early doom, and she passed sweetly away in the arms of her devoted husband. Thank God for the little glimpse of womanly happiness [Pg 301] which He gave her at the last, and for the faithful mourner who held her memory so sacred for many years in the old gray manse. Mr. Nichols watched faithfully over the old father in his last days, and only left Haworth when duty held him there no longer, although the place had grown inexpressibly sad to him after his affliction. To the graves of the gifted women who sleep there, pilgrimages are made to this day. The Yorkshire region has changed much; and many now seek its wild heathery moors, not only for its own sake, but for the sake of those who loved and suffered in the little gray parsonage among its bleak hills. Long will the genius which created "Jane Eyre" and "Villette" and "Shirley" delight the world; but the remembrance of the writer's womanly virtues will linger when all these shall have passed away.

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MARGARET FULLER.

There was little in the life of the people of New England in the early part of the present century upon which to feed the imagination of a precocious and romantic child like Margaret Fuller; and her childhood, though outwardly fortunate and well placed, was one of labor and repression, and

far from happy, if we may judge by her own account of it. The theology of the people was gloomy. They made everything connected with religion unlovely, and this austerity was particularly distasteful to one of Margaret's imaginative temperament and heroic disposition. Her ungratified imagination brought her early into conflict with the circumstances and surroundings of her life.

All the poetry of her nature cried out against the lives of toil and care by which she was surrounded,—lives at that time lighted up by little of art or literature or music, but held to a stern standard of duty and self-abnegation. Margaret's nature craved beauty and poetry and art and lavish affection, and it was nursed on a somewhat grim diet of hard work and little expressed affection, although her parents were both loving and intelligent. Her father himself educated her, being a Harvard graduate, and a lawyer and politician of that day. He taught her Latin at the age of six years; and she says that the lessons set for her were as many and various as the hours would allow, and on subjects far beyond her age. These lessons were recited to her father after [Pg 303] office hours, which kept the poor tired child up till late in the evening, and as a result the youthful prodigy was terrified at night by dreams and illusions, and given to sleep-walking. The result of such over-tension of a childish mind was a morbid and unhealthy state of both body and mind; and though she loved study, these great demands made upon her powers almost overcame her with their weight. She had a natural passion for reading, and when a mere child singled out Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Molière, from all the books in the library, for her especial favorites.

She was but eight years old when she took a passionate interest in "Romeo and Juliet," and was disgraced in the family for perusing it on Sunday; and the imaginative child was always seeking for the heroic figures of her Shakespearian world in the every-day life about her, and was always disappointed. Altogether, we must call it an unhappy and unfortunate childhood, and cannot but think much finer intellectual as well as moral results would have followed a different treatment in her home.

In her early girlhood she mixed much in the college society at Cambridge, and would have been taken for a much older person than she really was. She was not handsome, but her animated countenance made its own impression, and awakened interest in almost all who saw her. She made some of her life-long friends at this time. Dr. Hedge, James Freeman Clarke, and William Henry Channing were among them. With Emerson she made acquaintance a little later, through Miss Martineau, then visiting in this country. She was not at this time an agreeable person. She was much derided for her self-esteem by people who knew her slightly, and was also accused of hauteur and arrogance. Even Lowell was thus impressed by her, and put her in the pillory in the "Fable for Critics." He proposes to establish new punishments for criminals, thus:— [Pg 304]

"I propose to shut up every doer of wrong
With these desperate books, for such terms, short or long,
As by statute in such cases made and provided
Shall be by our wise legislators decided:
Thus:—Let murderers be shut, to grow wiser and cooler,
At hard labor for life on the works of Miss ——."

And again:—

"For a woman must surely see well, if she try,
The whole of whose being's a capital I."

And still further:—

"Phœbus! you know
That the infinite Soul has its infinite woe,
As I ought to know, having lived cheek by jowl,
Since the day I was born, with the Infinite Soul."

But people who knew her well soon lost this unfavorable impression, and she was almost idolized by her real friends. Mr. Emerson thus records his first impressions of her: "She had a face and frame that would indicate fulness and tenacity of life. . . . She was then, as always, carefully and becomingly dressed, and of lady-like self-possession. For the rest, her appearance had nothing pre-possessing. Her extreme plainness, a trick of incessantly opening and shutting her eyelids, the nasal tone of her voice,—all repelled; and I said to myself, 'We shall never get far.'" He adds: "I believe I fancied her too much interested in personal history; and her talk was a comedy in which dramatic justice was done to everybody's foibles. I remember she made me laugh more than I liked." But, "soon her wit had effaced the impression of her personal unattractiveness, and the eyes, which were so plain at first, swam with fun and drolleries and the very tides of joy and superabundant life," and he saw "that her satire was only the pastime and necessity of her talent;" and as he came to know her better, "her plane of character rose constantly in my estimation, disclosing many moods and powers in successive platforms or terraces, each above each." All superior women were drawn to her at once, and even those noted only for beauty or [Pg 305] social talent vied in their devotion to her. A few years later, it was for this circle that her famous conversation classes were held in Boston; and so great was their popularity that she continued them for six years. These conversations were entirely unique in character, and attracted great attention in their day. The novelty of such a departure in the Boston of forty years ago may be imagined, and the criticism drawn upon a woman who should inaugurate such an innovation was in some cases very severe. In regard to these same conversations, as in other things, the impression she made was twofold. Mrs. Howe says: "Without the fold of her admirers stood carping, unkind critics; within were enthusiastic and grateful friends." But as to her great

eloquence and ability, there was but one opinion. Even critics admitted that no woman had spoken like this before. And she addressed her fine audience of Boston's most cultivated women with entire ease and freedom, and gave many of them an impulse toward an intellectual career which nothing else at that time could have done.

Here was the real beginning of what may be called the woman question in this country. Before Margaret Fuller's day the agitation regarding woman's career and work in the world was practically unknown here; and all the ideas which have now become incorporated into the platform of the woman's party found in her their first and perhaps their best exponent. Very little that is new has since been urged upon this question. Her powerful mind seemed to have grasped the whole subject, and to have given it the best expression of which it was capable. She embodied her ideas after a time in her book, "Woman in the Nineteenth Century;" and although the literature of the subject is now voluminous, that book is still read and referred to.

Finding it necessary to support herself and to care for her mother and brothers after her father's death, she at first taught school, at one time in Mr. Alcott's famous school in Boston and [Pg 306] afterwards in Providence, and then took a position upon the "New York Tribune," kindly offered her by Mr. Greeley. She supported her brothers in college, and aided her mother for some years, putting by her own ambitions with a cheerful outward appearance, though oftentimes with a heavy heart. She had many and very ambitious literary projects, few of which were ever destined to be carried out. For a woman who occupied so much the minds of the men of her day and of a succeeding generation, she really left little upon which to base their admiration. What she was, rather than what she did, seems to have made its impression upon her time. That her vocation was to speak rather than to write, there seems little doubt. She had the rare but much-prized gift of eloquence, and in these latter days would no doubt have made a very large success as a speaker. Some who listened to her think that she might have been the peer of Wendell Phillips in oratory, had she bent her powers entirely in that direction. As it is, her genius has become almost wholly a tradition. There are many to-day who cannot guess the secret of the continued interest the world feels in her. That secret lies largely in the impression she made upon many of the famous men of her time. They have transmitted her name to posterity along with their own. Horace Greeley at first determined not to like her personally, and avoided her even after she became a member of his family; but he ended by growing as enthusiastic over her as the rest. Even crabbed Carlyle, though much prejudiced against women of her sort, bore testimony to his liking for her. He writes to Emerson:—

> "Margaret is an excellent soul; in real regard with both of us here. Since she went I have been reading some of her papers in a new book we have got; greatly superior to all I knew before,—in fact, undeniable utterances of a truly heroic mind, altogether unique, so far as I know, among the writing women of this generation; rare enough too, God knows, among the writing men. She is very narrow, but she is truly high. Honor to [Pg 307] Margaret, and more and more good speed to her!"

It was not until 1846 that Margaret's long desire to visit Europe was gratified. It had been the dream of her life, and one cannot but be sad at thought of its tragic ending. She spent some time in London, seeing all the celebrities of the day there, and then crossed over to Paris. Like London, Paris had then some brilliant men and women, whose peers she has not seen since. Rachel was the queen of the tragic stage, George Sand queen of the literary domain. De Balzac, Eugene Sue, Dumas *père*, and Béranger were all alive, and the centre of the Parisian literary coterie. Liszt and Chopin held the musical world in the bondage of sweet sounds. Into this little inner circle Margaret entered, and did not fail to make her mark there. She was a second Madame de Staël in conversation, and in her little circle was recognized as such.

From Paris she went to Italy, where the real romance of her life was enacted and its tragic *denouement* prepared for. Italy had been her promised land from early youth. She had longed for its sunny clime, amid the storms and winds of bleak New England; for its historic associations, amid the poverty of a land without a past; for its architectural splendors, amid the bareness and baldness of the New World cities; for the grandeur of its ancient art, amid the poverty of the America of that day; for its impassioned music, in a land almost devoid of musical culture; and she had longed for the beautiful, sensuous, idle life of its people, through all the strain of a strenuous and overworked existence. Her vision had been fair, and at first she was much disappointed. In artistic or architectural magnificence St. Peter's and the Transfiguration could not disappoint a soul like Margaret's, but she was deeply disappointed in the life of the Italian people and in the general charm of the country.

She fell upon exciting times in Italy. There had grown up the fiercest hatred of the Austrian rule, which had recently been aggravated by foolish acts of repression and violence. The whole [Pg 308] country was in a ferment. Mazzini, whom Margaret had met in London, was here awaiting his opportunity. Mrs. Howe says: "Up and down went the hopes and the hearts of the Liberal party. Hither and thither ran the tides of popular affection, suspicion, and resentment. The Pope was the idol of the moment. The Grand Duke of Tuscany yielded to pressure whenever it became severe. The minor princes, who had from their birth been incapable of an idea, tried as well as they could to put on some semblance of concession without really yielding anything." Margaret was soon in close relations with leading Liberals, and shared all their hopes and fears and some of their dangers.

At this time she first met the young Italian nobleman, Ossoli, who became her husband. She became separated from her party one day at some service at St. Peter's, and, wandering around

trying to find them, became tired and somewhat agitated. A young man of gentlemanly address offered his services to her as guide; and after looking in vain for her friends, she was obliged to accept his escort home, night having come on and no carriages being in attendance. They became mutually attracted, and the acquaintance continued, with that disregard of conventionality for which American women are noted when abroad. Although much younger than Margaret, he seemed to be greatly interested in her; and although he had none of her intellectual tastes, she was equally interested in him.

A very romantic attachment sprang up between them, which ended after a few months in a secret marriage. Her reason for the secrecy lay in the troubled times, and the fear of Ossoli's being deprived of his paternal inheritance on account of marrying a Protestant. They had great hopes of the coming revolution, and trusted to a more liberal government to give him his rights despite the fact of his marrying outside the Church of Rome. He was as poor as Margaret herself; and this was another reason for living apart for a time. He was a captain in the Civic Guard, and at [Pg 309] this time much occupied with military duties. It was at this time that the Roman Republic was proclaimed, with great pomp of rejoicing; and Margaret chronicles the opening of the Constitutional Assembly, with great display of processions and banners. In one procession walked a Napoleonic prince side by side with Garibaldi, both having been chosen as deputies. All this raised the hopes of the Liberals throughout Europe to the highest point, and Margaret was almost transported with happy excitement,—probably not understanding as well as the natives of Italy how ill prepared that country was for liberty, and how soon the despotic power would again close around the people. In point of fact, the Republic lasted but a few days, and Margaret's brief time for rejoicing was over, and her own personal troubles became very urgent and oppressive.

A son had been born to her some months before, and had of necessity been left in the hands of a nurse in the country, as the marriage had not yet been made known. During all the pomp of processions and the ringing of bells and firing of cannon, she had heard the voice of her infant crying at Rieti. She had not seen him for three months, on account of the troublous times. She lay awake whole nights contriving how she might end the separation which seemed killing her; but circumstances were too strong for her, and the object so dear to her heart could not be compassed. The French were already in Italy. The siege of Rome soon ended in the downfall of the Republic, and the government was placed in the hands of a triumvirate. The city once invested, military hospitals became a necessity. Margaret was named superintendent of the hospital of the Fate Bene Fratelli. "Night and day," writes Mrs. Story, "Margaret was occupied, and with the Princess Belgiojoso so ordered and disposed the hospitals that their conduct was admirable. Of money they had very little, and they were obliged to give their time and thoughts in its place. I have walked through the wards with Margaret, and have seen how comforting was her [Pg 310] presence to the poor suffering men. For each one's peculiar taste she had a care. To one she carried books; to another she told the news of the day; and listened to another's oft-repeated tale of wrongs, as the best sympathy she could give. They raised themselves on their elbows to get a last glimpse of her as she went away." Ossoli was stationed with his command on the walls of the Vatican, and in great danger. He refused to leave his post even for food and rest. The provisions which Margaret sent him he shared with his comrades. Sometimes she could visit him at his post and talk about the little Angelo, now always in her thoughts. As the wounded men were brought into the hospital she was always expecting to see her husband; and as the nurse had threatened to abandon the babe, and it was utterly impossible for Margaret to get outside the lines now investing the city, the two horrors were almost more than she could bear. It was only in trying to help the helpless that she found any consolation in this dreadful time. The night of the 20th of June, the French effected an entrance into the city; and although the defence was gallantly continued until the 30th, there was really no hope for the patriots.

At that time Garibaldi informed the Assembly that further resistance would be useless. The French occupation then began, and the end of all liberties. The gates once open, Margaret, with all her sorrow for Rome, was happy in the thought of reaching her child. She did reach him just in time to save his life. He had been forsaken by his nurse, and his mother found him "worn to a skeleton, too weak to smile or lift his wasted little hand." All that Margaret had endured seemed slight compared to this. She could but compare the women of the Papal States to wolves. The child, however, recovered with good nursing, and the family, now united, enjoyed a little season of repose and happiness. The marriage was announced, and Margaret's many friends in Rome extended their help and sympathy. Life in Italy had now become so painful to them that she [Pg 311] resolved to return to the New World. Her husband was willing to accompany her. They accordingly engaged passage upon a merchant-vessel from Leghorn, the same vessel being engaged to bring over the heavy marble of Powers's "Greek Slave." She seemed to have great forebodings about this voyage, and was almost induced to give up their passage on the vessel at the last moment; but she overcame her fears, and they embarked. After a few days the captain died of small-pox. The disease spread; and Margaret, as courageously as ever, went about the ship nursing the sick. Soon the little Angelo was taken with the dread disease; they nursed him safely through it, however, and after many dangers and trials the vessel arrived off the Jersey coast in thick weather. At night, the mate promised them a landing in New York in the morning; but the vessel ran upon the sand-bars near Long Island, and on Fire Island beach she struck at four o'clock on the morning of July 19. Margaret, with husband and child, was lost, after refusing to be separated in the efforts at rescue. They went down together, and the career of a great and noble woman ended thus tragically on that desolate coast.

[Pg 312]

EDGAR ALLAN POE.

Among the names that were occasionally mentioned in the brief and fleeting annals of the stage from the year 1798 to the year 1811, were those of Mr. David Poe and the beautiful Miss Arnold —afterward Mrs. Poe,—the father and mother of that most brilliant but erratic genius Edgar A. Poe.

