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Author: William Howitt
Illustrator: Henry W. Hewet

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HOMES AND HAUNTS

OF THE

MOST EMINENT BRITISH POETS.

BY

WILLIAM HOWITT.

The Illustrations Engraved by W. W. Hewet.

"An indissoluble sign of their existence has stamped itself on the abodes of all distinguished men, a sign which places all kindred spirits in communion with them. — *The Citizen of Prague.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
82 CLIFF STREET
1847.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

The subject of the present work is very extensive, and it was soon found necessary to leave out the Dramatic Poets for separate treatment. To them may possibly be added such other of our eminent poets as could not be included in the present work. It will be recollected that it is professedly on the Homes and Haunts of the Poets, and is not strictly biographical. For this reason there are some poets of considerable eminence who will find comparatively small mention; and others none, not because they are not entitled to much notice, but because there is nothing of deep interest or novelty connected with their homes and abodes.

The Elms, Clapton, *Dec. 18, 1846.*

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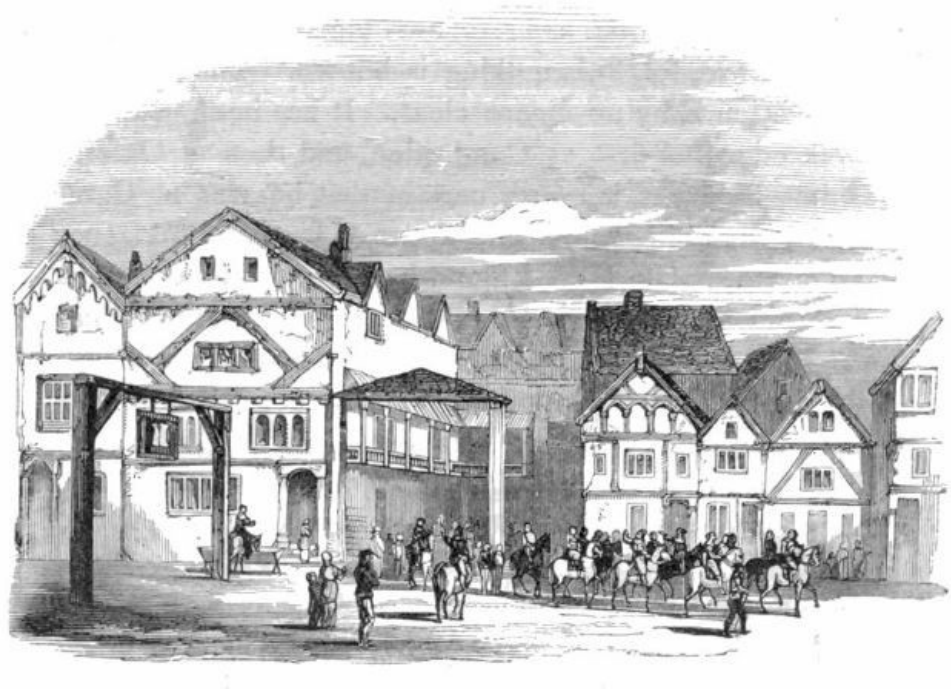

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

The first thing which forcibly strikes our attention in tracing the Homes and Haunts of the Poets, is the devastation which Time has made among them. As if he would indemnify himself for the degree of exemption from his influence in their works, he lays waste their homes and annihilates the traces of their haunts with an active and a relentless hand. If this is startingly apparent in the cases of those even who have been our cotemporaries, how much more must it be so in the cases of those who have gone hence centuries ago. We begin with the father of our truly English poetry, the genial old Geoffrey Chaucer, and, spite of the lives which have been written of him, Tyrwhitt tells us that just nothing is really known of him. The whole of his account of what he considers well-authenticated facts regarding him amounts to but twelve pages, including notes and comments. The facts themselves do not fill more than four pages. Of his birth-place, further than that it was in London, as he tells us himself in The Testament of Love, fol. 321, nothing is [Pg 2] known. The place of his education is by no means clear. It has been said that he was educated first at Cambridge, and then at Oxford. He himself leaves it pretty certain that he was at Cambridge, styling himself, in The Court of Love, "Philogenet of Cambridge, Clerk." Leland has asserted that he was at Oxford; and Wood, in his Annals, gives a tradition that, "when Wickliffe was guardian or warden of Canterbury College, he had for his pupil the famous poet called Jeffrey Chaucer, father of Thomas Chaucer, Esq., of Ewelme, in Oxfordshire, who, following the steps of his master, reflected much upon the corruptions of the clergy."

He is then said to have entered himself of the Inner Temple. Speght states that a Mr. Buckley had seen a record in the Inner Temple of "Geffrey Chaucer being fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan Friar in Fleet-street." This, Tyrwhitt says, was a *youthful* sally, and points out the fact that Chaucer studied in the Inner Temple on leaving college, and before his travels abroad, which is contrary to the account of Leland, who makes him, *after* his travels, reside in the Inner Temple. These travels even in France resting solely on the authority of Leland, Tyrwhitt disputes, but of their reality there can be little doubt.

Chaucer, having finished his education, became a courtier. The first authentic memorial, says Tyrwhitt, that we have of him, is the patent in Rymer, 41 E. III., by which the king grants him an annuity of twenty marks, by the title of *Valettus noster*. He was then in the 39th year of his age. Speght mentions a succeeding grant by the title of *Valettus hospitii*. By those titles it appears that he was a royal page or groom. In this situation he enjoyed various grants from the king. In the 48 E. III., he had, according to Rymer, a grant for life of a pitcher of wine dayly; in the same

year a grant, during pleasure, of the office of Controller of the Custom of Wools, &c., in the port of London. The next year the king granted him the wardship of Sir Edmund Staplegate's heir, for which he received £104; and in the following year, some forfeited wool to the value of £71, 4*s.*, 6*d.* His annuity of twenty marks was confirmed to him on the accession of Richard II., and another annuity of twenty marks was granted him in lieu of the dayly pitcher of wine. It is probable, too, that he was confirmed in his office of controller, though the instrument has not been produced. In the 13th of Richard II. he appears to have been clerk of the works at Westminster, &c., and in the following year at Windsor. In the 17th of Richard II. the king granted him a new annuity of twenty pounds; in the 22d, a pipe of wine. On the accession of Henry IV. his two grants of the annuity of twenty pounds and of the pipe of wine were confirmed to him, with an additional grant of forty marks. [Pg 3]

Thus it appears that Chaucer did not miss the profitable part of court patronage. He also reaped some of its honorable employments. Edward III., in the 46th year of his reign, appointed him, with two others, his envoy to Genoa, with the title of *Scutifer noster*, Our Squire. This great and able king, it is evident, regarded Chaucer as a good man of business, and that he proved himself so, is pretty well denoted by the chief grants of his life immediately following his return; namely, that of the pitcher of wine dayly, the controllership of the customs of wool and wine in the port of London, and in the following year of the wardship of Sir Edmund Staplegate's heir, &c. At the heels of these grants came also another embassy to France, with Sir Guichard d'Angle and Richard Stan, according to Froissart, to treat of a marriage between the Prince of Wales, afterward Richard II., and a daughter of the French king. Other historians assert that the original object of his mission was to complain of some infringement of the truce concluded with France, and which was so well pushed by Chaucer and his colleagues, that it led to some overtures respecting the marriage. However that may be, it is evident that our poet's part in the transaction met with the royal approbation, for the old king dying, one of the first acts of the prince, on his accession, was to confirm his father's grants to him, with an additional one, as we have observed. [Pg 4]

But Chaucer had also his share of life's reverses. In the eleventh year of Richard II. he had the king's license to surrender his two grants of twenty marks each, in favor of John Scalby. It is not really known why he surrendered those grants, but it is supposed that it was owing to his connection with the Lollard cause, and especially to his alliance with John of Gaunt, the Duke of Lancaster, and John of Northampton. He was not only attached to the duke on account of their common interest in the reformed opinions, but he was married to a sister of Catharine Swynford, the duke's mistress, and afterward wife. Chaucer, it seems, had exerted himself zealously to secure the re-election of John of Northampton as Lord-mayor of London. There is much mystery attached to the cause of the riot and its consequences which took place; but as this Comberton, or John of Northampton, was a zealous Wickliffite, the supposition that the disturbance arose from the violent opposition of the clergy to him is very probable. Comberton was finally committed to prison, and Chaucer fled, first to Hainault, then to France, and lastly to Zealand. "While in Zealand," says Mr. Chalmers, "he maintained some of his countrymen, who had fled thither on the same account, by sharing the money he had brought with him, an act of liberality which soon exhausted his stock. In the mean time, the partisans of his cause, whom he had left at home, contrived to make their peace, not only without endeavoring to procure a pardon for him, but without aiding him in his exile, where he became greatly distressed for want of pecuniary supplies. Such ingratitude, we may suppose, gave him more uneasiness than the consequences of it; but it did not lessen his courage, as he soon ventured to return to England. On this he was discovered, and committed to the Tower, where, after being treated with great rigor, he was promised his pardon if he would disclose all he knew, and put it in the power of the government to restore the peace of the city. His former resolution appears now to have failed him; or, perhaps, indignation at the ungrateful conduct of his associates, induced him to think disclosure a matter of indifference. It is certain that he complied with the terms offered; but we are not told what was the amount of his confession, or what the consequences were to others, or who they were that he informed against. We know only that he obtained his liberty, and that an oppressive share of blame and obloquy followed. To alleviate his regret for this treatment, and partly to vindicate his own conduct, he now wrote The Testament of Love; and although this piece, from want of dates and obscurity of style, is not sufficient to form a very satisfactory biographical document, it at least furnishes the preceding account of his exile and return." [Pg 5]

This account is attended with its difficulties. Chalmers states this exile to have occurred about the 3d or 4th of Richard II.; Tyrwhitt in the eleventh of that reign. One thing is certain, that if it occurred in the eleventh, the whole period of his exile and troubles lasted only two years; for in the 13th of Richard II. he was in great favor at court, and made clerk of the works at Westminster. Again, the two years during which he claimed protection from the king are stated by Chalmers to be from the 2d of Richard, and by Tyrwhitt, quoting Rymer, are dated from the twenty-first of that reign. It appears, however, pretty certain that he was reduced to great pecuniary distress, and obliged to screen himself from the persecutions of his creditors under the royal grant of protection. There can be little doubt that Rymer is the correct authority, and that it occurred in the 21st of Richard. About the time of the termination of this grant of protection, he would see his protector also reduced to the need of protection himself; which he did not find, but was deposed, and succeeded by Henry IV., who confirmed to our poet the grants of the unfortunate monarch Richard. [Pg 6]

Such are the few prominent facts of Chaucer's public life. Where, during his abode in London, he took up his residence, we have no knowledge. During the troubles of the court, and during his own, he is said to have retreated to his favorite Woodstock. This house he had engaged originally,

because the court was then much at Woodstock, and he was obliged to be in constant attendance on the king. It became his favorite abode. It was a square stone house, near the Park gate, and long retained the name of Chaucer's House. Many of the rural descriptions in his works have been traced to this favorite scene of his walks and studies. Every trace of it has been long swept away. The other residence which has acquired fame from connection with Chaucer, is Donnington Castle, in Berkshire. Tyrwhitt doubts whether it ever really belonged to him. If it did, he says, it could not have been till after the 16th of Richard II., for at that time it was in the possession of Sir Richard Abberbury. He observes, that we have no proof of such purchase, and he doubts whether the situation of his affairs admitted of such a purchase. It was five years, however, after this time when these affairs compelled him to seek the king's protection. There are traditions of his having settled all his lands on his son Thomas, for whom he had procured a rich wife. Again, it is true, it is denied that Thomas Chaucer was his son, or that it is known that he had any son but Lewis, said to be born twenty years after his marriage. So dubious is every step in this history. Yet tradition asserts Thomas Chaucer to have been his eldest son. It is known that Donnington Castle was for many years in the hands of this Thomas Chaucer; and may it not [Pg 7] have been the fact, that the purchase of Donnington Park, and the settlement of it on his son, must, together with a diminished income from the change of some of his affairs, have been the source of his embarrassments? It is certain that at one time his emoluments were great; he speaks of himself as "once glorified in worldly wellfulnesse, and having suche goods in welthe as makin men riche." He was in a fair way to make a fortune, and plant a family of rank and substance. He was married to the sister of the favorite mistress and subsequent wife of the powerful and liberal John of Gaunt; had the favor of the king, Edward III., and his wife that of the noble Queen Philippa, one of whose maids of honor she had been. Every thing promised prosperity; the promise was confirmed on the accession of Richard II., but soon, as we have seen, the scene changed. He was involved in the troubles of the times, compelled to sacrifice his offices, and obliged to fly to foreign countries. He then complained, in his Testament of Love, "of being berafte out of dignitie of office, in which he made a gatheringe of worldly godes."

Notwithstanding all this cloud of uncertainty, the belief will always prevail that Donnington was the residence of Chaucer. Evelyn tells us that there was an oak in the Park which tradition asserted to have been planted by Chaucer, and which was still called Chaucer's Oak. As his house at Woodstock is gone, so his castle here is a mere ruin. It is generally supposed to be at Woodstock that he wrote his Canterbury Tales, where he, also, is said to have written his Treatise on the Astrolabe, for the use of his son Lewis; yet if, as asserted, he was upward of sixty when he commenced the Canterbury Tales, he may have been in possession also of Donnington during part of the time that he was writing his great poem. But every thing concerning these particulars is wrapped in the mists of five hundred years. The only branch of his family that he mentions by name is his son *Lowis*. The very name of his wife is a secret. "Historians," says Tyrwhitt, "though [Pg 8] they own themselves totally ignorant of the Christian name of his wife, are all agreed that her surname was *Rouet*, the same with that of her father and eldest sister, Catharine Swynford." How *Rouet* and *Swynford* can be the same surname, Tyrwhitt does not tell us. Spite of this, the commentators have pored into the list of nine *Dunicellæ* of the Queen Philippa, to whom the king had granted annuities, and finding no *Rouet* there, have been resolved to fix, as the future wife of Chaucer, one Philippa Pykard, whom they did find. These are all rash peerings into the dark. As no damsel of the name of Rouet was found, the natural conclusion is that she was already married to Chaucer.

Of Donnington Castle in its present state a few more words may be acceptable, and this is the account we find given by Mr. Britton, in the Beauties of England and Wales. "Donnington Castle rears its lofty head above the remains of the venerable oaks that once surrounded it, on an eminence northeast of Donnington Grove, and nearly opposite to the village of Speen, now Newbury. It was formerly a place of much importance, and, by commanding the western road, gave to its possessors a considerable degree of authority. When it was originally built is uncertain, but, from a manuscript preserved in the Cottonian Library, it appears that it belonged to Walter Abberbury, who paid C. shillings for it to the king. Hither, about 1397, in the 70th year of his age, Geoffrey Chaucer, who had purchased it, retired. Alice, his granddaughter, conveyed it by marriage to William de la Pole, duke of Suffolk." In this line, and, therefore, in the descendants of Chaucer, it continued till the reign of Henry VII., when, by the treasonable practices of the owner, it was escheated to the crown. In the civil wars it was a post of great consequence, being fortified as a garrison for the king. During these troubles it was twice besieged; the second time its siege being raised by the arrival of the king himself. In Camden's [Pg 9] time this castle was entire. He describes it as "a small but very neat place, seated on the brow of a woody hill, having a fine prospect, lighted by windows on every side." The remains now consist of the east entrance, with its two round towers, and a small part of the east wall. The gateway is in good preservation, and the place for the portcullis may still be seen. A staircase winds up the south tower to the summit of the castle, which commands a beautiful view of the Hampshire Hills and the intermediate country.

It has been the fate of the places celebrated by Chaucer in his exquisite Canterbury Tales to retain something of their identity beyond all that might have been expected from the rapid changes, especially of late years, in England. The Tabard Inn, Southwark, from which his pilgrims set out, still exists, or at least partly so, under the name of the Talbot. This old inn is within view of London Bridge, on the left hand going thence down High-street in the borough. It is evidently the very inn which Dickens had in view when he described the one where Pickwick originally encountered Sam Weller. This once famous old hostel has indeed existed, but has fallen into decay, and sunk in rank. London has spread, and changed the importance of its localities. In the

city, and at the west end, multitudes of splendid hotels have sprung up: the ancient Tabard is gone down to a very ordinary house of entertainment. Once it occupied, no doubt, the frontage on both sides of its gateway, now it is confined to the right hand; and although the ancient yard and ancient galleries present themselves to your view as you enter, you find the premises occupied by at least half a dozen different tenants and trades. Here is the inn, on the right hand; on the left are offices of wine-merchants and others. Under the old galleries is the warehouse of a London carman, and huge bales of goods lie before it, to go off by wagon or by rail-road. Wagons belonging to this establishment are going in and out, and gigs and chaises are drawn up on the [Pg 10] further side of the inn. There are life and trade here still; but the antiquity and dignity of the ancient Tabard are broken up. The frontage, and about half the premises, were once destroyed by fire; the remainder, occupying the lower end of the court, exists in all its antiquity. The old wooden gallery, supported on stout wooden pillars, and with a heavy wooden balustrade, is roofed over; above are steep red-tiled roofs, with dormer-windows, bearing every mark of being very old. In front of this gallery hangs a large painting, long said to be a picture of the pilgrims entering Canterbury. A horseman is disappearing through the city gateway, and others are following; but the whole is so weather-beaten that it is difficult to make out. The painting seems to have possessed considerable merit, and it is a pity it is not restored.

Tyrwhitt says, "They who are disposed to believe the pilgrimage to have been real, and to have happened in 1383, may support their opinion by the following inscription, which is still to be read upon the inn, now called the Talbot, in Southwark: 'This is the inn where Sir Geoffrey Chaucer and the twenty-nine pilgrims lodged in their journey to Canterbury, anno 1383.'" Though the present inscription is evidently of a very recent date, we might suppose it to have been propagated to us by a succession of faithful transcripts from the very time; but, unluckily, there is too good reason to be assured that the first inscription of this sort was not earlier than the last century.

We learn from Speght, who appears to have been inquisitive about this inn in 1597, that "this was the hostelry where *Chaucer* and the other pilgrims met together, and with *Henry Bailey*, their host, accorded about the manner of their journey to Canterbury." Within the gallery was a large table, said to be the one where the pilgrims were entertained. It is now divided into four bed-rooms, where the guests of the inn still sleep, on the very floor occupied by the pilgrims upward [Pg 11] of 500 years ago. And, indeed, how much longer? The building existed probably long before Chaucer's days, who has been dead 446 years. It is one of the greatest antiquities and curiosities of London, so few of the like kind being spared by the fire, and still fewer by modern changes and improvements.

In Canterbury, also, the pilgrim's inn is said to have continued to the present time, no longer, indeed, existing as an inn, but divided into a number of private tenements in High-street. The old inn mentioned by Chaucer was called the Checkers. It stands in High-street, at the corner of the lane leading to the Cathedral, just below the parade, on the left-hand side going into Canterbury. Its situation was just that which was most convenient for the pilgrims to Thomas à Becket's tomb. It was a very large inn, as was necessary for the enormous resort of votaries to the shrine of this pugnacious saint. It is now divided into several houses, and has been modernized externally, having no longer a trace of having been an inn. The way to the court-yard is through a narrow doorway passage, and round the court you see the only evidences of its antiquity, remains of carved wood-work, now whitewashed over.

The old age of Chaucer, like that of too many men of genius, is said to have been stormy, and not unvisited by necessity. We are informed that he went from Woodstock to Donnington Castle, and thence to London, to solicit a continuance of his annuities, in which he found such difficulties as probably hastened his death. It has been said, how could this be? How could a man with lands and a castle be in such necessity? and it has been attributed to the desire of his biographers to excite an undue sympathy for their subject, that they have represented him in his old age as avaricious. Probably, if we knew all the circumstances, the whole would be clear enough. We know so little of Chaucer's real, and especially of his domestic history, that we may pronounce, as falsely as presumptuously, in saying he could not be in need. Who shall say that because Chaucer [Pg 12] casually mentions only one son, that he might not have half a dozen? Who shall say what misfortunes may have visited his old age? These were changeable and troublesome times. His biographers have settled his castle and estate on his son Thomas; and if he had other sons to provide for, and his annuities were not paid, these are causes enough for pecuniary difficulty.

The general opinion is, that he died October 25th, in the year 1400, being seventy-two years of age. According to Wood, he never repented of his reflections on the clergy of his times, but upbraided himself bitterly with the licentious portions of his writings, often crying out at the approach of death, "Woe, woe is me, that I can not recall and annul those things; but, alas! they are now continued from man to man, and I can not do what I would desire." He was buried in Westminster Abbey, in the great south aisle, but no monument was raised to his memory till a century and a half after his decease, when Nicholas Bingham, a gentleman of Oxford, a poet and great admirer of Chaucer, erected the plain altar, now so well known, having three quatrefoils, and the same number of shields, at the north end of a magnificent recess, formed by four obtuse arched angles. The inscription and figures are now almost obliterated.

Like himself, his great work, the Canterbury Tales, lay buried for upward of seventy years in manuscript. Caxton, the first English printer, selected these tales as one of the earliest productions of his press, and thus gave to the world what it will never again consent to lose. Spite of the rude state of the language when he wrote, the splendor of his genius beams and burns gloriously through its inadequate vehicle. Time, which has destroyed his house at

Woodstock, and beaten down his castle at Donnington, has not been able to effect the same ruin on his poems. The language has gone on perfecting and polishing; a host of glorious names and [Pg 13] glorious works have succeeded Chaucer and the Canterbury Tales, making England affluent in its literary fame as any nation on earth; but, from his distant position, the father of English poetry beams like a star of the first magnitude in the eternal hemisphere of genius. Like Shakspeare, he has, for the most part, seized on narratives already in existence to employ his art upon, but that art is so exquisite that it has stamped immortal value on the narrative. The life and the characters he has represented to us are a portion of the far past, rescued for us from the oblivion that has overwhelmed all that age besides. We gaze on the living and moving scenes with an interest which the progress of time can only deepen. To the latest ages men will read and say, "Thus, in the days of Wickliffe, of John of Gaunt, and Richard II., did men and women look, and act, and think, and feel; thus did a great poet live among them, and send them down to us, and to all posterity, ten thousand times more faithfully preserved than by all the arts of Egypt and the East." Quaint as they are, they are the very quintessence of human nature. They live yet, fresh and vivid, passionate and strong, as they did on their way to the tomb of St. Thomas, upward of five hundred years ago. They can never die; they can never grow old; and amid them the poet, Englishman every inch, lives, and laughs, and quaffs his cup of wine, and tells his story, and chuckles over his jokes, or listens to the narratives of all those around him, with a relish of life that he only could feel or could communicate. There is an elastic geniality in his spirit, a buoyant music in his numbers, a soul of enjoyment in his whole nature, that mark him at once as a man of a thousand; and we feel in the charm that bears us along a strength that will outlast a thousand years. It is like that of the stream that runs, of the wind that blows, of the sun that comes up, ruddy as with youth, from the bright east on an early summer's morning. It is the strength of nature living in its own joyful life, and mingling with the life of all around in gladdening [Pg 14] companionship. For a hundred beautiful pictures of genuine English existence and English character; for a world of persons and things that have snatched us from the present to their society; for a host of wise and experience-fraught maxims; for a many a tear shed, and emotion revived, and laugh of merriment; for many a happy hour and bright remembrance, we thank thee, Dan Chaucer, and just thanks shalt thou receive a thousand years hence.

[Pg 15]

EDMUND SPENSER.

So little is known of the early life of Spenser, that our notice of his haunts will be confined almost wholly to his castle of Kilcolman. He is said to be descended from the ancient family of Spenser; indeed, he says it himself:

"At length they all to mery London came;
To mery London, my most kyndly nurse,
That to me gave this life's first native sourse,
Though from another place I toke my name,
An house of ancient fame."

Prothalamion.

This was the house of Althorpe, and now also of Marlborough; but however this may be, his

parentage was obscure enough. He is said by Fenton to have been born in East Smithfield, near the Tower of London, in 1553; but the parish registers of that time are wanting, and we have no clew to trace more accurately the locality. He was admitted as sizer, the lowest order of students, at Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, in the year 1569; he took the degree of Bachelor of Arts in [Pg 16] January, 1572-3, and that of Master of Arts in June, 1576, in which year he was an unsuccessful candidate for a fellowship, according to some of his biographers, though others deny this. On quitting the University, he went to reside with his relations in the north of England, but how he was supported does not appear. These relations, it would appear probable, from the communication of a Mr. F. C. Spenser, in the Gentleman's Magazine of August, 1842, quoted by Craik, in his Spenser and his Poetry, were the Spensers, or Le Spensers, of Huntwood, near Burnley, Lancashire, part of which lay united on a little property, still called Spenser's, at the foot of Pendle Hill. This derives confirmation from the fact of Spenser having a son called Lawrence, and of the names of Edmund and Lawrence abounding in the registries of this Lancashire family, as well as of that family only spelling the name with an "s." Here he fell in love with a lady, whom he celebrates under the name of Rosalind, and who deserted him; this is said to be the cause of his writing the Shepherd's Calendar, in which he complains of this faithless mistress. Others, again, think she was a maiden of Kent, a Rose Lynde, the Lyndes being an old family in that county, where he went on his acquaintance with Sir Philip Sidney while in the south; but this can not at all agree with the letter of his friend, Gabriel Harvey, to him. To Sir Philip he was introduced by this old college friend, Gabriel Harvey, and dedicated to him the Shepherd's Calendar. If it be true that the dedication was the cause of introduction, this must have been solicited and decided upon while the poem was only in progress; for it appears pretty clearly that he wrote part of the Calendar at Penshurst; especially the eleventh eclogue, in which he laments the death of a "maiden of great blood," supposed to have been a daughter of the Earl of Leicester. In the tenth eclogue he lauds the Earl of Leicester as "the worthy whom the queen loves best;" so that he was now got into the very high-road to preferment, and does not appear to have been [Pg 17] backward to walk diligently in it. Leicester and Sidney, near kinsmen as they were, were just the two men of the whole kingdom to push the fortunes of a poet. With this early and regular introduction to these two powerful men (powerful in politics and literature, and in favor with the queen), it is difficult to weave in a belief of the fine story of Spenser's pushing his own way with the ninth canto of the first book of the Faërie Queene. It is a pity this should not be true, yet how can it? The story goes thus: One morning Spenser, determined to try his fortune with Sir Philip Sidney, the courtier most celebrated of the time for his intellectual accomplishments, and for his generous disposition, went to Leicester House, an entire stranger, carrying with him this canto of his great poem, in which is contained the fine allegory of Despair. He obtained admission to Sidney, and presented his MS. for his approbation: that great lover and judge of poetry had not read far before he was so much struck with the beauty of a stanza, that he ordered fifty pounds to be given to the author; proceeding to the next stanza, he raised his gift to a hundred, which sum he doubled on reading a third, and commanded his steward to pay instantly, lest he should be induced, by a further delay, to give away his whole estate. Pity so fine a story was not true! some imaginative person must have pleased himself with fancying how such a thing might have been.

However, Spenser was now a regular inmate of Leicester House, and at Penshurst; so that that latter sweet place has the honor of being as well the haunt of our great romantic poet as of the high-hearted Sidney. By Leicester and Sidney Spenser was introduced to Queen Elizabeth, who, it is said, on his presenting some poems to her, conferred on him a gratuity of a hundred pounds. If this be true, it is so unlike Elizabeth's parsimony that we must set it down as a wonder. Yet it is to this fact that Lord Burleigh's dislike to the *rhymer*, as he called Spenser, is attributed. He [Pg 18] deemed the grant so extravagant as to neglect its payment till he received a repetition of the order from his mistress, with a reproof for his delay. There were, there is no doubt, plenty of causes for Burleigh's dislike of Spenser. In the first place, he had not a spark of poetry in his constitution. To him it was sheer nonsense, idle and childish nonsense. But, besides this, Spenser was brought forward by the very party of whom Burleigh was most jealous—Leicester. He appeared at court as the particular friend of Leicester and Sidney; and the incautious poet is said to have aggravated the dislike of Burleigh by some satirical rhymes, which were assiduously carried to the clever but cold-blooded minister. There has not been wanting active vindication of Burleigh, and the discovery of a patent granting him a pension of fifty pounds a year, dated 1590-1, which he enjoyed till his death in 1598-9, has been said to be sufficient refutation of all that has been alleged against Burleigh in Spenser's case. But how does this at all remove the statements of Burleigh's dislike of Spenser and reluctance to his promotion? Not in the least. It merely shows that Spenser had friends, and an interest in the queen's good-will, powerful enough to overrule the minister's opposition. It may, and most likely is, just as true, that on the grant of this pension Burleigh declared "the pension was a good example, too great to be given to a ballad-maker;" and that when the queen ordered him a hundred pounds, he replied, "What! all this for a song?" These facts are so entirely in keeping with Burleigh's character that we can by no means doubt them. Indeed, Spenser himself has put the truth past a doubt. What means,

> "To have thy prince's grace, yet want his peeres'?"

What those lines at the close of the sixth book of the Faërie Queene?

[Pg 19]

> "Ne may this homely verse, of many meanest,
> Hope to escape his venomous despite,
> More than my *former writs*, all were they clearest,
> From blamefull blot, and free from all that wite
> With which some wicked tongues did it backbite,

And bring into a mighty peere's displeasure
That never so deserved to indite."

Again, in the fourth book of the Ruines of Time, written subsequently to the first edition of the Faërie Queene:

"The rugged foremost that with grave foresight
Wields kingdom's causes, and affairs of state,
My looser verses, I wote, doth sharply wite
For praising love," &c.

Thus, whether Spenser, as alleged or not, gave cause of offense by his satire, one thing is clear, that Burleigh was his bitter and unchangeable enemy. That Spenser had suffered at court is fully shown in his oft-cited verses in his "Mother Hubbard's Tale," the most lively picture of court attendance and its consequent chagrins that ever was painted.

"Full little knowest thou that hast not tryd,
What hell it is in suing long to byde;
To lose good days that might be better spent;
To waste long nights in pensive discontent;
To speed to-day, to be put back to-morrow;
To feed on hope, to pine with fear and sorrow;
To have thy prince's grace, yet want his peers';
To have thy asking, yet wait many years;
To fret thy soul with crosses and with cares;
To eat thy bread with comfortless despairs;
To fawn, to crouch, to wait, to ride, to run,
To spend, to give, to want, to be undone."

Spenser's sole reliance was on Leicester, Sidney, and Raleigh, with whom he became soon acquainted. He is said to have been employed by the Earl of Leicester on a mission to France in 1579; and though this has been questioned, yet his own assertion, in a letter to Gabriel Harvey, confirms it. In 1580 he accompanied Arthur, lord Grey of Wilton, who went as lord-lieutenant to [Pg 20] Ireland, as his private secretary. In this post he is said to have displayed great talents for business. He wrote a "Discourse on the State of Ireland," containing many decided plans for the improvement of that country.

In 1581, the first year of his being in Ireland, he was also made clerk to the Irish Court of Chancery, and Mr. Craik has pointed out the fact given in Collins's Peerage, in the account of the Earls of Portsmouth, that in this same year, too, he received from the queen a grant of a lease of the Abbey of Iniscorthy, or Enniscorthy, and the attached castle and manor, in the county of Wexford, at an annual rent of £300, 6*s.*, 8*d.*; and that he conveyed this property, on the 9th of December of the same year, to Richard Synot. This leasehold, by another sale, came into the hands of the family of the Earls of Portsmouth, and is rated by G. Wakefield, in his "Account of Ireland," at £8000 a year.

Lord Grey was recalled in 1582, and Spenser returned with him. But his fate was bound up with Ireland. After hanging about court for four years, during which time there can be little doubt that he experienced much of the bitterness expressed in the lines just quoted, he obtained, through the interest of his friends, Lords Grey and Leicester, and Sir Philip Sidney, a grant of 3026 acres of land in the county of Cork, part of the forfeited estate of the great Earl of Desmond. Scarcely was his patent made out, when his best friend and patron, Sidney, was killed at the battle of Zutphen. This was the death of his hopes in England, and he set out to reside on and cultivate his newly-acquired estate in Ireland; having lamented Sir Philip's death in the pastoral elegy of Astrophel. This was in 1586. In three or four years, 1590 or 1591, Spenser returned to England with Raleigh, published his first three books of the Faërie Queene, and was presented by Raleigh to Elizabeth, who at this time conferred on him his pension. Spenser, it seems, now returned to [Pg 21] Ireland, wrote his second three cantos, and bringing them over in 1596, published them; and also printed and published his Discourse on the State of Ireland, as a defense of his patron Lord Grey's policy there. From the condition of Ireland at that time, and the sense of insecurity which Spenser felt at his lonely castle of Kilcolman, it is not to be wondered at that his plan abounds with earnest recommendations of a coercive nature, and especially for the stationing of strong garrisons numerously. In 1597, he returned to Ireland, where almost immediately the great rebellion of Tyrone breaking out, he was chased from his castle, and, retiring to London, died there, heart-broken, in 1598.

Such is a brief outline of the life of Spenser. Let us now take a nearer view of his Irish home. One of the best accounts of it is contained in the Dublin University Magazine of November, 1843. The writer, evidently not only a genuine lover of the poetry of Spenser, but well acquainted with the scene he describes, goes at much length into the characters and allusions of the poem of the Faërie Queene. He shows us that Spenser draws a noble portrait of his benefactor, Lord Grey, in the second book of that poem. It is the warrior seen by Britomart in the mirror of Merlin, as her future husband.

"A comely knight, all armed in complete wize,
Through whose bright ventayle lifted up on hye
His manly face, that did his foes agrize,

And friends to termes of gentle truce entize,
Looked forth, as, Phœbus' face out of the east
Betwixt two shady mountaynes doth arise," &c.

The portrait is certainly a noble one, and limned with the colors of divine poetry. The anonymous but able author leads us justly to notice that, in the Legend of Artegall, the thirteen stanzas opening the first canto of the fifth book "relate to the hapless condition of the Ladye Irena—her tears and her troubles; tears that, alas! have not yet ceased to flow down, and troubles that to the [Pg 22] present hour are convulsing her bosom. For Irena is Ireland; and she sends her supplications across the ocean to Gloriana, the Queen of Faërie, the great and good Elizabeth of England, beseeching her to come over and help her. Artegall is the personification of equity and justice; and this is the boon which poor Irena looks for, and hopes to receive at her sister's hand."

Artegall, or, in other words, Lord Grey, passes over to Ireland, and encounters Pollentè, or Gerald, earl of Desmond, "who was in rebellion against Elizabeth at the time of Lord Grey's appointment to the chief authority in Ireland, and perished miserably in consequence. His prodigious wealth and power would amply bear out such an appellation. His lands extended one hundred and fifty miles in the south of the kingdom, stretching from sea to sea, and comprising the greater portion of the counties of Waterford, Cork, Kerry, and Limerick. We read of his being able to bring together, by his summons, six hundred cavalry and two thousand footmen; and of these, nearly five hundred were gentlemen of his own kindred and surname. His castles were numerous, and scattered over this large tract of country in well-chosen places, for its defense and protection; and it is curious that attached to one of them is a tale of blood not unlike what you will find Spenser describing. A few miles above the sea, on a bold cliff overhanging one of the deepest parts of the beautiful River Blackwater, stand the battered remains of the earl's Castle of Strancally. Attached to this strong-hold is a murderous device, which we had often previously heard of, but never till then beheld. The solid rock had been pierced with a large well-like aperture, communicating with the river; and the neighboring peasants will tell you, that the unwary, when decoyed within the castle, were tied hand and foot, and flung down the *murder-hole*: the rapid river hurried by, and soon carried away their gasping shrieks, and the dead told [Pg 23] no tales. We have every respect for these local traditions, and esteem them in a thousand instances valuable guides; notwithstanding, we place no faith in the present horrible legend, which is wholly at variance with the received character of the Earl of Desmond. It may be that such things were told to him, even in Spenser's days; and it is certain that, about the close of the year 1579, his Castle of Strancally was taken by the Earl of Ormond, the president of Munster; a capture which could be easily transferred to the poet's hero, Artegall."

Lord Grey was recalled, in consequence of representations of cruelty and oppression in his administration. "The queen was persuaded by these insinuations, and his recall took place when he had scarcely completed his second year. With this event the fifth book of the Faërie Queene concludes: and the poet there enters at large into the facts of the case. Artegall is summoned away to Faërie Court, and on his way thither meets with two ill-favored hags—'superannuated vipers,' as Lord Brougham would term them—whom he knows to be Envy and Detraction. These are painted in language that makes the grisly creatures live before you. Every hue and feature of their vile countenances is preserved—their slavering lips, their tireless tongues, their foul and claw-like hands. We remember nothing in Milton or Dante that surpasses this powerful personification."

Spenser, as we have already stated, accompanied Lord Grey home, and here came in for a share in the partition of the vast estates of the vanquished Earl of Desmond. The plan now devised for more securely attaching Ireland to the British crown was called the Plantation of Munster. The scheme, which was first put in operation on this vast confiscated territory of the Earl of Desmond, is thus described in Smith's History of Cork:

"All forfeited lands to be divided into manors and seigniories, containing 12,000, 8000, 6000, and 4000 acres each, according to a plot laid down. The undertakers (those who got these grants) to [Pg 24] have an estate in fee-farm, yielding for each seigniory of 12,000 acres, for the first three years, £33, 6*s.*, 8*d.* sterling, viz., from 1590 to 1593, and from Michaelmas, 1593, £66, 13*s.*, 4*d.* sterling, and ratably for every inferior seigniory, yielding upon the death of the undertaker the best beast as an heriot; to be discharged of all taxes whatsoever, except subsidies levied by Parliament. Bogs, mountains, &c., not to be included till improved, and then to pay a half-penny for each English acre. License to the undertakers to transport all commodities, duty free, into England for five years. That none be admitted to have more than 12,000 acres. No English planter to be permitted to convey to any mere Irish. The head of each plantation to be English; and the heirs female to marry none but of English birth; and none of the mere Irish to be maintained in any family there.

"Each freeholder, from the year 1590, to furnish one horse and horseman, armed; each principal undertaker for 12,000 acres, to supply three horsemen and six footmen, armed; and so ratably for the other seigniories; and each copyholder one footman, armed. That, for seven years to come, they shall not be obliged to travel out of Munster upon any service; and after that time, no more than ten horsemen and twenty footmen out of one seigniory of 12,000 acres, and so ratably; and such as serve out of Munster to be paid by the queen.

"That the queen will protect and defend the said seigniories, at her own charge, for seven years to come. All commodities brought from England for the use of the same seigniories to be duty free for seven years."

There was to be a complete English population established on these lands in this manner: "For

any seigniory containing 12,000 acres, the gentleman was to have for his own domain 2100 acres; six farmers, 400 acres each; six freeholders, 100 acres each; and lands to be appropriated [Pg 25] for mean tenures of 50, 25, and 10 acres, to the amount of 1500 acres; whereon thirty-six families, at least, must be established. The other seigniories to be laid out in like proportion. Each undertaker was to people his seigniory in seven years." These articles received the royal signature on the 27th of June, 1586. The following list of undertakers presents some curious particulars. In the first place, Sir Walter Raleigh and Arthur Robbins by some means managed at once to overleap the grand provision, that no undertaker should be permitted to have more than 12,000 acres: Sir Walter Raleigh getting 42,000, and poor Spenser, poet-like, only 3029! He is just tacked on at the end like an after-thought.

	Acres.
Sir Walter Raleigh	42,000
Arthur Robbins, Esq.	18,000
Fane Beecher, Esq.	12,000
Hugh Worth, Esq.	12,000
Arthur Hyde, Esq.	11,766
Sir Thomas Norris	6,000
Sir Richard Beacon	6,000
Sir Warham St. Leger	6,000
Hugh Cuff, Esq.	6,000
Thomas Jay, Esq.	5,775
Sir Arthur Hyde	5,774
Edmund Spenser, Esq.	3,029

The difference did not consist merely in the quantity either. Some of their lands, like Sir Walter's at Youghal, on the Blackwater, were splendid lands; those of Spenser were wild moorlands, facing the wilder mountains, where the Irish, yet smarting under defeat and expulsion, the destruction of their great chief, and this plan, which was to continue that expulsion forever, and plant on their own soil the hated Saxon, were looking down, ready to descend and take sanguinary vengeance. Such was the lot which Spenser chose in preference to the degrading slavery of court dependence. No doubt he pleased himself with the idea of a new English state, established in this newly-conquered region; where, surrounded by English gentlemen, and one of [Pg 26] the lords of the soil, he should live a life of content and happiness, and hand down to his children a fair estate. But in this fond belief how much of the poet's self-delusive property was mixed! Hear what the authority I have already made such use of, because I know it to be good, says: "It was a wild and lonesome banishment at best, for one who had lived so much in courts, and in companionship with the rich and high-born. Mountains on all sides shut in the retreat, and in the midst of the long and level plain between them stood a strong fortalice of the Earl of Desmond, which was to be the poet's residence, Kilcolman Castle. Hard by the castle was a small lake, and a mile or two distant, on either side, a river descended from the hills. In position, likewise, it was insecure, forming, as it did, the frontier of the English line in the south, and the contiguous hills affording lurking-places for the Irish kerns, whence they could pour down in multitudes to plunder. In the insurrectionary warfare that shortly succeeded, these mountain passes became the scene of many a skirmish; and the first object of the commander of the English forces, when he heard of any partial outbreak, was to send off a detachment of light-armed troops to occupy them in the name of the queen."

But, overlooking all these hazards, Spenser came hither full of bright views of the future. "The sunshine of the years to come," says the author we have been quoting, "were to atone for the darkness and the gloom of life's morning." His poetry, which had been previously of a pastoral cast, became now imbued with the wildness of the sylvan solitude around him: wood-nymphs and fairies were inhabitants he could summon up at will, and with them the hill-tops about him were peopled. Such names of places and things as his musical ear pronounced inharmonious were exchanged for others which quaint fancy suggested, and which read more sweetly in his tender verse. He sang sweet strains of the bridal or separation of his rivers; told how their stern sires, [Pg 27] the mountains, ofttimes forced their unwilling inclinations, and brought about a union which the water-nymph detested; and how sometimes she, in her faithful attachment to the one she loved, effected her wish by a circuitous course, or even sought beneath the earth's surface the waters dear to her bosom. Before an imagination so vivid the iron desolateness of Kilcolman vanished; and in its stead a fairy world arose to gladden the eyes of the dreamer with its bowers of bliss, and enchanted palaces, and magnificence more gorgeous than the luxuries of Ind.

"The Ballyhowra Hills, which formed the northern boundary of the poet's retreat, appeared in this new world under the feigned title of the Mountains of Mole; while the highest of them, which, like Parnassus, has a double summit, was dignified by the name of "Father." Sometimes Spenser seems to have extended the name of Mole to the entire range of hills which run along the northern and eastern limits of the county of Cork, and divide it from Limerick and Tipperary. In one place he speaks of a river rising from the Mole, and thence styled by him Molana; which undoubtedly takes its origin from the Tipperary Hills. The plain in which his castle stood was rebaptized in Helicon by the name of Armulla Dale. Of his two streamlets, one was suffered, for a special purpose, to retain its original name of Bregoge, *i. e.*, false, or deceitful:

"'Bregog hight
So hight became of his deceitful traine;'

and the other, the Awbeg, was specially appropriated to himself by the name of Mulla:

"'And Mulla mine, whose waves I whilom taught to weep.'

"The rivers here mentioned flowed at some distance on each side of Spenser's castle. The Bregoge on the east, at the distance of a mile; the Mulla on the west, at about two miles. Both rise, as the poet sings, in the Mole Mountain. They spring from wells, in glens about a mile and a [Pg 28] half asunder, on the opposite sides of *Corringlass*, the highest mountain in the range. The Bregoge proceeds, in a winding course, to the southwest, and falls into the Mulla a mile above the town of Doneraile. It is a very inconsiderable stream, forcing itself with difficulty among the rocks with which its channel is encumbered; and, like many mountain rivulets, is dry during the summer heats. When we saw it, in the course of the present year, its bed was a mass of dusty sand.

"The Mulla rises on the remote side of the hill from the Castle of Kilcolman, but has a more northerly head in Annagh bog, five miles from Anster's birth-place, Charleville, which perhaps, in strictness, should be deemed its source. Spenser, in the foregoing passage, describes it as springing out of Mole. It proceeds to Buttevant, and receives a branch a little above that town, at Ardskeagh; it then winds away toward Kilcolman, and meets the Bregoge near Doneraile. Directing its course thence, it turns to the south, and flows through a deep romantic glen to Castletown Roche, after which it enters the Blackwater at Bridgetown Abbey. It is now called the Awbeg, in contradistinction to the Awmore or Avonmore, one of the names of the Blackwater."

I have been the more particular in quoting from one well acquainted with the scene the geography of Spenser's domain, because those who have not been on the spot can really form no idea of the proportion of matter drawn hence, and from Ireland generally, in his poems. The Faërie Queene, Colin Clout, and his two cantos on "Mutabilitie," abound with allegorical or actual descriptions of his Irish life, and of the scenery, and especially the rivers, about his estate here. I must now trace my own visit to it.

Starting from Fermoy with a car, I ascended the Valley of the Blackwater, a river which for beauty of scenery is worthy of all its fame. About six miles up, I was told that Spenser had lived at [Pg 29] a place called Rennie. I found it a gentleman's house, standing at a field's distance from the highway, and drove up to it. It is the property of Mr. Smith, a merchant and magistrate of Fermoy. He was there with his lady, come out to see their splendid dairy of cows which they kept there, forty in number. They were at luncheon, and would insist on my going in and partaking; after which they both set out, most hospitably, to show me the place. The house stands on a lofty rock, overlooking the valley of the river, but at a field's distance from it. It is one of the places of exuberant vegetation, where vegetation in grass and trees seems perfectly exhaustless. The richest pastures, the most abundant and overshadowing trees, every where. In the little garden close to the house, and lying on the verge of the precipice, all glowing with dahlias, still remains a wall of the castle, which was undoubtedly inhabited by Spenser. There is an old oak on the river bank, at some distance above the house, under the precipice, which is called Spenser's Tree, and where he is said to have written part of the Faërie Queene. This property was inherited by Spenser's eldest son Sylvanus, who married a Miss Nagle, of Monanimy, in Cork, and lived at this Rennie.

In a life of Spenser, the following scanty information, which has been collected relative to his descendants, is given, and may help us to a clearer conception of the matter. Sylvanus had, by the marriage with Miss Nagle, two sons, Edmund and William. Peregrine Spenser, the third son of the poet, the second being Lawrence, is described, in a MS. deposition relative to the rebellion in 1641, as a Protestant resident about the barony of Fermoy, and so impoverished by the troubles as to be unable to pay his debts; and a part of the estate had been assigned to him by his elder brother, Sylvanus; this part of the estate is distinctly stated to have been Rennie. Hugoline, the son of Peregrine, opposed the designs of the Prince of Orange, and after the Revolution was [Pg 30] outlawed for treason and rebellion; his cousin, William Spenser, the son of Sylvanus, became a suitor for the forfeited property, and obtained it. Dr. Birch has described him as a man somewhat advanced in years, and as unable to give any account of the works of his ancestor which are missing. His case, as he presented it to Parliament, has been printed by Mr. Todd in his Life of Spenser, from the copy in the British Museum, presented by Mr. George Chalmers. In this document Hugoline is described as "very old and unmarried." Dr. Birch informs us that, in 1751, some of the descendants of Spenser were living in the country of Cork; and Mr. Todd, coming later down, observes, that "a daughter of a Mr. Edmund Spenser, of Mallow, the last lineal descendant of the poet, is now married to a Mr. Burne, of the English custom-house." A Mr. Price, in a MS. in the British Museum, states that he was told by Lord Cartaret, that when he was Lord-lieutenant of Ireland in 1724, a true descendant of Edmund Spenser, who bore his name, had a trial before Baron Hall, and he knew so little of the English tongue that he was forced to have an interpreter.

Now Mr. Smith informed me that not only was it the fixed tradition that this house at Rennie was inhabited by Spenser the poet, but that it was also as positively asserted that one of his descendants was murdered in it in a very extraordinary manner. The story was that of two brothers; one, banished for high treason, and the other, who succeeded him, murdered by his housekeeper out of jealousy. That this woman had been led to hope that her master would marry her, but finding that he was going to marry another lady, proposed, one morning as he was shaving, to do it for him, and being permitted, cut his throat with the razor. There seemed, however, some suspicion that the cousin of the murdered man, who was next heir, the elder brother being outlawed, had instigated or urged upon the woman to commit this act; but such

was the state of the times, that, notwithstanding this suspicion, his cousin came in for the property. [Pg 31]

Wild and terrible as this tradition is, it is there; and what is curious, we see in the above slight tracing of the descent of the Spensers, that Hugoline, a son of Peregrine, was outlawed for treason and rebellion, and that William, a cousin, and the son of Sylvanus, became a suitor for the forfeited property, and obtained it. In O'Flanagan's Guide to the Blackwater, this is stated to have happened to the last descendant of Spenser at Rennie, and that "in the small antique dwelling at Rennie is pointed out the room in which she did the deed." This is very different to the account I received from the present proprietor, which is that given above: nor does the house at Rennie prove to be "a small antique one." It is a good modern mansion. The property of Rennie continued in the family long after it had lost Kilcolman; in fact, till about 1734, when, on the death of Nathaniel Spenser, the then possessor, it was sold; the family became landless, and soon after extinct.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith set out with me to explore the scene. The house is modern; the land on the level of the house of the richest quality, and beautified with fine trees; the views up and down the river, and over it into the woods of Lord Listowell, with the tower of his castle peeping over them, are rich and beautiful. We descended into the meadows below the house, attended by four of the finest greyhounds ever seen, one of them as white as snow, and three or four terriers; and the dogs were soon in full chase of rabbits, up among the rocks and trees. We were soon below the house, and at the foot of the precipice on which it stands. The place was fit for Spenser's Pan, with all his fauns and sylvans. In the meadow, which extended to the banks of the river, grazed the fine herd of cattle, and amid them the sturdy bull; and all around us, above us on the rocks, in the meadow itself, and on the banks and green slopes on the other side of the river, grew the most prodigal trees. The whole scene told of ancient possession and a most affluent nature. At [Pg 32] the foot of the precipice under the house, laurels and filberts, which must have been planted long ago, and probably by Spenser himself, had attained the most enormous size; the laurels were as large as forest-trees; they had, some of them, stems, I suppose, half a yard in diameter, and had assumed a shape of sylvan massiveness and woodland rudeness, such as before I had no conception of in laurels. Some had been blown down by the winds and grew half prostrate; others had been sawed off, and had left huge stumps, knit, as it were, into one mass with the foot of the rocks. All was one scene of Arcadian greenness, and excess of growth.

Beneath the rock there was a sort of damp cave, where water stood as if oozing through from the river, and the plants above hung down their long arms, and made a fitting retreat for Spenser's satyrs. Around, seen from the shadow of this spot, lay the deep-green meadow, the swift, broad river, the rich masses of trees, closing in a little world of solitude; and as if to mark it for a spot in which the poet of fairy-land had sojourned, and left the impress of his spirit, in his own words:

> "Beside the same a dainty place there lay,
> Planted with myrtle-trees and laurels green,
> In which the birds sung many a lively lay
> Of God's high praise, and of their sweet loves' teene,
> As it an earthly paradise had been."

Perhaps Spenser might revel here till his castle was fitted up for his reception; perhaps it might be a retreat at times from the more open perils of the desolate Kilcolman; and a sweet change from moorland wildness to a sort of Italian richness and softness of scenery.

The way was still enchanting. Now down into the Valley of the Blackwater, among mills and rocks, and resounding waters; now aloft again, overlooking the white house of Rennie on its precipice, and opposite to it spreading out the woods and mountains of Ballynahoolly. Now arose [Pg 33] a bare district of hedgerows without trees, and little brown huts, with geese, and goats, and swine. Now, again, passing some gentleman's park, with its ocean of trees, and under a sort of tunnel rather than avenue of beeches, which are planted on banks, so that they meet close above, sometimes for half a mile, and which at night are as dark as a dungeon. Then, again, I passed between hedges of cider-apple, all grown into trees, and giving the country—for the fields right and left were inclosed with the same—a very wild look; and I came out on bare heights, and with view of far-off bleak and brown mountains. Near Doneraile, I saw the ocean of green woods belonging to Lord Doneraile's park and domain lying before me in the valley, and passed through it for a mile or more in highest admiration of the splendid growth and richness of foliage of its beeches, its superb wayside ashes, and its other trees. Surely where it is allowed to produce trees, Ireland does exhibit them in a beauty and prodigality of growth which is almost unrivaled by those of England. To this contributes, not merely the fertility of the soil, but the moisture of the atmosphere.

About two miles beyond Doneraile I found, on a wide plain, the ruins of Kilcolman. These ruins have frequently been drawn and engraved, and the views we have of them are very correct. Indeed, so vividly were the features of the scene impressed on my mind by the views, and by reading of it, that I seemed to know it quite well. Its old black mass of wall catches your eye as soon as you have passed the woody neighborhood of Doneraile, standing up on the wild moorland plain, a solitary object amid its nakedness. A tolerable highway, newly constructed, leads up near to it, along which you advance amid scattered Irish cabins, and their usual potato plots. To reach the castle, you have to turn to the left up one of those stony lanes that threaten to jolt a car to pieces, and then have to scale a gate belonging to the farm on which the ruin stands, and [Pg 34] advance on foot, through a farm-yard, and along the lake side. The remains of the castle, which consist only of part of the tower, at the southernmost corner, stand on a green mound of

considerable extent, overlooking the lake, or rather a winding sort of pond, overgrown with potamogeton. On one side, masses of limestone rock, on which the castle, too, stands, protrude from the banks, and on the other extends the green marsh, and the black peat bogs, with their piles of peat stacks. To the north, at about a mile's distance, stretch those brown moorland mountains, called by the natives the Ballyhowra Hills, but dignified by Spenser with the name of Mole. Of either of these names the peasants seemed to know nothing, but assured me the one nearest to the castle eastward was called Slieve Ruark. Southward, at a couple of miles' distance, stands another somber-looking tower, the remains of an ancient castle, which they called Castle Pook. On a hill, nearer Doneraile westward, are also the ruins of an abbey; so that, probably, in Spenser's time, this scene might be well wooded; these places inhabited by families of the English settlers; and might form some society for him; but at present, nothing can be more wild, dreary, and naked than this scene, and the whole view around. Turn which way you will, you see nothing but naked moorlands, bare and lonely, or scattered with the cabins and potato plots of the peasantry. To the northeast stands, at perhaps half a mile's distance, a mass of plantations, inclosing the house of a Mr. Barry Harold; and that is the only relieving object, except the distant mass of the woods of Doneraile Park, and the bare ranges of mountains that close in this unpicturesque plain at more or less distance.

As I stood on the top of the massy old keep, whose walls are three yards thick, and its winding stairs of slippery gray marble, I seemed to be rather in a dream of Spenser's castle, than actually at it. The sun was hastening to set, and threw a clear shining light over the whole silent plain, [Pg 35] and thousands of pewets and of rooks from Lord Doneraile's woods spread themselves over the green fields near the weedy water, and seemed to enjoy the calm dreamy light and stillness of the scene. The hour and the scene naturally brought to my mind the melodious stanza of Mickle, which has special reference to this solitary memorial of the history both of Ireland and its troubles, and the English poet of fairy-land and his fate:

"Awake, ye west winds, through the lonely dale,
And Fancy, to thy fairy bower betake;
Even now, with balmy sweetness breathes the gale
Dimpling with downy wing the stilly lake;
Through the pale willows faltering whispers wake
And evening comes with locks bedipped with dew;
On Desmond's mold'ring turrets slowly shake
The withered rye-grass, and the harebell blue,
And ever and anon sweet Mulla's plaints renew."

Looking round over this stripped and lonely landscape, over the "looming flats," over the dark moorland hills that slumber to the north and east, and then far away to more distant but equally sterile mountain ranges, a strange feeling crept over me of the force of events which could compel, nay, make it desirable for the most imaginative spirit of the age, next to Shakspeare, to quit the British capital, the wit and intelligence of Elizabeth's court, to sit down in this wilderness, and in the face of savage and exasperated foes, the poetical eremite, the exile of necessity. But, perhaps, the place then was not so shorn of all embellishment as now. The writer I have quoted seems to imagine that Spenser, by the sheer force of fancy, not only peopled this waste with fauns and nymphs, but clothed it with trees, and other charms of nature. But we must remember that since then, ages of devastation, of desertion, and of an exhausting system, have gone over this country. Then this castle stood fair and complete, and no doubt had its due embellishment and garniture of woodland trees. The green alder not only overhung the Mulla, [Pg 36] but this lake very likely, and a pleasure bark might then add its grace and its life to the view from the castle windows. Todd calls it "the *woody* Kilcolman," on what authority I know not, and supposes that Spenser calls his first-born son Sylvanus on that account, as its heir. Here he spent twelve years, and, from every thing that we can learn from his poetry, to his own great satisfaction. We can not suppose, therefore, that he found the place without some native charms, far less that he left it without those which planting and cultivation could give it. As Sir Walter Raleigh planted and embellished his estate at Youghal with laurels and other evergreens, there is little doubt that Spenser would do the same here. He would naturally feel a lively and active interest in raising that place and estate, which was to be the family seat of his children, to as high a degree of beauty and amenity as possible. Though busily engaged on his great poem, the Faërie Queene, there is evidence that he was also an active and clever man of business; so much so, that Queen Elizabeth, in preference to all those more aristocratic and more largely land-endowed gentlemen, who were settled with him on the plantations of Munster, had, the very year of his expulsion hence by the Irish rebels, named him to fill the office of sheriff of the county of Cork. That he asserted his rights, appears from a document published by Mr. Hardiman, in his Irish Minstrelsy, showing that he had a dispute with his neighbor, Lord Roche, about some lands, in which, by petitions to the Lord-chancellor of Ireland, it appeared that Edmund Spenser had made forcible claim on these plow-lands at Ballingerath, dispossessed the said Lord Roche, had made great waste of the wood, and appropriated the corn growing on the estate. And the decision was given against Spenser. Spenser was, therefore, evidently quite alive to the value of property.

If we look at what Doneraile is, a perfect paradise of glorious woods, we may imagine what Kilcolman would have been if, instead of being laid waste with fire and sword by the Irish kerns, [Pg 37] and left to become a mere expanse of Irish rack-rent farms and potato grounds, it had been carefully planted, cultivated, and embellished, as the estate of the descendants of one of the proudest names of England.

As it is, it stands one more lonely and scathed testimony to the evil fortunes of poets:

"The poets who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight, by heavenly lays!"

yet who, themselves, of all men, are still shown by a wise Providence to be "pilgrims and sojourners on the earth, having no abiding city" in it. Their souls have a heaven-aspiring tendency. They can not grasp the earth; it escapes from their hold, and they leave behind them, not castles and domains, but golden foot-prints, which, whoever follows, finds them ever and ever leading him upward to the immortal regions.

"For a rich guerdon waits on minds that dare,
If aught be in them of immortal seed,
And reason governs that audacious flight
Which heavenward they direct."—*Wordsworth.*

In no situations do we so much as in such as these recall the truth uttered by the meditative poet just quoted:

"High is our calling, friend! Creative art—
Whether the instrument of words she use.
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues,
Demands the service of a mind and heart,
Though sensitive, yet, in their weakest part,
Heroically fashioned—to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert.
And oh! when nature sinks, as oft she may,
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
And in the soul admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness—
Great is the glory, for the strife is hard."

Let us, then, at this moment, rather endeavor to look at the happiness which Spenser enjoyed here for ten bright years, than at the melancholy *finale*. Here he worked busily and blissfully at his great poem. Forms of glory, of high valor and virtue, of female beauty and goodness, floated richly through his mind. The imperial Gloriana, the heavenly Una, [Pg 38]

"Whose angel face,
As the great eye of Heaven, shinéd bright,
And made a sunshine in the shady place;"

the sweet Belphœbe, the gallant Britomart, and the brave troop of knights, Arthur the magnanimous, the Red-Cross Knight, the holy and hardly-tried, the just Artegall, and all their triumphs over Archimagos, false Duessas, and the might of dragon natures. This was a life, a labor which clothed the ground with golden flowers, made heaven look forth from between the clouds and the mountain tops, and songs of glory wake on the winds that swept past his towers. Here he accomplished and saw given to the world half his great work—a whole, and an immortal whole as it regarded his fame and great mission in the world—to breathe lofty and unselfish thoughts into the souls of men; to make truth, purity, and high principle the objects of desire.

Here, too, he married the woman of his heart, chosen on the principle of his poetry, not for her lands, but for her beauty and her goodness. Nothing is known of her, not even her name, except that it was Elizabeth, that she was eminently beautiful, and of low degree. Some conjecture her to be of Cork, and a merchant's daughter, but Spenser himself says she was a country lass. Thus, in the Faërie Queene:

"Such were these goddesses which you did see:
But that *fourth maid*, which there amid them traced
Who can aread what creature may she bee;
Whether a creature, or a goddess graced
With heavenly gifts from heaven first enraced! [Pg 39]
But whatso sure she was, she worthy was
To be the fourth with these three other placed:
Yet was she certes but a country lasse;
Yet she all other country lasses far did passe.

So far, as doth the daughter of the day
All other lesser lights in light excell:
So far doth she in beautiful array
Above all other lasses bear the bell:
Ne less in virtue that beseemes her well
Doth she exceede the rest of all her race;
For which the Graces that there wont to dwell
Have for more honor brought her to this place,
And gracéd her so much to be another Grace.

Another Grace she well deserves to be,
In whom so many graces gathered are,
Excelling much the mean of her degree;
Divine resemblance, beauty sovereign rare,
Firm chastity, that spight no blemish dare;
All which she with such courtesie doth grace
That all her peres can not with her compare,
But quite are dimméd when she is in place;
She made me often pipe, and now to pipe apace.

Sunne of the world, great glory of the sky,
That all the earth doth lighten with thy rayes,
Great Gloriana, greatest majesty,
Pardon thy shepherd, 'mongst so many lays
As he hath sung of thee in all his days,
To make one mencine of thy poor handmaid,
And underneath thy feet to place her praise,
That when thy glory shall be far displayed
In future age, of her this mention may be made."

Faërie Queene, b. xii., c. x.

These were known in Spenser's days to be an affectionate monument of immortal verse to his wife, still more nobly erected in his Epithalamion; and to identify it more, in his Amoretti he tells us that his queen, his mother, and his wife were all of the same name.

"The which three times thrice happy hath me made
With gifts of body, fortune, and of minde,
Ye *three Elizabeths* forever live,
That thus such graces unto me did give."

[Pg 40]

Here, too, he enjoyed the memorable visit of Sir Walter Raleigh, which he commemorates in Colin Clout. He had now ready for the press the first three books of his Faërie Queene; and these he read to Raleigh during his visit, probably as he has described it in pastoral style, as they sat together under the green alders on the banks of the Mulla.

"I sate, as was my trade,
Under the foot of Mole, that mountain hore,
Keeping my sheep among the coolly shade
Of the green alders by the Mulla's shore.
There a strange shepherd chanced to find me out;
Whether allured with my pipe's delight,
Whose pleasing sound yshrilled far about,
Or thither led by chance, I know not right,
Whom when I askéd from what place he came,
And how he hight, himself he did ycleep
The Shepherd of the Ocean by name,
And said he came far from the main sea deep.
He, sitting me beside in the same shade,
Provoked me to play some pleasant fit," &c.

Raleigh was enchanted with the poem. He was just returned from a voyage to Portugal, and was now bound for England. He was, it appears, himself weary of his own location, for he soon after sold it to the Earl of Cork. He pressed Spenser to accompany him, put his poem to press, and by means of its fame to win the more earnest patronage of Queen Elizabeth.

"When thus our pipes we both had wearied well,
Quoth he, and each an end of singing made,
He 'gan to cast great liking to my lore,
And great disliking to my luckless lot,
That banished had myself, like wight forlore,
Into that waste, where I was quite forgot.
The which to leave, thenceforth he counseled me,
Unmeet for man in whom was aught regardful,
And wend with him, his Cynthia to see;
Where grace was great, and bounty most rewardful.
So what with hope of good, and hate of ill,
He me persuaded forth with him to fare.
So to the sea we came."

[Pg 41]

Here it comes out that, however much more clothed with trees, and however much better this spot was in Spenser's days, it was still "a waste where he was forgot," a place into which Raleigh considered his friend as banished, and as unfit for any "man in whom was aught regardful." He left it, published his poem, tried court expectation and attendance once more, but found them still more bitter and sterile than his Irish wilderness, and came back.

When we hear Kilcolman described by Spenser's biographers as "romantic and delightful," it is

evident that they judged of it from mere fancy; and when all writers about him talk of the Mulla "flowing through his grounds," and "past his castle," they give the reader a most erroneous idea. The castle, it must be remembered, is on a wide plain; the hills are at a couple of miles or more distant; and the Mulla is two miles off. We see nothing at the castle but the wide boggy plain, the distant naked hills, and the weedy pond under the castle walls. Such is Kilcolman.

Here the poet was startled at midnight from his dreams by the sound of horse's hoofs beating in full gallop the stony tracks of the dale, and by a succeeding burst of wild yells from crowding thousands of infuriated Irish. Fire was put to the castle, and it was soon in flames. Spenser, concealed by the gloom of one side of the building, contrived to escape with his wife, and most probably his three boys and girl, as they were saved, and lived after him, but the youngest child in the cradle perished in the flames, with all his property and unpublished poems. On a second visit to England he had published three more books of his Faërie Queene; and there is a story of six more being lost by his servant, by whom they were sent to England. This could not be the fact, as he had himself but recently returned from the publication of the second three. Probably the rumor arose from some other MSS. lost in that manner. Fleeing to England, distracted at the fate of his child and his property, he died there, heart-broken and in poverty, at an inn or lodging- [Pg 42] house in King-street, Westminster, and was buried in Westminster Abbey, at the expense of the Earl of Essex, "his hearse attended," says Camben, "by poets, and mournful elegies and poems, with the pens that wrote them, thrown into his tomb."

There is much that we naturally are anxious to know connected with the final fate and family of Spenser. How his children actually escaped. What became of them and their claim on the property? When was the property of Kilcolman lost to the poet's descendants? Of all this next to nothing is known. The literati of that age do not seem to have given themselves any trouble to preserve the facts of the history of their illustrious cotemporaries. Shakspeare and Spenser were left to the cold keeping of careless tradition. The particulars, beyond what we have already given, are very few.

Spenser's widow returned to Ireland, and there brought up her children. Of these, Sylvanus, as eldest son, inherited Rennie and Kilcolman. It appears that he found some difficulty with his mother, Spenser's widow, who married again, to a Roger Seckerstone, and was obliged to petition the Lord-chancellor of Ireland, to obtain from his mother and her new husband documents belonging to his estate, which they withheld. He married, as already stated, Ellen Nagle, of Monanimy, south of Kilcolman, of a Catholic family, a circumstance which had a great effect on the fortunes of their descendants, as connecting them with the unsuccessful party in the troubles of Ireland. His eldest son died without issue, and his second son, William, succeeded to Kilcolman. The property of William, being seized on by the Commonwealth party, was ordered to be restored to him by Cromwell, but is supposed to have only been regained at the Restoration. He had three other grants of land in the counties of Galway and Roscommon, in the latter, the estate of Ballinasloe. At the Revolution he joined King William, who for his services granted him [Pg 43] the estate of his cousin Hugoline, of Rennie. This Hugoline was the son of Peregrine, the poet's youngest son, who had Rennie made over to him by his eldest brother, Sylvanus. Hugoline took part with his Catholic relatives, and, siding with King James at the Revolution, was outlawed, and his property at Rennie made over to his cousin William. Thus the descendants of Sylvanus, or the eldest son of the poet, became the only known posterity of the poet. The descendants of William, and therefore of Sylvanus Spenser, the elder male line, possessed Rennie till 1734, soon after which this line became extinct. There are still in Ireland persons claiming to be descendants, by the mother's side, from Spenser; and the Travers, of Clifton, near Cork, are lineal descendants of Spenser's sister Sarah and John Travers, a friend of the poet's, who accompanied him to Ireland, and had the town lands of Ardenbone and Knocknacaple given to him by Spenser as his sister's marriage dowry. The descendants of this sister number among many distinguished families of Ireland, those of the Earls of Cork and Ossary, Earl Shannon, Lord Doneraile, Earl of Clanwilliam, &c.

The fame of Spenser is not quite rooted out of the minds of the neighboring peasantry. I inquired of an old man and his family, who live close by the castle, whom that castle formerly belonged to, and they replied, "To one Spenser."

"Who was he?"

"They could not tell: they only knew that many officers from Fermoy, and others, came to see the place."

"Ay, I have heard of him," I added. "He was an Englishman, and the Irish burned him out of the castle, and he fled to England."

"Oh no! nothing of the kind. He lived and died there, and was buried just below the castle, which used to be a church-yard. Bones are often dug up, and on the western side of the mound there had been a nunnery."

In fact, they knew nothing accurately, but, like the people at Lissoy, by Goldsmith, would insist on [Pg 44] his death and burial on the spot.

But the desolated spot possesses an interest stronger than the possession of the poet's dust. It was the scene of his happiest hours—hours of love and of inspiration. Here the Faërie Queene grew in heavenly zeal, and here it was suddenly arrested by the howl of savage vengeance, and

the flames which wrapped the poet's heart in ruin.

"Ah! what a warning for a thoughtless man,
Could field or grove, or any spot of earth,
Show to his eye an image of the pangs
Which it hath witnessed; render back the echo
Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod."

Wordsworth.

[Pg 45]

SHAKSPEARE.

There are two reasons why I proposed to omit the homes and haunts of Shakspeare from the present volumes; the first, because I have found it impossible to include the dramatic poets in the compass of these two, and must reserve them for a third; and the second, because I have already, in my Visits to Remarkable Places (vol. i.), devoted a considerable article to almost the only place where his homes and haunts still remain, Stratford-upon-Avon. A very little reflection, however, convinced me that an entire omission of the haunts of this great national poet from these first two volumes would be received as a disappointment by a numerous class of readers. Shakspeare is not merely a dramatic poet. Great and peerless as is his dramatic fame, the very elements, not of dramatic art and fame alone, but of universal poetry, and that of the highest order, are so diffused throughout all his works, that the character of poet soars above the character of dramatist in him, like some heaven-climbing tower above a glorious church. Every line, almost [Pg 46] every word, is a living mass of poetry; these are scattered through the works of all authors as such exponents of their deepest sentiments as they can not command themselves. They are like the branches, the buds, the flowers and leaves of a great tree of poetry, making a magnificent whole, and rich and beautiful as nature itself, down to its minutest portions. To leave out Shakspeare were, indeed, to play Hamlet with the part of Hamlet himself omitted; it were to invite guests, and get the host to absent himself. In the Walhalla of British poetry, the statue of Shakspeare must be first admitted and placed in the center, before gradations and classifications are thought of. He is the universal genius, whose presence and spirit must and will pervade the whole place.

And yet, where are the homes and haunts of Shakspeare in London? Like those of a thousand other remarkable men, in the accidents and the growth of this great city they are swept away. Fires and renovation have carried every thing before them. If the fame of men depended on bricks and mortar, what reputations would have been extinguished within the last two centuries in London! In no place in the world have the violent necessities of a rapid and immense development paid so little respect to the "local habitations" of great names. The very resting-places and tombs of many are destroyed, and their bones, like those of Chatterton, have been scattered by the spades of the unlettered laborer.

We may suppose that Shakspeare, on his coming up to London, would reside near the theaters where he sought his livelihood. The first appears to have been that of Blackfriars. It has long been clean gone, and its locality is now occupied by Play-house-yard, near Apothecaries' Hall, and the dense buildings around. Play-house-yard derives its name from the old play-house. In Knight's London, it is suggested that this theater might be pulled down soon after the permanent

close of the theaters during the Commonwealth, by the Puritans; but the real old theater of [Pg 47]
Shakspeare must, had that not been the case, have perished entirely in the fire of London, which cleared all this ground, from Tower-street to the Temple. If Shakspeare ever held horses at the theater door on his first coming to town, it would be here, for here he seems to have been first engaged. The idea of his holding horses at a theater door, bold and active fellow as he had shown himself in his deer-stealing exploits, and with friends and acquaintances in town, has been scouted, especially as he was then a full-grown man of twenty-three. The thing, however, is by no means improbable. Shakspeare was most likely as independent as he was clever and active. On arriving in town, and seeing an old acquaintance, Thomas Green, at this theater, he might, like other remarkable men who have made their way to eminence in London, be ready to turn his hand to any thing till something better turned up. Green, who was a player, might be quite willing to introduce Shakspeare into that character and the theater; but it had yet to be proved that Shakspeare could make an actor of himself, and, till opportunity offered, what so likely to seize the attention of a hanger about the theater as the want of a careful horse-holder for those who came there in such style, which appears was then common enough. We have the statement from Sir William Davenant, and therefore from a cotemporary, admirer, and assumed relative. We are told that the speculation was not a bad one. Shakspeare, by his superior age and carefulness, soon engrossed all this business, and had to employ those boys, who had before been acting on their own account, as his subordinates; whence they acquired and retained, long after he had mounted into an actor himself, within the theater, the name of Shakspeare's boys. That he became "an actor at one of the play-houses, and did act exceedingly well," Aubrey tells us. He is
supposed to have acted Old Knowell in Ben Jonson's "Every Man in his Humor;" and Oldys tells us [Pg 48]
that a relative of Shakspeare, then in advanced age, but who in his youth had been in the habit of visiting London for the purpose of seeing him act in some of his own plays, told Mr. Jones, of Tarbeck, that "he had a faint recollection of having once seen him act a part in one of his own comedies, wherein, being to personate a decrepit old man, he wore a long beard, and appeared so weak and drooping, and unable to walk, that he was forced to be supported, and carried by another person to a table, at which he was seated among some company who were eating, and one of them sang a song." This is supposed to have been in the character of Adam, in "As You Like It," and hence it has been inferred, in connection with his acting the Ghost in Hamlet, and Old Knowell, that he took chiefly old or elderly characters.

Every glimpse of this extraordinary man, who, however much he might have been acknowledged and estimated in his own day, certainly lived long before his time, is deeply interesting. That he was estimated highly we know from Jonson himself:

> "Sweet swan of Avon, what a sight it were
> To see thee in our waters yet appear,
> And make those flights upon the banks of Thames
> That did so take Eliza and our James."

When the two monarchs under whom Shakspeare lived admired and patronized him, we may be sure that Shakspeare's great merits were perceived, and that vividly, though the age had not that intellectual expansion which could enable it to rise above its prejudices against a player, and comprehend that Shakspeare's dramas were not merely the most wonderful dramas, but the most wonderful expositions of human life and nature that had ever appeared. People were too busy enjoying the splendid scenes presented to them by this great genius, to note down for the gratification of posterity the dayly doings, connections, and whereabouts of the man with whom
they were so familiar. He grew rich, however, by their flocking to his theater, and disappeared [Pg 49]
from among them.

In this theater of Blackfriars he rose to great popularity both as an actor and dramatic author, and became a proprietor. It was under the management of Richard Burbage, who was also a shareholder in the Globe Theater at Bankside. To the theater at Bankside Shakspeare also transferred himself, and there he became, in 1603, the lessee. There he seems to have continued about ten years, or till 1613; having, however, so early as 1597, purchased one of the best houses in his native town of Stratford, repaired and improved it, and that so much that he named it New Place. To this, as his proper home, he yearly retired when the theatrical season closed; and having made a comfortable fortune, when the theater was burned down in 1613, retired from public life altogether.

Bankside is a spot of interest, because Shakspeare lived there many years during the time he was in London. It is that portion of Southwark lying on the river side between the bridges of Blackfriars and Southwark. This ground was then wholly devoted to public amusements, such as they were. It was a place of public gardens, play-houses, and worse places. Paris Garden was one of the most famous resorts of the metropolis. There were the bear-gardens, where Elizabeth, her nobles, and ladies used to go and solace themselves with that elegant sport, bear-baiting. There, also, was the Globe Theater, of which Shakspeare became licensed proprietor, and near which he lived. The theater was an octagon wooden building, which has been made familiar by many engravings of it. In Henry the Fifth, Shakspeare alludes to its shape and material:

> "Can this cockpit hold
> The vasty fields of France? Or may we cram
> Within this *wooden* O the very casques
> That did affright the air at Agincourt?"

It was not much to be wondered at that this wooden globe should get consumed with fire, which [Pg 50]

it did, as I have already stated, in 1613. Shakspeare's play of Henry VIII. was acting, a crowded and brilliant company was present, and among the rest Ben Jonson, when in the very first act, where, according to the stage directions, "drums and trumpets, chambers discharged," cannons were fired, the ignited wadding flew into the thatch of the building, and the whole place was soon in flames. Sir Henry Wotton thus describes the scene in a letter to his nephew: "Now, to let matters of state sleep, I will entertain you at present with what happened this week at the Bankside. The king's players had a new play, called All is True, representing some principal pieces from the reign of Henry VIII., which was set forth with many extraordinary circumstances of pomp and majesty, even to the matting of the stage; the knights of the order, with their Georges and garters; the guards, with their embroidered coats, and the like; sufficient, in truth, within a while, to make greatness very familiar, if not ridiculous. Now, King Henry making a mask at Cardinal Wolsey's house, and certain cannons being shot off at his entry, some of the paper or other stuff wherewith one of them was stopped, did light on the thatch, where, being thought at first but an idle smoke, and their eyes more attentive to the show, it kindled inwardly and ran round like a train, consuming within an hour the whole house to the very ground. This was the fatal period of that virtuous fabric, wherein yet nothing did perish but wood and straw and a few forsaken cloaks; only one man had his breeches set on fire, that perhaps had broiled him, if he had not, by the benefit of a provident wit, put it out with bottle ale."

Fires seem to have menaced Shakspeare on all sides, and he had narrow escapes. As there is no mention of his name in the accounts of the Globe Theater in 1613, nor any in his will, it is pretty clear that he had retired from the proprietorship of the Globe before, and escaped that loss; but [Pg 51] in the very year after it was burned down, there was a dreadful fire in Stratford, which consumed a good part of the town, and put his own house into extreme danger.

These were the scenes where Shakspeare acted, for which he wrote his dramas, and where, like a careful and thriving man as he was, he made a fortune before he was forty, calculated to be equal to £1000 a year at present. He had a brother, also, on the stage at the same time with himself, who died in 1607, and was buried in St. Savior's Church, Southwark, where his name is entered in the parish register as "Edmund Shakspeare, a player."

The place where he was accustomed particularly to resort for social recreation was the Mermaid Tavern, Friday street, Cheapside. This was the wits' house for a long period. There a club for *beaux esprits* was established by Sir Walter Raleigh, and here came, in their several days and times, Spenser, Shakspeare, Philip Sidney, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Massinger, Marlowe, Selden, Cotton, Carew, Martin, Donne, Wotton, and all the brave spirits of those ages. Here Jonson and Shakspeare used to shine out by the brilliancy of their powers, and in their "wit combats," in which Fuller describes Jonson as a *Spanish great galleon*, and Shakspeare as the *English man-of-war*. "Master Jonson, like the former, was built far higher in learning; solid, but slow in his performances. Shakspeare, with the English man-of-war, lesser in bulk, but lighter in sailing, could turn with all tides, tack about, and take advantage of all winds, by the quickness of his wit and his invention." Enough has been said of this celebrated club by a variety of writers. There can be no doubt that there wit and merriment abounded to that degree, that, as Beaumont has said in his epistle to Jonson, one of their meetings was enough to make up for all the stupidity of the city for three days past, and supply it for long to come; to make the worst companions right witty, and "downright fools more wise." There is as little doubt, however, that, with Jonson in the [Pg 52] chair, drinking would be as pre-eminent as the wit. The verses which he had inscribed over the door of the Apollo room, at the Devil Tavern, another of their resorts, are, spite of all vindications by ingenious pens, too indicative of that.

"Welcome all who lead or follow
To the oracle of Apollo:
Here he speaks out of his pottle,
Or the tin-pot, his tower bottle:
All his answers are divine;
Truth itself doth flow like wine.
Hang up all the poor hop-drinkers,
Cries old Sam, the king of skinkers.
He the half of life abuses
That sits watering with the Muses,
Those dull gods no good can mean us:
Wine—it is the cream of Venus,
And the poet's horse accounted:
Ply it, and you all are mounted.
'Tis the true Phœbian liquor,
Cheers the brain, makes it the quicker;
Pays all debts, cures all diseases,
And at once the senses pleases.
Welcome all who lead or follow
To the oracle of Apollo."

There is not any reason to believe that Shakspeare, lover of wit and jollity as he was, was a practical upholder of this pernicious doctrine. He may often make his characters speak in this manner, but personally he retired as soon as he could from this bacchanal life to his own quiet hearth at Stratford; and if we are to believe his sonnets addressed to his wife, and they possess the tone of a deep and real sentiment, he seriously rued the orgies in which he had participated.

"O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds: [Pg 53]
Hence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand;
Pity me, then, and wish I were renewed.
While, like a willing patient, I will drink
Potions of eysell,[1] 'gainst my strong infection.
No bitterness that I will bitter think,
No double penance to correct correction.
Pity me, then, dear friend, and I assure ye
Even that your pity is enough to cure me."

We can not read these and many other portions of his sonnets, we can not see Shakspeare retiring every year, and as soon as able, altogether from the bacchanalian and dissipated habits of the literary men of the day, to the peaceful place of his birth, and the purity of his wedded home, without respecting his moral character as much as we admire his genius. The praises and the practice of drunkenness by literary men, and poets especially, have entailed infinite mischief on themselves and on their followers. What woes and degradations are connected with the history of brilliant men about town, which have tended to stamp the general literary character with the brand of improvidence and disrespect—jails, deaths, picking out of gutters, sponging-houses, and domestic misery—how thickly do all these rise on our view as we look back through the history of men of genius, the direct result of the absurd rant about drinking and debauch! With what a beautiful purity do the names of the greatest geniuses of all rise above these details, like the calm spires of churches through the fogs and smokes of London! How cheering is it to see the number of these grow with the growth of years! Shakspeare, Spenser, Sidney, Milton, Cowper, Scott, Wordsworth, Southey, Shelley, have all been sober and domestic men; and the sanction which they have given by their practice to the proprieties of life, will confer on all future ages blessings as ample as the public truths of their teaching. The Mermaid Tavern, like the [Pg 54] other haunts of Shakspeare, has disappeared. It was swept away by the fire. If any traces of his haunts remain, they must be in the houses of the great, where he was accustomed to visit, as those of the Lords Southampton, Leicester, Pembroke, Montgomery, and others. These are, however, now all either gone, or so cut up and metamorphosed that it were vain to look for them as abodes hallowed by the footsteps of Shakspeare. If it be true that he was commanded to read his play of Falstaff in love—the Merry Wives of Windsor—to Queen Elizabeth, it would probably be at Whitehall or St. James's, for Somerset House was comparatively little occupied by her.

The very places in London more particularly illustrated by his genius have too much followed the fate of those in which he lived. It is true, the Tower, Westminster Palace, and some other of those public buildings and old localities where the scenes of his national dramas are laid, still remain, spite of time and change; and the sites of others, though now covered with wildernesses of fresh houses, may be identified. But The Boar's Head in East Cheap is annihilated; it, too, fell in the great fire, and the modern improvements thereabout, the erection of new London Bridge, and the cutting of King William-street, have swept away nearly all remaining marks of the neighborhood. It is supposed that the present statue of William IV. stands not very far from the spot where Hal reveled and Sir John swaggered and drank sack.

Over London, and many a spot in and about it, as well as over a thousand later towns, forests, and mountains, of this and other countries, wherever civilized man has played his part, will the genius of Shakspeare cast an undying glory; but to see the actual traces of his existence we must resort to the place of his nativity and death. There still stand the house and the room in which he was born; there stands the house in which he wooed his Ann Hathaway, and the old garden in [Pg 55] which he walked with her. There stands his tomb, to which the great, and the wise, and the gifted from all regions of the world have made pilgrimage, followed by millions of those who would be thought so, the frivolous and the empty; but all paying homage, by the force of reason, or the force of fashion, vanity and imitation, to the universal interpreter of humanity. It is well that the slow change of a country town has permitted the spirit of veneration to alight there, and cast its protecting wings over the earthly traces of that existence which diffused itself as a second life through all the realms of intellect.

There is nothing missing of Shakspeare's there but the house which he built, and the mulberry-tree which he planted. The tree was hewn down, the house was pulled down and dispersed piecemeal, by the infamous parson Gastrell, who thus "damned himself to eternal fame" more thoroughly than the fool who fired the Temple of Diana. There, only a few miles distant, is the stately hall of Charlecote, whither the youthful poacher of Parnassus was carried before the unlucky knight. There, too, and, oh shame! shame to England, shame to the lovers of Shakspeare, shame to those who annually turn Stratford and their club into a regular "Eatanswill," on pretense of honoring Shakspeare; there, too, live the descendants of the nearest relative of Shakspeare—of his sister Joan—in unnoticed and unmitigated poverty! Seven years ago, on my visit to this place, I pointed out this fact; and now, that the disgraceful fact still remains, I will once more record the words I then wrote.

"As I went to Shottry, I met with a little incident, which interested me greatly by its unexpectedness. As I was about to pass over a stile, at the end of Stratford, into the fields leading to that village, I saw the master of the national school mustering his scholars to their tasks. I

stopped, being pleased with the look of the old man, and said, 'You seem to have a considerable number of lads here; shall you raise another Shakspeare from among them, think you?' 'Why,' replied the master, 'I have a Shakspeare now in the school.' I knew that Shakspeare had no descendants beyond the second generation, and I was not aware that there was any of his family remaining. But it seems that the posterity of his sister, Joan Hart, who is mentioned in his will, yet exist; part under her marriage name of Hart, at Tewkesbury, and a family in Stratford, of the name of Smith. [Pg 56]

"'I have a Shakspeare here,' said the master, with evident pride and pleasure. 'Here, boys, here!' He quickly mustered his laddish troop in a row, and said to me, 'There now, sir, can you tell which is a Shakspeare?' I glanced my eye along the line, and instantly fixing it on one boy, said, 'That is the Shakspeare.' 'You are right,' said the master, 'that is the Shakspeare; the Shakspeare cast of countenance is there. That is William Shakspeare Smith, a lineal descendant of the poet's sister.'

"The lad was a fine lad of, perhaps, ten years of age; and, certainly, the resemblance to the bust of Shakspeare in the church at Stratford is wonderful, considering he is not descended from Shakspeare himself, but from his sister; and that the seventh in descent. What is odd enough is, whether it be mere accident or not, that the color of the lad's eyes, a light hazel, is the very same as that given to those of the Shakspeare bust, which, it is well known, was originally colored, and of which exact copies remain.

"I gave the boy sixpence, telling him I hoped he would make as great a man as his ancestor—the best term I could lay hold of for the relationship, though not the true one. The boy's eyes sparkled at the sight of the money, and the healthful, joyous color rushed into his cheeks; his fingers continued making acquaintance with so large a piece of money in his pocket, and the sensation created by so great an event in the school was evident. It sounded oddly enough, as I was passing along the street in the evening, to hear some of the same schoolboys say one to another, 'That is the gentleman who gave Bill Shakspeare sixpence.' [Pg 57]

"Which of all the host of admirers of Shakspeare, who has plenty of money, and does not know what to do with it, will think of giving that lad, one of the nearest representatives of the great poet, an education, and a fair chance to raise himself in the world? The boy's father is a poor man; if I be not fanciful, partaking somewhat of the Shakspeare physiognomy,[2] but also keeps a small shop, and ekes out his profits by making his house a 'Tom-and-Jerry.' He has other children, and complained of misfortune. He said that some years ago Sir Richard Phillips had been there, and promised to interest the public about him, but that he never heard any more of it. Of the man's merits or demerits I know nothing: I only know that in the place of Shakspeare's birth, and where the town is full of the 'signs' of his glory; and where Garrick made that pompous jubilee, hailing Shakspeare as a demi-god, and calling him 'the god of our idolatry;' and where thousands, and even millions, flock to do homage to the shrine of this demi-god, and pour out deluges of verse, of the most extravagant and sentimental nature, in the public albums; there, as is usual in such cases, the nearest of blood to the object of such vast enthusiasm are poor and despised: the flood of public admiration, at its most towering height, in its most vehement current, never for a moment winds its course in the slightest degree to visit them with its refreshment; nor, of the thousands of pounds spent in the practice of this devotion, does one bodle drop into their pockets.

"Garrick, as I have observed, once

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> 'Called the world to worship on the banks
> Of Avon, famed in song. Ah, pleasant proof
> That piety has still in human hearts
> Some place—a spark or two not yet extinct.
> The mulberry-tree was hung with blooming wreaths,
> The mulberry-tree stood center of the dance,
> The mulberry-tree was hymn'd with dulcet airs,
> And from his touchwood trunk the mulberry-tree
> Supplied such relics as devotion holds
> Still sacred, and preserves with pious care.
> So 'twas an hallowed time. Decorum reign'd,
> And mirth without offense. No few return'd
> Doubtless much edified, and all refresh'd.'
>
> *Cowper's Task*, b. vi.

"But it does not appear that Garrick and his fellow-worshipers troubled themselves at all about the descendants of the poet's sister; the object, in fact, seemed at the moment to be rather to worship Garrick than Shakspeare; how, then, could any ray of sympathy diverge from two 'demi-gods' to the humble relatives of one of them? And why should it? I hear honest utilitarians asking, why? What should lead the ragged descendants of poets and philosophers to forsake self-dependence, and look to the admirers of their ancestors for benefit? What a shocking thing, if they should, especially in a nation which ennobles whole lines forever, and grants immense estates in perpetuity for the exploit of some man who has won a battle that had better never have been fought! What! shall such men, and shall troops of lawyers, who have truckled to the government of the day, and become the tools of despotism in a country dreaming that it is free—shall men who have merely piled up heaps of coin, and purchased large tracts of earth, by plodding in the city dens of gain, or dodging on the Stock Exchange—shall such men be

ennobled, and their line forever, and shall men who have left a legacy of immortal mind to their country leave also to their families an exclusive poverty and neglect? Will our very philosophical utilitarian tell us why this should be?

"It might, also, be whispered, that it would not be much more irrational to extend some of that [Pg 59] enthusiasm and money, which are now wasted on empty rooms and spurious musty relics, to at least trying to benefit and raise in the scale of society beings who have the national honor to be relics and mementos of the person worshiped, as well as to old chairs, and whitewashed butchers' shops. Does it never occur to the votaries of Shakspeare, that these are *the only sentient, conscious, and rational things connected with his memory* which can feel a living sense of the honor conferred on him, and possess a grateful knowledge that the mighty poet of their house has not sung for them in vain, and that they only, in a world overshadowed with his glory, are not unsoothed by its visitings?"[3]

Seven years have gone over since this was written, and what has been the effect? The Shakspeare Club have gone down to Stratford, and feasted and guzzled *in honor of Shakspeare*, and the *representatives* of Shakspeare in the place have been left in their poverty. There seems to be some odd association of ideas in the minds of Englishmen on the subject of doing honor to genius. To reward warriors, and lawyers, and politicians, places, titles, and estates are given. To reward poets and philosophers, the property which they honestly, and with *the toil of their whole lives*, create, is taken from them, and that which should form an estate for their descendants to all posterity, and become a monument of fame to the nation, is conferred on booksellers. The copyright of authors, or, in other words, the right to the property which they made, was taken away in the reign of Queen Anne, "*for the benefit of literature*;" so says the act. Let the same principle, in God's name, be carried out into all other professions, and we shall soon come to an understanding on the subject. Take a lord's or a squire's land from him and his family forever, after a given number of years, *for the benefit of aristocracy*; take the farmer's plow and team, his [Pg 60] harrows and his corn, *for the benefit of agriculture*; take the mill-owner's mills, with all their spinning-jennies, and their cotton, and their wool, and their silk, and their own new inventions, for the benefit of manufacturing; take the merchant's ships and their cargoes, the shopkeeper's shop and his stores, the lawyer's parchment and his fees, the physician's and surgeon's physic and fees, for the benefit of commerce, trade, law, and physic: and let the clergy suffer no injury of neglect in this respect; let their churches, and their glebes, and tithes, be taken for the benefit of religion; let them all go shares with the authors in this beautiful system of justice and encouragement, and then the whole posse will soon put their heads together, and give back to the author his rights, while they take care of their own.

But till this be done—so long as the children and descendants, and nearest successors of the author are robbed by the state, while the poet and philosopher crown their country with glory, and fill it with happiness, and their country in return brands their children with disgrace, and fills them with emptiness—while they go in rags, and the bookseller in broad-cloth—in leanness, and the bookseller, endowed by the state with the riches of their ancestors, in jollity and fat—so long let those who are anxious to do honor to the glorious names of our literature, honor them with some show of common sense and common feeling. Honor Shakspeare, indeed! Has he not honored himself sufficiently? What says John Milton, another glorious son of the Muse?

> "What needs my Shakspeare for his honor'd bones,
> The labor of an age in piled stones?
> Or that his hallowed reliques should be hid
> Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
> Dear son of memory, great heir of fame!
> What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
> Thou in our wonder and astonishment
> Hath built thyself a long-lived monument."

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But if this honor be not needed, what needs there for our Shakspeare, the still weaker witness of his name, of guzzling and gormandizing? Is there any the remotest connection between the achievements of pure intellect and seven-gallon barrel stomachs of anniversary topers? Between the still labors of a divine imagination, and the uproarious riot of a public feed when half-seas over? Let mock turtle do honor to mock heroes; but what has Shakspeare, and the honor of Shakspeare, to do with the "hip! hips!" and the swilling of mere herds of literary swine? To become part and parcel of such a herd, were Dickens and Talfourd invited down to Stratford this very year. They wisely eschewed the honor.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that the spirit of Shakspeare could hear the hiccoughings of the crew assembled in his name, to honor him forsooth! If he were permitted to descend from the serene glory of his seventh heaven, and appeared at the door of their dining-room with the meager descendants of the Shakspeare family crowding sadly behind him, what are the indignant words that he would address to the flushed and bloated throng of his *soi-disant* worshipers? They have been already addressed to like ears by the great Master of love, and of the philosophy of true honor. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. * * * *Inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these, ye did it not to me.*"[4] No, the sycophantic humbugs never did it to Shakspeare. What cares he, in his seventh heaven of glory and of poetry, for their guzzlings? What have they to do with him or his honor? Is it not a precious imposture, to make a feast to a man's honor, and not to invite to it his nearest relatives, especially when they live at the next door? In the name of the national reputation, let this

wretched and egotistic farce be put down by the good sense of the British public. If these people will not honor Shakspeare by honoring his family, let them at least abstain from insulting their poverty and their neglect by this public parade, and this devouring of joints. [Pg 62]

Hear what Robert Southey says: "The last descendants of Milton died in poverty. The descendants of Shakspeare[5] are living in poverty, and in the lowest condition of life. Is this just to these individuals? Is it grateful to those who are the pride and boast of their country? Is it honorable or becoming to us as a nation, holding—the better part of us assuredly, and the majority affecting to hold—the names of Shakspeare and Milton in veneration? To have placed the descendants of Shakspeare and Milton in respectability and comfort in that sphere of life where, with a full provision for our natural wants and social enjoyments, free scope is given to the growth of our intellectual and immortal part, simple justice was all that was required—only that they should have possessed the perpetual copyright of their ancestors' works—only that they should not have been deprived of their proper inheritance."[6]

The time is evidently not yet come for setting this great matter right; for doing this great act of justice toward the teachers of the world and glorifiers of our national name; for executing this due redress. We have yet much to learn from those divine minds, whom, in Southey's words, we profess to venerate. But still the public mind is not destitute of its glimmerings of the truth, and its responsibilities. Since I wrote the pages quoted, numerous individuals have written to inquire if nothing can be done to remove the opprobrium of our treatment to the Shakspeare family. Many visitors have desired to see the boy thus pointed out, and have made him presents, but he still remains unprovided for. A clergyman, about two years ago, wrote to me from the west of England, expressing the interest he felt in this youth, whom he had seen at Stratford, and his [Pg 63] anxious desire to have a subscription raised to educate him, and put him into some honorable way of life. He begged me to make a move, in which he would zealously co-operate, to interest a sufficient number of literary and influential individuals to agitate the question, and commence the subscription. I made the attempt, but in vain. Some parties gave professions which ended in nothing, others which began in nothing; some doubted the chance of success, and some successfully chanced to doubt. One of the first persons whom I was naturally induced to write to for advice and co-operation was Mr. Charles Knight. Mr. Charles Knight had recently published a voluminous edition of Shakspeare's works, with elaborate criticisms and life; his apparent enthusiasm about Shakspeare suggested him instantly as a most likely person to unite in a plan for vindicating the honor of the nation toward the living representatives of the poet. I begged him to say whether he would do so, and whether he would be good enough to point out any means or parties by which this might be prosecuted. This enthusiast of Shakspearian honors did not even observe the ordinary courtesy of a reply. On the contrary, the Countess of Lovelace, the worthy representative of another great bard, expressed the readiest and most zealous desire to move all those within the reach of her influence in the matter. But, in a word, it did not succeed. The honor of Shakspeare lay too much on the national tongue instead of on the heart, yet to procure justice to the living members of his family.

Let us still trust that that time will come. I will not believe that this great and intellectual nation, which has given an estate and titles to the family of Marlborough, and the same to the family of Wellington, will refuse all such marks of honor to the Shakspeare family. Shall the heroes of the sword alone be rewarded? Shall the heroes of the pen, those far nobler and diviner heroes, be treated with a penniless contempt? In this nation the worship of military honors is fast subsiding, [Pg 64] the perception of the greatness and beneficence of intellect is fast growing. We are coming to see that it is out of our immortal minds, and not out of our swords and cannons, that our highest, purest, and most imperishable glory has grown and will grow. The people every day are more and more coming to this knowledge, and making it felt by government and the world. Let the people, then, wait no longer of Shakspeare clubs; let them leave them to their bottles and their beef; let them wait of no dilettanti authors, commentators, or scribbling publishers; let them wait of no governments, but let the people stand forward, and pay a national honor to Shakspeare, and in Shakspeare to justice and to intellect. The money, I have said, which is spent in visiting the trumpery collected as his at Stratford would have purchased a large estate for the descendants of the Shakspeare family. That has not been done, and never will be done; but a penny a piece from every person in this kingdom, who has derived days and months of delight from the pages of Shakspeare, would purchase an estate equal to that of Strathfieldsaye, or of Blenheim. What a glorious tribute would this be from the people of England to their great dramatic poet—the greatest dramatic poet in the world! How far would it rise above the tributes to violence and bloodshed! The tribute of a nation's love to pure and godlike intellect! This estate should not be appropriated on the feudal principle of primogeniture; should not be the estate of one, but of the family; should be vested in trustees chosen by the people, to educate, and honorably settle in the world *every* son and daughter of the Shakspearian family; and to support and comfort the old age of the unfortunate and decrepit of it. That it should not encourage idleness and a mischievous dependence, all such persons, when educated and endowed with a sufficient sum to enable them to make their way in the world, should be left so to make their way. The nation would then have [Pg 65] discharged its parental duties toward them, and they could expect no more. They should be educated to expect no more, and more should not be extended to them, except in case of utter misfortune or destitution, and then only on a scale that should be in itself no temptation.

Such an estate, founded by the people, would be the noblest monument ever yet erected to any man, or on any occasion. Shakspeare has a decent monument at Stratford, and an indifferent one in Westminster Abbey; this would be one worthy of him and of the nation which produced him. It would take away from us a melancholy opprobrium, and confer on him and the British people an

equal glory.

[Pg 66]

ABRAHAM COWLEY.

The chief places connected with the name of Cowley are Barn-Elms and Chertsey, both in Surrey. Cowley is one of those poets who had a great reputation in his own time, but who at the present day are only read by those who are anxious to know the real history of the poetry of their country. He is so overloaded with the most outrageous conceits, and his whole system of versification is at once so affected, artificial, and yet rugged and often mean, that he has, in the midst of so much more genuine inspiration, fallen into almost utter neglect. Johnson, often unjust to our poets, can hardly be said to have been so to Cowley, when he says of him and the other metaphysical poets, that "they were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavor; but unluckily resolving to show it in rhyme, instead of writing poetry, they wrote only verses, and very often such verses as stood the trial of the finger better than of the ear; for the modulation was so imperfect, that they were only found to be verses by counting the syllables."... From this account of their compositions it will be readily inferred that they were not successful in [Pg 67] representing or moving the affections. "For these reasons," Johnson adds, "that though in his own time considered of unrivaled excellence, and as having taken a flight beyond all that went before him, Cowley's reputation could not last. His character of writing was, indeed, not his own: he unhappily adopted that which was predominant. He saw a certain way to present praise; and, not sufficiently inquiring by what means the ancients have continued to delight through all the changes of human manners, he contented himself with a deciduous laurel, of which the verdure in its spring was bright and gay, but which time has been continually stealing from his brows."

In Cowley, in fact, you will find many beautiful sentiments, and much learning; but he seems always playing with his matter, not dealing earnestly with it; constructing toys and gewgaws, not everlasting structures. You have artifice instead of feeling, and conceits and often downright fustian instead of heart, soul, and human passion. Who would now willingly wade through pages of such doggerel as this?

"Since 'tis my doom, Love's undershrieve,
Why this reprieve?
Why doth she my advowson fly,
Incumbency?
To sell thyself dost thou intend
By candle's end;
And hold the contract thus in doubt,
Life's taper out?
Think but how soon the market fails," &c.

Who can tolerate, after being raised to some expectation by a beginning like the following, the end which comes?

"Begin the song, and strike the living lyre:
Lo! how the years to come a numerous and well-fitted quire,
All hand in hand do decently advance,
And to my song with smooth and equal measure dance; [Pg 68]
While the dance lasts, how long soe'er it be,
My music's voice shall bear it company,
Till all gentle notes be drowned

In the last trumpet's dreadful sound.

......*...*

But stop, my muse—
Hold thy Pindaric Pegasus closely in,
Which does to rage begin—
'Tis an unruly and a hard-mouthed horse
'Twill no unskillful touch endure,
But flings writer and reader too that sits not sure."

As a specimen of his fiction, Johnson has quoted his description of the Archangel Gabriel:

"He took for skin a cloud most soft and bright,
That e'er the mid-day sun pierced through with light;
Upon his cheeks a lively blush he spread,
Washed from the morning beauties' deepest red;
An harmless, fluttering meteor shone for hair,
And fell adown his shoulders with loose care;
He cuts out a silk mantle from the skies,
Where the most sprightly azure pleased the eyes;
This he with starry vapors sprinkles all,
Took in their prime before they grow ripe and fall;
Of a new rainbow, ere it fret or fade,
The choicest piece cut out, a scarf is made."

This comes but indifferently after a passage of Byron or Shelley. But, in fact, Cowley seems to have been a man who could not be permanently and decidedly any thing. He could not rise out of affectations, and dubious, half-way sort of positions, either in poetry or in life. He would fain pass for an ardent lover, and general admirer of the fair sex, and published a poem called "The Mistress," on the ground stated in the preface to one of its editions, "that poets are scarcely thought freemen of their company, without paying some duties, or obliging themselves to be true to love." This is genuine Cowley: he did not write a poem on a love subject because he was full of the subject, but because it seemed to be expected of a poet. It was not passion and admiration that fired him, but it was necessary to appearances that he should do it. He was unluckily always [Pg 69] spying about on the outside of his subject, and never plunging boldly into it. He was like a man who, instead of enjoying his house, should always be standing in the front and asking passengers what they thought of it, and if it did not look very fine; or, if not, where he could lay on some plaster, or put up a veranda. If his heart and soul had been engaged, there would have been less opportunity for his eternal self-consciousness; he would have done his work for the love of it, and because he could not help it, and not because he found it becoming to do some sort of work. Of love, therefore, says his biographer, he never knew any thing but once, and then dare not tell his passion.

He was a strong Loyalist; went over to France after the queen of Charles I. retired thither, and became secretary to Lord Jermyn, afterward Earl of St. Alban's, and was employed in such compositions as the royal cause required, and particularly in copying and deciphering the letters which passed between the king and queen. He afterward came back, and occupied the somewhat equivocal character of spy on the republican government, and detailer of its proceedings to the royal party abroad. "Under pretense of privacy and retirement, he was to take occasion of giving notice of the posture of things in this nation." This soon led to his arrest and incarceration; and he was not set at large without a guarantee of a thousand pounds. As it was supposed, he now published his poems, with the object of writing something in his preface which should give government an idea of the abatement of his loyalty. This gave great offense to the royal party, and was in subsequent editions withdrawn. Continuing to live in England as if contented with the existing government, on the death of Cromwell he wrote verses, as is said, in praise of him, and which verses he suppressed; and then went over again to France, as soon as the Commonwealth gave signs of dissolution; and came back in the crowd of royalists, eager for the spoil of the [Pg 70] nation. Like many others, however, who had been more decided and consistent than himself, he did not get what he expected, the Mastership of the Savoy.