David Poe was the son of old General Poe, who won his honors in Revolutionary times and was a man of sterling character and many heroic qualities. Miss Arnold belonged to the stage by birth, and from earliest youth had been attached to the theatre in some capacity. It is a most miserable fate for a child, but she knew of nothing better. She came before the public with a naïveté that was touching, and played her little airs on the piano and sung her little songs and uttered her childish sentences always to the very best of her ability, putting up with the late hours and the hasty and often scanty meals and the general discomfort of her lot with the utmost amiability and good-nature. No sheltered home, no days of careless pleasure, no constant and watchful care over health or manners or morals, fell to her lot; but the frowns and sometimes the curses of the older actors, the ill-nature of the manager, and the wearied fretfulness of her mother, who was growing old in the drudgery of her profession,—for she never rose above that at any time. Nor does it appear that Miss Arnold had any particular talent, though she won a moderate share of [Pg 313] favor upon the stage; but she was always much esteemed by those who knew her in private. She sung and sometimes danced, as did her husband, who was an actor of inferior merit. There is something very pathetic in the story of the little second-rate actress who was so conscientious and so persevering, and one cannot but hope that she received her due share of the applause which lends such a fascination to the life of the actor that he rarely abandons it for any other career.

There is a hint of the hardship of her life in the fact that there are but three short breaks in her dramatic career through all those years,—the times when the three children were born to them. Edgar was born Jan. 19, 1809, and his mother appeared upon the stage again February 10, and played to the end of the season almost incessantly. The family were poor to the verge of destitution at all times, and the little woman had need of a brave heart when the children came crowding into the poor unfurnished nest. One cannot doubt that there was much of pain and worry in the little creature's heart before the birth of Edgar; and no doubt the paint covered the traces of many tears on the faded cheeks, and the smiles which wreathed her face were more artificial than the usual stage smiles during all those weary months. In 1811 she and her husband were playing in Richmond, when her health failed her, and they were brought to great straits for the means of life. The actors gave her a benefit, but the receipts were small, and the following card was inserted in the Richmond papers:—

> "To the Humane: On this night Mrs. Poe, lingering on the bed of disease and surrounded by her children, asks your assistance; *and asks it perhaps, for the last time*."

Before the second benefit night the Richmond ladies had come to her relief, and she was tenderly cared for during the brief remainder of her life by stranger hands. She had never had a home. She had passed her whole life in poor, mean lodgings, about which no household charm could [Pg 314] linger. In these desolate places had been passed even her honeymoon; in some garret lodgings

had her children been born; here all that she had known of domestic joy or sorrow had been enacted; here she had doubtless wept her hot tears and had her little triumphs, and here she had died. Poor little variety-actress of the olden time! there is one heart at least that is touched by your lot, even at this distant day, and has dropped a tear to your memory on the page where she has read your history.

The three children were cared for by the kind people of Richmond, and Edgar was adopted by Mrs. John Allan, whose husband gave but a reluctant consent to the arrangement. Edgar was a most beautiful and precocious child, and attracted much attention in the new home. If the poor mother on her dying-bed could have known of the good fortune which awaited him, it would have eased somewhat the bitter pangs of her parting with her beautiful and idolized child. He was taken to England, where he spent several years of his childhood, and when he returned, entered a classical school, where he was prepared for college. He was described as "self-willed, capricious, inclined to be imperious, and, though of generous impulses, not steadily kind or even amiable." He was a facile scholar and fond of Latin and English poetry. He was nearly always alone, making few friends among his schoolmates, and was of a dignified and reserved disposition and inclined to melancholy. He entered the University of Virginia at the age of seventeen, and it was here that his fatal habit of drinking was first formed. One of his schoolmates writes:—

> "Poe's passion for strong drink was as marked and peculiar as that for cards. It was not the *taste* of the beverage that influenced him. Without a sip or smack of the mouth he would seize a full glass, without water or sugar, and send it home at a single gulp. This frequently used him up; but if not, he rarely returned to the charge."

This, for a lad of seventeen, with an excitable temperament, was sufficient to sow the seeds of all [Pg 315] his future woe. The youthful brain inflamed with alcohol never really recovers its normal condition, even when abstinence follows, and Poe's life-long struggle with his adversary began at this tender age. Dr. Day, long connected with the inebriate asylum at Binghamton, N. Y., once had an opportunity to examine the brain of a man who, after having been a drunkard, reformed and lived for some years as a teetotaller. He found to his surprise that the globules of the brain had not shrunk to their natural size. They did not exhibit the inflammation of the drunkard's brain, but they were still enlarged, and seemed ready on the instant to absorb the fumes of alcohol and resume their former condition. He thought he saw in this morbid condition of the brain the physical part of the reason why a man who has once been habituated to liquor falls so easily under its sway again in spite of every moral reason for refraining. Doubtless he was right, and poor Poe was only one of a vast number of men of brilliant intellects and kind hearts, who after a life-long struggle are defeated by the enemy they have taken into their stomachs to destroy their brains.

It is not our purpose to trace the poet through all the devious windings of his life, but to dwell for a little while upon the course of his domestic life and give some of the striking points in his character. We will pass over the close of his college career and the episode at West Point, as well as the publication of his earliest volume of poems, and look at him as we find him in the summer of 1833, living in Baltimore. He had a home here with his father's widowed sister, Mrs. Clemm, who with her daughter Virginia lived in a very humble way in that city. The little Poe could earn—for he was then at one of his lowest financial periods—went into the common stock, and the three struggled along together. Virginia was a child of eleven, beautiful, delicate, refined; and Mrs. Clemm was then, as always thereafter, the best and kindest of friends to the poet. She had little [Pg 316] to offer him, save kindness and motherly love; but she gave these most abundantly, and they were of priceless value to Poe. For many months he kept himself from his besetting sin, and worked faithfully at whatever literary work he could get to do. But he was poor to the point of destitution, and the mental strain upon him was great, with his extraordinary pride and sensitiveness. He had been well reared, with fine and delicate tastes, and accustomed to money; and privation was very bitter to him. He was naturally an aristocrat, too, and found in the associations to which he was almost compelled by poverty a heavy cross. At the end of two years he felt himself forced to leave Baltimore, and thought he could obtain employment in Richmond. He had become greatly attached to Virginia, and she was equally so to him; and although she was but a child of thirteen, Poe proposed to marry her and take her and Mrs. Clemm with him to his new destination. The youth of Virginia seems to have been the only obstacle in the mind of Mrs. Clemm, who had conceived the deepest affection for Poe and had great confidence in his abilities. She was friendless and unable to take care of herself and her daughter, and after some hesitation she consented to the marriage. It did not take place, however, till Virginia was fourteen years old.

Ill-starred and ill-timed as this marriage seemed to be, it was the one bright and beautiful thing about the life of Poe. He remained passionately devoted to the youthful wife as long as she lived; and it is thought by those who knew him best that, despite his numerous romantic passages with ladies after her death, Virginia was the only woman he ever really loved. In spite of the bad habits which clung to him so persistently, he seems to have been a really kind and devoted husband to the end. She, on her part, worshipped him with a supreme infatuation that was blind to all his faults. The romance of the first months of married life seemed never to wear off, and through all their sorrows—and they were many and bitter—their love burned as brightly as at [Pg 317] first.

To Mrs. Clemm, also, Poe was always a devoted son, and through all his waywardness; and folly and sin she clung to him with the devotion of a true mother. The sturdy figure of this woman

shows through all the dark spots of his life, casting a gleam of brightness. She was a strong, masculine-looking woman, full of energy, and took upon herself all the practical affairs of the little household. She received the money from Poe, and expended it in her own way; and she had a faculty of getting a good deal of comfort out of a very little money. So their home was almost always comfortable, even when they were poorest. And she never gave way to reproaches, even when Poe was at his worst. She seemed to consider his failing only in the light of a misfortune, and never blamed, but always pitied him. She worshipped his genius almost as blindly as did Virginia, and it is pleasant to think that with all their misfortunes and privations, they had much real happiness in their little home. Poe was very proud and very fond of Virginia, and liked to take strangers to see her. She had a voice of wonderful sweetness and sung exquisitely, and in some of their more prosperous days she had her harp and piano. One evening when she was singing she ruptured a blood-vessel, and for a time her life was despaired of Poe describes the affliction long afterwards in a letter as follows:—

> "Six years ago a wife whom I loved as no man ever loved before, ruptured a blood-vessel in singing. I took leave of her forever, and underwent all the agonies of her death. She recovered partially, and I again hoped. At the end of a year the vessel again broke. I went through precisely the same scene. Then again—again—and even once again at varying intervals. Each time I felt all the agonies of her death, and at each accession of the disorder I loved her more dearly and clung to her life with more desperate pertinacity. But I am constitutionally sensitive,—nervous to an unusual degree. I became insane, with long intervals of possible sanity. During these fits of [Pg 318] absolute unconsciousness, I drank—God only knows how often or how much. As a matter of course, my enemies referred the insanity to the drink, rather than the drink to the insanity."

Although Poe's word is not always to be taken in regard to his own affairs, this doubtless describes his feelings over Virginia's condition quite truthfully; and whether the drinking was cause or effect we shall probably never really know.

During one of the periods of Virginia's improved health Poe took her and went to New York, leaving Mrs. Clemm behind to settle up domestic affairs. In a letter which he wrote to his mother-in-law, we have a glimpse of the kindlier side of the man's nature and of his real affection for this devoted friend, as well as some hints of the straits of poverty to which they had been accustomed, by the fulness of his descriptions of the plenty upon which they had fallen. He is speaking of his boarding-house:—

> "I wish Catarina [the cat] could see it; she would faint. Last night for supper we had the nicest tea you ever drank,—strong and hot,—wheat and rye bread, cheese, tea-cakes (elegant—a great dish), two dishes of elegant ham and two of cold veal, piled up like a mountain and large slices, three dishes of the cakes, and everything in the greatest profusion. No fear of starving here. The landlady seemed as if she couldn't press us enough, and we were at home directly. For breakfast we had excellent-flavored coffee, hot and strong,—not very clear and no great deal of cream,—veal-cutlets, elegant ham and eggs, and nice bread and butter. I never sat down to a more plentiful or a nicer breakfast. I wish you could have seen the eggs and the great dishes of meat. Sis is delighted, and we are both in excellent spirits. She has coughed hardly any, and had no night-sweat. She is now busy mending my pants, which I tore against a nail. I went out last night and bought a skein of silk, a skein of thread, two buttons, a pair of slippers, and a tin pan for the stove. The fire kept all night. We have now got four dollars and a half left. To-morrow I am going to try and borrow three dollars, so that I may have a fortnight to go upon. I feel in excellent spirits, and haven't drank a drop—so that I hope [Pg 319] soon to get out of trouble. The very instant I scrape together enough money I will send it on. You can't imagine how much we both do miss you. Sissy had a hearty cry last night because you and Catarina weren't here. We hope to send for you very soon."

It is hard to read of the straits to which Poe was often reduced for a little money, and to know that all this time he was writing those immortal tales which would now make a man's fortune as soon as produced. It is true that he had two or three times good salaried positions,—good for that day,—but he never kept them long, and his chronic state was one of poverty, if not of destitution.

Mrs. Osgood, who knew him in the later days in New York, says of him:—

> "I have never seen him otherwise than gentle, generous, well-bred, and fastidiously refined. To a sensitive and delicately nurtured woman there was a peculiar and irresistible charm in the chivalric, graceful, and almost tender reverence with which he invariably approached all women who won his respect."

The home in the suburbs where he lived in the last days of his wife's life is described as a story-and-a-half house at the top of Fordham Hill. Within on the ground floor were two small apartments,—a kitchen and sitting-room,—and above, up a narrow stairway, two others, one Poe's room,—a low, cramped chamber lighted by little square windows like port-holes,—the other a diminutive closet of a bedroom, hardly large enough to lie down in. The furnishing was of the scantiest, but everything faultlessly neat.

> "Mrs. Clemm, now over sixty, in her worn black dress made upon all who saw her an

> impression of dignity, refinement, and deep motherly devotion to her children. Virginia, at the age of twenty-five, retained her beauty, but the large black eyes and raven hair contrasted sadly with the pallor of her face. Poe himself, poor, proud, and ill, anticipating grief and nursing the bitterness that springs from helplessness in the sight of suffering borne by those dear to us, was restless and variable, the creature of contradictory impulses." [Pg 320]

Virginia now failed rapidly, Poe was ill, and the household was reduced almost to the starving-point. Winter was upon them; and when at last a sympathizing friend found them she thus describes the situation:—

> "There was no clothing upon the bed, which was only straw, but a snow-white counterpane and sheets. The weather was cold, and the sick lady had the dreadful chills that accompany the hectic fever of consumption. She lay on the straw bed wrapped in her husband's great-coat, with a large tortoise-shell cat in her bosom. The wonderful cat seemed conscious of her great usefulness. The coat and the cat were the sufferer's only means of warmth, except as her husband held her hands and her mother her feet. Mrs. Clemm was passionately fond of her daughter, and her distress on account of her illness and poverty and misery was dreadful to see."

This friend at once interested some benevolent people in the case, and poor Virginia's last days were made comfortable by their aid. Poe's heart seemed filled with inexpressible gratitude to all who aided him in this sorest crisis of his life; and although he was much broken by his loss, he rallied once more and was sober and industrious for a time. Mrs. Clemm stood faithfully by him, and even watched over him through some of the fearful seasons of delirium which followed his complete giving up to the habits of drinking and of taking opium.

Of the final scenes of this unhappy life it is needless to write. They have been often described, and though the accounts vary, the sum and substance are the same. Poe was attacked with delirium-tremens in Baltimore, and died in a hospital in that city in October, 1849. Beautiful, gifted, and sensitive, proud, ambitious, and daring, endowed with a subtle charm of manner as well as of person, amiable and generous in his home life, loyal and devoted to his family, a very pleasing picture is presented of the man if we look but on this side. Could he have overcome the fatal fascination of drink, we might never have seen the reverse side of all this. As it is, let us cover his follies with our mantle of charity and dwell only upon his genius and his virtues. [Pg 321]

[Pg 322]

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY.

During a portion of Thackeray's life there seemed to be in the public mind a complete misapprehension of the character of the man. Superficial readers of his books, who knew nothing of him personally, were fond of applying the name of cynic to him; and he was even accused by some of these of being a hater of his kind, a misanthropist, a bitter satirist, a hard, ungenial man.

As no adequate personal memoir of him has ever been written, it being understood by his family

that such a publication would have been distasteful to him, it has taken time to correct all the false impressions that have gained credence in regard to the great humorist; but at the present time his character has been practically cleared of the former false charges. As one by one the friends who knew him personally have spoken, it has been discovered that this cynic was one of the tenderest and kindest men that our time has produced; this hater of his kind, a man so soft-hearted and full of sensibility that it was really a serious drawback to him in life; this misanthropist, one of the most genial and kindly companions in the world; this bitter satirist, a man who never made an enemy by his speech; this hard man, one who actually threw money away, as all his friends thought, by bestowing it upon every applicant whether he could afford it or not. [Pg 323]

So great a change in the world's estimate of a man has seldom been made after the man's death. It is to be accounted for by the fact that while he was living his friends never told what they knew of him, and that only very gradually did they reveal his virtues, even after he had gone, feeling always that he would have preferred them to be silent; and by the other fact that he often appeared other than he was, to cover up his excessive sensibility, of which he was very much ashamed.

The world will come to a truer knowledge of him still some day; and then it will be found what a great, loving, noble heart was hidden behind his thin crust of cynicism,—what gentleness, what tenderness, what wise kindness he was capable of,—what loyalty to his friends and to his principles, what reverence for sacred things, what infinite depths of pathos, lay beneath that mocking exterior. Let us gather together a few of these personal traits as they have been given us by different hands, and try to make thus a true likeness of the man as he appeared to those who knew him best. The events of his life were few and by no means striking.