This, and the ill success of his play, "Cutter of Coleman-street," which also was accused of being a satire on the king, filled Cowley with a desperate desire of retreating into the country. Whenever he was in trouble at court, this passion for solitude came rapidly upon him. Under the Commonwealth, when imprisoned as a spy, he introduced into the preface to his poems, that "his desire had been for some days past, and did still very vehemently continue, to retire himself to some of the American plantations, and to forsake this world forever." His courtly ambition being now again disappointed, he styled himself the *melancholy* Cowley, and resolved to ruralize in earnest. He had formerly studied physic, and obtained a diploma, but never practiced; having now, however, convinced himself that he was a lover of the country, he determined to practice that, and so betook himself to Barn-Elms. "He was now," says Sprat, "weary of the vexations and formalities of an active condition. He had been perplexed with a long compliance to foreign manners. He was satiated with the arts of a court, which sort of life, though his virtue made it innocent to him, yet nothing could make it quiet. These were the reasons that moved him to follow the violent inclinations of his own mind, which, in the greatest hurry of his own business, had still called upon him, and represented to him the delights of solitary studies, of temperate

pleasures, and a moderate income below the malice and flatteries of fortune."

It was not from a mind like Cowley's that we should expect a deep contentment as the result of this choice, and it is said not to have been the case. At first his poverty debarred him the necessary domestic comfort, but through the influence of his old patrons, the Earl of St. Alban's, [Pg 71] and the Duke of Buckingham, he secured a lease of some of the queen's lands, which afforded him an ample income.

Barn-Elms lies about half a mile from Barnes, near the road leading from Hammersmith suspension bridge to Wimbledon. It is an old estate, and in Cowley's time must have been tolerably solitary. Since then the road just mentioned has been made across the estate, and an inn built close to its entrance gate. It still, however, presents the aspect of antiquity. The land is rich and flat, and the present park is thickly scattered with the trees from which it derives its name. Some of these are reduced to mere massy fragments of trunks, which give a venerable aspect to the place. The house here is now occupied by Sir Lancelot Shadwell, the vice-chancellor of England. The spot is remarkable for many other associations than those with Cowley.

The old house here was called Queen Elizabeth's Dairy, and, from the richness of the meadow land, seems admirably calculated for a dairy on a grand scale. The property belonged to the canons of St. Paul's, having been granted to them by King Athelstan; but it was leased to Queen Elizabeth, and she granted her interest in it to Sir Francis Walsingham and his heirs. Here, in 1589, that subtle courtier entertained the queen and her whole court, where I suppose they would drink milk and be very rural. The Earl of Essex married Sir Francis's daughter, the widow of Sir Philip Sidney, and resided here frequently. No other man than Jacob Tonson afterward lived in this house, to which he built a gallery, wherein he placed the portraits of the members of the Kit-kat Club, which had been painted for him by Kneller. The members of the club were also entertained here frequently by the munificent bookseller, their secretary. Garth wrote the verses for the toasting-glasses of the club, which, as they are preserved in his works, have immortalized [Pg 72] some of the principal beauties of the commencement of the last century: Lady Carlisle, Lady Essex, Lady Hyde, and Lady Wharton. Tonson's gallery was partly pulled down a good many years ago, and partly united to a barn, so as to form a riding-school. The pictures were removed to Bayfordberry, the seat of William Baker, Esq., near Hertford.

In George the Second's time, Heydegger, his master of the revels, was the tenant, and the following whim of his was played off on his royal master. The king gave him notice that he would sup with him one evening, and that he would come from Richmond by water. It was Heydegger's profession to invent novel amusements, and he was resolved to surprise his majesty with a specimen of his art. The king's attendants, who were in the secret, contrived that he should not arrive at Barn-Elms before night, and it was with difficulty that he found his way up the avenue to the house. When he came to the door all was dark, and he began to be angry that Heydegger should be so ill prepared for his reception. Heydegger suffered the king to vent his anger, and affected to make some awkward apologies, when, in an instant, the house and avenues were in a blaze of light, a great number of lamps having been so disposed as to communicate with each other, and to be lighted at the same instant. The king heartily laughed at the device, and went away much pleased with his entertainment.

Adjoining the park, and not far from the house, is the farm and farm-yard of William Cobbett. Here that extraordinary man, as much attached to agriculture as to politics, had a sort of domicile and sleeping-place made for him in the farm-buildings, and used to survey his planting and plowing as assiduously as if there were no corruptions to root up, and no rank weeds to extirpate in the great estate of the nation.

Cobbett's farm-yard still stands to remind you of him, but the house which Cowley inhabited has [Pg 73] long been pulled down. From what I could learn on the spot, and it was little, it seems to have stood near the present stable-yard. The walls of the old gardens still remain, and old mulberry and other fruit trees bear testimony to the occupation by wealthy families for ages. The grounds are now disposed in the fashion of a considerable park, with these old gardens and extensive shrubberies adjoining. A carriage drive of considerable extent leads from the Barnes road down to the house, on one hand giving a level prospect over the meadows toward Hammersmith, and on the other bounded with the tall hedge and thick trees inclosing the park. The whole, with its rich meadow land, its old elms, and old gardens and shrubberies of fine evergreens, is almost too goodly for our ideas of the fortunes of a poet, and accords more truly with the prestige of a successful lawyer.

The house of Cowley at Chertsey yet remains, though it has been considerably altered: it is still called the Porch House, but the porch has been cut away because it projected into the street. Over the front door is a tablet of stone, let into the wall, on which is inscribed—

"Here the last accents fell from Cowley's tongue."

His garden and grounds were on the level of the meadows, as level as the meadows of Barn-Elms. These meadows lie along the road, as you go from Weybridge to St. Ann's Hill, and a pleasant brook runs through them, skirting the garden. The country around is very agreeable, and the nearness of St. Ann's Hill, with its heathy sides, and noble views far and wide, is a great advantage. For a heart that loved solitude, there need have been no pleasanter spot, especially as the little town of Chertsey could afford all creature comforts, and the occasional chat of the clergyman, the doctor, and a resident family or two. But in Cowley's time, how much deeper must have been the retirement of such a retreat here; how much further it was from London! Now it is [Pg 74] only a few hours' distance by the Southwestern Rail-way; then it was a journey—they took a

night's rest on the way! His letter to Sprat from this place gives us an odd kind of idea of his enjoyment of the place.

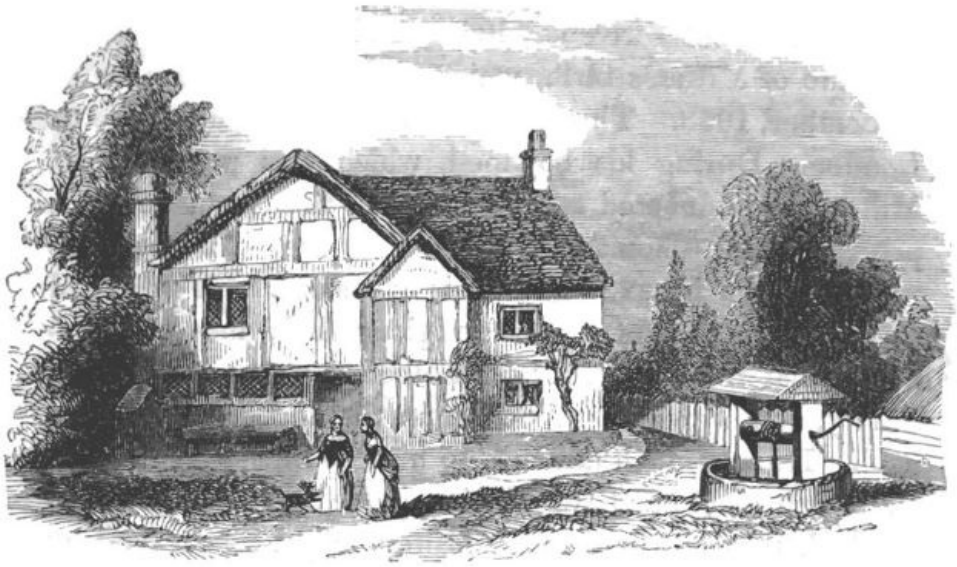
"*To* Dr. Thomas Sprat.

"Chertsey, May 21, 1665.

"The first night that I came hither I caught so great a cold, with a defluxion of rheum, as made me keep my chamber ten days; and, two after, had such a bruise on my ribs with a fall, that I am yet unable to move or turn myself in my bed. This is my personal picture here to begin with. And, besides, I can get no money from my tenants, and have my meadows eaten up every night by cattle put in by my neighbors. What this signifies, or may come to in time, God knows; if it be ominous, it can end in nothing less than hanging. Another misfortune has been, and stranger than all the rest, that you have broken your word with me, and failed to come, even though you told Mr. Bois you would. This is what they call *Monstri simile*. I do hope to recover my late hurt so far within five or six days, though it be uncertain whether I shall ever recover it, as to walk about again. And then, methinks, you and I, and *the dean*, might be very merry upon St. Ann's Hill. You might very conveniently come hither the way of Hampton Court, lying there one night. I write this in pain, and can say no more. *Verbum sapienti*."

Poor Cowley did not long enjoy his retreat here, if he did enjoy it at all. Within two years he died at the Porch House (in 1667), in the forty-ninth year of his age. He was buried with great pomp in Westminster Abbey, near Chaucer and Spenser.

[Pg 75]



JOHN MILTON.

Perhaps no man ever inhabited more houses than our great epic poet, yet scarcely one of these now remains. The greater part of his residences were in London, and in the hundred and seventy-two years since his decease, the whole of this great metropolis has been, as it were, in a ferment of growth and extension. The great fire of London swept away an immense mass of the old houses; and if we look around us now, we see how very few of the ancient framed tenements which then prevailed now remain. Again, Milton generally chose his houses, even in the city, with a view to quiet and retirement. They were, say his biographers, generally garden houses, where he enjoyed the advantages of a certain remoteness from noise, and of some openness of space. These spaces the progress of population has filled with dense buildings, in the course of the erection of which, the old solitary houses have been pulled down.

Milton, as is well known, was born in Bread-street, Cheapside, at the sign of the Spread Eagle. The spread eagle was the armorial bearing of the family. His father was an eminent scrivener, [Pg 76] living and practicing there at the time of Milton's birth, which took place on the 9th of December, 1608. This house was destroyed in the fire of London. During his boyhood, which was passed here, Milton was educated at home, in the first instance, by a private tutor, Thomas Young. This man Aubrey calls "a Puritan in Essex, who cut his hair short." Young had suffered persecution for his religious faith, and it is supposed that from him Milton imbibed a strong feeling for liberty, and a great predilection for the doctrines which he held. He was much attached to him, as he has testified by his fourth elegy, and two Latin epistles. It has been remarked, that however much Milton might be swayed by the principles of his tutor, he never was by his cut of hair; for, through all the reign of the Roundheads, he preserved his flowing locks. After the private tutor was dismissed, he was sent to St. Paul's School. This appears to have been in his fifteenth year. Here, too, he was a favorite scholar. The then master was Alexander Gill, and his son was the

usher, and succeeded his father in the school. With him Milton was on terms of great friendship, and has left a memorial of his regard in three of his Latin epistles.

From the relation of his original biographer, Aubrey, we may see the boy Milton going to and fro between Bread-street and his school, full of zealous thirst of knowledge, and the most extraordinary industry. He studied with excessive avidity, regardless of his health, continuing his reading till midnight, so that the source of his future blindness is obvious in his early passion for letters. Aubrey says, that "when Milton went to school, and when he was very younge, he studied very hard, and sate up very late, commonly till twelve or one o'clock; and his father ordered the maid to sett up for him." His early reading was in poetical books. He confirms this account of himself in his *Defensio Secunda pro Populo*, &c. He says that his father destined him to liberal studies, which he so eagerly seized upon, that from his twelfth year he seldom ever retired from [Pg 77] his books to bed before midnight; and that his eyes, originally weak, thus received the first causes of their future mischief. That, perceiving the danger of this, it could not arrest his ardor of study, though his nocturnal vigils, followed by his dayly exercises under his masters, brought on failing vision and pains in the head. Humphrey Lownes, a printer, living in Bread-street, supplied him, among other books, with Spenser and Sylvester's Du Bartas. Spenser was devoured with the intensest enthusiasm, and he has elsewhere called him his master.

Todd, the generally judicious biographer of Milton, praises his father for his discernment in the education of his son. The father, who was a very superior man, and especially fond of and skilled in music, certainly appears to have at once seen in his son the evidences of genius, and to have given to it every opportunity of development; but it is to be regretted that his fatherly encouragement was not attended with more prudence, and that he had not, instead of encouraging the habit of nocturnal study, the most pernicious that a student can fall into, restrained it. Had he done this, the poet might have retained his sight, and who shall say with what further advantage to the world!

At seventeen, Milton entered as a pensioner at Christ College, Cambridge. He was found to be a distinguished classical scholar, and conversant in several languages. His academical exercises attracted great attention, as well as his verses, both in English and Latin. His Latin elegies, in his eighteenth year, have always been regarded with wonder; and, indeed, in his Latinity, both in verse and prose, perhaps no modern writer has surpassed him. Hampton, the translator of Polybius, pronounced him the first Englishman who, since the revival of letters, wrote Latin verses with classic elegance. His extraordinary merit and acquisitions found, from the authorities of his college, general applause, spite of a disposition to severity, induced by his sturdy [Pg 78] opposition to them in opinion, on a plan of academical studies then under discussion.

Milton here, it appears, on the testimony of Aubrey, suffered an indignity from his tutor, which it was not in his high and independent nature to endure with impunity. He refers to the fact in his first elegy. He mentions threats and other things, which his disposition could not tolerate; that he was absent in a state of rustication, and felt no desire to revisit the reedy banks of the Cam. Aubrey says, from the information of our author's brother Christopher, that Milton's first tutor at Cambridge was Mr. Chappell, from whom receiving some unkindness (*he whipped him*), he was afterward, though it seemed against the rules of the college, transferred to the tuition of one Mr. Tovell. This information stands in the MS. *Mus. Ashmol. Oxon.*, No. 10, p. iii. Warton, remarking on the fact, adds, that Milton "hated the place. He was not only offended at the college discipline, but had even conceived a dislike to the face of the country—the fields about Cambridge. He peevishly complains that the fields have no soft shades to attract the Muses, and there is something pointed in his exclamation, that Cambridge was a place quite incompatible with the votaries of Phœbus."

It was not very likely that a youth of perhaps eighteen, who was writing the elegies and epistles in Latin which drew upon him so much notice, would submit quietly to so degrading a treatment. This treatment, it appears from Warton, was common enough, nevertheless, at both Cambridge and Oxford, among the tutors at that time. But Milton spurned it, as became his great spirit and noble nature, and was in consequence, probably, rusticated for a time. But this could not have been long, nor could it have been accordant to the wishes of the fellows of his college. The offense was against the tutor, not against the heads of the college, in the poet's mind. In his Apology for Smeotymnus, he thanks an enemy for the opportunity of expressing his grateful [Pg 79] sense of the kindness of the fellows, in these words: "I thank him; for it hath given me an apt occasion to acknowledge publicly, with all grateful mind, that more than ordinary favor and respect which I found above any of my equals, at the hands of those courteous and learned men, the fellows of the college wherein I spent some years; who at my parting, after I had taken two degrees, as the manner is, signified many ways how much better it would content them if I would stay; as by many letters full of kindness and loving respect, both before that time and long after, I was assured of their good affection to me."

Leaving Cambridge, Milton went to reside some time at Horton, near Colnbrook, in Buckinghamshire. His father had retired from his practice, on a competent fortune, to this village. This portion of his life was, probably, one of the most delightful periods of it. He had acquired great reputation for talent and learning at college; he had taken his degree of M.A., and in this agreeable retirement he not only indulged himself, as he tells us, in a deep and thorough reading of the Greek and Latin authors, but probably then contemplating his visit to Italy, made himself master of its language and well acquainted with its literature. To such perfection did he carry this accomplishment, that in Italy he not only spoke the language with perfect fluency, but wrote in it so as to astonish the most learned natives. Five years he devoted to these classical and modern studies, but not to these alone. He was here actively at work in laying the foundation of

that great poetical fame which he afterward achieved. Born in the city, he now made himself thoroughly familiar with nature. In the woods and parks, and on the pleasant hills of this pleasant country, he enjoyed the purest delights of contemplation and of poetry. Here he is supposed to have imbued himself with the allegoric romance of his favorite Spenser, and also to have written his own delightful Arcades, Comus, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and Lycidas. It is a fact which his [Pg 80] biographers have not seemed to perceive, but which is really significant, that the very Italian titles, L'Allegro and Il Penseroso, of themselves almost identify the productions of this period and place, where he was busy with the preparation for his visit to Italy. The county of Buckingham appeared always to be from this time a particular favorite with him; and no wonder, for it is full of poetical beauty, abounds with those solemn and woodland charms which are so welcome to a mind brooding over poetical subjects, and shunning all things and places that disturb. It abounds, being so near the metropolis, also with historic associations of deep interest.

"This pleasant retreat," says Todd, "excited his most poetical feelings; and he has proved himself, in his pictures of rural life, to rival the works of nature, which he contemplated with delight. In the neighborhood of Horton, the Countess Dowager of Derby resided; and the *Arcades* was performed by her grandchildren at this seat, called Harefield Place. It seems to me that Milton intended a compliment to his fair neighbor, for fair she was, in his L'Allegro:

'Towers and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,
Where, perhaps, some beauty lies,
The cynosure of neighboring eyes.'

The woody scenery of Harefield, and the personal accomplishments of the countess, are not unfavorable to this supposition; which, if admitted, tends to confirm the opinion that L'Allegro and Il Penseroso were composed at Horton. The Masque of Comus, and Lycidas, were certainly produced under the roof of his father."

The whole of these poems breathe the spirit of youth, and of scenes like those in which he now dayly rambled. Whether L'Allegro and Il Penseroso were written, as Sir William Jones contends, at Forest Hill, in Oxfordshire, or here, need not be much contested. If they were written there, it [Pg 81] must have been many years afterward, after his return from abroad, and after his first marriage; for it was at Forest Hill that he found his wife. But for the reason assigned, and for that of their general spirit, I incline to the belief that they were written at Horton, as there is plenty of evidence that Comus and the Arcades were. These latter poems overflow with the imagery and the feeling of the old wooded scenery of Buckinghamshire.

"*Comus.* I know each lane, and every alley green,
Dingle, or bushy dell of this wild wood,
And every bosky bourne from side to side,
My dayly walks and ancient neighborhood."

How full of the old pastoral country are these lines:

"*Sec. Bro.* Might we but hear
The folded flocks penned in their wattled cotes,
Or sound of pastoral reed with oaten stops,
Or whistle from the lodge, or village cock
Count the night watches to his feathery dames,
'Twould be some solace yet, some little cheering,
In this close dungeon of innumerous boughs."

There is no other poet who has been able to transfuse the very spirit of nature into words, as it is done in the following passages, except Shakspeare, on whose soul images of rural beauty and repose fell with equal felicity of effect.

"This evening late, by then the chewing flocks
Had ta'en their supper on the savory herb
Of knot-grass dew-besprent, and were in fold,
I sat me down to watch upon a bank
With ivy canopied, and interwove
With flaunting honey-suckle, and began,
Wrapped in a pleasing fit of melancholy,
To meditate my rural minstrelsy,
Till Fancy had her fill; but ere a close,
The wonted roar was up amid the woods," &c.

How exquisite is every image of this passage:

"Return, Sicilian Muse,
And call the vales, and bid them hither cast [Pg 82]
Their bells, and flowerets of a thousand hues.
Ye valleys low, where the mild whispers use
Of shades, and wanton winds, and gushing brooks,
On whose fresh lap the swart star sparely looks;
Throw hither all your quaint enamel'd eyes,

That on the green turf suck the honey'd showers,
And purple all the ground with vernal flowers.
Bring the rathe primrose that forsaken dies,
The tufted crow-toe and pale jessamine,
The white pink, and the pansy freak'd with jet,
The glowing violet,
The musk rose, and the well-attired woodbine,
With cowslips wan that hang the pensive head,
And every flower that sad embroidery wears;
Bid Amaranthus all his beauty shed,
And daffodillies fill their cups with tears,
To strow the laureate hearse where Lycid lies."

A power of poetic landscape-painting like this is only the result of genius deeply instructed in the school of nature. But the time was now come for the survey of other and more striking scenes than those of the woodlands and pastoral uplands of Buckingham. The tour of Milton in Italy is a marked portion of his life, and no doubt opened wide fields of poetic imagination and of artistic experience in his mind. He visited Nice, Leghorn, Pisa, Florence; in the vicinity of which last city, at the village of Belloguardo, or at Arcetri, it is supposed that he paid his visit to Galileo. Thence he went on to Sienna and Rome; he afterward proceeded to Naples, and was intending to visit Sicily and Athens, when the news of the revolutionary troubles in England reached him, and caused him to retrace his steps through Rome and Florence; whence he visited Lucca, and crossing the Apennines to Bologna, Ferrara, and Venice, he then hastened homeward by Verona, Milan, and along the Lake Leman to Geneva, and so on through France.

In every city of Italy he was cordially and honorably received by the most distinguished persons of the age, and studied the works of the great masters, in both painting and sculpture, with an [Pg 83] effect which is believed to be apparent in his great work, Paradise Lost. The sacrifice which he made to the spirit of patriotism by this return is eloquently adverted to by Warton. "He gave up," he remarks, "these countries, connected with his finer feelings, interwoven with his poetical ideas, and impressed upon his imagination by his habits of reading, and by long and intimate converse with the Grecian literature. But so prevalent were his patriotic attachments, that hearing in Italy of the commencement of the national quarrel, instead of proceeding forward, to feast his fancy with the contemplation of scenes familiar to Theocritus and Homer, the fires of Etna, and the porticoes of Pericles, he abruptly changed his course, and hastily returned home to plead the cause of ideal liberty. Yet in this chaos of controversy, amid endless disputes concerning religious and political reformation, independency, prelacy, tithes, toleration, and tyranny, he sometimes seems to have heaved a sigh for the peaceable enjoyments of lettered solitude, for his congenial pursuits, and the more mild and ingenious exercises of the Muse."

But though he might sigh for these, he never suffered them to draw him aside from the path of what he deemed the most sacred duty, both toward God and man; he sacrificed not only his desire of visiting classical regions, and of lettered ease, but he was willing to risk the achievement of what he considered—and which eventually proved to be—the crowning act of his eternal fame, the writing of his great epic. He had conceived, as he tells us himself, the scheme of his Paradise Lost; on that he placed his hope of immortality; but even that he heroically resolved to postpone till he had seen his country rescued from her oppressors, and placed on a firm ground of freedom. The casualties of life might have robbed him and the world forever of the projected work, but he ventured all for the great cause of his country and of man, and was rewarded.

A story has been repeatedly told as the occasion of Milton's Italian journey, and very generally [Pg 84] believed, which Todd has shown to be told also in the preface to "Poésies de Marguerite, Eleanore Clotilde, depuis Madame de Surville, Poëte Française du xv. Siècle," of another poet, a Louis de Puytendre, exactly agreeing in all the particulars, except that the ladies were on foot. That Milton needed no such romantic incentive to his Italian tour is self-evident, having a sufficient one in his classical and poetic tastes; but as it appeared in a newspaper, and obtained general credence, it may be worth transcribing.

"It is well known that in the bloom of youth, and when he pursued his studies at Cambridge, this poet was extremely beautiful. Wandering one day, during the summer, far beyond the precincts of the University, into the country, he became so heated and fatigued that, reclining himself at the foot of a tree to rest, he fell asleep. Before he woke, two ladies, who were foreigners, passed in a carriage; agreeably astonished at the loveliness of his appearance, they alighted, and having admired him, as they thought, unperceived, for some time, the youngest, who was very handsome, drew a pencil from her pocket, and having written some lines upon a piece of paper, put it with her trembling hand into his own; immediately afterward they proceeded on their journey. Some of his acquaintances, who were in search of him, had observed this silent adventure, but at too great a distance to discover that the highly-favored party in it was our illustrious poet. Approaching nearer, they saw their friend, to whom, being awakened, they mentioned what had happened; Milton opened the paper, and with surprise read these verses from Guarini, Madrigal xii., ed. 1598:

'Occhi, stelle mortali,
Ministre de miei mali—
Se chiusi m'uccidete,
Aperti che farete?'

"'Ye eyes, ye human stars! ye authors of my liveliest pangs! If thus, when shut, ye wound me, what must have proved the consequence had ye been open?" Eager from this moment to find the fair *incognita*, Milton traversed, but in vain, through every part of Italy. His poetic fervor became incessantly more and more heated by the idea which he had formed of his unknown admirer; and it is in some degree to *her* that his own times, the present times, and the latest posterity, must feel themselves indebted for several of the most impassioned and charming compositions of the Paradise Lost." [Pg 85]

Now, to say nothing of the incoherence of this story—of the questions that naturally suggest themselves, of how these young men, too far off to recognize their companion as the object of this flattering attention, could know that the ladies were foreigners, and that the one who wrote the paper was the *youngest*, and was very handsome—it is evident that, had a young Cantab found himself awaking, nowadays, under a tree, with a paper of Italian verses in his hand, and his comrades ready with a story of a couple of beautiful young ladies, foreigners, traveling in a carriage, and the *youngest*, who was very handsome, putting this paper into his hand, he would very naturally have deemed himself the subject of a most palpable quiz. Yet did the world, in a simpler age, not only gravely receive this narrative as a fact, but Anna Seward did it into verse.

Returned from Italy, not from the vain quest after an imaginary and romantic fair one, but with his mind stored with knowledge and poetic imagery, which he had not pursued in vain, Milton took up his residence in London, in order to be ready, as occasion presented itself, to serve his country. He had no longer the inducement to return to Horton. He had seen his mother laid in the grave before he went; his father had probably quitted Horton when the civil war broke out, and betaken himself to the security of Reading, a fortified town; for on the surrender of that town to the Earl of Essex, in 1643, the old man came up to London to his son, with whom he continued to reside till his death, about four years afterward. [Pg 86]

During the five years spent by Milton at Horton, between leaving Cambridge and setting out on his travels, he did not entirely bury himself there in his classical books and poetic musings in the woods and fields. He had occasional lodgings in London, in order to cultivate music, for which he had always a great passion, to prosecute his mathematics, to procure books, to enjoy the society of his friends, among whom were many of his old college friends, and, no doubt, to perfect himself in the speaking of the French and Italian languages, which it is not to be supposed he could do at Horton. Now, however, duty as well as inclination fixed him almost wholly in London. Great events were transpiring, and he felt a persuasion that he must bear his part in them. There was one circumstance which drew him for a while from the metropolis, and it was this. He became attached to a young lady in Oxfordshire, and is supposed to have made some abode in the place of her residence. "The tradition," says Todd, "that he did reside at this beautiful village of Forest Hill, near Shotover, is general, though none of his biographers assert the circumstance. Madame du Bocage, in her entertaining 'Letters concerning England,' &c., relates that, 'visiting, in June, 1750, Baron Shutz and lady, at their house near Shotover Hill, they showed me, from a small eminence, *Milton's House*, to which I bowed with all the reverence with which that poet's memory inspires me.'" And the same writer quotes this interesting account of the place and circumstance from a letter of Sir William Jones: "The necessary trouble of correcting the first printed sheets of my history prevented me to-day from paying a proper respect to the memory of Shakspeare, by attending his jubilee. But I resolved to do all the honor in my power to as great a poet, and set out in the morning, in company with a friend, to visit a place where Milton spent some part of his life, and where, in all probability, he composed several of his earliest compositions. It is a small village on a pleasant hill, about five miles from Oxford, called Forest Hill, because it formerly lay contiguous to a forest, which has since been cut down. The poet chose this place of retirement after his first marriage, and he describes the beauties of this retreat in that fine passage of his L'Allegro: [Pg 87]

'Sometime walking not unseen,
By hedgerow elms, on hillocks green,—
While the plowman, near at hand,
Whistles o'er the furrowed land,
And the milkmaid singeth blithe,
And the mower whets his scythe
And every shepherd tells his tale
Under the hawthorn in the dale.
Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,
While the landscape round it measures;
Russet lawns, and fallows gray,
Where the nibbling flocks do stray;
Mountains, on whose barren breast
The laboring clouds do often rest;
Meadows trim with daisies pied,
Shallow brooks and rivers wide;
Towers and battlements it sees
Bosom'd high in tufted trees;
Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes
From betwixt two aged oaks,' &c.

"It was neither the proper season of the year, nor time of the day, to hear all the rural sounds, and see all the objects mentioned in this description; but, by a pleasing concurrence of circumstances, we were saluted on our approach to the village with the music of the mower and

his scythe; we saw the plowman intent upon his labor, and the milkmaid returning from her country employment.

"As we ascended the hill, the variety of beautiful objects, the agreeable stillness and natural simplicity of the whole scene, gave us the highest pleasure. We at length reached the spot whence Milton undoubtedly took most of his images: it is on the top of a hill, from which there is [Pg 88] a most extensive prospect on all sides. The distant mountains, that seemed to support the clouds; the village and turrets, partly shrouded in trees of the finest verdure, and partly raised above the groves that surrounded them; the dark plains and meadows, of a grayish color, where the sheep were feeding at large; in short, the view of the streams and rivers, convinced us that there was not a single useless or idle word in the above-mentioned description, but that it was a most exact and lively representation of nature. Thus will this fine passage, which has always been admired for its elegance, receive an additional beauty from its exactness. After we had walked, with a kind of poetical enthusiasm, over this enchanted ground, we returned to the village.

"The poet's house was close to the church; the greatest part of it has been pulled down; and what remains belongs to an adjacent farm. I am informed that several papers, in Milton's own hand, were found by the gentleman who was last in possession of the estate. The tradition of his having lived there is current among the villagers: one of them showed me a ruinous wall that made part of his chamber, and I was much pleased with another who had forgotten the name of Milton, but recollected him by the title of The Poet.

"It must not be omitted, that the groves near this village are famous for nightingales, which are so elegantly described in the Penseroso. Most of the cottage windows are overgrown with sweet-briers, vines, and honey-suckles; and that Milton's habitation had the same rustic ornament, we may conclude from his description of the lark bidding him good-morrow:

> Through the sweet-brier, or the vine,
> Or the twisted eglantine;

for it is evident that he meant a sort of honey-suckle by the eglantine; though that word is commonly used for the sweet-brier, which he could not mention twice in the same couplet. [Pg 89]

"If ever I pass a month or six weeks at Oxford in the summer, I shall be inclined to hire and repair this venerable mansion, and to make a festival for a circle of friends in honor of Milton, the most perfect scholar, as well as the sublimest poet that our country ever produced. Such an honor will be less splendid, but more sincere and respectful, than all the pomp and ceremony on the banks of the Avon."

That Sir William might be, and probably was mistaken in supposing that the Allegro was written at Forest Hill, I think is apparent from the character of that poem and of the Penseroso, which bear, to me, evident marks of a more youthful muse than the Comus and the Lycidas. They deal more in mere description, and, what is more, the poet himself placed them in his original volume, prior to those poems, as if written prior. The images quoted by Sir William will apply to a thousand other scenes in England, and where Milton himself never was. They are such as a thousand hill-tops in our beautiful pastoral land can show us. They may be found equally in his earlier haunts in Buckinghamshire. Nevertheless, Shotover is not the less interesting, nor do the scenes the less apply to it. There Milton undoubtedly did walk and muse,

> "By hedgerow elms on hillocks green,"

and hear the plowman's whistle, the milkmaid's song, and the mower's ringing scythe, and rest his eye on its landscape, tinted and varied as he describes it. There he saw the distant mountains of Wales, and the shepherds under the hawthorns, down in the dales below him, each "telling his tale;" that is, not telling a story to some one, or making love, but "telling the tale," or number of his flock, before penning them for the night, or letting them loose in the morning.

That Milton lived at Forest Hill some time, there is no doubt; but when, and how long, and how [Pg 90] often, are points that now can not be very well cleared up. Sir William Jones represents him to have chosen this retirement after his first marriage. Now Milton was not married before 1643, at which time he was in his thirty-fifth year. But Comus and Lycidas were written long before then, and so, no doubt, were L'Allegro and Il Penseroso. Mosely, in his Address to the Reader, in the volume of Milton's poems containing all these pieces, published in 1645, tells us that these poems were known to be written, and that he solicited them to accompany Lycidas and Comus; and Milton, in presenting this volume to his friend Rouse, says plainly that they were the productions of his early youth:

> "Gemelle cultu simplici gaudens liber,
> Fronde licit geminâ,
> Munditiaque nitens non operosâ;
> Quem *manus attulit*
> *Juveniles olim*,
> Secula tamen haud nimii poetæ," &c.

This settles the question of the location of the poems; but the question of when, and how long, and how often Milton resided at Forest Hill, still remains. That he did not reside there long, *immediately* after his marriage, is very clear, from the statement of his nephew and biographer, Phillips. "About Whitsuntide, or a little after, he took a journey into the country: nobody about him certainly knowing the reason, or that it was more than a journey of recreation. After a

month's stay, home he returns a married man, that went out a bachelor; his wife being Mary, the eldest daughter of Mr. Richard Powell, then a justice of peace, of *Forestil*, near Shotover, in Oxfordshire." This account is confirmed by Anthony Wood, who states that Milton courted, married, and brought his wife to his house in London in one month's time; and that she was very young. She continued, however, as we shall presently see, only a few weeks with her husband, and returned to Forest Hill.

Now, as Milton kept this courtship so profound a secret, it is quite probable that it might be [Pg 91] going on much longer than any of his friends were aware of. When he set out on his journey, of which nobody knew the cause, he no doubt knew it. Somewhere, and some time before, he had most likely seen this Mary Powell—where, and how long before, who shall now say? It is possible, therefore, that, for aught any one of his friends knew, he might have been at Forest Hill, and sojourning there occasionally, attracted by this attachment; and that he now set out with an intention of bringing his courtship to an end, as he did. As it turned out, his wife was discontented with the dullness of his dwelling, being accustomed to much gayety at home, and left him. Of this we shall speak more anon, but here we are inquiring only into the probability of the extent of his residence or residences at Forest Hill. The marriage took place in the midst of the Revolutionary wars. Soon after, the house and property of Mr. Powell, Milton's father-in-law, were seized by the Parliamentary army, he being a Cavalier; and the wife, who had deserted her husband in her father's prosperity, now, in his adversity, came back, and soon brought her father and family, to seek protection under the roof so coolly abandoned before. The father-in-law and family appear to have lived with Milton till 1647, or about three years.

Mary Powell, Milton's first wife, died in 1652, or about nine years after her marriage. Now, these nine years were all years of the ascendency of the Parliamentary power, and consequently of danger and uncertainty to the Powell family. It must be to Milton's interest with Cromwell that they must look for any kind of security; and during these nine years there would be many occasions when Milton might find it agreeable to spend a certain time in the country, and at Forest Hill. It is said that Mr. Powell, Milton's father-in-law, had, indeed, another mansion in the neighborhood, and allowed Milton and his family occasional occupation of this. Thus, though [Pg 92] Milton, from his post as Latin secretary to Cromwell, and from his continual engagements in the cause of the Commonwealth, always had, and must have, his house in London, it is quite likely that during these nine years he resided, in the summer months, not unfrequently at Forest Hill.

Warton has said that he composed some of his later productions there. It would be just the retreat for such purposes, when he required close and unbroken retirement from the excitements and personal interruptions of town. Mr. Richards, a sub-commissioner under a recent commission of the reign of George III., gave Mr. Todd this intelligence: "Milton married a daughter of Justice Powell, of Sandhurst, in the vicinity of Oxford, and lived in a house at Forest Hill, about three miles from Sandhurst, where the late laureate Warton told me Milton wrote a great part of his Paradise Lost. Warton found a number of papers of Milton's own writing in that house, and also many of Justice Powell's, which the late Mr. Crewe, father to the late Viscountess Falmouth, permitted him to take, and make what use of them he thought proper. The late Mr. Mickle translated part of Camoens' Luciad in the same house, he being, at the time I visited him, a lodger in that house. Mr. Mickle married the daughter of Mr. Tomkins, a farmer, the tenant to Mr. Crewe. The time I allude to of visiting my worthy friend Mickle was in 1772 and 1773; and my conversations had with Mr. Warton and Mr. Crewe were from 1781 to 1786."

Having now clearly settled the fact that Forest Hill, near Shotover, was a residence of Milton, and probably through a course of nine years, at various times, and the scene of some of those great literary and political works on which he was arduously engaged during those years; and that while his birth-place in Bread-street, and his parental home at Horton, were both destroyed, this has been nearly so, we will now notice a little more closely the condition of his home during [Pg 93] those nine years of his first marriage. That marriage appears to have been a great mistake; to have destroyed to a great degree his domestic comfort, and to have occasioned the world to entertain a very unfavorable idea of Milton's disposition. The facts, drawn from his various biographers, are briefly these.

At Whitsuntide, in 1643, and in his thirty-fifth year, as we learn from his nephew Phillips, in the passage quoted, he married Mary, the daughter of Richard Powell, living at Forest Hill, near Shotover, and a justice of peace for Oxfordshire. He brought his wife to London. She was very young, and had been accustomed to a gay life. According to Aubrey, "she was brought up and bred where there was a great deal of company and merriment, as dancing, &c.; and when she came to live with her husband, she found it solitary, no company coming to her; and she often heard her nephews cry and be beaten. This life was irksome to her, and so she went to her parents." Phillips says the same; that she was averse to the philosophic life of Milton, and sighed for the mirth and jovialness to which she had been accustomed in Oxfordshire. It was a great mistake altogether. Milton was now a man of a sober age; he was yet but a schoolmaster, though he had a large and handsome house in Aldersgate-street, in a garden. This was necessary for the accommodation of his pupils, as well as for his quiet study, and prosecution of those great questions of the age in which he was engaged, writing for the Republican cause, and against its enemies. All this must have been immensely dull to a young girl, who, from all the glimpses we can get of her, was, though perhaps handsome and fascinating, but of an ordinary nature, and one who had been educated to frivolity and mere enjoyment of the fashionable gayeties of life. What was more, the very work on which Milton was zealously engaged, the defense of the Parliamentary cause, and the defeat of the kingly, and which abstracted him from her society, [Pg 94] was perfect poison to her and her family—all high Royalists. "Her relations," says Phillips, "being

generally addicted to the Cavalier party, and some of them possibly engaged in the king's service, who at this time had his headquarters at Oxford, and was in some prospect of success, they began to repent them of having matched the eldest daughter of the family to a person so contrary to them in opinion; and thought it would be a blot in their escutcheon, whenever that events should come to flourish again."

It was these circumstances, operating together, which induced his young wife to desert Milton. All that we can learn confirms the idea that her family was a regularly worldly-minded one; and the only wonder is that they should ever have agreed to the match at all. Milton was then comparatively unknown. He was but a schoolmaster, and must have been pretty well known to all that came in contact with him to hold very liberal opinions. However, scarcely was the match made, than the family began to suspect they had made a great blunder. The wife asked leave, after a week, to go home and see her parents; and the whole affair reminds us of the matrimonial history of a great poet of our own day. The wife goes home in good humor, and then sends her husband word that she does not mean to come back again. It does not appear that the wife or wife's friends ever set up the plea that Milton was mad, however they might think so. Luckily, Milton was a sober, moderate man, and not accustomed to run into debt. Had he, like Lord Byron, been pretty well dipped in debt, and expecting a large property with his wife, and not immediately getting it, but, on the contrary, all his creditors on his back in the expectation of it, he might have been quite as mad as he was. Like Lord Byron, however, he had not nine executions in his house in one week—enough to craze the sanest creature; and so Milton went on for a good while, calmly and manfully laboring at his *Areopagitica*, or Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing, one of the noblest works in our language. His wife had gone home, at the [Pg 95] invitation of her friends, to spend the remaining part of the summer with them: we have seen *why* they invited her. The good, easy man gave her leave to stay till Michaelmas. Michaelmas came, but no wife; the visit had only been a pretense for desertion. He sent for her, and she refused to come. He sent letter after letter; these remained unanswered. He dispatched a messenger to bring her home; the messenger was dismissed from her father's house with contempt. This very properly moved his spirit, and he resolved to repudiate her. To justify this bold step, he published four treatises on divorce: The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce; The Judgment of Martin Bucer concerning Divorce; his famous *Tetrachordon*, or Expositions upon the four chief places of Scripture which treat of Marriage, or Nullities of Marriage; and *Colasterion*. It is probable that the lady and her friends would have thanked him for the divorce, had the world gone well with them; and that, like the great poet of our time, he might have lived and died without further sight of his pretty runaway; but the political scene was now fast changing. The royal power was rapidly waning; the Powells were getting into trouble, or foresaw it fast approaching, from their active participation in the royal cause. Milton, on the other hand, was fast rising into popular note. He was the very man that they were likely to need in the coming storm; and, with true worldly policy, they forgot all their pride and insults—were willing to forget the offended husband's public exposure of his wife's conduct, and his active measures for repudiation; and a plan was laid for retaking him. The plot was thus laid: Milton was accustomed to visit a relative in St. Martin's-le-Grand; and here, as it had been concerted on her part, he was astonished to see his wife come from another apartment, and, falling on her knees before him, beg forgiveness for her conduct. After some natural astonishment, and some reluctance on his part to a reconciliation, [Pg 96] after what had passed, he at length gave way to her tears, and forgave and embraced her.

> "Soon his heart relented
> Toward her, his life so late, and sole delight,
> Now at his feet submissive in distress."

It has been supposed that the impression made upon his imagination and his feelings, on this occasion, contributed no little to his description of the scene in Paradise Lost, in which Eve addresses herself to Adam for pardon and peace.

And certainly Milton, on this occasion, displayed no little magnanimity and nobility of character. His domestic peace and reputation had been most remorselessly attacked, yet, says Fenton, "after this reunion, so far was he from retaining an unkind memory of the provocations which he had received from her ill conduct, that when the king's cause was entirely oppressed, and her father, who had been active in his loyalty, was exposed to sequestration, Milton received both him and his family to protection and free entertainment in his own house, till his affairs were accommodated by his interest with the victorious faction." The old father-in-law had to smart for his attachment to the royal cause. He was publicly announced as a delinquent, and fined £576, 12*s.*, 3*d.*; besides that his house was seized by the Parliamentary party.

It would be agreeable if from this time we could find data for believing that the returned wife and her friends showed a generous sense of the kindness of the poet. But we can not. It appears from Milton's nuncupative will, that the old man never paid him a penny of the promised marriage portion of £1000; and that the three daughters, too true daughters of such a mother, had behaved to him very undutifully. The whole of the view that we obtain of the Powell family is of a piece. After the royal power was restored, and Milton was in danger and disgrace, we hear of no [Pg 97] protection afforded by them to him; no protecting roof extended, no countenance even to the daughters, their mother now being dead; but the father being poor, and out of favor, the daughters were suffered to take their fate. One died early, having married a master-builder; one died single; and the third married a weaver in Spitalfields. It should be recollected that all three daughters survived their father as well as mother, yet it does not appear that they received the slightest notice or assistance from their rich relations of Shotover. Yet his third daughter, Deborah, had great need of it, and, in many respects, well deserved it. She lived to the age of

seventy-six. This is the daughter that used to read to her father, and was well known to Richardson and Professor Ward: a woman of a very cultivated understanding, and not inelegant of manners. She was generously patronized by Addison, and by Queen Caroline, who sent her a present of fifty guineas. She had seven sons and three daughters, of whom Caleb and Elizabeth are remembered. Caleb emigrated to Fort Saint George, where, perhaps, he died. Elizabeth, the youngest daughter, married Thomas Foster, a weaver in Spitalfields, as her mother had done before her, and had seven children, who all died. She is said to have been a plain, sensible woman, and kept a petty grocer's or chandler's shop, first at Lower Holloway, and afterward at Cock-lane, near Shoreditch Church. In April, 1750, Comus was acted for her benefit: Doctor Johnson, who wrote the prologue, says, "She had so little acquaintance with diversion or gayety, that she did not know what was intended when a benefit was offered her." The profits of the performance were only £67, the expenses being deducted, although Dr. Newton contributed largely, and Jacob Tonson gave £20. On this trifling augmentation to their small stock, she and her husband removed to Islington, where they both soon died.

Such is the history of Milton's posterity; that of Shakspeare was sooner terminated, though the descendants of his sister Joan still exist, in a poverty disgraceful to the nation. [Pg 98]

With his two succeeding wives, Milton appears to have lived in great harmony and affection. His second wife, a daughter of Captain Woodcock, of Hackney, died in child-birth within a year of their marriage; and his sonnet to her memory bears testimony to his tender regard for her. His third wife, Elizabeth Minshull, of Cheshire, survived him, and went to reside in her native county, among her own relatives.

From this melancholy review of Milton's domestic history, let us now return to his homes in London after his return from Italy. He came back with great intentions, but to the humble occupation of a schoolmaster; and here we encounter one of the most disgraceful pieces of chuckling over his lowly fate, to be found in that most disgraceful life of our great poet and patriot, by Dr. Johnson. The Lives of the Poets, by Johnson, in the aggregate, do him no credit. In point of research, even, they are extremely deficient; but the warped and prejudiced spirit in which they are written destroy them as authority. On Milton's head, however, Johnson poured all the volume of his collected bile. Such a piece of writing upon the greatest epic poet, as well as one of the most illustrious patriots of the nation, is a national insult of the grossest kind. Take this one passage as a specimen of the whole. "Let not our veneration for Milton forbid us to look with some degree of merriment on great promises and small performances; on the man who hastens home because his countrymen are contending for their liberty, and, when he reaches the scene of action, vapors away his patriotism in a private boarding-school." The passage is as false as it is malicious. Milton did not promise to come home and put himself at the head of armies or of senates. He knew where his strength lay, and he came to use it, and did use it most effectually. He did not say, "I will be another Cromwell," but he became the Cromwell of the pen. It was [Pg 99] precisely because he was poor—that he had no interest or connections to place him in the front ranks of action, that he showed the greatness of his resolve, in hastening to the scene of contest, and standing ready to seize such opportunity as should offer, to strike for his country and for liberty. He desired to do his duty in the great strife, whatever might be the part he could gain to play; and had he only sincerely desired to do that, and had yet not done it for want of opportunity, he would still have been worthy of praise for his laudable desire.

But every thing that Milton promised he performed: who performed so much? He did not make great promises, and show small performances; he did not vapor away his patriotism in a private boarding-school. He took to a school, because he must live; but he soon showed that every moment not required for teaching his private pupils was ardently and unceasingly devoted to teaching the nation and the world. His pen was worth a thousand swords; his thoughts flew about and slew faster than bullets or cannon-balls; his word became the word of exhortation and command to his country. In his hand lay victory, not for the day and the time only, but for all time. Shame to the old bigoted lexicographer! must every true son of his country and lover of truth exclaim, when he reads what Milton wrote and what he did. To say nothing of his Tractate of Education, and a number of other works; to say nothing of his Paradise Lost, and all his other noble poems; all breathing the most lofty and godlike sentiments—those sentiments which create souls of fire, of strength and truth, in every age as it arises; what are his *Areopagitica*? his Tenure of Kings and Magistrates? his *Eiconoclastes*? his *Defensio Populi*? his *Defensio Secunda*? his Treatise on the Means of Removing Hirelings out of the Church? his Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases? his State Letters, written at the command of Cromwell and the Parliament? [Pg 100] Are these nothing? If ever there was a magnificent monument of human genius, of intellectual power, and glorious patriotism, built up by one man, it exists in these immortal works. Vapored away his patriotism in a private boarding-school! There was no private boarding-school which could long hold such vaporing as this; it was of a kind that did, or it needs must, come forth to the face of the government, the country, and mankind. The poor schoolmaster, who on the plains of Italy heard the cry of his country for help, flew to her rescue as confidently as if he had been a prince, with fleets and armies at his command. In a poor hired dwelling he prepared his missiles and warlike machines. Men like Johnson, in the bigotry of despotism, might despise him and them; for they were but a few quires of paper and a gray goose-quill; but he soon shot that quill higher against the towers of royalty, deeper into the ranks of the oppressors, than ever the bullets of Cromwell and Fairfax could pierce. His papers flew abroad, the unfurled banners of liberty, before which kings trembled, and the stoutest myrmidons dropped their arms. The poor schoolmaster became speedily the oracle of the government. His Tenure of Kings and Magistrates vindicated in unanswerable eloquence the right of nations to call their monarchs to account for their offenses against the laws. His Defense of the People from the accursed charges

of the hireling Salmasius flew through Europe, and struck kings and servile senates dumb. By the side of Cromwell the visage of the blind but divine old man was seen, with awe and wonder; the learned and the wise from distant realms came to gaze upon the unequaled twain; and when the inspired secretary exclaimed,

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold,"

the guilty persecutors shrunk aghast, for they knew that where the voice of Milton could reach, the arm of Cromwell could reach too. Who shall say how much of the renown of England at that [Pg 101] day sprung from the pen and soul of John Milton! how much he inspired of that which Cromwell did! and how much of the grand march of political and social renovation, which is now going on throughout the world, originated in the vaporings of the poor schoolmaster! Before his fame how pales that of him who has dared thus to revile him! What are all the works of Johnson—and we are inclined to give them their fullest due—when compared with those of Milton, and their consequences? Before him

"Whose soul was like a star, and dwelt apart,"

it became the man who so worthily chastised the meanness of a Chesterfield, to have bowed with humility and reverential love. As it is, we turn with disgust from this humiliating spectacle, of Johnson, the reviler of the noble dead, to Johnson, the friend of Goldsmith, the vindicator of Savage, and the sympathizer with the poor and suffering.

Of all the various residences of Milton in London, as I have remarked, scarcely one has escaped the ravages of the fire, and the progress of improvement and population. The habit which he had of selecting houses standing in gardens, on account of their quietness, has more than any thing else tended to sweep them away. These places, as population increased, were naturally crowded, and the detached houses pulled down to make way for regular streets. His first lodging was in St. Bride's Church-yard, Fleet-street, on his return from Italy. Here he began educating his two nephews, John and Edward Phillips. Of this lodging nothing now remains. The house, as I learn from an old and most respectable inhabitant of St. Bride's parish, who lives in the church-yard, and very near the spot, was on the left hand, as you proceed toward Fleet-street through the avenue. It was a very small tenement, very old, and was burned down on the 24th of November, 1824, at which time it was occupied by a hair-dresser. It was—a proof of its age—without party [Pg 102] walls, and much decayed. The back part of the Punch-office now occupies its site.

These lodgings were too small, and he took a garden-house in Aldersgate-street, situated at the end of an entry, that he might avoid the noise and disturbance of the street. To his nephews he here added a few more pupils, the sons of his most intimate friends. This house was large and commodious, affording room for his library and furniture. Here he commenced his career of pure authorship, all he did having public reform and improvement for its object. Here he wrote, as a fitting commencement, a treatise Of Reformation, to assist the Puritans against the bishops, as he deemed the Puritans deficient in learning for the defense of the great principles they were contending for. That Milton would turn out a stern reformer of church matters, might be clearly seen from a passage in his Lycidas, written before he was twenty-nine years old. In this he is said even to anticipate the execution of Laud. The passage is curious:

"How well could I have spared for thee, young swain.
Enow of such as for their bellies' sake
Creep, and intrude, and climb into the fold?
Of other care they little reckoning make
Than how to scramble at the shearers' feast,
And shove away the worthy bidden guest;
Blind mouths! that scarce themselves know how to hold
A sheep-hook, or have learn'd aught else the least
That to the faithful herdman's art belongs!
What recks it them? What need they? They are sped;
And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw;
The hungry sheep look up and are not fed,
But swoln with wind, and the rank mist they draw,
Rot inwardly, and foul contagion spread:
Besides what the grim wolf with privy paw
Dayly devours apace, and nothing said;
But that two-handed engine at the door
Stands ready to smite once, and smites no more."

Here he next wrote his treatise, Of Practical Episcopacy, in defense of the Smectymneans, [Pg 103] against Archbishop Usher; then, Reasons of Church Government, urged against Prelacy. In this work he revealed to his readers his plans for a great poem—the Paradise Lost; which only was deferred till the advocacy which the times demanded of him should be completed. Here he finished the controversy, by his *Apology for Smectymnus*, in 1642; and in 1643 married Mary Powell, and saw her desert him at the instigation of her time-serving family. This led to his writings of Divorce. These were followed by a Treatise of Education; and, finally, by his famous *Areopagitica*—altogether an extraordinary mass of labor to proceed from the private abode of a poor vaporing schoolmaster!

It was in this house, on the approach of the troops of Prince Rupert to the capital in 1642, soon after the battle of Edge Hill, that Milton placed in imagination, if not in actual ink, his proudly deprecatory sonnet:

"Captain, or colonel, or knight in arms,
Whose chance on these defenseless doors may seize,
If deed of honor did thee ever please,
Guard them, and him within protect from harms.
He can requite thee, for he knows the charms
That call fame on such gentle acts as these,
And he can spread thy name o'er lands and seas,
Whatever clime the sun's bright circle warms.
Lift not thy spear against the Muses' bower:
The great Emathian conqueror bid spare
The house of Pindarus, when temple and tower
Went to the ground; and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save th' Athenian walls from ruin bare."

His next remove was to a house in Barbican, now also, without doubt, removed: this was a larger house, for it was necessary to accommodate, not only his wife, but all her family. "When it is considered," says Todd, "that Milton cheerfully opened his doors to those who had treated him with indignity and breach of faith; to a father, who, according to the poet's nuncupative will, never paid him the promised marriage portion of a thousand pounds; and to a mother, who, [Pg 104] according to Wood, had encouraged the daughter in her perverseness; we can not but concede to Mr. Hayley's conclusion, that the records of private life contain not a more magnanimous example of forgiveness and beneficence. They are supposed to have left him soon after the death of his father, who ended a long life in 1647, and whose declining days had been soothed by every attention of a truly affectionate son."

From the Barbican issued the first volume of his poems, including Comus, Lycidas, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, &c.; a strange Parnassus, as it now seems to us. In 1647, his large troop of inmates having left him, he once more flitted, to use the good old Saxon term, into a smaller house in Holborn, opening backward into Lincoln's Inn Fields; this house will now be sought in vain. Here he published, in 1649, his bold Tenure of Kings and Magistrates, in which he vindicated what the Parliament had done in 1648, in the execution of the king; this was followed by some other political pamphlets. As he had made himself a marked man before, this open defense of the royal decapitation bound him up at once with the measures of the ruling government. Such a champion was not to be overlooked; and accordingly, immediately afterward, he was invited by the Council of State, without any expectation or solicitation on his part, to become Latin secretary; as they had resolved neither to write to others abroad, nor to receive answers from any, except in that language, which was common to them all. Thus the vaporing schoolmaster, without any anxious solicitation, any flatteries, or compromise of his dignity and integrity, had steadily advanced to that post in which he could effectually serve his country. He was here not merely the secretary, he was the champion of the government; and, accordingly, the *Eicon Basiliké*, attributed to King Charles himself, was ordered by him to have an answer; which answer was his *Eiconoclastes*, or the Image-breaker. Then came his great Defense of the People of England against Salmasius; this [Pg 105] work was received, both at home and abroad, with the greatest excitement, abuse, and applause, as the different parties were affected: at Paris and Toulouse it was burned; at home, Milton was complimented on his performance of his task, by the visits or invitations of all the foreign ministers in London; his own government presented him with a thousand pounds, as a testimony of their approbation of the manner in which he had acquitted himself; and even Queen Christina, of Sweden, the patron of Salmasius, could not avoid applauding it, and soon after dismissed Salmasius from her court. The work itself, and the effect it produced, are said to have shortened the life of Salmasius, who died about two years afterward, without having finished his reply, upon which he was laboring.

On being made Latin secretary, Milton quitted Holborn, and took lodgings in Scotland-yard, near Whitehall: here he lost his infant son; and his own health being impaired, he removed to a more airy situation; that is, into one of his favorite garden-houses, situated in Petty-France, Westminster, which opened into St. James's Park, in which he continued till within a few weeks of the Restoration: in this house some of the greatest domestic events of his life occurred. Here he lost the entire use of his eyes; his left eye having become quite dark in 1651—the year in which he published his *Defensio Populi*—the second in 1653. His enemies triumphed in his blindness as a judgment from Heaven upon his writing against the king; he only replied by asking them, if it were a judgment upon him to lose his eyes, what sort of judgment was that upon the king, which cost him his head; and by adding, that he had charity enough to forgive them. We have seen that he laid the foundation of this deprivation in his youth, by unremitted and nocturnal study; and, when writing the Defense of the People, the physicians announced to him that he must desist, or [Pg 106] lose his sight: he believed his duty required him to go on, and he went on, knowing the sacrifice he made.

In this house he lost, too, his first wife, Mary Powell; their infant son was dead, but she left him three daughters, the only children that survived him. Of this ill-starred marriage we have said and seen enough. He afterward married Catharine, the daughter of Captain Woodcock, of Hackney, who died in childbed within a year of their marriage. Of the beautiful character of this excellent woman, he has left us that beautiful testimony, his twenty-second sonnet:

"Me thought I saw my late espoused saint
Brought to me, like Alcestis from the grave,
Whom Jove's great son to her glad husband gave,
Rescued from death by force, though pale and faint.
Mine, as whom washed from spot of childbed taint,
Purification in the old law did save,
And such, as yet once more I trust to have
Full sight of her in heaven without restraint,
Came, vested all in white, pure as her mind:
Her face was veiled, yet, to my fancied sight,
Love, sweetness, goodness, in her person shined
So clear, as in no face with more delight.
But, oh! as to embrace me she inclined,
I waked, she fled, and day brought back my night."

Here Milton wrote his Second Defense of the People against the attack made in a book called *Regii Sanguinis clamor ad Cœlum adversus parricidas Anglicanos*; written by one Peter du Moulin, afterward Prebendary of Canterbury; with other things in the same controversy. As he was now blind, he had the excellent Andrew Marvel associated with him as assistant secretary. His industry continued at writing, as if he had full use of his eyes. He published now his Civil Power in Ecclesiastical Cases, and The Means of Removing Hirelings out of the Church; collected the Original Letters and Papers addressed to Oliver Cromwell concerning the affairs of Great Britain, from 1649 to 1658, with other things.

This memorable dwelling is yet standing. It no longer opens into St. James's Park. The ancient front is now its back, and overlooks the fine old, but house-surrounded garden of Jeremy Bentham. Near the top of this ancient front is a stone, bearing this inscription: "SACRED TO MILTON, THE PRINCE OF POETS." This was placed there by no less distinguished a man than William Hazlitt, who rented the house some years, purely because it was Milton's. Bentham, when he was conducting people round his garden, which is now in the occupation of Mr. Gibs, the engineer, used to make them sometimes go down on their knees to this house. The house is tall and narrow, and has nothing striking about it. No doubt, when it opened into St. James's Park, it was pleasant; now it fronts into York-street, which runs in a direct line from the west end of Westminster Abbey. It is number 19, and is occupied by a cutler. The back, its former front, is closed in by a wall, leaving but a very narrow court; but above this wall, as already said, looks into the pleasant garden of the late venerable philosopher. [Pg 107]

But the time of the Restoration was approaching, and Milton began to retrace his steps toward the city, by much the same regular stages as he had left it. After secreting himself in Bartholomew-close till the storm had blown over, and his pardon was signed, he once more took a house in Holborn, near Red Lion Fields; and thence removed to Jewin-street, near Aldersgate. All these places have been rebuilt, and no house of Milton is now to be found in these thickly-populated parts. People have often wondered why Milton always showed such a preference for the city. There are many reasons. In the first place, he was born and brought up till his seventeenth year in it; the associations of youth form strong attractions. In the second, as Dr. Johnson considerately tells us, Aldersgate-street and the like were not then so much out of the world as now. Besides this, after the Restoration, it would be far more agreeable to Milton to be at some distance from the West End, where cavaliers and courtiers were now flaunting with newly-revived insolence; and nothing but taunts, insults, and the hearing of strange and most odious doings, could have awaited him. Here Milton married his third and last wife, Elizabeth Minshull, of a good family in Cheshire, with whom he seems to have lived in great affection; so much so, that he wished to leave her all that was left him of his property. [Pg 108]

From Jewin-street he made his last remove, as to his London residences, into Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields. Bunhill Fields were probably, in those days, open, and airy, and quiet; at present, with the exception of the Artillery Ground itself, and the thickly-populated burial-ground which contains the bones of Bunyan and De Foe, the whole of that neighborhood is covered with a dense mass of modern houses. Artillery Walk, Bunhill Fields, is no longer to be found. The nearest approach that you get, even to the name, is Artillery Place, Bunhill Row, which is merely a row of new houses adjoining the Artillery Ground, and a new church, which has been erected in that busy, ordinary, and dingy street, still called Bunhill Row. Besides an Art of Logic, his Treatise on True Religion, Heresie, Schism, Toleration, and what best means *may be used against the growth of Popery*; his Familiar Letters in Latin; and a translation of a Latin Declaration of the Poles in favor of John III., their heroic sovereign—the last two published in the last year of his life; his residence in Bunhill Fields was made remarkable by the publication of Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes. He left, moreover, in manuscript, a Brief History of Muscovy, and of other less known Countries lying Eastward of Russia as far as Cathay, which was published in 1682, and his System of Theology, which was long supposed to have perished, but has been recovered and published of late years, much to the scandal of the orthodox.

Thus to the last did this wonderful man live and labor. Never did any man less "vapor away his patriotism." There is something singularly interesting and impressive in our idea of him, as he calmly passed his latter days in his quiet habitation in Bunhill Fields. He had outlived the great battle of king and people, in which extraordinary men and as extraordinary events had arisen, and shaken the whole civilized world. Charles I., Laud, and Strafford had fallen in their blood; the monarchy and the Church had fallen. Pym, Hampden, Marvel, Vane, and the dictator Cromwell, had not only pulled down the greatest throne in Europe, but had made all others seem to reel by [Pg 109]

the terrific precedent. All these stern agents, with the generals Ireton, Harrison, Lambert, Fleetwood, and their compeers, who had risen from the people to fight for the people, were gone, like the actors in an awful tragedy who had played their rôle; some had perished in their blood, others had been torn from their graves; the monarchy and the Church, the peerage and all the old practices and maxims, were again in the ascendant, and had taken bloody vengeance; yet this one man, he who had incited and applauded, who had defended and made glorious, through his eloquence and his learning, the whole Republican cause, was left untouched. As if some especial guardianship of Providence had shielded him, or as if the very foes who pulled the dreaded Cromwell from his grave, feared the imprecations of posterity, and shrunk from the touch of that sacred head—there sat the sublime old man at his door, feeling with grateful enjoyment the genial sunshine fall on him. There he sat, erect, serene, calm, and trusting to God the Father of mankind. He had lived even to fulfill that long-deferred task of poetic glory; the vision of Paradise Lost passed before him, and had been sung forth in the most majestic strains that had ever made classical the English tongue. His trust in Providence had been justified; he had served his country, and had yet not missed his immortality. The great and the wise came from every quarter [Pg 110] to converse with him; and the wonderful passages through which he and his nation had lived, were food for the musings of the longest day or the most solitary moments.

Many have thought that those melancholy lines in Samson Agonistes, commencing

"O loss of sight! of thee I most complain,"

were his own wretched cogitations. But Milton, unlike Samson, had no weak seductions from the path of his great duty to reproach himself with; and far likelier were it that the whole apostrophe to light, spoken in his own character in the opening of the third book of Paradise Lost, was the more usual expression of his feelings:

"Thee I revisit safe,
And feel thy sov'ran, vital lamp; but thou
Revisit'st not these eyes, that roll in vain
To find thy piercing ray, and find no dawn;
So thick a drop serene hath quenched their orbs,
Or dim suffusion veil'd. Yet, not the more
Cease I to wander where the Muses haunt
Clear spring, or shady grove, or sunny hill,
Smit with the love of sacred song; but chief
Thee, Sion, and the flowery brooks beneath,
That wash thy hallowed feet, and warbling flow,
Nightly I visit: nor sometimes forget
Those other two equaled with me in fate,
So were I equaled with them in renown,
Blind Thamyris and blind Mæonides,
And Tiresias and Phineus, prophets old:
Then feed on thoughts, that voluntary move
Harmonious numbers; as the wakeful bird
Sings darkling, and, in shadiest covert hid,
Tunes her nocturnal note."

Such is the view that Richardson has given us of him in his declining days: "An ancient clergyman, of Dorsetshire, Dr. Wright, found John Milton in a small chamber hung with rusty green, sitting in an elbow-chair, and dressed neatly in black; pale, but not cadaverous; his hands [Pg 111] and fingers gouty, and with chalk stones. He used, also, to sit in a gray, coarse cloth coat, at the door of his house in Bunhill Fields, in warm, sunny weather, to enjoy the fresh air; and so, as well as in his room, received the visits of people of distinguished parts as well as quality."

Much pains have been taken to represent Milton as morose and exacting in domestic life; and as proof of it has been adduced, the leaving of him by his first wife, and the statement that he made his daughters read to him in Latin and Greek, though he would not allow them to learn a syllable of those languages. If these things were true, I should be the last man to defend them, or to endeavor to gloss them over; but they are at least very doubtful. We must remember that these were the charges of his enemies, and they were many and bitter, and by no means truthful. The causes for his wife's desertion we have already examined, and they reflect discredit on her and her family, and not on him. In that account, all that is generous and honorable lies on his side. As to his daughters, probably they did not wish to learn the classical languages; and how they could read in them, while ignorant of them, so as to satisfy his ear, is not so easily conceivable, when we recollect that when Elwood did not understand what he was reading, he immediately detected it, and stopped him. Be this, however, as it may, Dr. Newton tells us, that all who had written accounts of Milton agreed that "he was affable and instructive in conversation, and of an equal and cheerful temper." It is not so easy to excuse him for refusing to leave any of his property to his daughters, "because they had been very undutiful to him." No doubt he had much to complain of in that disposition which they had imbibed from their mother and her family, but it became a great man, like Milton, to cherish a great affection toward his own children, and to manifest toward them a great forgiveness.

There is an episode in the later life of Milton which we are made acquainted with by Thomas [Pg 112] Elwood, the Quaker, and which has something very pleasing and picturesque about it. It is that of his abode at Chalfont St. Giles, in Buckinghamshire. Elwood, who was the son of a country justice

of peace, was one among the first converts to Quakerism, and has left us a most curious and amusing autobiography. In this he tells us that, while Milton lived in Jewin-street, he was introduced to him as a reader, the recompense to Elwood being that of deriving the advantage of a better knowledge of the classics, and of the foreign pronunciation of Latin. A great regard sprung up between Milton and his reader, who was a man, not only of great integrity of mind, but of a quaint humor and a poetical taste. On the breaking out of the plague in London, Milton, who was then living in Bunhill Fields, wrote to Elwood, who had found an asylum in the house of an affluent Quaker, at Chalfont, to procure him a lodging there. He did so; but before Milton could take possession of his country retreat, Elwood, with numbers of other Quakers, was hurried off to Aylesbury jail. The persecution of that sect subsiding for a while, Elwood, on his liberation, paid Milton a visit, and received the MS. of Paradise Lost to take home and read. With this, Elwood had the sense to be greatly delighted, and, in returning it, said, "Thou hast said a great deal upon *Paradise Lost*; what hast thou to say upon *Paradise Found*?" Milton was silent a moment, as pondering on what he had heard, and then began to converse on other subjects. When, however, Elwood visited him afterward in London, Milton showed him the *Paradise Regained*, saying, "This is owing to you, for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont; which before I had not thought of."

Thus, in this abode at Chalfont, we hear the first mention of Paradise Lost, and to it we owe Paradise Regained. It is supposed that Milton wrote the whole of the latter poem there, and that he must have done, or the greater part of it, from his being able so soon after his return to show it to Elwood. [Pg 113]

It says much for the proprietors of the cottage at Chalfont, and for the feeling of the country in general, that this simple dwelling has been sacredly preserved to this time. You see that all the others near it are much more modern. This is of the old framed timber kind, and is known, not only to the whole village, but the whole country round, as Milton's house. Mr. Dunster, in the additions to his edition of Paradise Regained, says that the cottage at Chalfont "is not pleasantly situated; that the adjacent country is extremely pleasant; but the immediate spot is as little picturesque or pleasing as can well be imagined." He might have recollected, that it could signify very little to Milton whether the spot was picturesque or not, if it were quiet, and had a good air; for Milton was, and had been, long quite blind. But, in fact, the situation, though not remarkably striking, is by no means unpleasing. It is the first cottage on the right hand as you descend the road from Beaconsfield to Chalfont St. Giles.

Standing a little above the cottage, the view before you is very interesting. The quiet old agricultural village of Chalfont lies in the valley, amid woody uplands, which are seen all round. The cottage stands facing you, with its gable turned to the road, and fronting into its little garden and field. A row of ordinary cottages is built at its back, and face the road below. To the right ascends the grass field mentioned; but this, with extensive old orchards above the house, is pleasing to the eye, presenting an idea of quiet, rural repose, and of meditative walks in the shade of the orchard-trees, or up the field, to the breezy height above. Opposite to the house, on the other side of the way, is a wheelwright's dwelling, with his timber reared among old trees, and above it a chalk-pit, grown about with bushes. This is as rural as you can desire. The old house is covered in front with a vine; bears all the marks of antiquity; and is said by its [Pg 114] inhabitant, a tailor, to have been but little altered. There was, he says, an old porch at the door, which stood till it fell with age. Here we may well imagine Milton sitting, in the sunny weather, as at Bunhill Fields, and enjoying the warmth, and the calm sweet air. Could he have seen the view which here presented itself, it would have been agreeable; for though in this direction the ascending ground shuts out distant prospect, its green and woody upland would be itself a pleasant object of contemplation; shutting out all else, and favorable to thought. The house below consists of two rooms, the one on the left, next to the road, a spacious one, though low, and with its small diamond casements suggesting to you that it is much as when Milton inhabited it. Here he no doubt lived principally; and to all probability, here was Paradise Regained dictated to his amanuensis, most likely at that time his wife, Elizabeth Minshull. The worthy tailor and his apprentice were now mounted on a table in it, busily pursuing their labor.

Outside, over the door, is an armorial escutcheon, at the foot of which is painted, in bold letters, MILTON. The old man, who was very civil and communicative, said that it was not really the escutcheon of Milton, but of General Fleetwood, who purchased the house for Milton, and who at that time lived at the manor-house, and lies buried in the church here. Of this, Elwood tells us nothing, but, on the contrary, that he procured the house for Milton. Whether this escutcheon be really Fleetwood's or not, I had no means of ascertaining, as it was not only very indistinct, but too high to examine without a ladder; but as Milton's armorial bearing contained spread eagles, and as there were birds in the shield, it no doubt had been intended for Milton by those who placed it there. Fleetwood's living at Chalfont might be an additional reason for Milton's choosing it for his then retreat; but Elwood, and not Fleetwood, took the house, and it is doubtful even whether Fleetwood was still living, being one of the regicides condemned, but never executed. [Pg 115] Independent, however, of any other consideration, Milton had many old associations with Buckinghamshire, which would recommend it to him; and in summer the air amid the heaths and parks of this part of the country is peculiarly soft, delicious, and fragrant.

We come now to Milton's last house, the narrow house appointed for all living, in which he laid his bones beside those of his father. This was in the church of St. Giles, Cripplegate. He died on Sunday, the 8th of November, 1674, and was buried on the 12th. His funeral is stated to have been very splendidly and numerously attended. By the parish registry we find that he was buried in the chancel: "John Milton, gentleman. Consumption. Chancell. 12. Nov., 1674." Dr. Johnson

supposed that he had no inscription, but Aubrey distinctly states that "when the two steppes to the communion-table were raysed in 1690, his stone was removed." Milton's grave remained a whole century without a mark to point out where the great poet lay, till in 1793 Mr. Whitbread erected a bust and an inscription to his memory. What is more, there is every reason to believe that his remains were, on this occasion of raising the chancel and removing the stone, disturbed. The coffin was disinterred and opened, and numbers of relic-hunters were eager to seize and convey off fragments of his bones. The matter at the time occasioned a sharp controversy, and the public were at length persuaded to believe that they were not the remains of Milton, but of a female, that by mistake had been thus treated. But when the workmen had the inscribed stone before them, and dug down directly below it, what doubt can there be that the remains were those of the poet? By an alteration in the church when it was repaired in 1682, that which was the old chancel ceased to be the present one, and the remains of Milton thus came to lie in the great central aisle. The monument erected by Whitbread marks, as near as possible, the place. [Pg 116] The bust is by Bacon. It is attached to a pillar, and beneath it is this inscription:

JOHN MILTON,
Author of Paradise lost,[7]
Born Dec$^{r.}$, 1608.
Died Nov$^{r.}$, 1674.
His father, John Milton, died March, 1646.
They were both interred in this church.

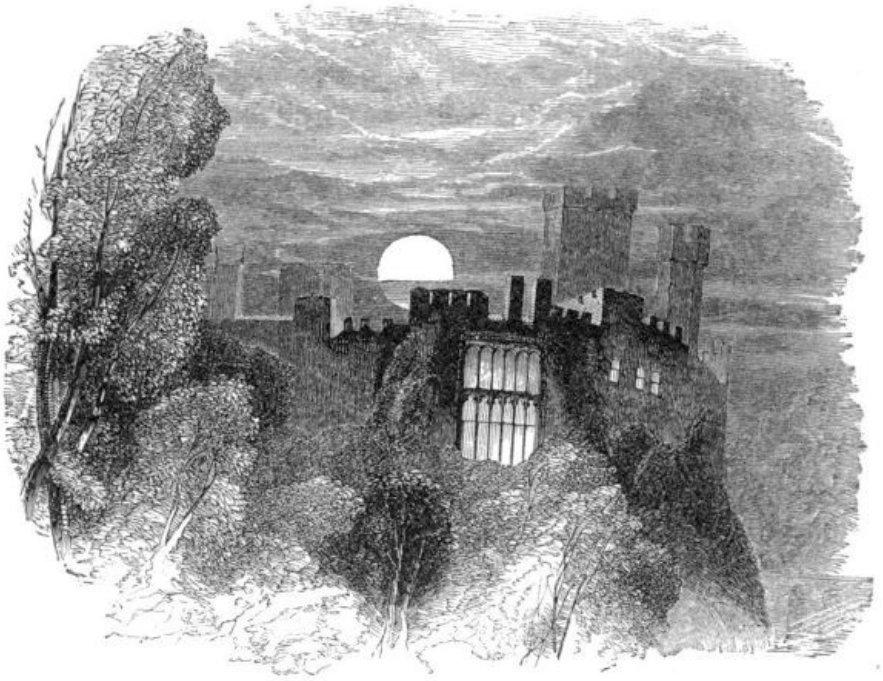
......*...*

Samuel Whitbread posuit, 1793.

This church is remarkable for the marriage of Oliver Cromwell having taken place in it, and for being the burial-place of many eminent men. In the chancel, in close neighborhood with Milton, lay old John Speed, the chronicler, and Fox, the martyrologist, whose monuments still remain on the wall. That of Speed is his bust, in doublet and ruff, with his right hand resting on a book, and his left on a skull. It is a niche, representing one of the folding shrines still seen in Catholic churches on the Continent. There is a monument, also, seen there, to a lady of the family of Sir Thomas Lucy, of Shakspeare notoriety; and another of some noble person, having beneath the armorial escutcheon an opening representing skulls, bones, and flames, within a barred grating, supposed to be symbolic of purgatory. The burial-ground of Bunhill Fields, where Bunyan and De Foe lie, belongs also to this parish, and their interments are contained in the registry of this church.

Thus the Prince of Poets, as Hazlitt styled him, sleeps in good company. The times in which he lived, and the part he took in them, were certain to load his name with obloquy and misrepresentation; but the solemn dignity of his life, and the lofty tone and principle of his writings, more and more suffice not only to vindicate him, but to commend him to posterity. No man ever loved liberty and virtue with a purer affection; no man ever labored in their cause with [Pg 117] a more distinguished zeal; no man ever brought to the task a more glorious genius, accomplished with a more consummate learning. Milton was the noblest model of a devoted patriot and true Englishman; and the study of his works is the most certain means of perpetuating to his country spirits worthy of her greatness.

[Pg 118]



SAMUEL BUTLER.

"In the midst of obscurity passed the life of Butler, a man whose name can only perish with his language. The mode and place of his education are unknown; the events of his life are variously related; and all that can be told with certainty is, that he was poor."

Such are the expressive words with which Dr. Johnson winds up his meager account of the witty author of Hudibras. A more significant finish to a poet's biography could scarcely be given. A more striking instance of national neglect, and the ingratitude of posterity, is nowhere to be found.

Strensham, in Warwickshire, claims the honor of his birth. His father is said to have been an honest farmer there, with a small estate, who made a shift to educate his son at the grammar-school at Worcester, whence he is supposed to have gone to the university, but whether of Oxford or Cambridge, is matter of dispute. His brother asserted that it was Cambridge, but could not tell [Pg 119] at which hall or college. Dr. Nash discovered that his father was owner of a house and a little land, worth about eight pounds a year, which, in Johnson's time, was still called *Butler's tenement*.

When we consider the humble position of the father, we can only wonder that he contrived to give him an education at a classical school at all, and may very well doubt, with the great lexicographer, whether he in reality ever did study at Cambridge. Having, however, given his son a learned education, his resources were exhausted, he had no patronage, and the young man became, and might probably think himself fortunate in doing so, a clerk to a justice of peace, Mr. Jefferys, of Earl's Croomb, in Worcestershire. Here he appears to have passed an easy and agreeable life. "He had," says Johnson, "not only leisure for study, but for recreation; his amusements were music and painting; and the reward of his pencil was the friendship of the celebrated Cooper. Some pictures, said to be his, were shown to Dr. Nash at Earl's Croomb; but when he inquired for them some years afterward, he found them destroyed to stop windows, and owns that they hardly deserved a better fate."

From this gentleman's service he passed into that of the Countess of Kent. The celebrated John Selden was then steward of the countess, and it was probably through him, or for his purposes, that Butler was introduced into the family. He was much noticed by Selden, and employed by him as an amanuensis. Whether this was the actual capacity in which he stood in the family of the countess, is, like almost every other event of his life, however, quite unknown. One thing seems certain, that, both at Mr. Jefferys' and here, he had been turned loose into great libraries, the sort of pasture that he of all others liked, and had devoured their contents to some purpose, as is manifested in his writings. These were the real colleges at which he studied, and where he laid [Pg 120] up enormous masses of information.

His next remove was into the family of Sir Samuel Luke, one of Cromwell's officers. This was the decisive circumstance of his life. Sir Samuel was the hero of his future poem—the actual Hudibras. But he was here in the very center of republican action, and sectarian opinion and discussion. In Sir Samuel he had a new and rich study of character; in those about him, a new world, abounding with all sorts of persons, passages, and doctrines, which made him feel that he also had a world unknown still in himself, that of satirical fun infinite. Into this world he absorbed all the new views of things; the strange shapes that came to and fro; the strange phraseology and sounds of conventicle hymns that assailed his ears. The historian and poet of the new land of Goshen, where all was light, while the neighboring Egypt of royalty was all in darkness, was born

into it; and Hudibras, and his Squire Ralph, Sidrophel, Talgol and Trulla, the Bear and Fiddle, all sprung into immortal existence.

The story of the utter neglect of Butler by the king and court, at the time that not only they, but all Royalists in the kingdom, were bursting with laughter over Hudibras, is too well known. Once it was hoped that he was on the verge of good fortune, and Mr. Wycherley was to introduce him to the all-powerful Duke of Buckingham. The story of this interview is too characteristic to be passed over.

"Mr. Wycherley," says Packe, "had always laid hold of an opportunity which offered of representing to the Duke of Buckingham how well Mr. Butler had deserved of the royal family, by writing his inimitable Hudibras, and that it was a reproach to the court that a person of his loyalty and wit should suffer in obscurity, and under the want he did. The duke always seemed to hearken to him with attention enough; and after some time undertook to recommend his [Pg 121] pretensions to his majesty. Mr. Wycherley, in hopes to keep him steady to his word, obtained of his grace to name a day when he might introduce that modest and unfortunate poet to his new patron. At last an appointment was made, and the place of meeting was agreed to be the Roebuck. Mr. Butler and his friend attended accordingly; the duke joined them; but, as the d—l would have it, the door of the room where they sat was open, and his grace, who had seated himself near it, observing a pimp of his acquaintance—the creature, too, was a knight—trip by with a brace of ladies, immediately quitted his engagement to follow another kind of business, at which he was more ready than at doing good offices to men of desert, though no one was better qualified than he, both in regard of his fortune and understanding, to protect them; and from that time to the day of his death, poor Butler never found the least effect of his promise!"

The brightest gleam of his life would seem to be between his quitting Sir Samuel Luke's and the publication of his Hudibras; but when this exactly took place, and how long this lasted, we are not informed. It must, however, have taken place between the king's return, which was in 1659, and 1664, some five years or so. During this period he was made secretary to the Earl of Carberry, president of the principality of Wales, who made him steward of Ludlow Castle when the Court of Marches was revived.

This was a post in which a poet might feel himself well placed. This ancient castle of the Lacys and Mortimers stands at the west end of the town of Ludlow, on a bold rock, overlooking the River Corve, and near the confluence of that river and the Teme. Many striking events had occurred here since the time that William the Conqueror bestowed it on Roger de Montgomery, from whose descendants it passed successively into the hands of the crown, the Warines, the Lacys, and the Mortimers. On the borders of Wales, it was a strong-hold for the crown of England, and after it fell again into the hands of the king, became the palace of the President of [Pg 122] the Marches, and often the residence of princes. Here the young king Edward V. lived, and left it only to proceed to London into the murderous hands of his uncle, Richard III., who, within two months of his quitting this quiet asylum, had him and his brother smothered in the Tower. Here Prince Arthur, eldest son of Henry VII., was married to Catharine of Aragon, who, after his death, was married to his brother, Henry VIII.; her divorce finally leading to the Reformation in England. Here Sir Philip Sidney's father, Sir Henry Sidney, had lived, as President of the Marches; and many a scene of splendor and festivity had lit up the venerable towers, on the occasion of royal visits, and other seasons of rejoicing. Above all, it was for one of those occasions that the youthful Milton had composed his Comus; and on a visit of Charles I., in 1631, to the Earl of Bridgwater, then President of the Marches, it was performed before him, the work being founded on a real incident occurring in the lord president's own family, which is thus related by Nightingale: "When he had entered on his official residence, he was visited by a large assembly of the neighboring nobility and gentry. His sons, the Lord Brackley and Sir Thomas Egerton, and his daughter, the Lady Alice, being on their journey,

> 'To attend their father's state,
> And new intrusted scepter,'

were benighted in Haywood Forest, in Herefordshire, and the lady for a short time was lost. The adventure being related to their father on their arrival at the castle, Milton, at the request of his friend, Henry Lawes, who taught music in the family, wrote the Mask. Lawes set it to music, and it was acted on Michaelmas night; the two brothers, the young lady, and Lawes himself, each bearing a part in the representation."

This single circumstance of being the scene of the first representation of the Mask of Comus, one [Pg 123] of Milton's most beautiful compositions, has given a perpetual interest to Ludlow Castle.

The genius of Butler was of a different stamp. It wanted the sublimity, the pathos, and tender sensibilities of that of Milton; but, on the other hand, for perception of the ridiculous; for a diving into the closest folds of cant and fanatical pretense; for a rough, bold, and humorous power of sketching ordinary life, it was unrivaled. A tower is still shown as the place where he wrote a part of his Hudibras. Whether it be the precise fact or not, it is idle to inquire. There our author has resided; there he is said to have written something or other, and the very room and spot of its composition are pointed out. It is best not to be too critical; and, on the other hand, if we believe, in general, that where a man of genius has lived he has also written, we shall seldom be far wrong. There is little doubt that here Butler, possessed of more leisure and independence than at any other period of his life, did really revise and prepare his work for press, of which the first part was published in 1663, and the second in the year following.

Here he married Mrs. Herbert, a lady of good family, with whom he lived in comfort, if not in

affluence. Of the place where Comus was first acted by the real personages of it, and where Butler brought forth his Hudibras, some idea may be gratifying to the reader. It was deserted in the first year of William and Mary, in consequence of the dissolution of the Court of the Marches. From an inventory of the goods found in Ludlow Castle, bearing date 1708, in the eleventh year of Queen Anne, there appeared to be then forty rooms entire. Many of the royal apartments were in that condition; and the couch of state and the velvet hangings were preserved. In the chapel there were still to be seen on the panels many coats of arms; and in the hall many of the same kind of ornaments, together with lances, spears, firelocks, and old armor. On the accession of [Pg 124] George I., an order came down to unroof the buildings, and strip them of their lead. Decay consequently ensued. Several panels bearing the arms of the lords president were converted into wainscoting for a public house in the town, a former owner of which enriched himself by the sale of materials clandestinely carried away. There remains, also, a rich embroidered carpet, hung up in the chancel of St. Lawrence's Church, said to be part of the covering of the council-board. The Earl of Powis, who previously held the castle in virtue of a long lease, acquired the reversion in fee by purchase from the crown in 1811.

The whole is now a scene of venerable ruin. The castle rises from the point of a headland, and its foundations are ingrafted into a bare gray rock. The north front consists of square towers with high connecting walls, which are embattled with deep interstices; and the old fosse, and part of the rock, have been formed into walks, which in 1722 were planted with beech, elm, and lime trees by the Countess of Powis, and those trees, now grown to maturity, add exceedingly to the dignity and beauty of the scene. Through a chasm on the west runs the broad and shallow River Teme. It were too long to describe all this mass of ruins, with its various courts, remains of barracks, and escutcheoned walls. The first view of the interior of the castle is fine. The court is an irregular square area, not very spacious, but the lofty embattled structures with which it is surrounded, though in ruin, still preserve their original outlines. The spacious hall is of sixty feet by thirty, the height about thirty-five feet, and is ornamented with a door with a beautiful pointed arch. The once elegant saloon, where the splendid scene of Comus was first exhibited; where chivalry exhausted her choicest stores, both of invention and wealth, and where hospitality and magnificence blazed for many ages in succession, without diminution or decay, is now totally [Pg 125] dilapidated, and neither roof nor floor remains.

From the time of Butler's quitting this scene of his ease and happiness, he seems to have experienced only poverty and neglect. His wife's fortune is said to have been lost through bad securities; his expectations from the royal person, or the royal party whom he had so immensely served, were wholly disappointed; and in 1680 he died, where, on the authority of the son of his truest friend and benefactor, Mr. Longueville, he had lived some years, in Rose-street, Covent Garden. Mr. Longueville exerted himself to raise a subscription for his interment in Westminster Abbey, but in vain; he therefore buried him at his own cost in the church-yard of Covent Garden. About sixty years afterward, Mr. Bailey, a painter, Mayor of London, and a friend to Butler's principles, bestowed on him that monument in Westminster Abbey, which is well known.

Such were the life, fortunes, and death of the author of Hudibras, whose name, as Johnson justly observes, can only perish with his language. It was his misfortune to look for protection to a monarch, who only protected courtesans, and the most disgusting of libertines. Butler should have been a pimp, and not a poet, and he would soon have found employment enough. His neglect is but one opprobrium more added to the memory of a monarch, whose whole life was a nuisance and a disgrace to the country which tolerated him.

[Pg 126]

JOHN DRYDEN.

Dryden should have been transferred to the volume of the dramatic poets if the quality of his dramas had borne any relative proportion to their quantity, or to the quality of his poetry; but it is the latter which gives him his great and lasting distinction. They are his Satires, and Fables, and Translations; his Absalom and Achitophel; his Hind and Panther; his Palemon and Arcite; the Flower and the Leaf; and, in short, all those racy and beautiful stories which he threw into modern poetry from Chaucer and Boccacio; with his Virgil, and lyrical compositions, and, at the head of these, his Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, that stamp his character with the English public as one of the most vigorous, harmonious, and truly British writers. Dryden displayed no great powers of creation; perhaps the literary hurry of his life prevented this; but he contemplated for years a national epic on Prince Arthur, and probably, had he possessed perfect leisure for carrying out this design, he would have astonished us as much with the display of that faculty as [Pg 127] he delights us with the masterly vigor of his reasoning powers; with his harmony and nerve of style; and with the stiletto stabs of his annihilating satire. But from any necessity of criticism on his genius, the familiar acquaintance of every true lover of poetry with the merits and beauties which have fixed his immortality, fortunately for my space, fully exempts me. Even over the long succession of literary events in his life we must pass, and fix our attention on his homes and haunts. For nearly forty years, from 1660 to 1700, he was before the public as an active author; and on the disappearance of Milton from the field of life, he became, and continued to be, the most marked man of his time; yet it is astonishing how little is known of his town haunts and habits. Of his publications, the appearance of his dramas, the controversies into which he fell with his literary cotemporaries, his change of religion, and his clinging to the despotic government of the Stuarts, we know enough; but of his home life next to nothing. That he lived in Gerrard-street, and was a constant frequenter of Will's Coffee-house, Covent Garden, seems to be almost all that is known of his town resorts. Like Addison, and most literary men who have married titled ladies, he did not find it contribute much to his comfort. His wife was Lady Elizabeth Howard, the eldest daughter of the Earl of Berkshire, and sister of his friend, Sir Robert Howard. Her temper is said to have been very peculiar, and that she looked down on Dryden as of inferior rank, though he was descended from a very old family, mixed with the most distinguished men of the nobility, and *was* the *first man* of his time; but conceit or the blindness of aristocratic pride do not alter the real nature or proportion of things, except in the vision of the person afflicted with them. Dryden was the great personage, and his titled wife the little one, and on him, therefore, lay the constant pressure of the unequal yoke he bore.

What, no doubt, rendered the conduct of his wife worse, was the pride of her family on the one [Pg 128] hand, and the unlucky connection of Dryden's brothers with ordinary trades. His family, and that of his mother, the Pickerings, had taken a decided part during the civil wars for the Parliament, while that of his wife had been as zealous on the Royalist side. Besides this, Erasmus, his immediate younger brother, was in trade in King-street, Westminster; James, the fourth brother, was a tobacconist in London; one of his sisters was married to a bookseller in Little Britain, and another to a tobacconist in Newgate-street; these would be dreadful alliances to a family proud and poor. "No account," says Mitford, in his life of the poet, "has been transmitted of the person of Dryden's wife, nor has any portrait of her been discovered. I am afraid her personal attractions were not superior to her mental endowments; that her temper was wayward, and that the purity of her character was sullied by some early indiscretions. A letter from Lady Elizabeth to her son at Rome is preserved, as remarkable for the elegance of the style as the correctness of the orthography. She says: 'Your father is much at woon as to his health, and his defnese is wosce,

but much as he was when he was heare; give me a true account how my deare son Charles is head dus.' Can this be the lady who had formerly held captive in her chains the gallant Earl of Chesterfield?"

"Lady Elizabeth Dryden," says Scott, "had long disturbed her husband's domestic happiness. 'His invectives,' says Malone, 'against the married state were frequent and bitter, and were continued till the latest period of his life;' and he adds, from most respectable authority, that the family of the poet held no intimacy with his lady, confining their intercourse to mere visits of ceremony. How could they? how could the tobacconist, and the other tobacconist's wife, and the little bookseller's wife of Little Britain, venture under the roof of the proud lady of the proud house of Howard, with 'her weak intellects and her violent temper?'"

A similar alienation, also, it is said, took place between her and her relatives, Sir Robert Howard, perhaps, being excepted; for her brother, the Honorable Edward Howard, talks of Dryden's being engaged in a translation of Virgil as a thing he had learned merely by common report. Her wayward disposition, Malone says, was, however, the effect of a disordered imagination, which, shortly after Dryden's death, degenerated into absolute insanity, in which state she remained until her own death in 1714, probably in the seventy-ninth year of her age. [Pg 129]

Poor Dryden! what with his wife—consort one can not call her, and helpmeet she was not—and with a tribe of tobacconist brothers on one hand, and proud Howards on the other; and a host of titled associates, and his bread to dig with his pen, one pities him from one's heart. Well might he, when his wife once said it would be much better for her to be a book than a woman, for then she should have more of his company, reply, "I wish you were, my dear, an almanac, and then I could change you once a year." It is not well to look much into such a home, except for a warning. Yet the outside of that life, like many others, would have deceived an ordinary spectator. There all was brilliant and imposing. "Whether," says Sir Walter Scott, "we judge of the rank which Dryden held in society by the splendor of his titled and powerful friends, or by his connections among men of genius, we must consider him as occupying at one time as high a station, in the very foremost circle, as literary reputation could gain for its owner. Independent of the notice with which he was honored by Charles himself, the poet numbered among his friends most of the distinguished nobility. The great Duke of Ormond had already begun that connection which subsisted between Dryden and three generations of the house of Butler. Thomas Lord Clifford, one of the Cabal ministry, was uniform in patronizing the poet, and appears to have been active in introducing him to the king's favor. The Duke of Newcastle loved him sufficiently to present [Pg 130] him with a play for the stage; the witty Earl of Dorset, then Lord Buckhurst, and Sir Charles Sedley, admired in that loose age for the peculiar elegance of his loose poetry, were his intimate associates, as is evident from the turn of The Essay on Dramatic Poesy, where they are the speakers. Wilmot, earl of Rochester, soon to act a very different part, was then anxious to vindicate Dryden's writings; to mediate for him with those who distributed the royal favor, and was thus careful, not only of his reputation, but his fortune. In short, the author of what was then held the first style of poetry, was sought for by all among the great and gay who wished to maintain some character for literary taste. It was then Dryden enjoyed those genial nights described in the dedication of the Assignation, when 'discourse was neither too serious nor too light, but always pleasant, and for the most part instructive; the raillery neither too sharp upon the present, nor too censorious upon the absent; and the cups such only as raised the conversation of the night, without disturbing the business of the morrow.' He had not yet experienced the disadvantages attendant on such society, or learned how soon literary eminence becomes the object of detraction, of envy, of injury, even from those who can best feel its merit, if they are discouraged by dissipated habits from emulating its flight, or hardened by perverted feeling against loving its possessors." But all this came; and, in the mean time, the poet had to work, like Pegasus in the peasant's cart, for the means to maintain this intercourse with such lofty society. And what did all these great friends do for him? They procured him no good post in return for good services rendered to their party, but the poet's meager office of the laureateship, which, added to that of historiographer to royalty, brought him £200 a year, and his butt of canary. Poor Dryden! with the cross wife, and the barren blaze of aristocracy around him, the poorest coal-heaver need not have envied him.

Neither did "glorious John" escape his share of annoyance from his cotemporaries of the pen, nor [Pg 131] from the publishers. He had a controversy with his friend and brother-in-law, Sir Robert Howard, on the true nature of dramatic poetry, which speedily degenerated into personal bitterness, and a long estrangement. Then came the Rehearsal, that witty farce in which he was ridiculed in the character of Bayes, and his literary productions, as well as personal characteristics, held up to the malicious merriment of the world by a combination of the wits and fashionable pen-men of the time; among them the notorious Villiers, duke of Buckingham, the author of Hudibras, the Bishop of Rochester, and others. The miserable Elkanah Settle was set up as a rival of him; and after these rose in succession the hostile train of the licentious Lord Rochester, Lord Shaftesbury, Milbourne, Blackmore, and others, by whom every species of spite, misrepresentation, and ridicule were for years heaped upon him. Nor did his enemies restrain themselves to the use of the pen in their attacks upon him. One of the most prominent events of Dryden's life is that of a ruffianly attack upon him as he returned from his club at Will's Coffee-house, on a winter's night. Lord Mulgrave had published a satire, called an Essay on Satire, in which Rochester and other wits and profligates of the time were introduced. The poem was a wretched affair; but Dryden, to oblige Mulgrave, had undertaken to revise it. Much labor he could not have bestowed upon it, it was so flat and poor; but Rochester thought fit to attribute it to Dryden himself; and a set of ruffians, supposed to be hired by him and the Duchess of Portsmouth, who had been also reflected on, fell on the poet as he passed through Rose-street,

Covent Garden, on his way from Will's Coffee-house to his own house in Gerrard-street. A reward of £50 was in vain offered in the London Gazette and other newspapers for the discovery of the perpetrators of the outrage. The beating was, in those loose times, thought a good joke. The Rose Alley ambuscade became almost proverbial; and even Mulgrave, the real author of the satire, and upon whose shoulders the blows ought in justice to have descended, in his Art of Poetry, thus mentions the circumstance with a pitiful sneer: [Pg 132]

> "Though praised and punished for another's rhymes,
> His own deserve as great applause *sometimes*."

Thus attacked with pens and cudgels by the envious writers of the day, Dryden was nearly starved by the booksellers. On one occasion, provoked by the refusal of timely supplies by Jacob Tonson, he did not do as Johnson did by Cave, knock him down with a quarto, but ran him through with a triplet, describing the bibliopole's person:

> "With leering looks, bull-faced, and freckled fair,
> With two left legs, and Judas-colored hair,
> And frowzy pores that taint the ambient air."

"Tell the dog," said the poet to the messenger by whom he sent these complimentary lines, "that he who wrote these can write more." But he needed not to write more; they were as effective as he could desire. Jacob, however, on his part, could make his tongue as pungent as Dryden could his verse. Johnson, in the "Life of Dryden," relates that Lord Bolingbroke one day making a call on Dryden, he heard another person enter the house. "That," said Dryden, "is Tonson. You will take care not to depart before he goes away; for I have not completed the sheet which I promised him; and if you leave me unprotected, I shall suffer all the rudeness to which his resentment can prompt his tongue."

Perhaps the happiest hours of Dryden's life, next to those spent over his finest compositions in his study, were passed at Will's Coffee-house. After dinner, at two o'clock, he used to repair thither, where assembled all the most famous men of the time. There he reigned supreme. He had a chair placed for him by the chimney in winter, and near the balcony in summer; where, says his biographer, he pronounced, *ex cathedrâ*, his opinions upon new publications, and in general upon all matters of doubtful criticism. Latterly, all who had occasion to ridicule and attack him, represent him as presiding in this little senate. His opinions, however, were not maintained with dogmatism, but he listened to criticism, provided it was just, from whatever unexpected and undignified quarter it happened to come. In general, however, it may be supposed that few ventured to dispute his opinion, or to place themselves in the gap between him and the object of his censure. [Pg 133]

Dryden's house, which he appears to have resided in from the period of his marriage till his death, was, as I have said, in Gerrard-street; the fifth on the left hand, coming from Little Newport-street, now No. 43. The back windows looked upon the gardens of Leicester House, of which circumstance the poet availed himself to pay a handsome compliment to the noble owner. His excursions to the country seem to have been frequent; perhaps the more so, as Lady Elizabeth always remained in town. In his latter days, the friendship of his relations, John Dryden, of Chesterton, and Mrs. Steward, of Cotterstock, rendered their houses agreeable places of abode to the aged poet. They appear, also, to have had a kind solicitude about his little comforts, of value infinitely beyond the contributions they made toward aiding him.

The principal traits of his domestic life have been collected together by Malone. From these, and from the pen of Congreve, we learn that he was, in youth, of handsome form and agreeable countenance; modest in his manner, reluctant to intrude himself on the notice and company of others, easily chilled and rebuffed by any thing like a distant behavior. He is described as most amiable and affectionate in his family, generous beyond his means, and most forgiving of injuries; all noble traits of character. Malone related, on the authority of Lady Dryden, that at that time the poet's little estate at Blakesley was occupied by one Harriots, grandson of the tenant who held it in Dryden's time, who stated that his grandfather used to take great pleasure in talking of him. He was, he said, the easiest and the kindest landlord in the world; and never raised the rent during the whole time he possessed the estate. The two most unfortunate circumstances in his life, next to his marriage, was his going over from Puritanism to popery, and from the liberal opinions of his family to the adherence of the worst of kings. For these changes it would be difficult to assign any better motive than that of mending his fortunes. But if this were the case, he was bitterly punished for it in both instances. The monarchs that he flattered were Stuarts, and the last of them being driven out, left him to encounter all the scorn, the sarcasms and sacrifices that were sure to come against him with the Dutch monarch of 1688. He was, instead of gaining more from royalty by his change, deprived of that which he had—the laureateship and office of historiographer; and saw them conferred, with £300 a year, on his unworthy rival, Shadwell. The change of his religion was equally unpropitious. His sons became more connected with Rome than England. Charles, the eldest, was chamberlain of the household of Pope Innocent XII., but having suffered by a fall from a horse, he returned to England, and was drowned in attempting to swim across the Thames at Datchett, near Windsor, in August, 1704. The second son, John, also went to Rome, and acted as the deputy of Charles, in the pope's household; he died at Rome. Both of these sons were poetical, and published. Erasmus Henry, the third son, went also to Rome, and became a captain in the pope's guards. He afterward returned to England, and succeeded to the family title of baronet, but not to the estate of Canons-Ashby, where he, however, continued to live with the proprietor, Edward Dryden, his cousin, till his [Pg 134]

death in 1710. Thus terminated the race of the great satiric poet.

In the county of Northampton there are various places connected with Dryden. He was of the old [Pg 135]
family of the Drydens, or Dridens, of Canons-Ashby, which family there still remains. The poet was born at the parsonage-house of Aldwinkle All-Saints. His father was Erasmus Dryden, and his mother Mary Pickering, the daughter of the rector of Aldwinkle, a son of the well-known Sir Gilbert Pickering, a zealous Puritan. It appears that our author's father lived at Tichmarsh, and that his son was born under his grandfather's roof. At Tichmarsh, accordingly, we find Dryden receiving his first education, whence he proceeded to Westminster, and studied under Dr. Busby, and thence to Cambridge.

Scott says, "If we can believe an ancient tradition, the poem of the 'Hind and Panther' was chiefly composed in a country retirement at Rushton, in Northamptonshire. There was an embowered walk at this place, which, from the pleasure which the poet took in it, retained the name of Dryden's Walk; and here was erected, about the middle of the last century, an urn, with the following inscription: 'In memory of Dryden, who frequented these shades, and is here said to have composed his poem of "The Hind and Panther."'"

This spot was, no doubt, the old house and park of the Treshams; that old, zealous Catholic family, of which one member, Sir Francis Tresham, played so conspicuous a part in the Gunpowder Plot. This Sir Francis Tresham had been actively engaged in the affair of the Earl of Essex, and his head had only been rescued from the block by his father bribing *a great lady*, and some people about the court, with several thousand pounds. This business was so closely veiled, that for some time the direct proofs of Tresham's connection with the business escaped the hands of the historians. The late examinations into the treasures of the State Paper Office have, however, made this fact, like so many others, clear. Long ago, also, original documents, fully proving it, fell into the hands of Mr. Baker, the excellent historian of Northamptonshire, including [Pg 136]
an admirable love-letter by this Sir Francis, who, notwithstanding his narrow escape, again rushed into the Gunpowder Treason, being a near relation of Catesby, the prime actor in it. The movements of Tresham in the matter have all the character of those of an actor in some strange romance. From the moment that he was admitted to the secret, Catesby was struck with inward terror and misgivings. Tresham augmented this alarm by beginning soon to plead warmly for warning the Lords Stourton and Mounteagle, who had married his sisters. A few days after, he suddenly came upon Catesby, Winter, and Fawkes, in Enfield Chase, and reiterated his entreaty. They refused; and then, on the 26th of October, as Lord Mounteagle was sitting at supper, at an old seat of his at Hoxton, which he seldom visited, and to which he had now come suddenly, a letter was brought in by his page, saying, he had received it from a tall man whose face he could not discern in the dark, and who went hastily away. The letter was tossed carelessly by Mounteagle to a gentleman in his service, who read it aloud. It was the very warning which Tresham wished so earnestly to convey to him. Mounteagle, in astonishment, carried the letter to Cecil the next morning, and thus the secret of the impending catastrophe was out. Once more Catesby and Winter appointed a meeting with Tresham in Enfield Chase. Their purpose was to charge him with the warning of Mounteagle, and, if he were found guilty, to stab him to the heart on the spot. But while they told him what had been done, they fixed their eyes searchingly on his countenance; all was clear and firm; not a muscle moved, not a tone faltered; he swore solemn oaths that he was ignorant of the letter, and they let him go. This man, when part of the conspirators were arrested, remained at large; while others fled, he hastened to the council to offer his services in apprehending the rebels. Finally, arrested and conveyed to the Tower himself, there, under torture, he implicated the Jesuits, Garnet and Greenway, in some treason in [Pg 137]
Queen Elizabeth's time, then retracted the confession, and died in agony, as the Catholics believed, of poison. Such was the career and end of this strange man. The family estate passed away into the hands of the Cockaynes, and is now the property of Mr. Hope. Could there be a more inspiring solitude for the composition of a poem, the object of which was to smooth the way for the return of Catholic ascendency, and that by a poet warm with the first fires of a proselyte zeal?

Among other places of Dryden's occasional sojourn may be mentioned Charlton, in Wiltshire, the seat of his wife's father, the Earl of Berkshire, whence he dates the introduction to his Annus Mirabilis; and Chesterton, in Huntingdonshire, the seat of his kinsman, John Driden, where he translated part of Virgil. In the country he delighted in the pastime of fishing, and used, says Malone, to spend some time with Mr. Jones, of Ramsden, in Wiltshire. Durfey was sometimes of this party; but Dryden appears to have underrated his skill in fishing, as much as his attempt at poetry. Hence Fenton, in his epistle to Lambard:

> "By long experience, Durfey may, no doubt,
> Ensnare a gudgeon, or sometimes a trout;
> Yet Dryden once exclaimed in partial spite,
> 'He *fish*!' because the man attempts to write."

And, finally, Canons-Ashby connects itself inevitably with his name. It was the ancient patrimony of the family. It was not his father's, it was not his, or his sons, though the title generally connected with it fell to his son, and there his son lived and died; yet, as the place which gives name and status to the line, it will always maintain an association with the memory of the poet. These are the particulars respecting it collected by Mr. Baker. The mansion of the Drydens, seated in a small deer park, is a singular building of different periods. The oldest part, as early as the beginning of the sixteenth century, or perhaps earlier, is built round a small quadrangle. [Pg 138]
There is a dining-room in the house thirty feet long by twenty feet wide, which is said to be

entirely floored and wainscoted with the timber of one single oak, which grew in this lordship. In this room are various portraits of persons of, and connected with, the family. The drawing-room is traditionally supposed to have been fitted up for the reception of Anne of Denmark, queen of James I. The estate is good, but not so large as formerly, owing to the strange conduct of the late Lady Dryden, who cut off her own children, three sons and two daughters, leaving the whole ancient patrimonial property from them to the son of her lawyer, the lawyer himself refusing to have it, or make such a will. The estate here was, it appears, regained, but only by the sacrifice of one in Lincolnshire. Such are the strange events in the annals of families which local historians rarely record. How little could this lady comprehend the honor lying in the name of Dryden; how much less the nature and duties of a mother.

The monument of the poet in Westminster Abbey is familiar to the public, placed there by Sheffield, duke of Buckingham, bearing only a single word, the illustrious name of—DRYDEN.

[Pg 139]

JOSEPH ADDISON.

Addison was a fortunate man; the houses in which he lived testify it. His fame as a poet, though considerable in his own time, has now dwindled to a point which would not warrant us to include him in this work, were not his reputation altogether of that kind which inseparably binds him up with the poetical history of his country. He was not only a popular poet in his own day, but he was the friend and advocate of true poetry wherever it could be found. It was he who, in the Spectator, first sounded boldly and zealously abroad the glory of John Milton. In our time the revival of true poetry, the return to nature and to truth, have been greatly indebted to the old ballad poetry of the nation. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Scott, and others, attribute the formation of their taste in the highest degree to the reading of Percy's Reliques of Ancient English Poetry. But it was Addison who long before had pointed out these sources and these effects. It was he who brought forward again the brave old ballad of Chevy Chace; who reminded [Pg 140] us that Sir Philip Sidney had said that it always stirred his heart like the sound of a trumpet. It was he who showed us the inimitable touches of nature and of true pathos in it. He showed us how alive was the old bard who composed it to all the influences of nature and of circumstances. How the stanza,

"The hounds ran swiftly through the woods,
  The nimble deer to take,
That with their cries the hills and dales
  An echo shrill did make,"

carried you at once to the scene. With what life, and spirit, and graphic power he introduced his heroes, and by their gallant bearing won at once your interest for them.

"Lo, yonder doth Earl Douglas come,
  His men in armor bright;
Full twenty hundred Scottish spears
  All marching in our sight.

"All men of pleasant Tivy-dale,
  Fast by the River Tweed;

'O cease your sport,' Earl Percy said,
'And take your bows with speed;

"'And now with me, my countrymen,
Your courage forth advance,
For there was never champion yet,
In Scotland or in France,

"'That ever did on horseback come,
But if my hap it were,
I durst encounter, man for man,
With him to break a spear.'

"Earl Douglas on his milk-white steed,
Most like a baron bold,
Rode foremost of the company,
Whose armor shone like gold.

"'Show me,' said he, 'whose men you be,
That hunt so boldly here,
That, without my consent, do chase
And kill my fallow deer.' [Pg 141]

"The first man that did answer make
Was noble Percy, he;
Who said, 'We list not to declare,
Nor show whose men we be.'"

It was Addison who made his cotemporaries fully aware of the truly noble sentiments which animated that fine ballad; the challenge of Douglas, and its acceptance by Percy, being a splendid instance.

"'But trust me, Percy, pity it were
And great offense to kill
Any of these our guiltless men,
For they have done no ill.

"'Let thou and I the battle try,
And set our men aside,'
Accursed be he,' Earl Percy said,
'By whom this is denied.'"

The life and vigor of the description of the battle—the impression given of the indomitable bravery of the British race—the exploit of Widdrington—the proud boast of the English monarch of the abundance of brave men in his kingdom—all were forcibly demonstrated by Addison; nor less the beautiful pathos of the poem.

"Next day did many widows come
Their husbands to bewail;
They washed their wounds in brinish tears,
But all would not prevail.

"Their bodies bathed in purple gore
They bare with them away,
They kissed them dead a thousand times,
Ere they were clad in clay."

Equally did Addison vindicate and commend to our hearts the sweet ballad of the Babes in the Wood, and others of the true school of nature and feeling. Who shall say that it was not owing to these criticisms that Bishop Percy himself was led to the study and the collection of the precious relics of former ages, that lay scattered about among the people? The services of Addison to the poetry of England are far greater through what he recommended than what he composed; and [Pg 142] the man who, more than all others, contributed to make periodical literature what it has become, and gave us, moreover, Sir Roger de Coverley, and the spirit of true old English life which surrounds him, with all those noble papers in which religion and philosophy so beautifully blend in the Spectator, must ever remain enshrined in the most grateful remembrance of his countrymen.

Addison, I have said, was a fortunate man. It is well for us that he was in that one case so fortunate. It was the service that his pen could render to the government of the time, that raised him from the condition of a poor clergyman's son to a minister of state, and thus gave him afterward leisure to pursue those beautiful speculations in literature which have had so decided and so permanent an influence on our literature and modes of thinking. Addison had his faults, and was not without a few of those thorns in the side which few escape in their progress through the wilderness of the world; but, so far as we are concerned, we owe to him nothing but love and admiration. Thus much said, we must, in this brief article, leave all the details of his life and progress, of his travels and his literary contests and achievements, as matters well known, and

confine ourselves to a survey of the abodes in which he lived.

He was born at the parsonage of Milston, in Wiltshire, an humble dwelling, of which a view may be seen in Miss Aikin's life of him; his father being then incumbent of the parish. He was sent to schools at Shrewsbury and Lichfield, and then to the Charter-house, where he formed that acquaintance with Richard Steele which resulted in such lasting consequences to literature. Thence he went to Oxford, where he continued till the age of five-and-twenty, when, finding that, notwithstanding his fellowship and the resource of his pupils, he was so far from realizing a livelihood that he was greatly in debt, he gave up all thought of taking orders, and devoted himself to public business Fully to qualify himself for this, he applied to Montague, afterward [Pg 143] Lord Halifax, with whose friendship he was already honored, as well as with that of Lord Somers, and procured from government a pension of £300 a year to enable him to make the circle of European travel, and acquaint himself with the real condition of those countries with which every English statesman must come into continual practical contact. He first went over to France, saw Paris, and then settled down at Blois to make himself master of the language. He continued nearly a year and a half at Blois, and it was to his intense study during this time that he owed his great knowledge of French literature. He then sailed from Marseilles for Italy. "It was in December, 1700," says Miss Aikin, "that he embarked at Marseilles for Genoa, whence he proceeded through Milan, Venice, Ravenna, and Loretto to Rome; thence to Naples by sea, and proceeded by Florence, Bologna, and Turin, to Geneva; where he arrived exactly one year from his quitting Marseilles, and two and a half after his departure from England. At Geneva he was met by the news of the death of King William. This was followed by the dismissal of the Whigs from office, the consequent loss of his pension, and the blasting of all his hopes of further advantage from them for the present. Instead, therefore, of attending on Prince Eugene, as secretary from the English king, as was appointed for him, he turned aside on his own slender resources to take a survey of Germany. After making a pleasant tour through the Swiss cantons, he descended into the plains of Germany, but found the inhabitants all in arms, and full of apprehension of the Bavarian troops, and was advised not to trust himself in the territories of the Duke of Bavaria. He therefore lost all opportunity of seeing Munich, Augsburg, and Ratisbon, and was obliged to make his way through the Tyrol to Vienna. In Vienna he felt himself in great anxiety on account of money, and made his way back through Holland home. Before reaching it, [Pg 144] he received a proposal to go on a second tour of Europe for three years, with the son of the Duke of Somerset, but refused the duke's offers. Soon after his return to England he was engaged to write a poem on the victory of Blenheim, to serve the Whig cause, and produced the Campaign; at the time a most successful poem, but now chiefly remembered by the passage in which he represents Marlborough, like the angel of divine vengeance, riding on the whirlwind and directing the storm." From this period his advance was rapid, and we here leave him to the biographer, and restrict ourselves to our proper task.

The change of circumstances from the humble author to the minister and the friend of ministers; from the simple clergyman's son to the husband of a countess, and the father-in-law of an earl, can not be more strikingly displayed than by the singular contrast of his abodes under these different characters. D'Israeli, in his Curiosities of Literature, says that Pope, when taking his usual walk with Harte in the Haymarket, desired Harte to enter a little shop, when, going up three flights of stairs into a small room, Pope said, "In this garret Addison wrote his Campaign." That was certainly somewhat different to Bilton and Holland House. But between the garret in the Haymarket and these princely houses there were some connecting and ascending steps in residence. Addison was always anxious to get a quiet retreat, amid trees and greenness, where he could write. Such was afterward his abode at Sandy End, a hamlet of Fulham. Here he appears to have occupied apartments in a lodging-house established at this place; whence several of the published letters of Steele are dated, written at times when he seems to have been the guest of Addison. From Sandy End, too, are dated some letters to Lord Warwick, his future son-in-law, then a boy, and very anxious to get news about birds and birds' nests, which Addison most cordially gives him. He then went to Ireland as chief secretary to the Earl of Wharton, on his appointment to the lord-lieutenancy, and resided for some time in that capacity in Dublin. [Pg 145] After this, he removed to a lodging at Kensington, owing to his increasing intimacy at Holland House, and was about this time a frequent guest at Northwick Park, with the first Lord Northwick, and there one of the best portraits of him, by Kneller, still remains.

In 1716, he married the Dowager Countess of Warwick; but five years before this, that is, in 1711, he had made the purchase of Bilton, as a suitable residence for a person of his position in the state, and of that high connection toward which he was already looking. Before, however, we indulge ourselves with a view of Addison at Bilton, let us see the mode of his life in town, on the authority of Pope, Spence, and Johnson: "Of the course of Addison's familiar day, before his marriage, Pope has given a detail. He had in the house with him, Budgell, and perhaps Philips. His chief companions were Steele, Budgell, Philips, Carey, Davenant, and Colonel Brett. With one or other of these he always breakfasted. He studied all morning; then dined at a tavern; and went afterward to Button's.

"Button had been a servant in the Countess of Warwick's family, who, under the patronage of Addison, kept a coffee-house on the south side of Russell-street, about two doors from Covent Garden. Here it was that the wits of that time used to assemble. It is said, when Addison suffered any vexation from the countess, he withdrew the company from Button's house.

"From the coffee-house he went to a tavern, where he often sat late, and drank too much wine. In the bottle, discontent seeks for comfort, cowardice for courage, and bashfulness for confidence. It is not unlikely that Addison was first seduced to excess by the manumission which he obtained

from the servile timidity of his sober hours. He that feels oppression from the presence of those to whom he knows himself superior, will desire to set loose his powers of conversation; and who that ever asked succors from Bacchus was able to preserve himself from being enslaved by his auxiliary? [Pg 146]

"Among those friends it was that Addison displayed the elegance of his colloquial accomplishments, which may easily be supposed such as Pope represents them. The remark of Mandeville, who, when he had passed an evening in his company, declared that he was a parson in a tie-wig, can detract little from his character; he was always reserved to strangers, and was not incited to uncommon freedom by a character like that of Mandeville."—*Johnson's Life of Addison.*

The statement made by Dr. Johnson, in his Lives of the Poets, and by Spence, that Addison's marriage, like that of Dryden, was not a happy one, has lately been strongly argued against by Miss Aikin. One would gladly be able to acquiesce in it, and if we could believe the painter as well as Miss Aikin, we should be inclined to believe the Countess of Warwick possessed both unusual sense and sweetness of temper. The current of tradition, however, runs strongly the other way; and I fear we have not now sufficient strength of evidence to avert it. As little do I anticipate that Miss Aikin will prove Addison a very sober man; the statements of his cotemporaries, and the voice of tradition, are against her. We must be content to take the man with his failings and his secret griefs, the foils to a great reputation and a great prosperity.

Addison purchased the estate of Bilton for £10,000, and the money was principally advanced by his brother Gulston Addison, governor of Fort St. George, at Madras. Thither he conveyed his paintings, his library, and his collection of medals, which, as connected with his Dialogues on Medals, was very valuable. Here it may be supposed that, during the five years previous to his marriage, he passed much of his leisure time. It was a beautiful retirement, well calculated to dispose to thought, and worthy of the author of the Spectator. If we are to believe tradition, that [Pg 147] he planted most of the trees now standing around it, he must have taken great pleasure in its embellishment. On his death, he left it to his only child, Charlotte Addison, who could not have been much more than two years old. Here she spent her long life, from the death of her mother, the countess, dying in 1797, at about eighty years of age. Miss Addison, for she was never married, is said to have been of weak intellect, a fact by many traced to the want of real and spiritual union between her parents, a supposition which the researches of our own times into the nature of man tend greatly to confirm. With the usual effect of aristocratic prejudice on a feeble mind, she is said to have been especially proud of her mother, but to have rarely mentioned her father. Being left to the care and education of her mother, this does not very strongly corroborate the case which Miss Aikin labors to establish. It does not tell very eloquently for that true affection which she tells us the countess bore toward Addison, and which she endeavors to prove by proving Addison's affection for her, evidenced by his making her his sole executrix, and guardian of his child. By the fruits we must judge of the woman as well as the tree, and the fruit of Lady Warwick's education of her child was, by all accounts, this, that she left her ashamed of her father the commoner, though an immortal man, and proud of her mother, a lady —and nothing more. There are many stories of the eccentricities and increasing fatuity of poor Miss Addison floating in the village and neighborhood of Bilton, which may as well die out with time. The disposal of her property marks the tendency of her feelings. Her grandfather, Dr. Lancelot Addison, was a native of Cumberland. There, at the time of Miss Addison making her will, still remained many near and poor relations, whom she entirely passed over, as she had done in her lifetime, and bequeathed Bilton to the Honorable John Bridgman Simpson, brother to Lord Bridgman, whose representative is now Earl of Bradford. This gentleman she chose to [Pg 148] consider her *nearest* relation, because her mother's relation, though very near he could not be. Her mother, the countess, was the daughter of Sir Thomas Middleton, of Chirk Castle, Denbighshire, by a daughter of Sir Orlando Bridgman; so that this Mr. Bridgman Simpson, a relative of her grandmother, could be no very near relative of her own, while she must have had first cousins of the paternal line in plenty. Those relatives of her own name, and who would have handed down the property, bound up with the name of Addison, as a monument of their family fame, disputed her will, but ineffectually. She is buried there in the chancel of the church, but the gratitude of that aristocratic person on whom, to the prejudice of her own name and blood, she bestowed her whole estate, has never to this hour proved warm enough to furnish a single stone, or a single line, to mark where she lies. As if the name of Addison were something noxious or disgraceful, and should be carefully kept out of all mention which might decide its connection with Bilton,

"The sole daughter of his house and heart"

lies buried in that oblivious silence which can not but be confessed to be a rich piece of poetical justice, though of very unpoetical ingratitude. Soon after Miss Addison's death, the library was removed to London, and in May, 1799, was sold by auction for £456, 2*s.*, 9*d.*, and Addison's collection of medals for £92, 2*s.*, 2*d.* The poet's screen, drinking-cup, tea-pot, &c., are now in the possession of William Ferdinand Wratislaw, Esq., of Rugby, the descendant of one of the most ancient families in Europe—no other than the royal family of Bohemia, of which our "good Queen Ann," the wife of Richard II., was a princess; and of which, that is, of Mr. Wratislaw, of Rugby, the present head of the house, the young Count Adam Wratislaw, allied to Queen Victoria by his aunt, the Princess of Leiningen, is a near relative. They could not be in better hands.

Since Miss Addison's death, the house at Bilton has been successively occupied by Mrs. Brookes [Pg 149] and Miss Moore; by Mr. Apperley, the well-known Nimrod of sporting literature; by Sir Charles

Palmer, Bart.; by the Vernon family; by the Misses Boddington; and, lastly, by Mr. Simpson himself. Mr. Simpson has considerably improved the house, rebuilding the back part facing the garden; but, on the other hand, he cut down a considerable part of a fine avenue of limes, stretching along one side of the garden down to a wood below, called Addison's Walk. This avenue is said to have been planted by Addison, and terminated in a clump of evergreens, where was an alcove called Addison's Seat. It was not till about half this avenue was felled that Mr. Simpson heard that it was Addison's Walk, and caused the destruction to stop. He is now a very old man, and has not resided at Bilton since the death of his wife. The house is, however, furnished; and after reading Miss Aikin's statement, that "a small number of pictures collected by Addison still, it is believed, remain in the house, which are mostly portraits of his cotemporaries, and intrinsically of small value," how great was my delight and surprise to find what and how many these paintings were! But let us make a more regular approach to this gem of an old house, to the actual country seat of our "dear short face," the Spectator.

Issuing from Rugby, Bilton salutes you from the hill on the opposite side of the valley, which you have to cross in order to reach it. A lofty mass of trees, on a fine airy elevation; a small gray church, with finely tapering spire in front of them, show you where Bilton lies; but house or village you do not discern till you are close upon them. It was not till I had approached within a few hundred yards of Addison's house, or the hall, as it is called, that I saw the cottages of the village stretching away to my right hand; and a carriage-road, diverging to my left toward the church, brought me within view of the house; there it stood in the midst of the fine old trees. A [Pg 150] villager informed me that no one lived there but the gardener, nor had done for years. The autumn had dyed all the trees with its rich and yet melancholy hues; they strewed the ground in abundance, and there was a feeling of solitude and desertion about the place which was by no means out of keeping, when I reflected that I was approaching the house of Addison, so long quitted by himself. A fine old avenue of lime-trees, winding with the carriage-drive, brought me to the front of the house. It is a true Elizabethan mansion, not too large for a poet, yet large enough for any country gentleman who is not overdone with his establishment. The front of the main portion is lofty, handsome, and in excellent repair. A projecting tower runs up from the porch to the roof. Over the door is cut, in freestone, some mathematical or masonic sign—a circle inclosing two triangles; and near the top is the date of 1623. On the right hand, a wing of lower buildings runs forward from the main erection, forming, as it were, one side of a court. These buildings turn their gables toward you, and are covered with ivy. On the left hand, but standing back in a stable-yard, are the outbuildings, seeming, however, to balance the whole fabric, and giving it an air of considerable extent. All round, adjoining the buildings and along the avenue, grow evergreens in tall and luxuriant masses.

On the other side of the house lies the old garden, retaining all the characters of a past age. The center consists of a fine lawn; the upper part of which, near the house, has recently been laid out in fancy flower-beds, in the form of a star, and corner beds to make up the square. The rest appears as it might be when Addison left it. On the right a square-cut holly hedge divides it from the fields, which are scattered with lofty trees, among which are foreign oaks, said to be raised from acorns brought home by the poet. To the left, the garden is bounded by a still more massy square-clipped hedge of yew, opening half way down into a large kitchen-garden, being, at the [Pg 151] same time, at the upper end, an old Dutch flower-garden. At the far side of this garden, opposite to the entrance through the yew hedge, is an alcove, and down that side extends the lime avenue, called Addison's Walk. At the bottom of this garden are fish-ponds, and in the field below an oak wood. Thus, amid lofty trees, some of them strong, old, and crooked, presenting a scene worthy of making part of a picture of Claude Lorraine, you look down over the garden to rich fields descending into the country below. At the bottom right-hand corner is an alcove, shut in by a group of evergreen shrubs and pine-trees from the house, but overlooking the fields and woodlands, called Addison's Seat; and a very pleasant seat it is, full of quiet retirement. Such is the exterior of Bilton. The interior of the main part of the house consists principally of two large rooms, a dining and drawing room. These extend quite through, are lighted at each end, and the projection in front forms a sort of little cabinet in each room. These two fine large rooms are hung round with the paintings placed here by Addison: whether they are few and of no intrinsic value will soon be seen.

In the dining-room are, first, full-lengths of James I., by Mark Garrard; Lord Crofts, Villiers, duke of Buckingham, by Balthazar Gerbier; the Duke of Hamilton, Henry Rich, earl of Warwick, Prince Rupert, and Prince Maurice, all by Vandyck; Sir Thomas Middleton, the Countess of Warwick's father, by Sir Peter Lely; and in the small division in front of the room, Chief Justice the Earl of Nottingham, by Michael Dahl; Mr. Secretary Craggs, by Sir Godfrey Kneller, a man of fair complexion, and handsome, amiable countenance, in a light blue dress; Sir John Vanburgh, by Verelst; and Lord Halifax, by Kneller. These are chiefly three-quarter figures.

On the staircase is one of the four well-known equestrian Charles the Firsts, by Vandyck, the horse by Stone, one of which is at Hampton Court, and another at Warwick Castle. Opposite to it [Pg 152] is a full-length figure of Anne of Austria, queen of France, by Mignard.

In the drawing-room, a full-length figure of a lady, labeled as Lady Isabel Thynne, daughter of the Earl of Holland, has a bit of paper stuck behind it by some artist, stating that at Knowle there is a precisely similar picture marked as Lady Frances Grenfield, daughter of the Earl of Middleton, and fifth Countess of Dorset; as well as a copy of it, likewise, at Knowle. Next to this is a singular picture, which might be one of Lely's, but bears no name of the artist. There is an exact fac-simile of it at Penshurst. It contains two half-length figures of Lady Lucy Percy, countess of Carlisle, and Lady Dorothy Percy, countess of Leicester, two of the most flattered and remarkable women of

the day, and the latter the mother of Algernon Sidney; next is the Duke of Northumberland, their father, by Lely; and full-lengths of the unfortunate Arabella Stuart, a very pretty and interesting-looking woman, and Rich, earl of Holland, by Vandyck. On the opposite side of the room are the Countess of Warwick, Addison's wife, by Kneller, in a bright blue dress. She is here represented as decidedly handsome, having a high, broad forehead, dark hair falling in natural ringlets, and with a sweet expression of countenance. To her right is her son, Lord Warwick, as a boy of twelve or fourteen years old, also in a light blue dress, and red scarf, by Dahl. On her left is a head of Lord Kensington, by Lely. A mother and daughter in two separate pictures, supposed to be by Lely; and the Earl of Warwick again as a boy.

Within the small department of the room we find a half-length of Addison himself, also in light blue, which seems the almost universal color of Kneller's drapery. He appears here about forty years of age, his figure fuller, and the countenance more fleshy and less spiritual than in either of the portraits at Holland House and Northwick. Besides this, there is another portrait of the Earl [Pg 153] of Warwick, by Kneller, as a young man; a head of Gustavus Adolphus, by Meirveldt; and, lastly, of the heiress of the house, Miss Addison herself. She is here a child, nor is there any one of her of a later age. If this portrait of her was done during Addison's life, it must have been represented as older than she really was; she could not be much more than two, and here she appears at least five years of age. It is a full length. The child stands by a table, on which is a basket of flowers, and she holds a pink flower in her hand against her bosom. She has the air of an intelligent child, and, as usual, wears one of Kneller's light blue draperies, with a lace-bordered apron, and stomacher of the same.

Such are the paintings at Bilton. They include a most interesting group of the friends and cotemporaries of Addison, besides others. It is a rare circumstance that they have been permitted to remain there, when his library and his medals have been dispersed. Altogether, Bilton is one of the most satisfactory specimens of the homes and haunts of our departed literary men.

Of Holland House, the last residence of Addison, it would require a long article to give a fitting idea. This fine old mansion is full of historic associations. It takes its name from Henry Rich, earl of Holland, whose portrait is in Bilton. It was built by his father-in-law, Sir Walter Cope, in 1607, and affords a very good specimen of the architecture of that period. The general form is that of a half H. The projection in the center, forming at once porch and tower, and the two wings supported on pillars, give great decision of effect to it. The stone quoins worked with a sort of arabesque figure, remind one of the style of some portions of Heidelberg Castle, which is what is called on the Continent *roccoco*. Here it is deemed Elizabethan; but the plain buildings attached on each side to the main body of the house, with their shingled and steep-roofed towers, have a very picturesque and Bohemian look. Altogether, it is a charming old pile, and the interior [Pg 154] corresponds beautifully with the exterior. There is a fine entrance hall, a library behind it, and another library extending the whole length of one of the wings and the house up stairs, one hundred and five feet in length. The drawing-room over the entrance hall, called the Gilt Room, extends from front to back of the house, and commands views of the gardens both way; those to the back are very beautiful.

In the house are, of course, many interesting and valuable works of art; a great portion of them memorials of the distinguished men who have been accustomed to resort thither. In one room is a portrait of Charles James Fox, as a child, in a light blue dress, and with a close, reddish, woolen cap on his head, under which show lace edges. The artist is unknown, but is supposed to be French. The countenance is full of life and intelligence, and the "child" in it is, most remarkably, "the father of the man." The likeness is wonderful. You can imagine how, by time and circumstance, that child's countenance expanded into what it became in maturity. There is also a portrait of Addison, which belonged to his daughter. It represents him as much younger than any other that I have seen. In the Gilt Room are marble busts of George IV. and William IV. On the staircase is a bust of Lord Holland, father of the second earl and of Charles Fox, by Nollekens. This bust, which is massy, and full of power and expression, is said to have brought Nollekens into his great repute. The likeness to that of Charles Fox is very striking. By the same artist there are also the busts of Charles Fox, the late Lord Holland, and the present earl. That of Frere, by Chantry, is very spirited. There are also, here, portraits of Lord Lansdowne, Lord John Russell, and family portraits. There is also a large and very curious painting of a fair, by Callot, and an Italian print of it.

In the library, down stairs, are portraits of Charles James Fox—a very fine one; of the late Lord Holland; of Talleyrand, by Ary Scheffer, perhaps the best in existence, and the only one which he [Pg 155] said that he ever sat for; of Sir Samuel Romilly; Sir James Mackintosh; Lord Erskine, by Sir Thomas Lawrence; Tierney; Francis Horner, by Raeburn, so like Sir Walter Scott by the same artist, that I at first supposed it to be him; Lord Macartney, by Phillips; Frere, by Shee; Mone, lord Thanet; Archibald Hamilton; late Lord Darnley; late Lord King, when young, by Hoppner; and a very sweet, foreign fancy portrait of the present Lady Holland. We miss, however, from this haunt of genius, the portraits of Byron, Brougham, Crabbe, Blanco White, Hallam, Rogers, Lord Jeffery, and others. In the left wing is placed the colossal model of the statue of Charles Fox, which stands in Bloomsbury Square.

In the gardens are various memorials of distinguished men. Among several very fine cedars, perhaps the finest is said to have been planted by Charles Fox. In the quaint old garden is an alcove, in which are the following lines, placed there by the late earl:

> "Here Rogers sat—and here for ever dwell
> With me, those pleasures which he sang so well."

Beneath these are framed and glazed a copy of verses in honor of the same poet, by Mr. Luttrell. There is also in the same garden, and opposite this alcove, a bronze bust of Napoleon, on a granite pillar, with a Greek inscription from the Odyssey, admirably applying the situation of Ulysses to that of Napoleon at St. Helena: "In a far-distant isle he remains under the harsh surveillance of base men."

The fine avenue leading down from the house to the Kensington road is remarkable for having often been the walking and talking place of Cromwell and General Lambert. Lambert then occupied Holland House; and Cromwell, who lived next door, when he came to converse with him on state affairs, had to speak very loud to him, because he was deaf. To avoid being overheard, [Pg 156] they used to walk in this avenue.

The traditions regarding Addison here are very slight. They are, simply, that he used to walk, when composing his Spectators, in the long library, then a picture gallery, with a bottle of wine at each end, which he visited as he alternately arrived at them; and that the room in which he died, though not positively known, is supposed to be the present dining-room, being then the state bed-room. The young Earl of Warwick, to whom he there addressed the emphatic words, "See in what peace a Christian can die!" died also, himself, in 1721, but two years afterward. The estate then devolved to Lord Kensington, descended from Robert Rich, earl of Warwick, who sold it, about 1762, to the Right Honorable Henry Fox, afterward Lord Holland. Here the early days of the great statesman, Charles James, were passed; and here lived the late patriotic translator of Lope de Vega, amid the society of the first spirits of the age. It has been rumored that the present amiable and intelligent possessor, his son, contemplated pulling down this venerable and remarkable mansion. Such a thought never did and never could for a moment enter his mind, which feels too proudly the honors of intellect and taste, far above all mere rank, which there surround his name and family.

JOHN GAY. [Pg 157]

Gay is certainly not one of our most eminent poets. He is clever, amiable, and displays much knowledge of life, both in town and country. It is rare, however, that he rises into any thing like genuine poetry. When he does that, it is when he elevates his theme by a spirit of devotion, which, however, is not too often. The best instances of this are to be found, perhaps, in his Lines on Night, in the first canto of Rural Sports, in his Contemplation on Night, and in A Thought on Eternity. It were to be wished that description as vivid had in Gay been oftener united to sentiment as elevated, in such lines as these:

"To Neptune's bounds I stray
To take my farewell of the parting day;
For in the deep the sun his glory hides,
A streak of gold the sea and land divides,
The purple clouds their amber linings show,
And edged with flame rolls every wave below.
Here pensive I behold the fading light,
And o'er the distant billow lose my sight.
  Now Night in silent state begins to rise,
And twinkling orbs bestrew th' uncloudy skies;
Her borrowed luster growing Cynthia lends,
And in the main a glittering path extends;
Millions of worlds hang in the spacious air,
Which round their suns their annual circles steer.
Sweet contemplation elevates my sense,
While I survey the works of Providence.
O could the Muse in loftier strains rehearse
The glorious Author of the universe,
Who reins the winds, gives the vast ocean bounds,
And circumscribes the flaming worlds their rounds;
My soul should overflow in songs of praise,
And my Creator's name inspire my lays!"

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The Contemplation on Night is equally worthy of a true poet, and concludes with the following lines, which properly follow, and seem to continue, those just quoted.

"When the pure soul is from the body flown,
No more shall Night's alternate reign be known;
The sun no more shall rolling light bestow,
But from the Almighty streams of glory flow.
Oh! may some nobler thought my soul employ,
Than transient, empty, sublunary joy.
The stars shall drop, the sun shall lose his flame,
But thou, O God! forever shine the same."

Spite, however, of such occasional passages as these, and of much graphic depicting of town and

country life and scenery; spite of the easy flow and the moral of his fables, John Gay can not claim to be included here, except in the character of the close and life-long friend of Pope and Swift. So intimately is he mixed up with *their* homes and haunts, that it seems requisite to say something of his own. But where were these? His haunts may be traced, but home of his own he seems never to have had. Gay was an easy, good-natured fellow, but he had no great feeling of independence; and without being able or desirous to say that he was a mean, far less a disgraceful, hanger-on of the great, he was still a hanger-on. His home was at first in or near Barnstaple, Devonshire, where he was born; then a mercer's shop in London; then lodgings, and the literary coffee-houses of London; then the house of the Duchess of Monmouth; and, finally, that of the Duke of Queensbury. For several years before his death, the house of the Duke of Queensbury was his home, wherever that was, at Burlington Gardens, in town, or at Amesbury or Petersham, in the country. Gay was as regular a part of the ducal family as any old court minstrel was of a palace of old. The duke was his treasurer, and the duchess his warm and generous patroness and friend.

All that we can require to know of Gay, Johnson, in a more good-humored vein than was his wont, has summed up for us. [Pg 159]

It was in 1688, the year of the Revolution, that he was born at Barnstaple, where he received his education. In London, he soon quitted the mercer's shop, and became the secretary of the Duchess of Monmouth, in which capacity he found leisure enough to write and publish his Rural Sports, which he inscribed to Pope, and thus won his friendship. So much pleased was Pope with his manners and conversation, that he soon became his fast and intimate friend, and introduced him to Swift. The three, as we have seen, formed a bond of attachment and of familiar intercourse, that Gay's death only put an end to. Of Gay's various publications it is not necessary here to speak. They are chiefly his Rural Sports, already mentioned; The Shepherd's Week; The Wife of Bath, a Play; What D'ye Call it, a Mock Tragedy; Three Hours after Marriage, a Comedy; The Captives; The Beggar's Opera; Polly; The Distressed Wife; his Fables; Trivia, or the Art of Walking the Streets; The Fan; Tales; Epistles; Gondibert, a Poem; and various small compositions.

His plays were seldom successful, with the exception of The Beggar's Opera, which was extremely so, and still continues so with certain classes. The origin of this singular production Pope has thus detailed:

"Dr. Swift had been observing once to Mr. Gay what an odd, pretty sort of a thing a Newgate Pastoral might make. Gay was inclined to try at such a thing for some time, but afterward thought it would be better to write a comedy on the same plan. This was what gave rise to the Beggar's Opera. He began on it; and when first he mentioned it to Swift, the doctor did not much like the project. As he carried it on, he showed what he wrote to both of us, and we now and then gave a correction, or a word or two of advice; but it was wholly of his own writing. When it was done, neither of us thought it would succeed. He showed it to Congreve, who, after reading it [Pg 160] over, said, 'It would either take greatly, or be damned confoundedly.' We were all at the first night of it, in great uncertainty of the event; till we were very much encouraged by overhearing the Duke of Argyle, who sat in the next box to us, say, 'It will do—it must do! I see it in the eyes of them!' This was a good while before the first act was over, and so gave us ease soon; for that duke, besides his own good taste, has a particular knack, as any one now living, in discovering the taste of the public. He was quite right in that, as usual: the good-nature of the audience appeared stronger and stronger every act, and ended in a clamor of applause."

Pope has also recorded the following particulars of its popularity. "This piece was received with greater applause than was ever known. Besides being acted in London sixty-three days without interruption, and received the next season with equal applause, it spread into all the great towns of England; was played in many places to the thirtieth and fortieth time; at Bath and Bristol, fifty, &c. It made its progress into Wales, Scotland, and Ireland, where it was performed twenty-four days successively. The ladies carried about with them the favorite songs of it in fans, and houses were furnished with it in screens. The fame of it was not confined to the author only. The person who acted Polly, till then obscure, became all at once the favorite of the town; her pictures were engraved, and sold in great numbers; her life written; books of letters and verses to her published, and pamphlets made even of her sayings and jests. Furthermore, it drove out of England, for that season, the Italian opera, which had carried all before it for ten years."

From that time to the present, the effect has been, to a certain degree, the same, in a certain class; the songs of The Beggar's Opera have begun again to be sung, and a manifest tendency has been produced to exalt into this admiration of the multitude, highwaymen and women of the [Pg 161] town. Neither can it be denied that it has given birth anew, in the shape of novels, to Newgate literature. The oddity of it was, that in opposition to the storm of reprehension which followed it from the press, Swift defended it for the excellence of its morality, and because "it placed all kinds of vice in the strongest and most odious light." This was sufficiently contradicted by the public admiration of its heroes, heroines, its songs, and its very slang. Yet we find Gay representing himself, in a letter to Swift, as a martyr to morality. "For writing in the cause of virtue, and against the fashionable vices, I am looked upon at present as the most obnoxious person almost in England." If Gay's self-love could so far blind and persuade him, there can be no reader of his collected poems at the present day who can agree with him. There is a far too considerable quantity of his writings which are utterly vile and filthy, and fit only to be bound up with Rochester, or, rather, not to be bound up at all; and it may be questioned whether the prudent lessons of his fables, and the better sentiments scattered through his other poetry, could by any means even neutralize the effect of his pages of defilement, were not the better more

commonly read, and the worse left to oblivion by the purer spirit of the age.

The origin of his Shepherd's Week, which, though coarse, has much nature in it, is also curious. Steele, in some papers in the Guardian, had praised Ambrose Philips as the Pastoral writer who was second only to Theocritus, Virgil, and Spenser. Pope, who had also published pastorals, not pleased to be overlooked, drew up a comparison of his own compositions with those of Philips's, in which he civilly gave himself the preference, while he seemed to disown it. So enraged was Philips, that he brought a sturdy cudgel to Button's coffee-house, and put it over the mantel-piece, saying, "That was for Pope when he could catch him there." Pope, on his part again, is supposed to have incited Gay to write the Shepherd's Week, to show that, if it be necessary to [Pg 162] copy nature with minuteness, rural life must be exhibited such as grossness and ignorance have made it. But intended only to burlesque Philips, these pastorals became popular, and were eagerly read for their truth to country life by those who took no interest in the literary squabble.

If we add to the places already mentioned the house of Dr. Arbuthnot, at Hampstead, where Gay used occasionally to domicile himself, we have a sufficient index to his homes and haunts.

[Pg 163]

ALEXANDER POPE.

Pope, who was born in London, spent nearly the whole of his life between Binfield, in Windsor Forest, and Twickenham. They were his only two constant residences; the time which he passed in London, he passed but as a visitor, or lodger. Town poet, or poet of society, as he seems, he was inseparably attached to the country, though it was the country of an easily accessible vicinity to town, and itself pretty thickly inhabited by people of rank and intelligence. From the time that his father purchased the property at Binfield, with the exception of a short time at school at Twyford, near Winchester, and at another school in Mary-le-bone, which was removed while he was there to near Hyde Park Corner, Pope never quitted Binfield as a residence till he bought Twickenham. He went soon after his twelfth year from school, and he continued to reside at Binfield till 1716, when he was twenty-eight years of age; and singularly enough, he lived at Twickenham twenty-eight years more, dying in May 1744, at the age of fifty-six. [Pg 164]

As is the case of many other people, who, with all their philosophy, are not content to rest their claims to distinction on their own virtues and achievements, there was an attempt on the part of Pope to hang his family on an aristocratic peg; and, as was to be expected in the case of a man who did not spare his enemies and who wrote Dunciads, there was as stout an attempt to pull this peg out. In his epistle to Dr. Arburthnot, he makes this claim for his parentage:

> "Of gentle blood, part shed in honor's cause,
> While yet in Britain honor had applause,
> Each parent sprang,"

And in a note to that epistle we are further informed, "that Mr. Pope's father was a gentleman of family in Oxfordshire, the head of which was the Earl of Downe, whose sole heiress married the Earl of Lindsay. His mother was the daughter of William Turner, of York," &c. In reply to this, Warton tells us, that when Pope published this note, a relation of his own, a Mr. Pottinger, observed that his cousin, Pope, had made himself out a fine pedigree, but he wondered where he got it; that he had never heard any thing himself of their being related to the Earls of Downe;

and, what was more, he had an old maiden aunt, equally related, a great genealogist, who was always talking of her family, but never mentioned this circumstance, on which she certainly would not have been silent had she known any thing of it. That the Earl of Guildford had examined the pedigree and descents of the Downe family for any such relationship; and that at the Heralds' Office, this pedigree, which Pope had made out for himself, was considered to be as much fabricated as Mr. Ireland's descent from Shakspeare.

This was one of Pope's weaknesses. No man did more than he did in his day to free literature from the long degradation of servile, fulsome dependence on patrons. He created a property for [Pg 165] himself by his own literary exertions, and set a splendid example to literary men of independence. He showed them that they might be free, honorable, and even wealthy, by their own means. He had the pride to place himself on equal terms with lords when they were intellectual, but he scorned to flatter them. It was a pride worthy of a literary man, and it was well that when he departed from this just feeling, and would fain set up a claim to rank with them on their own terms of family and descent—a proceeding which undermined his true and unassailable principle of the dignity of genius—that he should receive a due reprimand from the hands of his enemies. The moment that he abandoned in any degree the patent of God, the long and luminous descent of genius from heaven—a patent far above all other patents, a descent far higher than all other descents—it was a fitting retribution that the pigmies of the Dunciad should fling it in his face that his father was a mechanic, a hatter, or a cobbler, as it appears, from his reply to Lord Hervey and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, that they did; who themselves had thus addressed him in print:

> "None thy crabbed numbers can endure,
> Hard as thy heart, and as thy birth obscure."

The simple fact was, that Pope's grandfather, the highest they could trace the family, was a clergyman in Hampshire. The second son was Alexander, the father of the poet. This Alexander was intended for mercantile offices, and was sent out to reside in a family in Lisbon, where he embraced Catholicism, and transmitted that faith to his son. He afterward settled in Lombard-street, in London, as a linen-merchant, where Pope was born; and, acquiring an independence, retired first to Kensington, and afterward to Binfield, where he purchased a house and about twenty acres of land. This was pedigree enough for a poet, who needs none. In a truer tone, he pronounces the genuine honors of both his parents and himself in these words: "A mother, on [Pg 166] whom I never was obliged so far to reflect as to say *she spoiled me*; and a father, who never found himself obliged to say that *he disapproved my conduct*. In a word, I think it enough that my parents, such as they were, never cost me a blush; and that their son, such as he is, never cost them a tear."

Improving on this in his prologue to his Satires, he disclaims any adventitious distinctions for his parents whatever, and draws a beautiful character of his father:

> "Born to no pride, inheriting no strife,
> Nor marrying discord in a noble wife;
> Stranger to civil and religious rage,
> The good man walked innoxious through his age;
> No courts he saw, no suits would ever try,
> Nor dared an oath, or hazarded a lie.
> Unlearned, he knew no schoolman's subtle art,
> No language but the language of the heart;
> By nature honest, by experience wise,
> Healthy by temperance and by exercise;
> His life, though long, to sickness passed unknown,
> His death was instant, and without a groan."

From these parents, however, Pope inherited a feeble and crooked frame. This circumstance, added to his being the only child of his father, led to his domestic education and habits. When eight years old he was placed under the tuition of the family priest. From him he passed to the schools mentioned, and at the early age of twelve returned home. This, he says, was all the instruction he received. He continued, however, to educate himself; and as Milton had done in Buckinghamshire, so he at Binfield in the shades of Windsor Forest, pursued steadily his studies, both of books and nature. One of his earliest favorite books was Homer; and at Twyford school he wrote a satire on the master, for which he was severely castigated. Both these facts indicated his future character and pursuits. At Binfield he not only went on strenuously with the study of Latin, [Pg 167] Greek, and French, but he commenced author. At twelve he wrote his Ode to Solitude; a subject with which his situation made him well acquainted. Pope was one of the very rare instances of a genius which was at once prococious and enduring. But the secret of this was, that he did not exhaust his young powers out of mere puerile vanity, but went on reading all the best authors, English, French, Italian, Greek, and Latin, and wrote rather to imitate and practice different styles. To his sedulous practice of all kinds of styles, as those of Spenser, Waller, Cowley, Rochester, Dorset, but especially Chaucer and Dryden, may be attributed that great mastery of language, and that exquisite harmony of versification, in which he has never yet been excelled.

A great advantage to him in these pursuits was the friendship of Sir William Trumbull, who was not only an excellent scholar, but a man of great taste, and had seen the world. Sir William had been embassador to the Ottoman Porte, and afterward one of the secretaries of William III.; he had now retired to East Hamstead, his native place, near Binfield, where he soon found out the

promise of Pope, and became his guide and friend so long as he lived. Sir William introduced him to Wycherley, then an old man; Wycherley introduced him to Walsh; and the literary connections of the young poet spread so rapidly, that at seventeen he was an avowed poet, and frequented Will's Coffee-house, which was on the north side of Russell-street, in Covent Garden, where the wits of the time used to assemble; and where Dryden had, when he lived, been accustomed to preside. But even while giving his evenings to society of the highest kind here, he was, during the day, pursuing his studies in town, and particularly prosecuting, under good masters, his knowledge of French and Italian. Neither, freely as he had written, had he rushed so very prematurely into print; it was not till 1709, when he was twenty-one, that he published his Pastorals, including some verses of Homer and Chaucer, in Jacob Tonson's Miscellany. This [Pg 168] miscellany seemed to be the great periodical of the time; but the same year in which Pope's contributions appeared in it, brought forth the Tatler, which was succeeded by the Guardian and Spectator.

In 1711 Pope published his Essay on Criticism: this was soon followed by the Rape of the Lock; and Pope, still only twenty-three, was at once on the pinnacle of popularity. In 1715, or at the age of twenty-seven, he had already proceeded boldly with his grand enterprise, the translation of the Iliad of Homer, and had issued the first volume of it. This great work, however, had been preceded by the Windsor Forest, in 1712, and other detached poems, as his Ode on St. Cecilia's Day, in 1713; his Temple of Fame, in 1714; and his Key to the Lock, in 1715. Long before his Homer was out he numbered among his acquaintance and friends every great and distinguished name of the time—Swift, Bolingbroke, Gay, Addison, Steele, Congreve, Mr. Secretary Craggs, Lord Halifax, Prior, Mallet, Arbuthnot, Parnell, Lord Oxford, Garth, Rowe, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, &c. All this Pope had accomplished by the age of twenty-seven, and while at Binfield. Binfield will, therefore, always remain a place of lively interest to the lovers of our national literature, and especially to the admirers of the polished, acute, logical, and moral intellect of Pope.

Binfield lies near Wokingham, and about two miles north of Cæsar's camp, a pleasant village, surrounded with handsome houses, and in the midst of the tract called the Royal Hunt. The house in which Pope's father, and Pope too, resided, till he went to Twickenham, is a small, neat brick house, on the side of the London road. Within about half a mile of this house, and within a retired part of the forest, on the edge of a common, is the spot where, it is said, Pope used to compose many of his verses; on a large tree are inscribed, in capital letters, the words, *Here Pope sung*: *[Pg 169]* this sentence used to be annually refreshed at the expense of a lady of Wokingham. There used also to be a seat under this tree, but that has long disappeared; the fact is, however, that tradition likes to fix on some particular spot, and especially some tree, as a particular object of a poet's attachment; it is a palpable affair, and satisfies the ordinary mind; but Pope, no doubt, especially when planning and working out his poem of Windsor Forest, used to ramble all through these scenes, and they may all be considered as associated with his memory and genius.

Of the town life of Pope we find but few traces, considering the well-known times, and the personages among whom he moved. Where his settled lodgings were I find no exact mention; he was sometimes at friends' houses, or at that of Jervas, the painter, which was probably near St. James's Park; as when Mr. Blount writes to Pope, in 1716, endeavoring to persuade him to make a journey to the Continent with him, he exhorts him to leave "laziness and the elms of St. James's Park." Now this summer Jervas was on a visit to Swift in Ireland, and during his absence Pope made use of his house as his town sojourn; it was exactly at the crisis of Pope's removal from Binfield to Twickenham, and no doubt was a great convenience to him till his own house was fully ready for him. His description of this house, in a letter to Jervas, will be well remembered by the readers of his letters: "As to your inquiry about your house, when I came within the walls, they put me in mind of those of Carthage, where you find, like the wandering Trojan,

'Animum picturâ pascit inani;'

for the spacious mansion, like a Turkish caravansera, entertains the vagabonds with bare lodgings. I rule the family very ill, keep bad hours, and lend out your pictures about the town. See what it is to have a poet in your house. Frank, indeed, does all he can in such circumstances; for, considering he has a wild beast in it, he constantly keeps the door chained: every time it is [Pg 170] opened the links rattle, the rusty hinges roar. The house seems so sensible that you are all its support, that it is ready to drop in your absence; but I still trust myself under its roof, as depending that Providence will preserve so many Raphaels, Titians, and Guidos as are lodged in your cabinet. Surely the sins of one poet can hardly be so heavy as to bring an old house over the heads of so many painters. In a word, your house is falling; but what of that? I am only a lodger!"

This was mere pleasant badinage. During Jervas's absence, Pope made a journey on horseback to Oxford, a place he was fond of visiting; and his account of his journey, and mode of passing his time there, given in a letter to Martha Blount, is a pleasant near peep into his life. "Nothing could have more of that melancholy which once used to please me than my last day's journey; for, after having passed through my favorite woods in the forest, with a thousand reveries of past pleasures, I rode over hanging hills, whose tops were edged with groves, and whose feet watered with winding rivers, listening to the falls of cataracts below, and the murmuring of the winds above. The gloomy verdure of Stonor succeeded to these, and then the shades of the evening overtook me: the moon rose in the clearest sky I ever saw, by whose solemn light I passed on slowly without company, or any interruption to the range of my thoughts. About a mile before I reached Oxford, all the bells rang out in different notes; the clocks of every college answered one another, and sounded forth, some in deeper, some in softer tones, that it was eleven at night. All

this was no ill preparation to the life I have since led among these old walls, memorable galleries, stone porticoes, students' walks, and solitary scenes of the University. I wanted nothing but a black gown and a salary to be as mere a book-worm as any there. I conformed myself to college hours, was rolled up in books, lay in the most dusky parts of the University, and was as dead to [Pg 171] the world as any hermit of the desert. If any thing was alive or awake in me, it was a little vanity, such as even those good men used to entertain when the monks of their own order extolled their piety and abstraction; for I found myself received with a sort of respect which the idle part of mankind, the learned, pay to their own species; who are as considerable here as the busy, the gay, and the ambitious are in your world. Indeed, I was treated in such a manner, that I could not but sometimes ask myself, in my mind, what college I was founder of, or what library I had built. Methinks I do very ill to return to the world again—to leave the only place where I make a figure; and from seeing myself seated with dignity in the most conspicuous shelves of a library, put myself into the abject posture of lying at a lady's feet in St. James's Square."

There is a good deal of the poetical and picturesque in this account, as in another, of a ride to Oxford about two years before, there is of the picturesque and ludicrous. Pope and his cotemporaries, Swift, Addison, and Steele, have made immortal the triad of great publishers of their day—Tonson, Lintot, and Curll. Curll issued to the light a stolen volume of Pope's letters, to the poet's astonishment; and, on Pope's very natural anger, with very bibliopolical coolness, replied, that Mr. Pope ought to be very much obliged to him for making them known, for they did him so much credit. Jacob Tonson was the John Murray of his day; he turned out the most splendid editions of standard works, and was, moreover, the secretary of the great political Whig, or Kit-cat Club, of which the dukes of Somerset, Richmond, Grafton, Devonshire, and Marlborough; the Earls of Dorset, Sunderland, Manchester, Wharton, and Kingston; Lords Halifax and Somers; Sir Richard Steele, Addison, Congreve, Garth, Mainwaring, Pulteney, and many other distinguished men, were members. These, such was the munificence of the great bibliopole, he employed Sir Godfrey Kneller to paint for him, of a size to admit of representing [Pg 172] the heads, and which has since been called the kit-cat size. Munificent, however, as he was, Lintot soon out-bid him for Pope's Homer, and made his fortune by it.

Of Lintot's active schemes to turn a penny, the ride just mentioned to Oxford affords a curious example. Pope had borrowed a horse of Lord Burlington, and set out alone. He had most likely mentioned his going in Lintot's shop, for he had but just entered Windsor Forest, when who should come trotting up behind at a smart rate but Bernard Lintot. Pope had an instant feeling of Lintot's design, and in a letter to Lord Burlington gave a humorous and characteristic account of the singular conversation which took place between them. Pope had observed that Lintot, who was more accustomed to get astride of authors than of horses, sat uneasily in his saddle, for which he expressed some solicitude, when Lintot proposed that, as they had the day before them, it would be pleasant to sit a while under the woods. When they had alighted, "See here," said Lintot, "what a mighty pretty Horace I have in my pocket! What if you amused yourself in turning an ode till we mount again? Lord! if you pleased, what a clever miscellany you might make at leisure hours." "Perhaps I may," said Pope, "if we ride on; the motion is an aid to my fancy; a round trot very much awakens my spirits; then jog on apace, and I'll think as hard as I can." Silence ensued for a full hour, after which Lintot stopped short, and broke out, "Well, sir, how far have you gone?" "Seven miles," answered Pope. "Zounds! sir," exclaimed Lintot, "I thought you had done seven stanzas. Oldsworth in a ramble round Wimbledon Hill would translate a whole ode in this time. I'll say that for Oldsworth, though I lost by his Timothys, he translates an ode of Horace the quickest of any man in England. I remember Dr. King would write verses in a tavern three hours after he could not speak; and there is Sir Richard, in that rumbling old chariot of his, [Pg 173] between Fleet-street and St. Giles's Pound, shall make you half a Job." Pope jogged on to Oxford, and dropped Lintot as soon as he could.

We may imagine Pope, during his occasional visits to London, looking in at Lintot's to see what was coming out new, or spending a morning with Swift at his lodgings; with Bolingbroke; or with Gay, at the Duke of Queensbury's; with Lord Burlington, or Lord Halifax; and in the evening meeting in full conclave all the wits and philosophers of the time, at Will's Coffee-house, or at Button's, to which the company which used to meet at Will's had been transferred by the influence of Addison. This was also called the Hanover Club, because the members adhered to the Whig principles and the house of Hanover. But Pope was equally welcome at the Tory Club, which had been constituted by his great friends, Bolingbroke and Harley, on the downfall of the Whigs at the peace of Utrecht, in opposition to the Kit-cat Club, and where these noblemen, their great champion Swift, Sir William Wyndham, Lord Bathurst, Dr. Arbuthnot, and other men of note of that party assembled. This was called the October Club, from the month in which the great alteration in the ministry took place. Later, when the dissensions arose between Harley and Bolingbroke, a more exclusively literary club was formed, of which Swift, Gay, Parnell, and Arbuthnot were members. This was the Scriblerus Club, amid whose convivialities originated the History of Martinus Scriblerus; the Discourse on the Bathos, and Gulliver's Travels.

At all these places, Pope, who, having friends of all parties, would not commit himself to any political party, was always welcome, though the casual influence of party did not fail to take its effect, and do the work of estrangement among many of the leading spirits of the time. Pope always professed to hold Whig principles; but, in fact, there was little distinction of political [Pg 174] principle at that period, the chief difference being that of mere party. To the nation and its interests, it was of little consequence what leader was in power.

Amid all the convivialities, the excitements of wine, wit, and conversation, which so many meetings of celebrated men opened to Pope, he began to find himself growing dissipated, and his

health suffering. His wise old friend, Sir William Trumbull, warned him of his danger with an affectionate earnestness, and it is supposed with due effect. "I now come," said he, "to what is of vast moment—I mean, the preservation of your health, and beg of you earnestly to get out of all tavern company, and fly away *tanquam ex incendio*. What a misery it is for you to be destroyed by the foolish kindness—it is all one, real or pretended—of those who are able to bear the poison of bad wine, and to engage you in so unequal a combat. As to Homer, by all I can learn, your business is done; therefore come away, and take a little time to breathe in the country. I beg now for my own sake, and much more for yours. Methinks Mr. —— has said to you more than once,

'Heu! fuge, nati deâ, teque his, ait, eripe flammis.'"

Pope felt the justice of this call, and obeyed. It was not, however, without a lingering and reverted look, as a letter of his to Jervas testifies. "I can not express how I long to renew our old intercourse and conversation; our morning conference in bed in the same room, our evening walks in the Park, our amusing voyages on the water, our philosophical suppers, our lectures, our dissertations, our gravities, our fooleries, or what not."

It appears that not merely Jervas, Parnell, Garth, Rowe, and others of like respectable character, were his companions in the amusements referred to, but that, unfortunately for him, he had fallen into the company of the dissolute Earl of Warwick, Addison's son-in-law, and of Colley Cibber; who, availing themselves of his vivacity, laid a deliberate plan to engage him in an affair [Pg 175] derogatory to his reputation. But he cut wisely these connections, and London, with a valediction to be found in his verses written in the character of a philosophical rake:

"Dear, damned, distracting town, farewell
  Thy fools no more I'll tease," &c.

......*...*

"To drink and droll be Rowe allowed
  Till the third watchman toll;
Let Jervas gratis paint, and Froude
  Save threepence and his soul.

"Farewell Arbuthnot's raillery
  On every learned sot;
And Garth, the best good Christian he,
  Although he knows it not.

"Lintot, farewell! thy bard must go:
  Farewell, unhappy Tonson!
Heaven gives thee for thy loss of Rowe,
  Lean Phillips and fat Johnson.

"Why should I stay? both parties rage;
  My vixen mistress squalls;
The wits in envious feuds engage,
  And Homer—damn him—calls."

Here, then, ends Pope's town life, or that part of his life when he gave himself most up to it. We now accompany him to his new and his last residence, his beloved Twickenham, or Twitenham, as he used to write it.

It seems that Pope did not purchase the freehold of the house and grounds at Twickenham, but only a long lease. He took his father and mother along with him. His father died there the year after, but his mother continued to live till 1733, when she died at the great age of ninety-three. For twenty years she had the singular satisfaction of seeing her son the first poet of his age; caressed by the greatest men of the time, courted by princes, and feared by all the base. No parents ever found a more tender and dutiful son. With him they shared in honor the ease and distinction he had acquired. They were the cherished objects of his home. Swift paid him no false [Pg 176] compliment when he said, in condoling with him on his mother's death, "You are the most dutiful son I have ever known or heard of, which is a felicity not happening to one in a million."

The property at Twickenham is properly described by Roscoe as lying on both sides of the highway, rendering it necessary for him to cross the road to arrive at the higher and more ornamental part of his gardens. In order to obviate this inconvenience, he had recourse to the expedient of excavating a passage under the road from one part of his grounds to the other, a fact to which he alludes in these lines:

"Know all the toil the heavy world can heap
Rolls o'er my grotto, nor disturbs my sleep."

The lower part of these grounds, in which his house stood, constituted, in fact, only the sloping bank of the river, by much the smaller portion of his territory. The passage, therefore, was very necessary to that far greater part, which was his wilderness, shrubbery, forest, and every thing, where he chiefly planted and worked. This passage he formed into a grotto, having a front of rude stone-work opposite to the river, and decorated within with spars, ores, and shells. Of this place he has himself left this description:

"I have put the last hand to my works of this kind, in happily finishing the subterranean way and grotto. I found there a spring of the clearest water, which falls in a perpetual rill, that echoes through the cavern night and day. From the River Thames you see through my arch, up a walk of the wilderness, to a kind of open temple wholly composed of shells in the rustic manner; and from that distance under the temple, you look down through a sloping arcade of trees, and see the sails on the river passing suddenly and vanishing, as through a perspective glass. When you shut the door of this grotto, it becomes on the instant, from a luminous room, a *camera obscura*, [Pg 177] on the walls of which all the objects of the river, hills, woods, and boats are forming a moving picture, in their visible radiations; and when you have a mind to light it less, it affords you a very different scene. It is finished with shells, interspersed with looking-glass in regular forms, and in the ceiling is a star of the same material, at which, when a lamp of an orbicular figure of thin alabaster is hung in the middle, a thousand pointed rays glitter, and are reflected over the place. There are connected to this grotto, by a narrow passage, two porches, one toward the river, of smooth stones, full of light and open; the other toward the garden, shadowed with trees, rough with shells, flints, and iron ore. The bottom is paved with simple pebbles, as is also the adjoining walk up the wilderness to the temple, in the natural taste, agreeing not ill with the little dripping murmur, and the aquatic idea of the whole place. It wants nothing to complete it but a good statue with an inscription, like that beautiful antique one which you know I am so fond of. You will think I have been very poetical in this description; but it is pretty near the truth."

To this prose description Pope added this one in verse:

> "Thou who shalt stop, where Thames' translucent wave
> Shines a broad mirror through the shadowy cave;
> Where lingering drops from mineral roofs distill,
> And pointed crystals break the sparkling rill;
> Unpolished gems no ray on pride bestow,
> And latent metals innocently glow;
> Approach! great Nature studiously behold,
> And eye the mine without a wish for gold.
> Approach; but awful! Lo! the Egerian grot,
> Where, nobly pensive, St. John sat and thought;
> Where British sighs from dying Wyndham stole,
> And the bright flame was shot through Marchmont's soul.
> Let such, such only, tread this sacred floor,
> Who dare to love their country, and be poor."

But it was not merely in forming this grotto that Pope employed himself; it was in building and extending his house, which was in a Roman style, with columns, arcades, and porticoes. The [Pg 178] designs and elevations of these buildings may be seen by his own hand in the British Museum, drawn in his usual way on backs of letters. The following passage, in a letter to Mr. Digby, will be sufficient to give us his idea of both his Thamesward garden and his house in a summer view: "No ideas you could form in the winter could make you imagine what Twickenham is in this warm summer. Our river glitters beneath the unclouded sun, at the same time that its banks retain the verdure of showers; our gardens are offering their first nosegays; our trees, like new acquaintance brought happily together, are stretching their arms to meet each other, and growing nearer and nearer every hour. The birds are paying their thanksgiving songs for the new habitations I have made them. My building rises high enough to attract the eye and curiosity of the passenger from the river, where, upon beholding a mixture of beauty and ruin, he inquires, What house is falling, or what church is rising? So little taste have our common Tritons for Vitruvius; whatever delight the poetical gods of the river may take in reflecting on their streams, my Tuscan porticoes, or Ionic pilasters."

Pope's architecture, like his poetry, has been the subject of much and vehement dispute. On the one hand, his grottoes and his buildings have been vituperated as most tasteless and childish; on the other, applauded as beautiful and romantic. Into neither of these disputes need we enter. In both poetry and architecture a bolder spirit and a better taste have prevailed since Pope's time. With all his foibles and defects, Pope was a great poet of the critical and didactic kind, and his house and place had their peculiar beauties. He was himself half inclined to suspect the correctness of his fancy in such matters, and often rallies himself on his gimcracks and crotchets in both verse and prose. Thus, in his first epistle of his first book of Horace, addressed to Bolingbroke:

[Pg 179]

> "But when no prelate's lawn with haircloth lined
> Is half so incoherent as my mind;
> When—each opinion with the next at strife,
> An ebb and flow of follies all my life—
> I plant, root up; I build, and then confound;
> Turn round to square, and square again to round;
> You never change one muscle of your face;
> You think this madness but a common case."

Pope's building madness, however, had method in it. Unlike the great romancer and builder of our time, he never allowed such things to bring him into debt. He kept his mind at ease by such prudence, and soothed and animated it under circumstances of continued evil by working among his trees, and grottoes, and vines, and at his labors of poetry and translation. At the period

succeeding the rebellion of 1715, when that event had implicated and scattered so many of his highest and most powerful friends, here he was laboring away at his Homer with a progress which astonished every one. Removed at once from the dissipations and distractions of London, and from the agreeable interruptions of such society, he found leisure and health enough here to give him vigor for exertions astonishing for so weak a frame. The tastes he indulged here, if they were not faultless according to our notions, were healthy, and they endured. To the end of his life he preserved his strong attachment to his house and grounds. In 1736, writing to Swift, he says: "I wish you had any motive to see this kingdom. I could keep you, for I am rich; that is, I have more room than I want. I can afford room for myself and two servants. I have, indeed, room enough; nothing but myself at home. The kind and hearty housewife is dead! The agreeable and instructive neighbor is gone! Yet my house is enlarged, and the gardens extend and flourish, as knowing nothing of the guests they have lost. I have more fruit-trees and kitchen garden than you have any thought of; nay, I have melons and pine-apples of my own growth. I am as much a better gardener as I am a worse poet than when you saw me; but gardening is more akin to philosophy, [Pg 180] for Tully says, '*Agricultura proxima sapientiæ*.'" And toward the end of the same year he says, in a letter to Ralph Allen, "I am now as busy planting for myself as I was lately in planting for another; and I thank God for every wet day and for every fog that gives me the headache, but prospers my works. They will indeed outlive me, but I am pleased to think my trees will afford fruit and shade to others when I shall want them no more. And it is no sort of grief to me that those others will not be things of my own poor body; but it is enough that they are creatures of the same species, and made by the same hand that made me."

In 1743, the last year of his life, he was still inspired by the same tastes, and occupied in the same pursuits. "I have lived," says he, March 24th, 1743, "much by myself of late, partly through ill health, and partly to amuse myself with little improvements in my gardens and house, to which, possibly, I shall, if I live, be much more confined."

Of the mode of Pope's life here we have, from the letters of himself and his friends, a pretty tolerable notion. He was near enough town to make occasional visits to it, and his friends there near enough to visit him. His friends and acquaintances were every distinguished man and woman of the time, whether literary characters or statesmen. The greater part of them may be set down as his guests here, at one period or another. He delighted to have his most intimate friends near him, and some one or more of them with him. Bishops Atterbury and Warburton, the Duke and Duchess of Queensbury, Gay's great patrons; Sheffield, duke of Buckingham, Lady Suffolk, Lord and Lady Hervey, Lords Bathurst, Halifax, Oxford, Bolingbroke, Burlington, Lady Scudamore, the Countess of Winchilsea, Lord-chancellor Harcourt, and his son Sir Simon Harcourt, the Duke of Chandos, Lords Carlton, Peterborough, and Lansdowne, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Addison, Steele, Swift, Parnell, Gay, Rowe, and all the literary men of the age. [Pg 181] What an array of those who wrote, and of those who admired letters, were the frequenters of Twickenham. In fact, in a letter to Swift in 1736, Pope says, "I was the other day recollecting twenty-seven great ministers, or men of wit and learning, who are all dead, and all of my acquaintance within twenty years past."

But Pope loved to get those he most delighted to converse with to reside near him. Bolingbroke settled at Dawley, and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu at Twickenham itself. The latter remarkable woman was a little too near. All the world is familiar with Pope's intense admiration of her, his having her picture drawn by Sir Godfrey Kneller to gaze on every day, his worship of her, and their quarrel, which knew no reconciliation.

But Pope's attachments were, for the most part, strong and enduring. Except in the case of the flattered, spoiled, and satirical Lady Mary, there is scarcely a friend of Pope's who was not a friend for life. With the Blounts, the Allens,

> "And honest, hatless Cromwell, with red breeches,"

people who could confer no distinction, but had qualities worth loving, he maintained the most steady friendship to the last. On Martha Blount, the woman who above all others he most loved, he has conferred an immortality as enduring as his own.

But his three most intimate friends, after all, were Swift, Bolingbroke, and Gay. These congenial souls were here much, often, and for long times together. With Pope they not only entered into literary plans, read together, wrote together, and joked and feasted together, but with him they worked at his grotto and in his garden. They helped him to construct his quincunx; to plant, to sort spars and stones, and to fix them in the wall. Lord Peterborough, who had run so victorious a career in Spain, did not disdain to lay on a helping hand.

[Pg 182]

> "He whose lightnings pierced the Iberian lines,
> Now forms my quincunx and now ranks my vines."

Even the querulous dean, even the proud Bolingbroke, as well as the easy and good-humored Gay, zealously partook of the rural as well as the philosophical labors of Pope at Twickenham. Swift made two extraordinarily long sojourns here, one of five months; and though he took an abrupt leave at length, it was not, as Johnson would biliously represent it, because they could not live together, or had abated their mutual regard, but because they were both completely out of health, and the dean especially, afflicted with the nervous irritability which proved the forerunner of insanity. It was necessary for him to get home, where he could as little bear any society, in that morbid condition. Gay dead, Bolingbroke obliged to live abroad, Swift sunk into a hypochondriac, the latter end of Pope's life was melancholy, and Twickenham a comparative

solitude. He had, however, the cordially cheering attentions of Martha Blount; and Warburton, whose advancement in the church was the work of his friendship, came in to supply the places of the old companions gone.

Such was the home of Pope: there is still another portion of his life of which we get most picturesque glimpses, I mean into his haunts. Occasionally we find him at Bath for his health, but more frequently making a summer sojourn of a few weeks or months at the houses of some of his friends in the country. At one time he is at Dawley, with Bolingbroke, where they are lying and reading between two haycocks; at another at Prior Park, near Bath, at the Allens', where an odd kind of stiffness grew up between the Allens and Miss Blount and himself, that was never cleared up, but blew away, and left them as good friends as before. Then he is at Oakley Bower, Lord Bathurst's seat at Cirencester. In 1716, he writes to Martha and Teresa Blount—that was in his young and Homeric days—"I am with Lord Bathurst at my bower in whose groves we had [Pg 183] yesterday a dry walk of three hours. It is the place that of all others I fancy, and I am not yet out of humor with it, though I have had it some months; it does not cease to be agreeable to me so late in the season (October); the very dying of the leaves adds a variety of colors that is not unpleasant. I look upon it as upon a beauty I once loved, whom I should preserve a respect for in her decay; and as we should look upon a friend, with remembrance how he pleased us once, though now declined from his gay and flourishing condition.

"I write an hour or two every morning, then ride out a hunting upon the downs, eat heartily, talk tender sentiments with Lord B., or draw plans for houses and gardens, open avenues, cut glades, plant firs, contrive water-works, all very fine and beautiful in our own imagination. At night we play at commerce, and play pretty high. I do more. I bet too; for I am really rich, and must throw away my money, if no deserving friend will use it. I like this course of life so well, that I am resolved to stay here till I hear of somebody's being in town that is worth coming after."

In another letter to these sisters, he gives us a curious peep at court life. "First, then, I went by water to Hampton Court, unattended by all but by my own virtues, which were not of so modest a nature as to keep themselves or me concealed; for I met the prince, with all his ladies, on horseback, coming from hunting. Mrs. B—— and Mrs. L——" (Mary Bellenden and Mary Lepell, maids of honor to the queen) "took me into protection, contrary to the laws against harboring papists, and gave me a dinner, with something I liked better, an opportunity of conversing with Mrs. H——" (Mrs. Howard, afterward Countess of Suffolk). "We all agreed that the life of a maid of honor was of all things the most miserable; and wished that every woman that envied it had a specimen of it. To eat Westphalia ham in a morning, ride over hedges and ditches on borrowed [Pg 184] hacks, come home in the heat of the day with a fever, and—what is worse a hundred times—with a red mark in the forehead from an uneasy hat; all this may qualify them to make excellent wives for fox-hunters, and bear abundance of ruddy-complexioned children. As soon as they can wipe off the sweat of the day, they must simper an hour, and catch cold in the princess's apartment; from thence, as Shakspeare has it, 'to dinner with what appetite they may;' and after that, till midnight, walk, work, or think, which they please. I can easily believe no lone house in Wales, with a mountain and a rookery, is more contemplative than this court; and, as a proof of it, I need only tell you, Mrs. L—— (Mary Lepell) walked with me three or four hours by moonlight, and we met no creature of any quality but the king, who gave audience to the vice-chamberlain, all alone, under the garden wall.

"In short, I heard of no ball, assembly, basset-table, or any place where two or three were gathered together, except Madam Kilmansegg's, to which I had the honor to be invited, and the grace to stay away.

"I was heartily tired, and posted to —— Park (*q.* Bushy?); there we had an excellent discourse of quackery; Dr. S—— was mentioned with honor. Lady —— walked a whole hour abroad without dying after it, at least in the time I stayed, though she seemed to be fainting, and had convulsive motions several times in her head. I arrived in the forest by Tuesday at noon."

At another time we find him at Orchard Wyndham, the seat of Sir William Wyndham, in Somersetshire. "The reception we met with," says he, "and the little excursions we made, were every way agreeable. I think the country abounds with beautiful prospects. Sir William Wyndham is at present amusing himself with some real improvements, and a great many visionary castles. We are often entertained with sea views and sea-fish; and were at some places in the [Pg 185] neighborhood, among which I was mightily pleased with Dunster Castle, near Minehead. It stands upon a great eminence, and hath a prospect of that town, with an extensive view of the Bristol Channel, in which are seen two small islands called the Steep Holms and Flat Holms, and on the other side we could plainly distinguish the divisions of the fields on the Welsh coast. All this journey I performed on horseback." To how many readers will this fine scene here mentioned be familiar!

But another visit of Pope's to Stanton Harcourt, Oxfordshire, an old mansion of Lord Harcourt's, who lent it to him for the summer, has furnished us with a description which, though somewhat long, we must take in full. So much delighted was Pope with it, that he has described it twice; once to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, and once to the Duke of Buckingham. The following account is made complete by a careful comparison of both these letters; but may be supposed to be addressed to Lady Mary.

"I am fourscore miles from London; and the place is such as I would not quit for the town, if I did not value you more than, nay, every body else there; and you will be convinced how little the town has engaged my affections in your absence from it, when you know what a place this is which I prefer to it. I shall therefore describe it to you at large, as a true picture of a genuine

ancient country seat.

"You must expect nothing regular in my description of a house which seems to be built before rules were in fashion. The whole is so disjointed, and the parts are so detached from each other, and yet so joining again, one can not tell how, that in a poetical fit you could imagine it had been a village in Amphion's time, when twenty cottages had taken a dance together, were all out, and stood still in amazement ever since.

"You must excuse me if I say nothing of the front; indeed, I do not know which it is. A stranger would be grievously disappointed who should think to get into this house the right way. One [Pg 186] would reasonably expect, after the entry through the porch, to be let into the hall; but alas! nothing less! you find yourself in a brew-house. From the parlor you think to step into the drawing-room, but, upon opening the iron-nailed door, you are convinced, by a flight of birds about your ears, and a cloud of dust in your eyes, that it is the pigeon-house. On each side of our porch are two chimneys, that wear their greens on the outside, which would do as well within; for whenever we make a fire, we let the smoke out of the windows. Over the parlor window hangs a sloping balcony, which time has turned to a very convenient pent-house. The top is crowned with a very venerable tower, so like that of the church just by, that the jackdaws build in it as if it were the true steeple.

"The great hall is high and spacious, flanked on one side with a very long table, a true image of ancient hospitality. The walls are all over ornamented with monstrous horns of animals, about twenty broken pikes, ten or a dozen blunderbusses, and a rusty matchlock musket or two, which we were informed had served in the civil wars. There is one vast arched window, beautifully darkened with divers scutcheons of painted glass. There seems to be a great propriety in this old manner of blazoning upon glass, ancient families, like ancient windows, in the course of generations being seldom free from cracks. One shining pane, in particular, bears date 1286, which alone preserves the memory of a knight whose iron armor has long since perished with rust, and whose alabaster nose has moldered from his monument. The youthful face of Dame Elinor, in another piece, owes more to that single pane than to all the glasses she ever consulted in her life. Who can say, after this, that glass is frail, when it is not half so perishable as human beauty or glory? And yet I can not but sigh to think that the most authentic record of so ancient a family should be at the mercy of every boy who flings a stone! In this hall, in former days, have [Pg 187] dined gartered knights and courtly dames, with ushers, sewers, and seneschals, and yet it was but the other night that an owl flew in hither, and mistook it for a barn.

"This hall lets you, up and down over a very high threshold, into the great parlor. It is furnished with historical tapestry, whose marginal fringes do confess the moisture of the air. The other contents of this room are a broken-bellied virginal, a couple of crippled velvet chairs, with two or three moldered pictures of moldy ancestors, who look as dismally as if they came fresh from hell with all their brimstone about them. These are carefully set at the further corner, for the windows being every where broken, make it so convenient a place to dry poppies and mustard-seed in, that the room is appropriated to that purpose.

"Next to this parlor lies, as I said before, the pigeon-house, by the side of which runs an entry that leads, on one hand and on the other, into a bed-chamber, a buttery, and a small hole called the chaplain's study. Then follow the brew-house, a little green and gilt parlor, and the great stairs, under which is the dairy. A little further on the right, the servants' hall; and, by the side of it, up six steps, the old lady's closet for her private devotions, which has a lattice into the said hall, that, while she said her prayers, she might cast an eye on the men and maids. There are, upon the ground floor, in all, twenty-six apartments, hard to be distinguished by particular names, among which I must not forget a chamber that has in it a huge antiquity of timber, which seems to have been either a bedstead or a cider-press.

"The kitchen is built in form of the Rotunda, being one vast vault to the top of the house, where one aperture serves to let out the smoke and let in light. By the blackness of the walls, the circular fires, vast caldrons, yawning mouths of ovens and furnaces, you would think it either the [Pg 188] forge of Vulcan, the cave of Polyphemus, or the temple of Moloch. The horror of this place has made such an impression on the country people, that they believe the witches keep their Sabbath here, and that once a year the devil treats them with infernal venison, a roasted tiger stuffed with tenpenny nails.

"Above stairs we have a number of rooms: you never pass out of one into another but by the ascent and descent of two or three stairs. Our best room is very long and low, of the exact proportions of a bandbox. In most of these rooms there are hangings of the finest work in the world; that is to say, those which Arachne spins from her own bowels. Were it not for this only furniture, the whole would be a miserable scene of naked walls, flawed ceilings, broken windows, and rusty locks. Its roof is so decayed, that after a favorable shower we may, with God's blessing, expect a crop of mushrooms between the chinks of the floors.

"All the doors are as little and low as those to the cabins of packet-boats; and the rooms have, for many years, had no other inhabitants than certain rats, whose very age renders them worthy of this venerable mansion, for the very rats of this ancient seat are gray. Since these have not yet quitted it, we hope, at least, that this house may stand during the small remnant of days these poor animals have to live, who are too infirm to remove to another. They have still a small subsistence left them in the few remaining books of the library.

"We had never seen half what I have described but for an old, starched, gray-headed steward, who is as much an antiquity as any in the place, and looks like an old family picture walked out of its frame. He failed not, as we passed from room to room, to entertain us with several relations of

the family; but his observations were particularly curious when he came to the cellar. He showed where stood the triple rows of butts of sack, and where now ranged the bottles of tent for toasts [Pg 189] in a morning. He pointed to the stands that supported the iron-hooped hogsheads of strong beer; then, stepping to a corner, he lugged out the tattered fragments of an unframed picture. 'This,' says he, with tears in his eyes, 'was poor Sir Thomas, once master of all this drink! He had two sons, poor young masters! who never arrived to the age of this beer; they both fell ill in this very cellar, and never went out upon their own legs.' He could not pass by a heap of broken bottles without taking up a piece, to show us the arms of the family upon it. He then led us up the tower by dark, winding stone steps, which landed us into several little rooms, one above another. One of these was nailed up; and our guide whispered to us a secret occasion of it. It seems the course of this noble blood was a little interrupted, about two centuries ago, by a freak of the Lady Frances with a neighboring priest, since which the room has been nailed up, and branded as the Adultery Chamber. The ghost of Lady Frances is supposed to walk there, and some prying maids of the family report that they have seen a lady in a farthingale through the keyhole; but this matter is hushed up, and the servants are forbid to talk of it.

"I must needs have tired you by this long description; but what engaged me in it was a generous principle to preserve the memory of that which must itself soon fall into dust; nay, perhaps, part of it, before this letter reaches your hands. Indeed, I owe this old house the same gratitude that we do to an old friend, who harbors us in his declining condition, nay, even in his last extremities. I have found this an excellent place for retirement and study, where no one who passes by can dream there is one inhabitant; and even any body that could visit me does not venture under my roof. You will not wonder that I have translated a great deal of Homer in this retreat; any one that sees it will own that I could not have chosen a fitter or more likely place to converse with the dead."

No one, after reading this, can doubt that Pope possessed that rare talent of painting in words [Pg 190] which Thomson called so truly "the portrait painting of Nature," and which, in a letter to Doddington from Italy, he justly laments as so rare a faculty. "There are scarcely any to be met with who have given a landscape of the country through which they traveled, seen thus with the mind's eye, though that is the first thing which strikes, and what all readers of travels demand." "We must lament," says Warton, "that we have no more letters of Bishop Berkeley, who, we see by this before us (from Naples), possessed the uncommon talent of describing *places* in the most *lively* and *graphical* manner, a talent in which he has only been equaled or excelled by *Gray*, in many of those lively and interesting letters published by Mason; those especially written during his travels." The want continues to the present hour; the want of the art of bringing the things you speak of livingly before the reader. It is this want, which can only be supplied by the same principles of study in the writer as in the painter, which first suggested to me the necessity of "Visits to Remarkable Places." No one could have made such visits more effectual than Pope. This is a merit for which he yet has received little or no praise; and yet no talent is rarer, and few more delightful. In his letters, especially those addressed to his two lovely, charming, and life-long friends, Martha and Teresa Blount, such living portraitures of places abound. His description of Sir Walter Raleigh's old mansion and gardens at Sherbourne is a master-piece of the kind. You are now at Letcombe, in Berkshire, with Swift, where the author of Gulliver used to run up a hill every morning before breakfast; now at Bevis Mount, near Southampton, with his friend Lord Peterborough, the conqueror of Spain; and in his journeys to Bath, or to Lord Cobham's at Stowe, you peep in at a number of country houses, and rich peeps they are. Bath and London society is sketched with great vivacity and gusto; but such sketches are more [Pg 191] common than these peeps into aristocratic country life. Thus you have him rolling along slowly from Cobham toward Bath, drawn by the very horse on which Lord Derwentwater rode in the Rebellion, but then employed by Lord Cobham in rolling the garden. He looks in at Lord Deloraine's on the Downs. He lies one night at Rowsham, the seat of Colonel Cotterell, near Oxford; "the prettiest place for water-falls, jets, ponds inclosed with beautiful scenes of green and hanging wood, ever seen." Then at Mr. Howe's in Gloucestershire, "as fine a thing of another kind, where Nature has done every thing, and luckily, for the master has ten children." Then he calls at Sir William Codrington's, at Durhams, eight miles from Bath, where he thus describes his entertainment: "My reception there will be matter for a letter to Mr. Bethel. It was perfectly in his spirit. All his sisters, in the first place, insisted that I should take physic preparatory to the waters, and truly I made use of the time, place, and persons to that end. My Lady Cox, the first night I lay there, mixed my electuary; Lady Codrington pounded sulphur; Mrs. Bridget Bethel ordered broth; Lady Cox mounted first up stairs with the physic in a gallipot; Lady Codrington next, with the vial of oil; Mrs. Bridget third, with pills; the fourth sister with spoons and tea-cups. It would have rejoiced the ghost of Dr. Woodward to have beheld this procession." But two years before his death he was again at Stowe, when he says, "All the mornings we breakfast and dispute; after dinner and at night, music and harmony; in the garden fishing; no politics, and no cards nor novel reading. This agrees exactly with me, for the want of cards sends us early to bed."

This was the way he describes spending the latter part of his life: "Lord Bathurst is still my constant friend, but his country seat is now always in Gloucestershire, not in this neighborhood. Mr. Pulteney has no country seat; and in town I see him seldom. In the summer I generally [Pg 192] ramble for a month to Lord Cobham's, or to Bath, or elsewhere."

Such were the homes and haunts of Pope. In his life, one thing is very striking. How much the literary men of the time and the nobility associated; how little do they now. Are our nobility grown less literary, or our authors less aristocratic? It may be said that authors now are more independent, and can not flatter aristocracy. But no man was more independent, and proud of his

independence, than Pope. But I leave this question to wind up this article with a glance at Twickenham as it is.

Pope was anxious that some of his friends should have the lease of his house and grounds, and prevent their being pulled to pieces; but it was never done. Since his day they have gone through various hands. His house has long been pulled down; his willow has fallen down in utter decay; his quincunx has been destroyed. Two new tenements, having the appearance of one house, with a portico opening into the highway, have for some years been built at the further extremity of Pope's grounds next to the Thames. The house itself was stripped, immediately after his death, of all mementoes of him, by the operation of his own will. To Lord Bolingbroke he left his own copy of his Translation of Homer, and his other works. To Lord Marchmont, other books, with the portrait of Bolingbroke by Richardson. To Lord Bathurst, the three statues of the Hercules of Farnese, the Venus de Medici, and the Apollo in chiaro oscuro, by Kneller. To Mr. Murray, the marble head of Homer, by Bernini, and Sir Isaac Newton, by Guelfi. To Dr. Arbuthnot, another picture of Bolingbroke. He left to Lord Littleton the busts in marble of Shakspeare, Spenser, and Milton, presented to him by the Prince of Wales. His library went among his friends; the pictures of his mother, father, and aunts, to his sister-in-law, Mrs. Rackett. Of that of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, by Kneller, there is no mention; but all the furniture of his grotto, with the urns for his [Pg 193] garden, given by the Prince of Wales, he left to Martha Blount. Thus flew abroad those precious relics, then; and what changes in the place itself! A new house is at this moment rising on a part of the Thames bank, so that there are actually three tenements on the spot, and it is cut up and divided accordingly. With all this havoc, there are still, however, more traces of Pope left than might have been expected. The Thames is there; nothing can remove or cut up that. The scene across the river is woody, rich, and agreeable as ever. The sloping bank from the road to the river, once Pope's garden, is a pretty garden still. There is even at the end nearest to London a conservatory still standing, which has all the characteristics of another age, and probably was Pope's. It has Tuscan columns, and large panes of glass fit for sash windows. But a fine, fantastic sort of Swiss villa is rapidly rising, called by the people about Elizabethan. It has deep, depending eaves, full of wooden ornament, and a lofty tower. It is the property of a Mr. Young, a wholesale tea-dealer. Around were lying heaps of lime and other building materials, when I visited it a few weeks ago, and troops of work-people were busily employed where the lords, ladies, and literati of George II.'s reign resorted.

The subterranean passage, or grotto, still runs under the road, spite of Bowles telling us that all these things were pulled down and done away with. It is secured by iron gates at each end, and far more of the original spar and shell-work remains than you could have believed. Near the opening facing the Thames, under some ivied rockwork, stands the figure of a nun in stone, which, no doubt, has been placed there by some occupant subsequent to Pope.

On the opposite side of the road there is a field of some half dozen acres, still bearing traces of its former character. This was Pope's larger garden and wilderness, where he used to plant and [Pg 194] replant, contrive and recontrive, pull down and build up, to his heart's content. Around it still are traces of shrubberies, and over all are scattered many of those trees which, upward of a hundred years ago, Pope said he was busy planting for posterity. They are now stupendous in size—Spanish chestnuts, elms, and cedars. No doubt many of them have been felled, but what remain are lofty and magnificent trees. The walks and shrubberies are to a great extent annihilated; the center of the field was planted with potatoes. In the midst of a clump of old laurels, near the road, there is a remains of a large tree, hewn out into the shape of a seat, not unlike a watchman's box, which is said to have been Pope's, but is doubtful. At the top of the grounds is another grotto, that which was erected by Sir William Stanhope, who purchased the estate, or the lease of it, at Pope's death. This grotto seems to have formed the passage to still further grounds; for we are informed that Sir William Stanhope not only built two wings to Pope's house, but extended his grounds. There was placed over the entrance of this grotto a bust of Pope in white marble, and on a white marble slab the following inscription:

> "The humble roof, the garden's scanty line,
> Ill spoke the genius of a bard divine:
> But fancy now displays a fairer scope,
> And Stanhope's plans unfold the soul of Pope."—*Clare.*

These vaunting lines, which represent the addition of another grotto and another field as unfolding the soul of Pope, and Sir William Stanhope as somebody capable of far greater things than the poet himself, still remain, the monument of the writer's and the erector's folly. The bust, of course, is gone. The grotto is lined with spars; pieces of basalt, perhaps the very joints of the Giant's Causeway sent to Pope by Sir Hans Sloane in 1742, but two years before Pope's death; some huge pieces of glazed and striped jars of pottery; and masses of stalactites and of stone [Pg 195] worn by the action of the waters, evidently brought from some cavernous shore or bed of a torrent, perhaps from a great distance, and no doubt at a great expense. As this, however, was the work of Sir William Stanhope, and not of Pope, the whole possesses little interest. Every trace of the temple of which Pope speaks, as being in full view from his grotto, is annihilated; and if the small obelisk, having a funeral urn on each side, said to have been placed in a retired part of the grounds, remain, it escaped my observation. It had this inscription in memory of his mother:

> Ah! Editha,
> Matrum Optima,
> Mulierum Amantissima,
> Vale!

Lord Mendip, who married Sir William Stanhope's daughter, is said to have been particularly anxious to retain every trace of Pope. Yet in his care to maintain, he must have very much altered. He stuccoed the house, and adorned it, says a writer in the Gentleman's Magazine, in an elegant style. He inclosed the lawn, and propped with uncommon care the far-famed weeping willow, supposed to be the parent stock of the willows in Twickenham Park. Yes, Pope is said to have been the introducer of the weeping willow into England; that, seeing some twigs around the wrapping of an article of *vertu* sent to Lady Sylvius from abroad, he planted these, saying they might belong to some kind of tree yet unknown in England. From one of these sprung Pope's willow, and from Pope's willow thousands. Slips of his tree were anxiously sought after; they were even transmitted to distant climes; and in 1789, the Empress of Russia had some planted in her garden at Petersburgh. Notwithstanding every care, old age overcame this willow, and in spite of all props, it perished, and fell to the ground in 1801.

On the decease of Lord Mendip in 1802, the property was sold to Sir John Briscoe, Bart.; after whose death it was again sold to the Baroness Howe. This lady and her husband, Sir J. Waller Wathen, with a tasteless Vandalism, leveled the house of Pope to the ground; extirpated ruthlessly almost every trace of him in the gardens, and erected that house already mentioned at the extremity of Pope's property, now occupied as two tenements. This house of the unpoetical Lady Howe was also erected on the site of an elegant little villa, belonging to Hudson, the painter, the master of Sir Joshua Reynolds. [Pg 196]

Such are the revolutions which have passed over Pope's villa and its grounds. Where he, and such celebrated gardeners as Swift, Bolingbroke, and Gay labored, I found potatoes, black with the disease of 1846, growing. The giant trees planted by his hands, which still lift aloft their noble heads, we know not how long may escape some fresh change. The whole of the larger garden of Pope in which they grow, bears the evidences of neglect on its face. Laurels grow wild under the lofty hedges. The stones of Stanhope's grotto lie scattered about; and vast quantities of the deadly nightshade, as if undisturbed for years, displayed to my notice its dark purple and burnished berries of death.

The remains of Pope rest, with those of his parents, in Twickenham church. In the middle aisle, the sexton shows you a P in one of the stones, which marks the place of their interment. To see the monuments to their memory, you must ascend into the north gallery, where at the east end, on the wall, you see a tablet, with a Latin inscription, which was placed there by Pope in honor of his parents; and on the side wall of the gallery nearest the west is a tablet of gray marble, in a pyramidal form, with a medallion profile of the poet. This was placed here by Bishop Warburton, and bears the following inscription:

[Pg 197]

ALEXANDRO POPE, M. H. Gulielmus Episcopus, Glocestriensis,
Amicitiæ causâ fac: cur: 1761.
Poeta loquitur.

FOR ONE WHO WOULD NOT BE BURIED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

Heroes and kings, your distance keep;
In peace let one poor poet sleep,
Who never flattered folks like you:
Let Horace blush, and Virgil too.

By one of those acts which neither science nor curiosity can excuse, the skull of Pope is now in the private collection of a phrenologist. The manner in which it was obtained is said to have been this. On some occasion of alteration in the church, or burial of some one in the same spot, the coffin of Pope was disinterred, and opened to see the state of the remains; that by a bribe to the sexton of the time, possession of the skull was obtained for a night, and *another* skull returned instead of it. I have heard that fifty pounds were paid to manage and carry through this transaction. Be that as it may, the skull of Pope figures in a private museum.

[Pg 198]

DEAN SWIFT.

The principal scenes of residence of Dean Swift lie in Ireland. Johnson, in his life of the dean, makes it doubtful whether he was really an Englishman or an Irishman by birth. He says: "Jonathan Swift was, according to an account said to be written by himself, the son of Jonathan Swift, an attorney, and was born at Dublin on St. Andrew's day, 1667; according to his own report, as delivered by Pope to Spence, he was born at Leicester, the son of a clergyman, who was minister of a parish in Herefordshire. During his life the place of his birth was undetermined. He was contented to be called an Irishman by the Irish, but would occasionally call himself an Englishman. The question may, without much regret, be left in the obscurity in which he delighted to involve it."

There has long ceased to be any obscurity about the matter. His relations, justly proud of the connection, have set that fully in the light which Swift himself characteristically wrapped in mystification. He was of an English family, originally of Yorkshire, but his grandfather Thomas [Pg 199] Swift was vicar of Goodrich in Herefordshire. Taking an active part with Charles I. against the Parliament, he was expelled from his living; yet he died at Goodrich, and was buried under the altar there. The account of the plundering of his parsonage by the Parliament army, given in the appendix to Scott's life of the dean, is so lively a description of such an affair, that I will transcribe it:

"When the Earl of Stamford was in Herefordshire, in October, 1642, and pillaged all that kept faith and allegiance to the king, information was given to Mrs. Swift, wife of Thomas Swift, parson of Goodrich, that her house was designed to be plundered. To prevent so great a danger, she instantly repaired to Hereford, where the earl then was, some ten miles from her own home, to petition him that no violence might be offered to her house or goods. He most nobly, and according to the goodness of his disposition, threw the petition away, and swore no small oaths that she should be plundered to-morrow. The good gentlewoman, being out of hope to prevail, and seeing that there was no good to be done by petitioning him, speeds home as fast as she could, and that night removed as much of her goods as the shortness of the time would permit. Next morning, to make good the Earl of Stamford's word, Captain Kirle's troop, consisting of seventy horse and thirty foot, which were hangers on—birds of prey, came to Mr. Swift's house. There they took away all his provision of victuals, corn, household stuff, which was not conveyed away. They empty his beds, and fill the ticks with malt; they rob him of his cart and six horses, and make this part of their theft the means to convey away the rest. Mrs. Swift, much affrighted to see such a sight as this, thought it best to save herself, though she lost her goods; therefore, taking up a young child in her arms, began to secure herself by flight, which one of the troopers perceiving, he commanded her to stay, or, holding a pistol to her breast, threatened to shoot her [Pg 200] dead. She, good woman, fearing death whether she went or returned, at last, shunning that death which was next unto her, she retires back to her house, where she saw herself undone, and yet durst not oppose, or ask why they did so. Having thus rifled the house and gone, next morning early she goes again to Hereford, and there again petitions the earl to show some compassion to her and her ten children, and that he would be pleased to cause her horses and some part of her goods to be restored to her. The good earl was so far from granting her petition, that he would not vouchsafe so much as to read it. When she could not prevail herself, she makes use of the mediation of friends. These have the repulse also, his lordship remaining inexorable, without any inclination to mercy. At last, hoping that all men's hearts were not adamant relentless, she leaves the earl, and makes her addresses to Captain Kirle, who, upon her earnest entreaty, grants her a protection for what was left; but for restitution, there was no hope of that. This protection cost

her no less than thirty shillings. It seems paper and ink are dear in those parts. And now, thinking herself secure in his protection, she returns home, in hope that what was left she might enjoy in peace and quietness. She had not been long at home ere Captain Kirle sends her word that, if it pleased her, she might buy four of her own six horses again, assuring her, by her father's servant and tenant, that she should not fear being plundered any more by the Earl of Stamford's forces while they were in those parts. Encouraged by these promises, she was content to buy her own, and deposited eight pounds ten shillings for four of her horses. And now, conceiving the storm to be blown over, and all danger past, and placing much confidence in her purchased protection, she causes all her goods secured in her neighbor's houses to be brought home; and since it could not be better, rejoiced that she had not lost all. She had not enjoyed these thoughts long ere Captain Kirle sent unto her for some vessels of cider, whereof having [Pg 201] tasted, but not liking it, since he could not have drink for himself he would have provender for his horses, and therefore, instead of cider, he demands ten bushels of oats. Mrs. Swift, seeing that the denial might give some ground for a quarrel, sent him word that her husband had not two bushels of oats in a year for tithes, nor did they grow any on their glebe, both of which were most true. Yet, to show how willing she was, to her power, to comply with him, that the messengers might not return empty, she sent him forty shillings to buy oats. Suddenly after, the captain of Goodridge castle sends to Mr. Swift's house for victual and corn. Mrs. Swift instantly shows him her protection. He, to answer show with show, shows her his warrant; and so, without any regard to her protection, seizeth upon that provision which was in the house, together with the cider which Captain Kirle had refused. Hereupon Mrs. Swift writes to Captain Kirle, complaining of this injury, and the affront done to him in slighting his protection; but before the messenger could return with an answer to her letter, some from the castle came a second time to plunder the house, and they did what they came for. Presently after comes a letter from Captain Kirle in answer to Mrs. Swift's, that the Earl of Stamford did by no means approve of the injuries done to her, and withal, by word of mouth, sends to her for more oats. She, perceiving that as long as she gave they would never leave asking, resolved to be drilled no more. The return not answering expectation, on the third of December, Captain Kirle's lieutenant, attended by a considerable number of dragoons, comes to Mr. Swift's house and demands entrance; but the doors being kept shut against them, and not being able to force them, they broke down two iron bars in a stone window, and so, with swords drawn and pistols cocked, they enter the house. Being entered, they take all Master Swift's and his wife's apparel, his books and his children's clothes, they being in [Pg 202] bed; and these poor children that hung by their clothes, they being unwilling to part with them, they swung them about until, their hold-fast failing, they dashed them against the walls. They took away all his servants' clothes, and made so clean work with one that they left him not a shirt to cover his nakedness. There was one of the children, an infant, lying in the cradle; they robbed that, and left not the poor soul a rag to defend it from the cold. They took away all the iron, pewter, and brass; and a very fair cupboard of glasses, which they could not carry away, they broke to pieces; and the four horses lately redeemed are with them lawful prize again, and nothing left of all the goods but a few stools, for his wife, children, and servants to sit down and bemoan their distressed condition. Having taken away all, and being gone, Mrs. Swift, in compassion to her poor infant in the cradle, took it up, almost starved with cold, and wrapped it in a petticoat which she took off from herself; and now hoped that having nothing to lose would be a better protection for their persons than that which they purchased of Captain Kirle for thirty shillings. But, as if Job's messenger would never make an end, her three maid-servants, whom they in the castle had compelled to carry the poultry to the castle, return and tell their mistress that they in the castle said they had a warrant to seize upon Mrs. Swift and bring her into the castle, and they would make her three maid-servants wait on her there, and added things not fit for them to speak nor us to write. Hereupon Mrs. Swift fled to the place where her husband, for fear of the rebels, had withdrawn himself. She had not been gone two hours before they come from the castle, and bring with them three teams to carry away what was before designed for plunder, but wanted means of conveyance. When they came there was a batch of bread hot in the oven. This they seize on; her children, on their knees, entreat but for one loaf, and at last, with much importunity, obtained it; but before the children had eaten it, they took even that one loaf [Pg 203] away, and left them destitute of a morsel of bread among ten children. Ransacking every corner of the house that nothing might be left behind, they find a small pewter dish in which the dry-nurse had put pap to feed the poor infant, the mother who gave it suck being fled to save her life. This they seize on too. The nurse entreats, for God's sake, that they would spare that, pleading that, in the mother's absence, it was all the substance which was or could be provided to sustain the life of the child, that 'knew not the right hand from the left,' a motive which prevailed with God himself, though justly incensed against Nineveh.

"Master Swift's eldest son, a youth, seeing this barbarous cruelty, demanded of them a reason for this so hard usage. They replied that his father was a traitor to the king and Parliament, and added, that they would keep them so short that they would eat the very flesh from their arms; and to make good their word, they threaten the miller, that if he ground any corn for these children, they would grind him in his own mill; and not contented with this, they go to Mr. Swift's next neighbor, whose daughter was his servant, and take him prisoner: they examine him on oath what goods of Mr. Swift's he had in his custody. He professing that he had none, they charge him to take his daughter away from Mr. Swift's service, or else they threaten to plunder him; and to make sure work, they make him give them security to obey all their commands. Terrified with this, the neighbors stand afar off, and pity the distressed condition of these persecuted children, but dare not come or send to their relief. By this means the children and servants had no sustenance, hardly any thing to cover them, from Friday, six o'clock at night, until Saturday, twelve at night, until at last, the neighbors, moved with the lamentable cries and complaints of

the children and servants, one of the neighbors, overlooking all difficulties, and showing that he durst be charitable in despite of these monsters, ventured in, and brought them some provision. [Pg 204] And if the world would know what it was that so exasperated these rebels against this gentleman, the Earl of Stamford, a man that is not bound to give an account of all his actions, gave two reasons for it: first, because he had bought arms and conveyed them into Monmouthshire, which, under his lordship's good favor, was not so; and, secondly, because, not long before, he preached a sermon in Rosse upon that text, 'Give unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's,' in which his lordship said he had spoken treason in endeavoring to give Cæsar more than his due. These two crimes cost Mr. Swift no less than £300."[8]

With the memory of such things as these in the family, there need be no wonder at the dean's decided tendency to Toryism. His father and three uncles, that is, four out of ten sons, and three or four daughters of the persecuted clergyman, fled to Ireland, where the eldest son, Godwin Swift, a barrister, married a relative of the Marchioness of Ormond, and was made, by the Marquis of Ormond, his attorney-general in the palatinate of Tipperary. This Godwin married the co-heiress of Admiral Deane; the second son, a daughter of Sir William Davenant. Another was Mr. Dryden Swift, so called after his mother, who was a Dryden, and a near relation of the poet's. Thus Swift was of good family and alliance. He was the only son of Jonathan Swift, the eighth son of Thomas Swift, the vicar of Goodrich, who was so plundered. His mother was Abigail Erick, of Leicestershire, descended from the most ancient family of the Ericks, who derive their lineage from Erick the Forester, a great commander, who raised an army to oppose the invasion of William the Conqueror, by whom he was vanquished, but afterward employed to command that prince's forces. In his old age he retired to his house in Leicestershire, where his family has continued ever since, has produced many eminent men, and is still represented by the Heyricks [Pg 205] of Leicester town, and the Herricks of Beaumanor.

Swift's father was a solicitor, and steward to the Society of the King's Inn, Dublin; but he died before Swift was born, and left his mother in such poverty that she was not able to defray the expenses of her husband's funeral. He was born on the 30th of November, 1667, St. Andrew's Day, in a small house, now called No. 7, in Hoey's Court, Dublin, which is still pointed out by the inhabitants of that quarter, and, by the antiquity of its appearance, seems to vindicate the truth of the tradition. Here a circumstance occurred to him as singular as the case of his father, who, as a child in the cradle, had his clothes stripped from him by the troopers of Captain Kirle. His nurse was a woman of Whitehaven, and being obliged to go thither in order to see a dying relative, from whom she expected a legacy, out of sheer affection for the child, she stole on shipboard, unknown to his mother and uncle, and carried him with her to Whitehaven, where he continued for almost three years; for, when the matter was discovered, his mother sent orders by all means not to hazard a second voyage till he could better bear it. The nurse was so careful of him, that before he returned he had learned to spell, and by the time that he was five years old he could read any chapter in the Bible.

After his return to Ireland he was sent, at six years old, to Kilkenny school, and thence, at fourteen, he was transferred to the University at Dublin. At Kilkenny, it is said that his name is still shown to strangers at the school, cut, boy fashion, upon his desk or form. At the University, like Goldsmith, he was more addicted to general reading and poetry than to the classics and mathematics. He was poor, and the sense of his poverty on his proud spirit made him reckless, and almost desperate. He got into dissipation to drown his mortification. Between the 14th of November, 1685, and the 8th of October, 1687, he incurred no less than seventy penalties for [Pg 206] non-attendance at chapel, for neglecting lectures, for being absent at the evening roll-call, and for town-haunting, the academical phrase for absence from college without license. These brought censures, suspension of his degree; and, on his part, satirical sallies against the college authorities. He finally received his degree of bachelor of arts by *special grace*, that is, not by his own fair acquisition. His uncles, Godwin, and, after his death, Dryden, had borne the cost of his education; his mother had gone over to her native Leicester and friends, and, on obtaining his degree, he passed over to England to her. His mother was related to the wife of Sir William Temple, and, through her, Swift was received into Sir William's house as his private secretary. This brings us to the first *home* which Jonathan Swift may almost be said to have had.