He was born in Calcutta in 1811, and brought to England when six years of age. At eleven he was placed in Charter-House School, where he is described as a rosy-faced boy, with dark curling hair, and a quick intelligent eye, ever twinkling with good-humor. For the usual school sports he had no taste, and was only known to enjoy theatricals and caricatures, for which he retained his taste throughout life. He was wonderfully social and vivacious, and the best of good company, even at this early day. Merry, light-hearted, unselfish, not very industrious, but a fair classical scholar, and possessed of a wonderful memory,—so he is remembered by those who knew him at this time. In a great school, where nearly all the boys bullied those who were beneath them, he was noted for his invariable kindness to the smaller boys, and it was remarked of him, even at this age, that for one who had such powers of sarcasm he made very few wounds by his tongue. [Pg 324] At eighteen he entered Cambridge University, but left it at nineteen and went to study art in Paris. Here he remained for several years, and began his literary work. Here, too, he was married, when twenty-six years of age, to Miss Isabella Shawe, and here they passed the first happy days of their married life together. He has himself sketched a picture of the time, in these words:—

> "The humblest painter, be he ever so poor, may have a friend watching at his easel, or a gentle wife sitting by with her work in her lap, and with fond smiles or silence, or both, cheering his labors."

For a few short years they were very happy together, and three children were born to them. Then the most terrible misfortune of his life fell upon him,—his wife, after a severe illness, became hopelessly insane. For some time Thackeray refused to believe that it was more than an illness from which she would recover, but at last the terrible truth was forced upon him that he had lost her forever, and in a way so much more cruel than death. She was placed in the home of a kind family employed to care for her, and there she remained until death released her. His grief was of the most hopeless kind, and it made a melancholy man of him throughout life. At times and seasons his natural gayety would return to him; but he was a sad man at heart from that dreadful day when the horror of her fate was revealed to him. He never spoke directly of his grief, but once in a while he would speak of it in parable, as when he talked to a friend about somebody's wife whom he had known becoming insane, and that friend says:—

> "Never shall I forget the look, the manner, the voice, with which he said to me, 'It is an awful thing for her to continue to live. It is awful for her so to die. But has it ever occurred to you how awful the recovery of her lost reason would be, without the consciousness of the loss of time? She finds the lover of her youth a gray-haired old man, and her infants young men and women. Is it not sad to think of this?'" [Pg 325]

His mother came to live with him, and his children grew to maturity beneath his roof, one of them the Miss Thackeray now so well known as a novelist. But tenderly as he was attached to them,—and there could have been no fonder father,—he no doubt felt all the sadness of the thought that

> "The many make the household,
> But only one the home."

In one of the "Roundabouts" he says:—

> "I own, for my part, that in reading papers which this hand formerly penned, I often lose sight of the text under my eyes. It is not the words I see, but that past day, that by-gone page of life's history, that tragedy—comedy it may be—which our little home company were enacting, that merry-making which we shared, that funeral which we

followed, that bitter, bitter grief which we buried."

That he should live much in that vanished past, was but natural; yet it was hard for a man like Thackeray, who had naturally such great capacity for the enjoyment of life.

That his home was a pleasant and goodly place, all who have ever visited it bear witness. He made it his refuge from all outer troubles, and practised a genial and kindly hospitality there. It was a long time before he was able to buy a house, though he made a good deal of money from his books, his free-handed generous ways always keeping him back financially; but when he was enabled to buy one, he took great pride and pleasure in it, and decorated it according to his artistic tastes. To make a little more money for his daughters, that they might be independent when he was gone, he began lecturing, and was twice induced to come to America for that purpose, much as he dreaded leaving home, and especially crossing the ocean. [Pg 326]

His speech at the farewell dinner given him before leaving for America the last time, expressed this dread in a very comical manner, and was received with great cheering and uproar. "I have before me," he said, "at this minute the horrid figure of a steward with a basin perhaps, or a glass of brandy and water, which he will press me to drink, and which I shall try to swallow, and which won't make me any better. I know it won't." This with a grimace which put the whole table in a roar. Then he went on to tell of the last dinners given to criminals and convicts, and how they were allowed always to choose what they would have, in a manner so droll that all thought him in the happiest mood, while he was scarcely able to keep up, so sad was his heart at the prospect of leaving home. Next morning, we are told by a spectator, "he had been round crying in corners; and when the cab finally came, and the luggage had all been bestowed, and the servants stood in the hall, 'This is the moment I have dreaded,' said Thackeray, as he entered the dining-room to embrace his daughters, and when he hastily descended the steps to the door, he knew that they would be at the window to cast one loving, lingering look. 'Good-by,' he murmured in a suppressed tone, 'keep close behind me, and try to let me jump in unseen.' The instant the door of the vehicle closed behind him, he threw himself back in the corner, and buried his face in his hands."

His allusion to his little girls, in the poem of "The White Squall," is well known, and shows how constantly he had them in his thoughts:—

"And when, its force expended,
The harmless storm was ended,
And as the sunrise splendid
Came blushing o'er the sea,
I thought, as day was breaking,
My little girls were waking,
And smiling, and making
A prayer at home for me."

His love for these little girls, to whom he felt he must be both father and mother, gave him [Pg 327] unusual tenderness for all children, and he once said he never could see a boy without wanting to give him a sovereign. This he did very often too in England, where children, like servants, are allowed to receive "tips" from their parents' friends; and when in this country he felt it quite a hardship that the children of his friends were not allowed to take his money.

His American visits afforded him much pleasure—and profit too; and he always spoke kindly of us after his return. His light way of expressing his feeling towards us was extremely characteristic, as when he said he hoped he should never be guilty of speaking ill either of the North or the South, as he had been offered equally good claret by both. His frequent allusions to eating and drinking give the idea of a much more convivial person than he really was; he was temperate in both, but he loved to write of these things. In the "Memorials of Gormandizing," he writes in the most appetizing manner of all the good dinners he has eaten in many lands. Each dinner is an epic of the table. They make one hungry with an inappeasable hunger, and make him long to have Thackeray at his own board as a most appreciative guest. He was quite a diner-out in London, and a great favorite wherever he went. He was not one of the professional talkers, but always had one or two good things to say, which he did not repeat until they were stereotyped, as so many do. Though he said witty things now and then, he was not a wit in the sense that Jerrold was. He shone most in little subtle remarks on life, little off-hand sketches of character, and descriptive touches of men and things. He could be uproariously funny on occasion, and even sing his "Jolly Doctor Luther" at table to a congenial company; but he was often very dignified, and always gentlemanly. The bits of doggerel with which he was wont to diversify his conversation are spoken of by all his friends as irresistibly ludicrous, and he seems to have [Pg 328] indulged in this pastime from a boy, as he did in those of caricaturing and parodying. Mr. Fields tells us that—

> "In the midst of the most serious topic under discussion he was fond of asking permission to sing a comic song, or he would beg to be allowed to enliven the occasion by the instant introduction of a double shuffle. . . . During his first visit to America his jollity knew no bounds, and it became necessary often to repress him when walking in the street. I well remember his uproarious shouting and dancing when he was told that the tickets to his first course of readings were all sold; and when we rode together from his hotel to the lecture-hall, he insisted on thrusting both his long legs out of the carriage window, in deference, as he said, to his magnanimous ticket-holders."

Some of his fun was a little embarrassing to his friends, as when Mr. Fields had taken him to the meeting of a scientific club at the house of a distinguished Boston gentlemen, and Thackeray, being bored by the proceedings, stole into a little anteroom, where he thought no one could see him but his friend, and proceeded to give vent to his feelings in pantomime.

> "He threw an imaginary person (myself, of course) upon the floor, and proceeded to stab him several times with a paper-folder which he caught up for that purpose. After disposing of his victim in this way, he was not satisfied, for the dull lecture still went on in the other room, and he fired an imaginary revolver several times at an imaginary head; still the droning speaker proceeded; and now began the greatest pantomimic scene of all, namely, murder by poison, after the manner in which the player King is disposed of in 'Hamlet.' Thackeray had found a small phial on the mantel-shelf and out of it he proceeded to pour the imaginary 'juice of cursed hebenon' into the imaginary porches of somebody's ears. The whole thing was inimitably done, and I hoped nobody saw it but myself; but years afterwards a ponderous fat-witted young man put the question squarely to me: 'What *was* the matter with Mr. Thackeray that night the club met at M——'s house?'"

Thackeray's playfulness was indeed a marked peculiarity, and innumerable stories are told of his [Pg 329] dancing pirouettes, singing impromptu songs, and rhyming a whole company to their infinite amusement. Each one of his personal friends, in talking of him, says, "But if you could only have heard him" at such a time; but of course no one can repeat such unpremeditated jests, and the flavor is gone from them when any one tries to do so. He was the life of the clubs he frequented, and spent much time in them and at theatres, of which he was passionately fond. His duties as a man of fashion took much of his time, and his friends were always wondering when he wrote his books. Much of the jollity and boyish hilarity of his life in society was a rebound from the strain of these books. He was wont to live much, as did Dickens, in the creations of his fancy, and sometimes his emotional nature became overwrought in his work. Mr. Underwood tells us:—

> "One day while the great novel of 'The Newcomes' was in course of publication, Lowell, who was then in London, met Thackeray on the street. The novelist was serious in manner, and his looks and voice told of weariness and affliction. He saw the kindly inquiry in the poet's eyes, and said, 'Come into Evans's and I'll tell you all about it. *I have killed the Colonel!*' So they walked in and took a table in a remote corner; and then Thackeray, drawing the fresh manuscript from his breast-pocket, read through that exquisitely touching chapter which records the death of Colonel Newcome. When he came to the final *Adsum*, the tears which had been swelling his lids for some time trickled down his face, and the last word was almost an inarticulate sob."

Thackeray's sensibility was really extreme, and he could not read anything pathetic without actual discomfort,—never could get through "The Bride of Lammermoor," for instance,—and would not listen to any sad tales of suffering in real life if he could escape them. If he did hear of any one in want or distress, he relieved his feelings by instantly appropriating to their use all the [Pg 330] money he found himself in possession of at the time. When he was editor of the "Cornhill Magazine," this soft-heartedness was a great drawback to him. He was always paying for contributions he could not use, if they were sent, as so many are, with some pitiful tale accompanying; and was always wasting his valuable time by writing to poor creatures about their dreary verses, which there was no hope of his being able to improve. When quite young, he loaned—or rather gave, though he called it a loan—three hundred pounds to poor old Maginn, when he was beaten in the battle of life and lay in the Fleet Prison. But he denied this act with the utmost vehemence when accused of it, and berated the old fellow in a laborious manner for having been beaten when he should have fought on. Indeed, he was very much ashamed of his soft-heartedness always, and would oftentimes bluster and appear very fierce when appealed to for assistance.

Anthony Trollope tells a story about going to him one day and telling him of the straits to which a mutual friend was reduced.

> "'Do you mean to say that I am to find two thousand pounds?' he said angrily, with some expletives. I explained that I had not even suggested the doing of anything,—only that we might discuss the matter. Then there came over his face a peculiar smile, and a wink in his eye, and he whispered his suggestion, as if ashamed of his meanness. 'I'll go half,' he said, 'if anybody will do the rest.' And he did go half at a day or two's notice. I could tell various stories of the same kind."

These things were not easy for him to do; for he was never a rich man, and he had constant calls upon his charity. He kept a small floating fund always in circulation among his poorer acquaintances; and when one returned it to him he passed it to another, never considering it as his own but for the use of the unfortunate. He liked to disguise his charities as jokes,—as filling a pill-box with gold pieces and sending it to a needy friend, with the inscription, "To be taken one [Pg 331] at a time, as needed;" and various devices of this kind. He was as generous of his praise as of his money, and always had a good word for his literary friends. His fine tribute to Macaulay will be remembered, and his praise of Washington Irving, of Charlotte Brontë, and many others. While he had an exaggerated contempt for the foibles of the world at large, he had an almost equally exaggerated sympathy for the joys and sorrows of individuals; and much of the scorn which he gives to humanity collectively may be taken as a sort of vent to his feelings when he is ashamed

of having been too foolishly weak in dealing with some of these fellow-mortals in real life.

He never encouraged his companions in being cynical, but always encouraged them in admiration. "I am glad he worships anybody," he said, when some friends were satirizing an absent companion for his devotion to a great man. Neither would he encourage any unkind talk about the absent, or laugh at any good hit which was aimed at a friend. "You fiend!" he said to a friend who was laughing over a sharp attack on an acquaintance, and he refused to read or hear a word of it. Indeed, for steadfast loyalty to his friends, his equal has seldom been seen. He made common cause with them in everything, and nothing so enraged him as treachery or deceit among friends.

He was a man of aristocratic feeling, and resented familiarity. He was also in general a reserved man, and allowed few people really to know him. He had a surface nature which was all his mere acquaintances knew. Even his friends were long in finding him out. Douglas Jerrold was once heard to say, "I have known Thackeray eighteen years, and I don't know him yet;" and this was the case with the majority of his friends. His great griefs he kept closely within his own heart, and the more serious side of his nature was all hidden from the world as much as he could hide it. Those who read between the lines discovered it in his books, and those who looked deeply [Pg 332] enough into human nature found it in the man, but superficial observers saw only the mocking man of the world. When suddenly observed, his face always had a sad, grave aspect, and it was often hard for him to throw off this seriousness and to put on his harlequin's mask. Upon religious matters he was always reticent, but reverent. Only upon rare occasions would he discuss serious subjects at all, and only with a chosen few. In one letter which has been published he departs from his usual custom and writes:—

> "I never feel pity for a man dying, only for survivors if there be such passionately deploring him. You see the pleasures the undersigned proposes to himself here in future years,—a sight of the Alps, a holiday on the Rhine, a ride in the Park, a colloquy with pleasant friends of an evening. If it is death to part with these delights (and pleasures they are, and no mistake), sure the mind can conceive others afterward; and I know one small philosopher who is quite ready to give up these pleasures,—quite content (after a pang or two of separation from dear friends here) to put his hand into that of the summoning angel, and say, 'Lead on, O messenger of God our Father, to the next place whither the divine goodness calls us.' We must be blindfolded before we can pass, I know; but I have no fear about what is to come, any more than my children need fear that the love of *their* father should fail them. I thought myself a dead man once, and protest the notion gave me no disquiet about myself,—at least the philosophy is more comfortable than that which is tinctured with brimstone."

He hated those who make a stock in trade of their religion, and, like Dr. Johnson, would have advised them to clear their minds of cant; but no genuine evidence of religious feeling or experience was ever treated lightly by him, and he was greatly shocked at any real desecration of sacred things. He had a simple, childlike faith in God and in the Saviour, and a firm hope in the everlasting life.

In person, Thackeray was a tall, ruddy, simple-looking Englishman, with rather a full face, florid, almost rubicund, and keen, kindly eyes, and, after forty, abundant gray hair. He had a [Pg 333] conspicuous, almost a commanding figure, with a certain awkwardness in his gait. He had a misshaped nose, caused by an accident in boyhood, and a sarcastic twinkle oftentimes in his eyes, which changed the expression of his whole face.

He dressed well, but unpretendingly, and his voice and manner were always courteous and cordial. He smiled easily, and had a humorous look when not oppressed with sadness, which was often the case in later life. He died suddenly in middle life, leaving, like Dickens, an unfinished novel in the press. No other literary man, save perhaps Macaulay, has been mourned as Thackeray was mourned. There was universal sorrow for his premature loss, and great personal grief among his friends. Twenty-three years have passed since that time, and no successor has arisen to repay the world for that loss. When the curtain fell upon Becky Sharpe and Beatrix, upon Ethel Newcome and the good Colonel, upon Laura and Pendennis, upon Esmond and Warrington, and upon all the deeply studied characters of his mimic stage, that curtain fell to rise no more upon such creatures as his hands had made. He will have no successor. He is the One, the Only. Such pathos, such wit, such wisdom, will not dawn upon us again—in time.

When he wrote Finis for the last time at the close of one of those matchless volumes, it was an epoch closed in the history of literature. When the recording angel wrote Finis at the close of that sad and weary but bravely spent and useful life, it was a sad day for the world of men, who will not look upon his like again. Who that felt a love for the writer and the man could fail to rejoice that the end was quick and painless? One of our own poets has well described the scene:—

"The angel came by night
(Such angels still come down),
And like a winter cloud
Passed over London Town,
Along its lonesome streets,
Where want had ceased to weep, [Pg 334]
Until it reached a house
Where a great man lay asleep;

The man of all his time
   Who knew the most of men,—
The soundest head and heart,
   The sharpest, kindest pen.
It paused beside his bed
   And whispered in his ear;
He never turned his head,
   But answered, 'I am here.'
Into the night they went;
   At morning, side by side,
They gained the sacred place
   Where the greatest dead abide;
Where grand old Homer sits,
   In godlike state benign;
Where broods in endless thought
   The awful Florentine;
Where sweet Cervantes walks,
   A smile on his grave face;
Where gossips quaint Montaigne,
   The wisest of his race;
Where Goethe looks through all
   With that calm eye of his;
Where—little seen, but light—
   The only Shakspeare is!
When the new spirit came,
   They asked him, drawing near,
'Art thou become like us?'
   He answered, 'I am here.'"

CHARLES DICKENS.

No novelist has dealt so directly with the home life of the world as Charles Dickens. He has painted few historic pictures; he has dealt mostly in interiors,—beautiful bits of home life, full of domestic feeling. Indeed, we may say that his background is always the home, and here he paints his portraits, often like those of Hogarth for strength and grotesque effect. Here, too, he limns the scenes of his comedy-tragedy, and depicts the changing fashions of the time. The color is sometimes a little crude, laid on occasionally with too coarse a brush; but the effect is always lifelike, and our interest in it is never known to flag.

Nowhere else in all the range of literature have we such tender description of home life and love, such intuitive knowledge of child life, such wonderful sympathy with every form of domestic wrong and suffering, such delicate appreciation of the shyest and most unobtrusive of social

virtues; nowhere else such indignation at any neglect or desecration of the home, as in Mrs. Jellyby with her mission, in Mrs. Pardiggle with her charities, Mr. Pecksniff with his hypocrisy, and Mr. Dombey with his unfeeling selfishness. In short, Dickens is pre-eminently the prophet and the poet of the home.

Now, can it be possible that we must say of such a man as this, that in his own life he was the opposite of all that which he so feelingly describes,—that he desecrated the very home he so [Pg 336] apostrophizes,—that he put all his warmth, geniality, and tenderness into his books and kept for his own fireside his sour humors and unhappy moods,—that he was "ill to live with," as Mrs. Carlyle puts it? We cannot believe it in so bald a form, but we are forced to admit that his married life seems to have been in every way unhappy and unfortunate. No one could state this more strongly than Dickens himself, in the letter he wrote at the time of the separation. He said:—

> "Mrs. Dickens and I have lived unhappily for many years. Hardly any one who has known us intimately can fail to have known that we are in all respects of character and temperament wonderfully unsuited to each other. I suppose that no two people, not vicious in themselves, were ever joined together, who had greater difficulty in understanding one another, or who had less in common. An attached woman-servant (more friend to both of us than servant), who lived with us sixteen years and had the closest familiar experience of this unhappiness in London, in the country, in France, in Italy, wherever we have been, year after year, month after month, week after week, day after day, will bear testimony to this. Nothing has on many occasions stood between us and a separation but Mrs. Dickens's sister, Georgina Hogarth. From the age of fifteen, she has devoted herself to our home and our children. She has been their playmate, nurse, instructress, friend, protectress, adviser, companion. In the manly consideration towards Mrs. Dickens, which I owe to my wife, I will only remark of her that the peculiarity of her character has thrown all the children on some one else. I do not know, I cannot by any stretch of fancy imagine, what would have become of them but for this aunt, who has grown up with them, to whom they are devoted, and who has sacrificed the best part of her youth and life to them. She has remonstrated, reasoned, suffered, and toiled, and come again to prevent a separation between Mrs. Dickens and me. Mrs. Dickens has often expressed to her her sense of her affectionate care and devotion in the house,—never more strongly than within the last twelve months."

Again, in the public statement which he prepared for "Household Words," alluding to a multitude [Pg 337] of damaging rumors which were quickly put in circulation, he says:—

> "By some means, arising out of wickedness or out of folly or out of inconceivable wild chance, or out of all three, this trouble has been made the occasion of misrepresentations most grossly false, most monstrous, and most cruel,—involving not only me, but innocent persons dear to my heart, and innocent persons of whom I have no knowledge, if indeed they have any existence,—and so widely spread that I doubt if one reader in a thousand will peruse these lines by whom some touch of the breath of these slanderers will not have passed like an unwholesome air.
>
> "Those who know me and my nature need no assurance under my hand that such calumnies are as irreconcilable with me as they are in their frantic incoherence with one another. But there is a great multitude who know me through my writings and who do not know me otherwise, and I cannot bear that one of them should be left in doubt or hazard of doubt through my poorly shrinking from taking the unusual means to which I now resort of circulating the truth. I most solemnly declare then—and this I do both in my own name and my wife's name—that all lately whispered rumors touching the trouble at which I have glanced are abominably false; and that whosoever repeats one of them, after this denial, will lie as wilfully and as foully as it is possible for any false witness to lie before heaven and earth."

This denial, coming from a man of truth and honor like Charles Dickens, must, once for all, dispose of that convenient way of accounting for the sad estrangement.

The reasons for the unhappy state of things were of a much more complicated nature than this. Only the most intimate of his friends ever knew them in full, and of course they were debarred from making them public. But Professor Ward of Cambridge University, who has written a very kind and appreciative Life of Dickens, and one which gives a far more pleasing idea of his character than the bulky and egotistical Life by Forster, gives a clue to the whole trouble in the [Pg 338] following statement. He says:—

> "If he ever loved his wife with that affection before which so-called incompatibilities of habits, temper, or disposition fade into nothingness, there is no indication of it in any of the numerous letters addressed to her. Neither has it ever been pretended that he strove in the direction of that resignation which love and duty made possible to David Copperfield, or even that he remained in every way master of himself, as many men have known how to remain, the story of whose wedded life and its disappointments has never been written in history or figured in fiction."

And this troublous condition of things was very much intensified by Dickens having fallen violently in love with Mary Hogarth, Mrs. Dickens's youngest sister. This beautiful girl died at

their house at the early age of seventeen. No sorrow seems ever to have touched the heart and possessed the imagination of Charles Dickens like that for the loss of this dearly loved girl. "I can solemnly say," he wrote to her mother a few months after her death, "that waking or sleeping I have never lost the recollection of our hard sorrow, and I never shall." "If," he writes in his diary at the beginning of a new year, "she was with me now,—the same winning, happy, amiable companion, sympathizing with all my thoughts and feelings more than any one I ever knew did or will,—I think I should have nothing to wish but a continuance of such happiness." Throughout life her memory haunted him with great vividness. After her death he wrote: "I dreamed of her every night for many weeks, and always with a kind of quiet happiness, which became so pleasant to me that I never lay down without a hope of the vision returning." The year before he died he wrote to a friend: "She is so much in my thoughts at all times, especially when I am successful, that the recollection of her is an essential part of my being, and is as inseparable from my existence as the beating of my heart is." In a word, she was the one great imaginative passion of [Pg 339] his life. He is said to have pictured her in Little Nell, and he writes after finishing that book, "Dear Mary died yesterday when I think of it."

Have we not in this the key to all the sorrows of his domestic life? Could he have married the woman he loved in this manner, he would doubtless have been one of the tenderest and most devoted of husbands, and a family life as beautiful as any of the ideal ones he has depicted would have resulted. It is probable that he did not know Mary Hogarth until after his marriage, when she came to live in his house, and when his youthful fancy for his wife had begun to decline. Miss Hogarth died instantly of heart-disease, without even a premonitory warning.

All accounts agree in calling Mrs. Dickens a very pretty, amiable, and well-bred woman; and even if she was as infinitely incapable as represented, that alone would seem to be insufficient cause for so serious a trouble. Miss Georgina Hogarth, whom all describe as a very lovely and superior person, possessed the executive ability Mrs. Dickens lacked, it would seem; for all visitors both to Tavistock House and Gad's Hill describe with enthusiasm the perfect order which prevailed in the large establishments, attributing this in part at least to Dickens's own intense love of method and passion for neatness. But no man without the aid of feminine head and hands would have succeeded in attaining to this perfect housekeeping, especially where the family consisted of nine children, as in this case.

Hans Christian Andersen thus describes a visit to Gad's Hill:—

> "It was a fine new house, with red walls and four bow-windows, and a jutting entrance supported by pillars; in the gable a large window. A dense hedge of cherry-laurel surrounded the house, in front of which extended a neat lawn, and on the opposite side rose two mighty cedars of Lebanon, whose crooked branches spread their green far over another large lawn surrounded by ivy and wild vines, the hedge being so dense [Pg 340] and dark that no sunbeam could penetrate it.
>
> "As soon as I stepped into the house, Dickens came to meet me kindly and cordially. He was now in the prime of life, still so youthful, so active, so eloquent, so rich in the most pleasant humor, through which his sterling kind-heartedness always beamed forth. As he stood before me in the first hour, so he was and remained during all the weeks I passed in his company,—merry, good-natured, and full of charming sympathy. Dickens at home seems to be perpetually jolly, and enters into the interests of games with all the ardor of a boy. My bedroom was the perfection of a sleeping-apartment; the view across the Kentish hills, with a distant peep of the Thames, charming. In every room I found a table covered with writing-materials, headed notepaper, envelopes, cut quill-pens, wax, matches, sealing-wax, and all scrupulously neat and orderly. There are magnificent specimens of Newfoundland dogs on the grounds, such animals as Landseer would love to paint. One of these, named Bumble, seems to be a favorite with Dickens."

Mr. Mackenzie writes:—

> "Eminently social and domestic, he exercised a liberal hospitality, and though he lived well as his means allowed, avoided excesses. It is said of him that he never lost a friend, never made an enemy."

From all sources comes the same report of his geniality, of his devotion to his children and their devotion to him, of his constant generosity and good-humor. Byron's old servant said that Lady Byron was the only woman he ever saw who could not manage his master. Was this also true of Mrs. Dickens? Was she the only one who found him "ill to live with"? It may be; and yet one can easily imagine him to have been a man of moods, and that in some of these moods it would be best to give him a wide berth. The very excess of his animal spirits may have been wearying to one who could not share them; and that he was egotistical to a degree, and vain, and fond of [Pg 341] flattery, goes without saying. A lady in the "English-woman's Magazine" tells this story of his wild and reckless fun, and it is matched by many others. They were down on the seashore in the moonlight, and had been dancing there.

> "We then strolled farther down to watch the fading light. The tide came rippling in. The night grew darker,—starless, moonless. Dickens seemed suddenly to be possessed with the spirit of mischief; he threw his arm around me, and ran me down the inclined plane to the end of the jetty till we reached the toll-post. He put his other arm around this,

and exclaimed in theatrical tones that he intended to hold me there till the sad sea waves should submerge us. 'Think of the sensation we shall create.' Here I implored him to let me go, and struggled hard to release myself. 'Let your mind dwell upon the column in the "Times" wherein will be vividly described the pathetic fate of the lovely E. P., drowned by Dickens in a fit of dementia. Don't struggle, poor little bird; you are helpless.' By this time the last gleam of light had faded out, and the water close to us looked uncomfortably black. The tide was coming up rapidly, and surged over my feet. I gave a loud shriek, and tried to bring him back to common-sense by reminding him that my dress—my best dress, my only silk dress—would be ruined. Even this climax did not soften him; he still went on with his serio-comic nonsense, shaking with laughter all the time, and panting with his struggles to hold me. 'Mrs. Dickens,' I shrieked, 'help me! Make Mr. Dickens let me go—the waves are up to my knees.' 'Charles,' cried Mrs. Dickens, 'how can you be so silly? You will both be carried off by the tide!' And it was not until my dress had been completely ruined that I succeeded in wresting myself from him. Upon two other occasions he seized me and ran with me under the cataract, and held me there until I was thoroughly baptized and my bonnets a wreck of lace and feathers."

The same writer says,—and she is one who writes from familiar personal acquaintance,—"To describe Dickens as always amiable, always just, and always in the right, would be simply false and untrue to Nature;" and she relates several anecdotes going to prove that he was sometimes [Pg 342] capricious, not always responsive to appeals for help, and other things of that sort; all of which may be true and not be very damaging. This writer tells still another story of his reckless fun-making, as follows:—

"We were about to make an excursion to Pegwell Bay, and lunch there. Presently Dickens came in in high glee, flourishing about a yard of ballads, which he had bought from a beggar in the street. 'Look here,' he cried exultingly, 'all for a penny. One song alone is worth a Jew's eye,—quite new and original, the subject being the interesting announcement by our gracious Queen.' He commenced to give us a specimen, but after hearing one verse there arose a cry of universal execration. He pretended to be vexed at our 'shutting him up.' said there was nothing wrong in it, he had written a great deal worse himself; and when we were going to enter the carriages he said: 'Now, look here! I give due notice to all and sundry, that I mean to sing that song, and a good many others, during the ride; so those ladies who think them vulgar can go in the other carriages. I am not going to invest my hard-earned penny for nothing.' I was quite certain that Charles Dickens was the last man in the world to shock the modesty of any female, and too much of a gentleman to do anything that was annoying to us, but I thought it as well to go in the other carriage; and so he had no ladies with him but his wife and Mrs. S——. I was not sorry, however, to be where I was, as I heard for the next half-hour portions of those songs wafted on the breeze; and the bursts of laughter from ladies and gentlemen and the mischievous twinkle in Dickens's eye proved that he was in such a madcap mood that it was as well there were none but married people with him,—the subject being of a 'Gampish' nature. But he was not always full of spirits or even-tempered,—indeed, I was sometimes puzzled by the variability of his moods."

Anecdotes like the following, told by Blanchard Jerrold, abound in all writers who wrote of Dickens from personal knowledge:— [Pg 343]

"A very dear friend of mine, and of many others to whom literature is a staff, had died. To say that his family had claims upon Dickens is to say that they were promptly acknowledged and satisfied, with the grace and heartiness which double the gift, sweeten the bread, and warm the wine. I asked a connection of our dead friend whether he had seen the poor wife and children. 'Seen them?' he answered. 'I was there to-day. They are removed into a charming cottage. They have everything about them; and just think of this: when I burst into the room, in my eager survey of the new home, I saw a man in his shirt-sleeves up some steps, hammering away lustily. He turned. It was Charles Dickens, and he was hanging the pictures for the widow. . . . Dickens was the soul of truth and manliness as well as kindness, so that such a service as this came as naturally to him as help from his purse.'"

Jerrold continues:—

"There was that boy-element in him which has been so often remarked of men of genius. 'Why, we played a game of knock 'em down only a week ago,' a friend remarked to me last June, with beaming eyes, 'and he showed all the old astonishing energy and delight in taking aim at Aunt Sally.' My own earliest recollections of Dickens are of his gayest moods, when the boy in him was exuberant, and leap-frog and rounders were not sports too young for the player who had written 'Pickwick' twenty years before. The sweet and holy lessons which he presented to humanity out of the humble places in the world could not have been evolved out of a nature less true and sympathetic than his. It wanted such a man as Dickens was in his life to be such a writer as he was for the world."