Sir William, according to some authorities, was residing at this time at Sheen, near Richmond; according to others, he had retired to his favorite residence of Moorpark, near Farnham, in Surrey. Whichever place it was originally, it soon became Moorpark. Here William III. used to visit Temple; and here, as at Sheen, it was that the Dutch monarch, as is related as a most important fact, taught Swift to cut asparagus the Dutch way. The fact is Dutch and economical, and worthy to be known to all gardeners, and all other people who undertake this useful operation. It consists in cutting with a short and circular stroke, not with a wide, sweeping one. In the first case, you cut off only the head of asparagus you want; in the other, you most probably cut off half a dozen heads that have not yet appeared above the soil. Still, this was only half the advantage derived from the royal gardener: he taught Swift how to eat the asparagus when cut; and Swift used always to tell his guests that King William ate the stalks as well as the heads. If he taught him how to make them eatable, it is a great pity that the secret is lost. William is said, [Pg 207] also, to have offered Swift a troop of horse, which might naturally arise out of their cutting *horse*radish for dinner at the same time, though of this the biographers do not inform us. Certain it is, that Swift must have become a great favorite with William, or have thought so; for, though he respectfully declined becoming a trooper, he gave the king to understand that he had no objection to become a *canon*; and the king, as Swift wrote his uncle, desired him not to take orders till he gave him a prebend. Such was the opinion entertained by both Sir William Temple and Swift of his standing in the monarch's estimation, that he was employed by Sir William, who

was himself laid up with the gout, to lay before the king reasons why his majesty ought to assent to the bill for triennial Parliaments. Swift could strengthen Sir William's opinion by several arguments drawn from English history; but all his arguments had no effect on William III., who knew how to cut triennial Parliaments as cleverly as asparagus. This was Swift's first dip into politics, and, though he said it helped to cure him of vanity, it did not of addicting himself to the same unsatisfactory pursuit in after life.

Swift's residence at Moorpark is marked by all the characteristics of his after life, and by two of those events which are mixed up with its great mystery, and which brought after them its melancholy ending. He was so morose, bitter, and satirical, that Mr. Temple, nephew to Sir William, stated that Sir William for a long time very much disliked him "for his ill qualities, nor would allow him to sit down at table with him." Though related to Lady Temple, Sir William had engaged him only in the capacity of reader and amanuensis, at a salary of £20 a year and his board, and looked upon him as "a young fellow taken into a low office who was inclined to forget himself." We can well believe that the proud and unbending spirit which, through life, never deserted Swift, made him feel that he was thus regarded, and excited his most hostile and disagreeable qualities. He was also very defective in his education, and the consciousness of this [Pg 208] in a towering spirit like Swift's, while it mortified him, could not make him humble. Yet his better qualities at length prevailed. He took to study; was commended by Sir William; and this, on his part, induced a more respectful deportment toward Sir William, whose fine mind and noble character no one could better estimate than Swift, and it ended, notwithstanding an occasional jar, and a parting at one time, with Swift's becoming the most zealous, attentive, and affectionate friend of Sir William, who admitted him to his most entire and cordial confidence.

The whole period of Swift's residence at Moorpark was two years. During this time he went for a while to Oxford to take his degree, and he was absent twice in Ireland; once a few months on account of his health, and the second time when Swift, anxious for some means of independence, and Temple only offering him an employment worth a hundred a year in the office of the rolls in Ireland, they parted with mutual displeasure. Swift then went to Ireland, where, the heat of their difference having abated on both sides, through Sir William's influence, he obtained the prebend of Kilroot, in the diocese of Connor, worth about a hundred pounds a year. To this small living he retired, and assumed the character of a country clergyman. But this life of obscurity and seclusion was not likely long to suit the reckless, aspiring nature of Swift. He sighed to return to the intellectual pleasures and persons who resorted to Moorpark, and Sir William had not the less sensibly felt the absence of Swift, than Swift the absence of Moorpark. He returned within the year, and was welcomed back with warmth and respect, and thenceforward stood in a new position. With his abrupt departure from Kilroot, two very different stories have been connected: one which, if true, would sink his character forever; the other, which has never been questioned, evidencing the noblest qualities in that character. The first of these stories is that he attempted [Pg 209] violence on the daughter of a farmer, one of his parishioners. Of this it is enough to quote the words of Sir Walter Scott, which, after giving the particulars of the refutation of this calumny, are: "It is sufficient for Swift's vindication to observe, that he returned to Kilroot after his resignation, and inducted his successor in face of the church and of the public; that he returned to Sir William Temple with as fair a character as when he left him; that during all his public life in England and Ireland, when he was the butt of a whole faction, this charge was never heard of; that when adduced so many years after his death, it was unsupported by aught but sturdy and general averment; and that the chief propagator of the calumny first retracted his assertions, and finally died insane."

That there might be *something* on which this charge was founded is by no means improbable, and that Swift, as alleged, was brought before a magistrate of the name of Dobbs; for it is confessed that in his youth he was of a dissipated habit, and it is far more likely that these habits induced that constitutional affection, with giddiness, deafness, and ultimate insanity, which made his future life wretched, than that it was owing to eating an over quantity of stone-fruit. In this point of view, the life of Swift presents a deep moral lesson; for no man, if that were the case, ever drew down upon himself a severer chastisement; but, as regards this particular fact, it could by possibility be nothing so flagrant as was endeavored to be propagated by the report. The second statement one is unwilling to weaken, because, in itself, it is so beautiful; yet in the dean's life there are so many proofs of his making professions of patriotism and generosity to cover and screen his private purposes, that one is equally tempted to suspect a certain share of policy. The fact is thus stated:

"In an excursion from his habitation, he met with a clergyman, with whom he formed an acquaintance, which proved him to be learned, modest, well-principled, the father of eight [Pg 210] children, and a curate at the rate of forty pounds a year. Without explaining his purpose, Swift borrowed this gentleman's black mare—having no horse of his own—rode to Dublin, resigned the prebend of Kilroot, and obtained a grant of it for this new friend. When he gave the presentation to the poor clergyman, he kept his eyes steadily fixed on the old man's face, which, at first, only expressed pleasure at finding himself preferred to a living; but when he found that it was that of his benefactor, who had resigned in his favor, his joy assumed so touching an expression of surprise and gratitude, that Swift, himself deeply affected, declared he had never experienced so much pleasure as at that moment. The poor clergyman, at Swift's departure, pressed upon him the black mare, which he did not choose to hurt him by refusing; and thus mounted for the first time on a horse of his own, with fourscore pounds in his purse, Swift again rode to Dublin, and there embarked for England, and resumed his situation at Moorpark as Sir William Temple's confidential secretary."

The incident is a charming one; and we may admit the facts as regards the clergyman to be fully true, and that the pleasure of Swift must have been great in having the opportunity of thus making a good man happy; but, in order to place the transaction on its probably correct basis, we must not forget that Swift was confessedly already most thoroughly weary of the obscurity of Kilroot, and longing for return to Moorpark. This takes a good deal of the romance out of it. Without, therefore, astonishing ourselves at the unworldly generosity of a young man abandoning his own chance in life to serve a poor and meritorious man, we may suppose to the full that Swift was glad to do the good man such a service while it jumped with his own wishes. No man was more clear-sighted than Swift as to the consequences of such things; and none could better estimate the wide difference in the mode of doing the thing, between saying, "Well, I'm tired of [Pg 211] this stupid place; I must away again to England; but I'll try to get the living for you," and leaving the high merit of such a personal sacrifice to be attributed to him. In any way, it was rich in consequences. He left behind a family made happy; grateful hearts, and tongues that would sound his praises through the country; and what a *prestige* with which to return to Moorpark! He came back like a hero of romance. That, judging by the after life of the dean, is probably the true view of the affair. He did a good deed, and he took care that it presented to the public its best side.

These ten years of life at Moorpark, which ended only with the death of Sir William Temple, were every way a most important portion of Swift's life. Here he laid at once the foundation of his fame and his wretchedness. Here, with books, leisure, and as much solitude as he pleased—with the conversation of Sir William Temple, and the most distinguished literati of the age who visited him —Swift, in so auspicious an atmosphere, not only thought and studied much, but wrote a vast deal, as it were to practice his pen for great future efforts, when he felt his mind and his knowledge had reached a sufficient maturity. He informs his friend, Mr. Kendall, that he had "written, and burned, and written again upon all manner of subjects, more than perhaps any man in England." He wrote Pindaric Odes; translated from the classics; and exercised his powers of satire till he could confidently to himself predict the force of that "hate to fools" which he afterward assumed as his principal characteristic. Besides this, he was deeply engaged in assisting Sir William in the controversy on the superiority of ancient or modern learning, in which Temple, Boyle, Wotton, and Bentley were all involved. This occasioned Swift's "Battle of the Books," though it was not printed till some years afterward. Here, also, he wrote his famous "Tale of a Tub," which more than any other cause stopped effectually the path of his ambition toward a [Pg 212] bishopric. Though not known avowedly as an author, Swift was now well known as a man of great ability to many literary men, and was on terms of particular friendship with Congreve.

But his literary pursuits here had not so completely engrossed him as to prevent his engaging in what, in any other man, would have been termed more tender ones; in Swift they must take some other name, be that what it may. The history of his conduct, too, with regard to every woman to whom he paid particular court, is the most extraordinary thing in all literary research; there have been several ways of accounting for it, into which it is not my intention to descend; let the causes have been what they may, they stamp his character for intense selfishness beyond all possibility of palliation. If Swift felt himself disqualified for entering into matrimonial relations from whatever cause or motive, as it is evident he did, he should have conducted himself toward women of taste and feeling accordingly; but, on the contrary, he never, in any instance, seems to have put the slightest check on himself in this respect. He paid them the most marked attentions; in some instances he wooed, with all the appearances of passion, and proposed marriage with the most eager importunity; he saw one after another respond to his warmth, and then he coolly backed out, or entered into such a tantalizing and mysterious position—where the woman had to sacrifice every thing, peace of mind being destroyed, and character put into utmost jeopardy—as wore their very hearts and lives out. He played with women as a cat does with mice. So that they were kept fast bound within his toils, cut off from all the better prospects of life, sacrificed as victims to his need of their society, he cared nothing. He was alarmed and agitated almost to madness by the fear of losing them; yet this was a purely selfish feeling; he took no measures to set their hearts at rest; he placed them in such circumstances that he could not do it; to satisfy [Pg 213] one he must immolate another. Some of the finest and most charming women of the age were thus kept, as it were, with a string round their hearts, by which he could pluck and torture them at pleasure, and keep them walking forever over the burning plowshares of agonizing uncertainties, and the world's oblique glances. There is nothing which can ever reclaim Swift's memory, in this respect, from the most thorough contempt and indignation of every manly mind.

Every instance of what are called love-affairs, in which Swift was concerned, presents the same features, even under the softened effect of the coloring of his most laudatory biographer, Sir Walter Scott. While Swift was at Leicester, his mother was afraid of his forming an imprudent attachment to a young woman there; at which Swift, knowing himself pretty well, only laughed. His flirtations, he represented, were only "opportunities of amusement;" a "sort of insignificant gallantry which he used toward the girl in question;" a "habit to be laid aside whenever he took sober resolutions, and which, should he enter the Church, he should not find it hard to lay down at the porch." This is base language, and that of Scott is hardly better. He says, "It is probably to a habit, at first indulged only from vanity or for the sake of amusement, that we are to trace the well-known circumstances which imbittered his life and impaired his reputation."

And is this all? Are habits of indulging vanity, and of amusing one's self with the affections and the happiness of others, to be thus coolly talked of? "Circumstances which imbittered *his* life, and impaired *his* reputation," indeed! Swift had the greatest right to imbitter his own life, and impair his own reputation, if he pleased, but that is not the question; it was because he most recklessly, for the indulgence of his vanity and his self-love, imbittered the lives of those who listened to him,

and impaired their reputations, that he was culpable in proportion to his brilliant powers, and [Pg 214]
placed himself thereby in the category of heartless villains. These are severe words; but I have always felt, and still can not avoid feeling, that their application to Swift is most just and necessary. Perhaps no instance of mere meanness was ever more striking than that shown in his second courtship. The lady in this case was not a simple country girl, but was Jane Waryng, the sister of an ancient college companion; to this young lady, in his affected pastoral style, he had given the name of Varina. Let it be remembered that this was in Ireland, while he was bearing the name, and performing the functions, of a clergyman. His suit for this lady was continued for four or five years with all the appearances and protestations of the deepest attachment; he proposed marriage in the most unequivocal terms. The young lady does not seem to have responded very cordially to his advances, for a long time, in fact, till that very response put a speedy end to the disgraceful farce. When she did agree to accept him and his offer, "he seemed," says Scott, "to have been a little startled by her sudden offer of capitulation." He then assumed quite another tone; let Scott's own language relate what he did: "Swift charged Varina with want of affection and indifference; stated his own income in a most dismal point of view, yet intimated that he might well pretend to a better fortune than she was possessed of! He was so far from retaining his former opinion as to the effects of a happy union, that he inquired whether the physicians had got over some scruples they appeared to entertain on the subject of her health. (He had made this delicate health before a plea for entreating her to put herself under his care.) Lastly, he demanded peremptorily to know whether she would undertake to manage their domestic affairs with an income of rather less than three hundred pounds a year; whether she would engage to follow the methods he should point out for the improvement of her mind; [Pg 215]
whether she could bend all her affections to the same direction which he should give his own, and so govern her passions, however justly provoked, as at all times to resume her good humor at his approach; and, finally, whether she could account the place where he resided more welcome than courts and cities without him. These premises agreed, as indispensable to please those who, like himself, 'were deeply read in the world,' he intimates his willingness to wed her, though *without* personal beauty or large fortune."

This language requires no comment; it is the vile shuffle of a contemptible fellow, who, taken at his word, then bullies and insults to get off again.

The next victim of this wretched man was Esther Johnson, the Stella of this strange history. This young lady was the daughter of the steward of Sir William Temple at Moorpark; she was fatherless when Swift commenced his designs upon her; her father died soon after her birth, and her mother and sister resided in the house at Moorpark, and were treated with particular regard and esteem by the family. Miss Esther Johnson, who was much younger than Swift, was beautiful, lively, and amiable. Swift devoted himself to her as her teacher, and under advantage of his daily office and position, engaged her young affections most absolutely. So completely was it understood by her that they were to be married when Swift's income warranted it, that on the death of Temple, and Swift's preferment to the living of Laracor in Ireland, she was induced by him to come over and fix her residence in Trim near him, under the protection of a lady of middle age, Mrs. Dingley. The story is too well known to be minutely followed; Swift acquired such complete mastery over her, that he kept her near him and at his command the greater part of his life, but would neither marry her, nor allow her to marry any one else, though she had excellent offers. It was not till many years afterward, when this state of dependence, uncertainty, and [Pg 216]
arbitrary selfishness had nearly worn her to the death; and when these were aggravated by fears for her reputation, and then by the appearance of a rival on the scene, that she extorted from him a marriage, which was still kept a profound secret, unacknowledged, and which left her just in the position she was in before, that of a mere companion in presence of a third party, when he chose. The rival just mentioned was a Miss Vanhomrigh, the daughter of a widow lady, whose house he frequented during his life in London. This young lady, to whom he, on his uniform plan, which tended to prevent unpleasant claims by the evidence of letters, gave the name of Vanessa, as he termed himself Cadenus, was high-spirited and accomplished. When Swift, in his usual manner, had for a long time paid every marked attention to Miss Vanhomrigh, and was regarded both by herself and the whole family as an acknowledged lover, yet never came to plain terms, the young lady came boldly to them herself. The gay deceiver was thunderstruck: he had for a few years been living in the most intimate state of confidence with Stella, as her affianced lover; she had all the claims of honor and affection upon him that a wife could have; for, though maintaining the strictest propriety of life under the closest care of Mrs. Dingley, she was devoting her time, her thoughts, the very flower of her life, and the hazard of her good name, to his social happiness. This plain dealing, therefore, on the part of Vanessa, was an embarrassing blow. "We can not doubt," says Scott, "that he actually felt" the shame, disappointment, guilt, surprise, "expressed in his celebrated poem, though he had not the courage to take the open and manly course of avowing those engagements with Stella, or other impediments, which prevented his accepting the hand and fortune of her rival."

The fox, in fact, was taken in his wiles. He had got more on his hands than, with all his cunning, he knew how to manage. His selfish tyranny had been able to control, and put off poor Stella, but [Pg 217]
Vanessa was a different kind of subject, and put the wretched shuffler into great alarm and anxiety. He retired to Ireland; but this did not mend the matter: it tended rather to make it worse; for Miss Vanhomrigh had property there, and speedily announced to the guilty dean her presence in Dublin. He was now in as pretty a fix as one could wish such a double-dealer to be. "The claims of Stella," says Scott, "were preferable in point of date, and to a man of honor and good faith, in every respect inimitable. She had resigned her country, her friends, and even hazarded her character, in hope of one day being united to Swift. But if Stella had made the

greater sacrifice, Vanessa was the more important victim. She had youth, fortune, fashion; all the acquired accomplishments and information in which Stella was deficient; possessed at least as much wit, and certainly higher powers of imagination. She had, besides, enjoyed the advantage of having in a manner compelled Swift to hear and reply to the language of passion. There was in her case no Mrs. Dingley, no convenient third party, whose presence in society and community in correspondence necessarily imposed upon both a restraint, convenient perhaps to Swift, but highly unfavorable to Stella."

The consequences were such as might be expected. Swift endeavored to temporize and amuse Miss Vanhomrigh, and to get her to return to England, but in vain. She never ceased to press, to her, the important question, and to keep him in what he used to call a "quickset hedge." She importuned him with complaints of cruelty and neglect, and it was obvious that any decisive measure to break this acquaintance would be attended with some such tragic consequence as, though late, at length concluded their story. He was thus compelled to assume a demeanor of kindness and affection to Vanessa, which, of course, soon was reported to Stella, and began to produce in her the most fatal symptoms. Her heart was wrung by fears and jealousies; her health [Pg 218] gave way; and Swift was compelled to a private marriage, in order not to clog his conscience with her murder. The conditions of this marriage were, that it should continue a strict secret from the public, and that they should continue to live separately, and in the same guarded manner as before. The grand business of his life now was to soothe and wheedle Vanessa, and to play the hypocrite lover to her while he was the husband of another woman; a fine situation for a clergyman and a dean! This, we may believe, with a woman of Miss Vanhomrigh's temperament, was no easy task. His next plan was to get rid of her by inducing her to marry some one else, and for this purpose he presented to her Dean Winter, a gentleman of character and fortune, and Dr. Price, afterward Archbishop of Cashel. It was in vain; she rejected such offers peremptorily, and at length, as if to hide her vexation and seek repose in nature, she retired to Marley Abbey, her house and property near Celbridge. But the dreams of love and jealousy pursued her thither with only the more force. She heard whispers of Stella being actually the wife of Swift, and she determined to know the truth. For this purpose she wrote at once to Stella, and put the plain question to her. The result of this was rapid and startling. In a few days she saw the dean descend from his horse at her gate, and advance to her door dark and fierce as a thunder-cloud. He entered, threw down a letter upon the table before her, and with a look black as night, stalked out again without a word, mounted, and rode away. As soon as Miss Vanhomrigh recovered in some degree from her terror and amazement, she took up the letter, opened it, and found it her own to Stella!

Stella herself confirmed the fatal truth by a candid avowal and Miss Vanhomrigh sank under the shock. For eight years, trusting probably to the promises of Swift, and the apparently failing health of Stella, she had maintained the unequal contest with her deep-rooted passion and Swift's [Pg 219] mysterious conduct, but this revelation of his villainy was her death. However, she lived only to revoke in haste her will, which had been made in favor of Swift, and to leave her fortune to Mr. Marshall, afterward one of the judges of the Court of Common Pleas in Ireland, and Dr. Berkeley, the celebrated philosopher, and afterward Bishop of Cloyne; and to command the publication of all the letters which had passed between Swift and herself, as well as the celebrated poem of Cadenus and Vanessa.

Stella died in 1727-8, having borne the secret and corroding suffering of the position imposed by the selfishness of Swift for upward of thirty years. Mrs. Whiteway, a lady who was on terms of great intimacy with Swift, and spent much time at the deanery of St. Patrick's, stated, that when Stella was on her death-bed, she expostulated with Swift on his having kept their marriage unnecessarily secret, and expressed her fear that it might leave a stain on her reputation, to which Swift replied, "Well, my dear, if you wish it, it shall be owned." Stella replied, "*It is too late!*"

Scott says "he received this report of Mrs. Whiteway with pleasure, as vindicating the dean from the charge of cold-blooded and hard-hearted cruelty to the unfortunate Stella, when on the verge of existence." How does it vindicate him from any such charge? The avowal was never made by him; and so dubious was the very fact of the marriage left, as far as any act of Swift's was concerned, that its very existence has since been strenuously denied, especially by Mr. Monck Mason in his History of St. Patrick's Cathedral. The simple truth is, that the whole of Swift's conduct to Stella for thirty-three years was a piece of "cold-blooded and hard-hearted cruelty," which admits of no defense. Such was the treatment which all ladies who manifested an attachment to Swift received at his hands; is it any wonder that such a man went mad?

These circumstances have given a singular character to the biography of Swift; the letters of [Pg 220] Stella and Vanessa, which have been published, convert it, by their passion and heart-eloquence, into a species of romance; in which, however, Swift himself plays the part of a very clever, witty, and domineering, but certainly not attractive hero. Moorpark will always possess an interest connected with Stella. It was amid its pleasant groves that, young, beautiful, and confiding, she indulged with Swift in those dreams of after life which he was so bitterly to falsify. There is a cavern about three quarters of a mile from the mansion, called Mother Ludlam's Hole, which the country tradition represents as having been a frequent resort of Swift and Stella in their walks. It lies half way down the side of the hill, covered with wood toward the southern extremity of the park. It seems to have been hewn out of the sandstone rock, and to have increased considerably in its dimensions since it was described by Grose. The greatest height of this excavation may be about twelve feet, and its breadth twenty, but at the distance of about thirty feet from the entrance it becomes so low and narrow as to be passable only by a person crawling on his hands

and knees. From the bottom of the cave issues a small, clear stream, and two stone benches have been placed for the accommodation of visitors. The gloom and uncertain depth of the grotto, the sound of the water, and the beauty of the surrounding solitary scene, surveyed through the dark arched entrance, shagged with weeds and the roots of trees, give the spot an impressive effect. Grose gives a jocose account of the origin of the name of the cave. Old Mother Ludlam, he tells us, was a *white* witch, one who neither killed hogs, rode on broomsticks, nor made children vomit nails and crooked pins, but, on the contrary, did all the good she could. That the country people, when in want of any article, say a frying-pan or a spade, would come to the cave at midnight, and, turning three times round, would three times say, "Pray, good Mother Ludlam, lend me such a thing, and I will return it within two days." The next morning, on going there again, the article [Pg 221] would be found laid at the entrance of the cave. At length the borrower of a large caldron was not punctual in returning it, which so irritated the good mother, that when it did come she refused to take it in again, and in course of time it was conveyed away to Waverley Abbey, and, at the dissolution of the monasteries, was deposited in Frensham Church. From the hour of the non-appearance of the caldron, however, at its proper time, Mother Ludlam never would lend the slightest thing.

The resorts and residences of Swift in London, during his life there, have no very peculiar interest. He frequented freely the houses of the great political characters with whom he was connected. His immediate friends were Harley, Bolingbroke, Godolphin. He was a frequent attendant at Leicester House, the court of the Prince of Wales, afterward George II. He was on the most familiar terms with all the literati, Gay, Pope, Addison, and for a considerable period, Steele, etc. He was often at Twickenham for months together, and Button's Coffee-house was the constant resort of the wits of the time, among whom he played a very conspicuous part. It is not in these places, however, that the deep interest of Swift's life has settled, and, therefore, we pass at once across the Channel to Ireland, and seek his homes there. We have already noticed his brief abode at Kilroot; his next residence was at Laracor, in Meath.

Swift was about thirty-two years of age when he attended Lord Berkeley, one of the lords-justices of Ireland, to that country as his chaplain and private secretary. Berkeley had promised him the first good church living that fell vacant, but the rich deanery of Derry soon after falling out, he would only *sell* it to Swift for a thousand pounds. Swift resented this in such a manner, that to prevent making so formidable an enemy, he gave him the next vacancy—the rectory of Agher, and the vicarage of Laracor and Rathbeggan. These livings, united, amounted to about £230 [Pg 222] yearly; and the prebend of Dunlavin being added in the year 1700, raised Swift's income to between £350 and £400. His manner of taking possession of Laracor, where he resolved to live, was characteristic. He was a great walker, and he is said to have walked down *incognito* to Laracor from Dublin, making doggerel rhymes on the places which he passed through. Many anecdotes are related of this journey. Arriving, he entered the curate's house, demanded his name, and announced himself bluntly "as his master." All was bustle to receive a person of such consequence, who, apparently, was determined to make his consequence felt. The curate's wife was ordered to lay aside the doctor's clean shirt and stockings, which he carried in his pocket; nor did Swift relax his airs of domination until he had excited much alarm, which his subsequent and friendly conduct to the worthy couple turned into respectful attachment.

These *brusqueries* of the dean's were, no doubt, very amusing to himself, and are agreeable enough to read of, but they must have been any thing but agreeable to those upon whom they were played off. They betray a want of regard to the feelings of others, and were, every one of them, offenses against the best laws of society, which every one who regards the kindly sparing of the feelings of the humble and the modest ought to condemn. However respectful might be the after attachment of this worthy curate and his wife, we may well believe that the first strange rudeness and severity of the dreaded dean would leave a wound and a terror behind that were not deserved, and that no one ought willingly to inflict. There were cases where folly merited the eccentric chastisement which Swift gave them. The farmer's wife who invited him to dinner, and then spoiled the dinner by repeatedly complaining that it really was too poor for him to sit down to, though the table groaned with good things, deserved, in some degree, the retort, "Then why [Pg 223] did you not get a better? you knew I was coming; I have a good mind to go away and dine on a red herring." Yet even there, the good-natured country habit of the woman was somewhat too severely punished. She meant well.

Swift seemed to settle down at Laracor in good earnest. He found the church and parsonage much neglected and dilapidated, and set about their repairs at once. He was active and regular in the discharge of his clerical duties. He read prayers twice a week, and preached regularly on Sundays. The prayers were thinly attended, and it was on one of these occasions that Lord Orrery represents him as addressing the clerk, Roger Coxe, as "My dearly beloved Roger." The truth of the anecdote has been disputed, and is said to exist in an old jest-book, printed half a century before. This does not, however, render it at all improbable that Swift did not make use of the jest, especially when we know that Roger was himself a humorist and a joker; as, for instance, when Swift asked Roger why he wore a red waistcoat, and he replied, because he belonged to the church militant.

STELLA'S HOUSE.

Swift took much pleasure in his garden at Laracor; converted a rivulet that ran through it into a regular canal, and planted on its banks avenues of willows. As soon as he was settled, Stella, and her companion, Mrs. Dingley, came over and settled down too. They had a house near the gate of Knightsbrook, the old residence of the Percivals, almost half a mile from Swift's house, where [Pg 224] they lived when Swift was at Laracor, or were the guests of the hospitable vicar of Trim, Dr. Raymond. Whenever Swift left Laracor for a time, as on his annual journeys to England, the ladies then took possession of the vicarage of Laracor, and remained there during his absence. The site of Stella's house is marked on the Ordnance Survey of the county of Meath.

The residence of Swift at Laracor includes a most important portion of his life. It was, at the least, twelve years, as he took possession of his living in 1700, and quitted it for the deanery of St. Patrick in 1713. Here he was fully occupied with the duties of his parish, and the united labors of authorship and politics. Hardly was he settled when he wrote his pamphlet on the Dissensions between the Nobles and Commons of Rome, which applied to the impeachment by the Commons of Lords Somers, Oxford, Halifax, and Portland, on account of their share in the partition treaty. This brought him at once into the intimacy of Somers, Sunderland, and Halifax. Here he soon after published his Tale of a Tub, which had been written at Moorpark. This created a vast sensation, and though anonymous, like most of Swift's works, was soon known to be his, and his society was eagerly sought by men of the highest distinction both for rank and genius. Among the latter, Addison, Steele, Tickell, Philips, and others, at once became his friends. He now made use of his influence with government to obtain the gift of the first-fruits and tenths to the Church of Ireland, which he effected. Besides this boon to the Church at large, he increased the glebe of Laracor from one acre to twenty; and purchasing the tithes of Effernock, when he was not overburdened with money, settled them forever on his successors. Here he amused himself with his quizzes upon Partridge the astrologer, under the title of Isaac Bickerstaff, which almost drove that notorious impostor mad. Here he wrote the celebrated verses on Baucis and [Pg 225] Philemon, and other of his poems. Here, in 1710, he made his grand political transit from the Whigs to the Tories, and became the great friend, assistant, and political counselor of Harley and Bolingbroke; living, during his long sojourns in London, on the most familiar terms with those noblemen, and also with Pope, Gay, and all the more celebrated authors.

It is a singular subject of contemplation, and shows what momentous influence a mere private man may acquire in England by his talents, that of Swift's political achievements at this time. Here was a country clergyman of an obscure parish in Meath, with a congregation, as he himself said, of "some half-score persons," who yet wielded the destinies of all Europe. It was more by the power of his pen in "The Examiner," and by his counsels and influence, than by any other means, that the Tories were enabled to turn out of office the long-triumphant Whigs, and, by the peace of Utrecht, put a stop to the triumphs of Marlborough on the Continent. The vengeance which the Tories took on their adversaries the Whigs, on regaining power for a time, in Anne's reign, is, perhaps, the most startling thing in the history of party. The Whigs had steadily pursued the war against Louis the Fourteenth, in which William had been engaged all his life. For nearly half a century, that is, from 1667 to 1713, had that French monarch driven on a desperate contest for the destruction of the liberties of Europe. In Spain, in the Netherlands, in Holland, in Italy, and Germany, had his generals, Catinat, Luxemburg, Condé, Turenne, Vendôme, Villars, Melac, Villeroi, Tallard, &c., &c., led on the French armies to the most remorseless devastations. To this day, the successive demon deeds of Turenne, Melac, Créqui, and their soldiers, are vividly alive in the hearts and the memories of the peasantry of the Palatinate, where they destroyed nearly every city, chased the inhabitants away, leaving all that beautiful and fertile region a black desert, and, throwing the bones of the ancient Germanic emperors out of their graves in the [Pg 226]

Cathedral of Speir, played at bowls with their skulls. To extinguish Protestantism, and to extend the French empire, appeared Louis's two great objects, in which he was supported by all the spiritual power of the king of superstitions, the pope. Revoking the Edict of Nantes, he committed the most horrible outrages and destruction on his own Protestant subjects. He hoped, on the subjugation of Holland and the reformed states of Germany, to carry out there the same horrors of religious annihilation. Except in the person of Bonaparte, never has the spirit of conquest and of political insolence shown itself in so lawless, determined, and offensive a form as in this ostentatious monarch. William III., before his accession to the British throne, had been the most formidable opponent to his progress. But he had contrived to set his grandson, Philip V., on the throne of Spain, in opposition to the claims of Austria, and, by the fear of the ultimate union of these two great nations under one sceptre, alarmed all Europe. In vain was the united resistance of Austria and Holland, till England sent out its great general, Marlborough; and the names of Marlborough and the Savoyard, Prince Eugene, became as those of the demi-gods in the temple of war; and Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet, arose from their ages of obscurity into continental pyramids of England's military renown.

But of what avail was all this renown? What was won by it, except the empty glory itself? At the crowning moment—at the hour of otherwise inevitable retribution to the bloody and unprincipled monarch of France, and of recompense to those nations whose blood he had so lavishly shed, and whose surface he had covered with ashes, ruins, and horrors, instead of cities, peaceful villages, and fair fields—the Whigs were expelled from office by the Tories, and all the fruits of this long and bitter war were snatched away from us and our allies. To deprive the Whigs of the glory of a [Pg 227] successful war, to dash down as abortive all the triumphs of the Whig general, Marlborough, these men rushed into peace without consulting the allies, and left no results to the great European struggle but the blood which had been shed and the misery that had been endured. Louis, then eighty-five years of age, and tottering toward the grave, saw himself at once released from the most terrible condition into which his wicked ambition had plunged him—from the most terrible prospect of humiliation and disgrace which could wring such a mind. He had reduced his kingdom to the last stage of exhaustion by half a century's incessant contest with Europe; by bribing the English monarchs, Charles II. and James II., and many English nobles, to refuse help to the suffering Continent; and by bribing and paying the armies of German princes whom he could induce to become traitors to their nation. His people were fiercely imbittered against him; no taxes could be raised; his best generals were defeated on all hands, and a short time would, most probably, have seen Marlborough and Eugene anticipate the allies of our day, by marching directly upon and taking possession of Paris. So sensible of this was Louis, that his haughty tone was totally gone; he ordered his embassadors to give up Alsace, and even to assist in driving Philip, his own grandson, out of Spain, by privately paying the allies a million of livres monthly for the purpose. The Tories came in at this critical juncture, and all was changed. They offered Louis a most unexpected peace. At once he lifted again his head and his heart; Alsace remains to this day a part of France, Spain has descended to the Bourbon, and the glory of Marlborough is without a single result except Blenheim House, the dukedom to his family, and *sixty-two millions and a half of taxation*, which that war cost the English people. The peace of Utrecht roused the indignation of the whole civilized world. Volumes have been written in reprehension of it, and even enlightened Conservatives of our time, as Hallam in his Constitutional History, join in the [Pg 228] condemnation.

Yet this mighty change, with all its countless consequences, could be effected, almost wholly, by the simple vicar of a simple Irish parish. It was Swift who helped to plan and carry out this grand scheme of defeat and mortification to the Whigs, who had excited his wrath by withholding from him preferment. It was he, more than all men together, who, in the Examiner, painted the scheme in all his affluence of delusive colors to the nation, and roused the English people, by the cry of English blood and English money wasted on the Continent, to demand immediate peace. While we lament the deed, we must confess the stupendous powers of the man.

But all this could not win him the keenly-coveted bishopric. He could reverse the history of total Europe, he could reverse the victorious arms of Marlborough and Eugene, he could put forth his hand and save France and its proud monarch from just humiliation, but he could not extort from the reluctant queen, even by the combined hands of Oxford and Bolingbroke, the object of his own ambition, a mitre. The Tale of a Tub stood in his way; it was only just in time that his friends, themselves falling, secured for him the deanery of St. Patrick's, to which he retired to act the ostensible patriot by indulging his own private resentment against his enemies and his fate.

Laracor is about two English miles from Trim. It lies in a drearyish sort of a farming country, and to Swift, full of ambition, and accustomed to town life and the stirring politics of the time, with which he was so much mixed up, one would have thought must prove a perfect desert. There is no village there, nor does there appear to have been one. It was a mere church and parsonage, and huts were very likely scattered about here and there, as they are now. The church still stands; one of the old, plain, barn-like structures of this part of the country, with a low belfry. The [Pg 229] grave-yard is pretty well filled with headstones and tombs, and some that seem to belong to good families. The church-yard is surrounded by a wall and trees, and in a thatched cottage at the gate lives the sexton. He said he had built the house himself; that he was seventy-five or so; and his wife, who had been on the spot fifty years, as old; but that the incumbent, a Mr. Irvine, was eighty-four, and that he was but the third from Swift. Swift held it fifty-five years, the next incumbent nearly as long, and this clergyman thirty-six, or thereabouts. It must, therefore, be a healthy place. The old man complained that all the gentry who used to live near were gone away. His wife used to get £20 at Christmas for Christmas-boxes, "and now she does not get even a cup o' tay. Poor creature! and she so fond of the tay!"

Like his house at Dublin, Swift's house here is gone. There remains only one tall, thick ruin of a wall. "What is that?" I asked of a man at a cottage door close by. "It's been there from the time of the dane," said he. For a moment I imagined he meant the Danes, but soon recollected myself. Close to it, at the side of the high road, is a clear spring, under some bushes, and margined with great stones, which they call "the Dane's Cellar" and "the Dane's Well." "He was a very good man to the poor," say they. "He was a fine, bright man." This, however, is all the remains of his place here. The present vicar has built himself a good house in the fields, nearer to Trim; and not only the dean's house is all gone except this piece of wall, but his holly hedge, his willows, and cherry-trees have vanished. A common Irish hut now stands in what was his garden. The canal may still be traced, but the river walk is now a marsh.

Trim, where Stella lived when Swift was at Laracor, though the county town of Meath, is now little more than a large village. It bears, however, all the marks of its ancient importance. The ruins all about it, on the banks of the Boyne, are most extensive. They are those of a great palace, [Pg 230] a castle, a cathedral, and other buildings. It is a great haunt for antiquarians, and not far distant from it is Tara, with its hill, the seat of ancient kings. As you leave the town to go to Laracor, you come, at the town-end, to a lofty column in honor of Wellington, who was born at Dangan Castle, a few miles beyond Laracor. The way to Laracor then lies along a flattish country, with a few huts here and there by the wayside. On your left, as you approach Laracor, runs an old ruinous wall, with tall trees within it, as having once formed a park. The first object, connected with Swift, which arrests your attention, is the ruin of his house, with its spring, which lies on the right hand of the road; and on the left side of the road, perhaps a hundred yards further, stands the church in its inclosure.

From Laracor, Swift's remove was to Dublin, where he spent the remainder of his life. Here the deanery has been quite removed, and a modern house occupies its place. The old Cathedral of St. Patrick is a great object connected with his memory here. Though wearing a very ancient look, St. Patrick's was rebuilt after its destruction in 1362, and its present spire was added only in 1750. In size and proportion the cathedral is fine. It is three hundred feet long, and eighty broad. It can not boast much of its architecture, but contains several monuments of distinguished men; among them, those of Swift and Curran. These two are busts. Aloft in the nave hang the banners of the Knights of St. Patrick; and again, in the choir, hang newly-emblazoned banners of the knights; and over the stalls which belong to the knights are fixed gilt helmets, and by each stall hangs the knight's sword. The whole fabric is now undergoing repair, and not before it was needed. Of course, the monuments of highest interest here are those of Swift and Stella. These occupy two contiguous pillars on the south side of the nave. They consist of two plain slabs of marble, in memory of the dean and Mrs. Johnson—Stella. The inscription on the dean's slab is [Pg 231] expressive "of that habit of mind which his own disappointments and the oppressions of his country had produced." It was written by himself:

"*Hic* depositum est corpus
JONATHAN SWIFT, S. T. D.
Hujus Ecclesiæ Cathedralis
Decani
Ubi sæva indignatio
Ulterius
Cor lascerare nequit.
Abi Viator
Et imitare, si poteris,
Strenuum pro virili
Libertatis vindicatorem.
Obiit 19^o^· die mensis Octobris,
A.D. 1745. Anno Ætatis 78."

Over this monument has been placed his bust in marble, sculptured by Cunningham, and esteemed a good likeness. It was the gift of T. T. Faulkner, Esq., nephew and successor to Alderman George Faulkner, Swift's bookseller, and the original publisher of most of his works. The inscription over his amiable and much-injured wife is as follows: "Underneath lie the mortal remains of Mrs. Hester Johnson, better known to the world by the name of STELLA, under which she is celebrated in the writings of Dr. Jonathan Swift, dean of this Cathedral. She was a person of extraordinary endowments and accomplishments of body, mind, and behavior, justly admired and respected by all who knew her, on account of her many eminent virtues, as well as for her great natural and acquired perfections. She died January 27th, 1727-8, in the forty-sixth year of her age, and by her will bequeathed one thousand pounds toward the support of a chaplain to the hospital founded in this city by Dr. Steevens."

In an obscure corner, near the southern entrance, is a small tablet of white marble, with the following inscription: "Here lieth the body of Alexander M'Gee, servant to Doctor Swift, dean of [Pg 232] St. Patrick's. His grateful master caused this monument to be erected in memory of his discretion, fidelity, and diligence in that humble station. Obiit Mar. 24, 1721-2. Ætatis 29."

There are other monuments, ancient and modern, in the cathedral worthy of notice, but this is all that concerns our present subject. How little, indeed, seems to remain in evidence of Swift, where he lived so many years, and played so conspicuous a part. The hospital for the insane which he founded is perhaps his most genuine monument. It still flourishes. The sum which was made over by the dean's executors for this purpose was £7720. This has been augmented by Parliamentary grants and voluntary donations, and is capable of accommodating upward of a

hundred pauper patients, besides nearly an equal number of paying ones.

At the deanery house there is an excellent portrait of Swift, by Bindon. Another, by Bindon, and said to be one of the best likenesses of him, is in the possession of Dr. Hill, of Dublin; and there is a third at Howth Castle. But nothing can, to the visitor, fill up the vacuum made by the destruction of the house in which he lived. We want to see where the author of the Drapier's Letters and of Gulliver's Travels lived; where he conversed with Stella and Mrs. Whiteway, and joked with Sheridan and Delany, and where he finally sank into moody melancholy, and died.

Of all the lives of Swift which have been written, it would be difficult to say whether Dr. Johnson's or Sir Walter Scott's is the most one-sided. Johnson's is like that of a man who had a personal pique, and Scott's is that of a regular pleader. In his admiration of his author, he seems unconsciously to take all that comes as excellent and right, and slurs over acts and principles in Swift which in another he would denounce as most disgraceful. When we recollect that Swift was [Pg 233] bitterly disappointed in his ambition of a miter, and that he retired to Ireland to brood not only over this, but over the utter wreck of his political patrons and party, the impartial reader finds it difficult to concede to him so much the praise of real patriotism as of personal resentment. He was ready to lay hold on any thing that could at once annoy government and enhance his own popularity. In all relations of life, an intense selfishness was his great characteristic, if we except this in his character of author: there he certainly displayed a great indifference to pecuniary profit, and was not only a stanch friend to his literary associates, but allowed them to reap that profit by his writings which he would not reap himself. But in all other respects his selfishness is strikingly prominent. He did not hesitate to sacrifice man or woman for the promotion of his comfort or his ambition. We have spoken of his treatment of women, we may take a specimen of his treatment of men. In the celebrated case of Wood, the patentee, and the Drapier's Letters, nothing could be more recklessly unjust than his conduct, or more hollow than his pretenses. He wanted a cause of annoyance to Walpole, and against the government generally. Government had given a contract to Wood to coin a certain quantity of halfpence for Ireland, and this he seized hold on. He represented Wood as a low iron-monger, an adventurer; his halfpence as vile in quality and deficient in weight; and the whole as a nuisance, which would rob Ireland of its gold, and enrich England at its expense. Now Scott himself is obliged to admit that the whole of this was false. Wood, instead of the mere iron-monger on whom he heaped all the charges and epithets of villainy and baseness that he could, even to that of a "wood-louse," was a highly respectable iron-master of Wolverhampton. His coinage, on this outcry being raised by Swift, was submitted by government to Sir Isaac Newton to be assayed, when it was reported by Sir Isaac to [Pg 234] be better than bargain; and is admitted by Scott to have been better than Ireland had been in the habit of having, and, in fact, he says, a very handsome coinage. So far from an evil to Ireland, Scott admits, as is very obvious, that it was one of the best things Ireland could have, a sufficient stock of coin. But the ignorant population, once possessed with the idea of imposition, grew outrageous, and flung the coinage into the Liffey, and Swift chuckled to himself over the success of his scheme, and the acquisition of the reputation of a patriot. In the mean time, he had inflicted a real injury on his infatuated fellow-countrymen, and a loss of £60,000 on his innocent victim, Wood. Scott says that Wood was indemnified by a grant of £3000 yearly for twelve years. The simple fact I believe to be, that, though granted, it was never paid; Wood, who had nine sons, lost by this transaction the fortune that should have provided for them. One of these sons was afterward the introducer of platina into England. The real facts respecting Wood's coinage may be found in "Ruding's Annals of Coinage."

There is another point in which Swift's biographers and critics have been far too lenient toward him. Wonderful as is his talent, and admirable as his wit, these are dreadfully defiled by his coarseness and filthiness of ideas. Wit has no necessary connection with disgusting imagery; and in attempting to excuse Swift, his admirers have laid the charge upon the times. But Swift out-Herods the times and his cotemporaries. In them may be found occasional smuttiness, but the filthy taint seemed to pervade the whole of Swift's mind, and his vilest parts are inextricably woven with the texture of his composition, as in Gulliver's Travels. There is nothing so singular as that almost all writers speak of the wit of Swift and of Rabelais, without, as it regards the latter, once warning the reader against the mass of most revolting obscenity which loads almost every page of the Frenchman. Even Rogers, moral and refined in his own writings, talks of "laughing [Pg 235] with Rabelais in his easy chair," but he never seems to reflect that far the greater portion of readers would have to blush and quit his company in disgust. It is fitting that in an age of moral refinement, youthful readers should at least be made aware that the wit that is praised is combined with obscenity or grossness that can not be too emphatically condemned.

Among the places connected with the history of Swift's life, the residence of Miss Vanhomrigh—Vanessa—is one of the most interesting. The account of it, procured by Scott, was this: "Marley Abbey, near Celbridge, where Miss Vanhomrigh resided, is built much in the form of a real cloister, especially in its external appearance. An aged man, upward of ninety by his own account, showed the grounds to my correspondent. He was the son of Miss Vanhomrigh's gardener, and used to work with his father in the garden when a boy. He remembered the unfortunate Vanessa well, and his account of her corresponded with the usual description of her person, especially as to her *embonpoint*. He said she went seldom abroad, and saw little company; her constant amusement was reading, or walking in the garden. Yet, according to this authority, her society was courted by several families in the neighborhood, who visited her, notwithstanding her seldom returning that attention; and he added, that her manners interested every one who knew her. But she avoided company, and was always melancholy, save when Dean Swift was there, and then she seemed happy. The garden was to an uncommon degree crowded with laurels. The old man said that when Miss Vanhomrigh expected the dean, she always

planted with her own hand a laurel or two against his arrival. He showed her favorite seat, still called Vanessa's Bower. Three or four trees and some laurels indicate the spot. They had formerly, according to the old man's information, been trained into a close arbor. There were two seats and a rude table within the bower, the opening of which commanded a view of the Liffey, [Pg 236] which had a romantic effect, and there was a small cascade that murmured at some distance. In this sequestered spot, according to the old gardener's account, the dean and Vanessa used often to sit, with books and writing materials on the table before them. Vanessa, besides musing over her unhappy attachment, had, during her residence in this solitude, the care of nursing the declining health of her younger sister, who at length died about 1720. This event, as it left her alone in the world, seems to have increased the energy of her fatal passion for Swift, while he, on the contrary, saw room for still greater reserve, when her situation became that of a solitary female without the society or countenance of a female relation."

Marley Abbey, Vanessa's house, is now the residence of Mr. Henry Grattan, M.P.

In D'Alton's History of the County of Dublin, p. 344, there is an account of the present state of Delville, the residence of Dr. Delany.

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JAMES THOMSON.

The author of The Seasons was born at Ednam, a couple of miles or so from Kelso, on the 11th of September, 1700. His father was the minister of the parish, and it was intended to bring him up to the same profession. The early childhood only of Thomson was spent here, for his father removed to Southdean, near Jedburgh, having obtained the living of that place.

Ednam has nothing poetical about it. It lies in a rich farming country of ordinary features. The scenery is flat, and the village by no means picturesque. It consists of a few farm-houses, and long rows of hinds' cottages. David Macbeth Moir, the Delta of Blackwood's Magazine, described the place some years ago in these lines:

"A rural church; some scattered cottage roofs,
From whose secluded hearths the thin blue smoke
Silently wreathing through the breezeless air,
Ascended mingling with the summer sky;
A rustic bridge, mossy and weather-stained;
A fairy streamlet, singing to itself;
And here and there a venerable tree
In foliaged beauty; of these elements,
And only these, the simple scene was formed."

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Yet even this description is too favorable. It would induce us to believe that the spot had something of the picturesque—it has nothing of it. The streamlet sings little even to itself through that flat district; the mossy bridge has given way to a good, substantial, but unpoetical stone one. The landscape is by no means over-enriched by fine trees. There are some limes, I believe they are, in the churchyard. The old church has been pulled down since Thomson's time, and the new one now standing is a poor, barn-like affair, with a belfry that would do for a pigeon cote. The manse in which the poet was born has also disappeared, and a new, square, unpicturesque one been built upon the site. Perhaps no class of people have less of the poetical or the picturesque in them than the Presbyterian clergy of Scotland. The hard, dry, stern Calvinism imparted by John Knox has effectually expelled all that. The country people of Scotland are generally intelligent, and have a taste for poetry and literature; but to a certainty they do not derive this from their clergy. In no country have I found the parish clergy so ignorant of general literature, or so unacquainted with any thing that is going on in the world, except the polemics of their own Church. The cargo of *Geneva* which Knox imported has operated on the religious feeling of Scotland worse than any gin or whisky on its moral or physical condition. It is a *spirit* as unlike Christianity as possible. One is all love and tenderness; the other all bitterness and hardness: the one is gentle and tolerant; the other fierce and intolerant: the one careless of form, so that the life and soul of charity and piety are preserved; the other is all form and doctrine—doctrine, hard, metaphysical, rigid, and damnatory. On the borders, too, in many places, the very people seem to me more ignorant and stupid than is the wont of Scotland; they would match the Surrey chopsticks or Essex calves of England.

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I walked over from Kelso on the Sunday morning to Ednam. The people were collected about the church door, waiting for the time of service. I thought it a good opportunity to hear something of the traditions of the country about Thomson. Nobody could tell me any thing. So little idea had they of a poet, that they informed me that another poet had been born there besides Thomson. I asked whom that might be. They said, "One White, a decrepit old man who used to write under the trees of the church-yard;" and this they thought having another poet! Such—as we are often obliged to exclaim—is fame!

An old woman, into whose cottage I stepped, on returning, to avoid a shower, was more intelligent. She told me that her mother had lived at the old manse, and frequently heard what had been told to inquirers. The manse in which Thomson was born, she said, was of mud; and he was born in the parlor, which had a bed in a recess concealed by a curtain.

The present minister is the son of a saddler at Hawick. I stayed the service, or at least nearly three hours of it. It is the odd custom of many country places in Scotland, where the people have too far to come to be able to do it twice in the day, to actually have two services performed all at one sitting. With that attention to mere rigid formality which this Calvinism has introduced, that task-work holiness which teaches that God's wrath will be aroused if they do not go through a certain number of prayers, sermons, and ceremonies in the day, they have the morning and afternoon services all at once. There were, therefore, *two* enormously long sermons, three prayers, three singings, and, to make worse of it, the sermons consisted of such a mass of doctrinal stubble as filled me with astonishment that such actual rubbish, and worse than rubbish, could at the present day be inflicted on any patient and unoffending people. What a gross perversion and misconception of Christianity is this! How my heart bled at the very idea that the State paid and upheld this system, by which the people were not blessed with the pure, simple, and benign knowledge of that simplest, most beautiful, and love-inspiring of all systems, Christianity, but were actually cursed with the drawing of the horrid furze-bushes of school divinity and Calvinistic damnation across their naked consciences.

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Imagine a company of hard-working and care-worn peasants, coming for five or ten miles on a Sunday to listen to such chopped-straw preaching as this. The sermons were to prove that the temptation of Christ in the wilderness was a *bonâ fide* and actual history. And first, the preacher told them what profound subtlety the temptations of Satan showed, such as advising Christ after forty days' fast to cause the stones to be made bread; as if Christ could not have done that if he needed, without the devil's suggestion. And then he told them that Christ was God himself, so that the devil knowing that, instead of showing such profound subtlety, must have been a very daft devil indeed to try to tempt him at all. Poor people! of all the beautiful sayings and doings in the life of our Savior; of all the divine precepts which he peculiarly brought down from heaven for the especial consolation and invigoration of the poor; of all the deeds and the expressions of an infinite love; of all those teachings that "the Sabbath is made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;" of all the gracious declarations that it was not by doctrine and cunningly-devised fables, but by the great spirit of love—love to God and to one another, and by keeping his commandments, that we are to be saved, was there nothing that could be dealt out to you? Could your dry and thirsting spirits receive nothing but this dry and musty fodder of sectarian disquisition? Oh! how much better were one simple word of genuine feeling from the most

unlettered preacher on a bare hill-side!

My only wonder was to find any body in the church at all, for I thought I must have met the whole village going to Kelso, where they have *eight* different sects, the most zealous of all being the [Pg 241] Free Church. It is only by a passage through Scotland that you get a living idea of what a movement the movement of this Free Church has been. In every town, from the extremest south to the extremest north, you see free churches rising or arisen. Even in little Melrose there is a large one; and I observed that they built them as near, on all occasions, as possible to the established one, and, if compassable, exactly opposite. Indeed, I have been told that land has, in many instances, been offered gratuitously to build a free church upon, and has been refused because it was not opposite to the established one. Such is the fruit of an Establishment in Scotland, and such were the evidences of its teachings in Ednam. How different to the fine, genial, and genuine faith of James Thomson!

On a hill on the right hand of the road, proceeding from Kelso to Ednam, and about a quarter of a mile from that village, a plain obelisk has been erected to the memory of the poet, bearing this inscription: "Erected in memory of James Thomson, Author of the Seasons. Born at Ednam, 11th of September, A.D. 1700."

The Earl of Buchan, who erected a temple of the Muses at Dryburgh, in the center of which he placed Thomson, and who placed the brass tablet to his memory in the church at Richmond, also instituted an annual commemoration of his fame at Ednam, which has long fallen into desuetude. For the first meeting of this kind, Burns wrote his Address to the Shade of Thomson in crowning his bust at Ednam.

Of Thomson's sojourn at Southdean, nearly all that is now known is comprehended in the following passage in Mr. Robert Chambers's "Picture of Scotland:" "The father of James Thomson was removed from Ednam to this parish while the poet was a child; and here, accordingly, the author of the Seasons spent the days of his boyhood. In the churchyard may still be seen the [Pg 242] humble monument of the father of the poet, though the inscription is nearly obliterated. The manse in which that individual reared his large family, of whom one was destined to become so illustrious, was what would now be described as a small thatched cottage. It is traditionally recollected that the poet was sent to the University of Edinburgh, seated behind his father's man on horseback, but was so reluctant to quit the country for a town life, that he had returned on foot before his conductor, declaring that he could study as well on the braes of Sou'den—so Southdean is generally pronounced—as in Edinburgh."

Here Thomson undoubtedly acquired that deep love for nature, and that intimate acquaintance with it, which enabled him to produce the poem of the Seasons, which, with considerable faults of style, is one of the richest compositions in the language, in the legitimate subject matter, in the grandeur of its scenery, drawn from all regions of the earth, and in the broad and beautiful spirit of its religious philosophy. It has stood the test of more than a century, during which time great changes have taken place in the theory of versification and in public taste. Compositions of great variety, and of the most splendid character, have since rendered fastidious the public judgment, yet the Seasons are and will continue to be read with pleasure.

Though the old man-servant who had jogged along to Edinburgh with little Jemmy Thomson behind him was astonished, on his return, to find him at home again, yet another attempt must have been more successful, for at the University of Edinburgh he finished his education. The poetic nature, however, convinced him by that time that it was not his vocation to preach the arid notions of Knox, and palm them off as the grand, heart-opening truths of Christianity. His father had died two years after his coming to Edinburgh, leaving his mother with a considerable family, who raised upon her little estate, by mortgage, what she could, and came to reside in Edinburgh. [Pg 243] James resolved not to weigh upon her resources longer than needful, but set out for London with his poem of Winter in his pocket. He had introductions to several influential persons, and one of them to Mr. Mallet, then tutor to the sons of the Duke of Montrose. His great want, Dr. Johnson says, on reaching London, was a pair of shoes. To make his calls, these were necessary, and his Winter was his sole resource. It was a wintery one, for he could find no purchaser for it for a long time, and when purchased, it did not for a good while sell. At length it fell under the eye of a Mr. Whatley, who instantly perceived its merit, and zealously spread the information. Thomson was quickly a popular author, and from this time resided chiefly in the neighborhood of London. He made one tour on the Continent as companion to Mr. Talbot, the eldest son of the chancellor. The despotism which he saw abroad induced him to write his poem of Liberty, one of his very worst productions, and which lost him much government preferment; and when the public complained of this, a ministerial writer remarked that "Thomson had taken a *Liberty* which was not agreeable to *Britannia* in any *Season*."

Government preferment, however, he did receive. The chancellor conferred on him the place of Secretary of the Briefs, which made him independent. On the death of the Chancellor Talbot he lost this post, through being too indolent to make application to Lord Hardwicke for it, though Hardwicke kept it open for some time that he might. For a time he was again reduced by this circumstance to poverty and difficulty. Out of this he was, after a while, permanently raised through the influence of Lord Lyttleton, a pension of a hundred a year being conferred on him. This removed the pressure of utter necessity, but compelled him to work, without which compulsion, perhaps, no man would have worked less. About three years before his death, Lord Lyttleton, being then in power, made him Surveyor-general of the Leeward Islands. Those islands [Pg 244] he surveyed from his elevation on Richmond Hill, and very general his survey of course must have been. The particular and actual survey was left to his deputy in the islands themselves, and Thomson netted a yearly balance, the deputy being paid, of three hundred a year, which, with his

pension, left him most comfortably at ease in the castle of indolence. Besides his two principal poems, he wrote several tragedies, as Sophonisba, in which the unfortunate line,

"O Sophonisba, Sophonisba, O!"

was parodied by a wag with

"O Jemmy Thomson, Jemmy Thomson, O!"

and was echoed through the town every where and for a long time. Agamemnon was another, Edward and Eleonora a third, and Tancred and Sigismunda his last and best, except a posthumous one—Coriolanus.

Among the haunts of Thomson were the country houses of many of the more literary or more tasteful noblemen of the time, as Hagley, the seat of Lord Lyttleton; Bub Doddington's seat in Dorsetshire; Stowe, then the seat of Lord Cobham; the seat of the Countess of Hertford, &c. The last place, however, it seems, only received Thomson once. It was the practice, says Johnson, of the Countess of Hertford, to whom Thomson dedicated his poem of Spring, to invite some poet every summer into the country to hear her verses and assist her studies. This honor was once conferred on Thomson, who took more delight in carousing with Lord Hertford and his friends than assisting her ladyship's poetical operations, and never, therefore, received another summons.

Thomson was, in fact, the last person to hope for much literary and understrapper service from, though in the shape of a countess, where, on the one hand, bad verses had to be inflicted on him, and, on the other, there was a good table and good talk. Indolence and self-indulgence were his [Pg 245] besetting sins. Every one has heard of the lady who said she had discovered three things concerning the author in reading the Seasons: that he was a great lover, a great swimmer, and rigidly abstinent; at all which, Savage, who lived much with him, laughed heartily, saying that he believed Thomson was never in cold water in his life, and that the other particulars were just as true. The anecdote of Quin, regarding Thomson's splendid description of sunrise, has been equally diffused. He, like Savage, asserted that he believed Thomson never saw the sun rise in his life, and related that, going one day to see him at Richmond, he found him in bed at noon, and asking him why he did not get up earlier, he replied, listlessly, that "he had nae motive."

That no man ever lived more completely in a castle of indolence there can be little question, and perhaps as little that it cut his life short. He died at forty-eight, of cold taken on the Thames between Kew and Richmond. He used, it seems, to be in the habit of walking from town to his house at Richmond, and crossed at a boat-house somewhere here about, which being also a public house, he there took a rest and refreshment. The place is still shown. Here, it would seem, he came warm from his walk, and, crossing in a damp wind, took cold; but this susceptibility to cold was the direct result of his indolent, self-indulgent, and effeminate habits. Had he followed those practices of healthy activity so finely described in his poem, how much longer and more useful might his life have been! Yet it must be a fact unquestionable, that Thomson, as a boy, rose early, saw both sunrises and all the glories of nature, plunged into the summer flood, and braved the severity of winter. No man could so vividly or so accurately describe what he had not experienced, and they who know best the country know how exact is his knowledge of it. Every one can feel how masterly are his descriptions of the grandest phenomena of nature in every [Pg 246] region of the world, when such descriptions are deducible from books. In those, however, which came under his own eye, there is a life, and there are beauties that attest that personal knowledge. The faults of his Seasons are those of style. His blank verse is peculiar; you can never mistake it for that of any other poet; but it has not the charm of that of Milton, of Wordsworth, or of various other poets. It is often turgid, and still more often prosaic. There are strange inversions used; and with his adverbs and adjectives he plays the most terrible havoc. Frequently the adjective is tossed behind the substantive, just for the sake of the meter, and regardless of all other effect, as,

"Driving sleets
Deform the day delightless,"

instead of the delightless day. His adverbs are continually lopped of their last syllable, and stand like wretched adjectives out of place; as, the sower "liberal throws the grain," instead of liberally: clouds, "cheerless, drown the crude, unripened year," instead of cheerlessly: the herb dies, though with vital power: "it is copious blest," instead of copiously. These barbarisms, which greatly deface this poem, abound; but especially in the Spring, which was not published first in its native position, but third, the routine of appearance being Winter, Summer, Spring, and Autumn.

But, above its faults, how far ascend the beauties and excellences of this poem, the finest of which spring out of that firm, glowing, and noble spirit of patriotism and religion which animated James Thomson. His patriotism bursts forth on all occasions, but more especially in that elaborate description of England, her deeds and worthies, in the Summer, commencing,

"Heavens! what a goodly prospect spreads around,
Of hills and dales, of woods and lawns, and spires
And glittering towns, and gilded streams, till all
The stretching landscape into smoke decays.
Happy Britannia!" &c.

His piety, the piety of love and wonder, of that profound admiration which the contemplation of [Pg 247]
the works of the Divine Creator had inspired him with, and of that grateful love and trust which the manifestations of parental goodness every where had impressed upon his heart, these are, as it were, the living soul of the poem, and the principles of imperishable vitality. These sentiments, diffused throughout the poem itself, concentrate themselves at its conclusion as predominant over all others, and burst forth in that magnificent hymn, which has no rival in the language except the glorious one of Milton, the morning hymn of our first parents, beginning,

> "These are thy glorious works, Parent of good,
> Almighty! Thine this universal frame,
> This wondrous fair; Thyself how wondrous then," &c.

The religion, too, of Thomson was the religion not of creeds and crabbed doctrines of humanity. He had studied nature in the spirit of its Maker, and the fruit of that study was an enlarged and tender sympathy for his fellow-men. This sentiment is every where conspicuous as his piety; and in the passage following the fine account of the man perishing in the snow, rises to the power and descriptive eloquence of Shakspeare.

> "Ah! little think the gay, licentious proud,
> Whom pleasure, power, and affluence surround;
> They who their thoughtless hours in giddy mirth,
> And wanton, often cruel, riot waste;
> Ah! little think they, while they dance along,
> How many feel, this very moment, death,
> And all the sad variety of pain;
> How many sink in the devouring flood,
> Or more devouring flame; how many bleed,
> By shameful variance betwixt man and man;
> How many pine in want, and dungeon glooms;
> Shut from the common air, and common use
> Of their own limbs; how many drink the cup
> Of baneful grief, or eat the bitter bread
> Of misery; sore pierced by wintry winds, [Pg 248]
> How many shrink into the sordid hut
> Of cheerless poverty! How many shake
> With all the fiercer tortures of the mind,
> Unbounded passion, madness, guilt, remorse;
> Whence tumbled headlong from the height of life.
> They furnish matter for the tragic Muse.
> Even in the vale where Wisdom loves to dwell,
> With Friendship, Peace, and Contemplation joined,
> How many, racked with honest passions, droop
> In deep retired distress. How many stand
> Around the death-bed of their dearest friends,
> And point the parting anguish. Thought fond man
> Of these, and all the thousand nameless ills,
> That one incessant struggle render life,
> One scene of toil, of suffering, and of fate,
> Vice in his high career would stand appalled,
> And heedless, rambling Impulse learn to think;
> The conscious heart of Charity would warm,
> And her wide wish Benevolence dilate;
> The social tear would rise, the social sigh;
> And into clear perfection, gradual bliss,
> Refining still, the social passions work."—*Winter*, p. 147.

Yes, if the great sentiment of this passage were but firmly imprinted on the hearts of all men and all women, but especially the rich and powerful, how soon would the face of this earth be changed, and the vale of tears be converted into a lesser heaven! It is the grand defect of our systems of education, for rich and for poor, but pre-eminently for the former, that it is not taught that no man can live innocently who lives only for his own enjoyment; that to live merely to enjoy ourselves is the highest treason against God and man; that God does not live merely for himself, his eternal existence is one constant work of beneficence; and that it is the social duty of every rational being to live like God, his Creator, for the good of others. Were this law of duty taught faithfully in all our schools, with all its responsibilities, the penalties of its neglect, the ineffable delight of its due discharge, there would be no longer seen that moral monster, the man or woman who lives alone for the mere purpose of selfish enjoyment. That host of gay and idle [Pg 249]
creatures, who pass through life only to glitter in the circles of fashion; to seek admiration for personal attractions and accomplishments—for dressing, playing, dancing, or riding—whose life is but the life of a butterfly when it should be the life of a man, would speedily disperse, and be no more seen. That life would be shrunk from as a thing odious and criminal, because useless; when faculties, wealth, and fame are put into their hands, and a world is laid before them in which men are to be saved and exalted; misery, crime, shame, despair, and death prevented; and all the hopes and capacities for good in the human soul are to be made easy to the multitude. To live for these objects is to be a hero or a heroine, and any man or woman may be that; to live

through this world of opportunities given but once, and to neglect them, is the most fearful fate that can befall a creature of eternal responsibilities. But poets and preachers have proclaimed this great truth for ages; the charge now lies at the door of the educators, and they alone can impress effectually on the world its highest and most inalienable duty, that of living for the good of others.

Among those who have used the voice of poetry given them of God to rouse their fellow-men to a life of beneficence, none have done it more zealously or more eloquently than Thomson. For this we pass over here the mere charms of his poetic achievements; over those great pictures which he has painted of the world, and its elements of forests, tempests, plagues, earthquakes; of the views of active life at home and abroad; the hunter's perils and the hunter's carouse

"In ghostly halls of gray renown;"

of man roaming the forests of the tropics, or climbing the cliffs of the lonely Hebrides; to notice in this brief article those bursts of eloquent fire, in which he calls to godlike deeds—those of mercy and of goodness. In this respect, as well as in that of mere poetical beauty, his poem of the [Pg 250] Castle of Indolence is pre-eminent. Thomson suffered from the seductions of the vile wizard of Indolence, and in his first canto he paints most effectively the horrors of that vice; in the second canto he shows that, though he had fallen into the net of sloth, it had not entirely conquered, and it could not corrupt him. He calls with the energy of a martyr on his fellow-men to assume the privileges and glories of men. The Castle of Indolence is as felicitous in its versification as in its sentiments; it is full of harmony, and the spirit of picturesque beauty pervades every line; there is a manliness of sentiment about it that is worthy of true genius. Such a stanza as this is the seed of independence to the minds of thousands:

"I care not, Fortune! what you me deny:
You can not rob me of free Nature's grace;
You can not shut the windows of the sky,
Through which Aurora shows her bright'ning face;
You can not bar my constant feet to trace
The woods and lawns, by living streams, at eve;
Let health my nerves and finer fibers brace,
And I their toys to the great children leave:
Of fancy, reason, virtue, naught can me bereave."

The address of the bard of active virtue is worthy of being listened to in every age:

"Ye hapless race!
Dire laboring here to smother Reason's ray,
That lights our Maker's image in our face,
And gives us wide o'er earth unquestioned sway:
What is the adored Supreme Perfection, say?
What but eternal, never-resting soul,
Almighty power, and all-directing day;
By whom each atom stirs, the planets roll:
Who fills, surrounds, informs, and agitates the whole.

"Come, to the beaming God your hearts unfold!
Draw from its fountain life! 'Tis thence alone
We can excel. Up from unfeeling mold
To seraphs burning round the Almighty's throne,
Life rising still on life, in brighter tone, [Pg 251]
Perfection forms, and with perfection bliss.
In universal nature this clear shown
Not needeth proof; to prove it were, I wis,
To prove the beauteous world excels the brute abyss.

"It was not by vile loitering in ease
That Greece obtained the brighter palm of art;
That soft, yet ardent Athens learned to please,
To keen the wit, and to sublime the heart,
In all supreme, complete in every part!
It was not thence majestic Rome arose,
And o'er the nations shook her conquering dart:
For sluggard's brow the laurel never grows:
Renown is not the child of indolent repose.

"Had unambitious mortals minded naught
But in loose joy their time to wear away;
Had they alone the lap of dalliance sought,
Pleased on her pillow their dull heads to lay;
Rude Nature's state had been our state to-day;
No cities here their towery fronts had raised,
No arts had made us opulent and gay;
With brother brutes the human race had grazed;

None e'er had soared to fame, none honored been, none praised.

"Great Homer's song had never fired the breast
To thirst of glory and heroic deeds;
Sweet Maro's Muse, sunk in inglorious rest,
Had silent slept amid the Mincian reeds;
The wits of modern times had told their beads,
And monkish legends been their only strains;
Our Milton's Eden had lain wrapped in weeds;
Our Shakspeare strolled and laughed with Warwick swains;
Ne had my master, Spenser, charmed his Mulla's plains.

"Dumb, too, had been the sage historic Muse,
And perished all the sons of ancient fame;
Those starry lights of virtue that diffuse
Through the dark depths of time their vivid flame,
Had all been lost with such as have no name.
Who then had scorned his care for others' good?
Who then had toiled rapacious men to tame?
Who in the public breach devoted stood,
And for his country's cause been prodigal of blood?

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......*...*

"Heavens! can you then thus waste in shameful wise
Your few important days of trial here?
Heirs of eternity! yborn to rise
Through endless states of being, still more near
To bliss approaching and perfection clear;
Can you renounce a fortune so sublime—
Such glorious hopes, your backward steps to steer,
And roll with vilest brutes through mud and slime?
No! no! your heaven-touched hearts disdain the sordid crime!"

It is a pleasure to find that the spot where these noble sentiments were penned is still preserved sacred to the memory of the poet of truth and virtue. As far as the restless and rapid change of property would permit so near London, the residence of Thomson has been kept from destruction: changed it is, it is true, but that change has been made with a veneration for the Muse in the heart of the new inhabitant. The house of Thomson, in what is called Kew-foot Lane, at Richmond, as shown in the wood-cut at the head of this article, was a simple cottage; behind this lay his garden, and in front he looked down to the Thames, and on the fine landscape beyond. The cottage now appears to be gone, and in the place stands the goodly villa of the Earl of Shaftesbury; the cottage, however, is not really gone: it is only swallowed up in the larger house of the present time. After Thomson's death, his cottage was purchased by George Ross, Esq., who, out of veneration for his memory, forbore to pull it down, but enlarged and improved it at the expense of £9000. The walls of the cottage were left, though its roof was taken off, and the walls continued upward to their present height. Thus, what was Thomson's cottage forms now the entrance hall to Lord Shaftesbury's house. The part of the hall on the left hand was the room where Thomson used to sit, and here is preserved a plain mahogany Pembroke table of his, with a scroll of white wood let into its surface, on which are inlaid, in black letters, this piece of information:

"On this table James Thomson constantly wrote. It was therefore purchased of his servant, who also gave these brass hooks, on which his hat and cane were hung in this his sitting room.

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F. B."

These initials, F. B., are those of the Hon. Frances Boscawen, the widow of Admiral Boscawen, who came into possession of the property after the death of Mr. Ross, whose name, however, still attaches to it, being called Rossdale, or, more commonly, Rosedale House. Mrs. Boscawen it was who repaired the poet's favorite seat in the garden, and placed in it the table on which he wrote his poems there; she it was, too, no doubt, who hung the inscriptions there, her initials being again found appended to one of them. Her son, Lord Falmouth, sold the place. No brass hooks are now to be seen, that I could discover or learn any thing of.

The garden of Thompson, which lay behind the house, has been preserved in the same manner and to the same extent as his house; the garden and its trees remain, but these now form only part of the present grounds, as the cottage forms only part of the present house. Mr. Ross, when he purchased the cottage and some adjoining grounds, and came to live here after Thomson, not only enlarged the house, but threw down the partition fence, and enlarged the grounds to their present extent. A pleasanter lawn and shrubberies are rarely to be seen; the turf, old and mossy, speaks of long duration and great care; the trees, dispersed beautifully upon it, are of the finest growth and of the greatest beauty. In no part of England are there so many foreign trees as in the grounds of gentlemen's villas near London; in many of them the cedars of Lebanon are of a growth and majesty which probably Lebanon itself can not now show. In these grounds there are some fine ones, but there is one of especial and surpassing loveliness: it is the *pinus picea*, or silver cedar. The growth is broad, like that of the cedar of Lebanon; but its boughs do not throw

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themselves out in that exact horizontal direction that those of the cedar of Lebanon do; they sweep down to the ground in a style of exquisite grace. Heavy, full of life, rich in hue as masses of chased silver, their effect, with their young cones sitting birdlike on them, is like that of some tree of heaven, or of some garden of poetic romance. Besides this superb tree, standing on its ample portion of lawn, there are here the evergreen ilex, hickory, white sassafras, scarlet and Ragland oaks, the tulip-tree, the catalpa, the tupelo, the black American ash, &c. The effect of their fine growth, their varied hues and foliage, their fine, sweeping branches, over the soft velvet turf, is charming, for trees display the effects of breeding and culture quite as much as horses, dogs, or men.

A large elm, not far from the house, is pointed out as the one under which Thomson's alcove stood; this alcove has, however, been removed to the extremity of the grounds, and stands now under a large Spanish chestnut-tree in the shrubbery. It is a simple wooden construction, with a plain back, and two outward, sloping sides, a bench running round it within, a roof and boarded floor, so as to be readily removable altogether. It is kept well painted of a dark green, and in it stands an old, small walnut table with a drawer, which belonged to Thomson. On the front of the alcove overhead is painted, on a white oval tablet,

"Here
Thomson sang
The Seasons
and their change."

Within the alcove hang three loose boards, on which are painted the following inscriptions:

"Hail, Nature's Poet, whom she taught alone
To sing her works in numbers like her own.
Sweet as the thrush that warbles in the dale,
And soft as Philomela's tender tale;
She lent her pencil, too, of wondrous power,
To catch the rainbow, and to form the flower
Of many mingling hues; and, smiling, said—
But first with laurels crowned her favorite's head—
These beauteous children, though so fair they shine,
Fade in my *Seasons*, let them live in *Thine*.
And live they shall; the charm of every eye,
Till Nature sickens, and the Seasons die."

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......*...*

F. B.

"Within this pleasing retirement,
Allured by the music of the nightingale,
Which warbled in soft unison to the melody of his soul,
In unaffected cheerfulness,
And general though simple elegance,
Lived
James Thomson.
Sensitively alive to the beauties of Nature,
He painted their images as they rose in review,
And poured the whole profusion of them
Into his inimitable Seasons.
Warmed with intense devotion
To the Sovereign of the Universe,
Its flame glowed through all his compositions.
Animated with unbounded benevolence,
With the tenderest social sensibility,
He never gave one moment's pain
To any of his fellow-creatures,
Save only by his death, which happened
At this place on the 27th day of August,
1748."

......*...*

"Here Thomson dwelt.
He, curious bard, examined every drop
That glistens on the thorn; each leaf surveyed
That Autumn from the rustling forest shakes,
And marked its shape; and traced in the rude wind
Its eddying motion. Nature in his hand
A pencil, dipped in her own colors, placed,
With which he ever faithful copies drew,
Each feature in proportion just."

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On a brass tablet in the top of the table in the alcove is inscribed, "This table was the property of

James Thomson, and always stood in this seat."

Such is the state of the former residence of James Thomson at Richmond. Here, no doubt, he was visited by many of his literary cotemporaries, though it does not appear that he ever was by Pope, who was so near a neighbor. Old poets grow exclusive. As Wordsworth nowadays says he reads no new poets—he leaves them to their cotemporaries—it is enough for him to stick to his old loves; so, in the correspondence of Pope, you find no further mention of Thomson than that "Thomson and some other young men have published lately some creditable things;" and Gray, writing to one of his friends, says, "Thomson has just published a poem called 'The Castle of Indolence,' which contains some good stanzas."

The view down to the Thames, and over the country beyond, which he enjoyed, is now obstructed by the walls, including part of the royal property, on which the queen has erected her laundry, sending, it seems, all the royal linen from Windsor, the Isle of Wight, and elsewhere, to be washed and got up here, sufficiently, as one would think, near enough to the smoke of London. The vicinity of the royal wash-house certainly does not improve Lord Shaftesbury's residence here, especially as a tall, square, and most unsightly tower, most probably intended to carry the soot from the drying fires pretty high, overlooks his grounds. But it will not disturb the remains of the poet; and let us hope that the queen's linen will enjoy the benefit of all the *Seasons* from this close neighborhood.

Thomson is buried in Richmond Church, at the west end of the north aisle. There is a square brass tablet, well secured into the wall with ten large screws, bearing this inscription:

"In the earth below this Tablet [Pg 257]
Are the remains of
James Thomson,
Author of the beautiful Poems entitled The Seasons, Castle of Indolence,
&c., &c., who died at Richmond on the 27th day of August,
and was buried here on the 29th, old style, 1748. The Earl
of Buchan, unwilling that so good a man and sweet a poet
should be without a memorial, has denoted the place
of his interment for the satisfaction of his admirers,
in the year of our Lord, 1792."

"Father of light and life, thou Good Supreme!
O teach me what is good; teach me myself!
Save me from folly, vanity, and vice,
From every low pursuit! and feed my soul
With knowledge, conscious peace, and virtue pure,
Sacred, substantial, never-fading bliss!"—*Winter*, p. 144.

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WILLIAM SHENSTONE.

No poet of the same pretensions has been so much known through his residence as Shenstone.

Without the Leasowes he would have been nothing. His elegies and pastorals would have lain on the dustiest of book-shelves, and his Schoolmistress, by far the best of his productions, would hardly have retained vitality enough to make herself noticeable in the crowd of poetical characters. The Leasowes was the chief work of Shenstone's life, and it is the chief means of that portion of immortality which he possesses. Into every quarter of the kingdom the fame of this little domain has penetrated. Nature there formed the grand sub-stratum of his art, and nature is always beautiful. But I do confess, that in the Leasowes I have always found so much ado about nothing; such a parade of miniature cascades, lakes, streams conveyed hither and thither; surprises in the disposition of woods and the turn of walks, with a seat placed here, and another there; with inscriptions, Latin and English; and piping Fauns *fauning* upon you in half a dozen [Pg 259] places, that I have heartily wished myself out upon a good rough heath, with the winds blowing away the cobwebs of so many conceits from my brain.

In the days of Shenstone there prevailed the falsest notions of life and poetry. If poetry be indeed "the eloquence of truth," as Campbell beautifully pronounced it—if great passions, great sentiments, great wrestlings with our destinies, and conflicts for the good of others—if these constitute the sublimity of duty, and give occasion for the sublimity of poetry, how poor a delusion was that which led one to dream and drone in some fantastic retirement; to whimper over petty troubles, and waste the intellect on petty themes; exalting mole-hills into mountains, and the stings of a morbid selfishness into picturesque sorrows, when they should have been up and doing, dragging out to the light of day, like Crabbe, all the wretchedness and the wrong of social life, or breathing into the trumpet of a generous indignation the notes that rouse the world to a higher tone and task.

The remarks of Dr. Johnson appear to me, in the case of Shenstone, who was amiable but trifling, as very just: "Now was excited his delight in rural pleasures and his ambition of rural elegance. He began, from the time of occupying his own estate, to point his prospects, to diversify his surface, to entangle his walks, and to wind his waters, which he did with such judgment and such fancy as made his little domain the envy of the great and the admiration of the skillful; a place to be visited by travelers, and copied by designers. Whether to plant a walk in undulating curves, and to place a bench at every turn where there is an object to catch the view; to make water run where it will be heard, and to stagnate where it will be seen; to leave intervals where the eye will be pleased, and to thicken the plantation where there is something to be hidden, demand any great powers of mind, I will not inquire; perhaps a sullen and surly spectator may think such [Pg 260] performances rather the sport than the business of human reason. But it must be at least confessed that to embellish the form of nature is an innocent amusement, and some praise must be allowed by the most supercilious observer to him who does best what such multitudes are contending to do well."

This seems to me the precise merit of Shenstone. He introduced a better taste in landscape gardening, though *his* taste was often questionable, and may be ranked with Browne and Kent. He was a man of taste rather than of genius, and may claim a full alliance with the lovers of nature, but is as far from the association with great poets—with such men as Milton or Shakspeare, Burns or Elliott, as the glow-worm is with the comet. Poetry is not only the highest art, but, next to religion itself, the most divine principle on earth. It is a religion itself, or, rather, forms part and parcel of that of Christ; for its object is to stimulate virtue, abash vice, raise the humble, abase the proud, call forth the most splendid qualities of the soul, and pour love like a river over the earth till it fills every house, and leaves behind it a fertility like that which follows the inundations of the Nile. We do injustice to Shenstone when we place him beside the giants, and thus provokingly display his true proportions.

"The pleasure of Shenstone," continues Johnson, "was all in his eye; he valued what he valued merely for its looks; nothing raised his indignation more than to ask if there were any fishes in his water.

"His house was mean, and he did not improve it; his care was of his grounds. When he came home from his walks, he might find his floors flooded by a shower through the broken roof, but could spare no money for its reparation. In time, his expenses brought clamors about him that overpowered the lamb's bleat and the linnet's song, and his groves were haunted by beings very different to fauns and fairies. He spent his estate in adorning it, and his death was probably [Pg 261] hastened by his anxieties. He was a lamp that spent its oil in blazing. * * * He died at the Leasowes, of a putrid fever, in 1763, and was buried by the side of his brother in Halesowen churchyard.

"He was never married, though he might have obtained the lady, whoever she was, to whom his Pastoral Ballad was addressed. He is represented by his friend Dodsley as a man of great tenderness and generosity, kind to all that were within his influence, but if once offended, not easily appeased; inattentive to economy, and careless of his expenses. In his person he was larger than the middle size, with something clumsy in his form; very negligent of his clothes, and remarkable for wearing his gray hair in a particular manner; for he held that the fashion was no rule of dress, and that every man was to suit his appearance to his natural form. His mind was not very comprehensive, nor his curiosity active; he had no value for those parts of knowledge which he had not himself cultivated."

Gray visited the Leasowes, and his opinion of Shenstone was very similar to that of Johnson. "I have read, too, an octavo volume of Shenstone's letters. Poor man! he was always wishing for money, for fame, and other distinctions; and his whole philosophy consisted in living against his will in retirement, and in a place which his taste had adorned, but which he only enjoyed when people of note came to see and commend it. His correspondence is about nothing else but this

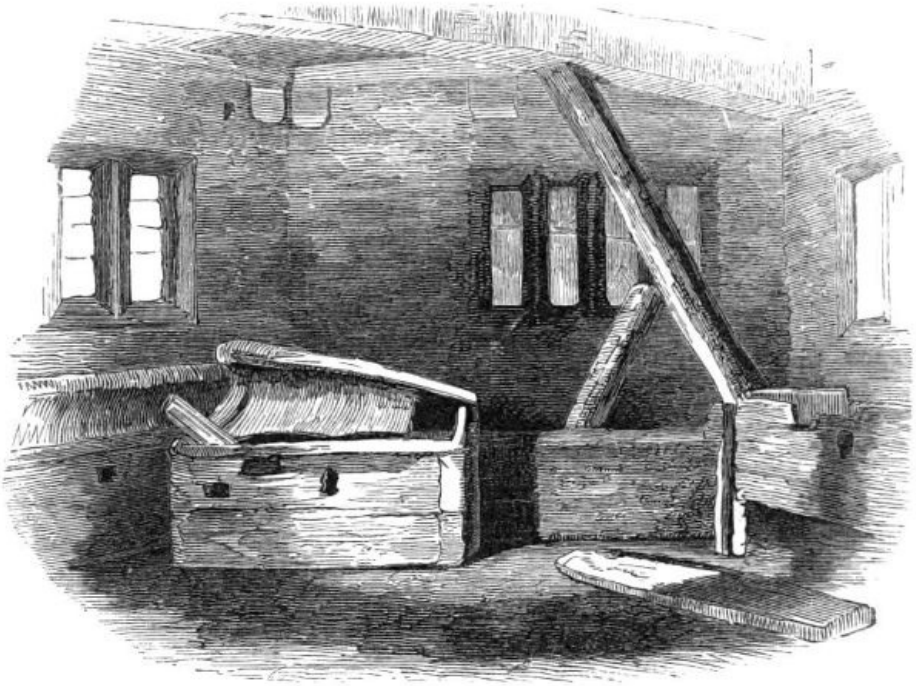
place and his own writings, with two or three neighboring clergymen, who wrote verses too."

I have ascertained the present condition of the Leasowes through an intelligent friend who visited it the other day at my request. The Leasowes is about six or seven miles distant from Birmingham, on the road to Kidderminster, and about four miles from Hagley, in the parish of Halesowen. Arriving at Halesowen, you have to descend a long and steep hill, from the top of which you have a view of the Bromsgrove, Clent, and Dudley hills, which are in the immediate [Pg 262] neighborhood—Hagley Park being situated on one of the Clent hills—and of the Clee hills in the distance; these form a boundary between the counties of Hereford and Salop. About half way down this descent, which is a mile long, you turn to the left down a shady lane; this leads to the Leasowes, and in some degree partakes of the character of the place; winding continually, yet still presenting a beautiful archway of trees, of nearly all descriptions. From this lane you enter the Leasowes, and, crossing a bridge, pass on to the lawn. On your left lies a beautiful piece of still water, overshadowed with evergreens, and conveying the idea of infinite depth. This is nearly the lowest part of the grounds, which here begin to ascend toward the house, commanding, not an extensive, but a beautifully condensed prospect. Going round the house to the right, and still ascending, you gain another prospect equally beautiful, yet different, and in both cases must be surprised by the skill which presents to the eye the artificial depth of forest which there strikes it. A canal which has been cut through the valley, between the house and Halesowen, so far from injuring the prospect, as many of these things are apt to do, rather improves it than otherwise, giving a rest to the eye, and shutting out, by its embankment, sundry forges which would otherwise be visible. In order to discover, however, the true spirit of the place, you must cross the lawn at the back of the house, where you are reminded of passages in Shenstone's pastorals.

Let us now suppose the grounds lying in the shape of a Y; the house not standing at the top, but near the center of the fork, and the lowest part of the scene, the stem. The lines forming the fork of the Y are beautifully wooded ravines or dells, down which flow small streamlets, meeting at the bottom of the hill, and in their progress forming numerous small pools, which may well represent "the fountains all bordered with moss." The walks along the sides of these streams are now neglected, but they still conduct you to the natural beauties of the scene. There is one spot [Pg 263] which commands the view of the whole grounds, and all the poetry of them. Following the course of one of the streams, you arrive at that part of the scene which was Shenstone's favorite spot, still marked by the remnants of several fallen statues. Still advancing along the brook side, you come to a pool. This may be called the tail or stem of the Y; and at dusk, on a November day, it gives you no bad idea of the Lake of the Dismal Swamp in miniature. Indeed, the feeling on quitting the place is, that you have been well deceived as to the extent of it, so small a space really containing so much variety of scenery.

The Leasowes now belongs to the Attwood family, and a Miss Attwood resides there occasionally; but the whole place bears the impress of desertion and neglect. The house has a dull look; the same heavy spirit broods over the lawns and glades; and it is only when you survey it from a distance, as when approaching Halesowen from Hagley, that the whole presents an aspect of unusual beauty. It is said to be a favorite resort of the members of the Society of Friends, as, halting for tea at Halesowen, on their return from their meetings at Stourbridge to Birmingham, they are fond of a stroll in the Leasowes, no doubt the quiet character of the poetry of Shenstone according well with their own habits.

[Pg 264]



CHATTERTON.

"In Severn's vale, a wan and moonstruck boy
Sought by the daisy's side a pensive joy;
Held converse with the sea-birds as they passed,
And strange and dire communion with the blast;
And read in sunbeams, and the starry sky,
The golden language of eternity.
Age saw him, and looked sad; the young men smiled;
And wondering maidens shunned his aspect wild.
But He—the ever kind, the ever wise,
Who sees through fate, with omnipresent eyes,
Hid from the mother, while she blessed her son,
The woes of genius and of Chatterton."—*Ebenezer Elliott.*

The Church of St. Mary Redcliffe, Bristol, is a beautiful church; some of the biographers of Chatterton have declared that it is the finest parish church in England. Mr. Britton has been almost as enamored of it as was Chatterton himself. He has written a complete history of it, and has for years zealously exerted himself to rouse the inhabitants of Bristol to have this ornament of their city put into thorough repair by subscription, an object in which I am glad to find that he [Pg 265] has finally succeeded, and that the perfect restoration, especially of the time-worn exterior, is already commenced under the superintendence of himself and Mr. Brayley.

"Beautiful exceedingly" is St. Mary of Redcliffe; and it is the triumph of this beauty that it has awoke the poet in the soul of one of its lovers, and a poet so extraordinary in the circumstances of his life, in the mere boyhood of his age, in the tragic nature of his death, and, above all, in the proud splendor of his genius; that his passion for this lovely structure, and the facts which have sprung out of it, have flung round St. Mary an everlasting interest, and made it one of the most brilliant monuments of national glory which stand on the bosom of our mother-land.

If it had turned out that the Rowley Poems produced to the public by Chatterton had been genuine, and that the fame of so great a poet as Thomas Rowley the priest had been buried for near four hundred years in the iron chest of William Canynge, it would have been a most extraordinary circumstance that it should have been a boy of fourteen who had discovered them; who had had the taste and discernment to pick them out from amid the ordinary documents of such a chest, of little interest except to parishioners; to transcribe them, to press them upon the attention of his townsmen and the literary public, and to have suffered insult, obloquy, and persecution on their account. Had he only raised that great public astonishment, inquiry, quarrel, and controversy among the learned and antiquarian of his time, and had been satisfactorily proved to be *only* the discoverer, introducer, and champion of the merit of these productions, it would have been one of the most remarkable occurrences in the whole history of literature, and the boy Chatterton would have still merited the happy epithet of "the marvelous boy." Had he been allowed, on justly admitted grounds, to have taken only that position which he claimed, that [Pg 266] of the discoverer of the Rowley MSS., and the writer of his own acknowledged poems, the occurrence would have stood alone in the annals of letters, and Chatterton must have still remained one of the most extraordinary of precocious geniuses. The wit which sparkles through the whole series of his verses, from Sly Dick to his Journal and his Will; the bold satire, the daring independence of his thoughts, setting defiance to public opinion, even on the most solemn of all subjects—religion; the indomitable pride, and bold adventure of the lad; these are facts, in connection with his great "discovery," supposing it to have been a real discovery, which must have raised the wonder of every one, and have given him a distinguished niche in the Walhalla of his country. The boy of sixteen, who could pen such a description as that of Whitfield in his Journal, beginning,

"In his wooden palace jumping,
Tearing, sweating, bawling, thumping,
Repent, repent, repent,
The mighty Whitfield cries,
Oblique lightning in his eyes"—

the daring description of religion in his Defense; or who could make such a will as that which he drew up, when he for the first time proposed to himself suicide, must be pronounced a startling but most uncommon lad. The youth who, without friends or patrons in the great metropolis, could set out with a small fund borrowed at the rate of a guinea apiece from his acquaintances, to make his fortune and fame; and there, in the midst of the utter wreck of all his august visions and soaring hopes; in the depth of neglect, contempt, and the most grinding indigence, could issue satire after satire, and launch Junius-like letters from the newspapers at the highest personages of the land, not sparing even the crowned head, can, however we might estimate such productions in an experienced adult, only be regarded with the most profound and unmixed [Pg 267] wonder. We may lament over the waywardness of his genius, but we must admit its unequivocal reality; and when its career is closed by self-violence, after appealing to Heaven from the abyss of its agony in stanzas such as the following, we know not whether most to marvel at the greatness of the phenomenon, or the dense stolidity of the age which did not perceive it, but suffered it to expire in horror, to the eternal disgrace of human nature and our country.

"THE RESIGNATION.

O God, whose thunder shakes the sky,
  Whose eye this atom globe surveys,
To thee, my only rock, I fly;
  Thy mercy in thy justice praise.

The mystic mazes of thy will,
  The shadows of celestial light,
Are past the power of human skill;
  But what th' Eternal acts is right.

O teach me in the trying hour,
  When anguish swells the dewy tear,
To still my sorrows, own thy power,
  Thy goodness love, thy justice fear.

If in this bosom aught but Thee
  Encroaching sought a boundless sway,
Omniscience could the danger see,
  And Mercy look the cause away.

Then why, my soul, dost thou complain?
  Why, drooping, seek the dark recess?
Shake off the melancholy chain,
  For God created all to bless.

But ah! my breast is human still;
  The rising sigh, the falling tear,
My languid vitals' feeble rill,
  The sickness of my soul declare.

But yet, with fortitude resigned,
  I thank the inflictor of the blow;
Forbid the sigh, compose my mind,
  Nor let the gush of misery flow. [Pg 268]

The gloomy mantle of the night,
  Which on my sinking spirit steals,
Will vanish at the morning light
  Which God, my East, my Sun, reveals."

But pride and despair triumphed over this deep feeling of trust in Divine goodness. These words were the rending cry of the dying giant; they were the mighty poetry of forlornest misery; and, independently of the poems of Thomas Rowley, stamped beyond dispute the high poetical renown of Thomas Chatterton. They showed that, notwithstanding the unworthy subjects on which necessity had forced him to attempt the waste of his sublime endowments, and had forced him in vain, for the soul of poesy within him had refused to come forth at the call of booksellers and political squabblers, there lay still in his bosom the great heart and the great mind of the first-rate poet.

But what were all these flashes and indications of the *mens divinior* to the broad and dazzling display of it in the Rowley poems themselves; those poems which would have crowned any grown man a king in the realms of intellectual reputation, which yet the towering pride of the boy—"that damned, native, unconquerable pride" which he said "plunged him into distraction," that "nineteen twentieths of his composition," as he himself asserted it to be—flung determinedly from him? These poems, now admitted on all hands to be his own boyish compositions, and which, indeed, were thrust upon him as crimes by those of his cotemporaries who ought to have seen in them the proofs of a genius which should have been carefully and kindly cherished for the good of humanity and the honor of England—these are, indeed, more stately and beautiful than the fair pile of St. Mary, which had first awoke in his spirit the deathless love of poetry and antique romance. Ah! what a sad, beautiful, but heart-wringing romance is itself the story of Chatterton! His real history is this.

There was a little boy in Bristol, whose fathers, for many generations, had been the sextons of St. [Pg 269] Mary Redcliffe. The veneration for this beautiful fabric, from the habit of ages, might be said to be woven into the frames and infused into the blood of this family. The office was gone out of the family; the boy's father had become a schoolmaster, and died three weeks previous to the child's birth. His uncle had been the last to fill this post, but he, too, was deceased. The boy's mother, however, lived in a small house, in a back court, nearly opposite to this church; and the lad, very likely led by what he heard her say of the former long connection of their family with it, was in the habit of going into it when open, and wandering about it for hours. At that time, nearly a century ago, neither churches nor church-yards were so rigidly locked up as at present, and ample and often was the time when a little boy on the watch might enter, and while marriage or burial ceremony went on, while the cleaners and sweepers were at work, or while the evening and the morning bell was rung, might stroll to and fro, and gaze and wonder to his heart's content. That this was his dearest occupation was soon well known to his family. "His mother's

house," says one of his biographers, "was close to the fine structure of St. Mary Redcliffe, and they well knew that the boy's favorite haunts were the aisles and towers of that noble pile. And there they would find the truant, seated generally by the tomb of Canynge, or lodged in one of the towers, reading." And what effect this church-haunting had upon him was very early visible. At five years of age he went to the day-school in Pyle-street, which had formerly been taught by his father, but here he was dull and stupid; and, till he was six and a half years old, his master could trace no sign of intellectual progress in him, and his poor mother began to think him an absolute fool. But the objects of the silent church had not fallen in vain on his infant fancy. Those quaint and gorgeous paintings, and those antique letters engraven on floor crosses, had acquired a strong hold upon him, and, without doubt, led him to seize, as he did, with an avidity new to [Pg 270] him, on the old musical manuscript in French, adorned with illuminated capitals, which he found at home. "He fell in love with it," said his mother; and the shrewd woman, catching at this discovered charm, brought him an ancient black-letter Bible, which she possessed, to read, and the boy's inner nature came to light: "he was no longer a dunce." At eight he was a voracious devourer of books. He read morning, noon, and night, from the hour that he awoke to that in which he went to bed. But another cause now contributed to strengthen the impression of antiquity which he had received in St. Mary's Church. He was become an inmate of the Blue-coat School of Bristol, on St. Augustine's Back, founded by Colston, a merchant, in 1708. Here, in an institution which, though not of ancient date, was yet conducted in the ancient fashion, he was arrayed in long blue coat and belt, and scarlet stockings, and tonsure cap. Here, say some of his schoolfellows, he took no part in the poetical and literary emulations which arose. An usher wrote poetry, and his example stimulated others to a like ambition; but Chatterton "possessed apparently neither the inclination nor ability for literary pursuits;" he contented himself with the ordinary sports and pastimes of his age. But, in truth, he was secretly gleaning up knowledge wherever he could lay hands on it. Long before, he had begged of a painter to paint him an angel, with wings and a trumpet, *to trumpet his name over the world*! This spirit once awoke, was not likely to die again, even in the bosom of a child. He had continually in his heart that cry which haunted Cowley:

"What shall I do to be forever known?"

From the time he had begun to read, a great change had passed over him. "He grew thoughtful and reserved. He was silent and gloomy for long intervals together, speaking to no one, and appearing angry when noticed or disturbed. He would break out into sudden fits of weeping, for [Pg 271] which no reason could be assigned; would shut himself in some chamber, and suffer no one to approach him, nor allow himself to be enticed from his seclusion. Often he would go to the length of absenting himself from home altogether, for the space, sometimes, of many hours; and his sister remembered him being most severely chastised for a long absence, at which, however, he did not shed one tear, but merely said, 'It was hard, indeed, to be whipped for reading.' This was before his entering Colston's school, but there he kept up the zealous reading. He is reported to have stood aloof from the society of his schoolmates, to have made few acquaintances, and only among those whose disposition inclined them to reflection. His money, all that he could procure, went to get the perusal of books; and on Sundays, and holidays, and half holidays, he was either wandering solitarily in the fields, sitting beside the tomb of Canynge in the church, or was shut up in a little room at his mother's, attending to no meal-times, and only issuing out, when he did appear, begrimed with ocher, charcoal, and black-lead.

"From twelve to seven, each Saturday, he was always at home; returning punctually a few minutes after the clock had struck, to get to his little room, and to shut himself up. In this room he always had by him a great piece of ocher in a brown pan; pounce-bags full of charcoal dust, which he had from a Miss Sanger, a neighbor; also a bottle of black-lead powder, which they once took to clean the stove with and made him very angry. Every holiday, almost, he passed at home, and often, having been denied the key when he wanted it, because they thought he hurt his health, and made himself dirty, he would come to Mrs. Edkins, and kiss her cheek, and coax her to get it for him, using the most persuasive expressions to effect his end; so that this eagerness of his to be in this room so much alone, the apparatus, the parchments (for he was not then indentured to Mr. Lambert), both plain as well as written on, and the begrimed figure he always [Pg 272] presented when he came down at tea-time, his face exhibiting many stains of black and yellow—all these circumstances began to alarm them; and when she could get into his room, she would be very inquisitive, and peep about at every thing. Once he put his foot on a parchment on the floor, to prevent her from taking it up, saying, 'You are too curious and clear-sighted; I wish you would bide out of the room; it is my room.' To this she answered by telling him that it was only a general lumber-room, and that she wanted some parchment to make thread-papers of; but he was offended, and would not permit her to touch any of them, not even those that were not written on; but with a voice of entreaty, said, 'Pray don't touch any thing here,' and seemed very anxious to get her away; and this increased her fears, lest he should be doing something improper, knowing his want of money, and his ambition to appear like others.[9] At last they got a strange idea that these colors were to color himself with, and that, perhaps, he would join some gipsies one day or other, as he seemed so discontented with his station in life, and unhappy."[10]

But the true secret was one far beyond the conception of his simple relatives. Coining and forging, indeed, he was bent upon, and meant to join himself, some day or other, to a company which, in their eyes, would have appeared stranger than a troop of gipsies. He was already, child as he was, forging the name and deeds of Thomas Rowley, and fathering upon him the glorious coinage of his own brain. A great and immortal guest was theirs, and they did not know it. One of themselves was marked by the passing angel of destiny as the one of all his generation doomed to [Pg 273]

the fearful sacrifice of a sad but eternal fame. The spirit which had stolen upon him and taken possession of him as he had roamed the dim aisles of the old church, and gazed on the great sacred scene of the Ascension of Christ, and on the light avenues of lofty columns, and sat by the tomb of Master Canynge, was now busy with him. It was this which had made him gloomy and retiring, which had caused him to burst into passions of tears, for which no reason could be assigned. A new world had dawned before his inner vision; the sensibilities of the poet were now quivering in every nerve; mysterious shapes moved around him, which one day he must report of to the world—shapes, the offspring of that old church, and its tombs and monuments, and traceries and emblazonments, mingled with the spirit of his solitary readings in history, divinity, and antiquities; and that melancholy foreboding, that *Ahnung* of the future, as the Germans term it, which, like a present angel of prophecy, unseen, but felt, hangs on the heart of youthful genius with an overpowering sadness, was spread over him like a heavenly cloud, which made the physical face of life dreary and insipid to him.

This was the boy, of eleven or twelve years old, who had already commenced satirist, and launched his arrows of sarcasm at offenders in Felix Farley's Bristol Journal, where "Sly Dick" and "Apostate Will" were pilloried before the whole city by so young a hand. This was the boy, of perhaps fourteen, who astonished the worthy pewterer, Burgum, by bringing to him an historic account of his pedigree, with coats of arms all elaborately painted on parchment, tracing his descent, with minute detail of personages, from no less a distance than the Saxon period, and from no less a person than the great Waltheof, earl of Northumberland, Northampton, and Huntingdon! Great has been the laughter at poor Burgum for swallowing the pleasant deceit; but let any one imagine to himself a charity schoolboy, in old-fashioned costume, and his innocent boy's face, appearing before him, and presenting to him so matter-of-fact a document, as found in [Pg 274] a chest in the muniment room of St. Mary's Church, in which this boy was known to pore and hunt about. Could any suspicion of such a boy's forgery of the document at first be entertained? Would any feelings but those of wonder and curiosity be excited? Burgum was completely taken in; and a thousand others who have since laughed at him would have been taken in too. And now began to be sounded about that famous story of the iron-bound chest of Master Canynge, in the muniment room over the north porch of St. Mary Redcliffe Church, from which Chatterton's father had been allowed to carry home whole heaps of parchments, and from which heaps Chatterton professed to have drawn this pedigree of the De Bergham family. This was a most prolific source of strange documents, which from time to time came issuing forth in the shape of transcripts by the boy Chatterton. His fifteenth year, however, saw him, in one day, metamorphosed from a Colston's charity boy into a lawyer's apprentice. He was bound to one Lambert, a man of little practice, and who, besides, is termed "a vulgar, insolent, imperious man; who, because the boy wrote poetry, was of a melancholy and contemplative disposition, and disposed to study and reading, thought him a fit object of insult and contemptuous rage." Need we ask why his mother bound him to such a man? To whom *can* the poor bind their children? Had Lambert been a pleasant fellow, and in great practice, he would have had rich men's sons offered, and would have demanded a fee that would effectually exclude the poor. Here his life was the life of insult and degradation, which might pretty safely be calculated upon with such a man and such a practice. Twelve hours he was chained to the office, *i. e.*, from eight in the morning till eight at night, dinner hour only excepted; and in the house he was confined to the kitchen, slept with the footboy, and was subjected to indignities of a like nature, at which his [Pg 275] pride rebelled, and by which his temper was imbittered. Yet here it was, during this life of base humiliation, that Thomas Chatterton worked out the splendid creations of his imagination. In less than three years of the life of a poor attorney's apprentice, fed in the kitchen, and lodged with the footboy, did he here achieve an immortality such as the whole life of not one in ten millions is sufficient to create.