One more anecdote. J. C. Young tells us that one day Mrs. Henry Siddons, a neighbor and intimate of Lord Jeffrey, who often entered his library unannounced, opened the door very gently

to see if he were there, and saw enough at a glance to convince her that the visit was ill-timed. The hard critic of the "Edinburgh Review" was sitting in his chair with his head on the table in deep grief. As Mrs. Siddons was retiring, in the hope that her entrance had been unnoticed, [Pg 344] Jeffrey raised his head and kindly beckoned her back. Perceiving that his cheek was flushed and his eyes suffused with tears, she begged permission to withdraw. When he found that she was intending to leave him, he rose from his chair, took her by both hands, and led her to a seat.

"Don't go, my dear friend; I shall be right again in another minute."

"I had no idea you had had any bad news, or cause for grief, or I would not have come. Is any one dead?"

"Yes, indeed. I'm a great goose to have given way so; but I could not help it. You'll be sorry to hear that little Nelly, Boz's little Nelly, is dead."

Dear, sweet, loving little Nell! We doubt if any other creation of poet or novelist in any language has received the tribute of as many tears as thou. From high, from low, on land, on sea, wherever thy story has been read, there has been paid the spontaneous tribute of tears. Whether or not many of the fantastic creations of the great master's hand will live in the far future we cannot tell, but of thy immortality there is no more question than there is of that of Hamlet or of Lear. Bret Harte tells us of a camp among the stern Sierras, where a group of wanderers gathered about the fire, and one of them arose, and "from his pack's scant treasure" drew forth the magic book; and soon all their own wants and labors were forgotten, and

"The whole camp with Nell on English meadows
Wandered and lost their way."

And from many different sources come stories of her influence upon the hearts and minds of all classes and conditions of men.

Of Dickens's personal appearance and of the leading traits of his character much has been written, and by some of the keenest observers of his time. He is said to have been a very small and sickly boy, subject to attacks of violent spasm. Although so fond of games and sports when a [Pg 345] man, as a boy he evinced little interest in them, probably on account of his ill health. We should naturally think of him as the autocrat of the playground, and the champion in all games of strength and skill; but such was not the fact. He was extremely fond of reading, at a very early age, and of acting little plays, and showing pictures in a magic lantern; he even sang at this time, and was as fond of fun as in later life. When quite young he and his companions mounted a small theatre, and got together scenery to illustrate "The Miller and his Men," and one or two other plays.

Mr. Forster describes him thus:—

> "The features were very good. He had a capital forehead, a firm nose, with full, wide nostril, eyes wonderfully beaming with intellect and running over with humor and cheerfulness, and a rather prominent mouth, strongly marked with sensibility. The head was altogether well-formed and symmetrical, and the air and carriage of it extremely spirited. The hair, so scant and grizzled in later days, was then of a rich brown and the most luxuriant abundance, and the bearded face of the last two decades had hardly a vestige of hair or whisker, but there was that in the face, as I first recollect it, which no time could change, and which remained implanted on it unalterably to the last. This was the quickness, keenness, and practical power, the eager, restless, energetic look on each several feature, that seemed to tell so little of a student or writer of books, and so much of a man of action and business in the world. Light and motion flashed from every part of it."

Another keen observer writes:—

> "The French painter's remark that 'he was more like one of the old Dutch admirals we see in picture galleries than a man of letters,' conveyed an admirably true idea to his friends. He had, indeed, much of the quiet, resolute manner of command of a captain of a ship. He trod along briskly as he walked; as he listened, his searching eye rested on you, and the nerves in his face quivered, much like those in the delicately formed nostrils of a finely bred dog. There was a curl or two in his hair at each side, which was characteristic; and the jaunty way he wore his little morning hat, rather on one side, [Pg 346] added to the effect. But when there was anything droll suggested, a delightful sparkle of lurking humor began to kindle and spread to his mouth, so that, even before he uttered anything, you felt that something irresistibly droll was at hand."

Mr. Mackenzie tells us:—

> "Dickens's personal taste in dress was always 'loud.' He loved gay vests, glittering jewelry, showy satin stocks, and everything rather *prononcé*; yet no man had a keener or more unsparing critical eye for these vulgarities in others. He once gave to a friend a vest of gorgeous shawl pattern. Soon after, at a party, he quizzed his friend most unmercifully for his stunning vest, although he had on him at that very moment its twin brother or sister, whichever sex vests belong to."

There was an almost morbid restlessness in the man, out of which arose his habit of excessive walking. When he was writing one of his great books he could not be away from London streets, and he used to walk about in them at night for hours at a time, until his body was completely exhausted; in this way only could he get sleep. When not composing he loved long country walks, and probably injured his health much in later life by the great length of these tramps across country. His restlessness showed itself also in many other ways. The element of repose was not in him. "My last special feat," he writes once when unable to sleep, "was turning out of bed at two, after a hard day, pedestrian and otherwise, and walking thirty miles into the country to breakfast."

The story is told, too, of a night spent in private theatricals, following a very laborious day for Dickens, and of his being so much fresher than any of his companions that towards morning he jumped leap-frog over the backs of the whole weary company, and was not willing to go to bed even then. His animal spirits were really inexhaustible, and this was the great unfailing charm of his companionship. He never drooped or lagged, but was always alert, keen, and ready for any [Pg 347] emergency. Out-of-door games he entered into with great hilarity, and was usually the youngest man in the party. There was a positive sparkle and atmosphere of holiday sunshine about him, and to no man was the word "genial" ever more appropriately applied.

He carried an atmosphere of good cheer with him in person as he did in his books, and was fond of the sentiment of joviality; wrote, indeed, a great deal about feasting, but was really abstemious himself, though he liked to brew punch and have little midnight suppers with his friends. Yet at these same suppers he ate and drank almost nothing, though he furnished the hilarity for the whole party.

His powers of microscopic observation have seldom been equalled. As Arthur Helps said of him, he seemed to see and observe nine facts while his companion was seeing the tenth. His books are full of the results of this accurate observation. Comparatively little in them is invention; the major part of everything is description of something he has seen and noted. When he was engaged in reporting, among eighty or ninety reporters, he occupied the very highest rank, not merely for accuracy in observing, but for marvellous quickness in transcribing. His wonderful ability as an actor is known to all. Probably he would have been the greatest comedian of his day if he had not been one of its greatest writers. His love for the theatre was an absorbing passion. He was quite as good a manager as actor, and could bring order out of the chaos of rehearsals for private theatricals, as no other man has ever been known to do. Carlyle, who was one of the keenest observers of men our time has produced, said: "Dickens's essential faculty, I often say, is that of a first-rate play-actor." Macready also gave it as his opinion that Dickens was the only amateur with any pretensions to talent that he had ever seen.

Among the weaknesses of his character were his love of display, which amounted to ostentation sometimes; his fear of being slighted; his vanity, which was prodigious, and a certain hardness, [Pg 348] which at times amounted to aggressiveness and almost to fierceness. The displays of this latter quality were very rare; but they left an ineffaceable impression upon all witnesses.

The only political questions which deeply moved him were those social problems to which his sympathy for the poor had always directed his attention,—the Poor Law, temperance, Sunday observance, punishment and prisons, labor and strikes. But that he much influenced the legislation of his country by his writings, no man can doubt. In religion he was a Liberal. Born in the Church of England, we are told by Professor Ward that he had so strong an aversion for what seemed dogmatism of any kind, that for a time—in 1843—he connected himself with a Unitarian congregation, and to Unitarian views his own probably continued during his life most nearly to approach.

In his will he says:—

> "I commit my soul to the mercy of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and I exhort my dear children humbly to try to guide themselves by the teaching of the New Testament, in its broad spirit, and to put no faith in any man's narrow construction of its letter here or there."

Although a man of deep emotional nature, his religion was, after all, mostly a religion of good deeds. Helpfulness, kindliness,—these were to him the supreme things. One who knew him well wrote after his death:—

> "I frankly confess that having met innumerable men and had dealings with innumerable men, I never met one with an approach to his genuine, unaffected, unchanging kindness, or one that ever found so sunshiny a pleasure in doing one a kindness. I cannot call to mind that any request I ever made to him was ungranted, or left without an attempt to grant it."

Upon this point all who ever knew the man are well agreed. It will suffice. To him who loved so [Pg 349] much, if need be much will be forgiven.

As we close this paper, how softly pass before us the long procession of the men and women he has created,—for they all seem thus to us,—not characters, but people, many of them personal acquaintances of our own. There are actual tears in our eyes as the little company of children pass in review, led by David Copperfield, and followed by Oliver Twist, with Paul Dombey in his wake, and little Nell timidly pressing near; while trooping after, sad, tearful, or grotesque, come

Florence Dombey, poor Joe, Pip and Smike, Sloppy and Peepy, Little Dorrit and Tiny Tim, and many more of those with whose sorrows we have sympathized, and over each and all of whom we have wept hot tears in the days that are no more. Dream-children, he calls them; but the great world acknowledges them as real beings, and sorrows and rejoices with them, even more, it is to be feared, than it does sometimes with the children of flesh and blood, homeless and forsaken as many of them are. But for the sake of Tiny Tim many an old Scrooge has softened his hard heart somewhat; and in memory of poor Joe many a hardened city man has been a little less imperious to the beggar-boy about "moving on." Even poor Smike has served the purpose of ameliorating a trifle the hard lot of such unfortunates as he, who are tyrannized over in public institutions; and, altogether, Dickens's dream-children can be said to have been useful in their day and generation.

How the other old friends come following on! We have our own peculiar greeting for each. We cannot help holding our sides as Mr. Pickwick and Sam Weller go by, followed by Captain Cuttle with his hook, the finest gentleman of them all; by the Major and Mrs. Bagnet, by whom discipline is maintained in the group; by Micawber, with his large outlines and flowing periods; and by Mrs. Micawber and her relations, senseless imbeciles or unmitigated scoundrels all, as her husband testifies; by Mrs. Gamp, by Barkis, and even the young man by the name of Guppy. A [Pg 350] smile spreads over the face of the whole reading world at the bare mention of their names. How the smiles deepen into tears as we think over the other friends to whom he has introduced us,—mutual friends of us all; of whom we talk when we congregate together, with just as much of real feeling and interest as we do of other friends of flesh and blood, laugh over their foibles and follies, pity their sorrows, blame their acts, and all with no other feeling than that of utter reality.

Will little Nell's friend, the old schoolmaster, ever cease to draw tears from our eyes? Shall we ever weary of gentle Tom Pinch? Shall we not always touch our hats to Joe Gargery? Shall we ever cease loving Mr. Jarndyce, even when the wind is in the east? And will Agnes and Esther ever pall upon our taste? Not, we verily believe, until the sources of feeling are dried up in us forever, and we have grown indifferent to all of earth. What an array of them there are, too! The bare catalogue of their names would fill a volume, and it would not be bad reading to the genuine Dickens lover,—recalling, as each name would, so much of vivid portrayal, and starting so many associations in the mind. But there is no need to repeat the names; the big, dull old world long ago learned them by heart. Nor will they soon be relegated to the shades. While the tide of English speech flows on, they will linger, component parts of the language itself.

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GEORGE ELIOT.

While the great woman who wrote under the *nom de plume* of George Eliot was alive, there was much appreciative interest and much unlawful curiosity felt regarding her private life. This as a matter of course. No such striking personality as hers could project itself into a time of dulness and mediocrity without exciting unusual interest and attention. And the half-knowledge which had been gained of her life and character served as an active stimulus to this curiosity. One or two leading facts in her history had become known and had been made the most of by a gossip-loving time; but aside from these isolated facts there was very little known of George Eliot, except by a little close circle of personal friends, who seem to have refrained in a remarkable manner from writing of her in the newspapers. That modern and almost purely American institution, the interviewer, allowed her to escape, and even up to the time of her death comparatively little was said of her except as a writer of books. But the interest in her as a woman has been deepening constantly since her death, fed by some half-revelations which have been made; and few books of our own time have been so eagerly anticipated and so universally sought after as the biography by her husband, which lately appeared. Here at last we have that wonderful woman painted by her own hand; not in an autobiography, where a person poses for the public, but in the private letters and journals of a lifetime. Like Mrs. Carlyle, she had [Pg 352] unconsciously drawn her own portrait from day to day. An admiring world looks upon the work,

and with one voice must pronounce it well done. For it is easy to gather from these unconscious touches everything of real importance in regard to the character and life of this woman. Much as we should have enjoyed the letters and journals in a complete form, untouched by pruning fingers, we cannot but heartily approve the wisdom of Mr. Cross in carefully selecting and editing them. He has shown himself a person of excellent taste and judgment, and one could scarcely ask to fall into better hands, if one's life must be given to the public at all when one has travelled away from the things of time and sense.

Let us see, then, what manner of woman this was who held a world entranced by the splendor of her genius for so many years. Here is one of the earliest glimpses of the child:—

> "Any one who happened to look through the windows of Griff House would have seen a pretty picture in the dining-room Saturday evening after tea. The powerful, middle-aged man, with the strongly marked features, sits in his deep leather-covered arm-chair at the right-hand corner of the ruddy fire-place, with the head of the 'little wench' between his knees. The child turns over the book with pictures which she wishes her father to explain to her, or that perhaps she prefers explaining to him. Her rebellious hair is all over her eyes, much vexing the pale, energetic mother who sits on the opposite side of the fire, cumbered with much service, letting no instant of time escape the inevitable click of the knitting-needles. The father is already proud of the astonishing and growing intelligence of his little girl. An old-fashioned child, already living in a world of her own imagination, impressible to her finger-tips, and ready to give her views upon any subject."

To readers of "The Mill on the Floss" little description of her child-life will be necessary. She has, in Maggie, pictured herself as nearly as possible during childhood. Here is her own description:— [Pg 353]

> "A creature full of eager, passionate longings for all that was beautiful and glad; thirsty for all knowledge; with an ear straining after dreamy music that died away, and would not come to her; with a blind, unconscious yearning for something that would link together the wonderful impressions of this mysterious life and give her soul a sense of home in it. No wonder, when there is this contrast between the outward and the inward, that painful collisions come of it."

In Adam Bede we have a partial portrait of her father, and there are other striking resemblances to him in Caleb Garth, although neither character is to be really identified with him. Mrs. Poyser bears the same partial relation to her mother. With these people for the *dramatis personæ*, the drama could scarcely fail to be a striking one. The relation existing between herself and her sister is described in "Dorothea and Celia,"—no intellectual affinity, but strong family affection. The repression of these early years she afterwards refers to in saying,—

> "You may try, but you can never imagine, what it is to have a man's force of genius in you, and yet to suffer the slavery of being a girl."

During her early youth she writes thus to a friend:—

> "I really feel for you, sacrificing as you are your own tastes and comforts for the pleasure of others, and that in a manner the most trying to rebellious flesh and blood; for I verily believe that in most cases it requires more of a martyr's spirit to endure with patience and cheerfulness daily crossings and interruptions of our petty desires and pursuits and to rejoice in them, if they can be made to conduce to God's glory and our own sanctification, than even to lay down our lives for the truth."

Deep religious feeling was one of the most striking characteristics of this period of her youth. On her nineteenth birthday she writes:— [Pg 354]

> "May the Lord give me such an insight into what is truly good that I may not rest contented with making Christianity a mere addendum to my pursuits, or with tacking it as a mere fringe to my garments! May I seek to be sanctified wholly!"