In the long, solitary hours of this empty office—for, not having any business, even the master was very often absent—he had ample leisure and secure opportunity to give scope to the feelings and fancies which had sprung up in the aisles of St. Mary's, but which had since grown with the aliment of historic and poetic knowledge gathered from Fuller, Camden, Chaucer, and the old chroniclers. From time to time, as I have said, came flying forth some precious old piece of local history, which astonished the good people of Bristol, and were always traced to this same wonderful lad, and his inexhaustible parchments from the old chest. A new bridge is built, and in Felix Farley's Journal appears an account of the opening of the old bridge ages before, with all the ceremonies and processions of civil officers, priests, friars, and minstrels, with all their banners and clarions. Then Mr. Barrett, a surgeon, is writing his history of the place, and lacks information respecting the ancient churches; and, lo! the prolific MSS. of Maister Canynge supply not only histories of all churches, but of castles and palaces, with the directions of the ancient streets, and all the particulars of the city walls, and all their gates. Never was an historian so readily and so affluently supplied! Whoever now sees the ponderous quarto of Barrett's History of Bristol, with all the wonders palmed upon the author by Chatterton, must be equally amazed at the daring of the lad and the credulity of the man. He restored in a fine drawing the ancient castle, in a style of architecture such as surely never was seen in any castle before. There were towers of a most lofty and unique description, yet extremely beautiful; there [Pg 276] were battlements as unique as if the ancient knights who defended them had left their shields lying upon them; there were tiers of arches, circles, and stars, one above another, in fronts of the most fanciful kind; there were other parts where pilasters ran from ground to battlement, ornamented with alternating cross keys, human figures, lozenges, ovals, zigzag lines, and other ornaments, such as never could have originated but in a poetical and daring brain; yet was the whole worthy of the residence of some knight or king of old romance. It was beautiful, and might suggest to architects in these threadbare days ideas of a style piquantly original and refreshing.

This was the view of Bristol Castle in 1138, Rowlie Canonicus, deleniator, 1440, to be seen in Barrett's History. But deeper and deeper does this fortunate youth dive into the treasures of the chest, and more and more amazing are the wonders that he brings up. Never was so rich a chest stowed away in cloisters of the rich old middle ages. Now came up poets, painters, carvers, heralds, architects, and stainers of glass, besides warriors of proudest renown, all flourishing in times that we are wont to deem barren of such glories; and a more than chivalric reign of Arthur —a more than Elizabethan constellation of genius in arts and arms, astonishes the senses of those deeply learned, who fancied that they had explored all possible mines of the past knowledge. The dark ages grow brighter and brighter as the necromantic stripling rubs his lamp in the office of the attorney Lambert, till the living are almost blinded by the blaze of light from the regions of the forgotten dead. No less than eleven poets of great fame did he bring to light, of whom Abbot John, who flourished in 1186, he says, was one of the greatest that ever lived; and Maister John à Iscam not much less, living in the time of the great Maister Canynge, himself also a fine poet! But of all men, most versatile and rich in lore and intellect was Thomas Rowley, the friend of [Pg 277] Canynge, and priest of St. John, in Bristol; and, truly, if the poems which he put forth in Rowley's name had been Rowley's, Rowley would have been a famous poet indeed—to say nothing of his sermons, histories, and other writings.

Spite of the wretchedness of his domestic position in Lambert's house, this must have been the happiest portion of Chatterton's life. His bringing out these treasures to the day had given him great consideration, among not only some of the most leading men, but among the youth of Bristol. With his excitable temperament, his spirits rose occasionally into great gayety and confidence. He began to entertain dreams of a lofty ambition. He had created a new world for himself, in which he lived. He had made Rowley its great heroic bard. He had raised Maister Canynge again from his marble rest in the south transept of St. Mary's, and placed him in his ancient glory in Bristol. Beneath his hands St. Mary's rose like a fairy fabric out of the earth, and was consecrated amid the most glorious hymns, and with the most gorgeous processions of priests and minstrels. Great and magnificent was Canynge in his wealth and his goodness once more in his native city; and in the brave lays of Rowley the valiant Ella fought, and the fierce Harold and William the Norman made the Hill of Battell the eternal monument of the loss and gain of England.

"He was always," says Mr. Smyth, one of his intimate companions, "extremely fond of walking in the fields, particularly in Redcliffe Meadows, and of talking about these manuscripts, and sometimes reading them there. 'Come,' he would say, 'you and I will take a walk in the meadow. I have got the cleverest thing for you imaginable; it is worth half a crown merely to have a sight of it, and to hear me read it to you.' When we arrived at the place proposed, he would produce his parchment, show it me, and read it to me. There was one spot in particular, full in view of the [Pg 278] church, in which he would take a particular delight. He would frequently lay himself down, fix his eyes upon the church, and seem as if he were in a kind of trance. Then, on a sudden, abruptly he would tell me, 'That steeple was burned down by lightning; that was the place where they formerly acted plays.'

"His Sundays were commonly spent in walking alone into the country about Bristol, as far as the duration of daylight would allow; and from those excursions he never failed to bring home with him drawings of churches, or some other objects which had impressed his romantic imagination."

This was one of those brief seasons in the poet's life when the heaven of his spirit has cast its glory on the nether world. When the light and splendor of his own beautiful creations invest the common earth, and he walks in the summer of his heart's joy. Every imagination seems to have become a reality; every hope to expand before him into fame and felicity; and the flowers beneath his tread, the sky above him, the air that breathes upon his cheek—all nature, in short, is full of the intoxication of poetic triumph. Bristol was become quite too narrow for him and Rowley; he shifted the field of his ambition to London, and the whole enchanted realm of his anticipations passed like a Fata Morgana, and was gone! There came instead, cruel contempt, soul-withering neglect, hunger, despair, and suicide!

Such was the history of the life of one of England's greatest poets, who perished by his own hand, stung to the soul by the utter neglect of his country, and too proud to receive that bread from compassion which the reading public of Great Britain refused to his poetic labors. Of this, of Walpole, and Gray, and Sam Johnson, and the like, we will speak more anon. Here let us pause, and select a few specimens of that poetry which the people of England, at the latter end of the eighteenth century, would fain have suffered to perish with its author. That they may be better [Pg 279] understood, we will modernize them.

The chief of his Rowley Poems are, Ella, a tragical Interlude, or discoursing Tragedy; Godwin, the fragment of another Tragedy; the Battle of Hastings, the fragment of an Epic; and the Parliament of Sprytes, a most merry Interlude; with smaller ones.

ROUNDELAY, SUNG BY THE MINSTRELS IN ELLA.

"O! sing unto my roundelay,
  O! drop the briny tear with me;
Dance no more at holiday;
  Like a running river be.
    My love is dead,
    Gone to his death-bed,
    All under the willow-tree.

"Black his hair as the winter night,
White his neck as the summer snow,
Red his face as the morning light;
Cold he lies in the grave below.
My love is dead, &c.

"Sweet his tongue as the throstle's note,
Quick in dance as thought can be,
Daft his tabor, cudgel stout;
O! he lies by the willow-tree.
My love is dead, &c.

"Hark! the raven flaps his wing
In the briered dell below;
Hark! the death-owl loud doth sing
To the nightmares, as they go.
My love is dead, &c.

"See! the white moon shines on high—
Whiter is my true love's shroud;
Whiter than the morning sky,
Whiter than the evening cloud.
My love is dead, &c.

"Here, upon my true love's grave,
Shall the barren flowers be laid;
Not one holy saint to save
All the coldness of a maid.
My love is dead, &c. [Pg 280]

"With my hands I'll bend the briers
Round his holy corse to gre:[11]
Elfin fairies, light your fires;
Here my body still shall be.
My love is dead,
Gone to his death-bed,
All under the willow-tree.

"Come with acorn-cup and thorn,
Drain my heart's blood all away;
Life and all its good I scorn,
Dance by night, or feast by day.
My love is dead, &c.

"Water-witches, crowned with reytes,[12]
Bear me to your lethal tide.
I die! I come! my true love waits:
Thus the damsel spoke, and died."

This roundelay has always, and most justly, been greatly admired for its true pathos, and that fine harmony which charms us so much in the fragments of similar songs preserved by Shakspeare. Not less beautiful is the chorus in Godwin. There is something singularly great and majestic in its imagery.

CHORUS IN GODWIN.

"When Freedom, dressed in blood-stained vest,
To every knight her war-song sung,
Upon her head wild weeds were spread;
A gory anlace by her hung:
She danced upon the heath;
She heard the voice of death;
Pale-eyed Affright, his heart of silver hue,
In vain assailed her bosom to acale;[13]
She heard unmoved the shrieking voice of woe,
And Sadness in the owlet shake the dale.
She shook the pointed spear,
On high she reared her shield;
Her foemen all appear,
And fly along the field. [Pg 281]

Power, with his head aloft unto the skies,
His spear a sunbeam, and his shield a star,
Like two fierce flaming meteors rolled his eyes,
Chafes with his iron feet and sounds to war.

She sits upon a rock,
  She bends before his spear,
She rises with the shock,
  Wielding her own in air.
Hard as the thunder doth she drive it on;
  Wit, closely mantled, guides it to his crown,
His long, sharp spear, his spreading shield is gone:
  He falls, and falling, rolleth thousands down.
  War, gore-faced War, by Envy armed, arist,[14]
His fiery helmet nodding to the air.
  Ten bloody arrows in his straining fist."

......*...*

Next let us take a poem whose truest criticism is contained in its own title:

AN EXCELLENT BALLAD OF CHARITY.

"From Virgo did the sun diffuse his sheen,
  And hot upon the meads did cast his ray;
Red grew the apple from its paly green,
  And the soft pear did bend the leafy spray;
  The piéd goldfinch sung the livelong day:
'Twas now the pride, the manhood of the year,
And eke the ground was dight in its most deft aumere.[15]

"The sun was gleaming in the midst of day,
  Dead still the air, and eke the welkin blue,
When from the sea arose in drear array
  A heap of clouds of sable, sullen hue;
  The which full fast unto the woodlands drew,
Hiding at once the sun's rejoicing face,
And the black tempest swelled and gathered up apace.

"Beneath an holm fast by a pathway side,
  Which did unto St. Godwin's convent lead,
A hapless pilgrim moaning did abide;
  In aspect poor, and wretched in his weed.
  Long filléd with the miseries of need,
Where from the hailstone could the almer[16] fly?
He had no house at hand, nor any convent nigh. [Pg 282]

"Look in his glooméd face, his sprite there scan;
  How woe-begone, how withered, dry, and dead!
Haste to thy church-glebe-house,[17] unhappy man!
  Haste to thy coffin, thy sole sleeping bed.
  Cold as the clay which will lie on thy head
Is charity and love among high elves;
Now knights and barons live for pleasure and themselves.

"The gathered storm is rife; the big drops fall;
  The sun-burned meadows smoke and drink the rain;
The coming *ghastness*[18] doth the cattle 'pall,
  And the full flocks are driving o'er the plain.
  Dashed from the clouds, the waters fly again;
The welkin opes; the yellow levin flies,
And the hot, fiery stream in the wide flashing dies.

"List! now the thunder's rattling, dinning sound
  Moves slowly on, and then augmented clangs,
Shakes the high spire, and lost, dispended, drowned,
  Still on the startled ear of terror hangs.
  The winds are up; the lofty elm-tree swings!
Again the levin, and the thunder pours,
And the full clouds at once are burst in stony showers.

"Spurring his palfrey o'er the watery plain,
  The Abbot of St. Godwin's convent came;
His chapournette[19] was drenchéd with the rain,
  His painted girdle met with mickle shame;
  He backward told his bead-roll at the same;
The storm grew stronger, and he drew aside
With the poor alms-craver near to the holm to bide.

"His cloak was all of Lincoln cloth so fine,
A golden button fastened near his chin;
His *autremete*[20] was edged with golden twine,
And his peaked shoes a noble's might have been;
Full well it showed that he thought cost no sin;
The trammels of the palfrey pleased his sight,
For the horse-milliner his head with roses dight.[21]

"'An alms, Sir Priest!' the dropping pilgrim said;
'O! let me wait within your convent door,
Till the sun shineth high above our head,
And the loud tempest of the air is o'er;
Helpless and old am I, alas! and poor;
No house, nor friend, nor money in my pouch;
All that I call my own is this my silver *crouche*.'[22]

"'Varlet!' replied the abbot, 'cease your din;
This is no season alms and prayers to give;
My porter never lets a stroller in;
None touch my ring who not in honor live.'
And now the sun with the black clouds did strive,
And shedding on the ground his glaring ray,
The abbot spurred his steed, and eftsoons rode away.

"Again the sky was black, the thunder rolled;
Fast hieing o'er the plain a priest was seen;
Not dight full proud, nor buttoned up in gold;
His cloak and cape were gray, and eke were clean;
A limitor he was of order seen;[23]
And from the pathway side then turnéd he,
Where the poor almer lay beneath the holmen tree.

"'An alms, Sir Priest,' the dropping pilgrim said,
'For sweet St. Mary and your order's sake.'
The limitor then loosed his pouch's thread,
And did thereout a groat of silver take;
The wretched pilgrim did for gladness shake.
'Here, take this silver, it may ease thy care;
We are God's stewards all; naught of our own we bear.'

"'But oh! unhappy pilgrim, learn of me,
Scarce any give a rent-roll to their Lord
Here, take my semi-cape,[24] thou'rt bare, I see;
'Tis thine; the saints will give me my reward.'
He left the pilgrim, and away he strode.
Virgin and holy saints, who sit in gloure,[25]
Or give the mighty will, or give the good man power!"

The following presents a very living picture of the ceremony of church consecration formerly:

[Pg 284]

ON THE DEDICATION OF OUR LADY'S CHURCH.

"Soon as bright sun along the skies had sent his ruddy light,
And fairies hid in oxlip cups till wished approach of night;
The matin bell with shrilly sound re-echoed through the air;
A troop of holy friars did for Jesus' mass prepare.
Around the high unsainted church with holy relics went,
And every door and post about with godly things bespent
Then Carpenter,[26] in scarlet dressed, and mitered holily,
From Master Canynge, his great house, with rosary did hie.
Before him went a throng of friars, who did the mass song sing;
Behind him Master Canynge came, tricked like a barbed king.
And then a row of holy friars who did the mass song sound;
The procurators and church reeves next pressed the holy ground.
And when unto the church they came, a holy mass they sang,
So loudly that their pleasant voice unto the heavens rang.
Then Carpenter did purify the church to God for aye,
With holy masses and good psalms which he therein did say.
Then was a sermon preached soon by Carpenter holily;
And after that another one ypreached was by me.
Then all did go to Canynge's house an interlude to play,
And drink his wines and ale so good, and pray for him for aye."

We will select just one short lyric more, because its stanza and rhythm seem to me to have

communicated their peculiar music to one of the sweetest of our living poets:

SONG OF SAINT WARBURGH.

"When King Kynghill in his hand
Held the scepter of this land,
Shining star of Christ's own light,
The murky mists of pagan night
  'Gan to scatter far and wide;
Then Saint Warburgh he arose,
Doffed his honors and fine clothes;
Preaching his Lord Jesus' name
To the land of West Sexx came,
  Where yellow Severn rolls his tide.

"Strong in faithfulness he trode
Over the waters like a god,
Till he gained the distant hecke;[27]
In whose banks his staff did stick
  Witness to the miracle.
Then he preachéd night and day,
And set many the right way.
This good staff great wonders wrought,
More than guessed by mortal thought,
  Or than mortal tongue can tell.

"Then the folks a bridge did make
Over the stream unto the heck,
All of wood eke long and wide,
Pride and glory of the tide,
  Which in time did fall away.
Then Earl Leof he besped
This great river from its bed,
Round his castle for to run;
'Twas in truth an ancient one;
  But war and time will all decay.

"Now again with mighty force,
Severn in his ancient course,
Rolls his rapid stream along,
With a sand both swift and strong,
  Whelming many an oaken wood.
We, the men of Bristol town,
Have rebuilt this bridge of stone,
Wishing each that it may last
Till the date of days be past,
  Standing where the other stood."

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Now, would it ever have been believed, had not the thing really taken place in its unmitigated strangeness, that such poetry as this—poetry, indeed, of which these are but mere fragments, which, while they display the power, poetic freedom, and intellectual riches of the writer, do not show the breadth and grandeur of his plans, to be seen only in the works themselves—that they could have been presented to the public, and passed over with contempt, not a century ago? Would it have been credited, that the leading men of the literary world at that time, instead of flinging back such poems at the boy who presented them as a discovered antiquity, were not struck with the amazing fact, that if the boy were an impostor, as they avowed—if he, indeed, *had written them himself*, that he must be a *glorious* impostor? Yet Horace Walpole, Gray, Mason, Sam Johnson, and the whole British throng of literati, were guilty of this blindness!

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That was a dark time in which Chatterton had the misfortune to appear. Spite of the mighty intellects, the wit or learning of such men as Johnson, Gray, Goldsmith, Thomas and Joseph Warton, Burke, and Walpole, poetry, and the spirit of poetry, were, as a general fact, at a low ebb. It was the midnight succeeding the long declining day of the imitators of Pope. The great crowd of versifiers had wandered away from Nature and her eternal fountain of inspiration, and the long array of Sprats, Blackmores, Yaldens, Garths, and the like, had wearied the ear and the heart to death with their polished commonplaces. The sweet muse of Goldsmith was almost the only genuine beam of radiant light, before the great dawn of a more glorious day which was about to break; and Goldsmith himself was hasting to his end. Beattie was but just appearing, publishing the first part of his Minstrel the very year that Chatterton perished by his own hand. The great novelists, Richardson, Fielding, and Sterne, had disappeared from the scene, and their fitting cotemporary, Smollett, was abroad on his travels, where he died the year after Chatterton's suicide. Akenside died the same year; Falconer was drowned at sea the year before; Sheridan's literary sun appeared only above the horizon five years later, with the publication of his Rivals. Who, then, were in the ascendant, and therefore the influential arbiters of public opinion; they who must put forth the saving hand, if ever put forth, and give the cheering "all

hail," if it were given? They were Gray, who, however, himself died the following year, Armstrong, Anstey, of the Bath Guide, Mason, Lord Littleton, Gibbon, the Scotch historians and philosophers, Hume, Robertson, Adam Smith, and the like. There were, too, such men about the stage as Foote, Macklin, Coleman, and Cumberland; and there were the lady writers, or patrons [Pg 287] of literature, Mrs. Carter, Mrs. Macauley, Mrs. Montagu. Macpherson was smarting under the flagellations received on account of his Ossian, and that was about all. Spite of great names, is that a literary tribunal from which much good was to be hoped? No, we repeat it, it was, so far as poetry, genuine poetry, was concerned, a dark and wintery time. The Wartons were of a more hopeful character, and Mrs. Montagu, the founder of the Blue-Stocking Club, had then recently published her Essay on the Genius and Writings of Shakspeare. She, a patron and an advocate of Shakspeare, might, one would have thought, have started from the herd, and done herself immortal honor by asserting the true rank of the new genius, and saving him from a fearful death. But it is one thing to assert the fame of a Shakspeare, established on the throne of the world's homage, and another to *discover*, much more to hymn the advent of a new genius. The literary world, warned by the scarifying castigation which Macpherson had undergone for introducing Ossian, as if, instead of giving the world a fresh poet, he had robbed it of one, shrunk back from the touch of a second grand impostor—*another knave* come to forge for the public another *great poet*! It was a new kind of crime, this endowment of the republic of literature with enormous accessions of wealth; and, what was more extraordinary, the endowers were not only denounced as thieves, but as thieves from themselves! Macpherson and Chatterton did not assert that *they* had written new and great poems, which the acute critics proved to be stolen from the ancients, Ossian and Rowley; that and their virtuous indignation we might have comprehended; but, on the contrary, while the critics protested that Chatterton and Macpherson *themselves* were the actual poets, and had only put on *the masks* of ancients, they treated them, not as clever maskers, joining in the witty conceit, and laughing over it in good-natured triumph, but they denounced them in savage terms, as base thieves, false coiners, damnable impostors! Oh [Pg 288] glorious thieves! glorious coiners! admirable impostors! would to God that a thousand other such would appear, again and again appear, to fill the hemisphere of England with fresh stars of renown! And of what were they impostors? Were not the poems *real*? Were they not genuine, and of the true Titanic stamp? Of what were they thieves? Were not the treasures which they came dragging into the literary bank of England genuine treasures? and if they were found not to have, indeed, dug them out of the rubbish of the ruined temple of antiquity, were they not *their own*? Did the critics not protest that they were *their own*? What, then, was their strange crime? That they would rob themselves of their own intellectual riches, and deposit them on the altar of their country's glory. Wondrous crime! wondrous age! Let us rejoice that a better time has arrived. Not thus was execrated and chased out of the regions of popularity, and even into a self-dug grave, "The Great Unknown," "The Author of Waverley." He wore his mask in all peace and honor for thirteen years, and not a soul dreamed of denouncing Sir Walter Scott, when he was compelled to own himself as the real author, because he had endeavored to palm off his productions as those of Peter Pattison or Jedediah Cleishbotham.

The world *has* grown wiser, and that through a new and more generous, because a more gifted, generation which has arisen. The age which was in its wane when Chatterton appeared upon the stage, was lying beneath the incubus of scholastic formality. Dr. Johnson ruled it as a growling dictator, and the mediocre herd of copyists shrunk equally from the heavy blow of his critical cudgel and the sharp puncture of Horace Walpole's wit. But the dawn was at hand. Bishop Percy had already, in 1765, published his Reliques, and they were beginning to operate. Men read them, went back again at once to nature, and, at her inspiration, up sprung the noble throng of poets, historians, essayists, and romance writers, which have clothed the nineteenth century with [Pg 289] one wide splendor of the glory of genius.

The real crime, however, which Chatterton committed, was, not that he had attempted to palm off upon the world his own productions as Rowley's, but that he had succeeded in taking the knowing ones in. He had caught in his trap those to whom it was poison and death not to appear more sagacious than all the world beside. He had showed up the infallibility of the critics—an unpardonable crime! These tricks of mere boys, by which the craft, and the owl-gravity of the graybeards of literary dictation, might any day be so lamentably disconcerted, and exposed to vulgar ridicule, was a dangerous practice, and therefore it was to be put down with a genuine Mohawk onslaught. Walpole, who had been bitten by Macpherson, and was writhing under the exposure so agonizing to his aristocratic pride, was most completely entrapped again by Chatterton. Spite of his cool denial of this, any one has only to read his letter to Chatterton, dispatched instantly on the receipt of Chatterton's first packet, to be quite satisfied on this point. He "thinks himself singularly obliged," he "gives him a thousand thanks for his very curious and kind letter." "What you have sent," he declares, "is valuable and full of information; *but instead of correcting you, sir, you are far more able to correct me*." Think of the cruel chagrin of the proud dilettante, Walpole, when he discovered that he had been making this confession to a boy of sixteen! What was worse, he had offered, in this letter of March 28, 1769, to print the poems of Rowley, if they had never been printed! and added, "The Abbot John's verses which you have given me are wonderful for their harmony and spirit!"

Never was a sly old fox so perfectly entrapped by a mere lad. But hear with what excess of politeness he concludes:

> "I will not trouble you with more questions now, sir; but flatter myself, from the [Pg 290] urbanity and politeness you have already shown me, that you will give me leave to consult you. I hope, too, you will forgive the simplicity of my direction, as you have favored me with no other.

"I am, sir, your much obliged and obedient servant,

"HORACE WALPOLE."

This was before Gray and Mason, who had seen the MS. sent, had declared it to be a forgery; and before poor Horace had discovered that he had been thus complimenting a poor lawyer's clerk, and his own poems! The man thought that he was addressing some gentleman of fortune, pursuing antiquarian lore in his own noble library, no doubt; but he was stung by two serpents at once—the writer was a poor lad, and the verses were his own!

There has been a great war of words regarding the conduct of Walpole to Chatterton. Almost every writer of the end of the last century, and the beginning of this, has written more or less respecting Chatterton and the Rowley poems; and all have gone largely into the merits or demerits of Walpole in the case. Some have declared him guilty of the fate of the poor youth; others have gone as far the other way, and exempted him from all blame. In my opinion, nothing can ever excuse the conduct of Walpole. If not to prevent the fate of Chatterton was, in his case, to accelerate it, then indeed Walpole must be pronounced guilty of the catastrophe which ensued; and what greatly aggravates the offense is, that he made that a crime in Chatterton of which he himself set the example. Chatterton gave out that his poems were written by Rowley, and Walpole had given out that his Castle of Otranto was the work of an old Italian, and that it had been found, not in Canynge's chest, but "in the library of an ancient Catholic family in the north of England." Nothing is more certain, then, that, brought into close communication with this extraordinary youth and his brilliant productions, he either did not or would not see, that if [Pg 291] Rowley was nobody, Chatterton was a great poet, and as a boy, and a poor boy, was an extraordinary phenomenon; and that both patriotism and humanity demanded that he should be at once brought under the notice of the good and wise, and every thing possible done to develop his rare powers, and secure them to his country. Walpole coolly advised him to stick to his desk, and walked off! Sir Walter Scott has said that Walpole is not alone to blame; the whole country partakes the censure with him; and that he gave the boy good advice. This is not quite true. The whole country did not know of Chatterton, of his wonderful talents, and his peculiar situation; but all these were thrust upon the attention of Walpole, and he gave him advice. True, the advice in itself was good, but, unluckily, it was given when Walpole, by his conduct, had destroyed all its value with Chatterton; when the proud boy, on seeing the contemptible way in which the selfish aristocrat, wounded in his vanity, had turned round upon him, had torn his letters to atoms, and stamped them under his feet.

Had Walpole, when he discovered the real situation and genius of Chatterton, kindly taken him by the hand; had he, instead of deserting him on account of his poverty, and of his having put on him the pardonable trick of representing his own splendid productions as those of a nonentity. Thomas Rowley, then and there advised him to adhere to his profession as a certain source of fortune, and to cultivate his poetic powers in his leisure moments, promising to secure for him, as he so easily could, a full acknowledgment of his talents from the public, it is certain that he might have made of Chatterton, who was full of affection, what he would. He might have represented to him what a fair and legitimate field of poetry he had chosen, thus celebrating the historic glory of his nation, and what an injustice he was doing to himself by giving the fame of his own genius to [Pg 292] Rowley. Had he done this, he would have assuredly saved a great mind to his country, and would have deserved of it all honor and gratitude. But to have expected this from Walpole was to expect warmth from an icicle.

Spite, therefore, of the advice of Walpole, "given with as much kindness and tenderness as if he had been his guardian," no argument or eloquence will ever be able to shield him from the utter contempt of posterity. There stands the fact—that he turned his back on a great poet when he stood before him blazing like a star of the first magnitude, and suffered him to perish. He did more. When that poet *had* perished, and the great soul of his country had awoke to its error and its loss, and acknowledged that "a prince had fallen in Israel," then, on the publication of Chatterton's letters to him in 1786, did this mean-souled man, in a canting letter to Hannah More, absolutely deny that he had ever received these letters! "*letters pretended, to have been sent to me*, and which *never were sent*."[28]

After this, let those defend Walpole who like; would that we could clear that rough, dogmatic, but noble fellow, Samuel Johnson, from a criminal indifference to the claims and fate of Chatterton; but with that unreflecting arbitrariness of will, which often led him into error, we learn from Boswell, who often urged him to read the poems of Rowley, that he long refused, saying, "Pho, child! don't talk to me of the powers of a vulgar, uneducated stripling! No man can coin guineas but in proportion as he has gold." When at length he *was* induced to read them, he confessed, "This is the most extraordinary young man that has encountered my knowledge. It is wonderful how the whelp has written such things." It had then been long too late to begin to admire; and the giant prejudices of Johnson had driven poor Chatterton as completely from him as the petit-maître vanity of Walpole repulsed him in that quarter.

Miss Seward, a woman who, with all her faults as a writer, had always the tact to discern true [Pg 293] genius, and was one of the first to recognize that of Scott and Southey, would have dared to acknowledge the vast powers of Chatterton, had it been in her own day of popularity; but at the death of Chatterton she was a country girl of twenty-three. What she says of Johnson's conduct is very just: "Though Chatterton had long been dead when Johnson began his Lives of the Poets; though Chatterton's poems had long been before the world; though their contents had engaged the *literati* of the nation in controversy, yet would not Johnson allow Chatterton a place in those volumes into which Pomfret and Yalden were admitted. So invincible were his grudging and surly

prejudices, enduring long-deceased genius but ill, and cotemporary genius not at all."

Thus we have traced the course of Thomas Chatterton to that eventful crisis of his fate, when he found himself rejected, as it were, by the literary senate of his nation, and thrust down the few steps of the temple of fame which he had dared to ascend, as a forger and impostor. He was thrust away, in a manner, from the heart, and, what was more, from the intellect of his country; yet his proud spirit spurned the ignominious treatment, and he dared to make one grand effort, one great and final appeal against the fiat, in the face of the whole world, and in the heart of the British metropolis. Alas! it was a desperate enterprise, and our hearts bleed as we follow him in his course. There is nothing, in my opinion, so utterly melancholy in all the history of the calamities of authors as the four fatal months of Chatterton's sojourn in London. It was his great misfortune, from the hour of his birth till that moment, that he never had one suitable friend; one wise, generous, and sympathizing friend, who saw at once his splendid endowments and the faults of his character, and who could thus acquire a sound, and, at the same time, an inspiring influence over him. Born of poor people, who, however they might love him, did not and could not comprehend him; living in a town devoted to trade, and nailed to the desk of a pettifogging [Pg 294] attorney, he went on his way alone, conscious of his own powers, and of the inferiority of those around him, till his pride and his passions kept pace with his genius, and he would have been a miracle had he not had great and many faults. If we, therefore, sigh over his religious skepticism, and regret the occasional symptoms of a sufficient want of truth and high principle in his literary hoaxes, especially in foisting fictitious matter into grave history, we are again compelled to acknowledge that it was because he had no adequate friend and counselor. He was like a young giant wandering solitarily over a wilderness without guide or guide-post; and if he did not go wrong in proportion to his unusual ardor, strength, and speed, it were a wonder. But from the moment that he sets foot in London, what is there in all biography so heart-breaking to contemplate? With a few borrowed guineas he sets out. Arrived in this great ocean of human life, where one living wave rushes past another as unrecognizant as the waves of the ordinary sea, his heart overflowing with domestic affections, he expends the few borrowed guineas in presents to his mother and sister, and sends them with flaming accounts of his prospect of honors for himself, and of wealth for them. If any one would make himself acquainted with the true pathetic, let him only read the few letters written home by Chatterton from Shoreditch and Holborn. He was to get four guineas a month by one magazine; was to write a history of England, and occasional essays for the daily papers. "What a glorious prospect!" He was acquainted with all the geniuses at the Chapter Coffee-house. "No author can be poor who understands the arts of booksellers; this knowledge I have pretty well dipped into!" Ah! poor Chatterton, one frog more gone to put himself under the protection of King Stork! Mr. Wilkes knew him by his writings; and he was going to visit him, and use his interest to secure the Trinity House for a Mrs. Ballance. He [Pg 295] wrote to all his young men acquaintances. They were to send him up compositions, and he would have them inserted in all sorts of periodicals. Songs he was to write for a doctor in music; and such was the good fortune pouring in, that he could not help exclaiming, "*Bravo, my boys! up we go!*" One person would give him a recommendation as traveling companion to the young Duke of Northumberland, only he spoke nothing but English; another to Sir George Colebrook, an East India director, for a place of no despicable description, only he would not go to sea. He was about to wait on the Duke of Bedford, and had had a most polite interview with Beckford, the lord-mayor. In short, all, according to his poetic fancy, was going on most mountingly. "If," wrote he to his sister, "money flowed as fast upon me as honors, I would give you a portion of £5000."

But what was the stern reality? Amid all the flush of imaginary honors and success, or what he would have his family to think such, to tranquilize their minds, he was, in truth, almost from the first, in a state of starvation. His journey, and the presents so generously but so injudiciously purchased for his mother and sister—the little fund of borrowed guineas was gone. Of friends he does not appear to have had one in this huge human wilderness. Besides the booksellers for whom he did slave-work, not a single influential mortal seems to have put out a single finger of fellowship toward him. So far as the men of literary fame were concerned, it was one wide, dead, and desert silence. From the wretched region of Shoreditch, he flitted to the good-natured dress-maker's of Brook-street, Holborn. But starvation pursued him, and stared him every day more fearfully in the face. He was, with all his glorious talents and his indomitable pride, utterly alone in the world. Walpole, who had given him advice "as kindly as if he had been his guardian," was in great bodily comfort, penning smart letters, and compiling a "Catalogue of Royal and Noble [Pg 296] Authors" at Strawberry Hill, while the noblest genius living was stalking on sternly through the streets of pitiless London to famine and despair. Sam Johnson, all *his* struggles now over, and at the annual price of £300 become, according to his own definition of Pensioner in his Dictionary, "A slave of state, hired by a stipend to obey his master," was comfortably lolling on the soft sofas of Mrs. Thrale, or acting the lion in the Literary Club, or in the saloon of some wealthy noble. Goldsmith was hastening to his end at fifty-three, and Chatterton to his at seventeen!

Of all the fine flourishes about the booksellers, whose arts he flattered himself that he understood, the following extract from his pocket-book, found after his death, will show the wretched result:

"Received	to May 23,	for Middlesex	£1 11 6
"	"	of B	1 2 3
"	"	of Fell, for the Consuliad	0 10 6
"	"	of Mr. Hamilton, for Candidus and Foreign Journal	0 2 0
"	"	of Mr. Fell	0 10 6
"	"	of Middlesex Journal	0 8 6

"	"	of Mr. Hamilton, for 16 songs	0 10 6
			£4 15 9

"In another part of this little book," says his biographer, "shortly before his death he had inserted a memorandum, intimating that the sum of eleven pounds was due to him from the London publishers. It was a cruel fate to be compelled to turn literary drudge, with four-and-twenty shillings a month for wages, and more cruel still to be doomed to suffer all the pains of hunger because those wages were not paid!"

Such was the life of Chatterton. His fate is too well known; and so little sensation did the awful death of this

"Marvelous boy, who perished in his pride,"

occasion, that it was long before his friends heard any thing of him. He was buried without ceremony, *among paupers in Shoe Lane*; his identity could with difficulty be established when the fact was known. [Pg 297]

In all the annals of literature there is nothing resembling the history of this boy-poet; he stands alone. Never did any other youth of the same years, even under the most favorable circumstances, produce works of the same high order; and never was child of genius treated by his country with such unfeeling contempt, with such an iron and unrelenting harshness of neglect. The fate of Francis Hilary Gilbert, a French writer, has been compared to that of Chatterton; but, besides that Gilbert was a man of forty-three, and had no claims to the genius of Chatterton, being a writer on veterinary medicine and rural economy, he destroyed himself because the government, which had sent him to Spain, neglected to send him his remittances, not from neglect of a whole nation. Except in the mere facts of destitution and suicide, there is little resemblance in the characters, claims, or fates of the two men. Chatterton's death has furnished a tragedy to the French stage from the pen of Alfred de Vigny.

The haunts of Chatterton lie within a narrow space. He was not one of those whom fate or fortune allows to traverse many lands; Bristol and London were his only places of residence. In London, little can now be known of his haunts: that he frequented Vauxhall and Marylebone Gardens; resorted to the Chapter Coffee-house; that he lived nine weeks at Mr. Walmsley's, a plasterer, in Shoreditch; and then removed to Mrs. Angel's, dress-maker, No. 4 Brook-street, Holborn, comprises nearly the totality of his homes and haunts in London. Where Mr. Walmsley's house was can not now be ascertained; the Chapter Coffee-house still retains its old situation, but has long ceased to be the resort "of all the literary characters" of London; Vauxhall is in its deserted old age, and Marylebone Gardens are, like many other gardens of Chatterton's time, now overrun, not with weeds, but houses. No. 4 Brook-street, Holborn, would be an interesting number if it remained; but, as if every thing connected with the history of this ill-fated youth, except his fame, should be condemned to the most singular fatality, there is no No. 4; it is swallowed up by an enormous furniture warehouse, Steffenoni's, fronting into Holborn, and occupying what used to be numbers one, two, three, and four of Brook-street. Thus the whole of the interior of these houses has been cleared away, and they have been converted into one long show-shop below, and as long manufacturing shops above. In this form they have been for the last eighteen years; and previous to that time, I am told, were occupied by an equally extensive ironmongery concern. Thus all memory of the particular spot which was the room of Chatterton, and where he committed the suicide, is rooted out. What is still more strange, the very same fate has attended his place of sepulture. He was buried among the paupers in Shoe Lane; so little was known or cared about him and his fate, that it was some time, as stated, before his friends learned the sad story; in the mean time, the exact site of his grave was wellnigh become unknown. It appears, however, from inquiries which I have made, that the spot was recognized; and when the public became at length aware of the genius that had been suffered to perish in despair, a headstone was erected by subscription among some admirers of his productions. With the rapid revolutions of property which now take place, especially in the metropolis and other large cities; with new plans and improvements, which in their progress seem to spare nothing of the past, however sacred, we have already seen, in the course of these volumes, how many traces of the resorts and dwellings of our poets have vanished from among us. The very resting-place of Chatterton could not escape the ungenial character of his fate. London, which seemed to refuse to know him when alive, refused a quiet repose to his ashes. To lie among the paupers of Shoe Lane was, one would have thought, a sufficiently abject lot for so proud and soaring a nature; but fortune had still another spite in reserve for his remains! The burial-ground in Shoe Lane, one of those inclosures of the dead which a dignitary of the Church has asserted to be guarded and guarantied against all violence and change by the ceremony of consecration, was sold to form Farringdon market; and tombs and memorials of the deceased disappeared to make way for the shambles and cabbage stalls of the living. Was there no lover of literature, no venerator of genius to take the alarm; to step in and see that the bones and the headstone of Chatterton were removed to the grave-yard which still is attached to St. Andrew's Church? It appears not. Neglected in death as in life, the headstone was pulled up, the bones of the poet were left to share the fate of those of his pauper comrades, and it is now most probable that they are scattered—Heaven knows where! for I am assured, on good authority, that houses are now built on the spot where this unfortunate youth lay. If houses are built, most likely cellars were dug to

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those houses; and then the bones of Chatterton—where are they? Echo may answer—where?

Let us now quit the desecrated scene of the poet's interment, and, returning to Bristol, seek that of his birth: we shall seek it equally in vain! The house of his birth, and the last narrow house of his remains, are alike swept away from the earth! Chatterton was born on Redcliffe Hill, in a back court behind the row of houses facing the northwest side of St. Mary's churchyard; the row of houses and its back courts have all been pulled down and rebuilt. The house in which Chatterton was born was behind a shop nearly opposite the northwest corner of the church; and the monument to the young poet, lately erected by subscription, has been very appropriately placed in a line between this house and the north porch of the church in which he professed to have [Pg 300] found the Rowley MSS. This monument is a Gothic erection, much resembling an ancient cross, and on the top stands Chatterton, in the dress of Colston's school, and with an unfolded roll of parchment in his hand. This monument was erected under the care and from the design of John Britton, the antiquary, who, so much to his honor, long zealously exerted himself to rescue Chatterton's memory from apparent neglect in his native city. The man who can gaze on this monument; can contemplate the boyish figure and face of the juvenile poet; can glance from this quarter, where he was born in poverty, to that old porch, where he planned the scheme of his fame; and can call to mind what he was and what he did without the profoundest sensations of wonder and regret, may safely pass through life without fear of an astonishment. It is, in my opinion, one of the most affecting objects in Great Britain. How much, then, is that feeling of sympathy and regret augmented when you approach, and, upon the monument, read the very words written by the inspired boy himself for his supposed monument, and inserted in his "will."

"To the Memory of
"THOMAS CHATTERTON.

> "Reader, judge not: if thou art a Christian—believe that he shall be judged by a Superior Power; to that Power alone is he now answerable."

One of the spots in Bristol which we should visit with the intensest interest connected with the history of Chatterton, would be the office of Lambert the attorney, where he wrote the finest of his poems attributed to Rowley. The first office of this person was on St. John's Steps, but he left this during Chatterton's abode with him; and, ceasing to be an office, it does not now seem to be exactly known in which house it was. From this place he removed to the house now occupied by [Pg 301] Mr. Short, silversmith, in Cornhill, opposite to the Exchange; and here Chatterton probably wrote the greater portion of Rowley's poems. Another favorite haunt of Chatterton's, Redcliffe Meadow, is now no longer a meadow, but is built all over; so rapidly has about seventy years eradicated the footsteps of the poet in his native place. There are two objects, however, which, from their public character, remain, and are likely to remain, unchanged, and around which the recollections of Chatterton and his singular history will forever vividly cling: these are, Colston's School, and the Church of St. Mary's.

The school in Pyle-street, where he was sent at five years of age, and which his father had taught, I believe no longer exists. The school on St. Augustine's Back exists, and is likely to exist. It is one of those endowments founded by the great merchants of England, which, if they had been preserved from the harpy and perverting fingers of trustees, would now suffice to educate the whole nation. This school, founded at a comparatively recent date, and in the midst of an active city like Bristol, seems to be well administered. There you find an ample school-room, dining-hall, chapel, and spacious bed-rooms, all kept in most clean and healthy order; a hundred boys, in their long, blue, full-skirted coats and scarlet stockings, exactly as they were in the days of Chatterton. You may look on them, and realize to yourself precisely how Chatterton and his schoolfellows looked when he was busy there devouring books of history, poetry, and antiquities, and planning the Burgum pedigree, and the like. Take any fair boy of a similar age; let him be one of the oldest and most attractive—for, says his biographer, "there was a stateliness and a manly bearing in Chatterton beyond what might have been expected from his years." "He had a proud air," says Mrs. Edkins, and, according to the general evidence, he was as remarkable for the prematurity of his person as he was for that of his intellect and imagination. His mien and [Pg 302] manner were exceedingly prepossessing; his eyes were gray, but piercingly brilliant; and when he was animated in conversation, or excited by any passing event, the fire flashed and rolled in the lower part of the orbs in a wonderful and almost fearful way. Mr. Calcott characterized Chatterton's eye "as a kind of hawk's eye, and thought we could see his soul through it." As with Byron, "one eye was more remarkable than the other; and its lightning-like flashes had something about them supernaturally grand." Take some fine, clever-looking lad, then, from the crowd, and you will find such, and you will feel the strangest astonishment in imagining such a boy appearing before the grave citizen Burgum with his pedigree, and within a few years afterward acting so daring and yet so glorious a part before the whole world.

To the admirers of genius, and the sympathizers with the strange fate of Chatterton, a visit to this school must always be a peculiar gratification; and under the improved management of improved times, and that of a zealous committee, and so excellent a master as the present one, Mr. Wilson, that gratification will be perfect. All is so airy, fresh, and cheerful; there is such a spirit of order evinced even in the careful rolling up of their Sunday suits, with their broad, silver-plated belt clasps, each arranged in its proper place, on shelves in the clothes-room, under every boy's own number; and yet without that order degenerating into severity, but the contrary, that you can not help feeling the grand beneficence of those wealthy merchants who, like Edward Colston, make

their riches do their generous will forever; who become thereby the actual fathers of their native cities to all generations; who roll in every year of the world's progress some huge stone of anxiety from the hearts of poor widows; who clear the way before the unfriended, but active and worthy lad; who put forth their invisible hands from the heaven of their rest, and become the genuine [Pg 303] guardian angels of the orphan race forever and ever; raising from those who would otherwise have been outcasts and ignorant laborers, aspiring and useful men, tradesmen of substance, merchants the true enrichers of their country, and fathers of happy families. How glorious is such a lot! how noble is such an appropriation of wealth! how enviable is such a fame! And among such men there were few more truly admirable than Edward Colston. He was worthy to have been lifted by Chatterton to the side of the magnificent Canynge, and one can not help wondering that he says so little about this great benefactor of his city.

Edward Colston was not merely the founder of this school for the clothing, maintaining, and apprenticing of one hundred boys, at a charge of about £40,000, but he also founded another school in Temple-street, to clothe and maintain forty boys, at a cost of £3000; and he left £8500 for an alms-house for twelve men and twelve women, with 6*s.* per week to the chief brother, and 3*s.* per week to the rest, with coals, &c.; £600 for the maintaining of six sailors in the Merchants' Alms-house; £1500 to clothe, maintain, instruct, and apprentice six boys; £200 to the Mint Work-house; £500 to rebuild the Boys' Hospital; £200 to put out poor children; £1200 to be given, in £100 a year, for twelve years, to apprentice the boys with, £10 each for his school; £1230 to beautify different churches in the city; £2500 to St. Bartholomew's Hospital in London; and £2000 to Christ Church School in London; £500 to St. Thomas's Hospital; £500 to Bethlehem Hospital; £200 to New Work-house in Bishopsgate Without; £300 to the Society for Propagating the Gospel; £900 for educating and clothing twelve poor boys and twelve girls, at £45 yearly, at Mortlake in Surrey; to build and endow an alms-house at Sheen in Surrey, sum not stated; £6000 to augment poor livings; besides various other sums for charitable purposes. All this property did this noble man thus bestow on the needs of his poorer brethren, without forgetting, as is often [Pg 304] the case on great occasions, those of his own blood relatives, to whom he bequeathed the princely sum of £100,000. But, like an able and wise merchant, he did not merely bequeath these munificent funds, but "he performed all these charitable works in his lifetime; invested revenues for their support in trustees' hands; lived to see the trusts justly executed, as they are at this day; and saw with his own eyes the good effects of all his establishments." Great, too, as were these bequests, they were not the result of hoarding during a long, penurious life, as is often the case, to leave a boastful name at his death; his whole life was like the latter end of it. True, he did not marry, and when urged to it, used to reply, with a sort of pleasantness, "Every helpless widow is my wife, and her distressed orphans my children." "He was a most successful merchant," says Barrett, in his History of Bristol, "and never insured a ship, and never lost one." He lived first in Small-street, Bristol, but having so much business in London, and being chosen to represent the city, he removed thither, and afterward lived, as he advanced in years, a very retired life, at Mortlake, in Surrey. His daily existence was one of the noblest acts of Christian benevolence; and his private donations were not less than his public. He sent at one time £3000 to relieve and free debtors in Ludgate, by a private hand; freed yearly those confined for small debts in Whitechapel Prison and the Marshalsea; sent £1000 to relieve distress in Whitechapel; twice a week distributed beef and broth to all the poor around him; and were any sailor suffering or cast away in his employ, his family afterward found a sure asylum in him.

Why did not Chatterton, who, by the splendid provision of this man, received his education and advance into life, resound the praises of Edward Colston as loudly as he did those of William Canynge? There is no doubt that it was because time had not sufficiently clothed with its poetic [Pg 305] hues the latter merchant as it had the former. Canynge, too, as the builder of Redcliffe Church, was to him an object of profound admiration. This church is the most lively monument of the memory of Chatterton. His mother is said to have lived on Redcliffe Hill, nearly opposite to the upper gate of this church, at the corner of Colston's parade; this must have been when he was apprentice at Lambert's, and also probably before, while he was at Colston's school. The houses standing there now, however, are too large and good for a woman in her circumstances to have occupied; and it is therefore probable that *this* abode of his, too, must have been pulled down. We turn, then, to the church itself, as the sole building of his resort, next to Colston's school, which remains as he used to see it. A noble and spacious church it is, as we have stated, of the lightest and most beautiful architecture. The graceful, lofty columns and pointed arches of its aisles; the richly-groined roof; and the fine extent of the view from east to west, being no less than 197 feet, and the height of the middle cross aisle, 54 feet, with a proportionate breadth from north to south, fills you, on entering, with a feeling of the highest admiration and pleasure. What does not a little surprise you is to find in the church, where the great painted altar-piece used to hang, now as large a painting of the Ascension, with two side pieces, one representing the stone being rolled away from the sepulcher of our Savior, and the other the three Maries come to visit the empty tomb; and those by no other artist than—Hogarth! The curiosity of such a fact makes these paintings a matter of intense interest; and if we can not place them on a par with such things from the hands of the old masters, we must allow that they are full of talent, and wonderful for a man whose ordinary walk was extremely different.

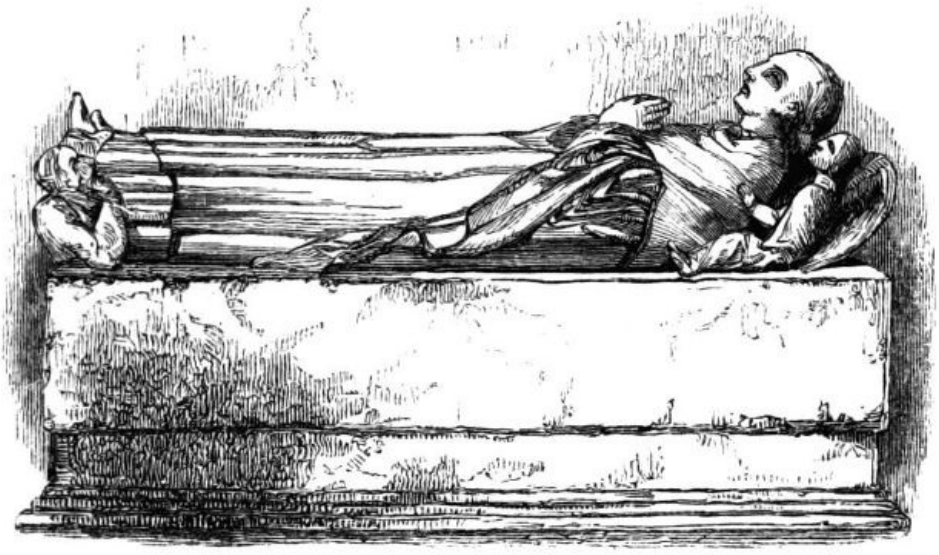
Another object of interest is the tomb of Admiral Penn, the father of the founder of Pennsylvania, which is in the pavement of the south aisle, with this inscription: "Here lieth the body of Sir William Penn, who departed this life the 16th of September, 1674. Dum clavum teneam." On a [Pg 306] pillar near hang two or three decayed banners, a black cuirass and helmet, gantlets and swords, with his escutcheon and motto. Not being aware that Admiral Penn lay buried here, I can not describe the singular feeling which the sight of these remnants of aristocratic pageantry,

suspended above the tomb of the father of the great Quaker of Pennsylvania, gave me; suspended, too, in one of the proudest temples of that proud national church, the downfall of which this very man predicted on his death-bed: "Son William, if you and your friends continue faithful to that which has been made known to you, you will make an end of priests and priestcraft to the end of the world."

In the south transept stand conspicuously the tomb and effigies of William Canygne. These are striking objects in connection with the history of Chatterton. Here you behold the very forms which, from the early dawn of his life, filled the mind of the poet-child with the deepest sense of admiration. It was here, before these recumbent figures, that he used to be found sitting in profound thought; and when the reading of the wealth, the princely merchant state, and the munificent deeds of William Canynge had arrayed the inanimate stone with the hues of long-past life and the halo of solemn and beautiful deeds—the raising of this fair church, the most beautiful of all—then was it these which became the germ of the great Rowley fable; Canynge, the ancient and magnificent, now the merchant, and now the shaven priest and dean, arose once more at the touch of the inspired boy, and played his part, not as a citizen of Bristol, but as a citizen of the world. These effigies are singular in themselves. First, you have William Canynge and Joan his wife, lying on an altar-tomb in full proportion, under a canopy handsomely carved in freestone; then, not far off, you have Canynge again carved in alabaster, lying along in his priest's robes as Dean of Westbury, with hands lifted up as in devotion, and a large book under his head. It is rare, and almost unique, to have two monuments of the same person side by side, and that in two different characters, yet still little would these have attracted notice over a thousand other goodly tombs in our churches, had they not chanced to attract the attention of this little charity-boy, the descendant of the sextons of the church. [Pg 307]

Last, but far most striking of all the haunts of Chatterton, is that muniment room over the north porch. When you ascend the dark and winding stair, and enter this dim and stony hexagon apartment, and see still standing on its floor the seven very chests of the Rowley story, old and moldering, their lids—some of them circular, as if hewn out of solid trees—broken off, and all dirty and worm-eaten, the reality of the strange facts connected with them comes thrillingly upon you. You seem then and there only first and fully to feel how actual and how sad is the story of Thomas Chatterton: that here, indeed, began his wondrous scheme of fame; hence it spread and stood forth as a brilliant mystery for a moment; hence the proud boy gloried in its sudden blaze as in that of a recognizing glory from heaven; and then how

"Black despair,
The shadow of a starless night, was thrown
Over the earth, in which he moved alone."—*Shelley.*



GRAY, AT STOKE-POGIS [Pg 308]

The life of Thomas Gray, the author of the Elegy in a Country Churchyard, was passed in London, in Cambridge, and at Stoke-Pogis, in Buckinghamshire, except what he spent in traveling, which was considerable. Gray was born in Cornhill, November 26, 1716. His parents were reputable citizens of London; his grandfather was a considerable merchant, but his father, Mr. Philip Gray, Mallet says, though he also followed business, was of an indolent and reserved temper, and therefore rather diminished than increased his paternal fortune. He had many children, of whom Thomas was the fifth; all except him died in their infancy. The business of Gray's father was, like that of Milton's, a money-scrivener. But, unlike Milton's father, Philip Gray was, according to Mallet, not only reserved and indolent, but of a morose, unsocial, and obstinate temper. His indolence led him to neglect the business of his profession; his obstinacy, to build a country house at Wanstead, without acquainting his wife or son of the design, to which he knew they

would be very averse, till it was executed. This turned out a loss of two thousand pounds to the family; and the character of the father, which is supposed to have been stamped by bodily ailments, was the occasion of Gray, though an only child, being left with a very narrow patrimony. His mother, to provide for her family, entered into business, independent of her husband, with her sister, Miss Antrobus. The two ladies kept a kind of India warehouse in Cornhill. As clever ladies in business generally do, they succeeded so well, that, on Mr. Gray's death, which happened about the time of the young poet's return from his first trip to the Continent, they retired, and went to join housekeeping with their third sister, Mrs. Rogers, the [Pg 309] widow of a gentleman of that name, who had formerly been in the law, and had retired to Burnham, in Buckinghamshire, where we find Gray, on one occasion, describing, in a letter to Walpole, the uncle and the place thus: "The description of a road that your coach-wheels have so often honored, it is needless to give to you; suffice it that I arrived safe at my uncle's, who is a great hunter in imagination. His dogs take up every chair in the house, so I am forced to stand up at this present writing; and though the gout forbids his galloping after them in the field, yet he continues still to regale his ears and nose with their comfortable noise and stink. He holds me mighty cheap, I perceive, for walking when I should ride, and reading when I should hunt. My comfort amid all this is, that I have, at the distance of half a mile, through a green lane, a forest—the vulgar call it a common—all my own, at least as good as so, for I spy no human thing in it but myself. It is a little chaos of mountains and precipices; mountains, it is true, that do not ascend much above the clouds, nor are the declivities quite so amazing as Dover Cliff; but just such hills as people who love their necks as well as I do may venture to climb, and crags that give the eye as much pleasure as if they were more dangerous. Both vale and hill are covered with most venerable beeches, and other very reverend vegetables, that, like most other ancient people, are always dreaming out their old stories to the winds:

> 'And as they bow, their hoary tops relate,
> In murmuring sounds, the dark decrees of Fate;
> While visions, as poetic eyes avow,
> Cling to each leaf and swarm on every bough.'

At the foot of one of these squats me I, *il penseroso*, and there grow to the trunk for a whole morning. The timorous hare and sportive squirrel gambol around me like Adam in Paradise, before he had Eve; but I think he did not use to read Virgil, as I commonly do there. In this situation I often converse with my Horace—aloud, too; that is, talk to you; but I do not remember [Pg 310] that I ever heard you answer me. I beg pardon for taking all the conversation to myself, but it is entirely your own fault. We have old Mr. Southern at a gentleman's house a little way off, who often comes to see us. He is now seventy-seven years old, and has almost wholly lost his memory, but is as agreeable as an old man can be—at least I persuade myself so when I look at him, and think of Isabella and Oronoko."

By this agreeable extract, however, we have outstepped the progress of Gray's life. He was educated at Eton, under the care of Mr. Antrobus, his mother's brother, then assistant to Dr. George, and, when he left school in 1734, entered a pensioner at Peterhouse, in Cambridge. It was intended that he should follow the profession of the law, for which his uncle's practice and connections seemed to open a brilliant way. He therefore lived on at college so long as his attendance on the lectures was required, but took no degree. His uncle's death put an end to his prospects of that kind, and he abandoned the idea of the legal profession. When he had been at Cambridge about five years, he agreed to make a tour on the Continent with Horace Walpole, and they proceeded together through France to Italy, where they quarreled and parted, taking different ways. On his return he again went to Cambridge, took the degree of Bachelor of Civil Law, and continued there, without liking the place or its inhabitants, as we are informed by both Johnson and Mallet, or professing to like them. His pleasure lay in wading through huge libraries, out of which, on a vast number of subjects, he extracted a vast amount of information. Such were Gray's assiduous study and research, that the following character of him by a cotemporary, the Rev. Mr. Temple, rector of St. Gluvias, in Cornwall, written a few months after his death, can scarcely be termed overdrawn. "Perhaps he was the most learned man in Europe. He was equally acquainted with the elegant and profound parts of science, and that not superficially, but [Pg 311] thoroughly. He knew every branch of history, both natural and civil; had read all the original histories of England, France, and Italy; and was a great antiquarian. Criticism, metaphysics, morals, politics, made a principal part of his plan of study. Voyages and travels of all sorts were his favorite amusement; and he had a fine taste in painting, prints, architecture, and gardening."

He was, in fact, one of the first to open up the Northern antiquities and legendary literature, and most probably was the cause of Mallet turning to this subject; he was also one of the very first, if not the very first person, who began to trace out and distinguish the different orders of Anglo-Gothic architecture, by attention to the date of its creation. These were the studies, enough to occupy a life, which kept him close at Cambridge in his room for years, and once induced him to take lodgings, for about three years, near the British Museum, where he diligently copied from the Harleian and other manuscripts. The death of his most intimate friend, Mr. West, the son of the Chancellor of Ireland, soon after his return from the Continent, tended only the more to fix this habit of retirement and study. He lived on at Peterhouse till 1756, when a curious incident drove him forth. Two or three young men of fortune, who lived in the same staircase, had for some time intentionally disturbed him with their riots, and carried their ill behavior so far as frequently to awaken him at midnight. After having borne their insults longer than might reasonably have been expected, even from a man of less warmth of temper, Mr. Gray complained to the governing part of the society, and not thinking his remonstrance sufficiently attended to,

quitted the college. He took up his residence at Pembroke Hall, where he continued to reside till the day of his death, which occurred here in the fifty-fifth year of his age, July 30, 1771, being seized with gout in the stomach while at dinner in the college hall.

He had for the last three years been appointed Professor of History in this college, but such was [Pg 312] his indolence, fastidiousness, or aversion to so public a duty, that, to use the words of Johnson, "he was always designing lectures, but never reading them; uneasy at his neglect of duty, and appeasing his uneasiness with designs of reformation, and with a resolution which he believed himself to have made, of resigning the office if he found himself unable to discharge it." He continued thus to vacillate, and held on till his death. A circumstance which attached him more to Pembroke College was, that Mason was elected a fellow of it in 1747; they grew warm friends, and Mason afterward became his biographer.

Such was the general outline of Gray's life. In reading it, we find the most interesting features those which he describes so well in his letters, his travels, and his occasional retreats at Stoke-Pogis. He made a tour into the north of England, to the lakes, and into Scotland; at another time through Worcester, Hereford, Monmouth, and parts of the neighboring counties; and all his details of such rambles, as they are given with an evident zest, are full of life and interest. In his prose, Gray gets out of the stiff and stilted formality of much of his poetry. He forgets his learning and his classical notions, and is at once easy, amiable, witty, and jocose. There was a degree of effeminacy about him, which you see in the portraits of him, which you do not the less detect in his poetry; but his prose gives you a far more attractive idea of him, as he must be in the familiar circle of his friends. On turning to Gray's account of those places which I have visited in various parts of the kingdom, I have always found him seizing on their real features, and impressed with their true spirit. Of this genuine feeling of nature, his account of his visit to the Grande Chartreuse may be taken as a sufficient specimen:

"We took the longest road, which lies through Savoy, on purpose to see a famous monastery called the Grande Chartreuse, and had no reason to think our time lost. After traveling seven [Pg 313] days, very slow—for we did not change horses, it being impossible for a chaise to go fast in these roads—we arrived at a little village among the mountains of Savoy, called Echelles, from whence we proceeded on horses, who are used to the way, to the mountain of the Chartreuse. It is six miles to the top; the road runs winding up it, commonly not six feet broad; on the one hand is the rock, with woods of pine-trees hanging over head; on the other a monstrous precipice, almost perpendicular, at the bottom of which rolls a torrent that, sometimes tumbling among the fragments of stone that have fallen from on high, and sometimes precipitating itself down vast descents with a noise like thunder, which is made still greater by the echo from the mountains on each side, concurs to form one of the most solemn, the most romantic, and the most astonishing scenes I ever beheld. Add to this the strange views made by the crags and cliffs on the other hand; the cascades that in many places throw themselves from the very summit down into the vale and the river below, and many other places impossible to describe—you will conclude we had no occasion to repent of our pains. This place St. Bruno chose to retire to, and upon its very top founded the aforesaid convent, which is the superior of the whole order. When we came there, the two fathers who are commissioned to entertain strangers—for the rest must neither speak to one another nor to any one else—received us very kindly, and set before us a repast of dried fish, eggs, butter, and fruits, all excellent of their kind, and extremely neat. They pressed us to spend the night there, and to stay some days with them, but this we could not do; so they led us about their house, which is, you must think, like a little city; for there are a hundred fathers, besides three hundred servants, that make their clothes, grind their corn, press their wine, and do every thing among themselves. The whole is quite orderly and simple: nothing of finery; but the wonderful decency, and the strange situation, more than supply the place of it. In the evening [Pg 314] we descended by the same way, passing through many clouds that were then forming themselves on the mountain's side, and pursued our journey toward Chamberry."

It is, however, at Stoke-Pogis that we seek the most attractive vestiges of Gray. Here he used to spend his vacations, not only when a youth at Eton, but during the whole of his future life, while his mother and his aunts lived. Here it was that his Ode on a Distant Prospect of Eton College, his celebrated Elegy written in a Country Churchyard, and his Long Story, were not only written, but were mingled with the circumstances, and all the tenderest feelings of his own life.

His mother and aunts lived at an old-fashioned house in a very retired spot at Stoke, called West End. This house stood in a hollow, much screened by trees. A small stream ran through the garden, and it is said that Gray used to employ himself when here much in this garden, and that many of the trees still remaining are of his planting. On one side of the house extended an upland field, which was planted round so as to give a charming, retired walk; and at the summit of the field was raised an artificial mound, and upon it was built a sort of arcade or summer-house, which gave full prospect of Windsor and Eton. Here Gray used to delight to sit; here he was accustomed to read and write much; and it is just the place to inspire the Ode on Eton College, which lay in the midst of its fine landscape, beautifully in view. The old house inhabited by Gray and his mother has just been pulled down, and replaced by an Elizabethan mansion by the present proprietor, Mr. Penn, of Stoke Park, just by. The garden, of course, has shared in the change, and now stands gay with its fountain and its modern green-house, and, excepting for some fine trees, no longer reminds you of Gray. The woodland walk still remains round the adjoining field, and the summer-house on its summit, though now much cracked by time, and [Pg 315] only held together by iron cramps. The trees are now so lofty that they completely obstruct the view, and shut out both Eton and Windsor.

It was at this house, now destroyed, that the two ladies from the Park made their memorable

visit, which gave occasion to the Long Story. The facts were these: Gray had finished his Elegy, and had sent it in manuscript to Horace Walpole, by whom it was shown about with great applause. Among the rest of the fashionable world to whom it was thus communicated, Lady Cobham, who now lived at the mansion-house at Stoke-Pogis, had read and admired it. Wishing to make the acquaintance of the author, and hearing that he was so near her, her relatives, Miss Speed and Lady Schaub, then at her house, undertook to bring this about by making him the first visit. He happened to be from home when the ladies arrived at his aunt's solitary mansion; and when he returned, was surprised to find, written on one of his papers in the parlor where he usually read, the following note: "Lady Schaub's compliments to Mr. Gray. She is sorry not to have found him at home, to tell him that Lady Brown is very well." This necessarily obliged him to return the visit, and soon after induced him to compose a ludicrous account of this little adventure for the amusement of the ladies in question. This was a mere *jeu d'esprit*, and, extravagant as some parts of it are, is certainly very clever; Gray regarded it but as a thing for the occasion, and never included it in his published poems. But Mallet tells us that when it appeared, though only in manuscript, it was handed about, and the most various opinions pronounced on it. By some it was thought a master-piece of original humor; by others, a wild and fantastic farrago. It, in truth, much more resembles his prose, and proves that, if he had not always had the fear of the critics before his eyes, he would have written with far more freedom and life than he often did. We may take a few stanzas, as connected with our further subject:

[Pg 316]

"In Britain's isle, no matter where,
An ancient pile of building stands:
The Huntingdons and Hattons there
Employed the power of fairy hands
To raise the ceiling's fretted height,
Each panel in achievements clothing,
Rich windows that exclude the light,
And passages that lead to nothing.
Full oft within the spacious walls,
When he had fifty winters o'er him,
My grave lord-keeper led the brawls;
The seal and maces danced before him.
His bushy beard, and shoe-strings green,
His high-crowned hat, and satin doublet,
Moved the stout heart of England's queen,
Though Pope and Spaniard could not trouble it.

......*...*

A house there is, and that's enough,
From whence one fatal morning issues
A brace of warriors, not in buff,
But rustling in their silks and tissues.
The first came *cap-à-pie* from France,
Her conquering destiny fulfilling,
Whom meaner beauties eye askance,
And vainly ape her art of killing.
The other Amazon kind Heaven
Had armed with spirit, wit, and satire;
But Cobham had the polish given,
And tipped her arrows with good-nature.
To celebrate her eyes, her air—
Coarse panegyrics would but tease her;
Melissa is her *nom de guerre*;
Alas! who would not wish to please her!
With bonnet blue, and *capuchine*,
And aprons long, they hid their armor,
And veiled their weapons, bright and keen,
In pity to the country farmer.
Fame, in the shape of Mr. P—t—
By this time all the parish knew it—
Had told that thereabouts there lurked
A wicked imp they call a poet;
Who prowled the country far and near,
Bewitched the children of the peasants,

[Pg 317]

Dried up the cows, and lamed the deer,
And sucked the eggs, and killed the pheasants.
My lady heard their joint petition,
Swore by her coronet and ermine,
She'd issue out her high commission,
To rid the manor of such vermine.
The heroines undertook the task,
Through lanes unknown, o'er stiles they ventured,
Rapped at the door, nor stayed to ask,
But bounce into the parlor entered.

The trembling family they daunt,
  They flirt, they sing, they laugh, they tattle,
Rummage his mother, pinch his aunt,
  And up stairs in a whirlwind rattle," &c.

The ancient pile here mentioned was the Manor-house, Stoke Park, which was then in the possession of Viscountess Cobham. This place and the manor had been in some remarkable hands. The manor was so called from the Pogies, the ancient lords of that name. The heiress of this family, in the reign of Edward the Third, married Lord Molines, who shortly afterward procured a license from the king to convert the manor-house into a castle. From him it descended to the Lords Hungerford, and from them to the Hastings, earls of Huntingdon, and was afterward the residence of Lord-chancellor Hatton. Sir Christopher Hatton had won his promotion with Queen Elizabeth through his graceful person and fine dancing, and is very picturesquely described by Gray, with "his shoe-strings green, high-crowned hat, and satin doublet," leading off the brawls, a sort of figure-dance then in vogue, before the queen. Sir Edward Coke, having married an heiress of the Huntingdon family, became the next possessor; and here, in the year 1601, he was honored with a visit from Elizabeth, whom he entertained in a very sumptuous style. After the death of the Viscountess Cobham, the estate was purchased by Mr. William Penn, chief proprietor of Pennsylvania, a descendant of the celebrated William Penn, the founder of that state.

This old manor-house has since been swept away, as Gray's residence is also, and a large modern mansion now occupies its place. This was built from a design by Wyatt, in 1789, and has since been altered and enlarged. It is built chiefly of brick, and covered with stucco, and consists of a large square center, with two wings. The north, or entrance front, is ornamented with a colonnade, consisting of ten Doric columns, and approached by a flight of steps leading to the Marble Hall. The south front, 196 feet long, is also adorned with a colonnade, consisting of twelve fluted columns of the old Doric order. This is surrounded by a projecting portico of four Ionic columns, sustaining an ornamental pediment; and again, on the top of the house, by a dome. [Pg 318]

Stoke Park, thus interesting both on account of these older associations, and of Penn and Gray, is about a couple of miles from Slough. The country is flat, but its monotony is broken up by the noble character and disposition of its woods. Near the house is a fine expanse of water, across which the eye falls on fine views, particularly to the south, of Windsor Castle, Cooper's Hill, and the Forest Woods. About three hundred yards from the north front of the house stands a column, sixty-eight feet high, bearing on the top a colossal statue of Sir Edward Coke, by Rosa. The woods of the park shut out the view of West End House, Gray's occasional residence, but the space is open from the mansion across the park, so as to take in the view both of the church and of a monument erected by the late Mr. Penn to Gray. Alighting from the carriage at a lodge, I entered the park just at the monument. This is composed of fine freestone, and consists of a large sarcophagus, supported on a square pedestal, with inscriptions on each side. Three of them are selected from the Ode to Eton College and the Elegy. They are:

"Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn,
  Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove;
Now drooping, woeful, wan, like one forlorn,
  Or crazed with care, or crossed in hopeless love. [Pg 319]

"One morn I missed him on the accustomed hill,
  Along the heath, and near his favorite tree;
Another came; nor yet beside the rill,
  Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he."

The second is from the Ode:

"Ye distant spires! ye antique towers!
  That crown the watery glade,
Where grateful science still adores
  Her Henry's holy shade;
And ye, that from the stately brow
Of Windsor's heights the expanse below
  Of grove, of lawn, of mead survey,
Whose turf, whose shade, whose flowers among
Wanders the hoary Thames along
  His silver winding way.

"Ah, happy hills! ah, pleasing shade!
  Ah, fields beloved in vain!
Where once my careless childhood strayed,
  A stranger yet to pain!
I feel the gales that from ye blow,
A momentary bliss bestow."

The third is again from the Elegy:

"Beneath those rugged elms, that yew tree's shade,

Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed."

The fourth bears this inscription:

"This Monument, in honor of
THOMAS GRAY,
Was erected A.D. 1799,
Among the scenery
Celebrated by that great Lyric and Elegiac Poet.
He died in 1771, [Pg 320]
And lies unnoted in the adjoining Church-yard,
Under the Tomb-stone on which he piously
And pathetically recorded the interment
Of his Aunt and lamented Mother."

This monument is inclosed in a neatly-kept garden-like inclosure, with a winding walk approaching from the shade of the neighboring trees. To the right, across the park, at some little distance, backed by fine trees, stands the rural little church and churchyard where Gray wrote his Elegy, and where he lies. As you walk on to this, the mansion closes the distant view between the woods with fine effect. The church has often been engraved, and is therefore tolerably familiar to the general reader. It consists of two barn-like structures, with tall roofs, set side by side, and the tower and finely-tapered spire rising above them at the northwest corner. The church is thickly hung with ivy, where

"The moping owl may to the moon complain
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient, solitary reign."

The structure is as simple and old-fashioned, both without and within, as any village church can well be. No village, however, is to be seen. Stoke consists chiefly of scattered houses, and this is now in the midst of the park. In the churchyard,

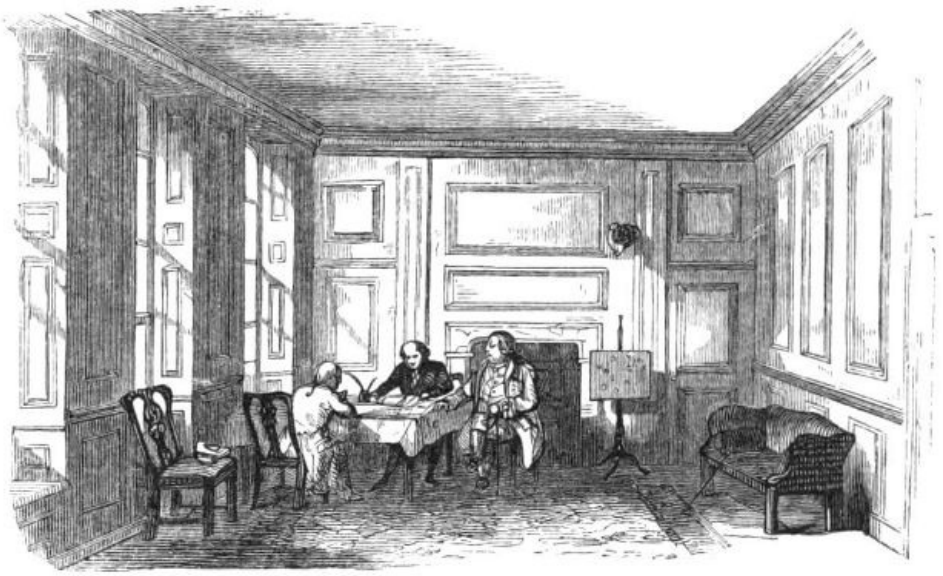
"Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade,
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep."

All this is quite literal; and the tomb of the poet himself, near the southeast window, completes the impression of the scene. It is a plain brick altar tomb, covered with a blue slate slab, and, besides his own ashes, contains those of his mother and aunt. On the slab are inscribed the following lines by Gray himself: "In the vault beneath are deposited, in hope of a joyful resurrection, the remains of *Mary Antrobus*. She died unmarried, Nov. 5, 1749, aged sixty-six. In [Pg 321] the same pious confidence, beside her friend and sister, here sleep the remains of *Dorothy Gray*, widow; the tender, careful mother of many children, ONE of whom alone had the misfortune to survive her. She died, March 11, 1753, aged sixty-seven."

No testimony of the interment of Gray in the same tomb was inscribed any where till Mr. Penn, in 1799, erected the monument already mentioned, and placed a small slab in the wall, under the window, opposite to the tomb itself, recording the fact of Gray's burial there. The whole scene is well worthy of a summer day's stroll, especially for such as, pent in the metropolis, know how to enjoy the quiet freshness of the country, and the associations of poetry and the past. The Great Western Rail-way now will set such down in about one hour at Slough, a pleasant walk from Stoke.

The late Mr. Penn, a gentleman of refined taste, and a great reverencer of the memory of Gray, possessed his autographs, which have been sold at great prices. It is to be regretted that his house, too, is now gone, but the church and the tomb will remain to future ages.

[Pg 322]



OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

Of all our poets, there is none who more completely verified the words of Crabbe than Oliver Goldsmith:

> "And never mortal left this world of sin
> More like the infant that he entered in."

He was a genuine Irishman, all heart and impulse. Imposed upon, ill treated, often made the butt of witlings, and compelled to labor and live on with that cancer of the heart, constant anxiety to procure the ordinary means of existence—none of these things could convert the milk of human kindness within him into gall, could teach him one lesson of malevolence, or dim the godlike sense of truth and humanity in his soul. Through a long experience of men and things, living by shifts, and writing for mere bread, he still remained the same simple, warm-hearted, generous, and unsophisticated creature that he was at the beginning. Improvident he was, out of the overflowing goodness of his nature; ready, at the first cry of distress, to give away that which he had bitterly toiled for, and which had been grudgingly paid; but he never made others the victims of his improvidence. He remained single, and made all that were in suffering his family, and [Pg 323] helped them even when he needed help himself. I know not whether more to admire the exquisite beauty of his poetry, the life and virtues of the Vicar of Wakefield, or the gloriously unworldly texture of his heart. Thousands of brilliant spirits have risen, glittered, and died in the field of our literature, having astonished and wounded their neighbors, as they have gone along in their pride, dreaming of an everlasting reputation, who are now justly forgotten, or are remembered without respect or emotion. They had intellect unallied to heart, and the cold meteor dazzled in its descent to earth, and left no blessing behind it. But the genial spirit of Goldsmith, all love and pity in itself, is, and will be forever, remembered with love and reverence—the last the very quality that he received least of in his lifetime. One of the most amiable and attractive points of view in which we contemplate Dr. Johnson, is that of his attachment to Goldsmith, and of his acknowledgment of his genius.

The life of Oliver Goldsmith has been well written by Mr. Prior. It is almost the only one that I have found, during the researches necessary for this work, which might have rendered unnecessary a visit to the actual "homes and haunts" of the poet under notice. It is a most rare circumstance that a biographer possesses the faculty of landscape-painting, and, besides detailing the facts of a person's life, can make you see the places where that life was passed. Mr. Prior possesses this faculty in a high degree. He was at the pains to visit Ireland, and see, with his own eyes, the scenes where Goldsmith was born, and where he lived; and the different sojourns of Goldsmith in that country are so accurately sketched, that they might have been transferred literally to these pages with advantage, had not I myself also gone over the same ground.

Goldsmith was of a very respectable family in Ireland, many of whom had been clergymen, residing principally in the counties of Roscommon, Westmeath, and Longford. Two of them were [Pg 324] deans of Elphin, another dean of Cloyne. Goldsmith used to boast that, by the female side, he was remotely descended from Oliver Cromwell, from whom his Christian name was derived. It seems, however, more likely, that he owed his name to his mother's father, the Rev. Oliver Jones, master of the diocesan school at Elphin. The poet's own father, Charles Goldsmith, was a poor curate at the time of the poet's birth. He had married Ann Jones at a time when he was without occupation, and therefore to the great dissatisfaction of her friends. Mrs. Goldsmith's uncle, however, was rector of Kilkenny West, near Lissoy, afterward to become the residence of Goldsmith himself, and to receive from him the immortal name and celebrity of Auburn. This uncle provided the young couple with a house, about six miles from Kilkenny West, at a small hamlet called Pallasmore, and with a salary for officiating at the church of the parish in which Pallas or

Pallasmore was situated, and also in that of his own, Kilkenny West. It seems Goldsmith's parents continued to reside twelve years at Pallas, and here the poet was born, on the 10th of November, 1728. He was one of eight children, five boys and three girls. He was the second son, his elder brother being Henry, who afterward became curate of Kilkenny West, and lived at Lissoy, where Oliver addressed to him his poem, "The Traveler." That Goldsmith was come of a good stock, we may infer by the character of simple piety which both his poetry and local tradition give to his father, the good parish priest—"passing rich, with forty pounds a year"—and not the less from the spirit and decision which his grandmother, Mrs. Jones, displayed in order to improve the scanty income of Oliver's parents. The husband of this lady, the Rev. Oliver Jones, was now dead; she was a widow; her daughter and son-in-law were living at Pallas, on the poor stipend derived from his curacy. Her husband had rented a considerable tract of land on very advantageous terms, [Pg 325] which now fell out of lease. She determined, if possible, to secure this for her son-in-law and daughter. She was refused; but, nothing daunted, she mounted behind her own son on a pillion, and set out on the long and arduous journey to Dublin, to try her personal influence with the landlord. Here the same refusal met her; but, as a last argument, she took out a hundred guineas, which she had provided herself with, and held them open in her hand while she pleaded. This had the effect that she procured *half* the land on the same easy terms as before, and she used jocularly to regret that she had not taken two hundred guineas, and thus got the whole. This noble act of maternal heroism is the more to be admired, as it cost her the life of her son, who received an injury of some kind on the journey.

Pallasmore, then, where Oliver Goldsmith was born, is a mere cluster of two or three cottages, called in Ireland farm-houses, but which, to an English eye, would present only the appearance of huts. The place lies quite out of the track of high-roads, about a mile and a half from Ballymahon in a direct line, but perhaps three, taking in all the windings of the ways to it. It is now the property of the Edgeworths. There is nothing remarkable in the aspect of the country. It is rather flat, naked of trees, and cultured by small tenants. It was with some difficulty that I got at it. My car-driver from Edgeworthstown knew nothing more of it than its name, and we had proceeded somewhat beyond the proper turning, as it lay quite off the highway, and were obliged to obtain permission to pass through the park of Newcastle, in order to reach it without making a great circuit. Having approached to within half a mile of it, a peasant pointed it out, as a group of white cottages standing in a clump of trees. The lanes were now become so narrow and stony that I was obliged to quit my car, as Mr. Prior describes himself to have done, and proceed across the fields on foot. I passed along the deep, stony, and narrow lanes, here and there a regular Irish cabin [Pg 326] sticking in the bank, the smoke coming out of the door, or issuing from the thatched roof about on a level with the fields above. A boy who was teaching school in one of these came out with his book in his hand, and directed me into a footpath across the fields. Here I advanced through the standing corn, and at length reached this out-of-the-world spot, dignified with the sounding title of Pallasmore. Here about three whitewashed cottages, of a superior description to the cabins I had passed in the narrow lanes, stood amid a number of ash-trees, looking out over an ordinary sort of country. A man, the inhabitant of one of them, advanced to show me the spot where the poet was born. He plunged into a potato-field, and at a few hundred yards from the cottages, in the bank of the next field, showed me a few stones, like the foundation of a wall, which have the reputation of being the sole remains of the house where the poet was born. Poets are, certainly, often born in odd places, but it certainly did strike me strangely, that the man who was destined to spend the greater portion of his life in the dense crowd of London, should have sprung out of this obscure and almost inaccessible location. There is nothing in the view around to suggest to the mind any the most faint dream of poetry. Oliver Goldsmith, however, was a mere, infant when first removed from this place. His father, two years after his birth, succeeded, on the death of his wife's uncle, to the rectory of Kilkenny West, and removed to Lissoy; but Oliver was accustomed to come thither, and made considerable sojourns with his brother Henry, who lived here when Oliver was grown up. The house is said to have been a good country house, looking toward Forney Church, at which Oliver's father and brother used to preach, and which still rises to view between it and some distant woods, one of the most pleasing objects of the scene.

Popular tradition ascribes the utter destruction of the house to the fairies, who, on its becoming [Pg 327] untenanted, used to take up their quarters there, and pursue their nocturnal sports in great content. But a tenant being found, and repairs of the house being commenced, a huge man in huge jack-boots used to come every night, and making a horse of it by bestriding the roof, would push his legs through the tiles, and, imitating galloping, shake the roof to pieces. It was therefore obliged to remain empty, till, falling into ruin, it was at length cleared clean away, with the exception of these few stones.

The very ordinary character of this scene, and of the country round, almost extinguished my desire for proceeding onward five miles further to Lissoy, the reputed Auburn, especially as the Edgeworths had told me it was not worth my while. I inquired, however, of a farmer that I met on my return to the car that waited for me on the road, what sort of a place Lissoy was. "Oh, a very beautiful place!" said he, "a very beautiful place! You must see it: that was where Oliver Goldsmith lived and died." "Lived, but not died," I replied: "he died in London." "Oh no! your honor," replied the man, "I assure you he died there, and lies buried at Kilkenny West."

The accuracy of the man's account was about equal in all its parts. Lissoy was just as truly beautiful as Goldsmith was buried there. But this is always the way with the Irish peasantry. Unlike the Scotch, whose local knowledge is generally very correct, they seem to look upon all remarkable men as they do on their saints, and insist on their remains being preserved among them. At Kilcolman Castle I was assured with equal positiveness that Spenser was buried just below the castle, and the spot pointed out to me. There was, however, sufficient charm in the

farmer's assurance that Lissoy was a very beautiful place, to turn the scale for going on. In such cases one is willing to be deceived, and follow the slightest word, though with an inward consciousness that we shall not find what we are promised. We drove on, therefore, six or seven miles further, over a very monotonous, naked country, only marked by a few banks for fences, and a few little smoky cabins with a poor population. It is a country that to Goldsmith's boyish fancy might be charming, but is certainly to an English eye by no means romantic. A part of an old round tower, however, stands near Auburn. There are the ruins of an old castle not far off, and old parks that *are* charming. One I passed, old, gray, craggy, and full of fern, but having not a single tree in it except old thorn-trees, large and of venerable age. There was a desolate antiquity about it that was attractive to the imagination. From the higher part of the road, too, approaching Lissoy, you see the Shannon hastening on toward the west. Presently, at a turn of the road, we passed the public house said to be that alluded to in The Deserted Village, and were in that "very beautiful place," Lissoy. It consists, in fact, of a few common cottages by the road side, on a flat, and by no means particularly interesting scene. A few hundred yards beyond these cottages stand, at some distance from the road, the ruins of the house where Goldsmith's father lived, and which continued in the family till 1802, when it was sold by Henry, the son of Henry, Oliver Goldsmith's brother, the nephew of the poet who had gone to America. This house was described in 1790 by the Rev. Mr. Hancock, of Athlone, who was intimately acquainted with the Goldsmith family, and, indeed, managed their property for them, as "a snug farm-house, in view of the high road, to which a straight avenue leads, with double rows of ash-trees, six miles northeast of this town—Athlone. The farm is still held under the Naper family, by a nephew of Goldsmith at present in America. In the front view of the house is the 'decent church' of Kilkenny West, that literally 'tops the neighboring hill;' and in a circuit of not more than half a mile diameter around the house, are 'the never-failing brook,' 'the busy mill,' 'the hawthorn bush with seats beneath the shade,' 'the brook with mantling cresses spread,' 'the straggling fence that skirts the way, with blossomed furze unprofitably gay,' 'the thorn that lifts its head on high, where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,' 'the house where nut-brown draughts inspired;' in short, every striking object of the picture. There are, besides, many ruined houses in the neighborhood, bespeaking a better state of population than at present."

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Such it was. Prior's description of it at his visit a few years ago would very nearly do for it now. "The house once occupied by the rector of Kilkenny West, pleasantly situated and of good dimensions, is now a ruin, verifying the truth of the pathetic lines of his son—

> 'Vain, transitory splendors! Could not all
> Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall!'

The front, including a wing, extends, as nearly as could be judged by passing it, sixty-eight feet by a depth of twenty-four; it consisted of two stories, with five windows in each. The roof has been off for a period of twenty years: the gable-ends remain, but the front and back walls of the upper story have crumbled away, and if the hand of the destroyer be not stayed, will soon wholly disappear. Two or three wretched cottages for laborers, surrounded by mud, adjoin it on the left. Behind the house is an orchard of some extent, and the remains of a garden, both utterly neglected. In fact, a pretty avenue of double rows of ash-trees, which formed the approach from the high road, about sixty yards distant, and at one time presented an object of interest to travelers, has, like every other trace of care or superintendence, disappeared—cut down by the ruthless hand of some destroyer. No picture of desolation can be more complete. As if an image of the impending ruin had been present, the poet has painted with fearful accuracy what his father's house was to be:

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> 'Near yonder copse, where once the garden smiled,
> And still where many a garden flower grows wild;
> There, where a few torn shrubs the place disclose,
> The village preacher's modest mansion rose.'"

Little can be added to that account. There still stands the long, white ruin of the house which sheltered Goldsmith as a boy, at the right-hand end one tall gable and chimney remaining aloft, the other having, since Mr. Prior's visit, fallen in. At the left hand, near the house, still remains *one* of the wretched cottages he mentions. I went into it. The floor of mud was worn into hollows, in which geese were sitting in little pools. There was a dresser on one side, with a few plates laid on it; a few chairs of a rudeness of construction such as no Englishman who has not visited an Irish cabin has any conception of; and the interior of the roof, for ceiling it had none, was varnished into a jetty brilliancy with the smoke.

Behind the ruins of the house there are still the orchard and wild remains of a garden, inclosed with a high, old stone wall. One could imagine this retreat a play-place for the embryo poet, whose charm would long linger in his memory; and, in truth, when the house was complete, with its avenue of ashes, along which you looked to the highway, and thence across a valley to the church of Kilkenny West, on a hill about a mile distant, the abode of Goldsmith's boyhood must have been a very pleasant one. It is now seen as stripped of all its former attractions, its life, its completeness as a house, its trees; and stands a white, bare, and solitary ruin.

Many people think, that as Goldsmith's father was the clergyman, this was the parsonage. It was not so. The parsonage was at Kilkenny West, where the present rector resides. This house was attached to the farm which the pastor had here, and was probably a much better and more commodious dwelling than the parsonage.

Returning to the village—if three or four poor cottages by the roadside can deserve that name—the public house is the object which attracts your attention. This is said to be the very house of which Goldsmith speaks in The Deserted Village. Goldsmith, however, tells you himself, in The Deserted Village, that the public house, among others, was destroyed: [Pg 331]

"Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where graybeard mirth and smiling toil retired," &c.

In fact, it was rebuilt by Mr. Hogan, a gentleman living near, who, being an ardent admirer of Goldsmith's poetry, did all that he could to restore to Lissoy the characteristics of Auburn. He rebuilt the public house on the spot where tradition placed the old one, with the traditionary thorn in front. He gave it the sign of "The Jolly Pigeons," he supplied it with new copies of "The Twelve Good Rules," and "The Royal Game of Goose;" he went even to the length of the ludicrous in his zeal for an accurate *fac-simile* of the genuine house, and

"Broken tea-cups, wisely kept for show,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row."

These, to perpetuate them, were fast imbedded in the mortar—but in vain; relic-hunters knocked them out, fictitious as they were, and carried them off as genuine. The very sign did not escape this relic mania—it is no longer to be seen; nor, I suppose, were a new one to be set up, would it long remain. The new "Twelve Good Rules," and new "Royal Game of Goose," have gone the same way; and there is no question that a brave trade in such things might be carried on with what Goldsmith calls "the large family of fools," if a supply were kept here. The very thorn before the door has been cut down piecemeal, and carried off to all quarters of the world. In 1830, Mr. Prior, when visiting the place, making inquiries for Goldsmith's biography, observed that "a tender shoot had again forced its way to the surface, which he, in emulation of so many other inconsiderate idlers, felt disposed to seize upon as a memorial of his visit; but which, if permitted [Pg 332] to remain, though this is unlikely, may renew the honors of its predecessor." Vain hope! there is not an atom of it left! He himself tells us, that "every traveler thither for forty years had carried away a portion of the tree, as a relic either of the poem or of his pilgrimage; when the branches had been destroyed, the trunk was attacked; and when this disappeared, even the roots were dug up, so that, in 1820, scarcely a vestige remained, either above or below ground, notwithstanding a resident gentleman had built a wall round it, to endeavor to prevent its extermination." There is now neither vestige of tree, root, nor wall. I suppose the rage of relicism has carried off the very stones that had stood on so hallowed a spot. There is still a slight mound left, or rather made, to mark the spot where the thorn stood.

The public house presents not a resemblance to Goldsmith's picture in his poem. The road from Ballymahon runs right toward this house. On arriving at it, the house stands on the further side of the road, facing you and the Ballymahon highway. Another road runs at right angles, that is, parallel with the house, so that it stands at what is usually called "where three roads meet." The road on your right hand runs down to the village; and some space is left in front of the house, the stone wall on your right, which fences in the field, being carried in a circular sweeping, instead of coming up to an abrupt corner. On the space left by this arrangement, on the side of the road, and directly opposite to the house, stood the tree. But how different is the house itself to that whose delightful picture your imagination has carried away from the page of the poet!

"Near yonder thorn, that lifts its head on high,
Where once the sign-post caught the passing eye,
Low lies that house where nut-brown draughts inspired,
Where graybeard mirth and smiling toil retired.
Where village statesmen talked with looks profound,
And news much older than their ale went round. [Pg 333]
Imagination fondly stoops to trace
The parlor splendors of that festive place;
The whitewashed wall, the nicely sanded floor,
The varnished clock that clicked behind the door;
The chest contrived a double debt to pay,
A bed by night, a chest of drawers by day.
The pictures, placed for ornament and use,
The twelve good rules, the royal game of goose.
The hearth, except when winter chilled the day,
With aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay,
While broken tea-cups, wisely kept for show,
Ranged o'er the chimney, glistened in a row.
  Vain, transitory splendor! could not all
Reprieve the tottering mansion from its fall!
Obscure it sinks, nor shall it more impart
An hour's importance to the poor man's heart;
Thither no more the peasant shall repair
To sweet oblivion of his daily care;
No more the farmer's news, the barber's tale,
No more the woodman's ballad shall prevail;
No more the smith his dusky brow shall clear,
Relax his ponderous strength, and lean to hear;

The host himself, no longer to be found,
Careful to see the mantling bliss go round;
Nor the coy maid, half willing to be pressed,
Shall kiss the cup to pass it to the rest."

These are all the attractive characteristics of a nice old village public house in England. Clean, quiet, sweet, and breathing of the olden time. They are characteristics professedly gathered by the poet in his rural rambles in England, where he had lived at least twenty years when he wrote the poem. In his preface he talks of these "country excursions for four or five years past," in which he had "taken all possible pains" to be correct in his details. Where, indeed, did any one see in an Irish country ale-house "the parlor splendors of a festive place;" "the whitewashed wall, the nicely sanded floor;" "the varnished clock that clicked behind the door;" "the hearth, except when winter chilled the day, with aspen boughs, and flowers, and fennel gay?" Where does he find the nut-brown ale? They all belong to the healthy, wholesome, well-to-do village ale-house of [Pg 334] rural and prosperous England. An Irish village ale-house! What is it? A poor and filthy cabin; the walls of rough stones, the roof often with nothing between it and the floor. The floor! nicely sanded?—a bed of mud, full of holes, in which geese, and ducks, and pigs, are dabbling and wallowing! If floored at all, paved with pebbles, which stand up in heaps by places, and by places are gone, leaving the aforesaid duck-pools and pig-troughs. A parcel of ragged people sprawling on the hearth around the peat fire, the coy maid, a bare-legged, shock-headed body, hard at work in tending the potato kettle, or contending with the ass, the cow, the pigs, that make part of the family. The parlor splendors? Half the house separated by a counter, behind which the landlord stands, amid a stock of candles and bread for sale, and dealing out, not the generous nut-brown ale, but the deadly liquid fire called whisky. Such are the almost universal attributes of a village ale-house in Ireland. Goldsmith knew better than to draw on his memory for them; he turned to the more poetical scene of the English village ale-house, which, clean as hands could make it, sweet, and all that he describes, had charmed him in his numerous rural excursions in this country.

The Three Jolly Pigeons is just a regular Irish ale-house, or, rather, whisky-shop. On going in, you look in vain for the picture Goldsmith has so beautifully drawn. The varnished clock clicking behind the door, the pictures placed for ornament and use, the twelve good rules, the royal game of goose, where are they? Not there; but in many an old-fashioned hamlet of England. The mud floor, the dirty walls, the smell of whisky, these are what meet you. You look for "the parlor splendors," and on your left hand there is, for a wonder, a separate room, but it is, as usual, filled with the candles, the herrings, the bread, of the Irish ale-house, and the whisky is doled out over the suspicious counter, instead of the nut-brown ale being brought in the generous foaming cup, [Pg 335] to the bright, clean fireside, by the neat and blooming maid.

In all Goldsmith's description of his Auburn, he has clearly blended the Doric charm of the English village and English scenery with the fond boyish memories of his actual native place. He has evidently intended to represent the scene as in England, or, at all events, to make his poem of general application, though he has drawn on his memory for features connected with his native place, and imparted soul and sentiment to it by indulging the feelings of old, affectionate regret. Thus the ale-house, the parsonage, the mill, the brook, the village green, the schoolmaster, the pious clergyman, were all portions of his native place, and actual inhabitants of it, yet mixed with touches from the later observations of his English life. The very circumstance of depopulation, which no doubt had occurred at Lissoy, and had sunk deep into his indignant heart, he tells us, in his dedication to Sir Joshua Reynolds, was going on in England, and that his description meant to apply to England. "But I know you will object—and, indeed, several of our best and wisest friends concur in the opinion—that the depopulation it deplores is nowhere to be seen, and the disorders it laments are only to be found in the poet's own imagination. To this I can scarcely make any other answer, than that I sincerely believe what I have written; that I have taken all possible pains in my country excursions, for these four or five years past, to be certain of what I allege, and that all my views and inquiries have led me to believe those miseries real which I here attempt to display."

The fact is only too much a fact. From Goldsmith's time to our own, the process of rural depopulation has been going on, by the absorption of smaller properties into larger ones. The rapid growth of capital in England has created a demand for landed investments, which has tempted the small proprietors to sell the old cottages and crofts. Whole hamlets have disappeared one after another, and ample parks have taken their place, and solitary halls have [Pg 336] sprung up where there used to be a long, populous village, buried in its gardens and orchards. As new men, merchants, lawyers, successful speculators, and cits grown wealthy, have carried out these changes, the old aristocracy have withdrawn further and further from the contact of these new erections, and, demolishing the little hamlets, have extended their immense park walls so as to create a vast solitude for themselves, where amid woods and wide fields have stood their proud seats. It were easy to cite almost innumerable instances of this, but in every neighborhood the old inhabitants are living chronicles of all these changes; we need only refer to the general and striking fact developed by our statistics, that about 1770, or in Goldsmith's time, the landed proprietors of England were about 200,000—they are now about 30,000! that is, proprietors of considerable estates; for the proprietors of small lots, on which houses and gardens, or town property stand, amount to about three millions. The proportion of *estates*, however, is as above, and it tells a fearful tale of the conglomeration of landed property during the last seventy years.

What is more strange than the doubt of the progress of rural depopulation in England is, that Mr. Prior, the biographer of Goldsmith, doubts even the justice of his strictures as applied to Ireland.

He admits that there appeared to have been some such circumstance at Lissoy in Goldsmith's youth as he has described in The Deserted Village; but he is inclined to palliate it till it becomes a mere trifle. "In November, 1738, a part of the town lands of Lissoy, and the adjoining lands of Cannorstown, to the number of 600 acres, were sold by Jeffery Frend, Esq., of the Middle Temple, to the Honorable Robert Naper, lieutenant-general of his majesty's forces in Ireland, for the sum of £3300, but the general died before the purchase was completed. Upon this property, named Ballybegg, lying behind the house of Mr. Goldsmith, about half a mile distant, Mr. William Naper, son of the general, several years afterward built the family residence, named Littleton. In [Pg 337] the preliminary arrangements, some circumstances, probably neither harsh nor unjust in themselves, connected with the removal of part of the tenantry, gave rise in the mind of Goldsmith, morbidly acute in his benevolent feelings, and particularly toward the poorer classes of society, to the idea of The Deserted Village."—Vol. i., p. 18. This, however, does not agree with Mr. Prior's own account of the appearance of the place on his own visit, given at page 257 of vol. ii. "There are, besides, many ruined houses in the neighborhood, bespeaking a better state of population than at present." It as little agrees with Goldsmith's assertion, that the very ale-house of the village was pulled down. Nay, at this very part of Mr. Prior's account (vol. ii., p. 259), he gives a more extended history of Mr. Naper or Napier's transactions; and while he endeavors to persuade us that the tradition of the neighborhood was not to be trusted, he shows that Mr. Naper had 1200 acres of land, a great part of which had been converted into demesne. The story of the neighborhood, as given by himself, is, that Lieutenant-general Robert Naper, returning from Vigo, in Spain, with a large fortune, purchased, as has been stated, the adjoining lands. In erecting a residence, and forming a demesne around it, the habitations of some, as is alleged, respectable tenants and several of the peasantry stood in the way, and being unwilling to remove for his convenience, were at length, after much resistance, all, except the Goldsmith family, ejected for non-payment of rent. Their houses were pulled down, and the park enlarged to a circumference of nine miles; but so great was the indignation of the people at the proceeding, that on the general's death, which occurred soon afterward, they assembled in a tumultuous manner, destroyed most of the property in and around it, and, among other things, plantations to the value of £5000.

What are the reasons assigned by the biographer for doubting the story? His own belief, that "the [Pg 338] wanton destruction of a thriving and pretty village, in a country where such are carefully encouraged by all proprietors of lands, is wholly improbable." He farther fancies that Goldsmith's morbid imagination "had converted a few mud cabins into a beautiful village, and, perhaps, their turbulent and vindictive occupants into injured, and innocent, and expatriated peasants." Lastly, and most unfortunately of all, he adds, "Proprietary rights can not always be exercised by landlords in Ireland, even in a reasonable manner, without extreme jealousy on the part of the people. Circumstances, therefore, which daily occur in England, and produce neither concern nor notice, excite in the former loud complaint, if not open hostility. Any thing resembling severity becomes speedily known and loudly censured; and such impressions, however untrue, taken up and acted upon by the imagination and eloquence of a poet, are dangerous assailants of reputation."

The revolting case of the expulsion of the tenants from the estate of the Gerrards, at Ballinasloe, in Ireland, occurring at the moment at which I write this, in which 270 poor people are turned out to the elements, their houses pulled to the ground, themselves chased from the roadside ditches, where they had sought a night's shelter from the piercing wind, and the fires which they had made to warm themselves extinguished—all this is a fearful answer to such writings, and too awful proof of the correctness of the poet's statements. So far from Irish landlords not destroying villages, so far from "any thing like severity" being speedily known and resisted, the inquiries caused by this one flagrant case have shown to the horrified public, that in no country in the world are the rights of the peasantry so totally disregarded; in no country has the outrage of The Deserted Village been so often enacted. The scene which Goldsmith so pathetically describes, of the poor villagers whose homes had been destroyed, whose native haunts had been made to cast [Pg 339] them forth, going on toward the shore seeking for an asylum beyond the ocean, was not a solitary scene. It has been reacted again and again. It has been repeated from that hour to this; and every year and almost every day sees sad thousands bidding adieu to their birth-places, and crowding on board the ships that carry them to a more hospitable country:

> "Even now, methinks, as pondering here I stand,
> I see the rural virtues leave the land.
> Down where yon anchoring vessel spreads the sail,
> That, idly waiting, flaps with every gale,
> Downward they move, a melancholy band,
> Pass from the shore, and darken all the strand.
> Contented toil, and hospitable care,
> And kind, connubial tenderness are there;
> And piety, with wishes placed above,
> And steady loyalty, and faithful love."

In five years, it is shown by official documents, that 72,000 persons have been thus cast out of their homes and expatriated, and that the process of this exterminating system has, within twenty years, made outcasts of no less than two millions and a half of peasantry!

Seeing this wholesale depopulation, which has not merely gone on formerly, but is going on at this hour, in the face of all enlightened and humane England, it is quite too late to call in question the truth of the poet's descriptions. We no longer wonder that, in opposition to popular opinion,

he stood boldly forward, at the moment that he issued his poem to the world, in assertion of the truth of his descriptions, and we deplore the fact that his noble sentiments have not sooner become national and availing.

Under all these circumstances, Auburn or Lissoy, which you will, will always be visited with enthusiasm by the genuine lovers of purest poetry and of kindly humanity. The visitor will not find all there that he naturally looks for. He will not find the country very beautiful, or the mill, the brook, the ale-house as rural and picturesque as he could wish; but he will find the very [Pg 340] ground on which Oliver Goldsmith ran in the happy days of his boyhood; the ruins of the house in which that model of a village preacher—simple, pious, and warm-hearted, justly, indeed, dear to all the country—lived, the father of the poet; the ruins of the house in which the poet himself spent a happy childhood, cherishing under such a parent one of the noblest spirits which ever glowed for truth and humanity; fearing no ridicule, contracting no worldliness, never abating, spite of harsh experience and repeated imposition, one throb of pity or of generous sympathy for the wretched. The ground where such a man was reared is indeed holy. Goldsmith himself, not less than his father and brother, was one of the most genuine Christian preachers that ever lived. The sermons of the father and the brother perished with their hearers, but those of the poet live forever in his writings. And how many of the personal characteristics of "the village preacher," which in his father he celebrates, lived in himself!

> "Unpracticed he to fawn or seek for power,
> By doctrines fashioned to the varying hour;
> For other aims his heart had learned to prize,
> More skilled to raise the wretched than to rise."

How often did he present this trait in his own life! How zealous he was to help any one that he could; how careless to help himself! Thus, when requested by the minister to say if he could be of any service to him, he said, "Yes, he had a brother, a worthy clergyman, whom he would gladly see promoted." At this time he was in great distress himself. At another time, Lord North sent to him a Dr. Scott, with a *carte blanche*, to induce him to write for the ministry; but Goldsmith was not to be bought. "I found him," said the doctor, "in a miserable set of chambers in the Temple; I told him my authority; I told him that I was empowered to pay most liberally for his exertions, and, would you believe it! he was so absurd as to say, '*I can earn as much as will supply my wants* [Pg 341] *without writing for any party; the assistance, therefore, you offer is unnecessary to me*;' and so I left him," added Dr. Scott, "in his garret."

How completely was this Dr. Primrose! How thoroughly was he the same man in every thing. When his aid was needed by his fellow-man,

> "Careless their merits or their faults to scan,
> His pity gave ere charity began."

It is because he embodied himself in all he wrote that his writings command such undecaying interest; for in impressing his own heart on his page, he impressed there nature itself in its most unselfish and generous character. Every circumstance, therefore, connected with "The Deserted Village" of such a man will always be deeply interesting to the visitor of the spot, and we must for that reason notice one or two facts of the kind before quitting Lissoy. Mr. Best, an Irish clergyman, met by Mr. Davis in his travels in the United States, said, "The name of the schoolmaster was Paddy Burns. I remember him well. He was, indeed, a man severe to view. A woman, called Walsey Cruse, kept the ale-house. I have often been in the house. The hawthorn bush was remarkably large, and stood opposite the house. I was once riding with Brady, titular Bishop of Ardagh, when he observed to me, 'Ma foi, Best, this huge, overgrown bush is mightily in the way; I will order it to be cut down!' 'What, sir,' said I, 'cut down Goldsmith's hawthorn bush, that supplies so beautiful an image in The Deserted Village!' 'Ma foi!' exclaimed the bishop, 'is that the hawthorn bush? Then ever let it be sacred from the edge of the ax, and evil to him that would cut from it a branch!'"

In other places the schoolmaster is called, not Paddy Burns, but Thomas Byrne, evidently the same person. He had been educated for school-teaching, but had gone into the army, and, serving in Spain during the reign of Queen Anne, became quarter-master of the regiment. On the [Pg 342] return of peace he took up his original calling. He is represented to be well qualified to teach; little more than writing, reading, and arithmetic were wanted, but he could translate extemporaneously Virgil's Eclogues into Irish verse, in considerable elegance. But his grand accomplishment was the narration of his adventures, which was commonly exercised in the ale-house; at the same time that, when not in a particular humor for teaching, he would edify his boys in the school with one of his stories. Among his most eager listeners was Oliver, who was so much excited by what he heard, that his friends used to ascribe his own love of rambling to this cause. The schoolmaster was, in fact, the very man to raise the imagination in the young poet. He was eccentric in his habits, of a romantic turn, wrote poetry, was well versed in the fairy superstitions of the country, and, what is not less common in Ireland, believed implicitly in their truth.

A poor woman, named Catharine Geraghty, was supposed to be

> "Yon widowed, solitary thing,
> That feebly bends beside the plashy spring:
> She, wretched matron, pressed in age for bread,
> To strip the brook with mantling cresses spread."

The brook and ditches near where her cabin stood still furnish cresses, and several of her descendants reside in the neighborhood. The school-house is still pointed out, but it is unfortunate for its identity that no school-house was built then, school being taught in the master's cottage. There is more evidence in nature of the poet's recalling the place of his boyhood as he wrote his poem. The waters and marshy lands, in more than one direction, gave him acquaintance with the singular bird which he has introduced with such effect as an image of desolation.

"Along thy glades, a solitary guest,
The hollow-sounding bittern guards its nest."

Little charm as Lissoy has at the present moment independent of association with Oliver Goldsmith, with him and genius it possesses one that grows upon you the more you trace the scenes made prominent in his poem, and we leave it with regret. [Pg 343]

There are various other places in the same part of Ireland which are connected with the early history of Goldsmith. At the school of Paddy Byrne he made little progress, as was to be expected, except in a growing attachment to the marvelous. He devoured not only the romantic stories of the schoolmaster, but of the peasantry. He listened enthusiastically to their ballads, their fairy tales and superstitions, of which they have in Ireland a plentiful stock. He got hold of, and read with equal avidity, what have been called the cottage classics of Ireland—those books which may be found in their cabins every where—History of Witches and Ghosts; the Devil and Dr. Faustus; Parismus and Parismenus; Montelea, knight of the Oracle; Seven Champions of Christendom; Mendoza's Art of Boxing; Ovid's Art of Love; Lives of celebrated Pirates; History of the Irish Rogues and Rapparees; of Moll Flanders; of Jack the Bachelor, a notorious smuggler; of Fair Rosamond and Jane Shore; of Donna Rosena; the Life and Adventures of James Freny, a famous Irish Robber, &c. A precious literature for a lad, it must be confessed. Luckily, if it excited his imagination, it failed in corrupting his heart; and, thanks to the spread of knowledge, a better class of books has now found its way even into Irish cabins, among which not the least general are Chambers's Journal and Tracts. To put Oliver under more suitable tuition, he was sent to the Rev. Mr. Griffin, of Elphin, master of the school once taught by his grandfather. Here he became an inmate of his uncle's house, Mr. John Goldsmith, of Ballyoughter, in the vicinity. Displaying now much talent, which was at once seen and cordially acknowledged by his uncle, he was destined for the University, and preparatory to that he was sent to a school of repute at Athlone. [Pg 344] At this school he continued two years, when he was removed to Edgeworthstown, under the care of the Rev. Patrick Hughes, where he continued till he went to the University.

That we may take a connected view of his homes and haunts in this part of the country, we must include at once his life hereabout before he went to the University, and his visits hither during an interval of two years, between his quitting the University and his quitting Ireland, to study physic in Edinburgh, and, in fact, never again to return to Ireland.

There are several facts connected with his school days at Edgeworthstown that are very interesting. He is said to have become acquainted, either here or at Ballyoughter, with Turlogh O'Carolan, the last of the ancient Irish bards. This popular musician and poet, whose songs have been translated into English, and published, maintained the style and life of the minstrel. He disdained to play for money, but went as an admired and honored guest from house to house among the most ancient and opulent families of Connaught. To complete his character as a harper, he was blind, and had been so from the age of eighteen. His songs, which are sung by the peasantry with enthusiasm, are numerous, and celebrate the persons and families of his patrons. If they do not, in the mind of an Englishman, appear to possess an originality equal to their fame in Ireland, it is to be remembered that they have there all the charm of association, their very titles being the names of lords and ladies of old families: O'Connor Faby; Dennis O'Connor; Planxty Stafford; Nelly Plunkett; Mrs. French; Anna M'Dermot Roe &c.

The influence which the other local poet, Laurence Whyte, had on the mind and genius of Goldsmith, is very striking. Whyte wrote, as part of a larger poem, The Parting Cup, or the Humors of Deoch an Doruis, in four cantos. It is a lively picture of a Westmeath farmer's life, [Pg 345] about the year 1710, and shows not only how its themes had sunk into the mind of Goldsmith as a boy when they reappeared in The Deserted Village, but also how old and how fixed a portion of Irish history are those miseries and outrages on the people which are at this hour the topic of public wonder in England. The exactions of the landlords; the casting forth from house and home the wretched tenantry; the stream of consequent emigration; and the curse of absenteeism. Whyte's poem is very clever, and deserves to be better known. Speaking of the better condition of the farmers in the seventeenth century, he proceeds:

"Thus farmers lived like gentlemen,
Ere lands were raised from five to ten;
Again from ten to three times five,
Then very few could hope to thrive;
But tugged against the rapid stream,
Which drove them back from whence they came:
At length 'twas canted to a pound,
What tenant then could keep his ground?
Not knowing which, to stand or fly,
When rent-rolls mounted zenith high,
They had their choice to run away,

Or labor for a groat a day.
Now beggared and of all bereft,
Are doomed to starve or live by theft.
Take to the mountain or the roads,
When banished from their old abodes.
Their native soil were forced to quit,
So Irish landlords thought it fit;
Who without ceremony or rout,
For their improvements turned them out.

......*...*

How many villages they razed,
How many parishes laid waste,
To fatten bullocks, sheep, and cows,
When scarce one parish has two plows.
Their flocks do range on every plain,
That once produced all kinds of grain.
Depopulating every village,
Where we had husbandry and tillage; [Pg 346]
Fat bacon, poultry, and good bread,
By which the poor were daily fed.

......*...*

Instead of living well and thriving,
There's nothing now but leading—*driving*;
The lands are all monopolized,
The tenants racked and sacrificed;
Whole colonies, to shun the fate
Of being oppressed at such a rate,
By tyrants who still raise their rent,
Sail to the Western Continent.
Rather than live at home like slaves,
They trust themselves to winds and waves."

If a poet at the present hour were describing the acts and deeds of the Gerrards, the Waterfords, and like exterminators, could he have done it more literally? Thus, independent of the other miseries and wrongs of Ireland, this system of turning out human creatures to make way for bullocks has been going on exactly for a hundred years; and the Irish aristocracy, having made themselves the scandal of the whole civilized world, still sleep in warm beds and dream that they are Christians! and England, the most powerful and humane nation on the earth, has overlooked the dreadful scene, having her eyes fixed, full of tears, on the far-off negro, the Esquimaux, and the South Sea Islander. Till this crying iniquity and disgrace be removed out of our borders, every Bible Society, and Missionary Society, and Society for Humanity to *Animals*, should stop its ordinary operations, and combine each and all into a great and omnipotent association to convert the Irish aristocracy to Christianity, and to teach to the oppressed and trodden-on people that there is really such a thing as "loving our neighbors as ourselves."

How unvarying are the features of the Irish gentry:

"Our squires of late through Europe roam;
Are too well bred to live at home:
Are not content with Dublin College,
But range abroad for greater knowledge; [Pg 347]
To strut in velvets and brocades
At balls, and plays, and masquerades.
To have their rent their chiefest care is,
In bills to London and to Paris.
Their education is so nice,
They know all chances on the dice;

......*...*

Those absentees we here describe
Are chiefly of our Irish tribe,
Who live in luxury and pleasure,
And throw away their time and treasure;
Cause poverty and devastation,
And sink the credit of the nation,"

Who has not seen their deserted homes, so picturesquely sketched here?

"Their mansions molder quite away,
And run to ruin and decay;
Left like a desert wild and waste,
Without the track of man or beast;

Where wild fowl may with safety rest,
At every gate may build a nest:
Where grass or weeds on pavements grow,
And every year is fit to mow.
No smoke from chimneys does ascend,
Nor entertainment for a friend;
Nor sign of drink, or smell of meat,
For human creatures there to eat."

To turn to a more agreeable circumstance. The chief incident in "She Stoops to Conquer" is said to have originated in an amusing adventure of Goldsmith's, on his last going from home to the school at Edgeworthstown, and is thus related by Prior: "Having set off on horseback, there being then, and indeed now, no regular wheeled conveyance from Ballymahon, he loitered on the road, amusing himself by viewing the neighboring gentlemen's seats. A friend had presented him with a guinea; and the desire, perhaps, of spending it—to a schoolboy—in a most independent manner at an inn, tended to slacken his diligence on the road. Night overtook him in the small town of [Pg 348] Ardagh, about half way on his journey. Inquiring for the best house in the place, meaning the best inn, he chanced to address, as is said, a person named Cornelius Kelly, who boasted of having taught fencing to the Marquis of Granby, and was then domesticated in the house of Mr. Featherstone, a gentleman of fortune in the town; he was known as a notorious wag, and, willing to play off a trick upon one whom he had no doubt discovered to be a swaggering schoolboy, directed him to the house of his patron.

"Suspecting no deception, Oliver proceeded as directed; gave authoritative orders about the care of his horse, and, being thence conceived by the servants to be an expected guest, was ushered into the presence of their master, who immediately discovered the mistake. Being, however, a man of humor, and willing to enjoy an evening's amusement with a boy under the influence of so unusual a blunder, he encouraged it, particularly when, by the communicative disposition of the guest, it was found he was the son of an old acquaintance on his way to school. Nothing occurred to undeceive the self-importance of the youth, fortified by the possession of a sum he did not often possess; wine was therefore ordered, in addition to a good supper, and the supposed landlord, his wife, and daughters, were invited to partake of it. On retiring for the night, a hot cake was ordered for breakfast the following morning; nor was it until preparing to quit the house next day that he discovered he had been entertained in a private family."

Ballymahon, the little foreign-looking town near his native place, figures conspicuously in Goldsmith's early life. After his father's death, which took place while he was at college, his mother removed thither, and thither during vacations Oliver betook himself. Again, when he quitted college, he spent two years among his relations, with no fixed aim; sometimes he was with his uncle Contarine in Roscommon; sometimes at Lissoy, where now his brother-in-law, Mr. Hodson, lived in the old house; at other times he was with his brother Henry, who, officiating as [Pg 349] curate, lived at Pallasmore in the house where Oliver was born, and, to eke out his small salary, kept a school, in which Oliver assisted him. No place was so dear to him, however, as Lissoy, where he entered into all the rural sports and occupations of his brother-in-law with fullest enjoyment. There is no doubt that, had he had sufficient means, he would have continued to live here a country life, and the world would most probably have lost a poet. As it is, he has made the life and characters of Lissoy familiar to all the world, in both The Deserted Village and The Vicar of Wakefield. No man drew more from real, and especially from his own past life, than Goldsmith. The last years he spent in the country he was a tutor in the family of a country gentleman in the county of Roscommon, of the name of Flinn; and the nature of his impressions regarding such a situation he is supposed to have recorded in the history of The Man in Black.

His mother's house at Ballymahon, where she lived as a widow about twenty years, is still pointed out to the curious; it forms one corner of the road to Edgeworthstown. Some shop accounts have been preserved, in which Oliver, under the familiar title of Master Noll, is found figuring as his mother's messenger for tea and sugar; it was only to the next door. Opposite to his mother's house stood George Conway's inn, where he used to spend many a gay and jovial evening, in the company of those who resorted thither, and often amused them with a story or a song. Here he was naturally a great authority in matters of learning. From scenes and characters occurring here, it is believed he drew the first idea of Tony Lumpkin; at all events, in such a circle he saw traits of human life and action that would be found as old gold at the necessary time. At Ballymulvey House, in the neighborhood, he spent many happy hours with his friend, and quondam college and school companion, Mr. Robert Bryanton, and also with him made excursions into the surrounding country, sometimes shooting, sometimes fishing in the Inny, [Pg 350] which runs through the town. In these rambles he made himself as familiar with nature and her wild children as he did with man in towns; he traced the haunts of the wild fowl, and hunted the otter in the waters that there communicate with the Shannon. There are many objects in the neighborhood of Ballymahon still proudly pointed out as belonging to the haunts of Goldsmith: the islets in the river; the ruins of a mill, in his time in full activity; the places on the river side where he used to sit and play on his flute; as well as the house of a Mr. Gannon, where, as he himself tells us in his Animated Nature, he first saw a seal, this gentleman having two for ten years in his house.

In this portion of his life there are many rich and amusing incidents, which it is to be regretted we can not here introduce, particularly that most amusing account of his visit to an old college friend, who had often pressed him to come and "command his stable and his purse," but who turned out as such friends often do. But we have over-stepped his sojourn at college, and must

turn back to it.

Trinity College, Dublin, is a noble structure; and, with its spacious courts and extensive gardens, more fittingly deserving the name of parks, one would think a place where the years of studentship might—especially in the heart of such a city—be very agreeably spent. But Goldsmith entered there under circumstances that were irksome to him, and, to add to the matter, he met with a brute in his tutor. The family income did not allow him to occupy a higher rank than that of a sizer, or poor scholar, and this was mortifying to his sensitive mind. The sizer wears a black gown of coarse stuff without sleeves, a plain black cloth cap without a tassel, and dines at the fellows' table after they have retired. It was at that period far worse; they wore red caps to distinguish them, and were compelled to perform derogatory offices: to sweep the courts in the [Pg 351] morning, carry up the dishes from the kitchen to the fellows' table, and wait in the hall till they had dined. No wonder that a mind like that of Goldsmith's writhed under the degradation! He has recorded his own feelings and opinions on this custom: "Sure pride itself has dictated to the fellows of our colleges the absurd fashion of being attended at meals, and on other public occasions, by those poor men who, willing to be scholars, come in upon some charitable foundation. It implies a contradiction for men to be at once learning the liberal arts, and, at the same time, treated as slaves; at once studying freedom and practicing servitude." A spirited fellow at length caused the abolition of the practice of the sizers acting as waiters, and that, too, on grand occasions before the public, by flinging the dish he was carrying on Trinity Sunday at the head of a citizen in the crowd, assembled to witness the scene, who made some jeering remarks on the office he had to perform.

His tutor, a great brute—let his name be known: it was Wilder—proceeded sometimes to actual corporeal castigation; and, with Oliver's natural tendency to poetry rather than to dry classical and mathematical studies, like many other poets, including Scott and Byron, he cut no great figure at college; and, like the latter, detested it. Among his cotemporaries at the college was Edmund Burke, but they appear to have known little of each other. To add to Goldsmith's uncomfortable position, there occurred a riot of the students, who, hearing that one of their body had been arrested in Fleet-street, rushed to the rescue, seized the bailiffs, dragged them to the college, and pumped them soundly in the old cistern. They next attempted to break open Newgate, and make a general jail delivery, but failed for want of cannon. In the subsequent inquiry Goldsmith came in, not for any severe punishment, but for a college censure. Feeling his self-respect deeply wounded by his brutal tutor entering his chambers on one occasion when he [Pg 352] had a party of merry comrades there, and in their presence inflicting personal chastisement upon him, he quitted college, selling his books, and set off to Cork to embark for some foreign country; but his money failed; he was compelled to sell his clothes from his back, and, brought to the utmost condition of misery and starvation, he thus reached his brother's house, who again clothed him, and brought him back to college, endeavoring to propitiate the brutal tutor. His father dying, he was reduced to the deepest distress. His generous uncle Contarine helped him all he could, but, with Oliver's careless habits, he was still often reduced to the utmost straits. He was sometimes compelled to pawn his books, and borrow others to study from. His condition became that of squalid poverty, and at length he was driven to the extremity of writing street-ballads, which he found a ready sale for, at five shillings a copy, at a shop known as the sign of the Reindeer, in Mountrath-street. Eventually obtaining the degree of B.A., he quitted the University, and, as we have seen, retreated to his own native neighborhood and friends.

All chance of succeeding as a clergyman, to which office he, moreover, had an aversion, appearing out of the question, and having either no inclination, or not sufficient spirit of plodding for the pursuit of law, which had been recommended to him, by assistance of his friends he crossed over to Edinburgh, and commenced in that University the study of physic. We have no clew to the exact lodgings of Goldsmith during his stay in Edinburgh, which was two winters. Men in the poverty of Goldsmith, as a student, seldom record very traceably their whereabouts. The tradition is, however, that the lodgings he chiefly occupied were in the College Wynd; and this is very likely, both because the situation is very convenient for the college, and because the character of the place agrees pretty much with the sort of entertainment he describes himself to have found in them. The College Wynd is a narrow alley of wretched houses, now inhabited only [Pg 353] by the lowest grade of population. It is probable, however, that in it was the better class of lodgings which Goldsmith occupied in this city. The house in which he located himself at first was also a boarding-house, but of such a description that he used, in after days, to amuse his friends in London with an account of the economy of the table. A leg of mutton, as he told the story, dished up in various ways by the ingenuity of his hostess, served for the better part of dinner during a week; a dish of broth being made on the seventh day from the bone. He soon fled from this luxurious abode, and joined several other students, his friends and countrymen, who were better accommodated, most likely in this College Wynd. He had the advantage of studying under the elder Monro; he became a member of the Medical Society; but was soon more noted for his convivial talents and habits than for his industrious study. He made a trip into the Highlands on a pony, he says, of the size of a ram, and wrote a humorous account of Scotland and the people to his friend, Robert Bryanton, of Ballymahon. Through some Irish connection he was invited to the Duke of Hamilton's, whose duchess at that time was one of the celebrated Gunnings; but he said he soon found himself liked rather as a *jester* than as a companion, and he at once disdained the company of dukes on any such terms. Among his college friends was that Lauchlan Macleane, whom Sir David Brewster has of late again been endeavoring to prove to be the real Junius, though his claims were long ago sifted, and rejected by public opinion; particularly from the cogent facts that Macleane was the private secretary of Lord Shelburne at the very time that his lordship was violently attacked by Junius, under another signature, in 1767, according to

Woodfall's evidence, which would convert Macleane into Junius at the cost of all character; and, secondly, because Macleane was himself ridiculed by Junius, under the signature of Vindex, in 1771.

Having, with his usual incaution in such matters, become security for a fellow-student, he would [Pg 354] not have been able to quit Edinburgh had it not been for Macleane and Dr. Joseph Fenn Sleigh, a Quaker, and afterward a popular physician at Cork. Saved from arrest by their kindness, he embarked for Bordeaux, but was driven into Newcastle-on-Tyne, where, the ship proving to be engaged in enlisting soldiers for the French army, he was seized and cast into prison for a fortnight before he could prove his innocence. In the mean time the ship had escaped out of the harbor. He had lost his passage, and his passage-money and luggage, but saved his life, for the ship was wrecked, and every soul perished. He then went over to Rotterdam, studied at Leyden for a year, but, as far as appears, took no degree; and thence set off, on foot, on that tour of which so much has always been said in connection with his name. With his usual good-natured thoughtlessness, when about to set forward from Leyden, provided with a small fund by his uncle Contarine, being struck, in the garden of a florist, with some beautiful bulbous flowers, and recollecting in his gratitude his uncle Contarine's admiration of those flowers, he spent most of the money in purchasing a quantity of them to ship to Ireland for him, as the most welcome present he could think of, and then set out, almost penniless, on his journey. His tour extended through Flanders; and France, at Paris attending the chemical lectures of Rouelle, and being introduced to Voltaire; a small portion of Germany; thence through Switzerland, visiting some of its most celebrated scenes, and climbing some of its highest mountains, as the Jura, into Italy, where he extended his journey to most of the northern cities, Mantua, Milan, Padua, Florence, Verona, Venice, and the wilds of Carinthia, but never reached Rome or Naples. His necessities became too great to permit him to go farther. In France his flute was, among the peasantry, as represented in his Traveler, a never-failing resource; not so in Italy. There the higher taste for [Pg 355] music made his rude skill useless; but he found many of his countrymen residents in the monasteries, and these were always ready to relieve his wants. He found also another resource, which he relates in his Philosophic Vagabond: "My skill in music could avail me nothing in Italy, where every peasant was a better musician than I; but by this time I had acquired another talent, which answered my purpose as well, and this was a skill in disputation. In all the foreign universities and convents, there are, upon certain days, philosophical theses maintained against every adventitious disputant; for which, if the champion opposes with any dexterity, he can claim a gratuity in money, a dinner, and a bed for one night. In this manner, then, I fought my way toward England; walked along from city to city, examined mankind more closely, and, if I may so express it, saw both sides of the picture."

There is no question that this hardy enterprise of making the tour of Europe on foot, and pushing his way as he could, by his powers of argument or his flute, though, as he observed, it made him a debtor in almost every kingdom in Europe, yet immensely extended his knowledge of human nature. He was the first man, through his close observation of the French people, to predict their breaking up the despotism of the old monarchy. "As the Swedes are making concealed approaches to despotism, the French, on the other hand, are imperceptibly vindicating themselves into freedom. When I consider that these Parliaments, the members of which are all created by the court; the presidents of which can only act by immediate direction; presume even to mention privileges and freedom, who, till of late, received directions from the throne with implicit humility; when this is considered, I can not help fancying that the genius of freedom has entered that kingdom in disguise. If they have but three weak monarchs successively on the throne, the mask will be laid aside, and the country will certainly once more be free." This was a [Pg 356] remarkable prophecy; the sagacity of Goldsmith penetrated the eventful future twelve years before the mind of Burke, by treading the same ground, arrived at the same conclusion.

In 1756 Oliver Goldsmith reached England, destined now to the end of his life to become the scene of his varied struggles, his poverty, and his fame. It were a long story to follow him minutely through all his numerous pursuits of an existence, his various changes of residence for a long time, without much advance toward profit or reputation. The early part of his career is lost in obscurity and conjecture. He stepped upon the shore of England a nameless adventurer, destitute of cash, and uncertain as to what means of livelihood he should embrace. The struggle which now and for some time went on was for life itself. He was reduced to the most desperate circumstances. He applied for assistance to his relations in Ireland, but whether they could no longer help him, or whether they now regarded his continual wanderings, and continual drain upon them, as the confirmed signs of a thriftless vagabond, none came. It is said that in this situation he tried the stage in a country town, and his intimate acquaintanceship with the interior of the wretched country play-house, as displayed in The Adventures of a Strolling Player, and the conclusion of the story of George Primrose, renders it very probable. He was driven by utter need, according to the by-word of the Irishman, to be almost "any body's customer." The next resource was, trusting to his scholastic acquirements to procure an engagement as an usher in a country school. But his appearance must have been against him; reference he had none in this country to give, and though he applied to his old kind tutor in Dublin, Dr. Radcliffe, not the brute Wilder, he requested his recommendation to be given to him under a feigned name, being ashamed of hereafter having his present condition associated with his own. Dr. Radcliffe was [Pg 357] obliged to be silent. Goldsmith held this situation, it may be supposed, under these circumstances for no long period; but the very location of the school is unknown; it has been said to be in Yorkshire, and also in Kent, near Ashford or Tenterden. What sort of a life he had of it in this "Do-the-boys Hall," wherever it was, we may learn from the curious catechism he puts into the mouth of the cousin of one of his heroes. "Ay, this is indeed a very pretty career that has been chalked

out for you. I have been an usher at a boarding-school myself; and may I die by an anodyne necklace, but I had rather be under-turnkey in Newgate. I was up early and late. I was browbeat by the master; hated for my ugly face by the mistress; worried by the boys within, and never permitted to stir out to receive civility abroad. But are you sure you are fit for a school? Let me examine you a little. Have you been bred apprentice to the business?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Have you had the small-pox?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Can you lie three in a bed?" "No." "Then you won't do for a school. Have you got a good stomach?" "Yes." "Then you will by no means do for a school!"

Driven from such a purgatory even for want of a character, Goldsmith, with The Deserted Village and The Vicar of Wakefield in his hand, was once more wandering the streets of London amid a thousand other equally destitute wretches. He applied to apothecary after apothecary, trusting to his medical education, for employment with them; but, with all the traces of vagabond indigence upon him, and without any recommendation to show, his repulses were certain. A chemist of the name of Jacob, residing at the corner of Monument or Bell Yard, on Fish Hill, taking compassion on his destitute condition, at length gave him employment. It may be supposed to be about this time that his lodgings were of that magnificent description with which he once in after life startled a circle of good company, breaking out suddenly in some fit of forgetful enthusiasm with, [Pg 358] "When I lived among the beggars in Ax Lane." His first gleam of better fortune was finding his old Edinburgh college friend, Dr. Sleigh, in London, who received him in all his squalor with the warmth of true friendship, and enabled him to commence as physician in Bankside, Southwark. It did not answer, and the next glimpse of him is acting as a corrector of the press in the printing-office of Richardson the novelist. The next fortunate circumstance was meeting with Mr. Milner, one of his old Edinburgh fellow-students, whose father, Dr. Milner, a Dissenting minister, kept a classical school at Peckham, in Surrey. By him he was recommended to his father, to assist him in his school duties. Dr. Milner was suffering under severe illness, and Goldsmith's services were accepted. Here he continued for some time, it has been said by part of the family, three years; and this connection led to the one which brought him into the direct field of authorship. Mr., afterward Dr. Griffiths, a bookseller of Paternoster Row, had started the Monthly Review, and was beating up for contributors. Goldsmith, whom he had become acquainted with at Dr. Milner's, was one invited. The engagement is calculated to make both proprietors and authors of the present day smile. Goldsmith was regularly boarded and lodged in the bibliopole's house—the hired servant of literature. How satisfactory this odd arrangement of keeping a tame author turned out, may be guessed by the fact that the engagement for a year ended in five months. The great fact at which Goldsmith kicked was, that not only Griffiths, but *his wife*, was in the regular habit of acting as the censor, and altering the articles written for the Review.

From this time to the day of his death Goldsmith was regularly lanched into the drudgery of literature; the most wearing, feverish, uncertain, and worst remunerating life under the sun. To live in one long anxiety, and to die poor, was his lot, as it has been that of thousands of others. [Pg 359] There are innocent minds, who are filled with gladness at the sight of a goodly library; who feast on a well-bound row of books, as the lover of nature does on a poetical landscape or on a bank of violets. For my part, I never see such a collection of books without an inward pang. They remind me of a catacomb; every volume is in my eyes but a bone in the great gathering of the remains of literary martyrs. When I call to mind the pleasure with which many of these books were written, followed by the agonies of disappointment they brought; the repulses and contempt of booksellers, to whom the authors had carried them in all the flush of their inexperience and of high hope; the cruel malice of the critics which assailed them,

> "Those cut-throat bandits in the paths of fame;
> Bloody dissectors, worse than ten Monros:
> He hacks to teach, they mangle to expose;"—*Burns.*

when I think of the glorious hopes which accompanied their composition, and the terrible undeceiving which attended their publication; when I reflect how many of these fair tomes were written in bitterest poverty, with the most aching hearts, in the most cheerless homes, and how many others ruined the writers who were tolerably well off before they put pen to paper; when I remember, on passing my eye along them, how many of them never were raised to their present rank and occupation till the unhappy authors were beyond the knowledge of it; when I see others which *had* their fame during the author's lifetime, but enriched only the lucky bibliopole, and left the conscious producer of wealth only doubly poor by seeing it in the enjoyment of another; when I see those works which, while the author lived, were assailed as blasphemous and devilish, and are now the text-books of liberty and progress; and when I call to mind all the tears which have bedewed them, the sadness of soul, often leading to suicide, which has weighed down the immortal spirits which created them, I own that there is to me no such melancholy spectacle as a [Pg 360] fine collection of books.

Goldsmith had his full share of this baptism of literary wretchedness. I can not follow him minutely through the years of book-drudgery and all its attendant adventures. Suffice it that he wrote an immense mass of articles for the periodicals; hosts of histories; plays, tales, essays, and the like, anonymously; and which, therefore, brought him precarious bread, but little fame. He commenced writing in the Monthly Review in 1757, and it was not till 1764 that his name was first affixed to his first poem, The Traveler. Thus he served a seven years' apprenticeship to anonymous authorship before he began to take that rank in English literature which was his destined portion; exactly in ten years more he was in his grave, having, in the mean time, given to posterity his exquisite Deserted Village; his inimitable Vicar of Wakefield; his Good-natured Man, and She Stoops to Conquer; besides hosts of histories, written to make the pot boil.

Histories of Animated Nature; of England, Greece, Rome, and what not. During the whole of his career, the pecuniary condition of Goldsmith was one of uneasiness. It is true that his generous, improvident disposition might have left the result the same had he won ten times the sum he did; but one can not help regarding the sums received by him for his writings as something most humiliating, when their real value to the booksellers of all ages is considered. We find his life abounding with his borrowing two and three guineas of his bookseller, and receiving such sums for articles. The Traveler brought him *twenty guineas*! The Vicar of Wakefield, *sixty*; and for the Deserted Village, *one hundred*; not two hundred pounds altogether, for three of the most popular works in any language. It would be a curious fact to ascertain, were it possible, what these three works alone have made for the booksellers.

But if Goldsmith was not well remunerated for the works with which he enriched the English language, he was rich in friends. Johnson, Burke, Sir Joshua Reynolds, all the great men of the age, were his intimate associates, and knew how to value both his genius and his unselfish nature. The friendship of Johnson for him was beautiful. All the world knows the story of Johnson selling "the manuscript of the Vicar of Wakefield" to save the author from an arrest of his landlady for arrears of rent. It has been made the subject of more than one excellent painting; but it is not so generally known, that so uncertain were both Johnson and the publisher of its merits, that it remained nearly two years in the publisher's desk before he ventured to publish it. It was the fame of The Traveler which emboldened the bibliopole to bring it out, and the public at once received it with one instant and general cheer. [Pg 361]

We must now confine ourselves to a brief indication of the successive residences and haunts of Goldsmith during his literary life in London, first observing only, that so unpromising for a long time was the field of authorship, that he sought several times to quit it. In 1758, he procured the post of physician and surgeon to one of the factories on the coast of Coromandel, but was refused his certificate at Surgeon's Hall as not duly qualified. He tried, in 1760, to procure the situation of secretary to the Society of Arts, as a means of permanent support; and failing, he recurred to a wild project, which he had entertained years before, of going out to the East to decipher the inscriptions on the Written Mountains, though he was totally ignorant of Arabic, or the language in which the inscriptions might be supposed to be written. His inducement was the salary of £300 a year, which had been left for that purpose. He proposed, in this expedition, also, to acquire a knowledge of the arts peculiar to the East, and introduce them into Britain. When Johnson heard of this, he said, "Why, sir, he would bring home a grinding-barrow, which you see in every street of London, and think he had furnished a wonderful improvement." The scheme appeared as visionary in other quarters, and so fell through. These various plans, however, all show what a thorny path was that of authorship to him. [Pg 362]

We find Goldsmith first residing, after he had quitted Griffiths's roof, about 1757, in the vicinity of Salisbury Square, Fleet-street; where exactly, is not known. At this time he was in the habit of frequenting the Temple Exchange Coffee-house, near Temple Bar, where he had his letters addressed, and where he even saw, according to the fashion of the times, his patients, when he had any. There does not appear to be any such coffee-house now. Green-arbor Court, between the Old Bailey and what was lately Fleet Market, was his next abode, where he located himself toward the end of 1758. "Here," says his biographer, "he became well known to his literary brethren, was visited by them, and his lodgings well remembered. This house, a few years ago, formed the abode, as it appears to have done in his own time, of laborious indigence. The adjoining houses likewise presented every appearance of squalid poverty, every floor being occupied by the poorest class. Two of the number fell down from age and dilapidation; and the remainder, on the same side of the court, including that in which the poet resided, standing on the right-hand corner on entering from Farringdon-street by what is called, from their steepness and number, Breakneck-steps, were taken down some time afterward to avoid a similar catastrophe. They were four stories in height; the attics had casement windows, and at one time they were probably inhabited by a superior class of tenants. The site is now occupied by a large building, inclosed by a wall running through the court or square, intended for the stabling and lofts of a wagon office."

In the beginning of March, 1759, he was seen here, in one of his excursions to London, by the Rev. Mr. Percy, afterward Bishop Percy, the collector of the Reliques, and author of the Hermit of Warkworth, one of his earliest literary friends. "The doctor," observed the prelate, "was employed in writing his Inquiry into Polite Learning, in a wretchedly dirty room, in which there was but one chair; and when, from civility, this was offered to his visitant, he himself was obliged to sit in the window. While they were conversing, some one gently rapped at the door, and on being desired to come in, a poor, ragged little girl of very decent behavior entered, who, dropping a courtesy, said, 'My mamma sends her compliments, and begs the favor of your lending her a potful of coals.'" [Pg 363]

Mr. Prior, in 1820, going into a small shop in the Clapham Road to purchase the first edition of Goldsmith's Essays, lying in the window, found the woman in the shop an old neighbor of the poet's. She said she was a near relative of the woman who kept the house in Green-arbor Court, and, at the age of seven or eight, went frequently thither; one of the inducements to which was the cakes and sweetmeats given to her and other children of the family by the gentleman who lodged there. These they duly valued at the moment, but when afterward considered as the gift of one so eminent, the recollection became the source of pride and boast. Another of his amusements consisted in assembling these children in his room, and inducing them to dance to the music of his flute. Of this instrument, as a relaxation from study, he was fond. He was usually shut up in the room during the day, went out in the evenings, and preserved regular hours. His

habits otherwise were sociable, and he had several visitors. One of the companions whose society gave him particular pleasure was a respectable watchmaker, residing in the same court, celebrated for the possession of much wit and humor; qualities which, as they distinguish his own writings, he professes to have sought and cultivated wherever they were to be found.

Here the woman related that Goldsmith's landlord having fallen into difficulties, was at length [Pg 364] arrested; and Goldsmith, who owed a small sum of money for rent, being applied to by his wife to assist in the release of her husband, found that, although without money, he did not want resources. A new suit of clothes was consigned to the pawnbroker, and the amount raised, proving much more than sufficient to discharge his own debt, was handed over for the release of the prisoner. What is most singular is, that this effort of active benevolence to rescue a debtor from jail, gave, in all probability, rise to a charge against him of dishonesty. As we have said, Goldsmith, proposing to go out to India, took his examination at Surgeon's Hall. To make a creditable appearance there, he had borrowed money of Griffiths, the bookseller, for a new suit of clothes. These clothes Griffiths soon afterward discovered hanging at a pawnbroker's door. As Goldsmith had lost the situation he had boasted of when he borrowed this money, and kept his own not very flattering secret of the cause of the loss—his rejection at Surgeon's Hall—Griffiths, a man of coarse mind, at once jumped to the conclusion that it was all a piece of trickery. He demanded an explanation of Goldsmith; Goldsmith refused to give it. He demanded the return of his money; Goldsmith, of course, had it not. They came to a fierce and violent, and, as it proved, irreconcilable quarrel, and Goldsmith disdaining to explain the real circumstances, long bore the disgrace of duplicity as the result of his generous act.

There is one more anecdote connected with his residence here, and it is characteristic. A gentleman, inquiring whether he was within, was shown up to his room without further ceremony, when, soon after having entered it, a noise of voices, as if in altercation, was heard by the people below, the key of the door at the same moment being turned within the room. Doubtful of the nature of the interview, the attention of the landlady was excited, but both voices being distinguished at intervals, her suspicions of personal violence were lulled, and no further [Pg 365] notice taken. Late in the evening the door was unlocked, a good supper ordered by the visitor from the neighboring tavern, and the gentlemen, who met so ungraciously at first, spent the remainder of the evening in great good humor. The explanation given of this scene was, that the poet being behind-hand with certain writings for the press, and the stated period of publication arrived, the intruder, who was a printer or publisher, probably Hamilton or Wilkie, for both of whom he wrote at that time, would not quit the room till they were finished; and for this species of durance inflicted on the author, the supper formed the apology.

In those apartments, little indebted as we may believe to the labors of the housemaid, he is said to have observed the predatory habits of the spider, and drawn up that paper on the subject which appeared in the fourth number of the Bee, reprinted in the Essays, and given in substance in the History of Animated Nature. In these lodgings he wrote a Memoir of the Life of Voltaire, and a Translation of The Henriade; an Inquiry into the State of Polite Learning in Europe; besides a multitude of Reviews and other articles in the Bee, the Busybody, and other magazines of the day. He wrote also his Chinese Letters, and newspaper articles at least two a week, at the rate of a guinea per article. In 1760 he quitted Green-arbor Court, and took respectable lodgings in Wine-office Court, Fleet-street, where he continued about two years in the house of an acquaintance, a relative of the friendly bookseller, Newbery, predecessor of Hunter, corner of St. Paul's churchyard, and since of Harris. Here he had a large literary acquaintance among men of all grades of reputation and talent. Among them Dr. Percy was a frequent visitor, and here it was that Dr. Johnson was introduced to him by Dr. Percy, at a large party which Goldsmith gave to persons chiefly literary. Johnson went dressed in his highest style; and on Percy's remarking it as they went along, "Why, sir," said Johnson, "I hear that Goldsmith, who is a very great sloven, [Pg 366] justifies his disregard of cleanliness and decency by quoting my practice, and I am desirous this night to show him a better example." From the first moment of meeting, these two great men took vastly to each other, and continued firm friends till Goldsmith's death.

During Goldsmith's residence in Wine-office Court, he was busily employed on a pamphlet on the Cock-lane Ghost; a History of Mecklenburg; The Art of Poetry on a New Plan; An Abridgment of Plutarch; Additions to English History; a Life of Beau Nash; and contributions to the Christian Magazine: most of these being written for Newbery. To relieve the tedium of his drudgery, he was in the habit of frequenting the Monday evening meetings of the Robin Hood Debating Society, held at a house of that name in Butcher Row, whither it had been removed from the Essex Head, in Essex-street, in the Strand. The payment of sixpence formed the only requisite for admission, three halfpence of which were said to be put by for the purposes of charity. The annual number of visitors averaged about 5000. A gilt chair indicated the presiding authority, and all questions, not excepting religion and politics, were open to discussion. In these discussions Goldsmith used even to take part, but his great delight was to listen to the harangues of an eloquent baker, at the conclusion of one of which Goldsmith exclaimed to his companion Derrick, "That man was meant by nature for a lord-chancellor;" to which Derrick replied, "No, no, not so high; he was only intended for *master of the rolls*." The man actually became a magistrate in Middlesex, and, as was said, a first-rate one.

In 1762 Goldsmith quitted Wine-office Court, and took lodgings in the house of a Mrs. Elizabeth Fleming, in Islington. This was to be near his friend and publisher, Mr. Newbery, who resided at Canonbury House, near to Mrs. Fleming's. Here he continued till 1764, chiefly employed upon [Pg 367] job-work for his friend Newbery; among the most important, the Letters of a Nobleman to his Son, and the History of England. He used to relieve the monotony of his life by weekly visits to

the Literary Club, of which Johnson, Burke, and Sir Joshua Reynolds were principal members, and which was held at the Turk's Head, Gerrard-street, Soho.

Here, there is every reason to believe, occurred the event already alluded to, the threat of his arrest, and the sale of the manuscript of the Vicar of Wakefield, by Johnson, to liberate him. Of this story there have been various versions; Mrs. Piozzi, Sir John Hawkins, Cumberland, and Boswell, all relate it, all profess to have heard it from Johnson, and yet each tells it very differently. In all these stories, however, there is a landlady demanding arrears of rent, and bailiffs waiting to arrest if the money were not forthcoming. All agree that Goldsmith was drinking, most of them say Madeira, to drown his vexation; and Cumberland adds, that the landlady proposed the alternative of payment or marriage. Whether the latter point were really included in the demand, is not likely ever to be known; but that Mrs. Fleming, who went by the name of Goldsmith's hostess, and is thus painted by Hogarth, was the woman in question, I think there can be little doubt, though Prior, the biographer, would fain exempt her from the charge, and suppose the scene to occur in some temporary lodging. There does not appear the smallest ground for such a supposition. All facts point to this place and person. Goldsmith had been here for at least a year and a half, for Prior himself gives the particulars of this landlady's bill reaching to June 22d. As it occurred in this year, and about this time—for it is expressly stated that the Vicar of Wakefield was kept about two years by the bookseller unpublished, and it was not published till the end of March, 1766—it could not possibly happen any where else. He could not have left Mrs. Fleming, or if he had, he could not have been away long enough to accumulate any [Pg 368] alarming score. Here, on the contrary, every thing indicates that he was in debt and difficulty. He had been at least a year and a half here, and might, and probably had, run a good way into his landlady's books. The biographer states expressly that Goldsmith *was* in great difficulties, and for some months was invisible—said to have made a trip into Yorkshire. The biographer also shows that Newbery, the bookseller, generally paid the landlady for Goldsmith; but it comes out that Goldsmith was now got also very far behind with Newbery, owing him no less than £111; and next comes an obvious dislocation with Newbery himself. It is a fact which does not seem to have struck the biographer, that when Johnson sold the manuscript of the Vicar of Wakefield, he did not sell it to Newbery, though Newbery was not only Goldsmith's publisher, but his own. He went and sold it to a nephew of Newbery's, Mr. Francis Newbery, of Paternoster Row. Now there must have been a reason for this, and what so likely as that Goldsmith having run too deep into debt, had alarmed Newbery—publishers are careful men—that he had not only refused to advance more, but had withdrawn his guarantee to the landlady. This being the case, Goldsmith would be at his wit's end. With long arrears of rent and board, for Mrs. Fleming found that too, the security withdrawn by Newbery, she would be alarmed, and insist on Goldsmith's paying. To Newbery he could not fly, and, in his despair, he sent for Johnson. Johnson sold the novel, but not to John Newbery. With him it would only have gone to reduce the standing claim, with another it could bring what was wanted, instant cash. What confirms this view of the case is, moreover, the fact that immediately after this Goldsmith did quit his old landlady, and returned to London.

Canonbury Tower, or Canonbury House, as it is indifferently called, is often said to have been a residence of Goldsmith, and the room is shown which he used to occupy, and where it is said he [Pg 369] wrote The Deserted Village. The reason given for Goldsmith's going to live at Islington is, that it was a pleasant, rural situation, and that there he would be near Newbery, his publisher, who engaged with Goldsmith's landlady to pay the rent. Newbery had apartments in Canonbury House, and here Goldsmith visited him. Anon, as his difficulties increased, he used to hide from his creditors in the tower, where he lay concealed for days and weeks. Very probably he was there all the time he was said to be gone into Yorkshire.

As to his having written The Deserted Village there, that is quite likely. It is equally probable that he might write there The Traveler, which was published at the end of the very year he left Islington. The Deserted Village was not published for five years afterward, or in 1769; and was, if written at Canonbury, the fruit of a subsequent residence there in 1767. His fixed abode was then in the Temple, but he had apartments for part of the summer in Canonbury House, and was visited there by most of his literary friends. On many of these occasions they adjourned to a social dinner at the Crown Tavern in the Lower Road, where tradition states them to have been very jovial. It is not improbable that he wrote part of The Vicar of Wakefield at Islington too, having, as we see, completed it at the time of his threatened arrest, that is, at the close of his residence at Islington.

Canonbury Tower, at the time Goldsmith used to frequent it, was a fine, airy place, in a sweet, rural neighborhood. Geoffrey Crayon says: "It is an ancient brick tower, hard by 'merry Islington,' the remains of a hunting seat of Queen Elizabeth, where she took the pleasure of the country when the neighborhood was all woodland. What gave it particular interest in my eyes was the circumstance that it had been the residence of a poet. It was here Goldsmith resided when he wrote his Deserted Village. I was shown the very apartment. It was a relic of the original style of [Pg 370] the castle, with paneled wainscot and Gothic windows. I was pleased with its air of antiquity, and its having been the residence of poor Goldy." Irving located his "Poor Devil Author" in this room of Goldsmith's, but represents him as soon driven away by the troops of Londoners. "Sunday came, and with it the whole city world, swarming about Canonbury Castle. I could not open my window but I was stunned with shouts and noises from the cricket-ground; the late quiet road beneath my windows was alive with the tread of feet and the clack of tongues; and to complete my misery, I found that my quiet retreat was absolutely a 'show-house,' being shown to strangers at sixpence a head. There was a perpetual tramping up stairs of citizens and their families, to look about the country from the top of the tower, and to take a peep at the city through the telescope, to try if they could discern their own chimneys."

The reason why Irving located his "Poor Devil Author" in Canonbury Tower, no doubt, was because it had been the resort of several such, as well as of men of greater note: Smart; Chambers, author of the Cyclopædia; Humphries, author of Canons, a poem, Ulysses, an opera, &c.

> "Here Humphries breathed his last, the Muses' friend,
> And Chambers found his mighty labors end."

> "See on the distant slope, majestic shows
> Old Canonbury's tower, an ancient pile
> To various fates assigned; and where, by turns,
> Meanness and grandeur have alternate reigned.
> Thither, in latter days, hath genius fled
> From yonder city to repine and die.
> There the sweet Bard of Auburn sat, and tuned
> The plaintive moanings of his village dirge.
> There learned Chambers treasured lore for *man*,
> And Newbery there his A B C for *babes*."

One of these citizens, who took a particular pleasure in a visit to Canonbury Tower, was William Hone. The view of the tower in his Every Day Book is very correct, except that there is now an iron balustrade round the top, for greater security of those who ascend it for the prospect. His account of it is as follows: [Pg 371]

"Canonbury Tower is sixty feet high, and seventy feet square. It is part of an old mansion, which appears to have been erected, or, if erected before, much altered about the reign of Elizabeth. The more ancient edifice was erected by the priors of the Canons of St. Bartholomew, Smithfield, and hence was called Canonbury, to whom it appertained until it was surrendered with the priory to Henry VIII.; and when the religious houses were dissolved, Henry gave the mansion to Thomas, lord Cromwell. It afterward passed through other hands, till it was possessed by Sir John Spencer, an alderman and lord-mayor of London, known by the name of 'rich Spencer.' While he resided at Canonbury, a Dunkirk pirate came over in a shallop to Barking Creek, and hid himself with some armed men in Islington Fields, near the path Sir John usually took from his house in Crosby Place to this mansion, with the hope of making him prisoner; but as he remained in town that night, they were glad to make off for fear of detection, and returned to France disappointed of their prey, and of the large ransom they calculated on for the release of his person. His sole daughter and heiress, Elizabeth,[29] was carried off in a baker's basket from Canonbury House by William, the second Lord Compton, lord-president of Wales. He inherited Canonbury, with the rest of Sir John Spencer's wealth, at his death, and was afterward created Earl of Northampton; in this family the manor still remains."

In Hone's time, a Mr. Symes, the bailiff of the manor under Lord Northampton, was residing in the tower. He had lived there for thirty-nine years. His mother-in-law, Mrs. Evans, wife to the former bailiff, told Mr. Symes that her aunt, Mrs. Tapps, a seventy-year inhabitant of the tower, was accustomed to talk much about Goldsmith and his apartment. It was an old oak room on the first floor. Mrs. Tapps affirmed that he there wrote his Deserted Village, and slept in a large press bedstead placed in the eastern corner. Since Goldsmith's time, the room has been much altered and subdivided. The house is still the residence of the bailiff of the manor. [Pg 372]

Poor Hone lamented sorely over the changes going on in this once sweet neighborhood. "I ranged the old rooms, and took, perhaps, a last look from the roof. The eye shrunk from the wide havoc below. Where new buildings had not covered the sward, it was embowelling for bricks, and kilns emitted flickering fire and sulphurous stench. Surely the dominion of the brick-and-mortar king will have no end, and cages for commercial spirits will be there instead of every green thing."

> "So, Canonbury, thou dost stand a while;
> Yet fall at last thou must; for thy rich warden
> Is fast 'improving;' all thy pleasant fields
> Have fled, and brick-kilns, bricks, and houses use
> At his command: the air no longer yields
> A fragrance—scarcely health; the very skies
> Grow dim and town-like; a cold, creeping gloom
> Steals into thee, and saddens every room;
> And so realities come unto me,
> Clouding the chambers of my mind, and making me—like thee."

One-and-twenty years have passed since Hone took this melancholy view of the changes going on round Canonbury Tower. There has been no pause in the process of housification since then. The whole neighborhood is fast ingulfing in one overflowing London. What a change since Queen Elizabeth used to come to this solitary tower, to hunt in the far-spreading woodlands around; or to take a view from its summit of her distant capital, and of the far-off winding Thames! What a change even since Goldsmith paced this old tower, and looked over green fields, and thick woods, and over the whole airy scene, full of solitude and beauty! There are still old gardens with their stately cedars, and lanes that show that they were once in a rural district, and that Canonbury was a right pleasant place. But the goodly house of Sir Walter Raleigh, who grew enamored of the spot from attending his royal mistress thither, is degraded to the Pied Bull, and long terraces of new houses extinguish one green field rapidly after another. Every thing seems in a state of [Pg 373]

spreading and active advance, except the great tavern near the tower, whose cricketers and revelers used to din Washington Irving so much, and that now stands empty and ruinous; the very Sunday roisterers from the city have sought some more greenly suburban resort.

The last residences of Goldsmith in London were within the precincts of the Temple; but here he made two removes. He first took apartments on the library staircase, No. 2 Garden Court. This is now pulled down, and, I suppose, on the site stands the new library; for, on going into the court, you now find no No. 2, but only Nos. 3 and 4, looking odd and puzzling enough to the inquirer. Hence he removed to the King's-bench Walk, but the particular house does not appear to be known. Lastly, he removed to No. 2 Brick Court. His lodgings were on the second floor, on the right hand ascending the staircase, and are said to consist of three rooms, sufficiently airy and pleasant. With an imprudence which brought upon him deep anxiety, and probably hastened his end, he borrowed of the booksellers, and of the occupier of the opposite rooms, Mr. Edmund Bott, a literary barrister, who was much esteemed by him, and became his principal creditor at his death, and the possessor of his papers, four hundred pounds, with which he furnished these apartments in an expensive manner. Below Goldsmith, on the first floor, lived Sir William Blackstone, who is said there to have written his Commentaries. There were other barristers, especially a Mr. William Cooke, author of a work on Dramatic Genius, and called Conversation [Pg 374] Cooke, living in the Temple, with whom Goldsmith was on terms of intimacy; and here he occasionally gave very expensive suppers to his literary friends. Here he was visited by almost every man of note of the time: Johnson with his Boswell, Burke, Reynolds, Garrick, Percy, Sir Philip Francis, &c. Almost twenty years after his death these rooms became the scene of a tragical adventure, by a Miss Broderick shooting in them a Mr. Eddington, with whom she had formerly lived, and who took this desperate means of punishing his desertion.

These rooms are at the lower end of Brick Court, at the corner of the range of buildings on your right hand as you descend the court from Fleet-street. There seems to be a considerable mistake in Prior's account of them. Nearly all that he says appears to apply much more naturally to his rooms in Garden than in Brick Court. In Garden Court they most likely would be airy and pleasant. There, too, the anecdote of his watching the rooks might take place; it could not in Brick Court. It is thus given: "The view toward the gardens supplied him with an observation given in Animated Nature, respecting the natural history of the rooks. I have often amused myself with observing their plan of policy from my window in the Temple, that looks upon a grove where they have made a colony in the midst of the city," &c.

Now there is no view toward the garden. The court is built all round with buildings as old as Goldsmith's time, and older. In his rooms in Garden Court he could have full view of the elms in the garden, the probable scene of the rookery in question.

During Goldsmith's life here, he was in the habit of meeting his literary friends often in the evening at the Miter Tavern, Fleet-street; at a card club at the Devil Tavern, near Temple Bar, not now existing; at the Globe Tavern, also near there, now gone too; and at Jack's Coffee-house, [Pg 375] now Walker's Hotel, Dean-street, corner of Queen-street, Soho. It was here that Goldsmith confounded the gravity of Johnson with one of his off-hand and simple jokes. They were supping tête-à-tête on rumps and kidneys. Johnson observed, "Sir, these rumps are pretty little things, but they require a good many to satisfy a man." "Ay! but," said Goldsmith, "how many of these would reach to the moon?" "To the moon! ay, sir, I fear that exceeds your calculation." "Not at all, sir," said Goldsmith; "I think I could tell." "Pray, then, let us hear." "Why, *one*, if it were long enough." Johnson growled at this reply for some time, but at last recollecting himself, "Well, sir, I have deserved it; I should not have provoked so foolish an answer by so foolish a question."

This house, in 1770, was the oldest tavern in London but three, and is now probably the oldest. Mr. Walker, the present landlord of this hotel, who has lived in it fifty years, and has now reached the venerable age of ninety, is proud of the ancient honors of the house. On his card he duly informs his friends that it was here that "Johnson, Garrick, Goldsmith, and other literary characters of eminence" used to resort. The house is old, spacious, and quiet, and well adapted for the sojourn of families from the country, who are glad to escape the noise of more frequented parts of the city. By permission of Mr. Walker, I present at the head of this article a view of the room once honored by Johnson and Goldsmith.

It is pleasant to find the author of The Traveler and Deserted Village, amid all his labors, ever and anon escaping to the country, which no man more profoundly enjoyed. It is delightful to imagine with what intense pleasure he must have traversed the groves of Ilam, and the lovely scenes of Dove Dale. He made similar rambles into Hampshire, Sussex, Suffolk, Yorkshire, Leicestershire, and Lincolnshire. When he wanted at once to enjoy country retirement and hard work, he would "abscond" from his town associates without a word, dive into some queer, [Pg 376] obscure retreat, often on the Harrow or Edgeware Roads, and not be visible for two or three months together. One of these retreats is said to be a small wooden cottage on the north side of the Edgeware Road, about a mile from Paddington, near what is called Kilburn Priory. At such places it was his great luxury, when tired of writing, to stroll along the shady hedge sides, seating himself in the most agreeable spots, and occasionally setting down thoughts which arose for future use. When he was in a more sociable mood, he got up parties for excursions into the neighborhood of London, in which he and his companions had a good long ramble among the villages, dined at the village inn, and so home again in the evening. These he called "tradesmen's holidays," and thus were Blackheath, Wandsworth, Fulham, Chelsea, Hampstead, Highgate, Highbury, &c., explored and enjoyed. On those occasions Goldsmith gave himself up to all his love of good fellowship, and of generously seeing others happy. He made it a rule that the party should meet and take a splendid breakfast at his rooms. The party generally consisted of four or

five persons; and was almost sure to include some humble person, to whom such a treat would never come from any other quarter. One of the most constant of these was his poor amanuensis, Peter Barlow. Peter had his oddities, but with them a spirit of high independence. He always wore the same dress, and never would pay more than a certain sum, and that a trifle, for his dinner; but that he would insist on paying. The dinner always costing a great deal more, Goldsmith paid the difference, and considered himself well reimbursed by the fund of amusement Peter furnished to the party. One of their frequent retreats was the well-known Chelsea Bun-house. Another of these companions was a Dr. Glover, a medical man and author of no great note, who once took Goldsmith into a cottage in one of their rambles at West End, Hampstead, [Pg 377] and took tea with the family as an old acquaintance, when he actually knew no more of the people than Goldsmith did, to his vast chagrin on discovering the fact.

A temporary retreat of Goldsmith's was a cottage near Edgeware, in the vicinity of Canons. There he lived, in conjunction with his friend Bott, and here he worked hard at his Roman History. It had been the retreat of a wealthy shoemaker of Piccadilly, and having a pleasant garden, they christened the place "The Shoemaker's Paradise." The last country lodging which he had was at Hyde, on the Edgeware Road. It is described by Prior as "of the superior order of farm-houses, and stands upon a gentle eminence in what is called Hyde Lane, leading to Kenton, about three hundred yards from the village of Hyde, on the Edgeware Road, and commands a view of an undulating country directly opposite, diversified with wood, in the direction of Hendon." From Mr. Selby, the occupier of the property, Mr. Prior obtained this information. He was himself a lad of sixteen at the time Goldsmith lodged there, and remembered him perfectly. He had only one room there, up one flight of stairs, to the right of the landing. There he wrote She Stoops to Conquer. He boarded with the family, but commonly had his meals sent up to his own apartment. When he had visitors to tea—for his friends used to come out from London, take tea, and then drive home—he had the use of the parlor immediately under his own room. Occasionally he would wander into the kitchen, and stand with his back toward the fire, apparently absorbed in thought. Sometimes he strolled about the fields, or was seen loitering and musing under the hedges, or perusing a book. In the house he usually wore his shirt-collar open, in the manner represented in the portrait by Sir Joshua. Occasionally he read much in bed, and his mode of extinguishing his candle when out of immediate reach was to fling his slipper at it, which in the morning was found near the overturned candlestick bedaubed with grease.

There, then, Goldsmith spent the last days of his life, except what he spent on his sick-bed, in the [Pg 378] full enjoyment of those two great charms of his existence, nature and books. Occasionally he would indulge in a jovial pause—have a dance got up among his visitors, and on one occasion took the young people of the house in a carriage to Windsor, to see a company of strolling players, and made himself and his juvenile party very merry by his remarks on the performance. From these quiet enjoyments and field musings, death called him away. He returned to town, and died in his lodgings in the Temple. He was privately interred in the Temple burying-ground, and a tabular monument to his honor placed on the walls of Westminster Abbey. That great and noble building does not hold the remains of a nobler or better heart. Oliver Goldsmith was a true Irishman, generous, impulsive, and improvident; but he was more, he was a true man and true poet. Whether we laugh with him or weep with him, we are still better for it.

[Pg 379]

ROBERT BURNS.

We come now to the man who is the great representative of a class which is the peculiar glory of Great Britain; that is, to Robert Burns. It is a brilliant feature of English literature, that the people, the mass, the multitude, call them what you will, have contributed to it their share, and that share a glorious one. We may look in vain into the literature of every other nation for the like fact. It is true that there may be found in all countries men who, born in the lowest walks of life, orphans, outcasts, slaves even, men laboring under not only all the weight of social prejudices, but under the curse of personal deformity, have, through some one fortunate circumstance, generally the favor of some one generous and superior person, risen out of their original position, and through the advantages of academical or artistic education, have taken their place among the learned and illustrious of their race. We need not turn back to the Esops and Terences of antiquity for such characters; they are easy to select from the annals of middle age, and modern [Pg 380] art and learning; but there is a class, and this class is found in Great Britain alone, which, belonging to the body of the people, has caught, as it were passingly, just the quantum of education which had come within the people's reach, and who, on this slender participation of the general intellectual property, have raised for themselves a renown, great, glorious, and enduring as that of the most learned or most socially exalted of mankind. Those extraordinary individuals to whom I have alluded as to be found in the literature of all civilized nations—these men, who, admitted from the ranks of the people to the college or the studio, have distinguished themselves in almost every walk of science or letters—these have vindicated the general intellect of the human race from every possible charge of inequality in its endowments. They have shown triumphantly that "God is no respecter of persons." They have thus vindicated not only man's universal capacity for greatness, but the Creator's justice. They have demonstrated that "God has made of one blood all the nations of the earth," and still more, that he has endowed them all with one intellect. Over the whole bosom of the globe its divine Architect has spread fertility; he has diffused beauty adapted to the diversity of climes, and made that beauty present itself in such a variety of forms, that the freshness of its first perception is kept alive by ever-occurring novelties of construction, hue, or odor. It is the same in the intellectual as in the physical world. In the universal spirit of man he has implanted the universal gifts of his divine goodness. Genius, sentiment, feeling, the vast capacity of knowledge and of creative art, are made the common heritage of mankind. But climate and circumstance assert a great and equal influence on the outer and the inner life of the earth. Some nations, under the influences of certain causes, have advanced beyond others; some individuals, under the like causes, have advanced beyond the generality of their cotemporaries. But these facts have not proved that those nations, or those [Pg 381] individuals, were more highly endowed than the rest; they have rather proved that the soil of human nature is rich beyond all conception; the extent of that wealth, however, becoming only palpable through the operation of peculiar agencies. The causes which developed in Greece, in Rome, in India, in Egypt, such manifestations of grace, spirit, and power at certain periods, as never were developed even there at any other periods, before or since, present a subject of curious inquiry, but they leave the grand fact the same, and this fact is, that the soul of universal man is endowed with every gift and faculty which any possible circumstances can call upon him to exert for his benefit, and the adornment of his life. He is furnished for every good word and work. He is a divine creature, that, when challenged, can prove amply his divinity, though under ordinary circumstances he may be content to walk through this existence in an ordinary guise. Every great social revolution, every great popular excitement of every age, has amply demonstrated this. There never was a national demand for intellect and energy, from the emancipation of the Israelites from the Egyptian yoke, or the destruction of the Thirty Tyrants of Athens, down to the English or the French Revolution, which was not met, to the astonishment of the whole world, with such a supply of orators, poets, warriors, and statesmen, speakers and actors, inventors and constructors, in every shape of art, wisdom, and ability, as most completely to certify that the powers which slumber in the human bosom are far beyond those which are ever called into activity. The fertility of the soil of the earth is there in winter, but it lies unnoticed. The sun breaks out, and, like a giant alarmist thundering at the doors of the world, he awakens a thousand hidden powers. Life, universal as the earth itself, starts forth in its thousand shapes, and all is movement, beauty, sweetness, hurrying on through a charmed being into an exuberant fruit.

Those men, then, who have risen through the medium of a finished education to literary, artistic, [Pg 382] or scientific eminence, have, I repeat, vindicated the universality of intellectual endowment; but there is still another class, and that, as I have said, peculiar to these islands, who have shown that a finished or academical education even is not absolutely necessary to the display of the highest order of genius. Circumstances again have been at work here. The circumstances of this country are different to those of any other. We have preserved our liberties more entire. The British people have disdained from age to age to suffer the curb and the bit that have been put upon the neck, and into the mouth, of the more pliant nations of the Continent. Whether these circumstances are to be looked for in the peculiar mixture of races, or in this particular mixture coexisting with peculiarities of climate and insular position, might afford scope to much argument; enough, these circumstances have existed, and their results do exist in a race, proud, active, free, and indomitable.

> "Pride in their port, defiance in their eye,
> I see the lords of human kind pass by;
> Intent on high designs, a thoughtful band,
> By forms unfashioned, fresh from nature's hand,
> Fierce in their native hardiness of soul;
> True to imagined right, above control;

While e'en the peasant boasts these rights to scan,
And learns to venerate himself as man."

GOLDSMITH, *The Traveler*.

Thus it is that this free constitution of the British Empire; this spirit of general independence; this habit of the peasant and the artisan of venerating themselves as men, has led to a universal awakening of mind in the people. In other countries few think; it is a few who are regularly educated, and arrogate the right to think, and write, and govern. If the poor man become an acknowledged genius, it is only through the passage of the high school. The mass is an inert mass; it is a laboring, or, at best, a singing and dancing multitude. But in Great Britain there is [Pg 383] not a man who does not feel that he is a member of the great thinking, acting, and governing whole. Without books often he has caught the spark of inspiration from his neighbor. In the field, the work-shop, the ale-house, the Chartist gathering, he has come to the discussion of his rights, and in that discussion all the powers of his spirit have felt the rousing influence of the sea of mind around, that has boiled and heaved from its lowest depths in billows of fire. Under the operation of this oral, and, as it were, forensic education, which has been going on for generations in the British Empire, the whole man, with all his powers, has become wide awake; and it required only the simple powers of writing and reading to enable the peasant or artisan to gather all the knowledge that he needed, and to stand forth a poet, an orator, a scientific inventor, a teacher himself of the nation.

To these circumstances we owe our Burnses, Hoggs, Bloomfields, Clares, Elliotts, Allan Cunninghams, Bamfords, Nicolls; Thoms; our Thomas Millers and Thomas Coopers. To these circumstances we owe, however, not merely poets, but philosophers, artists, and men of practical science. Such were Drew, Opie, Smeaton, Brindley, Arkwright, Strutt, Crompton, Watt; such men are Joseph Barker, the great religious reformer of the people, and Carlton, the vigorous delineator of Irish actual life. For such men we look in vain abroad; and at home they constitute themselves a constellation of genius, such as more than one country of Continental Europe can not muster from all the gathered lights of all its ages.

It is with pride, and more than pride, that I call the attention of my countrymen to this great and unique section of their country's glorious literature. I look to the future, and see in these men but the forerunners of a numerous race springing from the same soil. They are evidences of the awakened mind of the common people of England. They are pledges that out of that awakened [Pg 384] mind there will, as general education advances, spring whole hosts of writers, thinkers, and actors, who shall not so merely represent the working classes of our society, but shall point out the people as the grand future source of the enrichment of our literature. They are luminous proofs, and the forerunners of multitudinous proofs of the same kind, that genius is not entirely dependent upon art; but can, having once the simple machinery of reading and writing, seize on sufficient art to enable it to exhibit all the nobler forms of intellectual life, and to speak from heart to heart the living language of those passions and emotions, which are the elements of all human exertion after the good and the great, which console in distress, harden to necessary endurance, or fire to the generous rage of conquest over difficulties, and over the enemies of their just rights. These men are the starry lights that glitter on the verge of that dawn in which mankind shall emerge to its true position; the many being the enlightened spirits, and the few the weak exceptions, shrinking like shadows from the noon-day of human progress.

At the head of this great class stands, first in stature as in era, Robert Burns. True, before him there had been a Stephen Duck and a Robert Dodsley—glow-worms preceding the morning star; wonders, because the day of genuine minds had not yet come; respectable men, but not geniuses of that Titanic stamp which, by its very appearance, puts an end to every question as to its rank or nature in the utter astonishment at its gigantic presence. There have been many small geniuses paraded before the public as curiosities, because they were uneducated; but when Burns came forth from the crowd of his fellow-men, it was as the poet of the people; issuing like Moses from the cloud of God's presence, with a face so radiant with divine light, that the greatest prophets of the schools were dazzled at the apparition. He needed no apologies of want of [Pg 385] academic discipline; he was a man with all the gifts and powers of a man, fresh and instinctive in their strength as if direct from the Creator's hand. Burns was the representative of the common man in representative perfection. He was a combination of all the powers and the failings, the strength and the weakness of human nature. He had the great intellect of such a specimen man, awakened to its full consciousness, but not polished to the loss of any of its prominences. He was manly, blunt, daring, independent; full of passion and the thirst of pleasure; yet still, tender as a woman, sensitive as a child, and capable of sinking to the humblest penitent at the suggestions of his conscience, or rising to the dignity of a prophet or the sanctity of an apostle, as the oppressions of man or the sublimity of God aroused or exalted his spirit. He had the thrilling nerves and the changing moods of the poet; quick, versatile, melancholy, or humorous, he reflected all the changes of the social sky. His sensations were too acute to obey the sole dictates of mere reason—they carried him to every extreme. He was now bursting with merriment in the midst of his convivial comrades, singing like the lark or the nightingale in the joy of his heart; now thundering against the outrages of the strong and arbitrary, or weeping in convulsive grief over his follies or his wounded affections. But if his sensations were too acute to obey reason at all times, his moral-nature was too noble not to obey the clear voice of a conscience, which he often outraged, but never strove systematically to destroy. There have not wanted numbers who have wondered that David should be called "a man after God's own heart." But to me there is nothing wonderful in such an appellation. God knows that we are weak and imperfect, that in proportion to the strength of our passions are we liable to go wrong, and he does not expect

miracles from us. What he expects is, that errors committed in the hurricane of passion shall be abhorred and repented of, as soon as they are fully displayed to our consciences. To endeavor to [Pg 386] do right, yet, if overtaken with error, to abhor our crime, and to repent in the dust and ashes of prostrate remorse, marks a heart frail, yet noble; and such is human nature at best. The evidence of a corrupt spirit, of a truly criminal nature, is that leaven of malignity, which goes doggedly wrong, substituting the base purposes of its selfishness for the broad commands of God, and finding a satanic pleasure in working evil against its fellow-men. Such was not Robert Burns. He was no faultless monster, nor yet a monster with all his faults. His vivid sensibilities—those sensibilities which gave him the capacity of poetry, those qualities which were the necessary requisites for his vocation—often led him astray, often stained the purity of his mind; but they never succeeded in debasing his moral nature. That was too generous, too noble, too true to the godlike gift of a great human heart, which was to feel for all mankind, and to become the inspirer of the general mass with truer and higher ideas of themselves, and of their rank in creation. Woefully fell David of old—the poet taken from the sheepfold and the solitude of the wilderness to sit on the throne of a great people—and bitterly in the sight of that people did he lie in the dust and deplore his errors. Awfully went Robert Burns astray—the poet taken from the plow to sit on the throne of the realm of poetry—and bitterly did he, too, bow down and weep in the ashes of repentance. God gave, in both instances, impressive proofs to the world, that glorious talents given to men leave them but men still; and that they who envy the gift should not forget that they too would be exposed to the imminent danger of the fall. There is a comfort and a warning, there is a great moral lesson for mankind in the lives of such men; there is a great lesson of humility and charity. Who shall say that with a nature equally igneous and combustible, his delinquencies would not be far greater? Where is the man in ten millions that, with such errors on one side of the account, can place the same talents and virtues on the other? In the words of Burns himself, [Pg 387]

"Who made the heart, 'tis He alone
  Decidedly can try us;
He knows each chord its—various tone,
  Each spring—its various bias;
Then at the balance let's be mute,
  We never can adjust it;
What's *done* we partly may compute,
  But know not what's *resisted*."

The errors of Burns were visited upon him severely in his day; they stand recorded against him; no man can plead his example, for he condemned himself, and the consequences of his aberrations stand warningly side by side with the deeds themselves; but who is he that, with all the perfections of a monotonous propriety, shall confer the same benefits on his country and on his fellow-men? There was in the nature of Burns a manliness, a contempt of every thing selfish and mean, a contempt of all distinctions not based on nature, a hatred of tyranny, a withering scorn of hypocrisy, which, had he not possessed the brilliant genius that he did, would, among his cotemporaries, have diffused that tone of honest uprightness and justness of thinking which are the truest safeguards of a country's liberties and honor, and would have stamped him as a remarkable man. But all these qualities were but the accompaniments of a genius the most brilliant, the wonders and delights of which stand written, as it were, in lightning forever. Besides the irresistible contagion of his merriment, the flashes of wit, the tenderness of his sentiment, the wild laughter of his satiric scorn of cant, and priestcraft, and self-righteousness, the ardor of his patriotism, the gayety of his social songs, there is a tone in his graver writing which breathes over the hearts of his countrymen, and of all the world, the highest and most dignifying feeling that ever hallowed the heart of man.

With Burns, to be a man is the grand distinction. All other distinctions are but the clothes which [Pg 388] wrap the figure—the figure itself is the real thing. To be a man, in his eye, was to be the most glorious thing that we have any conception of on this side of heaven; to be an honest man was to be "the noblest work of God!" That was the great sentiment which animated him, and made him come forth from between the stilts of his plow, from his barn or his byre, into the presence of wealth and title, with a calm dignity and a proud bearing which astonished the artificial creatures of society. Titles, carriages, gay garments, great houses, what are they but the things which *the man* had gathered about him for his pride or his comfort? It was for *the man* that they were created and gathered together. Without *the man* they were nothing, had no value, could have no existence. Without that solid, and central, and sentient monarch, titles are but air, gay clothes but the furniture of a Jew's shop, great houses but empty, useless shells, carriages no better than wheel-barrows. From *the man* they derived all they were or counted for; and Burns felt that he and his poorest brother of the spade, and poorest sister of the spindle, were as entirely and essentially that as the king upon his throne. The king upon his throne! He was set there and arrayed in all his pageantry, and armed with all his power, solely for *the man* and by *the man*. In *the man* and his inner life, the heart, the soul, and the sentiment—that wondrous mystery which, prisoned in flesh and chained by matter to one corner of the limitless universe, yet is endowed with power to range through eternity—to plunge down amid innumerable worlds and their swarming life—to soar up and worship at the foot-stool of the Framer and Upholder of suns and systems, the Father of all being—in him the poet recognized the only monarch of this nether world. For *him*, not for lords, or millionnaires, or mitered priests, but for him was this august world created. For him were its lands and waters spread abroad; for him the seasons set forward in the harmony of their progress; for him were empires and cities framed, and all the comforts of [Pg 389] life, and the precious flowers of love and intellect breathed into the common air, and shed into

the common heart. That was the feeling of Robert Burns, which made him tread down all other distinctions as he did the thistles of his own fields. That was the doctrine which he was as surely created and sent forth to preach, as Jesus Christ was to promulgate that glorious Gospel whose especial mission he declared was to the poor. Robert Burns was the apostle of the dignity of man —man, in his own proper nature, standing calmly and invincibly above every artful distinction which sought to thrust him from his place in God's heritage, and set over him the selfish and the base. When contemplating such delusive distinctions, the winged words,

"A man's a man for a' that!"

burst like a lightning flash from the poet's bosom, and became the eternal watchword of self-respecting humanity.

"The king can make a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, and a' that;
The rank is but the guinea stamp,
A man's a man for a' that!"

Brave words! glorious truth! The soul of poetry and the whole science of social philosophy compressed into a single stanza, to serve as the stay and comfort of millions of hearts in every moment when most needed.

The pre-eminent merit of Burns, independent of his beauties as a fine poet, is the vigorous inculcation of these sentiments of a just self-estimation into the people. To teach them to regard themselves as objects of worth from their own human nature and destiny, irrespective of the mere mode by which they live, is to confer on the million the noblest benefaction. It is to give them at once a shield against "the proud man's contumely" and the degradations of vice. It is to set their feet on the firm rock of an eternal truth, and to render them alike invulnerable to envy [Pg 390] and despair. The man who breathes the soul of a rational dignity into the multitude is the greatest of possible patriots. He who respects virtue and purity in himself will respect those qualities in others; and a nation permeated with the philosophy of Burns would be the noblest nation that the sun ever yet shone upon.

But it is not merely that Robert Burns teaches his fellow-peasants and citizens to fling out of their bosoms the fiends of envy and self-depreciation; taught by those errors for which he has been so severely blamed, he has become, without question, the most efficient, wise, and tender counselor that they ever had. He knows all their troubles and temptations, for he has experienced them; and he gives them the soundest advice under all circumstances. He weeps with them, he rejoices with them, he worships with them, in such a brotherly, and occasionally such a fatherly sympathy, that his poems have become to the poor of Scotland, as they have told me, a sort of second Bible. How beautifully are blended in these stanzas the indignant sense of those oppressions which never crushed more directly the laboring poor than they do at this day in wealthy England, and the consoling truth of a divine retribution:

"Many and sharp the numerous ills
Inwoven with our frame:
More pointed still we make ourselves
Regret, remorse, and shame!
And man, whose heaven-erected face
The smiles of love adorn,
Man's inhumanity to man
Makes countless thousands mourn.

"See yonder poor o'erlabored wight,
So abject, mean, and vile,
Who begs a brother of the earth
To give him leave to toil;
And see his lordly fellow worm
The poor petition spurn,
Unmindful, though a weeping wife
And helpless offspring mourn. [Pg 391]

"If I'm designed yon lordling's slave,
By nature's law designed,
Why was an independent wish
E'er planted in my mind?
If not, why am I subject to
His cruelty and scorn?
Or why has man the will and power
To make his fellow mourn?

"Yet let not this too much, my son.
Disturb thy youthful breast;
This partial view of human kind
Is surely not the last!
The poor, oppressed, honest man,
Had never, sure, been born,

Had there not been some recompense
To comfort those that mourn!"

Robert Burns ran off the rail-road line of morality; but listen to the advice, warned by his own folly, which he gives to a Young Friend.

"The sacred lowe o' weel-placed love,
Luxuriantly indulge it,
But never tempt the illicit rove,
Tho' naething should divulge it,
I waive the quantum o' the sin,
The hazard of concealing;
But, och! it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling!

"To catch Dame Fortune's golden smile,
Assiduous wait upon her;
And gather gear by every wile
That's justified by honor:
Not for to hide it in a hedge,
Nor for a train attendant,
But for the glorious privilege
Of being independent.

"The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip
To haud the wretch in order,
But where ye feel your honor grip,
Let that aye be your border: [Pg 392]
Its slightest touches, instant pause—
Debar a' side pretenses,
And resolutely keep its laws,
Uncaring consequences.

"The great Creator to revere
Must sure become the creature,
But still the preaching cant forbear,
And e'en the rigid feature;
Yet ne'er with wits profane to range,
Be complaisance extended;
An Atheist's laugh's a poor exchange
For Deity offended!

"When ranting round in pleasure's ring,
Religion may be blinded,
Or if she gie a random sting,
It may be little minded;
But when on life we're tempest driven,
A conscience but a canker—
A correspondence fixed wi' Heaven
Is sure a noble anchor!"

These are golden words, worthy to be committed to memory by every young person; they are full of the deepest wisdom. But such wisdom, such golden lines, we might quote from almost every page of Burns. In his Epistle to Davie, how cordially does he enter into all the miseries of the poor, yet how eloquently does he also dwell on those blessings which God has given to all, and which no circumstances can take away!

"To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,
When banes are crazed and bluid is thin,
Is doubtless great distress!"

Yet there are other seasons when Nature, even to the most abject tramp, pours out royal pleasures.

"What though, like commoners of air,
We wander out we know not where,
But either house or hall?
Yet Nature's charms, the hills and woods,
The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,
Are free alike to all. [Pg 393]
In days when daisies deck the ground,
And blackbirds whistle clear,
With honest joy our hearts will bound
To see the coming year.
On braes when we please, then,
We'll sit and sowth a tune;

Syne rhyme till't, we'll time till't,
And sing't when we hae done."

"It's no in titles nor in rank;
It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,
To purchase peace and rest:
It's no in makin muckle mair;
It's no in books; its no in lear;
To make us truly blest;
If happiness hae not her seat
And center in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich, or great.
But never can be blest.
Nae treasures, nor pleasures,
Could make us happy lang;
The heart ay's the part ay,
That makes us right or wrang."

So speaks the humble plowman of Ayrshire, the still humbler exciseman of Dumfries, but the greatest poet of his country, and one of the noblest and wisest men of any country or age, spite of all his practical errors. We must now make our pilgrimage to the spots which were his homes on earth.

The old town of Ayr, so intimately connected with the memory of Burns, by his birth near it, by his poem of the Twa Brigs, by the scene of Tam O'Shanter, by the place of his monument and the festival in his honor, and by other particulars, is a quiet and pleasant old town of some twenty thousand population. It lies on a level, sandy coast, on land which, in fact, appears to have been won from the sea. Though lying close on the sea, it has no good harbor, and therefore little commerce, and no manufacture of any account. These circumstances leave much of the town as it was in Burns's time, though there are also evidences of modern extension and improvement, in [Pg 394] new streets and public buildings, especially of a county jail lying between the town and the shore. The moment you step out of the station of the Glasgow railway, which terminates here, you come upon the mouth of the River Ayr, and behold the Twa Brigs. That which was the New Brig in Burns's days, is the one over which you pass into the town. This bridge, whose guardian sprite is made to swagger over the Auld Brig, if it has not fulfilled the prophecy of the Auld Brig, and been swept away by a flood, has been in danger of demolition, having grown too narrow for the increase of traffic. It has been saved, however, no doubt by the saving power of Burns's poetry, which has made it sacred, and it was undergoing the process of widening at the time I was there, in July, 1845. The Auld Brig is some hundred yards or so higher up the stream, and seems retained really for little more than its antiquity and poetic classicality. It is now used only as a footpath, and, not being considered safe for carriages, has posts set up at the end to prevent every attempt with any carriage to pass it. One is irresistibly reminded, on going upon it, of the haughty query of the New Brig:

"Will your poor narrow footpath of a street,
Where two wheel-barrows tremble when they meet,
Your ruined, formless bulk o' stane an' lime,
Compare wi' bonnie brigs o' modern time?"

Mr. Chambers says that the Auld Brig is reported to have been built in the reign of Alexander III. by two maiden sisters, whose effigies are still shown in a faded condition on a stone in the eastern parapet, near the south end of the bridge. There certainly is such a stone, and you may rather fancy than distinctly trace two outlines of heads. The whole bridge is, as described by Burns, very old and time-worn.

"Auld Brig appeared o' ancient Pictish race,
The very wrinkles Gothic in his face; [Pg 395]
He seemed as he wi' Time had warstled lang,
Yet, teughly doure, he baide an unco bang."

There is a peculiar pleasure in standing on this old Brig, so exactly has Burns enabled you to place yourself in the very scene that he contemplated at the moment of conceiving his poem.

"A simple bard,
Unknown and poor, simplicity's reward,
Ae night, within the ancient burgh of Ayr,
By whim inspired, or haply pressed wi' care,
He left his bed, and took his wayward route,
And down by Simpson's wheeled the left about;
The drowsy Dungeon clock had numbered two,
And Wallace Tower had sworn the fact was true;
The tide-swollen Firth, wi' sullen sounding roar,
Through the still night dashed hoarse along the shore.
All else was hushed as Nature's closed e'e;
The silent moon shone high o'er tower and tree;
The chilly frost, beneath the silver beam,

Crept, gently crusting, o'er the glittering stream."

From this scene "the drowsy dungeon clock" is removed, the old jail having been pulled down; but Simpson's is still to be seen, a public house at the end of the bridge on the side most distant from the town; and Wallace Tower, I believe, however, almost wholly rebuilt since then, and presenting now a very modernized aspect, rears itself in a distant part of the town. Along the river side the "ancient burgh of Ayr" presents its antiquated houses, roofs, and gables, much as they did to the eye of Burns.

Ayr, though it stands on a flat, has still great charm of location, and this you perceive as you set out to visit the birth-place and monument of Burns, which lie about three miles south of Ayr. You may, if you please, take the way along the shore; and here you have the sea with its living billows, displaying at a distance opposite the craggy mountain heights of Arran, and the Mull of Cantire. Northward, Troon, with its new houses, may be seen standing on its naked promontory, and southward, the Tower of Dunbere is a bold but somber object on an elevated knoll on the margin [Pg 396] of the ocean, and far out southwest, Ailsacraig is descried, towering amid the waters. It is a fine and animated scene. It was Sunday forenoon as I advanced over the very level ground near the shore, toward Alloway. People were walking on the beach enjoying the sunshine, breeze, and glittering world of waters; lovers were seated among the broomy hillocks, children were gathering flowers amid the crimson glare of the heather; all had an air of beauty and gladness. To my left lay a richly-wooded country, and before me, beyond Alloway and the Doon, stretched the airy range of the Carrick Hills. It was the direction which I was pursuing that Tam O'Shanter took from the town to Alloway, for the old road ran that way; but there is a new and more direct one now from Ayr, and into that, having been shown the cottage where Mrs. Begg, Burns's sister, still lives, I struck. This agreeable road I soon saw diverge into two, and asked a poor man which of the two led to Burns's monument. At the name of Burns, the poor man's face kindled with instant animation. "I am going part of the way, sir," he said, "and will be proud to show it you." I begged him not to put himself at all out of his way. "Oh," said he, "I am going to look at my potato plot which lies out here." We fell into conversation about Burns; the way again showed a fresh branch, which was the way to his potato field; but the poor fellow gave a hesitating look; he could not find it in his heart to give up talking about Burns, and begged that I would do him the honor to allow him to walk on with me. "But your potatoes, my friend?" "Oh! they'll tak no harm, sir. The weather's very growing weather; one feels a natural curiosity to see how they thrive, but that will do next Sunday, if you *would* allow me to go on with you?"

I assured him that nothing would give me greater pleasure. I only feared that I might keep him out too long, for I must see all about Burns's birth-place, Kirk Alloway, the Brig of Doon, the [Pg 397] monument, and every thing of the kind. It was now over noon, and must be his dinner hour. He said, "No; he never had dinner on a Sunday; for years he had accustomed himself to only two meals on that day, because he earned nothing on it, and had ten children! But he generally took a walk out into the country, and got a good mouthful of fresh air, and that did him a deal of good."

I looked more closely at my new companion. He was apparently sixty, and looked like a man accustomed to dine on air. He was of a thin and grasshopper build; his face was thin and pale, his hair grizzled; yet there was an intelligence in his large gray eyes, but it was a sad intelligence, one which had long kept fellowship with patience and suffering. His gray coat, and hat well worn, and his clean but coarse shirt-collar, turned down over a narrow band of a blue cotton tie neckerchief, with its long ends dangling over his waistcoat, all denoted a poor, but a careful and superior man. I can not tell what a feeling of sympathy came over me; how my heart warmed toward the poor fellow. We went on; gay groups of people met us, and seemed to cast looks of wonder at the stranger and his poor associate; but I asked myself whether, if we could know, as God knows, the hearts and merits of every individual of those well-dressed and laughing walkers, we should find among them one so heroic as to renounce his Sunday dinner as a perpetual practice, because he "earned nothing on that day, and had ten children?" Was there a man or a woman among them who, if they knew this heroic man as I now knew him, would not desire to give him, for that one day at least, a good dinner, and as much pleasure as they could?

"My friend," said I, "I fear you have had more than your share of hardship in this life?"

"Nay," he replied, "he could not say that. He had had to work hard, but what poor man had not? But he had had many comforts; and the greatest comfort in life had been, that all his children had [Pg 398] taken good ways; if I don't except," and the old man sighed, "one lad, who has gone for a soldier; and I think it a little ungrateful that he has never written to us since he went, three years ago. Yet I hear that he is alive and well, in Jamaica. I can not but think that rather ungrateful," he added; "but of a' Robin Burns's poems, there's none, to my thinking, that comes up to that one—Man was made to Mourn."

I could not help again glancing at the thin, pale figure, which went as softly at my side as if it were a ghost, and could not wonder that Burns was the idol of the poor throughout Scotland, and that the Sunday wanderer of his native place had clung so fondly to the southern visitor of the same sacred spot.

"Can you explain to me," I asked, "what it is that makes Burns such a favorite with you all in Scotland? Other poets you have, and great ones; out of the same class, too, you had Hogg, but I do not perceive the same instant flash, as it were, of an electric feeling when any name is named but that of Burns."

"I can tell," said he, "why it is. It is because he had the heart of a man in him. He was all heart and all man; and there's nothing, at least in a poor man's experience, either bitter or sweet,

which can happen to him, but a line of Burns springs into his mouth, and gives him courage and comfort if he needs it. It is like a second Bible."

I was struck with the admirable criticism of the poor artisan. What acuteness of genius is like the acuteness of a sharp experience, after all? I found that, had I picked the whole county of Ayr, I could not have hit on a man more clearly aware of the real genius of Burns, nor a more excellent guide to all that related to him hereabouts. He now stopped me. We were on the very track of Tam O'Shanter.

"Kirk Alloway was drawing nigh,
Where ghaists and houlets nightly cry. [Pg 399]
By this time he was cross the ford,
Where in the snaw the chapman smoored:
And past the birks and meikle stane
Where drunken Charley brak 's neck-bane.
And through the whins, and by the cairn
Where hunters found the murdered bairn;
And near the thorn aboon the well
Where Mungo's mither hanged hersel."

The whins, the birks were gone: all was now one scene of richest cultivation; but in the midst of a cottager's garden still projected the "meikle stane" from the ground, in a potato bed. To this, by permission of the cottager, we advanced, and from this spot my guide pointed out the traditionary course of Tam on that awful night when

"Before him Doon pours all his floods;
The doublin' storm roars through the woods,
And lightnings flash from pole to pole."

Some of these scenes lay yet far before us; as the well

"Where Mungo's mither hanged hersel,"

which is just on the banks of the Doon itself. Anon we reached the cottage in which Burns was born. This stands on the right-hand side of the road, about a quarter of a mile from Kirk Alloway and the Brig o' Doon. It is a genuine Scotch cottage of two rooms on the ground floor, thatched and whitewashed. It is now, and has been long, a little public house. It stands close up to the road, and over the door is a portrait of Burns, an evident copy from the portrait by Nasmyth, and under it, in large and noticeable letters, "Robert Burns, the Ayrshire Poet, was born under this roof, the 25th Jan., A.D. 1759. Died A.D. 1796, aged 37-1/2 years."

It is well known to most readers that this house was built by Burns's father, and that about a week after Robert, his first child, was born, the roof fell in during a tempest at midnight, and that mother and child had to be carried forth in a hurry, through the storm and darkness, to a cottage, [Pg 400] which still remains, not far off, on the opposite side of the road. Robert Burns was born in what is now the kitchen, in one of those recess beds so common in Scotch cottages. This is still shown to visitors by the occupiers of the house. The better room, in which the guests are entertained, that nearest to the town of Ayr, bears abundant marks of the zeal of these visitors. The walls are well written over with names, but not in that extraordinary manner that the walls of Shakspeare's birth-place at Stratford are. The rage here has taken another turn, that of cutting the names into the furniture. There are two plane-tree tables, which are cut and carved in the most singular completeness. There does not seem to be left space, neither on the top, the sides, nor the legs, even for another initial. There were formerly three of these tables, but one of them was sold some years ago. There is a cupboard and chairs all cut over, the chairs having been obliged to be renewed, but the fresh ones are now as much cut as ever. We were informed by Mrs. Gondie, the widow of the old miller, John Gondie, of Doonside Mill, who had lived in the house nearly forty years, that the lease of the property had been bought of Burns's father, by the Shoemaker's Company of Ayr, for one hundred and sixty guineas; but that the property now let for £45 a year; and that the said Shoemaker's Company wishing again to raise the rent, the widow was going to quit at Michaelmas last, and that another person had taken the house and small piece of ground adjoining, at a rental of £60 a year. Mrs. Gondie said that she had been once bid £15 for one of the tables, but had refused it; that, however, being now about to quit the premises, she had sold the chairs and tables to a broker at Glasgow, who was announcing them as the actual furniture of Burns, though it was well known that when Burns's father left this house for Mount Oliphant, a few miles off, when Robert Burns was not seven years of age, he took all his furniture with him. Conspicuous among the carved names in this room was that of an ambitious Peter Jones, of Great [Pg 401] Bear Lake, North America.

Burns's father, who was, when he lived here, gardener to Mr. Ferguson, of Doonholm, was a man of an excitable temperament, but of a most upright disposition; and his mother, like the mothers of most remarkable men, was a woman of clear, clever, and superior mind, of a winning address, and full of ballads and traditions. From both sides the son drew the elements of a poet; and we can well imagine him sitting by the humble fireside of this cottage, and receiving into his childish heart, from the piety of the father, and the imaginative tales of the mother, those images of genuine Scottish life which poured themselves forth as well in Tam O'Shanter as in the grave and beautiful Cotter's Saturday Night.

Having insisted on my worthy guide getting some refreshment, we again sallied forth to make a

more thorough exploration of the youthful haunts of the poet. And now, indeed, we were surrounded by mementoes of him and of his fame on all hands. The cottage stands on a pleasant plain; and about a quarter of a mile onward you see, on the left hand of the road, the monument erected to his memory: a dome, surmounted with a lyre and the significant wine-cup, and supported on Corinthian pillars. On the opposite, that is, on the right-hand side of the road, is the old Kirk of Alloway; beyond, away to the right, is heard the sea, while the airy range of the Carrick Hills stretches across, closing the landscape before you. At their feet a mass of trees marks the course of the Doon; but, before you reach any of these objects, you pass, on your left, the large open field in which was held the Burns Festival on the 6th of August, 1844. The place where the wall had been broken down to admit the procession was plainly discernible by its new mortar; and a fine crop of corn was now waving where such thousands had, but a year before, met in honor of the immortal exciseman.

Of this festival copious particulars are to be found in all the newspapers of the day, but in none so [Pg 402] complete and accurate as "The Full Report" published by Mr. Maxwell Dick, the worthy publisher of the Ayrshire News Letter at Irvine, one of the most enthusiastic admirers of the genius of Burns, and of genius in general. By this report it appears that the procession, forming on the Low Green of Ayr, near the County Buildings, met at ten o'clock in the morning, and consisted of the magistrates of the town, public bodies, farmers, numerous freemasons' lodges, societies of gardeners, archers, and odd fellows, King Crispin in his most imposing style, with Souter Johnny in character, accompanied by attendants with banners floating, and bands playing music of Burns's songs. In this procession were seen gentlemen and noblemen, and literary men of the highest distinction, from all parts of the empire. It reached a mile along the high road, three abreast. The whole number of persons present—that is, in the procession and on the ground—was calculated at eighty thousand. A splendid triumphal arch was erected at the cottage where the poet was born, and, as the procession drew near it, the band played, "There was a Lad was born in Kyle;" the vast multitude uncovered at once, and the flags were lowered as they passed the humble but much respected spot. Platforms were erected in various places, so that people could get a *coup-d'œil* of the procession. As it approached Kirk Alloway, the old bell, which still occupies the belfry, was set a ringing, and continued so while the procession marched under the triumphal arch along the new bridge. Deploying round toward the old bridge of Doon, the circling line, partially obscured by the houses and trees, had a truly picturesque effect; the waving banners, the music of the bands, mellowed and echoed by "the banks and braes o' bonnie Doon," were deeply impressive. On reaching the Auld Brig, over which was thrown a triumphal arch, the band struck up "Welcome, Royal Charlie," while the procession, uncovering and lowering their [Pg 403] flags, passed over in front of the platform, on which stood the three sons of Burns, his sister Mrs. Begg, her son, and two daughters. The procession occupied at least an hour in coming from the new bridge to the field, on entering which the band played "Duncan Gray," followed by "The Birks of Aberfeldy." A large circle was then formed round the platform for the musicians in the field; and the whole company, led by professional vocalists, joined in singing "Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon," and "Auld Lang Syne." The bands were then stationed in various parts of the field: the regimental and Glasgow St. Andrew's bands in the center of the field; the Kilwinning and Cumnock bands at the cottage; and the bagpipers played at a distance from the pavilion. There were two inclosures for dancing: one near the head of the field, and the other on the brow overlooking the Doon. Immediately after the procession was over, the crowd were astonished by the sudden appearance of Tam O'Shanter, "well mounted on his gray mare Meg," and a flight of witches in full pursuit of her, till he reached and passed the keystone of the arch of the Auld Brig. At two, the Earl of Eglinton took the chair at the banquet in the pavilion, with Professor Wilson as croupier. To the right of the chairman sat Robert Burns, Esq., the eldest son of the poet; Major Burns, his youngest son; on the left, Colonel Burns, second son of the poet; Mrs. Begg, Burns's sister; and right and left, other members of the family, amid many noble and distinguished persons: as Mrs. Thomson, of Dumfries, the Jessie Lewars of the poet; Sir John M'Neill, late plenipotentiary to the court of Persia; the lord-justice-general, the Countess of Eglinton, Alison, the historian, Mr. and Mrs. S. C. Hall, Robert Chambers, of Edinburgh, Douglas Jerrold, William Thom, the poet of Inverury, &c., &c. The chairs of the chairman and croupier were made of oaken rafters from Kirk Alloway, and many mementoes of the poet decorated the table. The scene in the [Pg 404] pavilion is described as splendid, and like one of fairy-land; and the most enthusiastic speeches were made in honor of the poet, especially by the noble chairman and the eloquent John Wilson.

It will be seen, by those acquainted with the ground, that the procession had thus taken a course contrived to include every object of interest connected with Burns here. It had passed the cottage of his birth; passed between Kirk Alloway and his monument; crossed by the new bridge over the Doon to the side of the river, and returned over the old bridge, so as to see all "the banks and braes o' bonnie Doon," and so entered the field of the festival, having entirely encircled the monument. There, in full view of all these objects, the cottage, the old ruins of the kirk, the monument, and the banks of Doon, they celebrated—eighty thousand persons—the festival of his honor, amid the music of his own enchanting songs, among which were, "A Man's a Man for a' That;" "This is na my ain House;" "Green Grow the Rashes, O;" "My Love she's but a Lassie yet;" "What ye wha's in yon Toun."

This stirring and tumultuous expression of a nation's veneration was gone by; silence had again fallen, as it were, with a musing sense of the poet's glory on the scene; and with my worthy old guide I went over the same ground leisurely, noting all its beauties and characteristics. First, we turned into the grave-yard of Kirk Alloway. Here stood the roofless old kirk, just such a plain, simple ruin as you see in a hundred places in Ireland. One of the first objects that arrests your attention is the bell in the little belfry, with a rope hanging outside, only sufficiently low for the

sexton, on any occasion of funeral, to reach it with a hooked pole, and thus to prevent any idle person ringing it at other times. This bell, when the parishes of Alloway and Ayr were joined, was attempted to be carried away by the authorities of Ayr, by no means to their honor, but the crofters of Alloway manfully rose and resisted successfully the removal. There are plenty of open [Pg 405] windows where Tam O'Shanter could take a full view of the uncanny dancing-party; and "the winnock bunker in the east," a small window, "where sat Auld Nick, in shape o' beast," as fiddler, is conspicuous enough. The interior of the kirk is divided by a wall. The west-end division is the burial-place of the Cathcarts, which is kept very neat. The other end, and where the witch-dance met Tam's astonished eyes, is now full of briers and nettles, bearing sufficient evidence of no recent displays of this kind. The kirk-yard is crowded with tombs, and the first memorial of the dead which meets your eye is the headstone of the poet's father, just before you as you enter by the stile, with this inscription: "Sacred to the memory of William Burns, farmer in Lochlea, who died Feb., 1784, in the 63d year of his age; and of Agnes Brown, his spouse, who died the 14th of Jan., 1820, in the 88th year of her age. She was interred in Bolton Church-yard, East Lothian.

"O ye whose cheek the tear of pity stains,
  Draw near with pious reverence, and attend!
Here lie the loving husband's dear remains,
  The tender father, and the generous friend.
The pitying heart that felt for human woe;
  The dauntless heart that feared no human pride;
The friend of man, to vice alone a foe;
  'For e'en his failings leaned to virtue's side.'"

This epitaph was written expressly for this tomb by Burns, the last line being quoted from Goldsmith.

Advancing now to the new bridge, you stand between two remarkable monuments of the poet. On your right hand, close on the banks of the Doon, and adjoining the bridge, stands a handsome villa, in beautiful grounds which occupy part of "the banks and braes." This is the house of Mr. Auld, the enterprising hair-dresser of Ayr, who was the first to recognize the genius of Thom the sculptor, then a poor stone-mason of Ayr. Thom, seeing a picture of Tam O'Shanter in Auld's window, requested the loan of it for a few days. Being asked by Auld what he wanted it for, he [Pg 406] said he had a notion that he could make a figure from it. It was lent, and in a few days he returned with a model of Tam in clay. Mr. Auld was so struck with the genius displayed in it, that he suggested to Thom to complete the group by adding Souter Johnny. That was soon done; and then, by the assistance of Mr. Auld, the well-known group was cut in stone. The enterprising hair-dresser now prepared to set out on an expedition of exhibition of this group, the proceeds of which, I understand, were agreed to be equally divided between Auld, Thom, and the committee for a monument to Burns, near his birth-place. Such was the success of the scheme, that Thom, I am told, received £4000 as his share of the proceeds, which, however, he soon contrived to lose by taking stone-quarries, and entering on building schemes. Having lost his money, he retired to America. Auld, more careful, quitted the wig-block and lather-brush, and building himself a house, sat down as a country gentleman opposite to the monument, which seems to be in his keeping. It has been said that the monument committee never received any thing like a third of the proceeds of the exhibition, or the monument might now be opened free of cost to the public. That, however, is a point which the committee and Mr. Auld must be best informed about. One thing is certain, that Mr. Auld's present residence is a grand specimen of the effect of the united genius of Burns, Thom, and Auld; an exciseman, a stone-mason, and a barber. To the left hand of the road, opposite to *this* monument, stands, in a pleasant garden, the *other* monument of Burns, as already described, and which also, it seems, partly owed its existence to the same bold enterprise of this barber of Ayr, who seems actually to have had the art of "cutting blocks with a razor." In this monument is no statue of Burns, but merely a framed copy of that admirable colored print of Burns, published by Mr. Maxwell Dick, of Irvine, from Nasmyth's picture; and on [Pg 407] the table in the center, the Bible and Testament given by Burns to his Mary at their last parting near Montgomery Castle. These are two separate volumes, and are displayed at the beginning of each, where Burns has placed a masonic sign, and written his name, now nearly obliterated; adding the two texts, Leviticus, xix., 12; Matthew, v., 33; which are, "Ye shall not swear by my name falsely; I am the Lord;" and, "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths." These precious volumes were known to be in the possession of the sister of Burns's "Mary," in America; and a society of young men, ardent admirers of Burns, resolved to regain them, if possible, for the public. This, after great trouble and expense, they finally effected, and here they are, objects certainly of the deepest interest.

In a separate and small building in the same garden stands the celebrated group, by Thom, of Tam and Souter Johnny. This, however, it being Sunday, was, by an order of the authorities of Ayr, not allowed to be seen, though the monument was. I asked the youth who showed the monument if he could explain to me why it was a sin to show the group, and not a sin to show the monument on a Sunday; but the lad very properly replied that he did not pretend to a

metaphysical sagacity so profound; his business was to *show* the monument, and *not* to *show* either the group or the reason why; for that he referred me to the superior hair-splitting piety and acumen of the corporate authorities of Ayr.

Quitting this garden, you encounter, at the foot of the new bridge, a new inn called Burns's Inn and Hotel, with a fine painted sign, with a blackbird singing upon a bough, with a crook and a house, and an oak in the center of a shield laid on branches of olive and oak; and over it the words, "Better a small bush than nae bield." The auld brig is some little distance up the stream, and the view from it is very beautiful. You are surrounded by "the banks and braes o' bonnie [Pg 408] Doon," steep, hung with orchards and fine woodland trees. At some little distance still further up the stream, you descry the old mill of Alloway, half buried in umbrageous trees, and all round rise sweet woodland fields at the feet of the hills. The bridge is well carved over with names, and overgrown with masses of ivy. Standing on this remarkable old gray bridge, my companion exhibited a trait of delicate and genuine feeling, which no man of the most polished education in the school of politeness could have surpassed. Gathering a sprig of ivy, he said, presenting it, "May be ye would like to send this to your leddy in England; it's gathered just frae the keystane." I accepted it with the liveliest pleasure, and it is now carefully preserved where the good man wished it. We now returned to Ayr, talking of Burns, his history, his poetry, and his fine qualities all the way; and after one of the pleasantest rambles I ever made in any company, I bid my old friend good-by at his door, leaving in his hand a trifle to mend his Sunday supper. "But," said he, as I was going away, "might I request the favor of your name, that I may know who it was that I had the honor of a walk with to Burns's monument, when I am thinking of it?" I told him; his face passed from its usual paleness to a deep flush; and he exclaimed, "Eh, sir! I ken yer name, and that o' yer leddy too, right weel!" Depend upon it, the recollection of that walk has been as pleasant to my old friend as to myself.

The next day, with a driver well acquainted with the country, I issued forth in a gig to visit all the various residences of Burns, between Ayr and Mauchline. Burns, in his life, seemed like a bird leaving its nest. He took two or three short flights till he flew quite away to Dumfries. At every move he got further from Ayr. He was like an emigrant, still going on and on in one direction, and his course was southeast. First he went, that is, with his father, to Mount Oliphant, a farm about [Pg 409] four miles from Alloway, where he lived from his sixth to his twelfth year. This farm has nothing particular about it. It lies on a bare ridge of hill, an ordinary little Scotch farm-steading, with bare and treeless fields. Then he went on to another farm—to Lochlea, still further out on this long, high, and bleak tract of country, near Tarbolton. This farm ruined his father, and there he died. Lochlea is a neat farm-house, lying in a hollow more sheltered than Mount Oliphant, but still possessing no picturesque features. In fact, the family was seeking, not the picturesque, but a livelihood. At Lochlea, Burns lived till he was twenty-four, and here he attended the masonic lodge at the Cross Keys, at Tarbolton, which still remains. There he became acquainted with Mr. David Sillar, the schoolmaster of Tarbolton, and addressed to him his Epistle to Davie. It was about three miles from Tarbolton, but that was nothing to Burns, full of life and poetry. The Bachelor's Society that, with David Sillar and other young men, he formed there, had infinite charms for him. Humble were these companions; in David Sillar's words,

"Of birth and blood we do not boast,
  No gentry does our club afford,
But plowmen and mechanics we
  In nature's simple dress record;"

but they were men after Burns's own heart. He judged of men as his father had taught him:

"My father was a farmer upon the Camek Border,
And carefully he bred me up in decency and order;
He bade me act a manly part, though I had ne'er a farthing,
For without an honest, manly heart, no man was worth regarding."