This religious feeling she carried with her throughout life, although she soon left behind her the tenets and creeds of the church in which she was born and for which she had so strong an affection. In later life, although placing herself entirely outside of historic Christianity, and becoming a rationalist of the rationalists, the fervor of strong religious feeling never left her, and to her latest days she loved to read the Scriptures and to feel the glow of devotional feeling which belonged to her nature. The strong and powerful motive of her life in youth and age was the intense desire to aid and help the world, for which she felt a compassion so strong as to remind one of the descriptions given of Buddha in Eastern song and story. In every period of her life, in her most private letters and journals, this burden of the world's sorrow seemed to find expression, and her pitying love was almost Christ-like in its tenderness.

In forming an estimate of the woman we must never lose sight of this predominating feeling. Next to it in intensity is to be placed the longing for love and sympathy, the strength of the affections. No such deeply loving human heart has been pictured to the world in all the realm of books. To those who have been accustomed to think of George Eliot as the master-mind of her time, the greatest intellect of her generation, the revelation of her heart will be a great surprise and delight. A deep, strong, passionate, loving human soul, with heights and depths of devotion

and tenderness unthinkable even to the poorer natures around her,—it was in this that both her strength and her weakness lay. This affectionateness was shown in her youth in her devotion to her father, whose home she kept for several years, and in lavish regard for the few friends who were near her, all of whom she retained and loved to her dying day. It was shown later on in the [Pg 355] passionate and absorbing love she gave to Mr. Lewes throughout a lifetime, and which seemed but to deepen and widen with the years; and in the tenderness and thoughtfulness of the mother-love she gave to his children, and which seem to lack not one of the elements of real maternal feeling. This strong, pitying, passionate love of hers—a love hardly to be conceived of by cold and self-contained natures—is the key to the one action of her life requiring apology and charitable construction. In the first place, she pitied Mr. Lewes for the sorrows of his life and for the unfaithfulness of the wife upon whom he had lavished his heart's devotion, and whom he had forgiven for the first offence, only to be deceived the second time. Next, the strong feeling for justice which characterized her nature rebelled against that law which bound him to this unfaithful wife simply because he had once forgiven her; and, finally, the desire she felt to comfort his loneliness and redeem his life overcame all the scruples which the integrity of her nature must have confronted her with, and she defied the law which was odious to her and the conventionalities which were dear to her, in the same act, and assumed the tie which held her in such loyal allegiance until death severed it. Here is the only allusion she made to it in all her correspondence, as far as we know. This was written to one of her oldest friends, Mrs. Bray.

> "If there is any one action or relation of my life which is, and always has been, profoundly serious, it is my relation to Mr. Lewes. It is, however, natural enough that you should mistake me in many ways, for not only are you unacquainted with Mr. Lewes's real character, and the course of his actions, but also it is several years since you and I were much together, and it is possible that the modifications my mind has undergone may be quite in the opposite direction of what you imagine. No one can be better aware than yourself that it is possible for two people to hold different opinions on momentous subjects with equal sincerity and an equally earnest conviction that their [Pg 356] respective opinions are alone the truly moral ones. If we differ on the subject of the marriage laws, I at least can believe that you cleave to what you believe to be good, and I don't know of anything in the nature of your views that should prevent you from believing the same of me. How far we differ I think we neither of us know; for I am ignorant of your precise views, and apparently you attribute to me both feelings and opinions which are not mine. We cannot set each other right in letters; but one thing I can tell you in few words. Light and easily broken ties are what I neither desire theoretically nor could live for practically. Women who are satisfied with such ties do not act as I have done. That any unworldly, unsuperstitious person who is sufficiently acquainted with the realities of life can pronounce my relation to Mr. Lewes immoral, I can only understand by remembering how subtle and complex are the influences which mould opinion. But I do remember this, and I indulge in no arrogant or uncharitable thoughts about those who condemn us, even though we might have expected a somewhat different verdict. From the majority of persons we never, of course, looked for anything but condemnation. We are leading no life of self-indulgence, except, indeed, that being happy in each other we find everything easy. We are working hard to provide for others better than we provide for ourselves, and to fulfil every responsibility that lies upon us."

These responsibilities were not light, for they were poor and not yet famous, and must support by their pens not only themselves, but three boys of Mr. Lewes, and their mother. This they found no easy thing to do at first; but when the great success of George Eliot's novels had been attained, their financial affairs became easy, and continued so to the end.

Their life together seemed to be one of unbroken love and confidence, their delight in each other increasing, if possible, with time. The letters and journals of George Eliot are full of expressions of this love and trust, and give us very pleasing pictures of the character and life of Mr. Lewes. He seems to have been an eminently genial, kind, loving, and appreciative man; a man, too, of fascinating manners and wonderfully keen intellect, though totally lacking in any such genius as [Pg 357] that which has made George Eliot immortal. Charming glimpses of their home life occur on every page,—a home life that was sweet and well ordered, pervaded by such a spirit of love and devotion as would sanctify any home. George Eliot was the most womanly of women, despite what is often called her masculine intellect; and she made a genuine home, after the true and womanly fashion, delighting in good order and neatness and such attention to details as is an absolute necessity in the formation of a happy home. She never allowed her literary work to prevent her from overseeing that home, and in her younger days seems to have had a real taste for executing these housekeeping details herself. There was no remote hint of Mrs. Jellyby in her, but strong, practical common-sense in all the management of her family affairs, and a real delight in having all things well ordered and agreeable in her home. This is one of the most pleasing of the many revelations of this book. We love to know that she was a true woman, and no intellectual monstrosity. The glimpses that are given of her nursing her father through his long last sickness are very sweet and touching, and everything connected with her devotion to Mr. Lewes's children, down to poor Thornie's death, makes us love her more and more. Indeed, it is a strong, pure, loving, and noble woman that is brought out on every page of this Life. But a very sad and deep-thoughted woman, too; one to whom pity goes out as naturally as love. She was afflicted with ill health all her life, and the record of all this suffering is at times oppressive. One cannot help wishing that we might have had the same woman strong and well, and wondering

what sort of books would have been the result. Far pleasanter and more cheering, no doubt, for some of them are heart-breakingly sad as it is, but perhaps no deeper or truer. Then, too, she suffered keenly through her sympathies, feeling for all loss and wrong with the acutest pain; and her lack of faith intensified all her suffering. So did lack of hope; for she was almost as destitute [Pg 358] of this cheering friend of man as Carlyle himself, and was given to despondency as the sparks fly upward. In her earlier writing the tears and smiles are blended, her humor lighting up the dark places; but the deepening years deepened her gloom, and her later writing is sombre almost throughout. Yet she had great capacity for joy as well as for sorrow, and enjoyed with the utmost intensity the brighter parts of life, and retained this sense of the pleasure of life even to the end. She speaks much of the intense happiness of her life with Mr. Lewes, and they seem never to have been separated, taking all journeys and holidays together, and never wearying of what she calls their "*solitude à deux*." Such expressions as these are very frequent throughout the book:—

> "I never have anything to call out my ill-humor or discontent,—which you know was always ready enough to come on slight call,—and I have everything to call out love and gratitude. I am very happy,—happy in the highest blessing life can give us, the perfect love and sympathy of a nature that stimulates my own to healthful activity. My life has deepened unspeakably during the last year. I feel a greater capacity for moral and intellectual enjoyment, a more acute sense of my deficiencies in the past, a more solemn desire to be faithful to coming duties, than I remember at any former period of my life. And my happiness has deepened, too; the blessedness of a perfect love and union grows daily. Few women, I fear, have had such reason as I have to think the long, sad years of youth were worth living for the sake of middle age."

And this extract from the journal of Mr. Lewes leaves us his thought about their life, which is so like her own:—

> "I owe Spencer another and a deeper debt. It was through him that I learned to know Marian,—to know her was to love her,—and since then my life has been a new birth. To [Pg 359] her I owe all my prosperity and all my happiness. God bless her!"

That her great books would ever have been written without this loving sympathy and appreciation on the part of Mr. Lewes, seems extremely doubtful. She needed encouragement at every step, being prone to despair about her writings, and she had the utmost reliance upon the judgment and taste of the companion of her life. And he seems to have been everything that heart could desire as loving critic and counsellor. Her sympathy with the lives and hopes of others is very charming, particularly with the love and marriage of their eldest boy, though it is shown constantly in a true womanly way; as, for instance:—

> "A pretty thing has happened to an acquaintance of mine, which is quite a tonic to one's hope. She has all her life been working in various ways, as housekeeper, governess, etc.,—a dear little dot about four feet eleven in height; pleasant to look at and clever; a working-woman without any of those epicene queernesses that belong to the class. More than once she has told me that courage quite forsook her. She felt there was no good in living and striving. Well, a man of fortune and accomplishments has just fallen in love with her—now she is thirty-three. It is the prettiest story of a swift-decided passion, and made me cry for joy. Madame B—— and I went with her to buy her wedding clothes. If you will only imagine all I have not said, you will think this a very charming fairy tale."

In 1878 her happy companionship with the man she had so passionately loved was ended by his death. The only entry in her diary in 1879 is this: "Here I and sorrow sit." The desolation of her life told terribly upon her health and spirits. She saw no one, wrote to no one, had no thoughts, as she tells us, for many months. Among the first lines she wrote were these:—

> "Some time, if I live, I shall be able to see you,—perhaps sooner than any one else,—but not yet. Life seems to get harder instead of easier. When I said some time, I meant still [Pg 360] a distant time. I want to live a little time, that I may do certain things for his sake. So I try to keep up my strength, and I work as much as I can to save my mind from imbecility. But that is all at present. But what used to be joy is joy no longer, and what is pain is easier, because he has not to bear it."

Again:—

> "You must excuse my weakness, remembering that for nearly twenty-five years I have been used to find my happiness in his. I can find it nowhere else. But we can live and be helpful without happiness, and I have had more than myriads who were and are better fitted for it."

As soon as she was able to see any friends, Mr. Cross, who was an old and valued one, began to visit her and be helpful to her in many ways, and he soon became a comfort to that gentle nature to which some prop was indispensable. She grew accustomed to him, and began to rely upon his support. After a while she could read with him, and her mind renewed its vigor. Still later she could play for him, and the consolation of music was added to her life. As the months went by she leaned upon him more and more, and found real comfort in his kindly ministrations. This is the first allusion to him in her letters:—

"I have a comfortable country practitioner to watch over me from day to day, and there is a devoted friend who is backward and forward continually to see that I lack nothing."

Of the outcome of that watchful tenderness Mr. Cross says:—

"As the year went on George Eliot began to see all her old friends again. But her life was nevertheless a life of heart-loneliness. Accustomed as she had been for so many years to *solitude à deux*, the want of close companionship continued to be very bitterly felt. She was in the habit of going with me very frequently to the National Gallery and [Pg 361] to other exhibitions of pictures. This constant companionship engrossed me completely and was a new interest to her. A bond of mutual dependence had been formed between us. It was finally decided that our marriage should take place as soon and as privately as possible."

She writes thus of this marriage:—

"All this is wonderful blessing falling to me beyond my share, after I had thought that my life was ended, and that, so to speak, my coffin was ready for me in the next room. Deep down below there is a hidden river of sadness, but this must always be with those who have lived so long; but I am able to enjoy my newly reopened life. I shall be a better, more loving creature than I could have been in solitude. To be constantly, lovingly grateful for the gift of a perfect love is the best illumination of one's mind to all the possible good there may be in store for man on this troublous little planet. I was getting hard, and if I had decided differently I think I should have become selfish.

"The whole history is something like a miracle-legend. But instead of any former affection being displaced, I seem to have recovered the loving sympathy that I was in danger of losing. I mean that I had been conscious of a certain drying-up of tenderness in me, and that now the spring seems to have risen again."

The consolations of this new love and tenderness were to cheer her but a little time, for they were scarcely settled in the new home after the trip abroad, during which time she had excellent health and enjoyed everything much, before the final illness came, and "the fever called living was over at last."

Amid the falling of the bitter rain of winter, in the deadliest desolation of the year, they bore her to her rest amid the silent. She whose speech has endeared her to the whole thinking world, whose thoughts have borne us like an anthem ever upward to the loftiest and the best, all her sacred service done, shall know hereafter no more work, no more device, but the deep calm of rest, untroubled by the vexing sights and shows of time. [Pg 362]

We cannot think that she met the solemn, swift release with dread. She looked too deeply into life to make of it a mere thing of daily bread, of common homely joys and trifling labors; but all its sorest problems weighed her down, and all its deepest doubt and dull despairing went with her to the last, saddening even the happiest moments of her life. And the falling of that cold and solemn winter rain into that grave, about which gathered many of the greatest minds in England with reverent tears, seems not sad but sweet,—a kind release from the stress and strain of a tumultuous existence. Nevermore will that still heart be crushed and riven by wrongs and woes which she has no power to aid; nevermore life's terrors hold and o'ermaster her; nevermore a questioning world look upon her in judgment. With the great of every time and nation she has at last taken her place, and will hold it evermore.

CHARLES KINGSLEY.

Charles Kingsley was born at Holne Vicarage, under the brow of Dartmore, in 1819; but his family removed almost immediately into Nottinghamshire, although he always felt himself to be, and called himself, a Devonshire man. Of his parents he himself gives account as follows:—

> "We are but the *disjecta membra* of a most remarkable pair of parents. Our talent, such as it is, is altogether hereditary. My father was a magnificent man in body and mind, and was said to possess every talent except that of using his talents. My mother, on the contrary, had a quite extraordinary practical and administrative power; and she combines with it, even at her advanced age (seventy-nine), my father's passion for knowledge, and the sentiment and fancy of a young girl."

The product of the union of such characters could hardly be otherwise than unique; and we see in Charles Kingsley a man of powerful nature,—strong, aggressive, administrative,—but at the same time deeply poetical, and tender almost to weakness. We find in him a union of the intensest sympathy with the weak and helpless, and a comprehension of the flaws and defects which make up their character, which seems at times merciless and almost heartless. We find in him remarkable combative power, united to a desire to use that power purely and simply for the defence and protection of those who are unable to protect and help themselves. We find a man [Pg 364] who can deal heaviest blows, who loves the excitement of a battle, and never shuns an occasion for a fight in behalf of humanity, but who was so sensitive to an unfair thrust from an opponent that his life was permanently embittered by the injustice and malignity of literary and political critics of the opposing party. In short, he united a royal aggressiveness shaped and guided entirely by his Christian principles, and a tenderness and sensitiveness such as are rarely found in so strong and fearless a man.

In childhood he is described as strong and active, but not expert at any games; while he bore pain wonderfully well, and excelled in all feats that required nerve and daring. He was well prepared when he went to Cambridge, and obtained a scholarship at Magdalen the first year. He disliked the prescribed course intensely, and sometimes neglected his work and gave himself up to wild sport in the fens, which then presented much of the bleak picturesqueness which he has immortalized in his prose idyls. He was very popular, but not very sociable, and lived then, as afterwards, a most strenuous life. On July 6, 1839, while visiting in Oxfordshire, he met his future wife, Fanny, the daughter of Pascoe Grenfell and Georgiana St. Leger his wife. Circumstances seemed to give the lover very little hope, and in intervals of recklessness Kingsley often dreamed and talked of going to America and joining the wild hunters on the prairies. Had he done so, what bits of strong and striking description should we not have had! Few writers have the photographic accuracy of Kingsley, united to so vivid an imagination; consequently his pictures are all of striking quality. Look at this characteristic bit, when Amyas and his friends walk to the cliffs of Lundy:—

> "As they approached, a raven, who sat upon the topmost stone, black against the bright blue sky, flapped lazily away, and sunk down the abysses of the cliff, as if he had [Pg 365] scented the corpses beneath the surge. Below them from the gull-rock rose a thousand birds, and filled the air with sound; the choughs cackled, the hacklets wailed, the great black-backs laughed querulous defiance at the intruders, and a single falcon with an angry bark darted out beneath their feet, and hung poised high aloft, watching the sea-fowl which swung slowly round and round below."