It was during his abode here that he wrote John Barleycorn; Corn Riggs are Bonnie; Winter, a Dirge; the Death of Poor Mailie; Mailie's Elegy; and Now Whistling Winds, &c. But the love affairs he was now continually getting into, and the dissipations that he became acquainted with [Pg 410] at Kirkoswald and Irvine, at which places he spent some months, rendered his poetical growth far less than it otherwise might have been there. One incident in his life, and one of his most beautiful poems consequent on it, however, arose out of an attachment, which, though said to be formed at Mauchline, was certainly cultivated here. Just below Tarbolton lies Montgomerie Castle, beautifully situated amid its woods on the banks of the Faile, where he fell in love with Mary Campbell. Here was the house at which, according to his own beautiful poem, they used to meet, and here it was that he finally took leave of her. She was dairy-maid in the house then belonging to Colonel Hugh Montgomerie, afterward Earl of Eglinton, and grandfather of the present earl.

"Ye banks, and braes, and streams around
  The castle of Montgomerie,
Green be your woods and fair your flowers,
  Your waters never drumlie.
There summer first unfaulds her robes,
  And there they longest tarry,
For there I took my last farewell

Of my sweet Highland Mary."

There is a story mentioned in the Life of Burns of this parting being on the banks of Ayr, and Cromek repeats it, adding that "the lovers stood on each side of a small purling brook; they laved their hands in the limpid stream, and, holding a Bible between them, pronounced their vows to be faithful to each other."

All this may be true, for they took a day to this final solitary enjoyment of each other's society in the woods before parting. They might wander by the Ayr, and so on up to the Faile, and at some small rivulet on the way perform this simple and affecting ceremony. Mary was going to the Western Highlands to see her friends before she married Robert Burns, but she died on her way back, and they never met again. This Bible, as we have seen, has been recovered, and is deposited in the monument at Alloway Wherever this ceremony, however, took place, the parting [Pg 411] assuredly took place here. Burns says, not only that "there I took my last farewell," but also

"How sweetly bloomed the gay green birk,
  How rich the hawthorn's blossom,
As, underneath the fragrant shade,
  I clasped her to my bosom."

There still stands the thorn, called by all the country "Highland Mary's Thorn."

The house and park are sold or leased by the Earl of Eglinton to a solicitor in Ayr. My driver appeared afraid of going into the park, saying "the writer," that is, the solicitor, was a queer fellow, and would not let any body go to the thorn, and certainly a large board at each park gate, warning all persons to avoid those hallowed precincts, appeared to confirm the man's opinion; but, having come so far, I did not mean to pass without a glance at the parting scene of Burns and Highland Mary. I bade him drive down to the house, where I was speedily assured by the servants about that I was quite at liberty to go to the tree. "How shall I know it?" "Oh! a child may know it: it is all hacked, and the twigs broken, by people who carry away some of it to keep." By these signs I readily recognized the tree. It is not far from the house, close to the carriage drive, and on the top of the slope that descends to the Faile, which murmurs on beneath its sweet woodland shade.[30]

The last abode of Burns in Ayrshire was at Mossgiel. This is some four miles beyond Tarbolton, and close to Mauchline, which is merely a large village. Mossgiel farm lies, as it were, at the end [Pg 412] of that long, high, barren ridge of hills, which extends almost all the way from Ayr thither, and on which Burns's father had sought a poor living, and found ruin. It stands near the line of the slope which descends into Mauchline, and overlooks a large extent of bleak and bare country, and distant, bare hills. In the vales of the country, however, lie many scenes of great beauty and classic fame. Such are the banks of the Ayr, which winds on deep between its braes and woods, like the Nith, the Doon, and the higher Clyde. Such are Stair, Logan, Crukerne, Catrine, Dugald Stewart's place, and many others.

The farm of Mossgiel, which consists of about 118 acres, lies, as observed, high, and as Gilbert, the brother of Burns, described it, "on a cold, wet bottom." The farms occupied by the Burns family in this part of the country were all of a thankless and ungenial kind; in fact, they lacked the means to command better. The two brothers, Robert and Gilbert, had taken this farm some time before their father's death, in the hope of assisting the family in that poverty which came still after them, spite of the most laborious exertion, like an armed man, and which was weighing their father to the grave. At his death they removed altogether from Lochlea, and with their mother and sisters became here one household. Here Burns made the firmest resolves of steadiness, industry, and thriving; but the seasons were against him, and he soon became mixed up with all the dissipations of Mauchline, where he established a club after the fashion of that at Tarbolton. Very soon, too, he plunged into the midst of Church disputes, in which his friend Gavin Hamilton, a lawyer of the place, was personally embroiled. Here he wrote The Holy Tuilzie, Holy Fair, Holy Willie's Prayer, The Ordination, The Kirk's Alarm—those scalping poems, in which he lays bare to the skull bone, bigotry, hypocrisy, and all sanctimonious bitterness in religion. Here he fell in love with Jean Armour, the daughter of a stone-mason of Mauchline, who, after many [Pg 413] troubles, and much opposition on the part of the family, became afterward his wife. Here he wrote the greater part of his poems, and his very finest ones, and here he broke forth upon the world like a new-risen sun, his poems, which were first published at Kilmarnock, attracting such extraordinary attention, that he was called to Edinburgh, and a new and more complete edition there published, while he himself was introduced as a sort of miracle to the highest circles of aristocracy and literature. The four years which he lived here, though they were sinking him, in a pecuniary point of view, into such a slough of despair that he seriously resolved to emigrate to the West Indies, and only published his poems to raise the means, were, as regarded his fame, glorious and most interesting years. It was here that he might be said, more expressly than any where else,

"To walk in glory and in joy,
Following his plow along the mountain side;"

for, spite of the iron destiny which seemed to pursue him, and in an ungenial soil and the most untoward seasons, to endeavor to crush him with "carking care," he was full of life and vigor, and often rose in the entrancement of his spirit above all sense of earth and its darkness. By the testimony of his cotemporaries, there were few that could vie with him in all the operations of the

farm. In mowing, reaping, binding after the reapers, thrashing, or loading, there were few who could compete with him. He stood five feet ten in height, and was of singular strength and activity. He prided himself on the straightness of the furrow that he drew, and the skill with which he threw his corn in sowing. On one occasion, a man having succeeded in a hard strife in setting up as many shocks in a given time, said, "There, I am not far behind this time;" to which Burns replied, "In one thing, John, you are still behind; I made a song while I was stooking." Allan Cunningham says that his father, who was steward to Miller of Dalswinton, Burns's landlord, and [Pg 414] lived just opposite to him at Ellisland, declared that "he had the handsomest cast of the hand in sowing corn that he ever saw on a furrowed field." It was here, then, at Mossgiel, that, young, vigorous, and full of desire to advance in worldly matters, he worked assiduously with his brother Gilbert in the fields, undivided in his attentions by the duties of the Excise. But poetry, spite of all resolves to the contrary, came over him like a flood. As his hand worked, his heart was full of inspiration, and as Gilbert held the plow, Robert would come and walk beside him, and repeat what he had just composed; or as they went with the cart to carry out corn or bring home coals, he would astonish him with some such display. "The verses to the Mouse and the Mountain Daisy," says Gilbert, "were composed on these occasions, and while the author was holding the plow. I could point out the spot where each was composed. Holding the plow was a favorite situation with Robert for poetic composition, and some of his best verses were produced while he was at that exercise." With what interest, then, do we look over the fields at Mossgiel, scarcely an inch of which has not been strode over by Burns, while engaged at once in turning up the soil, sowing or gathering its crops, and in working out, in the depth of his mind, those compositions which were to remain for all time the watchwords of liberty and of noble thought. Besides the polemic poems already spoken of, here he wrote Halloween; Address to the De'il; Death and Dr. Hornbrook, a satire on the poor schoolmaster and self-appointed apothecary, Wilson of Tarbolton, which drove him from the place, but only to thrive in Glasgow; The Jolly Beggars; Man was made to Mourn; The Vision; The Cotter's Saturday Night, which he very appropriately repeated to Gilbert during a Sunday afternoon walk.

The very interesting scene of the creation of these exquisite poems lies on the left hand of the road proceeding from Tarbolton to Mauchline. The house stands at a field's distance from the [Pg 415] road. It is a thatched house with but and ben, just as it was, and the buildings behind it forming two wings, exactly as he built his house at Ellisland. To the northwest the house is well sheltered with fine, full-grown trees. A handsome young mother, the farmer's wife, worthy for her comely and intelligent look to have been celebrated by Burns, told me that great numbers of people came to see the place, and that it was very much as Burns left it. There were the barn, the byre, the garden near, in all which the poet had labored like any other son of earth for his daily bread, and on the yearly allowance—for every one of the family had a specific allowance for clothes and pocket-money—of seven pounds, which, says his brother, he never exceeded! Very extravagant he could not have been. You see the ingle where he sat and composed some of his most pathetic and most humorous pieces. It is said to be in the spence, a better room, which has a boarded floor, and the recess beds so common in Scotland, that he chiefly wrote. Who can contemplate this humble room, and recall the image of the young poet, with a heart of melancholy, here inditing, Man was made to Mourn, or his Vision, without the liveliest emotion? There is no feeling of utter sadness more strongly expressed than in the opening of the Vision.

"The sun had closed the winter day,
The curlers quat their roaring play,
An' hunger'd mawkin ta'en her way
To kail-yard green,
While faithless snaws ilk step betray
Whare she has been.

"The threshers weary flinging tree
The lee-lang day had tired me;
And when the day had closed his e'e
Far i' the west,
Ben i' the spence, right pensively,
I gaed to rest [Pg 416]

"There, lanely, by the ingle cheek,
I sate and eyed the spewing reek,
That filled with hoast-provoking smeek,
The auld clay biggin;
And heard the restless rattons squeak
About the riggin.

"All in this mottie, misty clime,
I backward mused on wasted time,
How I had spent my youthful prime
An' done naething
But stringin blethers up in rhyme,
For fools to sing.

"Had I to gud advice but harkit,
I might, by this, hae led a markit,
Or strutted in a bank and clarkit

My cash account.
While here, half mad, half fed, half sarket,
Is a' th' amount."

Gilbert, it seems, continued on this farm after Robert left for Ellisland till 1800; and the next tenant had occupied it till but a year or two ago, when the present young people came in.

Mauchline, at the distance of a few minutes, abounds with recollections of Burns. There is the inn where Burns used to meet his merry club. There is the church-yard where the scene of the Holy Fair is laid, though the old church which stood in Burns's time has disappeared, and a new one taken its place. Opposite to the church-yard gates runs the street called "The Cowgate," up which he makes Common Sense escape; just by is the house of "Posie Nansie," where Burns fell in with the "Jolly Beggars;" not far off is the public house of John Dow, that Burns and his companions frequented at the opening of the Cowgate. Posie Nansie, or Nance Tinnock's, was the house mentioned in the Holy Fair, where the public crowded in during the intervals of the service, having a back door most convenient into the area.

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"Now but an' ben, the change-house fills
Wi' yill-caup commentators;
Here's crying out for bakes and gills,
An' there the pint stoup clatters."

Every body can tell of the haunts and places of Burns and his jolly companions in Mauchline. The women came out of their houses as they saw me going about, and were most generously anxious to point out every noted spot. Many of the older people remembered him. "A fine, handsome young fellow, was he not?" I asked of an old woman that would show me where Jean Armour lived. "Oh! jus a black-avised chiel," said she, hurrying up a narrow street parallel to the Cowgate; "but here lived Jean Armor's father. Come in, come," added she, unceremoniously opening the door, when an old dame appeared, who occupied the house. "I am only going to show the gentleman where Robin Burns's Jean lived. Come along, sir, come along," continued she, hastening as unceremoniously up stairs; "ye maun see where the bairns were born. Ha! ha! ha!" "Ha! ha! ha!" screamed the old dame of the house, apparently highly delighted; "ay, show the gentleman! show him! he! he! he!" So up went my free-making guide, up went I, and up came the old lady of the house. "There! there!" exclaimed the first old woman, pointing to a recess bed in one of the chambers, "there were three o' Robin Burns's bairns born. It's true, sir, as I live!" "Ay, gude faith is it," re-echoed the old lady of the house, and the two gossips again were very merry. "But ye maun see where Rob an' Jean were married!" so out of the house the lean and nimble woman again hurried, and again, at a rapid pace, led me down another narrow street just to the back of what they call the castle, Gavin Hamilton's old house. It was in Burns's time Gavin Hamilton's office, and in that office Burns was married. It is now a public house.

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Having taken a survey of all the scenes of Burns's youthful life here, I proceeded to that house where he was always so welcome a guest—the house of Gavin Hamilton itself. Though called the castle, it is, in fact, a mere keep, with an ordinary house attached to it in a retired garden. The garden is surrounded by lofty walls, with a remarkably large tree in the center. The house, a mere cottage, is huddled down in the far right-hand corner, and opposite to it stands the old keep, a conspicuous object as you descend the hill into the town. It is maintained in good order, and used as a laundry. A bare-legged lassie was spreading out her wash on the grass-plot, who informed me that not only was Gavin Hamilton dead, but his son too, and that his son's widow and her children were living there. I was shown the room where Burns, one Sunday, on coming in after kirk, wrote the satirical poem of the Calf, on the clergyman. An ordinary little parlor.

In traversing the streets of Mauchline, it was impossible to avoid not only recalling all the witty jollity of Burns here, but his troubles that wellnigh drove him from the land. The opposition of Jean Armour's family; the tearing up of her secret marriage-lines by herself in her despair; Burns's distraction, his poverty, his hidings from the myrmidons of the law, and his daily thirteen miles' walk to correct the proofs of his poems at Kilmarnock, to save postage. But now the Muse which had made him poor refused to permit him to quit his native land. Out burst the sun of his glory, and our scene changes with this change to Edinburgh.[31]

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To describe all the haunts of Burns in Edinburgh were a long affair. They were the houses of all the great and gay: of the Gordons, the Hamiltons, the Montgomeries, of the learned, and the beautiful. The celebrated Duchess of Gordon, at that time at the zenith of beauty and fashion, was one of his warmest admirers, and had him to her largest parties. The young plowman of Ayrshire sat hob-nobbing in the temples of splendor and luxury with the most distinguished in every walk of life. Yet his haunts also lay equally among the humble and the undistinguished. Burns was true to his own maxim, "a man's a man for a' that;" and where there were native sense, wit, and good-humor, there he was to be found, were it even in a cellar with only a wooden stool to sit on. At his first arrival in Edinburgh he took up his quarters with a young Ayrshire acquaintance, Richmond, a writer's apprentice, in the house of a Mrs. Carfrae, Baxter's Close, Lawn Market, where he had a share of the youth's room and bed. From the most splendid entertainments of the aristocracy he described himself as groping his way at night through the dingy alleys of the "gude town to his obscure lodgings, with his share of a deal table, a sanded floor, and a chaff bed, at eighteen pence a week." This was during the winter and spring of 1786-7, on his first visit to Edinburgh, where he became the great fashionable lion, and while his new edition by Creech was getting out. In the spring, finding his popularity had brought him so much under the public eye that his obscure lodgings in the Lawn Market were not quite befitting him,

he went and lodged with his new acquaintance, William Nicol, one of the masters of the High School, who lived in the Buccleugh Road. In the *winter* of 1787, on his second visit to Edinburgh, he had lodgings in a house at the entrance of James's Square, on the left hand. As you go up East Register-street, at the end of the Register House, you see the end of a house at the left-hand side [Pg 420] of the top of the street. There is a perpendicular row of four windows: the top window belongs to the room Burns occupied. Here it was that he was visited by the lady with whom at this time he corresponded under the name of Sylvander, and she with him as Clarinda. His leg had been hurt by an overturn of a carriage by a drunken coachman, and he was laid up some time, and compelled to use crutches. Allan Cunningham tells us that this lady "now and then visited the crippled bard, and diverted him by her wit, and soothed him by her presence." She was the Mrs. Mac of his toasts. A blithe, handsome, and witty widow, a great passion or flirtation grew up between Burns and her. In one of his letters to his friend, Richard Brown, December 30, 1787, he says, "Almighty love still reigns and revels in my bosom, and I am at this moment ready to hang myself for a young Edinburgh widow." In a letter of their correspondence which has recently been published, he bids Clarinda look up at his window as she occasionally goes past, and in another complains that she does not look high enough for a bard's lodgings, and so he perceives her only gazing at one of the lower windows. If we are to believe the stanza of hers quoted by Burns, we must suppose Clarinda to have been unhappily married:

"Talk not of love—it gives me pain—
  For love has been my foe;
He bound me with an iron chain,
  And plunged me deep in woe."

If it be true, as Allan Cunningham surmises, that those inimitable verses in the song of "Ae fond kiss, and then we sever," which expresses the pain of a final parting better than any other words ever did, have reference to Clarinda, then Burns must have been passionately attached to her indeed:

"Who shall say that Fortune grieves him,
While the star of hope she leaves him? [Pg 421]
Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me;
Dark despair around benights me.
Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted."

Of the generous and true-hearted disposition of Clarinda, we shall possess a juster idea when we reflect that Burns was not at this time any longer the lion of the day. The first warm flush of aristocratic flattery was over. The souls of the great and fashionable had subsided into their native icy contempt of peasant merit. "What he had seen and endured in Edinburgh," says honest Allan Cunningham, "during his second visit, admonished him regarding the reed on which he leaned, when he hoped for a place of profit and honor from the aristocracy on account of his genius. On his first appearance the doors of the nobility opened spontaneously, 'on golden hinges turning,' and he ate spiced meats, and drank rare wines, interchanging nods and smiles 'with high dukes and mighty earls.' A colder reception awaited his second coming: the doors of lords and ladies opened with a tardy courtesy; he was received with a cold and measured stateliness, was seldom requested to stop, seldom to repeat his visit; and one of his companions used to relate with what indignant feelings the poet recounted his fruitless calls and his uncordial receptions in the good town of Edinburgh."

It is related, that on one occasion being invited to dine at a nobleman's, he went, and, to his astonishment, found that he was not to dine with the guests, but with the butler! After dinner he was sent for into the dining-room; and a chair being set for him near the bottom of the table, he was desired to sing a song. Restraining his indignation within the bounds of outward appearance, Burns complied, and he sung,

'Is there, for honest poverty,
    Wha hangs his head and a' that? [Pg 422]
The coward slave, we pass him by,
  And dare be poor for a' that.
    For a' that, and a' that,
    A man's a man for a' that!

"You see yon birkie, ca'd a lord,
  (*Pointing to the nobleman at the head of the table*)
  Who struts, and stares, and a' that,
Though hundreds worship at his word,
  He's but a coof for a' that.
    For a' that, and a' that,
    A man's a man for a' that."

As the last word of these stanzas issued from his lips, he rose, and not deigning the company a syllable of adieu, marched out of the room and the house.

Burns himself expressed in some lines to Clarinda all this at this very moment:

"In vain would Prudence, with her decent sneer,
Point to the censuring world and bid me fear:
Above that world on wings of love I rise,
I know its worst, and can that worst despise.
Wronged, slandered, shunned, unpitied, unredressed,
The mocked quotation of the scorners' jest,
Let Prudence direst bodements on me fall—
Clarinda, rich reward! o'erpays them all."

But Clarinda could never be Burns's. To say the least of it, his attachment to her was one of the least defensible things of his life. Jean Armour had now the most inviolable claims upon him, and, in fact, as soon as his leg was well enough, he tore himself from the fascinations of Clarinda's society, went to Mauchline, and married Jean.

But we must not allow ourselves to follow him till we have taken a peep at the house of Clarinda at this time, where Burns used to visit her, and where, no doubt, he took his melancholy farewell. This house is in Potter's Row; now old and dingy-looking, but evidently having been at one time a superior residence. It is a house memorable on more accounts than one, having been occupied by General Monk while his army lay in Edinburgh, and the passage which goes under it to an [Pg 423] interior court is still called the General's Entrance. To the street the house presents four gabled windows in the upper story, on the tops of which stand a rose, thistle, fleur-de-lis, with a second rose or thistle to make out the four. The place is now inhabited by the poorest people; and on a little shop window in front is written up, "Rags and Metals bought!" The flat which was occupied by Clarinda is now divided into two very poor tenements. In the room which used to be Clarinda's sitting-room, a poor woman was at once busy with her work and two or three very little children. My companion told her that her house had been once frequented by a great man; she said, "Oh yes, General Monk." When he, however, added that he was then thinking of Robert Burns, this was news to her, and seemed to give to the wretched abode quite a charm in her eyes.

Clarinda lived to a great age, as a Mrs. Maclehose, and only died a few years ago. Mrs. Howitt and myself were once introduced to her by our kind friend, Mr. Robert Chambers, at her house near the Calton Hill; and a very characteristic scene took place. The old lady, evidently charmed with our admiration of Burns, and warmed up by talking of past days, declared that we should drink out of the pair of glasses which Burns had presented to her in the days of their acquaintance. She brought these sacred relics out of the cupboard, and rang for the servant to bring in wine. An aged woman appeared, who, on hearing that we were to drink out of Burns's glasses, which stood ready on the table, gave a look as if sacrilege were going to be committed, took up the glasses without a word, replaced them in the cupboard, locking them up, and brought us three ordinary wine-glasses to take our wine out of. It was in vain for Mrs. Maclehose to remonstrate; the old and self-willed servant went away without deigning a reply, with the key in her pocket.

Disheartened and chagrined, treated with the utmost contempt by those who once flattered and [Pg 424] lionized him beyond bounds, Burns now turned his back on Edinburgh, and went to seek that obscure country life which he saw well enough was his destiny. The man to whom that very city was to raise a splendid monument on the Calton Hill; the man who was to have monuments raised to his honor in various spots of his native land; the man to whose immortal memory jubilees were to be held, to which people of all ranks were to flock by eighty thousands at a time; the man who was to take the highest rank of all the poets of Scotland,

"Whose lines are mottoes of the heart,
Whose truths electrify the sage,"

in the eloquent words of Campbell, and whose genius was to be the dearest memory of his countrymen in regions of the earth whither their adventurous spirit leads them, now, with a sad and wounded heart, pursued his way homeward with an exciseman's appointment in his pocket, the highest and only gift of his country. Burns knew and felt that his genius had a just claim to a good and honorable post in his native land, and his remaining letters sufficiently testify that from this hour the arrow of blighted ambition rankled in his heart, which never ceased its irritation till it had pulled down his gallant strength, and sent him to an early grave. He married his Jean, and chose his farm on the banks of the Nith, as Allan Cunningham's father remarked to him at the time, not with a farmer's, but a poet's choice. But here, half farmer, half exciseman, poverty came rapidly upon him once more; in three years' time only he quitted it, a man ruined in substance and constitution, and went to depend on his excise salary of £70 a year in the town of Dumfries.

I visited this farm in August, 1845. The coach from Dumfries to Glasgow set me down at Ellisland, lying about seven miles from Dumfries. Here I found a road running at right angles from the highway at a field's distance, and saw the gray roof of the farm homestead and its white [Pg 425] chimneys peeping over the surrounding trees. The road, without gate or fence, leads you across a piece of watery ground, one of those hollows left undrained for the growth of what they call bog-hay, that is, rushes and coarse grass, which they give to the cows in winter. This was quite gay with cotton-rush, bog-beans, orchises, and other bog flowers, and with its fragrant marginal fringe of meadow sweet. After about a hundred yards, the road becomes a lane, inclosed on one side by a rough stone wall, and on the other by a tall hedge, with a row of flourishing ashes, each fence standing on a bold bank well hung with broom. The barley stood green on the one hand, and the hay in cock in the field on the other, and all had a pleasant summer air and feeling about it.

Advancing up this lane, I soon stood on the ascent, and saw the farm-house shining out white from among its trees, and half a dozen young men and women busily hoeing turnips in the adjoining fields. The farm, in fact, is a very pleasant farm. It lies somewhat high, and its fields swell and fall in a very agreeable manner, though it is still low compared to the hills that rise around it at a distance, green and cultivated, but bare. It is distinguished from all the farms round it by being so completely planted with hedgerow trees, particularly ashes and larches. The land is light, yet tolerably fertile—is dry and healthy. Close below the house sweeps along that fine vale of the Nith, with all its rich meadows and woods, its stately old houses, and its river dark and swift, overhung with noble and verdurous trees. This seems the place where Burns might have been happy, had happiness and prosperity been easily secured by a temperament and circumstances such as his. He had a home fit for a poet, though humble. It was a home amid the goodliness and the godliness of nature. It was the home of a brave, a free, and an honest man—of a great man and great poet, whose name and fame were allowed and honored by the sound [Pg 426] hearts and sound minds, if not by the baser and vainer ones of his country. Here he was a man and a farmer; and both man and farmer are gentlemen, if they choose to be so. He had no need to doff his bonnet, or to pull it in shame over his brow before any man, so that he cultivated his acres and the glorious soil of his intellect with the heart and hand of an enthusiast in his labor. He had built his own bower in the spot chosen by himself, in a spot beautiful and pure, and calm as a poet could desire; and had brought to it the woman of his love, and his children were springing up around him, making the green and woodland banks of the Nith ring with the rapture of their young sports. He had a stalwart frame, and a giant intellect, and a heart true in its feelings to the divinity of human nature, to the divinity within him, to the divinity of those aims, and objects, and truths for which man exists, and for whose advance and illustration the poet is, beyond all men, born and endowed. Ah! if he could but have guided with a safe hand those passions which are given to feed and kindle the glorious impulses of the glorious nature of the poet, the friend, and prophet, and counselor of mankind, what a great and what a happy man might he have lived and died here. If he had really

"Followed his plow along the mountain side,"

instead of the exciseman's horse over the hills and through the hamlets of the country round, to what a venerable age might he have lived among his children and his admiring countrymen. But the tact for business and the turn for prudence, how rarely *can* they exist with the fervid temperament which has to evolve the living meteors of poetry. The volcano *will* have its crater and its desolations, and not green and peaceful ridges of peace; particularly in this case, where the poet had been called out of the ranks of the poor, and had had at once to contend against the flatteries of exaltation unprepared by the discipline of education. Burns and Hogg may therefore be excused, where Byron could not stand; Ebenezer Elliott is almost the only instance of contrary [Pg 427] success.

One can not, however, see this Arcadian scene, this sort of Sabine farm, so well calculated for the "*otium cum dignitate*" of the poet, without feeling one's heart wrung at the idea that it was a vain gift—a haven of peace only offered to a struggling and doomed swimmer; and that the foul exciseman craft, and the degrading dipstick, and the whisky-firkin were in the rear. The very next neighbors of Burns were Mr. Miller, of Dalswinton, and Mr. Riddell, of Friars' Carse. There he went to meet, and dine, and revel with distinguished guests. Heavens! why should he not have been able to go there as the honest British farmer, and not as the exciseman? Could he feel that he was a poet, and fit society for the wealthy, the refined, and the learned, and that he was not degraded? He was glorious—and an exciseman. Here he wrote Mary in Heaven, and mounted his jaded steed and trotted off to the hell of whisky distilleries and whisky dram-shops. He wrote here, in one day, Tam O'Shanter, in a fever of laughter and excitement, and perhaps the next day would repeat the lines to the rude and fuddled rabble of a "public," where he was in the way of his business and his ruin. There is something so anomalous in the genius and the grade, in the magnificent endowments and the bare necessities of Robert Burns, that one can not now conceive how they could have been permitted to occur by his fellow-men, or tolerated by himself. To think of him here, in his own white farm-house, like a dove's nest, amid its green and overshadowing leaves, and hung over the pure lapsing waters; and then of him in that little dirty house in Dumfries, in that street of tramps and beggars, living degraded, despised, and persecuted, and dying the poorest exciseman and greatest poet of his country! In the hour of his death the soul of his country awoke with one great throb to the consciousness of who and what he was; what a pity that the revelation did not come a little sooner! And this I say not to taunt his [Pg 428] country with it. The sense of the national treatment of Robert Burns has been expressed with such manly eloquence by his countrymen, Lockhart, Wilson, and Allan Cunningham, that it needs not us English to cast a single stone, who have the memory of Chatterton among us. All great nations have similar sins to answer for. Scotland does not stand alone; but there is something so peculiarly strange in the fate of Burns, and that comes over one as we tread the ground that he had chosen for his home, and the floor of the house that he built, that it has forced me involuntarily to follow my own feelings instead of my descriptions.

The farm, as I have said, is a very pleasant one. Burns is supposed to have chosen the particular situation of his house not only for its fine situation on the banks of the river, and overlooking the vale and country round, but on account of a beautiful spring which gushes from the slope just below the house. The ground-plan of his house is very much like that of most Scotch farms. The buildings form three sides of a quadrangle. The house and buildings are only one story high, white, and altogether a genuine Scotch steading. The house is on the lower side, next to the river. Burns's bed-room has yet two beds in it, of that sort of cupboard fashion, with check

curtains, which are so often seen in Scotch farm-houses. The humble rooms are much as they were in his time. Near the house, and running parallel with the river, is a good large garden which he planted. The side of the farm-yard opposite to the house is pleasantly planted off with trees. The farm is just as it was, about one hundred acres. By places it exhibits that stony soil which made Burns call it "the riddlings of creation," and say that when a plowed field was rolled it looked like a paved street; but still it carries good crops. Burns had it for £50 a year, or ten shillings an acre. I suppose the present tenant pays three times the sum, and is proud of his bargain. He observed it was an ill wind that blew nobody any profit. "Mr. Burns," said he, "had [Pg 429] the farm on lease for ninety years, and had he not thrown it up, I should not have been here now." The farmer seemed a very sensible man, and though he was just mounting his gig to go on business to Dumfries, he stopped, and would go over the farm and house, and point out every thing to me. He said what Lockhart and Cunningham say, that Burns had so many servants that they ate and drank all that came off the farm. "The maids baked new bread, and the men ate it hot with ale." But it is said, too, on the spot, that most of these servants were relatives, and that presents of whisky and other good things were sent from far and near to Burns, and that, while he was absent on his excise rounds, they sat in the house and drank, and ate to it, instead of being at work. Burns once observed to his neighbor, the next farmer, that he wondered how it was that the farm left no surplus for rent; and the farmer said, "Why, Mr. Burns, it would be a wonder if it did, for your servants can not eat it and leave it for rent too." It is said, also, that being once invited to dinner at Dalswinton House, and not coming, the guests asked how he was getting on. Mr. Miller said he hoped very well, "for," added he, "I think I have set him up." This being repeated to Burns, is said to have hurt his proud feelings extremely, and to have induced him to remark that he did not like to live on the estate of a man who thought he had set him up. Long he did not live there—more's the pity. The good-will of his haughty landlord had gone before.

It was here, too, that the story is told of his being found by two Englishmen fishing in the Nith. "On a rock that projected into the stream, they saw a man angling. He had a cap of foxskin on his head, a loose great-coat fixed round him by a belt, from which hung an enormous Highland broadsword: it was Burns." The story is likely enough. The banks of the Nith here are steep, and full of wild thickets; and one may very well imagine Burns not being over particular in his toilet [Pg 430] while pursuing his amusement in this solitude.

It was one of his delights to range along these steep river banks; and it was along them, between the house and the fence at the bottom of the field, down the river, that he paced to and fro as he composed Tam O'Shanter. Mrs. Burns relates, "that observing Robert walking with long, swinging strides, and apparently muttering as he went, she let him alone for some time. At length she took the children with her, and went forth to meet him. He seemed not to observe her, but continued his walk. On this," said she, "I stepped aside with the bairns among the broom, and past us he came, his brow flushed, and his eyes shining; he was reciting these lines:

'Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans
A' plump an' strapping, i' their teens;
Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flannen,
Been snaw-white seventeen hunder linnen!
Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair,
That ance were plush, o' gude blue hair
I wad hae gi'en them aff my hurdies,
For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies.'

I wish ye had but seen him! He was in such ecstasy that the tears were happing down his cheeks." He had taken writing materials with him, and, leaning on a turf fence which commanded a view down the river, he committed the poem to paper, walked home, and read it in great triumph at the fireside. The remains of this turf fence may be seen to this day in the shape of a green bank, close above the river, under the shade of a narrow plantation of larches which bounds the field. The farmer said that Professor Wilson, when he visited the spot, rolled himself on the bank, saying it was worth while trying to catch any remains of genius and humor that Burns might have left there.

The farmer said—what, indeed, Allan Cunningham states—that when Burns came the farm was all open; "there were no dikes," walls, or fences. That he introduced the first dairy of Ayrshire [Pg 431] cows, all splendid cattle, some of them being presents from such friends as the Dunlops, &c. Presents or no presents, poor Burns laid out on the farm, in his first year, all the proceeds of his Edinburgh edition of his poems, and never saw them again.

The view from the house is very charming. The river runs clear and fleet below, broad as the Thames at Hampton Court, or the Trent at Nottingham, and its dark trees hang far along it over its waters. Beyond the stream lie the broad, rich meadows and house of Dalswinton, a handsome mansion of red freestone aloft amid its woods, and still beyond and higher up the river rise still bolder hills. The very next residence upward on the same side of the river is Friar's Carse, the seat of Burns's friend, Mr. Riddell, into whose grounds he had a private key, so that he could enjoy all the beauty and solitude of his woods at pleasure, or take the nearest cut to the house. Up the valley, about two miles or so, is the farm-house belonging to his friend Nicol, of the High School, where

"Willie brewed a peck o' malt,
And Rob and Allan cam to see."

Friar's Carse deserves a few more words before we shift to the last sad scene, Dumfries. It is a beautiful estate, which you enter from the Glasgow road by a neat lodge, and advance a quarter of a mile, perhaps, along a carriage drive, one side of which is planted with shrubs and flowers, and the other consists of the steep, wild bank of a fine wood. The way winds on, and here and there you have an old stone gray cross, or old picturesque saint, or such thing, which has a good effect. At last you emerge in an open meadow, surrounded by fine hills and woods, and at the head of which, on a green and graceful esplanade, stands a good, though not very large house. In the meadows, which are of great extent, roves a numerous herd of as fine cattle as ever roamed the meads of Asphodel, and much finer, I suspect, for they are Ayrshire cows of the most splendid [Pg 432] description; and some very fine trees rear their heads to beautify the ground. As you approach the house, it is along the foot of a beautiful slope enriched by noble old trees. Behind the house there is a green and airy sort of table-land, on which flower-stands of rustic work, filled with roses and geraniums, stand, and down which money-wort, with all its golden blossoms, streams, and then the ground sinks rapidly into a deep dell full of tall trees, and containing a garden of the old pleached walk kind, and which, through the latticed gate, gives you such a peep at its beauties as enchants you.

In this house used to live Mr. Riddell. Here the Whistle was caroused for, and here the original copy of Burns's poem on the subject is kept still. Pity it was that the lady of the house, a young widow, Mrs. Crichton, was just bowling out at her lodge gates as I walked in, or I would have made bold to call and request the favor of a sight of this paper. But the butler assured me that there it was; and in the pine wood, on the side by which you enter, are the remains of the hermitage where Burns wrote the well-known lines on the window. The pine wood has grown; there are silver firs that need not shame to claim kindred with those of the Black Forest; but the hermitage is gone down. A single gable, a few scattered stones, and a mass of laurels that have grown high and hidden it, are all that remain of the hermitage, which I only found by dint of long traversing the dusky wood.

But Burns is gone; Miller of Dalswinton is gone; Riddell of Friar's Carse is gone; their estates are in other families; and it is to be hoped that the exciseman's gauging-stick is gone too. I do not see it hung aloft in any hall. I dare say the sons of Burns have not preserved it, as the walking-stick of Sir Walter Scott now hangs aloft in the study at Abbotsford. But the memory of the poet and his friends lives all over these walks, and meadows, and woods, more livingly than ever. It is the [Pg 433] quick spirit of the place. Poetry is not dead here. It is the soul and haunting shadow of these fair and solemn scenes, and a thousand years hence will startle young and beating hearts as the wood-pigeon dashes out through the magic hush of the forest, and the streamlet leaps down the mossy stone, and laughs and glitters in the joyous glance of the sun. The exciseman's stick is turned into the magic wand of nature, and there will be bitter satire, and deep melancholy, and wonder and love, as it waves a thousand times self-multiplied in the bough of the pine-tree, and the bent of the grass, while the heart of man can suffer or enjoy. You see that already in every thing. Burns no longer walks on one side of the market-place of Dumfries, solitary and despised, while the great and gay crowd and flutter on the other; but as the daily coach rolls on its way, the coachman, pointing with his whip, says softly, "That is the Farm of Ellisland!" And every man and woman, every trade-traveler and servant-maid says, "Where?" All rise up and look, *and there is a deep silence*.

For that silence, and the thoughts that live in it, who would not have lived, and suffered, and been despised? It is the triumph of genius and the soul of greatness over the freaks of fortune, and even over its own sins and failings. It is something to have walked over the farm of Ellisland; it is still more to have stood on the spot in his farm-yard where the heart of Burns rose up in a flame of hallowed affection to Mary in Heaven—a more glorious shrine than the mausoleum of Dumfries.

The neighborhood of Dumfries, to which the last scene of our subject leads us, is very charming. The town is just a quiet country town, but the Nith is a fine river, and runs through it, and makes both town and country very agreeable. The scenery is not wild and rocky, but the vale of the Nith is rich, and beautiful in its richness. The river runs in the finest sweeps imaginable; it seems to disdain to go straight, but makes a circle for a mile, perhaps, at a time, as clean and perfect as if [Pg 434] struck with compasses, and then away in another direction; while on its lofty banks alders and oaks hang richly over the water, and fine herds of cattle are grouped in those deep meadows, and salmon-fishers spread their nets and are busy mending them on the broad expanse of gravel that covers here and there the bends of the river; while high above the lapsing waters, your eye wanders over abroad extent of fresh, rich meadow country, with scattered masses of trees, and goodly farms, and far around are high and airy hills cultivated to the top. A more lovely pastoral country, more retired and poetical, you can not well find. This is the scenery to which Burns, during his abode in Dumfries, loved to resort. "When he lived in Dumfries," says Allan Cunningham, "he had three favorite walks: on the dock-green by the river side, among the ruins of Lincluden College, and toward the Martingam Ford, on the north side of the river. The latter place was secluded, commanded a view of the distant hills and the romantic towers of Lincluden, and afforded soft greensward banks to rest upon, and the sight and sound of the stream. As soon as he was heard to hum to himself, his wife saw that he had something in his mind, and was quite prepared to see him snatch up his hat and set off silently for his musing ground."

About three miles up the river we came upon the beautiful ruins of the abbey of Lincluden, standing on an elevated mound overlooking the junction of the Cluden and the Nith, and overlooked by a sort of large tumulus covered with larches, where the monks are said to have sat to contemplate the country, and where the country people still resort to loiter or read on

Sundays. A profound tranquillity reigns over all the scene—a charm indescribable, which Burns, of all men, must have felt. For myself, I knew not where to stop. I advanced up the left bank of the river, opposite to the ruins, now treading the soft turf of the Nith's margin, now pent in a [Pg 435] narrow track close on the brink of the stream among the alders, now emerging into a lofty fir clump, and now into a solemn grove of beech overhanging the stream. Further on lay the broad old meadows again, the fisher watching in his wooden hut the ascent of the salmon, the little herdboy tending his black cattle in the solitary field, old woods casting a deep gloom on the hurrying water, gray old halls standing on fine slopes above the Nith, amid trees of magnificent size and altitude. The mood of mind which comes over you here is that of unwritten poetry.

When one thinks of Burns wandering amid this congenial nature, where the young now wander and sing his songs, one is apt to forget that he bore with him a sad heart and a sinking frame. When we see his house in Dumfries, we are reminded pretty forcibly of these things. We have to dive at once into a back street in the lower part of the town, and turn and wind from one such hidden and poor street to another, till, having passed through a sufficient stench of tan-yards, which seem to abound in that neighborhood, you come to a little street with all the character of the abode of the poor, which is honored with the name of Burns-street. The house is the first you come to on the left hand. There is the thatched one on the opposite side, and I set it down at once to be the poet's; but no; at a regularly formal poor man's house, of a dingy white-wash, with its stone door and window frames painted of a dingy blue, a bare-legged girl, very dirty, was washing the floors, and went from the bucket and showed me the house. On the right hand of the door was the kitchen, in which the girl informed me that there was nothing left belonging to the Burnses except two bells, which she pointed out, and a gas-pipe which Mr. Burns had put in. On the left hand was the sitting-room, furnished very well for a poor man, with a carpet on the floor. The girl said her father was an undertaker, but when I asked where was his shop, she said he was [Pg 436] an undertaker of jobs on railroads and embankments. Up stairs there was a good, large chamber unfurnished, which she said was the one occupied by Mr. and Mrs. Burns, and where both of them died. Out of the other chamber a little closet was taken, including one front window, and here, she said, Burns wrote, or it was always said so. There were two garrets; and that was the poet's, or, rather, the exciseman's house. It was just about suited to the income of an ordinary exciseman, and had no attribute of the *poet's* home about it. Mr. Robert Chambers, in his Picture of Scotland, calls it a neat little house. Unfortunately, at my visit it was any thing but neat or clean, and its situation in this miserable quarter, and amid the odor of tan-yards, must give to any foreigner who visits it an odd idea of the abodes of British poets. I wonder that in some improvement the Dumfriesians don't contrive to pull it down.

From this abode of the living poet I adjourned to that of the dead one. This is situated in St. Michael's church-yard, not far from the house, but on an eminence, and on the outside of the town. The *lane* in which the *house* is, is just one of the *worst*. It looks as though it were only inhabited by keepers of lodging-houses for tramps, and, I believe, mainly is so. It is a sort of Tinker's Lane. The church-yard, though not more than two hundred yards off, is one of the most respectable, and the poet's house *there* is the very grandest. One naturally thinks how much easier it is to maintain a dead poet than a living one.

A church-yard in this part of the country has a singular aspect to an English eye. As you approach the Scottish border you see the headstones getting taller and taller, and the altar-tombs more and more massive. At Carlisle, the headstones had attained the height of six or seven feet at least, and were deeply carved with coats of arms, &c., near the top, but here the whole church-yard is a wilderness of huge and ponderous monuments. Pediments and entablature, Grecian, [Pg 437] Gothic, and nondescript; pillars and obelisks, some of them at least twenty feet high—I use no exaggeration in this account—stand thick and on all sides. To our eyes, accustomed to such a different size and character of church-yard tombs, they are perfectly astonishing. I imagine there is stone enough in the funeral monuments of this church-yard to build a tolerable street of houses. You would think that all the giants, and, indeed, all the *great* people of all sorts that Scotland had ever produced, had here chosen their sepulture. Such ambitious and gigantic structures of freestone, some red, some white, for dyers, iron-mongers, gardeners, slaters, glaziers, and the like, are, I imagine, nowhere else to be seen. There are vintners who have tombs and obelisks fit for genuine Egyptian Pharaohs; and slaters and carpenters, who were accustomed to climb high when alive, have left monuments significant of their soaring character. These far outvie and overlook those of generals, writers to the signet, esquires, and bailiffs of the city.

Your first view of the church-yard strikes you by the strange aspect of these ponderous monuments. A row of very ancient ones, in fact, stands on the wall next to the street. Two of them most dilapidated, and of deep red stone, have a very singular look. They have Latin inscriptions, which are equally dilapidated. Another one to Francis Irving fairly exhausts the Latin tongue with his host of virtues, and then takes to English thus:

> "King James the First me balive named;
> Dumfries oft since me provost claimed;
> God has for me a crown reserved,
> For king and country have I served."

Burns's mausoleum occupies as nearly as possible the center of the farther end of the church-yard opposite to the entrance, and a broad walk leads up to it. It stands, as it should do, overlooking the pleasant fields in the outskirts of the town, and seems, like the poet himself, to belong half to man and half to nature. It is a sort of little temple, which at a distance catches the [Pg 438]

eye as you approach that side of the town, and reminds you of that of Garrick at Hampton. It is open on three sides, except for iron gates, the upper border of which consists of alternating Scottish thistles and spear-heads. A couple of Ionic pillars at each corner support a projecting cornice, and above this rises an octagon superstructure, with arches, across the bottom of which again run thistle-heads, one over each gateway, and is surmounted by a dome. The basement of the mausoleum is of granite. The building is inclosed by an iron railing, and that little gate in front of the area is left unlocked, so that you may approach and view the monument through the iron gates. The area is planted appropriately with various kinds of evergreens, and on each side of the gate stand conspicuously the Scottish thistle.

In the center of the mausoleum floor, a large flag, with four iron rings in it, marks the entrance to the vault below. At the back stands Turnarelli's monument of the poet. It consists of a figure of Burns, of the size of life, in white marble, at the plow, and Coila, his muse, appearing to him. This is a female figure in alto-relievo on the wall, somewhat above and in front of him. She is in the act of throwing her mantle, embroidered with Scotch thistles, over him, according to his own words: "The poetic genius of my country found me, as the prophetic bard Elijah did Elisha, at the plow, and threw her inspiring mantle over me." Burns stands with his left hand on one of the plow stilts, and with the other holds his bonnet to his breast, while, with an air of surprise and devotion, he gazes on the muse or genius of his poetry. He appears in a short coat, knee breeches, and short gaiters. The execution is so-so. The likeness of the poet is by no means conformable to the best portraits of him; and Nature, as if resenting the wretched caricature of her favorite son, has already begun to deface and corrode it. The left hand on the plow is much decayed, and the right hand holding the bonnet is somewhat so too. At his feet lies what I [Pg 439] suppose was the slab of his former tomb, with this inscription: "In memory of Robert Burns, who died the 21st of July, 1796, in the 37th year of his age. And Maxwell Burns, who died the 25th of April, 1799, aged 2 years and 9 months. Francis Wallace Burns, who died the 9th of June, 1808, aged 14 years. His sons. The remains of Burns received into the vault below, 19th of September, 1815. And his two sons. Also, the remains of Jean Armour, relict of the Poet, born Feb., 1765, died 26th of March, 1834."

The long Latin inscription mentioned by his biographers, a manifest absurdity on the tomb of a man like Burns, and whose epitaph ought to be intelligible to all his countrymen, is, I suppose, removed, for I did not observe it, and the above English inscription, of the elegance of which, however, nothing can be said, substituted.

The gates of the mausoleum itself are kept locked, and the monument again inclosed within a plain railing.

Some countrymen were just standing at the gate, with their plaids on their shoulders, making their observations as I arrived at it. I stood and listened to them.

1st Man. "Ay, there stands Robin, still holding the plow, but the worst of it is, he has got no horses to it."

2d Man. "Ay, that is childish. It is just like a boy on a Sunday, who sets himself to the plow, and fancies he is plowing when it never moves. It would have been a deal better if you could have seen even the horses' tails."

3d Man. "Ay, or if he had been sitting on his plow, as I have seen him sometimes in a picture."

1st Man. "But Coila is well drawn, is not she? That arm which she holds up the mantle with is very well executed."

2d Man. "It's a pity, though, that the sculptor did not look at his own coat before he put the only button on that is to be seen."

3d Man. "Why, where is the button?" [Pg 440]

2d Man. "Just under the bonnet; and it's on the wrong side."

1st Man. "Oh! it does not signify if it be a double-breasted coat; or perhaps Robin buttoned his coat different to other folks, for he was an unco' chiel."

2d Man. "But it's only single-breasted, and it is quite wrong."

The men unbuttoned and then buttoned their coats up again to satisfy themselves, and they decided that it was a great blunder.

I thought there was much sound sense in their criticism. The allegorical figure of the muse seems too much, and the absence of the horses too little. Burns would have looked quite as well standing at the plow, and looking up inspired by the muse without her being visible.

The plow rests on a rugged piece of marble, laid on a polished basement, in the center of which is inscribed, in large letters,

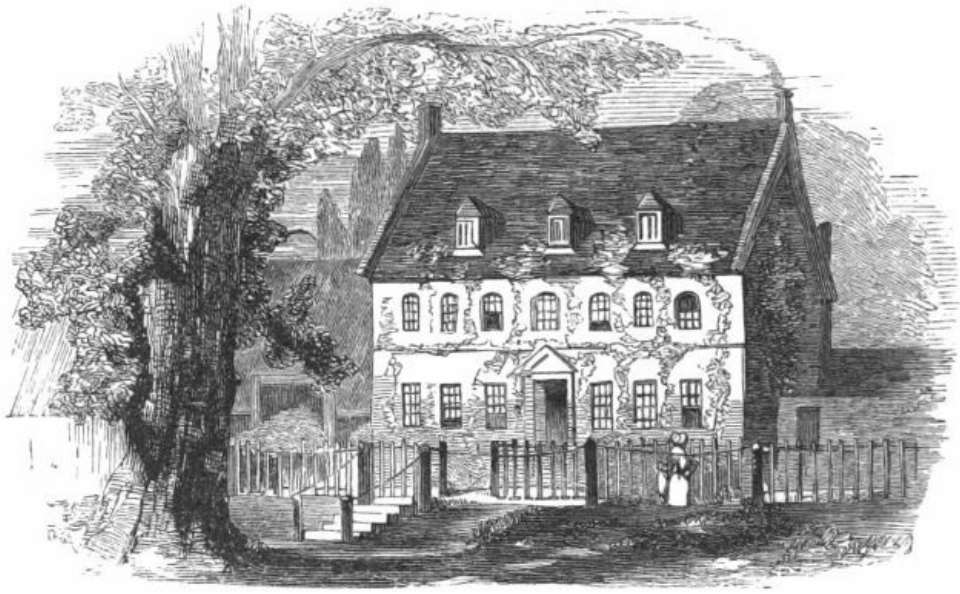
BURNS.

I had to regret missing at Dumfries the three sons of Burns, and the stanch friend of the family, and of the genius of the poet, Mr. M'Diarmid. Mr. Robert Burns, the poet's eldest son, resides at Dumfries, but was then absent at Belfast, in Ireland, where I afterward saw him, and was much struck with his intelligence and great information. Colonel and Major Burns had just visited Dumfries, but were gone into the Highlands with their friend, Mr. M'Diarmid. The feelings with which I quitted Dumfries were those which so often weigh upon you in contemplating the closing scenes of poets' lives. "The life of the poet at Dumfries," says Robert Chambers, "was an unhappy one; his situation was degrading, and his income narrow." Reflecting on this as I proceeded by

the mail toward Moffat, the melancholy lines of Wordsworth recurred to me with peculiar effect:

"My former thoughts returned; the fear that kills; [Pg 441]
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain, and labor, and all fleshly ills;
And mighty poets in their misery dead."

WILLIAM COWPER. [Pg 442]



There is scarcely any ground in England so well known in imagination as the haunts of Cowper at Olney and Weston; there is little that is so interesting to the lover of moral and religious poetry. There the beautiful but unhappy poet seemed to have created a new world out of unknown ground, in which himself and his friends, the Unwins, Lady Austen and Lady Hesketh, the Throckmortons, and the rest, played a part of the simplest and most natural character, and which fascinated the whole public mind. The life, the spirit, and the poetry of Cowper present, when taken together, a most singular combination. He was timid in his habit, yet bold in his writing; melancholy in the tone of his mind, but full of fun and playfulness in his correspondence; wretched to an extraordinary degree, he yet made the whole nation merry with his John Gilpin and other humorous writings; despairing even of God's mercy and of salvation, his religious poetry is of the most cheerful and even triumphantly glad kind;

"His soul exults, hope animates his lays,
The sense of mercy kindles into praise."

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Filled with this joyous assurance, wherever he turns his eye on the magnificent spectacle of creation, he finds themes of noblest gratulation. He looks into the heavens, and exclaims:

"Tell me, ye shining host,
That navigate a sea that knows no storm,
Beneath a vault unsullied with a cloud,
If from your elevation, whence ye view
Distinctly scenes invisible to man,
And systems, of whose birth no tidings yet
Have reached this nether world, ye spy a race
Favored as ours, transgressors from the womb,
And hastening to a grave, yet doomed to rise,
And to possess a brighter heaven than yours?
As one who, long detained on foreign shores,
Pants to return, and when he sees afar
His country's weather-bleached and battered rocks
From the green wave emerging, darts an eye
Radiant with joy toward the happy land;
So I with animated hopes behold,
And many an aching wish, your beamy fires,
That show like beacons in the blue abyss,
Ordained to guide the embodied spirit home
From toilsome life to never-ending rest.
Love kindles as I gaze. I feel desires,
That give assurance of their own success,
And that, infused from heaven, must thither tend."

The Task, Book v.

Such is the buoyant and cordial tone of Cowper's poetry; how unlike that iron deadness that dared not and could not soften into prayer, which so often and so long oppressed him. Nay, it is not for himself that he rejoices only, but he feels in his glowing heart the gladness and the coming glory of the whole universe.

"All creatures worship man, and all mankind
One Lord, one Father. Error has no place;
That creeping pestilence is driven away;
The breath of Heaven has chased it. In the heart
No passion touches a discordant string,
But all is harmony and love. Disease [Pg 444]
Is not, the pure and uncontaminate blood
Holds its due course, nor fears the frost of age.
One song employs all nations, and all cry,
'Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!'
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy:
Till nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round.
Behold the measure of the promise filled;
See Salem built, the labor of a God!
Bright as a sun the sacred city shines:
All kingdoms, and all princes of the earth
Flock to that light; the glory of all lands
Flows into her; unbounded is her joy,
And endless her increase. Thy rams are there,
Nebaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there;
Praise is in all her gates: upon her walls,
And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,
Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there
Kneels with the native of the farthest West;
And Ethiopia spreads abroad the hand,
And worships. Her report has traveled forth
Into all lands. From every clime they come
To see thy beauty, and to share thy joy,
O Sion! an assembly such as earth
Saw never, such as Heaven stoops down to see.
  Thus heavenward all things tend. For all were once
Perfect, and all must be at length restored.
So God has greatly purposed."—*The Task*, Book vi.

Such was the lofty and all-embracing spirit of that man whom hard dogmatists could yet terrify and chill into utterest woe. Shrinking from the world, he yet dared to lash this world from which he shrunk, with the force of a giant, and the justice of more than an Aristides. Of the Church, he yet satirized severely its errors, and the follies of its ministers; in political opinion he was free and indignant against oppression. The negro warmed his blood into a sympathy that produced the most effective strains on his behalf—the worm beneath his feet shared in his tenderness. Thus he walked through life, shunning its tumults and its highways, one of its mightiest laborers. [Pg 445]

In his poetry there was found no fear, no complaining; often thoroughly insane, nothing can surpass the sound mind of his compositions; haunted by delusions even to the attempt at suicide, there is no delusion in his page. All there is bright, clear, and consistent. Like his Divine Master, he may truly be said to have been bruised for our sakes. As a man, nervous terrors could vanquish him, and unfit him for active life; but as a poet, he rose above all nerves, all terrors, into the noblest heroism, and fitted and will continue to fit others for life, so long as just and vigorous thought, the most beautiful piety, and the truest human sympathies command the homage of mankind. There is no writer who surpasses Cowper as a moral and religious poet. Full of power and feeling, he often equals in solemn dignity Milton himself. He is as impressive as Young without his epigrammatic smartness; he is as fervently Christian as Montgomery, and in intense love of nature there is not one of our august band of illustrious writers who surpasses him. He shows the secret of his deep and untiring attachment to nature in the love of Him who made it.

"He is the freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves beside. There's not a chain
That hellish foes, confederate for his harm,
Can wind around him, but he casts it off
With as much ease as Samson his green withes.
He looks abroad into the varied field
Of Nature, and though poor, perhaps, compared
With those whose mansions glitter in his sight,
Calls the delightful scenery all his own.
His are the mountains, and the valleys his,
And the resplendent rivers. His to enjoy
With a propriety that none can feel,
But who with filial confidence inspired
Can lift to heaven an unpresumptuous eye,
And smiling say, 'My Father made them all!'
Are they not his by a peculiar right,
And by an emphasis of interest his,
Whose eye they fill with tears of holy joy, [Pg 446]
Whose heart with praise, and whose exalted mind
With worthy thoughts of that unwearied love
That planned, and built, and still upholds a world
So clothed with beauty, for rebellious man?
Yes, ye may fill your garners, ye that reap
The loaded soil, and ye may waste much good
In senseless riot; but ye will not find
In feast, or in the chase, in song or dance,
A liberty like his, who, unimpeached
Of usurpation, and to no man's wrong,
Appropriates nature as his Father's work,
And has a richer use of yours than ye.
He is indeed a freeman: free by birth
Of no mean city, planned or ere the hills
Were built, the fountains opened, or the sea
With all his roaring multitude of waves."

The Task, Book v.

The writings of Cowper testify every where to that grand sermon which is eternally preached in the open air; to that Gospel of the field and the forest, which, like the Gospel of Christ, is the voice of that love which overflows the universe; which puts down all sectarian bitterness in him who listens to it; which, being perfect, "casts out all fear," against which the gloom of bigots and the terrors of fanatics can not stand. It was this which healed his wounded spirit beneath the boughs of Yardley Chase, and came fanning his temples with a soothing freshness in the dells of Weston. When we follow his footsteps there, we somewhat wonder that scenes so unambitious could so enrapture him; but the glory came from within, and out of the materials of an ordinary walk he could raise a brilliant superstructure for eternity.

William Cowper was born in the parsonage of Great Berkhampstead. The Birmingham railway whirls you now past the spot; or you may, if you please, alight, and survey that house, hallowed by the love of a mother such as he has described, and by the record of it in those inimitable verses of the son on receiving her picture.

[Pg 447]

"Where once we dwelt our name is heard no more,
Children not thine have trod my nursery floor;
And where the gardener Robin, day by day,
Drew me to school along the public way,
Delighted with my bawble coach, and wrapped
In scarlet mantle warm, and velvet capped.
'Tis now become a history little known,
That once we called the pastoral house our own."

Cowper was at school at Market-street, Hertfordshire, then at Westminster; after which he was articled for three years to Mr. Chapman, a solicitor. After quitting Mr. Chapman, he entered the

Inner Temple as a regular law student, where his associates were Thurlow, afterward the well-known lord-chancellor, Bonnel Thornton, and Colman. Cowper's family was well connected, both on the father's and mother's side, and he had every prospect of advancement; but this the sensitiveness of his nature prevented. Being successively appointed to the offices of reading clerk, clerk of the private committees in the House of Lords, and clerk of the Journals, he was so overwhelmed by being unexpectedly called on to discharge his duty publicly before the House, that it unsettled his mind, his prospects of a wordly nature were forever over, and in a state of the most settled melancholy he was committed to the care of Dr. Cotton, of St. Alban's. In the summer of 1765 he quitted St. Alban's, and retired to private lodgings in the town of Huntingdon. There he was, as by a direct act of Providence, led to the acquaintance of the family of the Rev. Mr. Unwin, one of the clergymen of the place. Cowper had attended his church, and his interesting appearance having attracted the attention of his son William Cawthorne Unwin, he followed him in his solitary walk, and introduced himself to him. This simple fact decided, as by the very finger of Heaven, the whole destiny of the poet, and probably secured him as a poet to the world. With this family he entered into the most affectionate intimacy. They were people after his own heart, pious, intelligent, and most amiable. The father was, however, soon after killed by [Pg 448] a fall from his horse, the son was himself become a minister, and the widow, the ever-to-be-loved Mary Unwin, retired with the suffering poet to Olney, at the invitation of the Rev. John Newton, the clergyman there, where she watched over him with the tender solicitude of a mother. To her, in all probability, we owe all that we possess in the poetry of Cowper.

With his life here we are made familiar by his poetry and letters, and the biography of Hayley. His long returns of melancholy; the writing of poetry, which Mrs. Unwin suggested to him to divert his thoughts; his gardening, his walks, his tame hares, his successive acquaintances with Lady Austen, Lady Hesketh, and the like all—this we know. What now concerns us is the present state and appearances of his homes and haunts here. To these the access is now easy. From the Wolverton station, on the Northwestern railway, an omnibus sets you down, after a run of nine miles, at the Bull Inn, in the spacious, still, and triangular market-place of Olney. Here, again, prints have made us most accurately acquainted with the place. The house occupied by Cowper stands near the eastern corner, loftily overtopping all the rest. There are the other quiet, cottage-like houses stretching away right and left, the tall elm-tree, the pump, the old octagon stone lock-up house. The house which was Cowper's makes an imposing appearance in a picture, and in reality is a building of considerable size. But it must always have been internally an ill-finished house. He himself, and his friends, compared it to a prison. It had no charms whatever of location. Opposite to it came crowding up some common dwellings; behind lay the garden, on a dead flat, and therefore with no attractions but such as art and a poet's imagination gave it. It was, for some years after he quitted it, inhabited by a surgeon. He has, in his turn, long left it; and it now is divided into three tenements. One is a little grocer's shop, the other part in front is [Pg 449] an infant school, and the back part is a work-shop of some kind. The house is altogether dingy and desolate, and bears no marks of having at any time been finished in any superior style. That which was once the garden is now divided into a back yard and a small garden surrounded by a high stone wall. They show an apple-tree in it which they say Cowper planted. The other and main portion of the garden is cut off by the stone wall, and the access to it is from a distant part of the town. This garden is now in the possession of Mr. Morris, a master bootmaker, who, with a genuine feeling of respect for the poet's memory, not only retains it as much as possible in the state in which it was in Cowper's time, but has the most good-natured pleasure in allowing strangers to see it. The moment I presented myself at his door, he came out, anticipating my object, with the key, and proffered his own guidance. In the garden, about the center, still stands Cowper's summer-house. It is a little square tenement, as Cowper describes it himself in one of his letters, not much bigger than a sedan chair. It is of timber, framed, and plastered, and the roof of old red tiles. It has a wooden door on the side next to his own house, and a glass one, serving as window, exactly opposite, and looking across the next orchard to the parsonage. There is a bench on each side, and the ceiling is so low that a man of moderate stature can not stand upright in it. Except in hot weather, it must have been a regular wind-trap. It is all over, of course, written with verses, and inscribed with names. Around it stand evergreens, and in the garden remain various old fruit-trees, which were there in Cowper's time, and some of them, no doubt, planted by him. The back of some low cottages, with their windows level with the very earth, forms part of the boundary wall, and the orchard in front of the summer-house remains as in Cowper's time. It will be recollected that, in order to save himself the trouble of going round through the town, Cowper had a gate put out into this orchard, and another into the orchard of [Pg 450] the Rectory, in which lived his friend Mr. Newton. He paid a pound a year for thus crossing his neighbor's orchard, but had, by this means, not only a very near cut to the parsonage opened to him, but a whole quiet territory of orchards. This still remains. A considerable extent of orchards, bounded, for the most part, by the backs of the town houses, presents a little quiet region in which the poet could ramble and muse at his own pleasure. The parsonage, a plain, modern, and not large building, is not very distant from the front of the summer-house, and over it peeps the church spire. One can not help reflecting how often the poet and his friends used to go to and fro there. Newton, with his genuine friendship for Cowper, but with his severe and predestinarian religion, which to Cowper's grieving spirit was terrifying and prostrating; then, a happy change, the lively, and affectionate, and witty Lady Austen, to whom we owe John Gilpin and the Task. Too lively, indeed, was this lady, charming as she was, for the nerves and the occupations of the poet. She went, and then came that delightful and true-souled cousin, Lady Hesketh, a sister, as Mary Unwin was a mother to the poet. She had lived much abroad, from the days in which Cowper and herself, merry companions, had laughed and loved each other dearly as cousins. The fame of him whom she had gone away deploring as blighted and lost forever, met her on her

return to her native land, a widow; and with a heart and a purse equally open, she hastened to renew the intercourse of her youth, and to make the poet's life as happy as such hearts only could make him. There is nothing more delightful than to see how the bursting-forth fame of Cowper brought around him at once all his oldest and best friends—his kith and kin who had deemed him a wreck, and found him a gallant bark, sailing on the brightest sea of glory to a sacred immortality.

Lady Hesketh, active in her kindness as she was beautiful in person and in spirit, a true sisterly soul, lost no time in removing Cowper to a more suitable house and neighborhood. Of the house we have spoken. The situation of Olney is on the flat, near the River Ouse, and subject to its fogs. The town was dull. It is much now as it was then; one of those places that are the links between towns and villages. Its present population is only 2300. In such a place, therefore, every man knew all his neighbors' concerns. It was too exposed a sort of place for a man of Cowper's shy disposition, and yet had none of that bustle which gives a stimulus to get out of it into the country. Removing from it to the country was but passing from stillness to stillness. The country around Olney, moreover, is by no means striking in its features. It is like a thousand other parts of England, somewhat flat, yet somewhat undulating, and rather naked of trees. Weston, to which he now removed, was about a mile westward of Olney. It lies on higher ground, overlooking the valley of the Ouse. It is a small village, consisting of a few detached houses on each side of the road. The hall stood at this end, and the neat little church at the other. Trees grew along the street, and Cowper pronounced it one of the prettiest villages of England. Luckily, he had neither seen all the villages of England, nor the finest scenery of this or other countries. To him, therefore, the country was all that he imagined of lovely, and all that he desired. It never tired, it never lost its hold upon his fancy and his heart. [Pg 451]

> "Scenes must be beautiful, which, dayly viewed,
> Please dayly, and where novelty survives
> Long knowledge, and the scrutiny of years.
> Praise justly due to those that I describe."

This he said of this scenery around Weston; and in setting out for that village from Olney, we take the track which, even before he went to live there, was his dayly and peculiarly favorite walk. Advancing out of Olney-street, we are at once on an open ascent on the highway. At a mile's distance before us lies Weston and its woods, its little church tower overlooking the valley of the Ouse. Behind us lies Olney, its tall church spire rising nobly into the sky; and close beneath it the Ouse emerges into sight, sweeping round the water-mills which figure in the poet's works, and then goes in several different streams, as he says, lazily along a fine stretch of green meadows, in which the scenes of "The Dog and Water-lily," and "The Poplar Field" occur. On this eminence stood Cowper often, with Mary Unwin on his arm, and thus he addresses her, as he describes most vividly the view: [Pg 452]

> "And witness, dear companion of my walks,
> Whose arm this twentieth winter I perceive
> Fast locked in mine, with pleasure such as love,
> Confirmed by long experience of thy worth
> And well-tried virtues could alone inspire—
> Witness a joy that thou hast doubled long.
> Thou knowest my praise of nature most sincere,
> And that my raptures are not conjured up
> To serve occasions of poetic pomp,
> But genuine, and art partner of them all.
> How oft upon yon eminence our pace
> Has slackened to a pause, and we have borne
> The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
> While admiration, feeding at the eye,
> And still unsated dwelt upon the scene.
> Thence with what pleasure we have just discerned
> The distant plow slow moving, and beside
> His laboring team, that swerved not from the track,
> The sturdy swain diminished to a boy;
> Here Ouse slow winding through a level plain
> Of spacious mead, with cattle sprinkled o'er,
> Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
> Delighted. There, fast rooted in their bank,
> Stand, ne'er overlooked, our favorite elms,
> That screen the herdsman's solitary hut;
> While far beyond, and overthwart the stream,
> That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
> The sloping land recedes into the clouds;
> Displaying on its varied side the grace
> Of hedge-row beauties numberless, square tower, [Pg 453]
> Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
> Just undulates upon the listening ear,
> Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote."

We should not omit to notice that behind us, over Olney, shows itself the church tower and hall of

Clifton, the attempt to walk to which forms the subject of Cowper's very humorous poem, The Distressed Travelers. Before us, as we advance—the Ouse meadows below on our left, and plain, naked farm-lands on our right—the park of Weston displays its lawns, and slopes, and fine masses of trees. It will be recollected by all lovers of Cowper that here lived Sir John and Lady Throckmorton, Cowper's kind and cordial friends, who, even before they knew him, threw open their park and all their domains to him; and who, when they did know him, did all that generous people of wealth and intelligence could do to contribute to his happiness. The village and estate here wholly belonged to them, and the hall was a second home to Cowper, always open to him with a warm welcome, and an easy, unassuming spirit of genuine friendship, Lady Throckmorton herself voluntarily becoming the transcriber of his Homer when his young friend Rose left him. In the whole of our literature there is no more beautiful instance of the intercourse of the literary man and his wealthy neighbors than that of Cowper and the Throckmortons. Their reward was the pleasure they conferred; and still more, the fame they have thus won.

The Throckmortons having other and extensive estates, the successors of Cowper's friends have deserted this. The house is pulled down, a wall is built across the bottom of the court-yard, which cuts off from view what was the garden. Grass grows thickly in the court, the entrance to which is still marked by the pillars of a gateway bearing vases. Across the court are erected a priest's house and Catholic chapel—the Throckmortons were and are Catholic—and beyond these still stand the stables, coach-house, &c., bearing a clock-tower, and showing that this was once a [Pg 454] gentleman's residence. At the end of the old thatched out-building you see the word SCHOOL painted; it is the village school, Catholic, of course, as are all, or nearly all, the inhabitants. A pair of gateway pillars, like those which led to the house, mark the entrance to the village a little beyond the house. On the opposite side of the road to the house is the park, and directly opposite to the house, being taken out of the park, is the woodland wilderness in which Cowper so much delighted to ramble.

The village of Weston is a pretty village. The house of Cowper, Weston Lodge, stands on the right hand, about the center of it, forming a picturesque old orchard. The trees, which in his time stood in the street opposite, however, have been felled. A few doors on this side of the lodge is a public house, with the Yardley Oak upon its sign, and bearing the name of Cowper's Oak. The lodge, now inhabited by Mr. Swanwell, the steward, who very courteously allows the public to see it, is a good and pleasant, but not large house. It is well known by engravings. The vignette at the head of this article represents the tree opposite as still standing, which is not the fact, and the house wants shrubbery round it, by which its present aspect is much improved. The room on the right hand was Cowper's study. In his bed-room, which is at the back of the house overlooking the garden, there still remain two lines which he wrote when about to leave Weston for Norfolk, where he died. As his farewell to this place, the happiest of his life, when his own health, and that of his dear and venerable friend, Mrs. Unwin, were both failing, and gloomy feelings haunted him, these lines possess a deep interest. They are written on the bevel of a panel of one of the window-shutters, near the top right-hand corner, and when the shutter has been repainted, this part has been carefully excepted.

[Pg 455]

"Farewell, dear scenes, forever closed to me!
Oh for what sorrow must I now exchange you?
July 22.
— — even here 28 } 1795
July 22 } 1795."

The words and dates stand just as here given, and mark his recurrence to these lines, and his restless state of mind, repeating the date of both month and year.

From this room Cowper used to have a view of his favorite shrubbery, and beyond it, up the hill, pleasant crofts. The shrubbery was generally admired, being a delightful little labyrinth, composed of flowering shrubs, with gravel walks, and seats placed at appropriate distances. He gave a humorous account to Hayley of the erection of one of these arbors: "I said to Sam, 'Sam, build me a shed in the garden with any thing you can find, and make it rude and rough, like one of those at Eartham.' 'Yes, sir,' says Sam; and straightway laying his own noddle and the carpenter's together, has built me a thing fit for Stowe Gardens. Is not this vexatious? I threaten to inscribe it thus:

Beware of building! I intended
Rough logs and thatch, and thus it ended."

All this garden has now been altered. A yard has been made behind, with outbuildings, and the garden cut off with a brick wall.

Not far from this house a narrow lane turns up, inclosed on one side by the park wall. Through this old stone wall, now well crowned with masses of ivy, there used to be a door, of which Cowper had a key, which let him at once into the wilderness. In this wilderness, which is a wood grown full of underwood, through which walks are cut winding in all directions, you come upon what is called the Temple. This is an open Gothic alcove, having in front an open space, scattered with some trees, among them a fine old acacia, and closed in by the thick wood. Here Cowper used to sit much, delighted with the perfect and deep seclusion. The temple is now fast falling to [Pg 456] decay. Through a short winding walk to the left you come out to the park, which is separated from the wilderness by a sunk fence. A broad grass walk runs along the head of this fosse, between it and the wilderness, and here you find the two urns under the trees, which mark the

grave of two favorite dogs of the Throckmortons', for which Cowper condescended to write epitaphs, which still remain, and may be found in his poems. There is also a figure of a lion, couchant, on a pedestal, bearing this inscription: "Mortuo Leone etiam Lepores insultant, 1815."

From this point also runs out the fine lime avenue, of at least a quarter of a mile long, terminated by the alcove. Every scene, and every spot of ground which presents itself here, is to be found in Cowper's poetry, particularly in the first book of his Task—The Sofa. The Sofa was but a hook to hang his theme upon; his real theme is his walk all through this park and its neighborhood, particularly this fine avenue, closing its boughs above with all the solemn and inspiring grace of a Gothic cathedral aisle. To the right the park descends in a verdant slope, scattered with noble trees. There, in the valley, near the road to Olney, is the Spinny, with its rustic moss-house, haunted by Cowper, and where he wrote those verses, full of the deepest, saddest melancholy which ever oppressed a guiltless heart, beginning,

"Oh, happy shades, to me unblest!
  Friendly to peace, but not to me!
How ill the scene that offers rest,
  And heart, that can not rest, agree."

There, too, in the valley, but where it has freed itself from the wood, is the Rustic Bridge, equally celebrated by him; and beyond it, in the fields, the Peasant's Nest, now grown from a laborer's cottage, shrouded in trees, to a considerable farm-house, with its ricks and buildings, conspicuous on an open eminence. Still beyond are the woods of Yardley Chase, including those [Pg 457] of Kilwick and Dinglebury, well known to the readers of Cowper; and this old chase stretches away for four or five miles toward Castle Ashby. In traversing the park to reach the woods and Yardley Oak, we come into a genuinely agricultural region, where a sort of peopled solitude is enjoyed. Swelling, rounded eminences, with little valleys winding between them; here and there a farm-house of the most rustic description; the plow and its whistling follower turning up the ruddy soil; and the park, displaying from its hills and dells its contrast of nobly umbrageous trees, showed where Cowper had often delighted himself, and whence he had drawn much of his imagery:

"Now roves the eye:
And posted on this speculative height
Exults in its command. The sheepfold here
Pours out its fleecy tenants o'er the glebe.
At first, progressive as a stream, they seek
The middle field; but scattered by degrees,
Each to his choice, soon whitens all the land.
There from the sunburn'd hay-field homeward creeps
The loaded wain; while, lightened of its charge,
The wain that meets it passes swiftly by;
The boorish driver leaning o'er his team,
Vociferous, and impatient of delay.
Nor less attractive is the woodland scene,
Diversified with trees of every growth,
Alike, yet various. How the gray, smooth trunks
Of ash, or lime, or beech, distinctly shine
Within the twilight of their distant shades:
There, lost behind a rising ground, the wood
Seems sunk, and shortened to its topmost boughs."

The Task, Book i.

At this point of view you find the poet's praises of the scenery more fully justified than any where else. The park here has a solemn, solitary, splendidly wooded air, and spreads its green slopes, and gives hints of its secluded dells, that are piquant to the imagination. And still the walk, of a mile or more, to the ancient chase, is equally impressive. The vast extent of the forest which [Pg 458] stretches before you gives a deep feeling of silence and ancient repose. You descend into a valley, and Kilwick's echoing wood spreads itself before you on the upland. You pass through it, and come out opposite to a lonely farm-house, where, in the opening of the forest, you see the remains of very ancient oaks standing here and there. You feel that you are on a spot that has maintained its connection with the world of a thousand years ago; and amid these venerable trees, you soon see the one which by its bulk, its hollow trunk, and its lopped and dilapidated crown, needs not to be pointed out as the Yardley Oak. Here Cowper was fond of coming, and sitting within the hollow boll for hours; around him stretching the old woods, with their solitude and the cries of woodland birds. The fame which he has conferred on this tree has nearly proved its destruction. Whole arms and great pieces of its trunk have been cut away with knife, and ax, and saw, to prepare different articles from. The Marquis of Northampton, to whom the chase belongs, has had multitudes of nails driven in to stop the progress of this destruction, but finding that not sufficient, has affixed a board bearing this inscription: "Out of respect to the memory of the poet Cowper, the Marquis of Northampton is particularly desirous of preserving this oak. Notice is hereby given, that any person defacing, or otherwise injuring it, will be prosecuted according to law." In stepping round the Yardley Oak, it appeared to me to be, at the foot, about thirteen yards in circumference.

Every step here shows you some picture sketched by Cowper:

"I see a column of slow rising smoke
O'ertop the lofty wood that skirts the wild.
A vagabond and useless tribe there eat
Their miserable meal. A kettle slung
Between two poles upon a stick transverse,
Receives the morsel—flesh obscene of dog,
Or vermin, or at best of cock purloined [Pg 459]
From his accustomed perch. Hard-faring race!
They pick their fuel out of every hedge,
Which kindled with dry leaves just saves unquenched
The spark of life. The sportive wind blows wide
Their fluttering rags, and shows a tawny skin,
The vellum of the pedigree they claim."

We are now upon

"The grassy sward, close cropped by nibbling sheep,
And skirted thick with intermixture firm
Of thorny boughs."

The old wild chase opens its glades, discovers its heaths, startles us with its abrupt cries of birds, or plunges us into the gloom of thick, overshadowing oaks. It is a fit haunt of the poet. Such are the haunts of Cowper in this neighborhood. Amid these he led a secluded, but an active and most important life. How many of those who bustle along in the front of public life can boast of a ten-thousandth part of the benefit to their fellow-men which was conferred, and for ages will be conferred, by the loiterer of these woods and fields? In no man was his own doctrine ever made more manifest, that

"God gives to every man
The virtue, temper, understanding, taste,
That lifts him into life, and lets him fall
Just in the niche he was ordained to fill."

He says of himself,

"I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
Long since. With many an arrow deep infixed
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I joined by one who had himself
Been hurt by the archers. In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live.
Since then, with few associates, in remote
And silent woods I wander, far from those
My former partners of the peopled scene,
With few associates, and not wishing more."

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Thus he began; but soothed by the sweet freshness of nature, strengthened by her peace, enlightened to the pitch of true wisdom by her daily converse, spite of all his griefs and fears, he ended by describing himself, in one of the noblest passages of modern poetry, as the happy man.

"He is the happy man whose life e'en now
Shows somewhat of that happier life to come;
Who, doomed to an obscure but tranquil state,
Is pleased with it; and, were he free to choose,
Would make his fate his choice; whom peace, the fruit
Of virtue, and whom virtue, fruit of faith,
Prepare for happiness; bespeak him one
Content, indeed, to sojourn while he must
Below the skies, but having there his home.
The world o'erlooks him in her busy search
Of objects, more illustrious in her view;
And, occupied as earnestly as she,
Though more sublimely, he o'erlooks the world.
She scorns his pleasures, for she knows them not;
He seeks not hers, for he has proved them vain.
He can not skim the ground like summer birds
Pursuing golden flies; and such he deems
Her honors, her emoluments, her joys.
Therefore in contemplation is his bliss,
Whose power is such, that whom she lifts from earth
She makes familiar with a heaven unseen,

And shows him glories yet to be revealed.
Not slothful he, though seeming unemployed,
And censured oft as useless. Silent streams
Oft water fairest meadows, and the bird
That flutters least is longest on the wing."

The Task, Book vi.

Quitting these scenes in quest of health, both the poet and his dear friend Mary Unwin died at Dereham, in Suffolk, she in 1796, and he in 1800. "They were lovely in their lives, and in death they are not divided."

MRS. TIGHE, THE AUTHOR OF PSYCHE.

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Perhaps no writer of merit has been more neglected by her own friends than Mrs. Tighe. With every means of giving to the public a good memoir of her, I believe no such is in existence; at all events, I have not been able to find one. The following brief particulars have been furnished by a private hand: "Mrs. Tighe was born in Dublin in 1774. Her father, the Rev. Wm. Blachford, was librarian of Marsh's library, St. Sepulchre, in that city. Her mother, Theodosia Tighe, was one of a family whose seat has been, and is, Rosanna, county Wicklow. In 1793, Miss Blachford, then but nineteen, married her cousin, Henry Tighe, of Woodstock, M.P. for Kilkenny in the Irish Parliament, and author of a County History of Kilkenny. Consumption was hereditary in Mrs. Tighe's family, and its fatal seeds ripened with her womanhood. She was constantly afflicted with its attendants, languor, depression, and want of appetite. With the profits of Psyche, which ran through four editions previous to her death, she built an addition to the Orphan Asylum in Wicklow, thence called the Psyche Ward. She died on the 24th of March, 1810, and was buried at Woodstock, in Kilkenny, beneath a monument chiseled by Flaxman from the finest marble of Italy. Mrs. Hemans, Banim, and Moore have done homage to her genius, or lamented over its eclipse. North, in the Noctes Ambrosianæ, with the assistance of Mr. Timothy Tickler, has paid her a very high compliment. But her abilities, her beauty, and her virtue have not, as yet, been adequately pictured in any biographical notice of her that I have seen. The 1813 edition of Psyche contains some affecting allusions to her, in the preface written by her husband, who soon after followed her to the grave."

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How little is known of Mrs. Tighe, when so short an account is the best that a countryman of hers can furnish! and even in that there are serious errors. So far from her monument being of the finest marble of Italy, it is of a stone not finer than Portland stone, if so fine. So far from her husband soon following her to the grave, Mrs. Tighe died in 1810, and her husband was living at the time of Mrs. Hemans's visit to Woodstock in 1831. He must have survived her above twenty years. In Mrs. Hemans's own account of her visit to Woodstock, she speaks of it as the place where "Mrs. Tighe passed the latest years of her life, and near where she is buried;" yet in the same volume with Psyche (1811 edition, p. 306) there is a "Sonnet, written at Woodstock, in the county of Kilkenny, the seat of William Tighe, June 30, 1809," *i. e.*, but nine months before her death. For myself, I confess myself ignorant of the facts which might connect these strangely-clashing accounts of a popular poetess, of a wealthy family, and who died little more than thirty years ago. I hoped to gain the necessary information on the spot, which I made a long journey to visit purposely. Why I did not, remains to tell.

The poem of Psyche was one which charmed me intensely at an early age. There was a tone of deep and tender feeling pervading it, which touched the youthful heart, and took possession of every sensibility. There was a tone of melancholy music in it, which seemed the regretful expression of the consciousness of a not far-off death. It was now well known that the young and beautiful poetess *was* dead. The life which she lived—crowned with every good and grace that God confers on the bright ones of the earth, on those who are to be living revelations of the heaven to which we are called, and to which they are hastening, youth, beauty, fortune, all glorified by the emanations of a transcendent mind, was snatched away, and there was a sad fascination thrown over both her fate and her work. The delicacy, the pathos, the subdued and purified, yet intense passion of the poem, were all calculated to seize on the kindred spirit of

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youth, and to make you in love with the writer. She came before the imagination in the combined witchery of brilliant genius and the pure loveliness of a seraph, which had but touched upon the earth on some celestial mission, and was gone forever. Her own Psyche, in the depth of her saddest hour, yearning for the restoration of the lost heaven and the lost heart, was not more tenderly beautiful to the imagination than herself.

Such was the effect of the Psyche on the glowing, sensitive, yet immature mind. How much of this effect has, in many cases, been the result of the quick feelings and magnifying fancy of youth itself! We have returned to our idol in later years, and found it clay. But this is not the case with Psyche. After the lapse of many years, after the disenchanting effects of experience, after the enjoyment of a vast quantity of new poetry of a splendor and power such as no one age of the world ever before witnessed, we return to the poem of Mrs. Tighe, and still find it full of beauty. There is a graceful fluency of diction, a rich and deep harmony, that are the fitting vehicle of a story full of interest, and scenery full of enchantment. Spite of the incongruity of ingrafting on a Grecian fable the knight-errantry of the Middle Ages, and the allegory of still later days, we follow the deeply-tried Psyche through all her ordeals with unabating zest. The radiant Island of

Pleasure, the more radiant Divinity of Love, the fatal curiosity, the weeping and outcast Psyche wandering on through the forests and wildernesses of her earthly penance, the mysterious knight, the intrepid squire of the starry brow, are all sketched with the genuine pencil of poetry, and we follow the fortunes of the wanderers with ever-deepening entrancement. None but Spenser himself has excelled Mrs. Tighe in the field of allegory. Passion in the form of the lion subdued by the knight; Psyche betrayed by Vanity and Flattery to Ambition; the Bower of Loose [Pg 464] Delight; the Attacks of Slander; the Castle of Suspicion; the Court of Spleen; the drear Island of Indifference; and the final triumph and apotheosis of the gentle soul—all are vigorously conceived, and executed with a living distinctness. The pleasure with which she pursued her task is expressed in the graceful opening stanzas of the fifth canto.

"Delightful visions of my lonely hours!
  Charm of my life and solace of my care!
Oh! would the muse but lend proportioned powers,
  And give me language equal to declare
The wonders which she bids my fancy share,
  When rapt in her to other worlds I fly;
See angel forms unutterably fair,
  And hear the inexpressive harmony
That seems to float in air, and warble through the sky.

"Might I the swiftly-glancing scenes recall!
  Bright as the roseate clouds of summer eve,
The dreams which hold my soul in willing thrall,
  And half my visionary days deceive,
Communicable shape might then receive,
  And other hearts be ravished with the strain;
But scarce I seek the airy threads to weave,
  When quick confusion mocks the fruitless pain,
And all the airy forms are vanished from my brain.

"Fond dreamer! meditate thine idle song!
  But let thine idle song remain unknown;
The verse which cheers thy solitude, prolong;
  What though it charm no moments but thy own,
Though thy loved Psyche smile for thee alone,
  Still shall it yield thee pleasure, if not fame;
And when, escaped from tumult, thou hast flown
  To thy dear silent hearth's enlivening flame,
Then shall the tranquil muse her happy votary claim!"

Moore has recorded his admiration of Psyche in a lyric, of which these stanzas are not the least expressive:

"Tell me the witching tale again,
  For never has my heart or ear
Hung on so sweet, so pure a strain,
  So pure to feel, so sweet to hear. [Pg 465]

"Say, Love! in all thy spring of fame,
  When the high Heaven itself was thine.
When piety confessed the flame,
  And even thy errors were divine!

"Did ever muse's hand so fair
  A glory round thy temple spread?
Did ever life's ambrosial air
  Such perfume o'er thine altars shed?"

Mrs. Hemans had always been much struck with the poetry of Mrs. Tighe. She imagined a similarity between the destiny of this pensive poetess and her own. She had her in her imagination when she wrote The Grave of a Poetess; and the concluding stanzas are particularly descriptive of Mrs. Tighe's spirit.

"Thou hast left sorrow in thy song.
  A voice not loud, but deep!
The glorious bowers of earth among,
  How often didst thou weep!

"Where couldst thou fix on mortal ground,
  Thy tender thoughts and high?
Now peace the woman's heart hath found,
  And joy the poet's eye!"

It was certainly among earth's glorious bowers that Mrs. Tighe passed her days. Rosanna, in Wicklow, is said to have been her principal residence after her marriage. The whole country

round is extremely beautiful, and calculated to call forth the poetic faculty where it exists. All the way from Dublin to Rosanna is through a rich and lovely district. As you approach Rosanna the hills become higher, and your way lies through the most beautifully wooded valleys. At the inn at Ashford Bridge you have the celebrated Devil's Glen on one hand, and Rosanna on the other. This glen lies a mile or more from the inn, and is about a mile and a half through. It is narrow, the hills on either hand are lofty, bold, craggy, and finely wooded; and along the bottom runs, deep and dark over its rocky bed, the River Vartree. This river runs down and crosses the road near the inn, and then takes its way by Rosanna. Rosanna is perhaps a mile down the valley from the inn. [Pg 466] The house is a plain old brick house, fit for a country squire. It lies low in the meadow near the river, and around it, on both sides of the water, the slopes are dotted with the most beautiful and luxuriant trees. The park at Rosanna is indeed eminently beautiful with its wood. The trees are thickly scattered, and a great proportion of them are lime, the soft, delicate foliage of which gives a peculiar character to the scenery. The highway, for the whole length of the park as you proceed toward Rathdrum, is completely arched over with magnificent beeches, presenting a fine natural arcade. On the right the ground ascends for a mile or more, covered with rich masses of wood. In fact, whichever way you turn, toward the distant hill, or pursuing your way down the valley, all is one fairy land of beauty and richness. It is a region worthy of the author of Psyche, worthy to inspire her beautiful mind; and we rejoice that so fair, and gentle, and good a spirit had there her lot cast. In her poems she addresses one to the Vartree:

"Sweet are thy banks, O Vartree! when at morn
  Their velvet verdure glistens with the dew;
When fragrant gales, by softest zephyrs borne,
  Unfold the flowers, and ope their petals new.

"And sweet thy shade, at noon's more fervid hours,
  When faint we quit the upland gayer lawn,
To seek the freshness of thy sheltering bowers,
  Thy chestnut glooms, where day can scarcely dawn.

"Beneath the fragrant lime, or spreading beech,
  The bleating flocks in panting crowds repose;
Their voice alone my dark retreat can reach,
  While peace and silence all my soul compose."

In her sonnets, too, she alludes to her favorite Rosanna, and to her "chestnut bower," which, I believe, still remains. Indeed, Rosanna will always be interesting to the lovers of gentle female virtue and pure genius, because here Psyche was written; here the author of Psyche lived, loved, and suffered.

Woodstock, where she died, lies, I suppose, forty or fifty miles distant, in Kilkenny. It is equally [Pg 467] beautiful, though in a different style. It lies on a high, round, swelling hill—a good modern mansion. You see it afar off as you drive over a country less beautiful than that about Rosanna. There is a fine valley, along which the River Nore runs, amid splendid masses of wood, two miles in length, and meadows of the deepest green; and beyond swells up the steep round hill, covered also with fine timber to the top, eight hundred feet in elevation. The whole is bold, ample, and impressive. To reach the house you pass through the village of Innerstiogue, at the foot of the hill, and then begin the long and steep ascent. A considerable way up you are arrested by smart lodge gates, and there enter a fine and well-kept park, in which the neatness of the carriage roads, which are daily swept, and the skillfully dispersed masses of fine trees, speak of wealth, and a pride in it. On the top of the hill stands the house, commanding noble views down into the superb vale below, and over a wide extent of country.

In traveling between these two estates, a mind like that of Mrs. Tighe would find scenery not inferior to that immediately lying around both of them. In one direction she might traverse the celebrated district of Glendalough, or the Vale of the Seven Churches; in another, she might descend the Vale of Avoca, and cross some of the finest parts of Carlow to Kilkenny. I took this latter route. No part of England is more beautiful or more richly cultivated than much of this: thick woods, fertile fields, well-to-do villages, and gentlemen's houses abounded. From the little town of Rathdrum we began to descend rapidly into the Vale of Avoca, and passed the Meeting of the Waters just before dark. The vale, so far, had a very different character to what I expected. I expected it to be a mile or two long, or so, soft, flowing, and verdant. On the contrary, it is eight miles in length, and has to me a character of greatness and extensiveness about it. It is what the [Pg 468] Germans call "*grossartig*"—we want the word. You descend down and down, and feel that a deeper country is still below you. To me it had a feeling as if descending from the Alps into a champaign country. Long ranges of hills on either hand ever and anon terminated, as if to admit of a way into the country beyond, and then began again, with the river wandering on still far below us; and here and there stupendous masses of lofty rock, open meadows, and bold, high woods. These were the features of this striking and great valley.

At the bridge, where the first meeting of the waters takes place, that is, the meeting of the two streams, Avonbeg and Avonmore, which thence become the Avoca, the driver of the car said, "Perhaps your honor knows that this is the Meeting of the Waters. It was here that Moore made his speech!"

But the most striking meeting to us was a meeting with a great number of one-horse carts, those of miners, with whom this vale abounds. They were coming up from a market at Avoca, just

below, and they took no more notice of being just all in our way than if we were not there. The driver shouted, but in vain; and it was only by using his whip over them till he broke off the lash that he could get a passage. When they did draw out of the way, it was always purposely to the wrong side. The fact is, they were all drunk, and seemed to have a very animal doggedness of disposition about them. The Wooden Bridge Inn, at the bottom of the vale, and at the commencement of the Vale of Arklow, and the place of the second meeting of the waters, is the great resort of travelers. The scene here has great softness. A bend of the valley, an opening of rich meadow, surrounded by hills thickly clothed with foliage, and the rivers running on to their meeting, give a feeling of great and quiet seclusion. Here I posted, as I have said, across Carlow to Kilkenny, and to Woodstock.

But at Rosanna and at Woodstock, my hope of obtaining some information regarding Mrs. Tighe [Pg 469]
—of seeing some painting or other object connected with her, was, with one exception, thoroughly frustrated. Mrs. Tighe was an angel; of her successors I have somewhat more to say. In all my visits to remarkable places in England, I have received the utmost courtesy from the proprietors of those houses and scenes which it was my object to see. In those where I was anxious to obtain sight of relics of celebrated persons of antiquity not ordinarily shown to the public, I have written to the owner to request opportunity of examining them. In such cases, noblemen of the highest rank have not, in a single instance, shown the slightest reluctance to contribute to that information which was for the public. In some cases, they have themselves gone down into the country to give me the meeting, and thrown open private cabinets, and the like depositories of rare objects, with the most active liberality. In every other case, so invariably have I found the most obliging facilities given for the prosecution of my inquiries, that I have long ceased to carry a letter of introduction; my name, of twenty-three years' standing before the public, being considered warranty enough. I found it equally so in Ireland, except with the Tighes.

At Rosanna, Mr. Dan Tighe, as the people familiarly call him, certainly not Dante, was pointed out to me by a workman, walking in the meadow before his house, handling his bullocks which grazed there. On asking the servant who came to the door whether Mr. Tighe was at home, he first, as a perfect tactician, requested my name, and he would see. I gave him my card; and though he could see his master as well as I could in the meadow, to whom I directed his attention, he very solemnly marched into the house, and returned, saying he was not in. A self-evident truth. I inquired if Mrs. Tighe was at home, explaining that I had come from England, and for what object. He said "yes, but she was *lying in*, and could see no one." I then inquired when [Pg 470]
Mr. Tighe might be expected in, as I should much regret losing the opportunity of learning from him any particulars connected with my present inquiry. "He could not say; most likely at six o'clock, his dinner hour." I promised to call on my way toward Avoca, about half an hour before that time, that I might not interfere with Mr. Tighe's dinner hour. I did so. Mr. Tighe was now standing in his field, not a hundred yards from his house. As soon as the servant appeared, he assured me Mr. Tighe was not at home; he could not tell where he was. I immediately directed his attention to where he stood looking at some men at work. The man did not choose to see him; and, under the circumstances, it was not for me to advance and address him. It was evident that the man had his cue; the master did not choose to be seen. I therefore mounted my car, and ordered the driver to drive off. The spirit of the place was palpable. A willing master makes a willing man; but on this man's nose sat perched that solemn lie that is unmistakable. Well, as Mr. Tighe was *walking out*, and Mrs. Tighe was *lying in*, I bade adieu to Rosanna not much wiser for my visit; but then there was Woodstock.

I drove fifty miles across the country, and found myself at the door of Woodstock. Woodstock is a show-house; and here, therefore, I anticipated no difficulty of at least obtaining a sight of portrait or statue of the late charming poetess. But, unfortunately—what in England would have been most fortunate—Mr. Tighe was at home, and the servant, on opening the door, at once informed me that the house was never shown when the family was there. Having written on my card what was my object, that I had made the journey from England for it, and added the name of a gentleman well known to Mr. Tighe, who had wished me to do so, I requested the servant to present that to Mr. Tighe. He did so; and returned, saying, "Mr. Tighe said I was at liberty to see [Pg 471]
the grounds, but not the house; and he had nothing further to say!"

My astonishment may be imagined. The servant seemed a very decent, modest sort of fellow, and I said, "Good heavens! does Mr. Tighe think I am come all the way from England to see his grounds, when ten thousand country squires could show much finer? Was there no picture of Mrs. Tighe, the poetess, that I might be allowed to see?" "He thought not; he did not know." "Was there no statue?" "He thought not; he never heard of any." "How long had he been there?" "Five years." "And never heard of a statue or a monument to Mrs. Tighe, the poetess?" "No, never! He had never heard Mrs. Tighe, the poetess, spoken of in the family! But if there were any monument, it must be at the church at Innerstiogue!" I thanked him for his intelligence, the only glimpse of information I had got at Rosanna or Woodstock, and drove off.

The matter was now clear. The very servants who had lived years in the family had never heard the name of Mrs. Tighe, the poetess, mentioned! These present Tighes had been marrying the daughters of lords—this a daughter of the Duke of Richmond, and Dan Tighe, a daughter of Lord Crofton. They were ashamed, probably, that any of their name should have degraded herself by writing poetry, which a man or woman without an acre may do. When I reached the church at Innerstiogue, the matter received a most striking confirmation. There, sure enough, was the monument, in a small mausoleum in the church-yard. It is a recumbent figure, laid on a granite altar-shaped basement. The figure is of a freestone resembling Portland stone, and is lying on its

side, as on a sofa, being said, by the person who showed it, to be the position in which she died, on coming in from a walk. The execution of the whole is very ordinary, and if really by Flaxman, displays none of his genius. I have seen much better things by a common stone-mason. There is a [Pg 472] little angel sitting at the head, but this has never been fastened down by cement. The monument was, no doubt, erected by the widower of the poetess, who was a man of classical taste, and, I believe, much attached to her. There is no inscription yet put upon the tomb, though one, said to be written by her husband, has long been cut in stone for the purpose. In the wall at the back of the monument, aloft, there is an oblong-square hole left for this inscription, which I understood was lying about at the house, but no single effort had been made to put it up, though it would not require an hour's work, and though Mrs. Tighe has been dead six-and-thirty years!

This was decisive! If these two gentlemen, nephews of the poetess, who are enjoying the two splendid estates of the family, Woodstock and Rosanna, show thus little respect to the only one of their name that ever lifted it above the mob, it is not to be expected that they will show much courtesy to strangers. Well is it that Mrs. Tighe raised her own monument, that of immortal verse, and wrote her own epitaph in the hearts of all the pure and loving, not on a stone which sordid relatives, still fonder of earth than stone, may consign to the oblivion of a lumber-room.

That these nephews of the poetess do look after the earth which her husband left behind him, though not after the stone, I learned while waiting in the village for the sexton. I fell into conversation with the woman at the cottage by which I stood. It was as follows:

Self. "Well, your landlord has a fine estate here. I hope he is good to you."

Woman. "Well, your honor, very good, very good."

Self. "Very good? What do you call very good? I find English and Irish notions of goodness don't always agree."

Woman. "Well, your honor, we may say he is mixed; mixed, your honor." [Pg 473]

Self. "How mixed?"

Woman. "Why, your honor, you see I can't say that he was very good to me."

Self. "How was that?"

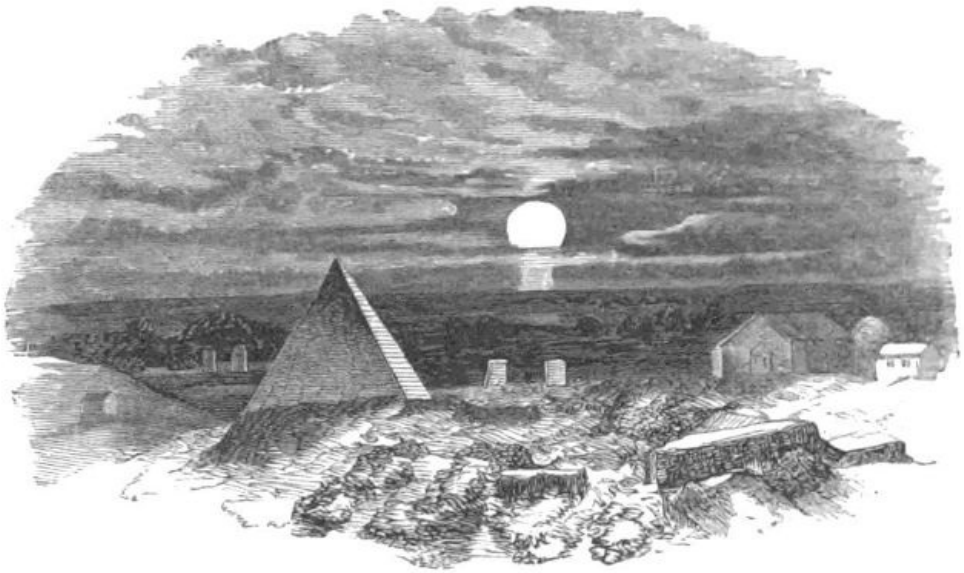
Woman. "Why, your honor, we were backward in our rent, and the squire sent for my husband, and told him that if he did not pay all next quarter, he would sell us up. My husband begged he would give him a little more time, as a neighbor said he had some money left him, and would take part of our land at a good rent, and then we should be able to pay; but now we got little, and the children were many, and it was hard to meet and tie. 'Oh!' said the squire, 'if you are going to get all that money, you will be able to pay more rent. I must have two pounds a year more.'"

Self. "Gracious Heaven! But, surely, he did not do such a thing?"

Woman. "But he did it, your honor. The neighbor *had* no money: it was a hum; he never took the field of us at all; we never were able to get a penny more from any one than we gave; but when my husband went to pay the rent at the next rent-day, the steward would not take it. He said he had orders to have two pounds a year more; and from that day we have had it regularly to pay."

What a fall out of the poetry of Psyche to the iron realities of Ireland! This screwing system on the poor, which you find almost every where, soon makes us cease to wonder at the wretchedness and the wild outrages of the people there. At one splendid place where I was, the lord of the estate and the gentry were all bowling away on the Sunday morning to a church three miles distant. When I asked why they did not stay at their own, this was the reply: "The clergyman had given great offense by saying in one of his sermons that their dogs were better lodged and fed than their neighbors!" Poor Ireland! where such is the distortion of circumstances [Pg 474] that the poor are too poor to have the truth told about them to ears polite even from the pulpit, and where the squirearchy live in splendid houses, and in state emulating the peerage, surrounded by hovels and wretchedness, such as the world besides can not parallel. The condition of Ireland is fatal in its effects on all classes. The poor are reduced to a misery that is the amazement of the whole world; and the squirearchy, who live in daily contemplation of this misery, are rendered utterly callous to it. They go on putting on the screw of high rental to the utmost limit, and surrounded, as it were, only by serfs, naturally grow selfish beyond our conceptions in England, haughty, and ungracious. I believe that no country, except Russia, can furnish such revolting examples of ignorant and churlish insolence as Ireland can from the ranks of its solitary squirearchy—so utterly opposed to the generally generous, courteous, and hospitable character of its people.

[Pg 475]



JOHN KEATS.

"Where is the youth for deeds immortal born,
Who loved to whisper to the embattled corn,
And clustered woodbines, breathing o'er the stream,
Endymion's beauteous passion for a dream!
Why did he drop the harp from fingers cold,
And sleep so soon with demigods of old!
Oh, who so well could sing Love's joys and pains?
He lived in melody, as if his veins
Poured music; from his lips came words of fire,
The voice of Greece, the tones of Homer's lyre."

Ebenezer Elliott.

We come now to one whose home and haunts on the earth were brief;

"Who sparkled, was exhaled, and went to heaven."