In all his books we have these glowing pictures of the natural world, intense, graven in as it were with a burin, and colored with tropical magnificence.

Soon after taking orders Charles Kingsley was given the living of Eversley, which he retained to the end of his life. His work there was full of hardship; but he was young and strong, and had a superabundant energy which no toil daunted. Eversley was a democratic parish of "heth croppers," and there were few gentry within its borders. These peasants were hereditary poachers on Windsor Forest and other preserves in the neighborhood, and possessed one and all with a spirit of almost lawless independence. But it was one of Kingsley's most amiable characteristics through life to be able to make friends of uncultivated people without any painful effort of condescension. He visited these poor people of his parish constantly, until he knew every person intimately, and could speak to each with a knowledge of his inmost needs; and their needs, in most cases, were of a very earthly and commonplace kind.

"What is the use," he would say, "of my talking to a lot of hungry paupers about heaven? Sir, as my clerk said to me yesterday, there is a weight on their hearts, and they care for no hope and no change, for they know they can be no worse off than they are." But he did better for them than to preach far-away sermons above their comprehension. "If a man or woman were suffering or dying, he would go to them five or six times a day,—and night as well as day,—for his own heart's

sake as well as for their soul's sake." And he won the respect of these people for the Church [Pg 366] which they had long neglected, and which had ceased to stand for anything to them, until, "when he announced the first confirmation, and invited all who wished to take advantage of it to come to the rectory on a certain evening for instruction, the stud groom from Sir John Cope's, a respectable man of five-and-thirty, was among the first to come, bringing a message from the whips and stablemen to say that they had all been confirmed once, but if Mr. Kingsley wished it they would all be happy to come again." This was at a time when England was in a really dangerous state of tumult and discontent, and when the Church, through the heartlessness and folly of its leaders, had lost almost all hold upon the people. Is there not in it a hint to the unsuccessful preachers of our time?

In a few years he had raised the whole parish of Eversley to a higher level, and had set his mark upon every individual soul in his keeping. And after he had been appointed to the canonry of Westminster, and was called to preach to immense congregations there, he felt the burden of these new souls, as he had felt that of his more humble charge. He felt that he was personally called to speak some vital word to every soul within his hearing, and the strain upon him was great, as he realized how difficult a thing this was to do in these later days. He expressed his sense of this responsibility in his characteristic way. "Whenever," he said, "I walk along the choir to the pulpit I wish myself dead; and whenever I walk back I wish myself more dead." But though his sense of failure was great, it is certain that those noble sermons in the grand abbey left their ineffaceable mark upon some of that multitude of young men who crowded the north and south transepts of the abbey, and stood there for two hours through a long musical service, that they might hear Kingsley when he spoke; for he spoke with characteristic power and eloquence, moving all by his earnestness and evident sincerity. "If you want to be stirred to the very depths of your heart," said one of the minor canons to Canon Farrar, "come to the abbey and hear Canon [Pg 367] Kingsley." And when he preached, as he often did, to classes of college boys, even the youngest, they always found something pertinent to their own cases in what he said.

He had married in the early days of Eversley the one woman he ever loved, and the marriage was one of peculiar happiness, so that his home life was always of the brightest. A family of beautiful children sprung up around him, and in his peculiar fondness for pets he always had dogs about him that were scarcely less dear than his children. He mourned the death of one after another of his favorites, until, when the last one died, he said he would have no more,—the pang of parting with them was too keen.

The influence of his books as they came along one after another—"Yeast," "Alton Locke," "Hypatia," "Westward Ho," "Two Years Ago"—was of a stimulating, even of an exciting, nature, particularly that of the earlier ones. Like nearly all men of genius, when young he was a radical, and upon the publication of his first books the conservatives all took up arms against him. In review after review, all learning, all sincerity, all merit was denied him. He bore up under a storm of obloquy and misrepresentation. This simply because he had shown some of the sufferings of the poor,—given some vivid pictures of life in England as it was in those days, before the repeal of the Corn Laws had mitigated a little the sufferings of the dependent masses; and had expressed some human sympathy with all this fruitless pain, and a manly indignation at some forms of atrocious wrong. But there was nothing in his teaching of the people which should have given offence to the veriest conservative. The main burden of it was that "workingmen must emancipate themselves from the tyranny of their own vices before they could be emancipated from the tyranny of bad social arrangements; that they must cultivate the higher elements of a common humanity in themselves before they could obtain their share in the heritage of national [Pg 368] civilization. He discouraged every approach to illegality or violence, and during the riots of that exciting time worked as hard as the Duke of Wellington to keep the peace." But the Philistines of that day looked upon it as crime in a beneficed clergyman to enter into friendly intercourse for any purpose whatever with revolutionists, as they called the agitators, who were engaged in what seem to us now to have been great reforms. They denounced him for a Chartist, a name which he proudly owned, although he never went the lengths of the real leaders in that movement; and owning, as his enemies did, all the powerful papers and reviews, they systematically belittled his work and prejudiced the minds of many people against him to his dying day.

This misinterpretation of his work and misinterpretation of his motives was a keen grief to him throughout life. He never became hardened to such attacks, and they afflicted him to the end. "'Hypatia,'" he once said, "was written with my heart's blood, and was received, as I expected, with curses from many of the very churchmen whom I was trying to warn and save." But he was more than repaid for this misinterpretation and persecution by the orthodox and conservative classes, by seeing the efforts he had put forth—some of them, at least—crowned with considerable success even in his lifetime; while he was conscious of having sown much seed that would ultimately take root in reform. He never faltered, although he grew very weak and discouraged at times. He writes thus to a friend:—

> "Pray for me; I could lie down and die sometimes. A poor fool of a fellow, and yet feeling thrust upon an sorts of great and unspeakable paths, instead of being left in peace to classify butterflies and catch trout."

Long before his death he saw the condition of the English poor very materially modified. Bad as things are in England to-day, they are much better than in the days when Charles Kingsley began [Pg 369] his labors.

He was accused of growing conservative in later life, and doubtless he did so, as it is natural that

man should do; but he had witnessed great improvement during his life, and perhaps felt that the forces which had been called into play needed guiding and directing now, rather than further stimulation. But, like all dreamers, he was obliged to bid farewell to many of his dreams for the good of his fellow-men as he grew older. There was intense sadness to him in this, and Kingsley during all his later life was a very sad man. Striving to be cheery and helpful, as he had ever been, there was yet in his face the look of a defeated man,—the look of a man upon whom life had palled, and who had scarcely hope enough left to carry him through to the end. There was remarkable pathos in many of his sermons, and ineffable sadness in many of his letters. Doubtless much of this was due to overwork, for he had overworked himself systematically for many years, and could not escape the consequences. He paid the penalty in flagging spirits and a growing weariness of life. During the journey in America, near the close of his life, there was but a forced interest where once the feeling would have been real and keen; and we find him once writing like this:—

> "As I ride I jog myself and say, 'You stupid fellow, wake up! Do you see that? and that? Do you know where you are?' And my other self answers, 'Don't bother, I have seen so much I can't take in any more; and I don't care about it at all. I longed to get here. I have been more than satisfied with being here, and now I long to get back again.'"

And, again, from St. Louis he writes:—

> "I wish already that our heads were turned homeward, and that we had done the great tour, and had it not to do."

There was also much of pathos in his speech at the Lotos Club in 1874, where he said:— [Pg 370]

> "One of the kind wishes expressed for me is long life. Let anything be asked for me except that. Let us live hard, work hard, go at a good pace, get to our journey's end as soon as possible; then let the post-horse get the shoulder out of the collar. . . . I have lived long enough to feel like the old post-horse,—very thankful as the end draws near. . . . Long life is the last thing that I desire. It may be that as one grows older one acquires more and more the painful consciousness of the difference between what ought to be done and what can be done, and sits down more quietly when one gets the wrong side of fifty to let others start up to do for us things we cannot do ourselves. But it is the highest pleasure that a man can have who has (to his own exceeding comfort) turned down the hill at last, to believe that younger spirits will rise up after him and catch the lamp of truth—as in the old lamp-bearing race of Greece—out of his hand before it expires, and carry it on to the goal with swifter and more even feet."

He did not live long after his return from America. He took cold Advent Sunday, and soon was down with the sickness from which he never recovered. His wife was dangerously ill at the same time, and he made himself seriously worse by leaving his bed once or twice to go to her, where he said "heaven was." To this wife he had been a devoted lover for over thirty years, and retained to the last moment his chivalric devotion. To his children and his servants he was the ideal parent and master, and to every one who had known him personally the ideal friend. His parish was only a large family, where he was held in like honor and esteem. Would that we all in these restless times might find some of the secret springs of his life, and thus make, like him,

> "Life, death, and that vast forever
> One grand, sweet song"!

His wife remained for a little time to mourn his loss, although he believed at the time of his death that she would not live, and spoke of the supreme blessing of not being divided in the hour of death from her he had loved so well. She lived to tell to the world, in a touching and tender [Pg 371] manner, the story of that life of "deep and strange sorrows," as he once expressed it; and then followed him, gladly, into the rest that remains for all who toil earnestly and worthily as he had done. It was proposed to bury him in Westminster Abbey, but agreeably to his own wishes in the matter he was buried in the little churchyard at Eversley, where he had familiar acquaintance with every tree and shrub, and where the poor, to whom he had been so much while living, could still feel him near to them though dead. Upon the white marble cross are carved the words, "God is Love,"—the words which had been the central thought of all his eloquent and effective preaching, and the words by which he had shaped his whole life; for, in imitation of that God he so reverenced, he had made his life one of active love and helpfulness toward the whole brotherhood of man. Few men of loftier aims, higher purposes, purer spirit, have ever lived; few men who fulfilled the priestly office in so high and conscientious a manner have been known in our day; few reformers who have been so aggressive, and yet so temperate in action; few men personally so loved by those who knew him intimately. Soft be the turf at Eversley upon him, and sweet the sighing of her summer winds about his grave!

[Pg 372]

JOHN RUSKIN.

In the very heart of the great city of London, shut in by dingy brick walls that closed upon him to such an extent that it was only by going into the middle of the street and looking up that he could ever see the sky, in the early part of the century, was born the man who has the finest eye for the beauties of the natural world, and the most eloquent pen in describing them, that the century has produced.

We will make no exception of poet or painter in this statement; for John Ruskin sees more and better than any poet of the day, and can give in words a more vivid picture of a scene he loves than any painter can produce. Indeed, few men have lived at any time who could color a landscape as Ruskin colors it, or who have so delicate an eye for the shyest and most sequestered beauties, as has this poet-painter. Probably Wordsworth comes nearer to Ruskin than any other modern writer in his love of the natural world, and he has given us the finest descriptions we have of some phases of Nature; but there is a glow and a depth of feeling about Ruskin's descriptions which even Wordsworth lacks. A real worship of Nature runs through all that he has written. Think of a child with such a nature as this brought up in a crowded city,—a city unlike many others, especially in this country and on the Continent, where lovely glimpses of Nature may be had from open squares, or streets leading out into lovely country roads. In New York one [Pg 373] can hardly walk anywhere without catching glimpses of the water and the shores of New Jersey or Long Island. Most boys, we fancy, penetrate to the Battery and enjoy its superb outlook; or they have the run of Central Park, where they make a sort of acquaintance with Nature, which, if somewhat artificial, is much better than no knowledge at all. In Edinburgh the inhabitants live under the shadow of its two fantastic mountains, and from their windows can trace the windings of its glittering frith. Not even the lofty houses of the Canongate or the battlements of the castle afford the eye an equal pleasure. In Venice not even the Palace of the Doge, the most beautiful building in the world, or the matchless walls of fair St. Mark's, can keep the eye from seeking the blue waters of the Adriatic or the purple outlines of the Alps. Beautiful Verona has a broad and rushing river of deep blue sweeping through the heart of it; it has an environment of cliffs, where grow the cypress and the olive, and a far-away view of the St. Gothard Alps. Rome, from its amphitheatre of hills, has views of unrivalled loveliness, and its broad Campagna is a picture in itself. Paris even has its charms of external nature, as have all the cities of the New World; but London is grim and gray, and bare and desolate, wrapped in eternal fog. To be sure, it has the Thames, and there are lovely suburbs; but we mean that vast, densely crowded part of the city proper which we think of when we say London.

The father of John Ruskin was a London wine-merchant, who made and bequeathed to him a large fortune. But they were very plain people, and the youth knew nothing of ostentation or luxury. He says of his childhood:—

> "Nor did I painfully wish what I was never permitted for an instant to hope, or even imagine, the possession of such things as one saw in toy-shops. I had a bunch of keys to play with as long as I was capable only of pleasure in what glittered and jingled; as I grew older I had a cart and a ball, and when I was five or six years old, two boxes of [Pg 374] well-cut wooden bricks. With these modest, but, I still think, entirely sufficient possessions, and being always summarily whipped if I cried, did not do as I was bid, or tumbled on the stairs, I soon attained serene and secure methods of life and motion; and could pass my days contentedly in tracing the square and comparing the colors of my carpet, examining the knots in the wood of the floors, or counting the bricks in the opposite houses, with rapturous intervals of excitement during the filling of the water-cart through its leathern pipe from the dripping iron post at the pavement edge, or the still more admirable proceedings of the turncock, when he turned and turned till a

> fountain sprang up in the middle of the street. But the carpet, and what patterns I could find in bed-covers, dresses, or wall-papers to be examined, were my chief resources; and my attention to the particulars in these was soon so accurate that when at three and a half I was taken to have my portrait painted by Mr. Northcote, I had not been ten minutes alone with him before I asked him why there were holes in his carpet."

He was once taken when a child to the brow of the crags overlooking Derwentwater, and he tells of the "intense joy, mingled with awe, that I had in looking through the hollows in the mossy roots over the crag into the dark lake, and which has associated itself more or less with all twining roots of trees ever since." He also speaks of his joy in first treading on the grass; and, indeed, each fresh bit of acquaintance which he made with Nature gave him unbounded delight. He says in his late "Recollections:"—

> "To my further great benefit, as I grew older I saw nearly all the noblemen's houses in England, in reverent and healthy delight of uncovetous admiration,—perceiving, as soon as I could perceive any political truth at all, that it was probably much happier to live in a small house and have Warwick Castle to be astonished at, than to live in Warwick Castle and have nothing to be astonished at; but that, at all events, it would not make Brunswick Square in the least more pleasantly habitable to pull Warwick Castle down. And at this day, though I have kind invitations enough to visit America, I [Pg 375] could not, even for a couple of months, live in a country so miserable as to possess no castles."

Again he says:—

> "For the best and truest beginning of all blessings, I had been taught the perfect meaning of Peace, in thought, act, and word. Angry words, hurry, and disorder I never knew in the stillness of my childhood's home. Next to this quite priceless gift of Peace, I had received the perfect understanding of the natures of Obedience and Faith. I obeyed word or lifted finger of father or mother, simply as a ship her helm; not only without idea of resistance, but receiving the direction as a part of my own life and force,—a helpful law, as necessary to me in every moral action as the law of gravity in leaping. And my practice in Faith was soon complete; nothing was ever promised me that was not given, nothing ever threatened me that was not inflicted, and nothing ever told me that was not true."

Ruskin's father began to read Byron to him soon after he entered his teens, the first passage being the shipwreck in "Don Juan."

> "I recollect that he and my mother looked across the table at each other with something of alarm, when on asking me a few *festas* afterwards what we should have for after-dinner reading, I instantly answered, 'Juan and Haidee.' My selection was not adopted, and feeling there was something wrong somewhere, I did not press it, attempting even some stutter of apology, which made matters worse. Perhaps I was given a bit of 'Childe Harold' instead, which I liked at that time nearly as well; and, indeed, the story of Haidee soon became too sad for me. But very certainly by the end of this year, 1834, I knew my Byron pretty well all through. . . . I never got the slightest harm from Byron; what harm came to me was from the facts of life and from books of a baser kind, including a wide range of the works of authors popularly considered extremely instructive,—from Victor Hugo down to Dr. Watts."

Byron became a great favorite with the young student, as will be seen from the following passage:— [Pg 376]

> "I rejoiced in all the sarcasm of 'Don Juan.' But my firm decision, as soon as I got well into the later cantos of it, that Byron was to be my master in verse, as Turner in color, was made, of course, in that gosling, or say cygnet, epoch of existence, without consciousness of the deeper instincts that prompted it. Only two things I consciously recognized,—that his truth of observation was the most exact and his chosen expression the most concentrated that I had yet found in literature. By that time my father had himself put me through the first two books of Livy, and I knew, therefore, what close-set language was; but I saw then that Livy, as afterward that Horace and Tacitus, were studiously, often laboriously, and sometimes obscurely concentrated; while Byron wrote, as easily as a hawk flies and as clearly as a lake reflects, the exact truth in the precisely narrowest terms,—not only the exact truth, but the most central and useful one. Of course I could no more measure Byron's greater powers at that time than I could Turner's; but I saw that both were right, in all things that I knew right from wrong in, and that they must henceforth be my masters, each in his own domain. But neither the force and precision nor the rhythm of Byron's language was at all the central reason for my taking him for master. Knowing the Song of Moses and the Sermon on the Mount by heart, and half the Apocalypse besides, I was in no need of tutorship either in the majesty or simplicity of English words; and for their logical arrangement I had had Byron's own master, Pope, since I could lisp. But the thing wholly new and precious to me in Byron was his measured and living truth,—measured as compared with Homer, and living as compared with everybody else."

He began to be an observer of beauty at a very early age, and then, as afterwards, placed beauty first, utility second. He says:—

> "So that very early, indeed, in my thoughts of trees I had got at the principle, given fifty years afterwards in Proserpina, that the seeds and fruits of them were for the sake of the flowers, not the flowers for the fruit. The first joy of the year being in its snowdrops, the second and cardinal one was in the almond-blossom, every other garden and woodland gladness following from that in an unbroken order of kindling flower and [Pg 377] shadowy leaf; and for many and many a year to come—until, indeed, the whole of life became autumn to me—my chief prayer for the kindness of Heaven, in its flowerful seasons, was that the frost might not touch the almond-blossom."

His mother, who was a very religious woman, used to oblige him to learn long chapters of the Bible by heart at a very early age, and his favorite chapters were always from the Psalms, where there is so much of grand and glowing poetry. It was a fine diet for such a child as he, or, indeed, for any child; and he attributes his taste for the grand things in literature to his early knowledge of the matchless poetry of the Bible. Doubtless it gave also that devotional bent to his mind which has been one of his many striking characteristics through life. He is as essentially religious as one of the old Hebrew prophets, and has brought forward his religious precepts in season and out of season ever since he began to write.

He was taken on his travels when but a boy, and saw many of the beauties of Europe before he went to Oxford. He made acquaintance at that early age with most of the beautiful buildings about which he has since written so eloquently. The old Gothic buildings pleased him most of all, —even the rugged Gothic of the North. He spent much time in Italy and in Switzerland, which he says is a country to be visited and not lived in. He thinks that such sublimity of scenery should only be looked upon reverently, and that those who view it habitually lose their reverence, and, indeed, do not appreciate it at any time.

At Oxford he produced a prize poem; but he has never been heard of as a poet since, although there is more of poetry in his prose than in the verse of many of his contemporary poetical brethren, and if any man of his time has been endowed with the true poetic temperament, it is surely he.

His constitution has always been feeble, and he can bear no excitement, and has been known to sink into such exhaustion from a little over-tension of the nerves that it has been very difficult to [Pg 378] bring him back to consciousness.

A person of this nature was probably very romantic in his youth, and he fell very violently in love with a Scottish lady when quite young. He says that never having been indulged with much affection in youth, or been allowed to bestow a great deal even upon his parents, when in later life love did come, "it came with violence, utterly rampant and unmanageable, at least to me, who never before had anything to manage."

He lived in a world of his own dreams for a long time, endowing the object of his affections with every grace and charm. He was an exacting as well as a passionate lover, and the lady was of far cooler blood than he. But after a variety of experiences, such as fall to the lot of most lovers, the lady became his wife. Of course the world knows little of the inner secrets of that married life, for John Ruskin is not a man to cry his sorrows in the market-place; but the world does know that the marriage proved very unhappy, and that it was finally followed by a separation. Of course there was a world of scandal at the time, which is now happily forgotten; for all this was very, very long ago, and the first scandal was as nothing compared to that which followed the lady's marriage with Millais, the artist of whom London is so proud. There was no moral blame imputed to either party at the time of the separation; and it was understood to have been only one of the numerous cases of incompatibility, of which the world is so full.

This most deplorable event in Ruskin's life was followed by long years of seclusion. He had never gone much into society, but after this he lived in almost utter solitude for years, writing his wonderful books, and making long stays in Venice and other distant cities. He was born to wealth, and never had to trouble himself about the more prosaic affairs of the world. In this country we have had until recently no large leisure class, and those who are now taking that [Pg 379] place are few in number, and seem utterly at a loss how to pass their time amid the business and bustle of our hurrying life. More and more are they going to Europe, as is natural; for there they find people like themselves, and multitudes of them, who have nothing to do, and who therefore seek to enjoy their leisure. With such a man as Ruskin this was not difficult, and he became a hard worker, not from necessity, but from the pressure from within. He never made or sought to make any money from his books, but they gave him great delight in the writing, and brought him fame, which he did not disdain. One of the cardinal principles of his morality has always been that poverty is no bar to happiness, but that all that is best in life is open to poor as well as rich. This he proclaimed loudly in lectures to workingmen, which he inaugurated in London, Edinburgh, and other cities. If men can only be taught to see, and to think, and to worship, according to Ruskin they have always sources of happiness at hand, of which no outward force of circumstances can deprive them. This is a great and a true gospel, and would there were more such eloquent proclaimers of it as Ruskin! what could be better doctrine for the men and women of this generation than this:—

> "In order to teach men how to be satisfied, it is necessary fully to understand the art

> and joy of humble life; this at present, of all arts and sciences, being the one most needing study. Humble life,—that is to say, proposing to itself no future exaltation, but only a sweet continuance; not excluding the idea of forethought, but only of fore-sorrow, and taking no troublous thought for coming days. The life of domestic affection and domestic peace, full of sensitiveness to all elements of costless and kind pleasure, therefore chiefly to the loveliness of the natural world."

Again he sums up these costless pleasures in sentences weighty with meaning:—

> "To watch the corn grow, and the blossoms set; to draw hard breath over plough, hoe, and spade; to read, to think, to love, to hope, to pray,—these are the things which make men happy; they have always had the power to do this, and they always will. The world's prosperity or adversity depends upon our knowing and teaching these few things, but upon iron or glass, or electricity or steam, in nowise."

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Ruskin has always had a quarrel with the railroads, and says that all travelling becomes dull in proportion to its rapidity. "Going by railroad," he affirms, "I do not call travelling at all; but it is merely 'being sent' to a place, and very little different from becoming a parcel. A man who really loves travelling would as soon consent to pack a day of such happiness into an hour of railroad as one who loved eating would agree, if it were possible, to concentrate his dinner into a pill." Walking he commends most heartily to young men, and considers it one of the rarest pleasures of life. In this country walking-parties are as yet almost unknown, but in Europe they are extremely common, especially among students. What could be better for the youth of our land than such a pastime as this for their vacations?

He has also a great contempt for some of the feats of modern science, and exclaims somewhere:—

> "The scientific men are as busy as ants examining the sun and the moon and the seven stars; and can tell me all about them, I believe, by this time, and how they move, and what they are made of. And I do not care, for my part, two copper spangles how they move or of what they are made. I can't move them any other way than they go, nor make them of anything else better than they are made."

It is over forty years ago that Ruskin startled the literary and artistic world with that marvellous book entitled "Modern Painters; Their Superiority in the Art of Landscape Painting to All the Ancient Masters." The title contained the argument of the book, and it was a monumental heresy to utter at that time. Not that there was the least doubt as to its truth, but no voice had then been raised to proclaim it. The English people at that time were blind worshippers of Claude and one or two other old masters; and here was a daring youth—reminding one of David with his sling—going forth to do battle against all the received art opinions of his day, and boldly proclaiming Turner a better painter than Claude, Salvator Rosa, Gaspar Poussin, and the various Van-Somethings who had until that time held undisputed sway in conventional art circles. The young Oxford graduate was greeted with a perfect tempest of ridicule and denunciation. Every critic in the land hurled his lance at him, and every artist looked upon him with sovereign contempt. The young Oxford man, however, valiantly held his ground. He possessed genius, profound conviction, and a magnificent self-conceit; and he hurled back defiance to the whole art-clan, and rode forward. Criticism beat upon the book in vain. Everybody read it, and everybody talked about it, and it conquered criticism at last. No such sensation in the art line has been made in Ruskin's day. His teachings in the course of a few years well-nigh revolutionized art opinion in England. The sum and substance of it was Nature against conventionality. People must look at Nature with their own eyes and judge art by the help of Nature. This seems simple enough to-day, but it was a new doctrine in Ruskin's youth.

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Ruskin has always been an extremest in everything, and he went so far as to denounce Raphael's "Charge to Peter" on the grounds that the Apostles are not dressed as men of that time and place would have been when going out fishing. He held to an almost brutal realism in everything, and preached his doctrine whether men would hear or whether they would forbear. He soon rallied a little coterie of artists about him, and formed a school styled the Pre-Raphaelites. The principal founder of the school was Dante Gabriel Rossetti, since better known as a poet than an artist. He held his little court in London for many years, and a great number of young men sat at his feet. His chief supporters at first were Holman Hunt and Millais. These latter soon left Rossetti far behind in execution; but Rossetti was the soul of the movement. He had received his inspiration directly from Ruskin. Among the reminiscences of this art movement are Oscar Wilde and the esthetes of London to-day, with their "symphonies" in blue and their "arrangements" in yellow, and the hideous females who go about London drawing-rooms in limp dresses of sulphur color and sage green loosely hanging from their shoulders, after the manner of ancient Greece. But they have had real artists among them,—these apostles of the sunflower and knights of the lily,—and although some of the better class have repudiated the antics of their followers, the movement known as Pre-Raphaelitism has really been an artistic success.

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Ruskin followed the "Modern Painters" in due time with his "Seven Lamps of Architecture" and his "Stones of Venice." They were masterpieces of eloquent description and rhetoric. No such vivid writing had been seen for many a day, and no such zeal and earnestness. The wealth of gorgeous imagery was dazzling; the declamation imparted to it the eloquence of an earlier day, and the lofty thought and moral purpose were peculiarly the author's own. The books exerted a

remarkable influence. He has written much since, but he has never reached the height he attained in those earlier books.

As he grew older, he grew dogmatic and crotchety in the extreme. He imitated Carlyle in his scoldings, and indeed was much influenced by Carlyle in many ways. He has always been an impracticable theorist, and in these latter years he has put forth a thousand foolish and subversive vagaries. People have not taken him quite seriously for some time. They laugh at his follies, ridicule his philanthropic schemes,—of which he has an infinite number, for he is a man of the kindest heart,—they tell excruciating stories of his colossal self-conceit, and they go home and read his books because no such books can be found written by any other man, search they never so widely. He has always been a wrong-headed man, entirely out of accord with the world [Pg 383] around him, and consequently almost sure to be on the wrong side of every practical political question. He and Carlyle had much in common in all this, and it would have been a rich treat to have heard Ruskin proclaiming his political creed, "I am a King's man, and no mob's man;" and to have heard Carlyle answer with denunciations of his millions of fellow-countrymen, "mostly fools."

Ruskin lives in one of the most beautiful of London suburbs,—on Denmark Hill, at the south side of the river, near Dulwich and the exquisite Sydenham slopes, where the Crystal Palace stands. His home is beautiful, filled with wonderful art treasures and numberless books, with many rare and costly editions. He has lectured much at Oxford; and of late years his lectures have been so crowded that tickets had to be procured to attend them. This, when the lectures of the most learned professors of the university are often given to a beggarly array of empty boxes.

He has given away during his lifetime the greater part of his large fortune,—not always wisely, but always in a manner characteristic of the man. He has acted upon the belief that it is wrong to take interest in excess of the principal, and has made the property over to his debtors whenever he has had interest to this extent. He gave seventeen thousand pounds to his poor relations as soon as he came into his fortune; and fifteen thousand pounds more to a cousin, tossing it to him as one would a sugar-plum; fourteen thousand pounds to Sheffield and Oxford; and numberless other gifts to different charities, mostly of an eccentric nature. He retained for himself three hundred and sixty pounds a year, upon which he says "a bachelor gentleman ought to live, or if he cannot, deserves speedily to die." Of course such a royal giver has been besieged during his whole life by an innumerable company of beggars for every conceivable object; but he has always chosen to select for himself his beneficiaries, and has often sent sharp answers to appeals; like [Pg 384] the following to the secretary of a Protestant Blind Pension Society: "To my mind, the prefix of 'Protestant' to your society's name indicates far stonier blindness than any it will relieve." And in reply to a letter asking aid in paying off a church debt he replies:—

> "I am sorrowfully amused at your appeal to me, of all people in the world the precisely least likely to give you a farthing. My first word to all men and boys who care to hear me is, 'Don't get into debt. Starve, and go to heaven; but don't borrow. Try, first, begging. I don't mind, if it's really needful, stealing. But don't buy things you can't pay for.' And of all manner of debtors, pious people building churches they can't pay for are the most detestable nonsense to me. Can't you preach and pray behind the hedges, or in a sandpit, or in a coal-hole, first? And of all manner of churches thus idiotically built, iron churches are the damnablest to me. And of all the sects and believers in any ruling spirit—Hindoos, Turks, Feather Idolaters, and Mumbo Jumbo Log and Fire Worshippers —who want churches, your modern English Evangelical sect is the most absurd and objectionable and unendurable to me. All of which you might very easily have found out from my books. Any other sort of sect would, before bothering me to write it to them."

Ruskin is the poet and the high-priest of Nature. To him she reveals her mysteries, and he interprets them to a dull and commonplace world in language as glowing and impassioned as that of the prophets and priests of the olden time. No man, apparently, has seen the sea as Ruskin has seen it,—not even Byron, who wrote so majestic a hymn to it; no man has so seen the mountains, with his very soul transfixed in solemn awe; no one has felt as he the holy stillness of the forest aisles, or so described even the tiny wild flowers of the fields. And he has not only seen their outward glories, but he has interpreted their hidden meanings. He has carried the symbolism of Nature on into the moral world. There is no greater moralist than he. He is stern in his demands for right, and truth, and sincerity in life and in work. This has been the keynote of his teachings [Pg 385] throughout life. He hates a falsehood or a sham as much as Browning or Carlyle. He has taught his countrymen many things. No people love Nature better than the English of the present day, and John Ruskin has opened the eyes of many of them to the beauties that lie everywhere about them. Then his long agitation for a better architecture has not been wholly in vain. Though the architects all laughed at him when his lectures were given, many of his ideas slowly made their way, and the new demand for strength and solidity and sincerity in building has been largely due to him.

But much greater than all his art influence has been the weight of his moral teachings. No preacher of the day has preached to such an audience as he, and he has always held men to the best that is in them. Long after his idiosyncrasies shall have been forgotten, and his faults and foibles given over to oblivion, his precepts will remain to influence the life and thought of the coming time.

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