John Keats was one of those sweet and glorious spirits who descend, like the angel messengers of old, to discharge some divine command, not to dwell here. Pure, ethereal, glowing with the fervency of inward life, the bodily vehicle appears but assumed for the occasion, and as a mist, as a shadow, is ready to dissolve the instant that occasion is served. They speak and pass away into the higher light from whence they came; but their words remain—themselves life, and spirit, and [Pg 476] power—like the electric element in the veins of the earth, quickening and vitalizing the souls of men to the end of time. They become part and parcel of our nature; they are as essential to the aliment and the progress of our intellectual being, as the light, the morning dew of summer, the morning and the evening star, or any of those great components of nature, the sky, the sea, or the mountain, from which we draw the daily spirit of beauty; and live!—live, not as mere material machines; not as animal existences—as brutes,

"Which graze the mountain top with faces prone,
And eyes intent upon the scanty herb
It yields them; or, recumbent on its brow,
Ruminate heedless of the scene outspread
Beneath, beyond, and stretching far away
From inland regions to the distant main"—*Cowper.*

not mere men of the world, money-getting, house-building, land-purchasing creatures, but souls of God and of eternity. "Man lives not by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God," and which descends to earth by his prophets, whether of prose or of poetry. It is by the mediation of such pure and seraphic intelligences that our true psychological frame and constitution are built up. For, created to take our places in the great future of the universe, amid the spiritual revelation of all things spiritual, we must be raised substantially from the mere germ of immortality within us into "spirits of just men made perfect." We must be composed of the spiritual elements of beauty, thought, sensation, and seizure of all intellectual things, growing by the daily absorption of divine essences into spiritual bodies, incorporate of love, of light, of lofty aspirations and tenderest desires; of thoughts that comprehend the world, and hearts that embrace it with a divine capacity of affection. As we walk on our daily way, and along the muddiest paths of life, amid our own cares and loneliness, we do not and can not walk unblessed. The shower of God's benedictions falls on us; the sunshine of his ceaseless gifts surrounds us. [Pg 477] From his own appointed men, whether living or dead, "the refreshments from his presence" reach us, melt into us, and sustain us. Words spoken thousands of years ago steal, like the

whisper of a breeze, into our bosoms, and become bright guests there; music, full of deep movings, heard but yesterday from the lips of the inspired, touches the spring of happiness within us. The thoughts and sentiments of poets and philosophers, "beautiful exceedingly," stand around us like the trees and the flowers of our wayside; and from every point of heaven and earth are reflected upon us the flowing waters, the cool forest shades, the bright and glittering stars of that mind, which has been poured through a myriad of vehicles and a host of ages down upon us here. The light, and color, and warmth which mature our very corn and fruits, come from the sun. They are no more inherent in this nether earth than our own life is. All that we have and enjoy must come from other worlds to us. Our material aliments are sustained by the strength and life issuing from the infinite heavens; and thence too descend, in still more ethereal actuality, all that our souls are made of.

Of the class of swift but resplendent messengers by whom these ministrations are performed, neither ours nor any other history can furnish a specimen more beautiful than John Keats. He was of feeling and "imagination all compact." His nature was one pure mass of the living light of poetry. On this world and its concerns he could take no hold, and they could take none on him. The worldly and the worldly wise could not comprehend him, could not sympathize with. To them his vivid orgasm of the intellect was madness; his exuberance of celestial gifts was extravagance; his unworldliness was effeminacy; his love of the universal man, and not of gross distinctions of pride and party, was treason. As of the highest and divinest of God's messengers to earth, they cried, "Away with him; he is not fit to live;" and the body, that mere mist-like, that mere shadow- [Pg 478]
like body, already failing before the fervency of his spiritual functions, fell, "faded away, dissolved," and disappeared before the bitter frost-wind of base criticism.

It was a dark and wretched time when Keats made his appearance among us. War, and party, and peculation on the one side, and resentment and discontent on the other; the necessity for the gainer maintaining his craft at all costs, and the equal necessity for the loser dragging this ruinous craft to the ground, had infused into literature an atrocious spirit. From this foul spirit, genius, in every fresh incarnation, suffered the most ruthless and inhuman assaults. The stronger possessor of it stood; the weaker or more sensitive fell. Keats was one of the latter. He had soul enough for any thing, but his *physique* was feeble, and sunk. It will be one of the "damned spots" which will forever cling, not to the country, but to the age. But it is to the everlasting honor of Leigh Hunt, that, himself a critic as well as a poet, he never dipped his hand in the blood of the innocents. He never slew one of those martyrs whose glorious tombs we now build with adamantine stones of admiration, tempering the cement with the tears of our love. Himself assailed, and shot at, and cruelly wounded by the archers, he not only turned and manfully defended himself, but spread the shield of his heart to protect those who were rising up to become formidable rivals in the public regard. Will the country ever show to this generous man, and in time, that warm-heartedness which he always showed to its sons of genius in their unfolding hours? It is a glory that is peculiar, and peculiarly beautiful, that amid that iron age of a murderous criticism, he was forever found in close union and communion with the morning stars of poetry. They truly "sang together." They seemed by an instinct of life to flock to him, and by an instinct equally sure and unselfish, he felt at once their claims, and with open hand and [Pg 479]
heart maintained them. It was in the pages of the Examiner that, amid specimens of young poets, I first made acquaintance with the magnificent sonnet of Keats on reading Chapman's Homer, and with Shelley's Hymn to Intellectual Beauty. From that hour there could be no moment's question but that great men were come among us; those men who, in fact, "turn the world upside down," and by which turning upside down, the only process, the asps and scorpions of malice are shook out of it, and all its strong-rooted fabrics of prejudice and pride are toppled into the dust. Till death, the souls of these men, who

> "Learned in suffering what they taught in song,"

never ceased to maintain that brave union thus begun, but amid abuse, misrepresentation, and the vilest onslaughts from the army of the aliens, went on blessing the world with those emanations of splendid and unshackled thought, which are now recognized as among the most precious of the national property. Who in future days will not pray that he might have been as one of these?

It is to the account by Leigh Hunt, in his "Byron and some of his Cotemporaries," that we owe almost all that we know of the life and haunts of Keats. From this we learn that "Mr. Keats's origin was of the humblest description. He was born October 29, 1796, at a livery-stable in Moorfields, of which his grandfather was proprietor. He never spoke of it, perhaps out of a personal soreness which the world had exasperated. After receiving the rudiments of a classical education at Mr. Clarke's school at Enfield, he was bound apprentice to Mr. Hammond, a surgeon, in Church-street, Edmonton; and his enemies having made a jest even of this, he did not like to be reminded of it; at once disdaining them for their meanness, and himself for being weak enough to be moved by them. Mr. Clarke, Jun., his schoolmaster's son, a reader of genuine discernment, had encouraged with great warmth the genius that he saw in the young poet; and it [Pg 480]
was to Mr. Clarke I was indebted for my acquaintance with him."

Mr. Hunt, in his warm-hearted way, lost no time in introducing his poetry to the best judges of poetry, among them to Godwin, Hazlitt, Basil Montagu, Charles Lamb, and others. He read to them, among others, that fine sonnet already mentioned, which, as it is printed in a volume now not much seen, can not too often be quoted:

"ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER.

"Much have I traveled in the land of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen,
Round many western islands have I been,
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold;
Oft of one wide expanse have I been told,
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet I did never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold.
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies,
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez, when, with eagle eyes,
He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Looked at each other in a wild surprise,
Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

The two poets became speedily familiar and almost inseparable. They read, walked, and talked together continually; and Mr. Hunt gives us various particulars of Keats's haunts at this period which are nowhere else to be obtained. "The volume containing the above sonnet," he says, "was published in 1817, when the author was in his twenty-first year. The poem with which it begins was suggested to him by a delightful summer day, as he stood beside the gate that leads from the battery on Hampstead Heath into a field by Caen Wood; and the last poem, the one on Sleep and Poetry, was occasioned by his sleeping in one of the cottages in the Vale of Health, the first one that fronts to the valley, beginning from the same quarter. I mention these things, which now look trivial, because his readers will not think them so twenty years hence. It was in the beautiful [Pg 481] lane running from the road between Hampstead and Highgate to the foot of Highgate Hill, that, meeting me one day, he first gave me the volume. If the admirer of Mr. Keats's poetry does not know the lane in question, he ought to become acquainted with it, both on his author's account and its own. It has been also paced by Mr. Lamb and Mr. Hazlitt, and frequently, like the rest of the beautiful neighborhood, by Mr. Coleridge; so that instead of Millfield Lane, which is the name it is known by 'on earth,' it has sometimes been called Poet's Lane, which is an appellation it richly deserves. It divides the grounds of Lords Mansfield and Southampton, running through trees and sloping meadows, and being rich in the botany for which this part of the neighborhood of London has always been celebrated." Mr. Hunt was at this time living at Hampstead, in the Vale of Health, and the house at which it is said Keats wrote the beautiful poem on Sleep and Poetry was his. There is another fact in this account that deserves attention, and that is, the date of the publication of Keats's first small volume. This was 1817; in 1818 he published his Endymion; on the 26th of June, 1820, his third volume, Lamia, and other Poems, was published; and on the 27th of December of the same year he died at Rome. Thus the whole of his poetical life, from the issue of his first small volume to his death, was but about three years. During the greater part of that period he felt his disease, consumption, was mortal. Yet what progress in the development of his powers, and the maturing of his judgment and feeling of art, was manifested in that short space and under those circumstances! The first volume was a volume of immature fancies and unsettled style, but with things which denoted the glorious dawn of a short but illustrious day. The Endymion had much extravagance. It was a poetical effervescence. The mind of the writer was haunted by crowds of imaginations, and scenes of wonder, and dreams of beauty, chiefly from the old mythological world, but mingled with the passion for living nature, [Pg 482] and the warmest feelings of youth. It brought forward the deities of Greece, and invested them with the passions and tenderness of men, and all the youthful glow which then reigned in the poet's heart. The mind was boiling over from intense heat; but amid the luscious foam rose streams of the richest wine of poetry which ever came from the vintage of this world. The next volume, Lamia, Isabella, &c., showed how the heady liquor had cleared itself, and become spirit bright and strong. There was an aim, a settled plan and purpose in each composition, and a steady power of judgment growing up amid all the vivid impulses of the brain that still remained vivid as ever. The style was wonderfully condensed, and the descriptive as well as conceptive faculty had assumed a vigor and acumen which was not, and is not, and probably never will be, surpassed by any other poet. For proofs to justify these high terms, it is only necessary to open the little volume, and open it almost any where. How powerful and tender is the narrative of Isabella; how rich, and gorgeous, and chaste, and well-weighed is the whole of St. Agnes's Eve; how full of the soul of poetry is The Ode to the Nightingale. Perhaps there is no poet, living or dead, except Shakspeare, who can pretend to any thing like the felicity of epithet which characterizes Keats. One word or phrase is the essence of a whole description or sentiment. It is like the dull substance of the earth struck through by electric fires, and converted into veins of gold and diamonds. For a piece of perfect and inventive description, that passage from Lamia, where, Lycius gone to bid the guests to his wedding, Lamia, in her uneasy excitement, employs herself and her demon powers in adorning her palace, is unrivaled:

"It was the custom then to bring away
The bride from home at blushing shut of day,
Veiled, in a chariot, heralded along
By strewn flowers, torches, and a marriage-song, [Pg 483]
With other pageants: but this fair unknown
Had not a friend. So being left alone—
Lycius was gone to summon all his kin—
And knowing surely she could never win
His foolish heart from its most pompousness,

She set herself, high-thoughted, how to dress
The misery in fit magnificence.
She did so; but 'tis doubtful how and whence
Came, and who were her subtle servitors.
About the halls, and to and from the doors,
There was a noise of wings, till in short space
The glaring banquet-room shone with wide-arched grace.
A haunting music, sole, perhaps, and lone
Supportress of the fairy roof, made moan
Throughout, as fearful the whole charm might fade.
Fresh carved cedar mimicking a glade
Of palm and plantain, sent from either side
High in the midst, in honor of the bride,
Two palms, and then two plantains, and so on;
From either side their stems branched one to one
All down the aisled place; and beneath all
There ran a stream of lamps straight on from wall to wall.
So canopied lay an untasted feast
Teeming with odors. Lamia, regal dress'd,
Silently paced about, and as she went,
In pale, contented, silent discontent,
Missioned her viewless servants to enrich
The fretted splendor of each nook and niche:
Between the tree-stems, marbled plain at first,
Came jasper panels; then anon there burst
Forth creeping imagery of slighter trees,
And with the larger wove in small intricacies.
Approving all, she faded at self-will,
And shut the chamber up, close, hushed, and still,
Complete and ready for the revels rude,
When dreadful guests would come to spoil her solitude."

The description of Lamia undergoing the metamorphosis by which she escaped from the form of a serpent to that of a beautiful woman, is marvelous for its power and precision of language.

"Left to herself, the serpent now began
To change: her elfin blood in madness ran, [Pg 484]
Her mouth foamed, and the grass, therewith bespent,
Withered with dew so sweet and virulent.
Her eyes in torture fixed, and anguish drear,
Hot, glazed, and wide, with lid-lashes all sear,
Flashed phosphor and sharp sparks, without one cooling tear.
The colors all inflamed throughout her train,
She writhed about convulsed with scarlet pain:
A deep, volcanian yellow took the place
Of all her milder mooned body's grace;
And as the lava ravishes the mead,
Spoiled all her silver mail and golden brede;
Made gloom of all her frecklings, streaks, and bars,
Eclipsed her crescents, and licked up her stars:
So that in moments few she was undress'd
Of all her sapphires, gems, and amethyst,
And rubious argent; of all these bereft,
Nothing but pain and ugliness was left.
Still shone her crown; that vanished, also she
Melted and disappeared as suddenly;
And in the air her new voice luting soft
Cried 'Lycius, gentle Lycius!' Borne aloft
With the bright mists about the mountains hoar
These words dissolved: Crete's forest heard no more."

The most magnificent trophy of his genius, however, is the fragment of Hyperion. On this poem, which has something vast, colossal, and dreamy about it, giving you a conception of the unfoldings of an almost infinite scope of "the vision and the faculty divine" in this extraordinary youth, he was employed when the progress of his complaint, and the savage treatment of the critics, sunk his heart, and he abandoned the task, and went forth to die. How touching, under the circumstances, is the short preface affixed to this volume by the publishers. "If any apology be thought necessary for the appearance of the unfinished poem of Hyperion, the publishers beg to state that they alone are responsible, as it was printed at their particular request, and contrary to the wish of the author. The poem was intended to have been of equal length with the Endymion, but the reception given to that work discouraged the author from proceeding." [Pg 485] Can a critic even read the passage without some compunction? and who shall again repeat the stale sophism that unkind criticism never extinguished genuine poetry?

Mr. Hunt says of Keats, that "he enjoyed the usual privileges of greatness with all whom he knew, rendering it delightful to be obliged by him, and an equal, but not a greater, to oblige. It was a

pleasure to his friends to have him in their houses, and he did not grudge it."

He was sometimes a regular inmate with Mr. Hunt at Kentish town, and used to ramble about the sweet walks of Hampstead and Highgate to his heart's content. "When Endymion was published, he was living at Hampstead with his friend Charles Brown, who attended him most affectionately through a long and severe illness, and with whom, to their great mutual enjoyment, he had taken a journey into Scotland. The lakes and mountains of the North delighted him exceedingly. He beheld them with an epic eye. Afterward he went into the South, and luxuriated in the Isle of Wight." He was, too, down in Devonshire. The preface to his Endymion is dated from Teignmouth.

On Mr. Brown's leaving England a second time, "Mr. Keats," says Leigh Hunt, "was too ill to accompany him, and came to reside with me, when his last and best volume of poems appeared, containing Lamia, Isabella, The Eve of St. Agnes, and the noble fragment of Hyperion. I remember Charles Lamb's delight and admiration on reading this work; how pleased he was with the designation of Mercury as 'the star of Lethe,' rising, as it were, and glittering when he came upon that pale region; with the fine, daring anticipation in that passage of the second poem,

> 'So the two brothers and *their murdered man*
> Rode past fair Florence;'

and with the description, at once delicate and gorgeous, of Agnes praying beneath the painted window."

This must have been immediately before the young poet quitted England in the vain quest of [Pg 486] health. There is a very affecting passage in Mr. Hunt's brief memoir of him, which shows what was the state of mind of this fine young poet at this crisis. The hunter had stricken him, death was dealing with him, and the pain of affections unassured of a return was helping his other enemies to pull him down. "Seeing him once," says Mr. Hunt, "change countenance in a manner more alarming than usual, as he stood silently eyeing the country out of the window, I pressed him to let me know how he felt, in order that he might enable me to do what I could for him; upon which he said that his feelings were almost more than he could bear, and he feared for his senses. I proposed that we should take a coach and ride about the country together, to vary, if possible, the immediate impression, which was sometimes all that was formidable, and would come to nothing. He acquiesced, and was restored to himself. It was, nevertheless, on the same day, sitting on the bench in Well Walk, at Hampstead, nearest the heath, that he told me, with unaccustomed tears in his eyes, that 'his heart was breaking.' A doubt, however, was upon him at that time, which he afterward had reason to know was groundless; and during his residence at the last house that he occupied before he went abroad, he was at times more than tranquil."

His house, it appears, was in Wentworth Place, Downshire Hill, Hampstead, by Pond-street, and at the next door lived the young lady to whom he was engaged. Mr. Hunt accompanied Keats and this young lady to the place of embarkation in a coach, and saw them part. It was a most trying moment. Neither of them entertained a hope to see each other again in life, yet each endeavored to subdue the feelings of such a moment to the retention of outward composure. Keats was accompanied on his voyage by that excellent artist, Mr. Severn, and who, to quote again the same competent authority, possessed all that could recommend him for a companion: old acquaintanceship, great animal spirits, active tenderness, and a mind capable of appreciating [Pg 487] that of a poet. They first went to Naples, and afterward to Rome, where they occupied the same house, at the corner of the Piazza di Spagna. Mr. Severn made several sketches of Keats, both on the voyage and at Rome, and, while there, finished a portrait of him for Mr., now Lord Jeffery, who had spoken handsomely of him in the Edinburgh Review. At Rome, on the 27th of December, 1820, as already stated, John Keats died in the arms of his friend, completely worn out and longing for release. How the circumstance of this life-weariness reminds us of his longing for death in his inimitable Ode to the Nightingale!

> "Oh for a draught of vintage that hath been
> Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,
> Tasting of Flora and the country green;
> Dance and Provençal song, and sunburned mirth!
> Oh for a beaker full of the warm south,
> Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
> With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
> And purple-stained mouth!
> That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
> And with thee fade away into the forest dim;
>
> "Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget
> What thou among the leaves hast never known,
> The weariness, the fever, and the fret,
> Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;
> Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs;
> Where youth grows pale, and spectre thin, and dies;
> Where still to think is to be full of sorrow,
> And leaden-eyed despairs:
> Where beauty can not keep her lustrous eyes,
> Or new love pine at them beyond to-morrow."

"A little before he died, he said that 'he felt the daisies growing over him.' But he made a still

more touching remark respecting his epitaph. 'If any,' said he, 'were put over him, he wished it to consist of nothing but these words: Here lies one whose name was writ in water;' so little did he [Pg 488] think of the more than promise he had given; of the fine and lasting things he had added to the stock of poetry. The physicians expressed their astonishment that he had held out so long; the lungs turning out, on inspection, to have been almost obliterated. They said he must have lived upon the mere strength of the spirit within him. He was interred in the English burying-ground at Rome, near the monument of Caius Cestius, where his friend and poetical mourner, Mr. Shelley, was so shortly to join him."

Such is the brief but deeply interesting account of John Keats, drawn mostly from the written narrative, and partly from the conversation of his true friend and fellow-poet. It is not possible to close it in more just or appropriate words than those of this admiring but discriminating friend: "So much for the mortal life of as true a man of genius as these latter times have seen; one of those who are too genuine and too original to be properly appreciated at first, but whose time for applause will infallibly arrive with the many, and has already begun in all poetical quarters."

[Pg 489]

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY.

Keats was the martyr of poetry, but Shelley was the martyr of opinion. Keats dared to write in a new vein, to disregard all the old canons of criticism, to pour out his heart, and all his fancies, in that way only which seemed naturally to belong to them, and this was cause enough to bring down upon him the vengeance of all the rule-and-line men of literature. But besides this, Keats kept suspicious company. Hunt and Shelley were notorious Radicals; and Hunt and Shelley were his friends. "Tell me what company you keep, and I will tell you what you are," is an old proverb, and was, in John Keats' case, most promptly applied. But Shelley was perhaps the most daring, as he was the most splendid offender of modern times. Born of a good family, educated in the highest schools of orthodoxy, it was to the public, which looked for a new champion of the old state of things, a most exasperating circumstance that, in his very teens, he should set all these expectations, and all the prospects of his own worldly advantage, at defiance, and boldly avow [Pg 490] himself the champion of atheism. The fact is every way to be deplored. It became the source of blight and misery to himself through his whole life. It alienated his friends and family; it occasioned an excitement of fiery bigotry and party wrath, which, in their united virulence, were poured upon his head, and, destroying the sale of his works, greatly dispirited him, and so diminished the amount, and perhaps, in no slight degree, the joyous and buoyant spirit of what he did write. Who shall say, wonderful as are the works of Shelley, all accomplished amid ill health and the bitterest persecutions, before the age of thirty, and most of them before the age of twenty-six, what he would have produced had he written with the encouraging feeling of a generous public with him? And when we regard the whole affair impartially, it was the public which was really the greatest offender after all. On the part of Shelley, it was a rash and boyish action. It was the act of a really fine and noble spirit led away, and so far led wrong, by its impetuous indignation against popular delusions and impositions. He was not the first man, nor will he be the last, whom the spirit of a virtuous zeal precipitates into an offense against virtue itself. In him it was meant to be no such thing. He was honest as he was zealous, and the world ought to have respected his honesty, if it could not his opinions. It should have endeavored to show him, by calm and sound reason, that he was wrong as to the existence of a God, and by its charity and forbearance, that Christianity was true. There can be little doubt what effect a wise

conduct like this would have had on a nature like his. As it was, spite of all the outrageous cries of infidel, blasphemer, and atheistic wretch with which he was pursued, time showed a wonderful change in his opinions on these matters.

The world should have recollected that it professed to be a Christian world, and it should not have let the spirit and conduct of the infidel put it to shame by its superior liberality and [Pg 491] goodness. Our Savior nowhere preached or commanded persecution, but to bless those who curse us, and do good to those who hate us and despitefully use us. The world did not do thus: it left poor Shelley to show this conduct to it. Christ left a glorious example to all time—why is the Christian world blind to it? He declared a glorious doctrine on the treatment of unbelievers—why is the world deaf to it? He declared that he was come to seek and save that which was lost, and to die for the conversion of those who mocked and denied him. He nowhere left us the whip, the gag, or the sword of extermination. He brought no such things with him out of heaven, but the great corrector—patience; the great weapon—charity. When his disciples ran and called upon him to silence those who performed miracles, and yet did not follow him, he gave a reply which never should be forgotten while the sun rises and sets: "Let them alone; ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."

It was Shelley who showed the spirit of the Christian, and the so-called Christian world the spirit of the infidel. It *was* infidel. It did not trust to the sublime toleration of Christ, but fell to the dark, bitter paganism of curses and hatred.

There was another particular, too, which the virtuous world should here bear in mind. It was priestcraft, which had so disguised Christianity with the trappings of gentile-ism that it had reduced it to the level of a pagan system. It had introduced so much mummery, so many pagan fables, so many false doctrines, that it had taught thousands and millions, and does still, to confound it with the selfish impostures of heathenism itself. No man who does not go much among the people can tell the extent to which infidelity, and even atheism, has spread among them from this cause. They see the great and groaning oppressions which are done under the sun, and which endure from age to age, and they begin to doubt a Providence which can permit [Pg 492] this. They see the selfish arts, the pride and luxury of pastors, and the misery of the many, and they say, these men do not believe what they teach—they know it to be a fable. When our countrymen travel into Catholic countries, and see millions of deluded wretches streaming up from all quarters to adore the so-called coat of Christ at Metz, or to have a cross touched with the Virgin Mary's chemise, the swaddling clothes, and the grave-clothes of Jesus, hoisted aloft in the Cathedral of Aix la Chapelle, they say, what is this Christianity but old paganism under another name? These are the things which make infidels. These are the men who, by their impious greed mocking God and man at once, under the garb of teachers, stab religion to the heart, murder faith, strangle charity, and spread moral death from end to end of Christendom. These are they against whom the holy anger of the zealous should be turned. The mocking devils in the tabernacle, who, for the bread and wine of the hour, scatter perdition through descending centuries. These are the men and things who convert the most beautiful spirits into apostles of unbelief—who make Shelleys, ay, and far worse men.

Shelley, indeed, was a good and noble creature. He had, spite of his skepticism, clearly and luminously stamped on his front the highest marks of a Christian; for the grand distinction appointed by Christ was—love. Shelley was a Christian spite of himself. We learn from all who knew him that the Bible was his most favorite book. He venerated the character of Christ, and no man more fully carried out his precepts. His delight was to do good, to comfort and assist the poor. It was his zeal for truth and for the good of mankind which led him, in his indignation against those who oppressed them and imposed upon them, to leap too far in his attack on those enemies, and pass the borders which divide truth from error. For his conscientious opinion he sacrificed ease, honor, the world's esteem, fortune, and friendship. Never was there so generous a friend, so truly and purely poetical a nature. Others are poets in their books and closets; the [Pg 493] poet's soul in him was the spirit of all hours and all occasions. His conduct to his friend Hunt was a magnificent example of this. Mr. Hunt himself tells us that he at once presented him with fourteen hundred pounds to free him from embarrassments, and he meant to do more, an intention which his son has nobly remembered. Where are the censorious zealots who can show like deeds? "He was," says Mr. Hunt, "pious toward his friends, toward the whole human race, toward the meanest insect of the forest. He did himself an injustice with the public in using the popular name of the Supreme Being inconsiderately. He identified it solely with the vulgar and tyrannical notions of a God, made after the worst human fashion, and did not sufficiently reflect that it was often used by a juster devotion to express a sense of the great Mover of the universe."

The same generous, enthusiastic spirit was the living and glowing principle of his poetry. With an imagination capable of soaring into the highest and most ethereal regions, and drawing thence most gorgeous colors, and most sublime, spiritual, and beautiful imagery, he preached love and tenderness to the whole family of man, except to tyrants and impostors. For liberty of every kind he was ready to die. For knowledge, and truth, and kindness, he desired only to live. He was a rare instance of the union of the finest moral nature and the finest genius. If he erred, the world took ample vengeance upon him for it; while he conferred, in return, his amplest blessing on the world. It was long a species of heresy to mention his name in society; that is passing fast away. It was next said that he never could become popular, and therefore the mischief he could do was limited. He *is* become popular, and the good that he is likely to do will be unlimited. The people read him: though we may wonder at it, they comprehend him—at least so far as the principles of freedom and progress are concerned; and in these he will not lead them astray. He is the herald [Pg 494] of advance, and every year must fix him more widely and firmly in men's hearts. How truly does

he describe himself and his mission in Laon, the poet of the Revolt of Islam:

"Yes, from the records of my youthful state,
And from the lore of bards and sages old,
From whatsoe'er my wakened thoughts create,
Out of the hopes of thine aspirings bold,
Have I collected language to unfold
Truth to my countrymen; from shore to shore
Doctrines of human power my words have told;
They have been heard, and men aspire to more
Than they have ever gained, or ever lost of yore.

"In secret chambers parents read, and weep,
My writings to their babes, no longer blind;
And young men gather when their tyrants sleep,
And vows of faith each to the other bind;
And marriageable maidens, who have pined
With love, till life seemed melting through their look,
A warmer zeal, a nobler hope now find;
And every bosom thus is rapt and shook,
Like autumn's myriad leaves in one swoln mountain brook.

"Kind thoughts, and mighty hopes, and gentle deeds
Abound for fearless love, and the pure law
Of mild equality and peace succeeds
To faiths which long had held the world in awe,
Bloody, and false, and cold: as whirlpools draw
All wrecks of ocean to their chasm, the sway
Of thy strong genius, Laon, which foresaw
This hope, compels all spirits to obey,
Which round thy secret strength now throng in wide array."

This extraordinary man, and most purely poetic genius of his age—this great and fearless, and yet benign apostle of freedom, whose influence on succeeding ages it is impossible to calculate, or calculating, perhaps, to overrate, mixed, it is true, with a skeptical leaven deeply to be deplored, was a descendant of a true poetic line, that of Sir Philip Sidney. He was born at Field Place, in Sussex, on the 4th of August, 1792. He was the eldest son of Sir Timothy Shelley, Bart., [Pg 495] of Castle Goring in that county; and his son, Percy Florence Shelley, now bears the family title. His family connections belonged to the Whig aristocrats of the House of Commons; and Mr. Hunt has, in the circumstances of such birth and connection, hit, perhaps, upon the fact which solves the mystery of a mind like Shelley's rushing into the extreme course he did. "To a man of genius," he observes, "endowed with a metaphysical acuteness to discern truth and falsehood, and a strong sensibility to give way to his sense of it, such an origin, however respectable in the ordinary point of view, was not the very luckiest that could have happened for the purpose of keeping him within ordinary bounds. With what feelings is truth to open its eyes upon this world, among the most respectable of our mere party gentry? Among licensed contradictions of all sorts? Among the Christian's doctrines, and the worldly practices? Among fox-hunters and their chaplains? Among beneficed loungers, noli-episcoparian bishops, rakish old gentlemen, and more startling young ones, who are old in the folly of *knowingness*? In short, among all those professed demands of what is right and noble, mixed with real inculcations of what is wrong and full of hypocrisy? * * * Mr. Shelley began to think at a very early age, and to think, too, of these anomalies. He saw that at every step in life some compromise was expected between the truth which he was told he was not to violate, and a coloring and a double meaning of it, which forced him upon the violation."

This is, no doubt, the great secret of both the noble resolve of Shelley to burst at once loose from this conventional labyrinth, and of the length to which the impetus of his effort carried him. He saw that truth and falsehood were so intimately mixed in all the education, life, and purposes of the class by which he was surrounded, that he suspected the same mixture in every thing; and the very effort necessary to clear himself of this state of things, plunged him into the natural [Pg 496] result of rejecting indiscriminately, in the case of Christianity, the grain with the chaff. At every school to which he was sent, he found the same system existing. Education was molded to a great national plan—to a future support of a church and a party. The noble heart of the boy rebelled against this sacrifice of truth to interest, and, I believe, at every school to which he went, showed a firm resolve never to bend to it. He was brought up for the first seven or eight years in the retirement of Field Place with his sisters, receiving the same education as they; and hence, it is stated, he never showed the least taste for the sports or amusements of boys. Captain Medwin tells us that it was not Eton, but Sion House, Brentford, to which he alludes in his introductory stanzas to the Revolt of Islam, where he says,

"There rose
From the near school-room voices that, alas!
Were but an echo from a world of woes,
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes."

Captain Medwin, who is a relative, was Shelley's schoolfellow there, and says, "this place was a

perfect hell to Shelley. His pure and virgin mind was shocked by the language and manners of his new companions; but, though forced to be *with* them, he was not *of* them. Methinks I see him now, pacing with rapid strides a favorite and remote spot of the play-ground, generally alone, and where, he says, he formed these resolutions:

'To be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power; for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check.'

"Tyranny," continues Captain Medwin, "generally produces tyranny in common minds; not so with Shelley. Doubtless much of his hatred of oppression may be attributed to what he saw and [Pg 497] suffered at this school; and so odious was the recollection of the place to both of us, that we never made it a subject of conversation in after life. He was, as a schoolboy, exceedingly shy, bashful, and reserved; indeed, though peculiarly gentle, and elegant, and refined in his manners, he never entirely got rid of his diffidence; and who would have wished he should? With the character of true genius, he was ever modest, humble, and prepared to acknowledge merit wherever he found it, without any desire to shine himself by making a foil of others."

Yet it was this gentle and shy boy, who had so early resolved to be "just, and free, and mild," that was roused by his sense of truth, and his abhorrence of oppression, to make the most bold and determined stand against unjust and degrading customs, however sanctioned by time, place, or persons. At Eton, whither he went at the age of thirteen, he rose up stoutly in opposition to the system of fagging. He organized a conspiracy against it, and for a time compelled it to pause. While thus resisting school tyranny, he was reading deeply of German romances and poetry; and to Bürger's Leonora, and the ghost stories and legends of the Black Forest, has been traced his fondness for the romantic, the marvelous, and the mystic. His mind was rapidly unfolding, and to the high pitch of his moral nature and aims, these stanzas from the Dedication to the Revolt of Islam bear touching testimony:

"Thoughts of great deeds were mine, dear friend, when first
The clouds that wrap this world from youth did pass.
I do remember well the hour which burst
My spirit's sleep: a fresh May-day it was
When I walked forth upon the glittering grass,
And wept, I knew not why; until there rose
From the near school-room voices that, alas!
Were but an echo from a world of woes,
The harsh and grating strife of tyrants and of foes. [Pg 498]

"And then I clasped my hands, and looked around—
But none was near to mark my streaming eyes,
Which poured their warm drops on the sunny ground.
So without shame I spoke, 'I will be wise,
And just, and free, and mild, if in me lies
Such power; for I grow weary to behold
The selfish and the strong still tyrannize
Without reproach or check.' I then controlled
My tears; my heart grew calm, and I was meek and bold.

"And from that hour did I with earnest thought
Heap knowledge from forbidden mines of lore;
Yet nothing that my tyrant knew or taught
I cared to learn; but from that secret store
Wrought linked armor for my soul before
It might walk forth to war among mankind."

This war began in earnest at Oxford. He had left Eton, it is understood, before the usual time, and in consequence of his resistance to the practices which he there found inconsistent with his ideas of self-respect: what was to be hoped from Oxford? The contest into which he soon fell with the principal of University College on theological and metaphysical questions, quickly led to his expulsion. No circumstance in his history has made so much noise as this; on it turned the whole character of his destiny. He was expelled on a charge of atheism. In the New Monthly Magazine for 1833 is given "The History of Shelley's Expulsion from Oxford." From this account, nothing could have been more barbarous, unfeeling, and tyrannical than the conduct of the principal on this occasion. It appears that Shelley and some of his companions had indulged themselves in puzzling the logicians. They had made a careful analysis of Locke on the Human Understanding, and Hume's Essays, particularly the latter, as was customary with those who read the Ethics, and other treatises of Aristotle, for their degrees. They printed a syllabus of these, and challenged, not only the heads of houses, but others, to answer them. "It was," says the writer, "never offered for sale; it was not addressed to the general reader, but to the metaphysician alone; and it was so [Pg 499] short that it only designed to point out the line of argument. It was, in truth, a general issue; a compendious denial of every allegation, in order to put the whole case in proof. It was a formal mode of saying, You offer so and so—then prove it; and thus was it understood by his more candid and intelligent correspondents. As it was shorter, so it was plainer, and, perhaps, in order

to provoke discussion, a little bolder than Hume's Essays, a book which occupies a conspicuous place in the library of every student. The doctrine, if it deserve the name, was precisely similar; the necessary and inevitable consequence of Locke's philosophy, and of the theory that all knowledge is from without. I will not admit your conclusions, his opponent might say; then you must deny those of Hume; I deny them; but you must deny those of Locke also; and we will go back together to Plato. Such was the usual course of argument; sometimes, however, he rested on mere denial, holding his adversary to strict proof, and deriving strength from his weakness. The young Platonist argued thus negatively through the love of argument, and because he found a noble joy in the fierce shock of contending minds. He loved truth, and sought it every where, and at all hazards, frankly and boldly, like a man who deserved to find it; but he also dearly loved victory in debate, and warm debate for its own sake. Never was there a more unexceptionable disputant. He was eager beyond the most ardent, but never angry and never personal; he was the only arguer I ever knew who drew every argument from the nature of the thing, and who never could be provoked to descend to personal contentions."—*P. 25 of Part II.*

This is a very different thing to the foul and offensive statement put forth to the world, that Shelley avowedly, with his name, put forth a pamphlet on atheism, challenging the whole bench of bishops to refute it, for the sake and from the mere love of atheism. Not less disgraceful was the manner of his expulsion. He was suspected of this pamphlet; it is said that "a pert, meddling [Pg 500] tutor of a college of inferior note, a man of an insalubrious and inauspicious aspect," had secretly denounced him to the master as the author of it; and that, for this piece of treason, he was, as he hoped, speedily enriched with the most splendid benefices, and finally made a bishop! The master himself is described by a third party "as a man possessing no more intellect or erudition than that famous ram, since translated to the stars, through grasping whose tail less fervently than was expedient, the sister of Phryxus formerly found a watery grave, and gave her name to the broad Hellespont." He adds, "I thank God I have never seen that man since; he is gone to his bed, and there let him sleep. While he lived he ate freely of the scholar's bread, and drank freely of his cup; and he was sustained throughout the whole term of his existence, wholly and most nobly, by those sacred funds that were consecrated by our pious forefathers to the advancement of learning. If the vengeance of the all-patient and long-contemned God can ever be roused, it will surely be by some such sacrilege!"

But let us see in what manner this swollen Bœotian ox dealt with this ardent yet gentle stripling of seventeen—for, let it be remembered, he was only of that age—and let us first see what was the condition of the University at that time, in which it was made a mortal offense in a young and zealous spirit to dispute metaphysical points.

"Whether such disputations," says the writer in the New Monthly, "were decorous or profitable, may be perhaps doubtful; there can be no doubt, however, since the sweet gentleness of Shelley was easily and instantly swayed by the mild influences of friendly admonition, that had even the least dignified of his elders suggested the propriety of pursuing his metaphysical inquiries with less ardor, his obedience would have been prompt and perfect. Not only had all salutary studies been long neglected at Oxford at that time, and all wholesome discipline fallen into decay, but [Pg 501] the splendid endowments of the University were grossly abused. The resident authorities of the college were, too often, men of the lowest origin; of mean and sordid souls; destitute of every literary attainment except that brief and narrow course of reading by which the degree was attained; the vulgar sons of vulgar fathers; without liberality, and wanting the manners and sympathies of gentlemen. A total neglect of all learning, an unseemly turbulence, the most monstrous irregularities, open and habitual drunkenness, vice, and violence, were tolerated or encouraged, with the basest sycophancy, that the prospect of perpetual licentiousness might fill the colleges with young men of fortune. Whenever the rarely-exercised power of coercion was exercised, it demonstrated the utter incapacity of our unworthy rulers, by coarseness, ignorance, and injustice. If a few gentlemen were admitted to fellowships, they were always absent; they were not persons of literary pretensions, or distinguished by scholarship, and they had no share in the government of the college."—P. 26.

It is fitting that the world should know out of what a sty, and by what swine, Shelley was expelled from Oxford. It seems that any crime or licentiousness might be practiced—nay, was encouraged—so that no question of learning was provokingly pushed forward that might show the ignorance, and thus wound the brutal pride of the fellows. Let us now see the manner in which it was done.

"As the term was drawing to a close, and a great part of the books we were reading together still remained unfinished, we had agreed to increase our exertions, and to meet at an early hour. It was a fine spring morning, on Lady Day, in the year 1811, when I went to Shelley's rooms: he was absent; but before I had collected our books he rushed in. He was terribly agitated. I anxiously inquired what had happened. 'I am expelled,' he said, as soon as he had recovered himself a little, 'I am expelled! I was sent for suddenly a few minutes ago; I went to the common room, where I [Pg 502] found our master, and two or three of the fellows. The master produced a copy of the little syllabus, and asked me if I were the author of it. He spoke in a rude, abrupt, and insolent tone. I begged to be informed for what purpose they put the question. No answer was given; but the master loudly and angrily repeated, "Are you the author of this book?" "If I can judge from your manner," I said, "you are resolved to punish me if I should acknowledge that it is my work. If you can prove that it is, produce your evidence; it is neither just nor lawful to interrogate me in such a case and for such a purpose. Such proceedings would become a court of inquisitors, but not free men in a free country." "Do you choose to deny that this is your composition?" the master reiterated in the same rude and angry voice.'

"Shelley complained much of his violent and ungentleman-like deportment, saying, 'I have

experienced tyranny and injustice before, and I well know what vulgar insolence is; but I never met with such unworthy treatment. I told him calmly, but firmly, that I was resolved not to answer any questions respecting the publication on the table.' 'Then,' said he, furiously, 'you are expelled, and I desire you will quit the college early to-morrow morning, at the latest.'"

A regular sentence of expulsion, ready drawn up in due form, was handed to him, under the seal of the college. So monstrous and illegal did the outrage seem to one of Shelley's fellow-students, that he immediately wrote a remonstrance to the master and fellows against it, declaring that he himself, or any one else in that college, might just as well be treated in the same manner. The consequence was, that he was immediately treated in the same manner. He was called before this tribunal. "The angry and troubled air," he says, in a statement to the writer of the article, "of men assembled to commit injustice, according to established forms, was new to me; but a native [Pg 503] instinct told me, as soon as I entered the room, that it was an affair of party; that whatever could conciliate the favor of patrons was to be done without scruple, and whatever could tend to prevent preferment was to be brushed away without remorse." The same question was put to him; he refused to answer it, and he was also expelled with the same summary violence. Thus were Shelley and another youth of eighteen expelled and branded for life with the stigma of atheism, to serve the sordid ends of those greedy preferment-seeking fellows. They were expelled simply because they refused to criminate themselves, and the boast of a virtuous zeal against atheism was trumpeted abroad, which soon raised one man to a bishopric, and others, no doubt, to what they wanted. So are sacrificed the rare spirits of the earth for the worldly benefit of the hogs of Epicurus. If all the youths were treated thus brutally at that age, when doubts beset almost every man, and more especially the earnest and inquiring, what would become of our finest and noblest characters? When men begin to study the grounds of theology, they must study, too, what is advanced by the opposers. The consequence is at once, that all that has been received as fact by unquestioning boyhood, falls to the ground, and they have to begin again, and test, through doubts and anxieties, and amid the menaces of despair, all the evidence on which our faith is built. Seize on any one of these inquirers at this peculiar crisis, and expel him for atheism, and, if he be a man of quick feelings and a high spirit, you will pretty certainly make him that for which you have stigmatized him. His pride will unite with his doubts to fix him, to petrify him, as it were, into incurable unbelief. It would be a brutal and murderous procedure. Such procedure had the worst effect on Shelley. The consequences were a sort of repudiation of him by his father and family, who had built the highest worldly hopes on his talents. There was a fierce hue and cry set up after him in the world, and the very next year saw him sit down and [Pg 504] write Queen Mab. The actions of this portion of his life are the least defensible of any portion of it. He seemed restless, unhappy, and put into a more antagonistic temperament by his public expulsion from college, which he felt more deeply than was natural to him, or could have arisen had he been treated differently. At this period he made his first unfortunate marriage with a young woman of humble station, and, as it proved, of very uncongenial mind. They separated, and in her distress she some time afterward drowned herself. Differing as I do most widely from Shelley, both in his ideas regarding Christianity and marriage, it is but just to say that they who knew him best, and his second wife, the celebrated daughter of celebrated parents, Godwin and Mary Wolstoncroft, most emphatically assert their assurances that "in all he did, at the time of doing it, he believed himself justified to his conscience, while the various ills of poverty, and the loss of friends, brought home to him the sad realities of life." My opinion is, that at this period the state of excitement into which so gross an outrage on his sensitive nature had thrown him, is to be regarded as the most palliating cause of any thing in Shelley which was not in perfect harmony with the general tone of his benign spirit. For his errors at this period, though they never could be run into by Shelley willfully, and with a consciousness of error, he suffered deeply and severely. One of his biographers says, "Nobody could lament the catastrophe of his wife's death more bitterly than he did. For a time it tore his being to pieces."

For about two years after his wife's death he seemed to be wandering about in quest of rest, and not finding it. He was at one time at the Lakes on a pilgrimage to Southey, which, when Coleridge heard of, he said, "Why did he not come to me? I should have understood him." Most true. He was in London, and No. 90 Great Russell-street, oddly enough kept by a person named Godwin, and in Mabledon Place, a corner house next to Hastings-street, are known as lodgings of [Pg 505] his. He was also in Dublin, and in North Wales, where, in the absence of his landlord, Mr. Maddocks, an extraordinary tide menacing his embankment against the sea, Shelley put his name at the head of a subscription paper for £500, and, carrying it round the neighborhood, raised a sum sufficient to prevent this truly Roman work being destroyed. In 1814 he made a tour on the Continent, visiting France, Switzerland, the Reuss, and the Rhine, the magnificent scenery of which produced the most striking effects on his mind. In 1815 he made a tour along the southern coast of Devonshire, and then renting a house on Bishopsgate Heath, on the borders of Windsor Forest, he spent the summer months in ruminating over the scenes he had visited, and produced there his poem of Alastor, or the Spirit of Solitude. The next year he again visited the Continent. He was now married to Mary Wolstoncroft Godwin, who accompanied him. They fixed their residence for a time on the banks of the Lake of Geneva.

Here Shelley and Lord Byron first met; they had corresponded before, but here began that friendship which contributed so palpably to the purification and elevation of tone in the higher poetry of Byron. They seemed equally pleased with each other. Byron was occupying the Villa Diodati; a name connected with Milton, and, perhaps, one of the noble poet's reasons for choosing it as a residence. Shelley engaged one just below it, in a most sequestered spot. There was no access to it in a carriage; it stood only separated from the lake by a small garden, much overgrown by trees, and a pathway through the vineyard of Diodati communicated with it. The

two poets entered deeply into poetical disquisition. Nothing could be more opposite than their natures and their poetic tendencies. Shelley was all imagination; Byron had a strong tendency to the actual, or to that which must tell upon the general mind: Shelley was purely spiritual; Byron [Pg 506] had much of the world in him: Shelley was all generosity; Byron, with a great show of it, had a tremendous dash of the selfish. Still, they had many things in common. They were fond of boating and pistol-shooting; they were persecuted by public opinion; they had broken from all bonds of ordinary faith, and were free in discussion and speculation, as the birds were in their flight over their heads. They rowed together round the lake, and were very near being lost in a storm upon it. They visited together Meillerie and Clarens; and the effect of the scenery on Shelley, with the Nouvelle Heloise in his hand, was entrancing. He visited, also, Lausanne, and while walking in the Acacia Walk belonging to Gibbon's house, he could not help saying, "Gibbon had a cold and unimpassioned spirit. I never felt more inclination to rail at the prejudices which clung to such a thing, than now that Julie and Clarens, Lausanne and the Roman Empire, compel me to a contrast between Rousseau and Gibbon." His lines on the Bridge of Arve and his Hymn to Intellectual Beauty were written at this time.

The poets and Mrs. Shelley were constantly together, out in the air amid that sublime scenery in fine weather, and in the evenings at each other's houses; and during a week of rain, they horrified themselves with German ghost-stories, and gave a mutual challenge to write each one of their own. To this we owe the Vampire, which was, on its first appearance, attributed to Lord Byron, but was, in reality, written by his vain satellite of a physician, Polidori. Byron wrote a story called The Marriage of Belphegor, which was to narrate the circumstances of his own—as he was now smarting under a recent refusal of his wife to live with him; but on hearing from England that Lady Byron was ill, with an impulse that did him honor, he thrust it into the fire. What Shelley did does not appear, but the production of Mrs. Shelley was Frankenstein.

On his return to England in the autumn of that year, he had to endure the misery of his two [Pg 507] children being taken from him by the Court of Chancery, on the ground of his disbelief of revealed religion, and the authorship of Queen Mab, a work published without his consent. It was at this period that he went to live at Great Marlowe, in Buckinghamshire. Mrs. Shelley says, "Shelley's choice of abode was fixed chiefly by this town being at no great distance from London, and its neighborhood to the Thames. The poem of the Revolt of Islam was written in his boat, as it floated under the beech groves of Bisham, or during wanderings in the neighboring country, which is distinguished for its peculiar beauty. The chalk-hills break into cliffs that overhang the Thames, or form valleys clothed with beech. The wilder portion of the country is rendered beautiful by exuberant vegetation, and the cultivated part is particularly fertile. With all this wealth of nature, which, either in the form of gentlemen's parks, or soil dedicated to agriculture, flourishes around, Marlowe was inhabited—I hope it is altered now—by a very poor population. The women are lace-makers, and lose their health by sedentary labor, for which they are very ill paid. The poor-laws ground to the dust not only the paupers, but those who had risen just above that state, and were obliged to pay poor-rates. The change produced by peace following a long war, and a bad harvest, brought with them the most heart-rending evils to the poor. Shelley afforded what alleviation he could. In winter, while bringing out his poem, he had a severe attack of ophthalmia, caught while visiting the cottages. I mention these things—for this minute and active sympathy with his fellow-creatures gives a thousandfold interest to his speculations, and stamps with reality his pleadings for the human race."

Shelley does not seem to have had any acquaintance at Marlowe or in the neighborhood; it was simply the charm of the country and the river which attracted him; but his friend Mr. Peacock, of the India House, was residing there at the time, either drawn there by Shelley, or Shelley by him. [Pg 508] Marlowe stands in a fine open valley, on the banks of the Thames. The river here is beautiful, running bankful through the most beautiful meadows, level as a bowling green, of the richest verdure, and of a fine, ample, airy extent. Beyond the river these meadows are bounded by steep hills clothed with noble woods, and a more charming scene for boating can not be imagined. The grass and flowers on the river margin overhang and dip lovingly into the waters, which, from running over a chalk bottom, are as transparent nearly as the air itself; and at the various turns of the river new features of beauty salute you. Impending woods, which invite you to land and stroll away into them; solitary valleys, where house or man is not seen; and then, again, cultivated farms, and hills covered with flocks. No wonder that Shelley was all summer floating upon this fine river, and luxuriating in the composition of his splendid poem. A little below the town stands the village of Little Marlowe, with its gray church, and old manor-house, called Bisham Abbey, amid its fine trees; and around, a lovely scene of the softly flowing, beautiful river, the level meads, and the hills and woods. On the other side of the town, the country is of that clear, bright aspect, with its tillage farms and isolated clumps of beech on swelling hills, which always marks a chalk district. The town itself is small, and intensely quiet. The houses are low and clean-looking, as if no smoke ever fell on them from the pure diaphanous air. It consists of three principal streets, something in the shape of the letter T, with some smaller ones. In passing along it, you would not suspect it of that intense poverty which Mrs. Shelley speaks of, though, from the wretched depression of the hand-lace weaving, it may exist. The houses have a neat miniature look, and the people look cheerful, healthy, and the women of a very agreeable expression of countenance.

Such was the spot where Shelley resided eight-and-twenty years ago. His house was in the main [Pg 509] street—a long stuccoed dwelling, of that species of nondescript architecture which once was thought Gothic, because it had pointed windows and battlements. It must have been then a spacious and a very pleasant residence. It is now, as is the lot of most places in which poets have lived, desolated and desecrated. It is divided into three tenements, a school, a private house, and

a pot-house. I entered the latter, and with a strange feeling. In a large room with a boarded floor, and which had probably been Shelley's dining-room, was a sort of bar partitioned off, and a number of visitors were drinking on benches along the walls, which still bore traces, amid disfigurement and stains, of former taste. The garden behind had evidently been extensive, and very pleasant. There were remains of fine evergreen trees, and of a mound on which grew some deciduous cypresses, where had evidently stood a summer-house. This was gone. The garden was divided into as many portions as there were now tenants, and all evidences of care had vanished from it. Along the side of it, however, lay a fine open meadow, and the eye ran across this to some sweetly wooded hills. It was a melancholy thing to go back to the time when Shelley and his wife and friends walked in this garden, enjoying it and its surrounding quiet scenery, and to reflect what had been the subsequent fate of it and him.

Among the poor of the town the remembrance of his benevolence and unassuming kindness had still chroniclers; but from the other classes little could be learned, and that not what the memory of such a man deserves. One old shopkeeper, not far from his house, remembered him, and "hoped his children did not take after him." "Why?" "Oh! he was a very bad man!" "Indeed! what bad actions did he do?" "Oh! I beg your pardon! he did no bad actions that I ever heard of, but, on the contrary, he was uncommonly good to the poor; but then—" "But then, what?" "Why, he did not believe in the devil!" Such are the fruits of bigot teaching. Christ says, "By their *fruits* [Pg 510] shall ye know" men; but those calling themselves his followers say, "No;" no matter what good fruits men produce, they are all doomed to perdition if they cast a single aspersion on that very favorite personage, Satan. I begged the poor man, of whom I found Shelley bought no groceries, to at least leave Shelley to the judgment of his God and of Christ, who came to seek and to save all that were lost; and to believe those great assurances of the Gospel, that the prodigal, when he had committed all kind of crimes, found not only a pacified, but a fond father; that he that hath not charity is as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal; and that he that loveth intensely, though he may think very erroneously, will stand a very fair chance with the Father of love himself.

"But, pray, what has become of this Mr. Shelley, then?" asked the man's wife, who had come from an inner room. "He was drowned," I replied. "Oh! that's just what one might have expected. Drowned! Lud-a-mercy! ay, just what we might ha' said he'd come to. He was always on the water, always boating, boating—never easy but when he was in that boat. Do you know what a trick was played him by some wag?" "No." "He called his boat '*Vaga*,' and one morning he found the name lengthened by a piece of chalk with the word '*bond*'—*Vagabond*. There are clever fellows here as well as in London, mind you. But Mr. Shelley was not offended. He only laughed; for, you see, he did not believe in a devil, and so he thought there could be nothing wrong. He used to say, when he heard of any wickedness, 'Ah, poor people! it's only ignorance; if they knew better, they'd do better!' Oh! what darkness and heathenry! to excuse sin, and feel no godly jealousy against wickedness!" I found that the crabbed creedsman had been there too long before me. My hint about charity was thrown away, and I moved off, lest both myself and Jesus Christ, who would not condemn even the adulteress at the desire of the vengeful and the sensual, should [Pg 511] be found wanting in holy indignation too.

It was in vain that I inquired among the class of little gentry in the place for information about Shelley; they knew nothing of any such person. At length, after much research, and the running to and fro of waiters from the inn, I was directed to an ancient surgeon, who had attended almost every body for the last half century. I found him an old man of nearly ninety. He recollected Shelley; had attended him, but knew little about him. He was a very unsocial man, he said; kept no company but Mr. Peacock's, and that of his boat, and was never seen in the town but he had a book in his hand, and was reading as he went along. The old gentleman, however, kindly sent his servant to point out Shelley's house to me, and as I returned up the street, I saw him standing bare-headed on the pavement before his door, in active discourse with various neighbors. My inquiries had evidently aroused the Marlowean curiosity. On coming up, the old gentleman inquired eagerly if I wanted to learn more yet about Mr. Shelley—I had learned little or nothing. I replied that I should be very happy. "Then," said he, "come in, sir, for I have sent for a gentleman who knows all about him." I entered, and found a tall, well-dressed man, with a very solemn aspect. "It is the squire of the place," said I to myself. With a very solemn bow he arose, and with very solemn bows we sat down opposite to each other. "I am happy to hear," said I, "that you knew Mr. Shelley, and can give me some particulars regarding his residence here." "I can, sir," he replied, with another solemn bow. I waited to hear news, but I waited in vain. That Mr. Shelley had lived there, and that he had long left there, and that his house was down the street, and that he was a very extraordinary man, he knew, and I knew; but that was all: not a word of his doings or his sayings at Marlowe came out of the solemn brain of that large, solemn man. But at length a [Pg 512] degree of interest appeared to gather in his cheeks and brighten in his eyes. "Thank God!" I exclaimed, inwardly. "The man is slow, but it is coming now." His mouth opened, and he said, "But pray, sir, what became of that Mr. Shelley?"

"Good gracious!" I exclaimed. "What! did you never hear? Did it never reach Marlowe—but thirty miles from London—that sad story of his death, which created a sensation throughout the civilized world?" No, the thing had never penetrated into the Bœotian denseness of that place! I rose up, and now bowed solemnly too. "And, pray, what family might he leave?" asked the solemn personage, as I was hasting away. "You will learn that," I said, still going away, "in the Baronetage, if such a book ever reaches Marlowe."

I hastened to the inn, where my chaise was standing ready for my departure, and was just in the act of entering it, when I heard a sort of outcry, perceived a sort of bustle behind me, and, turning my head, saw the tall and solemn man hasting with huge and anxious strides after me.

"You'll excuse me, sir—you'll excuse me, I think; but I *could* relate to you a fact, and I think I *will* venture to relate to you a fact connected with the late Mr. Shelley." "Do," said I. "I think I *will*," replied the tall, stout man, heaving a deep sigh, and erecting himself to his full height, far above my head, and casting a most awful glance at the sky; "I *think* I will—I *think* I may venture." "It is certainly something very sad and agonizing," I said to myself; "but I wish he would only bring it out." "Well, then," continued he, with another heave of his capacious chest, and another great glance at the distant horizon, "I certainly will mention it. It was this: When Mr. Shelley left Marlowe, he ordered all his bills to be paid, most honorably, certainly most honorably; and they were paid—all—except—mine! There, sir! it is out; excuse it—excuse it; but I am glad it is out."

"What! a bill!" I exclaimed, in profoundest astonishment; "a bill! was that all?" [Pg 513]

"All, sir! all! every thing of the sort; every shilling, I assure you, has been paid but my little account; and it was my fault; I don't know how in the world I forgot to send it in."

"What!" said I, "are you not the squire here? What are you?"

"Oh, Lord! no, sir! I am no squire here! I am a tradesman! I am—in the general way!"

"Drive on!" I said, springing into the carriage; "drive like the Dragon of Wantley out of this place: Shelley is remembered in Marlowe because there was one bill left unpaid!"

There again is fame. It would be a curious thing if the man who deems himself most thoroughly and universally famous, and walks about in the comfortable persuasion of it, could see his fame mapped upon the country. What an odd figure it would make! A few feeble rays shooting here and there, but all around what vast patches of unvisited country, what unilluminated regions, what deserts of oblivion of his name! Shelley lived, and suffered, and spent himself for mankind; and, in the place where he last lived in England, within thirty miles of the great metropolis of genius and knowledge, he is only remembered by a bad joke on his boat, by his disbelief of the devil, and by a forgotten bill. Were it not forgotten, he had been so! *Eheu! jam satis.*

On the 12th of March, 1818, Shelley quitted England once more. He was never to return. His own fate and that of Byron were wonderfully alike. The two greatest, most original, most powerful, and influential poets of the age were driven into exile by the public feeling of their country. They could not bring themselves to think on political questions with a large party, nor on religious ones with a still larger; and every species of vituperation and insult was let loose upon them. As if [Pg 514] charity and forbearance had been heathen qualities, and wrath and calumny Christian virtues, the British public most loftily resolved not to do as Christ required them—to love those who hated them and despitefully used them—but to hate those who loved them, and had noble virtues, though they had their errors. Their errors should have been lamented, and their doctrines refuted as much as possible; but there is no law, human or divine, that can release us from the law of love, and the command of seventy times seven forgiveness of injuries. Both these great men died in their exile of hatred; the world had its will for the time, and the spirits of these dead outcasts must now have their will, in their deathless volumes, to the end of time.

If any one would know what sort of a man this moral monster, Shelley, was, let him read the eloquent account of him and his life at Oxford in the New Monthly Magazine for 1832, written by one who was his friend and companion, and who, Mrs. Shelley says, has described him most faithfully. There we find him full of zeal for learning; most zealous in accumulating knowledge; overflowing in kindness; indignant against all oppression to man or to animals. Never failing to rush in on witnessing any cruelty or hearing of any calamity, to stop the one and alleviate the other. Full of gayety and fun as a child, sailing his paper boats on every pool and stream, or rambling far and wide over the country in earnest talk and deep love of all nature. He was ready to caress children, to smile on even gipsies and beggars, to run for refreshment for starving people by the way side, pledging even his favorite microscope, his daily means of recreation, to assist a poor old man. Such was the dreadful creature that must be expelled from colleges, have his children torn from him to prevent the contamination of his virtues, and to be hooted out of his native land. Yet, amid all the anguish that this inflicted on him, he was ever ready still to do a sublime good, or enter with the most boyish relish into the merest joke. Nothing can convey a [Pg 515] more vivid idea of the latter disposition—which is not that of a man systematically malicious, which is the true spirit of wickedness—than to quote a joke related to him by the writer of these articles, and see the manner in which it was enjoyed.

"I was walking one afternoon, in the summer, on the western side of that short street leading from Long Acre to Covent Garden, where the passenger is earnestly invited, as a personal favor to the demandant, to proceed straightway to Highgate or Kentish Town, and which is called, I think, James-street. I was about to enter Covent Garden, when an Irish laborer, whom I met bearing an empty hod, accosted me somewhat roughly, and asked why I had run against him. I told him briefly that he was mistaken. Whether somebody had actually pushed the man, or he only sought to quarrel, and although he, doubtless, attended a weekly row regularly, and the week was already drawing to a close, he was unable to wait till Sunday for a broken head, I know not, but he discoursed for some time with the vehemence of a man who considers himself injured or insulted, and he concluded, being emboldened by my long silence, with a cordial invitation just to push him again. Several persons, not very unlike in costume, had gathered round him, and appeared to regard him with sympathy. When he paused, I addressed him slowly and quietly, and it should seem with great gravity, these words, as nearly as I can recollect them: 'I have put my hand into the hamper; I have looked upon the sacred barley; I have eaten out of the drum! I have

drunk, and was well pleased; I have said, [Greek: konx ompax], and it is finished!' 'Have you, sir?' inquired the astonished Irishman; and his ragged friends instantly pressed round him with, 'Where is the hamper, Paddy?' 'What barley? and the like. And ladies from his own country, that is to say, the basket-women, suddenly began to interrogate him; 'Now, I say, Pat, where have you [Pg 516] been drinking? What have you had?' I turned, therefore, to the right, leaving the astounded neophyte, whom I had thus planted, to expound the mystic words of initiation as he could to his inquisitive companions. As I walked slowly under the piazzas, and through the streets and courts toward the West, I marveled at the ingenuity of Orpheus—if he were, indeed, the inventor of the Eleusinian mysteries; that he was able to devise words that, imperfectly as I had repeated them, and in the tattered fragment that has reached us, were able to soothe people so savage and barbarous as those to whom I had addressed them, and which, as the apologists for those venerable rites affirm, were manifestly well adapted to incite persons who hear them for the first time, however rude they may be, to ask questions. Words that can awaken curiosity even in the sluggish intellect of a wild man, and can open the inlet of knowledge!"

"*Konx ompax*; and it is finished!" exclaimed Shelley, crowing with enthusiastic delight at my whimsical adventure. A thousand times, as he strode about the house, and in his rambles out of doors, he would stop and repeat the mystic words of initiation, but always with an energy of manner, and a vehemence of tone and gesture, that would have prevented the ready acceptance which a calm, passionless delivery had once procured for them. How often would he throw down his book, clasp his hands, and, starting from his seat, cry suddenly, with a thrilling voice, "I have said *Konx ompax*; and it is finished!"

This child-like, this great, and greatly kind, and if men would have let him, this light-hearted man, thus then quitted England. Like Byron, he sought a home in Italy. He lived in various cities, and wrote there his very finest works; among them, Prometheus Unbound; The Cenci; Hellas; part of Rosalind and Helen; his Ode to Liberty, perhaps the very finest ode in the language, and certainly, in its description of Athens, never excelled in any piece of description in any language; [Pg 517] Adonais, an elegy on the death of Keats, and those very melancholy verses written in the Bay of Naples. He was drowned, as is well known, by the sinking of his boat in a squall, in the Gulf of Spezia, in the summer of 1822, at the age of thirty.

Shelley must have enjoyed this portion of his life beyond all others, had he been in health and spirits. He was united to a woman worthy of him, and who could partake of all his intellectual pleasures. Children were growing around him, and he was living in that beautiful country, surrounded by the remains of former art and history, and under that fine sky, pouring out from heart and brain, glorious, and impassioned, and immortal works. But his health failed him, and the darts of calumny were rankling in his bosom, depressing his spirits, and sapping his constitution. I can only allow myself a few passing glances at his homes in Italy, of which Mrs. Shelley has given us such delightful sketches in the notes to her edition of her husband's poems.

They went direct to Milan, and visited the Lake of Como; then proceeding to Pisa, Leghorn, the Baths of Lucca, Venice, Este, Rome, Naples, and back to Rome for the winter. There he chiefly wrote his Prometheus. In 1818 they were at the Baths of Lucca, where Shelley finished Rosalind and Helen. Thence he visited Venice, and occupied a house lent him by Lord Byron at Este. "I Capucini was a villa built on the site of a Capuchin convent, demolished when the French suppressed religious houses. It was situated on the very overhanging brow of a low hill, at the foot of a range of higher ones. The house was cheerful and pleasant; a vine-trellised walk, or pergola, as it is called in Italian, led from the hall door to a summer-house at the end of the garden, which Shelley made his study, and in which he began the Prometheus; and here, also, as he mentioned in a letter, he wrote Julian and Maddalo. A slight ravine, with a wood in its depth, divided the garden from the hill, on which stood the ruins of the ancient Castle of Este, whose [Pg 518] dark, massive wall gave forth an echo, and from whose ivied crevices owls and bats flitted forth at night, as the crescent moon sunk behind the black and heavy battlements. We looked from the garden over the wide plain of Lombardy, bounded to the west by the far Apennines; while to the east, the horizon was lost in misty distance. After the picturesque but limited view of mountain, ravine, and chestnut wood at the Baths of Lucca, there was something infinitely gratifying to the eye in the wide range of prospect commanded by our new abode."

Here they lost a little girl, and quitting the neighborhood of Venice, they proceeded southward. Shelley was delighted beyond expression with the scenery and antiquities of Italy. "The aspect of its nature, its sunny sky, its majestic streams; the luxuriant vegetation of the country, and the noble, marble-built cities, enchanted him. The first entrance to Rome opened to him a scene of remains of ancient grandeur that far surpassed his expectations; and the unspeakable beauty of Naples and its environs added to the impression he received of the transcendent and glorious beauty of Italy."

The winter was spent at Naples, where they lived in utter solitude, yet greatly enjoyed their excursions along its sunny sea or into its beautiful environs. From Naples they returned to Rome, where they arrived in March, 1819. Here they had the old MS. account of the story of the Cenci put into their hands, and visited the Doria and Colonna palaces, where the portraits of Beatrice were to be found. Her beauty cast the reflection of its grace over her appalling story, and Shelley conceived the subject of his masterly drama. In Rome they lost their eldest child, a very lovely and engaging boy, and, quitting the Eternal City, took the villa Valsovano, between Leghorn and Monte Nero, where they resided during the summer. "Our villa," says Mrs. Shelley, "was situated in the midst of a podere; the peasants sang as they worked beneath our windows, during the heat [Pg 519] of a very hot season; and in the evening the water-wheel creaked as the progress of irrigation went on, and the fire-flies flashed among the myrtle hedges; nature was bright, sunshiny, and

cheerful, or diversified by storms of a majestic terror, such as we had never before witnessed.

"At the top of the house there was a sort of terrace. There is often such in Italy, generally roofed. This one was very small, yet not only roofed, but glazed. This Shelley made his study; it looked out on a wide prospect of fertile country, and commanded a view of the near sea. The storms that sometimes varied our day, showed themselves most picturesquely as they were driven across the ocean. Sometimes the dark, lurid clouds dipped toward the waves, and became water-spouts, that churned up the waters beneath as they were chased onward, and scattered by the tempest. At other times the dazzling sunlight and heat made it almost intolerable to every other; but Shelley basked in both, and his health and spirits revived under their influence. In this airy cell he wrote the principal part of the Cenci."

They spent part of the year 1819 in Florence, where Shelley passed several hours dayly in the Gallery, studying the works of art, and making notes. The summer of 1820 was spent chiefly at the Baths of Guiliano, near Pisa, where Shelley made a solitary journey on foot during some of the hottest weather of the season to the summit of Monte San Pelegrino, a mountain on which stands a pilgrimage chapel, much frequented; and during this expedition he conceived the idea of The Witch of Atlas, and immediately on his return sat down and wrote it in three days. An overflowing of the Serchio inundated the house, and caused them to quit San Guiliano: they returned to Pisa.

In 1821, the Spanish Revolution excited throughout Italy a similar spirit. In Naples, Genoa, Piedmont, almost every where, the spirit of revolt showed itself; and Shelley, still at Pisa, [Pg 520] sympathized enthusiastically with these movements. Then came the news of the Greek insurrection, and the battle of Navarino, which put the climax to his joy; and in this exultation he wrote Hellas. These circumstances seem to have given a new life to him. He had now his new boat, and was sailing it on the Arno. It was a pleasant summer, says Mrs. Shelley, bright in all but Shelley's health; yet he enjoyed himself greatly. He was in high anticipation of the arrival of Leigh Hunt; and at this juncture, the now happy poet and his family made their last remove. Let us give the deeply interesting picture of Shelley's last home in the words of his gifted wife.

"The Bay of Spezia is of considerable extent, and is divided by a rocky promontory into a larger and a smaller one. The town of Lerici is situated on the eastern point, and in the depth of the smaller bay, which bears the name of this town, is the village of Sant Arenzo. Our house, Casa Magni, was close to this village; the sea came up to the door, a steep hill sheltered it behind. The proprietor of the estate was insane; he had begun to erect a large house at the summit of the hill behind, but his malady prevented its being finished, and it was falling into ruin. He had, and this, to the Italians, seemed a glaring symptom of decided madness, rooted up the olives on the hill-side, and planted forest trees. These were mostly young; but the plantation was more in English taste than I ever saw elsewhere in Italy. Some fine walnut and ilex trees intermingled their dark, massy foliage, and formed groups which still haunt my memory, as then they satiated the eye with a sense of loveliness. The scene was, indeed, of unimaginable beauty; the blue extent of waters, the almost land-locked bay, the near Castle of Lerici, shutting it in to the east, and distant Porto Venere to the west; the various forms of precipitous rocks that bound in the beach, near which there was only a winding, rugged path toward Lerici, and none on the other side; the tideless sea, leaving no sands nor shingle, formed a picture such as one sees in Salvator Rosa's [Pg 521] landscapes only. Sometimes the sunshine vanished when the sirocco raged—the ponente, the wind was called on that shore. The gales and squalls that hailed our first arrival surrounded the bay with foam; the howling wind swept round our exposed house, and the sea roared unremittingly, so that we almost fancied ourselves on board ship. At other times sunshine and calm invested sea and sky, and the rich tints of Italian heaven bathed the scene in bright and ever-varying hues.

"The natives were wilder than the place. Our near neighbors, of Sant Arenzo, were more like savages than any people I ever before lived among. Many a night they passed on the beach, singing, or, rather, howling; the women dancing about among the waves that broke at their feet, the men leaning against the rocks, and joining in their loud, wild chorus. We could get no provisions nearer than Sarzana, at a distance of three miles and a half off, with the torrent of the Margra between; and even there the supply was deficient. Had we been wrecked on an island of the South Seas, we could scarcely have felt ourselves further from civilization and comfort; but where the sun shines, the latter becomes an unnecessary luxury, and we had enough society among ourselves. Yet, I confess, housekeeping became rather a toilsome task, especially as I was suffering in my health, and could not exert myself actively."

To this wild region they had come to indulge Shelley's passion for boating. News came of Leigh Hunt having arrived at Pisa. Shelley, and his friend Captain Ellerker Williams, set out to welcome him, and were on their return to Lerici when the fatal squall came on, and they went down in a moment. The particulars of that event, and the singular scene of the burning of the body by his friends, Byron, Hunt, Trelawney, and Captain Shenley, have been so vividly related by Mr. Hunt as to be familiar to every one. Shelley had gone down with the last volume of Keats, the Lamia, [Pg 522] &c., in his jacket pocket, where it was found open. The bodies came on shore near Via Reggio, but had been so long in the sea as to be much decomposed. Wood was therefore collected on the strand, and they were burned in the old classical style. The magnificent Bay of Spezia, says Mr. Hunt, is on the right of this spot, Leghorn on the left, at equal distances of about twenty-two miles. The headlands projecting boldly and far into the sea, form a deep and dangerous gulf, with a heavy swell and a strong current generally running right into it.

So ended this extraordinary man his short, but eventful and influential life; and his ashes were buried near his friend John Keats, under a beautiful ruined tower in the English burial-ground at

Rome. It was remarkable, that Shelley always said that no presentiment of evil ever came to him except as an unusual elevation of spirits. When he was last seen, just before his embarking for his return, he was said to be in most brilliant spirits. On the contrary, Mrs. Shelley says, "If ever shadow of evil darkened the present hour, such was over my mind when they went. During the whole of our stay at Lerici an intense presentiment of coming evil brooded over my mind, and covered this beautiful place and genial summer with the shadow of coming misery. * * A vague expectation of evil shook me to agony, and I could scarcely bring myself to let them go." The very beauty of the place, she says, seemed unearthly in its excess; the distance they were from all signs of civilization, the sea at their feet, its murmurings or its roarings forever in their ears, led the mind to brood over strange thoughts, and, lifting it from every-day life, caused it to be familiar with the unreal. "Shelley," she adds, "had now, as it seemed, almost anticipated his own destiny; and when the mind figures his skiff wrapped from sight by the thunder-storm, as it was last seen upon the purple sea, and then as the cloud of the tempest passed away, no sign [Pg 523] remained of where it had been—who but will regard as a prophecy the last stanza of the Adonais?

'The breath, whose might I have invoked in song,
Descend upon me: my spirit's bark is driven
Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng,
Whose sails were never to the tempest given;
The massy earth and sphered skies are riven!
I am borne darkly, fearfully, afar;
While burning through the inmost veil of heaven,
The soul of Adonais, like a star,
Beacons from the abode where the eternal are.'"

[Pg 524]

LORD BYRON.

In The Rural Life of England, I have already recorded my visits to two of the most interesting haunts of Lord Byron—Newstead Abbey and Annesley Hall. In this paper we will take a more chronological and consecutive survey of his haunts and abodes.

Lord Byron was, it appears, born in London, in lodgings in Holles-street, as his mother was on her way from France to Scotland. His mother, whose history and ill-starred marriage are well known through Moore's life of the poet, had accompanied her husband to France soon after their marriage, to avoid the swarm of claimants on her property, the creditors of her dissipated husband, which that marriage had brought upon her. The Byrons, who had inherited the estate of Newstead, in Nottinghamshire, since the reign of Henry VIII., when it was granted to Sir John Byron, generally called The Little Sir John Byron, had distinguished themselves greatly in the civil wars, but had of late years been much more conspicuous for their poverty and eccentricity. [Pg 525] Commodore Byron, whose name will always be remembered from the narrative of the sufferings of himself and crew, in consequence of the wreck of the Wager, and who was still better known by the name of "Foul-weather Jack," from the singular fact that he never put to sea, even when holding the rank of admiral, and in command of the fleet for the protection of the West Indies, without encountering the most tempestuous weather, was his grandfather. His father, Captain Byron, appears to have been one of the most unprincipled and dissipated men of his day. He ran off with the wife of Lord Carmarthen to the Continent; and this, of course, leading to a divorce, he married Lady Carmarthen, and had by her one daughter, the present Hon. Augusta Leigh, the wife of Colonel Leigh. Lady Carmarthen did not live long; and covered with debt, and pursued by

hungry creditors, Captain Byron looked out for some woman of fortune to victimize to his own comfort. This species of legalized robbery, that is, of selecting a simple and unsuspecting woman to plunder under the sanction of the laws, instead of running the hazard of hanging or transportation by the more vulgar method of highway robbery, house-breaking, or forgery, is one so fashionable, that a man like Captain Byron was not likely to boggle at it. Of all species of theft, it is the most dastardly and despicable, because it is performed under the sacred name of affection. The vampire who means to suck the blood of the selected victim, makes his approach with flatteries and vows of the deepest attachment, of the most eternal tenderness, and protection from the ills of life. He wins the heart of the confiding woman by the basest lies, and then deliberately proceeds to the altar to pronounce before the all-seeing God the same falsehood, "to love and comfort," and "cherish till death," the helpless creature that is binding herself for life to ruin and deception. One would think it were enough for a man to feel, as he stands thus before God and man, that he is a mere seeker of creature comforts and worldly honor [Pg 526] while he is wedding a rich wife; but knowingly to have picked out his prey under the pretense of loving her above all of her sex, in order to hand over her estate to his creditors, to defray the scores of his gambling and licentiousness, that characterizes a monster of so revolting a kind, that nothing but the gradual corruption of society through the medium of conventionalism could save him from the expatriating execrations of his fellows. There are cases of peculiar aggravation of this kind, those where the property of the victim is almost wholly demanded for the liquidation of the demon-lover's debts, and the wife is left to instantaneous beggary. The marriage of Captain Byron was one very much of this kind. His wife's most convertible property, as bank shares, salmon fisheries, money securities, were hastily disposed of; then went the timber from her estates, then the estates themselves, all amounting to probably £30,000, leaving her a mere annuity of £123! The property gone to this mite, the harpy husband still hung upon her, and upbraided her with the want of further means to contribute to his reckless riot. With cash extorted from her now severe poverty, he at length luckily departed again for the Continent, and died at Valenciennes in 1791, when Byron was three years old.

Such were the circumstances in which Lord Byron entered the world. If he were the prey of violent passions; if he, too, had a tendency to dissipation; if he, in future years, followed his father's example, though not to so culpable a degree, and married an heiress,

> "And spoiled her goodly lands to gild his waste,"

there may be some excuse for him, drawn from hereditary taint. His father was not the solitary instance of irregularity, violent passions, and wastefulness. His great-uncle, to whose title and diminished property he succeeded, was of the like stamp. His violence had led to his wife's separation from him; he had killed his next neighbor, Mr. Chaworth, in a duel; he had shot his [Pg 527] coachman; he had hewed down extensive plantations on his estate, with the avowed purpose of preventing his son's enjoyment of their profit, because he had offended him. This son, and also his grandson, died before him, and the wifeless and childless old lord had led a moody and solitary life in the decaying abbey of Newstead, which threatened to drop about his ears, feeding a heap of crickets on the hearth, and feared by the whole peasant population of the country round.

Such was the paternal lineage of Lord Byron; his maternal one, if more moral, was not the less fiery and volcanic. His mother, a little fat woman, was a woman of a most excitable temperament, an evil which no doubt was much aggravated by the outrage on her warm affections and trust in her husband, which the base object of his marriage with her revealed in all its blackness to her. She appeared all feeling and passion, with very little judgment to control them. She was fond to distraction of her child, and used to spoil him to the utmost extreme, at the same time that her passions occasionally broke out so impetuously against his freaks, that she would fling the tongs or poker at his head when a mere child.

At the age of eleven brought to England, and, with all this ancestral fire in him, introduced to the ruinous and gloomy abode of his forefathers, with the stories of their recent doings rife all around him, no wonder that on his peculiarly sensitive mind the impression became deep. He grew up a Byron in the eccentricity and other characteristics of his life; like his father, his morals were not very nice, his habits were not very temperate, he too married to repair the waste of his lands, and quitted his wife to live abroad, and die there a comparatively early death. Happily, there was implanted in him an ethereal principle, which gave a higher object to the exercise of his passions and energies than had of late distinguished his fathers. He was a born poet, and the divine gift of [Pg 528] poetry converted, in some degree, his hereditary impetuosity into an ennobling instrument. His very dissipations extended his knowledge of life and human nature, and if they led him too frequently to seek to embellish sensuality, they compelled him to depict in the strongest terms that language can furnish, the disgust and remorse which inevitably pursue vice. He was a strange mixture of the poet and the man of the world; of the radical and the aristocrat; of the scoffer at creeds, and the worshiper of the Divine Being in the sublimity of his works. Well was it for him and the world that his early years were cast amid the beauty and the solitude of nature, where he could wander wholly abandoned to the influences of heath and mountain, river and forest; and that the prospect of aristocratic splendor did not come in to disturb those influences till they had acquired a life-long power over him. The grandeur of nature can not make a poet; thousands and millions live during their whole existences amid its most glorious displays, and are little more sentient than the rocks that tower around them; but where the spark of poetry lies latent, it is sure to call it forth.

They who ever visit, then, the earliest scenes of Lord Byron's life, will not be surprised at the

influence which they exercised upon him, nor at the fondness with which he cherished the memory of them. This is strongly expressed in one of his juvenile poems.

LACHIN-Y-GAIR.

"Away, ye gay landscapes, ye gardens of roses!
In you let the minions of luxury rove;
Restore me the rocks, where the snow-flake reposes,
Though still they are sacred to freedom and love:
Yet, Caledonia, beloved are thy mountains,
Round their white summits though elements war;
Though cataracts foam 'stead of smooth-flowing fountains,
I sigh for the valley of dark Loch na Garr. [Pg 529]

"Ah! there my young footsteps in infancy wandered;
My cap was the bonnet, my cloak was the plaid;
On chieftains long perished my memory pondered,
As daily I strode through the pine-covered glade:
I sought not my home till the day's dying glory
Gave place to the rays of the bright polar star;
For fancy was cheered by traditional story,
Disclosed by the natives of dark Loch na Garr."

Hours of Idleness, p. 111.

The feeling thus ardent in youth was equally vivid to the last. Only about two years before his death he wrote thus in The Island:

"He who first met the Highlands' swelling blue
Will love each peak that shows a kindred hue;
Hail in each crag a friend's familiar face,
And clasp the mountain in his mind's embrace.
Long have I roved through lands which are not mine,
Adored the Alp, and loved the Apennine;
Revered Parnassus, and beheld the steep
Jove's Ida, and Olympus crown the deep;
But 'twas not all long ages' love, nor all
Their nature held me in their thrilling thrall;
The infant rapture still survived the boy,
And Loch na Garr with Ida looked o'er Troy;
Mixed Celtic memories with the Phrygian mount,
And Highland linns with Castalie's clear fount."

The city of Aberdeen was the place where the chief part of the earlier boyhood of Byron was spent. He went thither as an unconscious infant, and there, in the neighboring Highlands, he continued till in his eleventh year, when the title fell to him, and he was brought by his mother to England. Aberdeen is a city which must have been a very charming abode for a boy of Byron's disposition, ready either to mix in the throng of lads of his own age in all their plays, contentions, and enterprises, to shoot a marble, or box out a quarrel, or to stroll away into the country and enjoy nature and liberty with an equal zest. There are people who are inclined to think that a great deal of the sublime tone of some of Byron's poetry, as that of the Childe Harold, of the [Pg 530] sentiment, almost sentimentality of his Hours of Idleness, and many of his smaller poems throughout his works, was put on by him at will and for effect. They do not see how these things could proceed from the same mind as the rodomontade of many of his most familiar letters, or the slang and wild humor of many parts of Don Juan. How little do such persons know of the human mind! Did not Tam O'Shanter, and Mary in Heaven, and the Cotter's Saturday Night, all proceed from the same mind, and one of the most earnest minds that ever lived? Did not the sublime scenes of the Iliad, and the battle of the beggars in the Odyssey, and the trick of Ulysses in the cave of Polypheme, when he called himself Noman—so that when Polypheme roared out as they put out his eye, and he told his neighbors who came running to inquire what was the matter, that Noman hurt him, they replied,

"If no man hurt thee, why dost thou complain?"

and marched away without helping him—did not these proceed from the same mind? Did not the puns of Hood, and the sober ballad of Eugene Aram, and the Song of the Shirt, proceed from one and the same mind? Did not John Gilpin and the loftiest strains of pious poetry proceed from that of Cowper? Did not Chatterton write equally Sly Dick and the tragedy of Ella? In fact, we might run through the whole circuit of poetic and prose literature, and show that the moods of our minds are as various and changeable as those of external nature. The very gravest, the most steadfast of us, have our transitions from sad to gay, from frivolous to the highest tone of the highest purpose, with a rapidity that seems to belong to the most changeful of us. There is, in fact, no such chameleon, no such kaleidoscope as the human mind. Light and shadow pass over us, and communicate their lusters or their glooms. Facts give us a turn up or down, and the images of our brain present new and ever new arrangements. But in all this change there is no [Pg 531]

mere chance, far less confusion; every movement depends on a fixed principle. Perhaps there have been few men in whom circumstances—circumstances of physical organization, of life, and education—cherished and made habitual so many varied moods as in Lord Byron. Thrown at a very early age into the bosom of a beautiful and solitary nature, he imbibed a profound and sincere love of nature and solitude. Sent early to public schools to battle his way among boys of his own age, and with a personal defect which often subjected him to raillery, his native spirit made him bristle up and show fight, as he did afterward with his reviewers. Raised to rank and wealth, and, spite of his crooked foot, endowed with, in all other respects, a very fine person, he was led to plunge into the dissipations of young men of his class, and he thus acquired a tone of libertinism that ever afterward, under the same circumstances, was sure to show itself. Led by his quick sense of right and wrong, and by his shrewd insight into character, to despise priestcraft and political despotism, and spurred on by the spirit of the time, especially abroad where he traveled, he imbibed a spirit of skepticism and radicalism as principles. From these causes, he soon began to exhibit the most opposite phases of character. In solitude and nature he was religious in his tone—in society, a scoffer; in solitude he was pensive, and even sentimental—in society he was convivial, fond of practical jokes, satirical. He wrote like a radical, and spoke like an aristocrat. In him Childe Harold and Don Juan, the sublime and the ludicrous, the noble and the mean, the sarcastic and the tender, the voluptuous and beautifully spiritual, the pious and the impious, were all embodied. He was all these by turns, and in all, for the moment, most sincere. Like an instrument of many strings, each had its peculiar tone, and answered faithfully to the external impulse. Multifarious as were his moods, you might in any given circumstances have predicated which of these would prevail. There would be no sensuality in the face of the [Pg 532] Alps, there would be no sublimity in the city saloon. If he had to speak in the House of Lords, his speech, by the spirit of antagonism, would assuredly be radical; did he come into contact with the actual mob, he would case himself in the hauteur of the aristocrat. With nature, he was ashamed of men, and his doings and sayings among them; with men, he was ashamed of nature and poetry. He would laugh at his own flights of sentiment. He was a many-sided monster, showing now sublime and now grotesque, but with a feeling in the depths of his soul that he ought to be something greater than he was or dared to be.

To go back, however, from his character to himself. Aberdeen presented to the boy ample food for two of his propensities, those toward the enjoyment of nature and society. The country round, though not sublime, is beautiful. The sea is at hand, an ever grand and stirring object. The Dee comes winding from the mountains of the west through a vale of great loveliness; the Don, from the north, through scenes perhaps still more striking. There is an air of antiquity about the town, with its old churches, colleges, and towers, that is peculiarly pleasing, and the country has likewise a primitive look that wins at once on the spectator. To one of us from the south, the approach to it by the sea is very striking. I do not mean the immediate approach, for this is flat, but the coast voyage out from Edinburgh. The whole coast is bleak, yet green, and presenting to the sea bold and time-worn rocks. For a considerable part of the way they appear to be of red sandstone, and are therefore scooped out into the boldest caves, hollows, and promontories imaginable. Here and there are deep, dark caverns, into which the sea rushes as into its own peculiar dens, and in other places it has cut out arches and doorways through these rocks where they stand insulated, and you see the light through them displaying other rocks behind. One of these is noted for presenting, by effect of light behind it, the appearance of a lady all in white, [Pg 533] standing at the mouth of a cave, and beckoning with her hand. As you skim along the coasts of Fife, Forfar, Kincardine, and Aberdeen, these rocks and caverns present ever-new forms, while all the country above them is green, smiling, and cultured now, but formerly must have been savage indeed, and giving rise, and no wonder, to strange superstitions and legends. Bleak little towns ever and anon stretch along the shore; though green, the country is very bare of trees. Dundee, Arbroath, Montrose, are good large towns; and there are the ruins of Arbroath Abbey and Dunnottar Castle, with others of less note. Dunnottar can not be passed without thinking of Old Mortality, whom Scott found in the church-yard there restoring the inscriptions on the grave-stones of the Covenanters; nor can Uri, an old-fashioned house on the bare uplands above Stonehaven, as the abode of Barclay, the writer of the celebrated Apology for Quakerism, and in our day for that of his pedestrian descendant, Captain Barclay. How singular are the reflections which arise on human life and its combinations when gazing on such a place as this! What should induce a man at one time to go forth from a remote scene and solitary old house like this, to mingle with the ferment of the times—to become an active apostle of Quakerism, and the expositor of its faith; and another, nearly two centuries afterward, to march out of the same house down into England, not for an exhibition of Quakerism, but of pedestrianism; not of *reasoning*, but of *walking* powers? Why should that house—just that house and its family, be destined to produce great Quakers, ending in great walkers and great brewers? How often in my boyhood had I read Barclay's Preface to his Apology, dated from "Uri in Scotland, the Place of my Pilgrimage," and addressed to King Charles II., by "Robert Barclay, the servant of Jesus Christ, called by God to a dispensation of the Gospel revealed anew in this our age," &c. And there it [Pg 534] stood, high, bare, and solitary, eliciting the oddest compound ideas of "hops and heresy," according to the phrase of a clergyman of the time, or, rather, of Quakerism, London porter, and walking-matches against time!

Beyond this the coast becomes more and more what is called iron-bound, and the rocks—probably of trap or whinstone—as you advance northward, stand up in the sea, black and curdled as it were, and worn into caverns and perpendicular indentures exactly as you see them in Bewick's wood-cuts. Stepping then on land at Aberdeen, how agreeable is the change! The city, built all of a gray and lustrous granite, has a look of cleanness and neatness almost inconceivable. Since the days of Byron's boyhood great must have been the changes. The main

streets are all evidently new; and on advancing into the great street which traverses almost the whole length of the city, Union-street, a mile in length and seventy feet wide, you are struck with a pleasant surprise. The width and extent, the handsome yet plain buildings of clean granite, and the fine public buildings visible in different directions, are far more than you expected in a town so far north.[32] On the river you find an imposing assemblage of ships; you find the Marischal College now built in a very graceful style; and a market-house, I suppose in extent, convenience of arrangement, and supply, inferior to none in the kingdom. The olden streets, such as were in existence in Byron's time, are much more like what you would have looked for, of a narrower and more ordinary character.

About a mile to the north of the new town lies Old Aberdeen. In advancing toward it you become every moment more aware of its far greater antiquity. It looks as if it had a fixed attachment to [Pg 535] the past, and had refused to move. There is a quietness, a stationariness about it. One old house or villa after another stands in its garden or court as it has done for centuries. The country about has an old Saxon look. It carried me away into Germany, with its unfenced fields of corn and potatoes; villages seen in the distance also unfenced, but with a few trees clustered about them, and the country naked except for its corn. To the right lay the sea, to the left this open country, and on before arose, one beyond the other, tower and spire of an antique character, as of a very ancient city. Presently I came to the college—King's College—with the royal crown of Scotland surmounting its tower, in fine and ample dimensions, and its courts and corridors seen through the ancient gateway. Then, on the other hand, the equally antique gateway to the park of Mr. Powis Leslie, with its two tall round towers of most ancient fashion, with galleries and spires surmounted with crescents. Then, onward, the ancient, massy Cathedral, with its two stone spires, and tall western window of numerous narrow windowlets, and ponderous walls running along the road side, with a coping of a yard high, and stuccoed. Every thing had a heavy, ancient, and German character. I could have imagined myself in Saxony or Franconia; and, to augment the illusion, a woman at a cottage door inquiring the time of day, received the answer "half twa," as near as possible "half two" in Plat-deutsch. Still further to increase the illusion, the people talked of the bridge as "she." Truly the repose of centuries, and the fashion of a far-gone time, so far as relates to our country, lay over the whole place.

I had now to inquire my way to the Brig of Balgounie, a spot which makes a conspicuous figure in Byron's boyish history. "The Brig of Don," says he himself, in a note in Don Juan, canto x., p. 309, "near the 'auld town' of Aberdeen, with its one arch, and its black, deep salmon stream, is in my memory as yesterday. I still remember, though perhaps I may misquote, the awful proverb which [Pg 536] made me pause to cross it, and yet lean over it with a childish delight, being an only son, at least by the mother's side. The saying, as recollected by me, was this, but I have never heard or seen it since I was nine years of age:

> 'Brig of Balgounie, wight (strong) is thy wa',
> Wi' a wife's ae son on a mare's ae foal,
> Down shalt thou fa'.'"

How accurate was his recollection of this old bridge; a proof of the delight with which he had enjoyed this scenery. We are told that on holiday afternoons he would get down to the sea-side and find great amusement there. Here was the sea just below; and it will be seen that the whole way that he had to come from New Aberdeen was full of a spirit and an aspect to fall deep into the heart of an embryo poet. There is a new and direct way now from the city nearer to the sea, and from the new bridge of Don the view of the old bridge is very picturesque. It is one tall, gray pointed arch, with cottages about it on both sides on the high banks of the Don, and mills, with masses of trees. On the low ground below the bridge at the left-hand end stands a white house, and little fishermen's huts or sheds scattered here and there. On the other bank of the river the ground is high and knolly. Clumps of trees seem to close in upon the bridge, and behind and above them is a little group of fishermen's houses, called the huts of Balgounie. Below the bridge the river widens out into a broad expanse, and between high, broomy banks, comes down to the new bridge, and thence to the sea meadows, where the white billows are seen chasing each other at its mouth. Above the bridge the river is dark and deep, and the high banks are overhung with wood. The valley of the Don above is very picturesque with woods and rocks, and is enlivened with mills and factories.

The view from the bridge itself down into the river is striking. I suppose it must be forty or fifty feet from its center to the water, yet a man living close by told me that he once saw a sailor leap [Pg 537] from it for a wager. The bridge is remarkably strongly built. It is said to have been built in the time of Bruce, yet it has by no means a very ancient look, and being of solid granite, is not very likely to fulfill the prophecy of its fall. Yet Mr. Chambers, in his "Picture of Scotland," says this superstition has not always been confined to children, for our late Earl of Aberdeen, who was an only son, and rode a favorite horse, which was "a mare's ae foal," always dismounted on approaching this bridge, and used to have his horse led over at a little distance after him. The people near do not now seem to partake of it. "Fall!" say they; "ay, when the rocks on which it is based fall!" It is, in fact, like a solid piece of rock itself; and is in possession of funds, left in 1605 by Sir Alexander Hay, which, though then only producing five-and-forty shillings a year, have so accumulated that they are not only amply sufficient to maintain it in repair, but have built the new brig. At each end of the bridge you see several large iron rings in the wall. These, I was told, were to secure ropes or chains to, from which to suspend scaffolding for the repair of the bridge on the outside. Every care is thus taken of it. "She is verra rich, is the auld brig," said the man before mentioned. "She has been verra useful in her time, for before the new brig was built she

was the only means of getting to the north country—there was no fording the river. And the new brig has been built wi' her money, ay, every sixpence of it, gran' brig as the new on' is, with her five granite arches; and the auld brig gives £100 a year to take care of her too. But she's verra well off in the world yet, for all that; she has plenty left for herself." Thus do they talk of the auld brig as if she were a wealthy old lady. If, however, any one should pay her a visit from New Aberdeen, I would counsel him to go by the old road for its picturesque effect, but to be careful to inquire the road in Old Aberdeen down to the brig, for it is particularly obscure. He must ask, too, for "The Auld Brig o' Don," for the name of the brig of Balgounie seems known to few of the younger generation. [Pg 538]

In New Aberdeen, the admirer of Lord Byron will also naturally seek to take a glance at the different houses in which he lived as a child with his mother. These are in Queen-street, one at nearly each end of the street; one at the house in Broad-street, then occupied by Mr. Leslie, father of the present surgeon of that name; and one in Virginia-street, not far from the docks. The visitor will not be surprised to find that these are but ordinary houses in ordinary streets in general, when he recollects that Mrs. Byron was then reduced by the matrimonial robbery of her husband to an income of £123 a year, and that her effects, that is, the furniture of her lodgings, &c., when sold, on her setting out with her boy for England, amounted only to £74, 17*s.*, 7*d.* In these houses she was merely a lodger. The best situation which she occupied was in Mr. Leslie's house in Broad-street, over a shop. All these places are still well known. The schools to which Byron went in Aberdeen are also objects of interest. That in Long Acre, kept by a Mr. Bower, whom he calls *Bodsy* Bower, a name, he says, given him on account of his dapperness, was a common day school, where little boys and girls were sent principally to be out of the way at home. This school has long been closed. The next school to which he went, and where he continued to go till he left Aberdeen, was the grammar school. This, of course, remains, and though it has been considerably enlarged since Byron was there, that room in which he studied continues exactly as it was at that time. It is an ordinary school-room, with benches and desks cut deep with hundreds of names, and hundreds of other names printed and written over them with ink, and the walls adorned in the like style, as well as with grotesque figures, drawn with the pens of schoolboys. Amid this multitude of names, the Rev. Dr. Melville, the present master, assured me that diligent search had been made to discover that of Byron, but in vain. There are many of his old schoolfellows still living in the place, and all seem to recollect him as "a mischievous urchin." It must, however, be recollected, that Byron was little more than ten years of age when he left Aberdeen, and that was forty-seven years ago. [Pg 539]

The place to which perhaps still more interest will attach, connected with the poet's boyhood in this part of the country, is Ballater, where his mother was advised to take him on recovering from the scarlet fever in 1796. It would appear as if Mrs. Byron, as well as her child, was so delighted with the summer residence there, as to return thither the two following summers. These are all the opportunities there could possibly be, for they left for England in the autumn of 1798, on the death of the old Lord Byron. They were the summer residences here, however, that awoke the poetic feeling in him. He was here in the midst of the most beautiful mountain scenery, and so intensely did it operate upon him, that through his whole life he looked back to his abode here as the most delicious period in his memory.

The vale of the Dee, or the Dee-side, as they call it, all the way from Aberdeen, a distance of forty miles, is fine; beautifully wooded by places, the hills, as you advance, become more and more striking. You pass the Castle of Drum, one of the oldest inhabited castles in Scotland; a seat of the Burnets, of Bishop Burnet's line, finely situated on the right hand on rising ground, and various other interesting places. But it is as you approach Ballater that the scenery becomes most striking. It becomes truly Highland. The hills get lofty, bare, gray, and freckled. They are, in fact, bare and tempest-tinted granite, having an air of majestic desolation. Some rise peaked and splintered, and their sides covered with *debris*, yet, as it were, bristled with black and sharp-looking pine forests. Some of the hills run along the side of the Dee, covered with these woods, exactly as the steep Black Forest Hills are in the neighborhood of Wildbad. [Pg 540]

As you approach Ballater the valley expands. You see a breadth of green meadow, and a neat white village stretching across it, and its church lifting its spire into the clear air, while the mountains sweep round in a fine chain of peaked hills, and close it in. All up Dee-side there is well-cultivated land, but, with the exception of this meadow, on which Ballater stands, all is now hill, dark forest, and moorland; while below, on the banks of the winding and rapid Dee, birch woods present themselves in that peculiar beauty so truly belonging to the Highlands. On your right first looks out the dark height of Culbleen, mentioned by Byron in his earlier poems:

> "When I see some dark hill point its crest to the sky,
> I think of the rocks that o'ershadow Culbleen;"

then "Morven, streaked with snow;" and Loch na Garr lifts himself long and lofty over the lower chains that close the valley beyond Ballater.

Ballater, though a neat village now, did not exist when Byron was here. There were a few cottages for the use of visitors, near the other side of the present bridge, but those who came to drink the waters generally located themselves in farm-houses as near as they could to "the wells," which are two miles down the opposite bank of the Dee. Mrs. Byron chose her summer residence in one of the most thoroughly-secluded and out-of-the-world spots which it was possible to find, perhaps, in the whole island. It lies four miles below Ballater, on the same side of the river as the spring, that is, two miles beyond "the wells," as they call them, some chalybeate springs which issue from the hills, and which now bring many people to Ballater in summer. You proceed to

them along the feet of the hills, and at the feet, also, of a dark pine wood. The river is below you; above you are these mountain forests, and the way lies sometimes through the wood. Under [Pg 541] beeches which shade the way, there are benches set at intervals, so that a more charming walk, with the noble mountain views opposite to you, can not well be conceived. At about two miles on the road, after passing under stupendous dark cliffs that show themselves above the craggy and steep forest, you find a couple of rows of houses, and here are the waters issuing out of pipes into stone basins. Going still forward, you come out upon the wild moorlands. Above you, on the right hand, rise the desolate hills; below, on the left, wanders on the Dee, amid its birch woods; and the valley is one of those scenes of chaotic beauty, which perhaps the Highlands only show. It is a sea of heath-clad little hills, sprinkled with the light green birch-trees, and here and there a dark Scotch fir. It is a fairy land of purple beauty, such as seems to belong to old romance, and where the people of old romance might be met without wonder. And through all goes the sound of the river like a distant ocean. Those who have been in the Highlands know and recollect such scenes, so carpeted with the crimson heather, so beautified with the light-hued, fairy birch woods. Still the way leads on till you come down to the Dee, where it makes a wide and splendid sweep deep below the bank on which you are, and then you wonder where can be Bellatrich, the house you seek, for you see no house at all! In the birch wood, however, you now discern one white cottage, and that must be it. No! To that cottage I went, and out came a woman with spectacles on and her Bible open in her hand. I asked if she could tell me where Bellatrich was, and I expected her to say "Here!" but she replied, in a low, quiet voice, "I will show you, for it is not easy to find." And so on we went for another quarter of a mile, when, coming to a little hidden valley running at right angles from the river up into the moorlands, she showed me a smoke rising above the trees, and told me there I should find the house.

And here was the place to which Byron's mother used to *retire* in the summer months from [Pg 542] Aberdeen with her boy. The valley is divided by a wild brook hidden among green alders, and its slopes are hung with the native birch and a few oaks. At the upper end stands a farm-house, but this is new, and the farmer, to show me the house in which Byron lived, took me into his farm-yard. The house Mrs. Byron inhabited is now a barn, or sort of hayloft rather, in his yard. It was exactly one of the one-storied, long Highland huts, and is now included in the quadrangle of his farm-yard; but the bed in which Byron used to lie is still there. It is one of the deal, cupboard sort of beds that are common in Highland huts. There it stands among his straw. He says many people come to see the place, and several have tried to buy the bed from him, but that he should think it quite a shame to sell it.

Imagine, then, Mrs. Byron living here upward of forty years ago, and Byron a boy of about ten years of age; soon after which he left for England, to be converted out of a poor Highland boy into a lord. There was probably another hut or so near, as there is now, but that was all. The house they lived in was but a hut itself. There was no Ballater then. That has sprung up under the management of Mr. Farquarson, the laird of Ballater. There was only the water issuing from the moorland rocks, and no house at it, but those few huts near Ballater Bridge, where Lords Panmure and Kennedy, and some of their jovial companions, notorious up here, used to come and to drink the waters, in order to remedy their drinking too much whisky. There was no carriage road then. There was no cultivated meadow. All was moorland, and woods, and wild mountains. There was a rude road at the margin of the river, but so stony that no carriage could exist upon it. Nay, this present farmer says that when he came to live here, within these ten years, there was no road into this little hidden valley. There was no bridge over the brook, but they went [Pg 543] through amid the great stones, and that without taking any trouble to put them aside. There was no garden, and there was no field. Around rose, as they do now, dark moorland mountains, and the little black-faced sheep, and the black cattle roamed over the boggy, heathery, and birch-scattered valley, as they do still, except within the little circle of cultivation that the present tenant has made.

What a place for a civilized woman and her only son! How he got so far around as he did is to me a miracle. He got up the valley quite to Braemar, and there was no carriage road thither! There was no turnpike road from Aberdeen further than to Banchory, half way to Ballater, forty-six years ago, and that then made, was the first turnpike road in Aberdeenshire. So a gentleman of Aberdeen assured me. Further, all was a mere track, in which a horse could go. Yet the boy Byron, with his lame feet, and very lame he was, according to those who knew him, and plenty of such remain, rambled all about this wild region. The passion with which he traversed those scenes is expressed in his poem to Mary Duff, the equally-beloved object of his boyish heart.

"When I roved a young Highlander on the dark heath,
  And climbed thy steep summit, oh Morven! of snow,
To gaze on the torrent that thundered beneath,
  Or the mist of the tempest that gathered below;
Untutored by science, a stranger to fear,
  And rude as the rocks where my infancy grew,
No feeling, save one, to my bosom was dear,
  Need I say, my sweet Mary, 'twas centered in you?

"Yet it could not be love, for I knew not the name—
  What passion can dwell in the heart of a child?
But still I perceive an emotion the same
  As I felt when a boy in the crag-covered wild.
One image alone on my bosom impressed,
  I loved my bleak regions, nor panted for new;

And few were my wants, for my wishes were blessed,
  And pure were my thoughts, for my soul was with you. [Pg 544]

"I arose with the dawn; with my dog for my guide,
  From mountain to mountain I bounded along:
I breasted the billows of Dee's rushing tide,
  And heard at a distance the Highlander's song," &c.

That he was intensely happy here, the poetry and memories of his whole life testify. That he must have strolled far and wide, and, as he says, with his dog for his guide, is no doubt true; but, lame as he was, it appears little less than miraculous. "I mind him weel," said a shepherd still living in the valley near the farm; "he was just such a boy as yon," pointing to a boy of eleven or twelve, "and used to play about wi' us here. His feet were *both* turned in, and he used to lift one over the other as he walked; and when he ran he would sometimes catch one against the other, and tumble over neck and heels. We heard that in England he had got his feet straightened."

How such a boy could get about there, over the rough heath and up the distant mountains, is strange enough. We do not hear that he had any pony, and there were only his mother or the maid to accompany him. Mrs. Byron, by all accounts, was not well-fitted for much walking, far less climbing up hills; yet it is quite certain that he rambled far and wide, and, it is most probable, alone. Loch na Garr, Morven, and Culbleen are the grand features of the mountain scenery, and it is evident that the wild and beautiful solitudes of the Dee-side, and the mountains around, had made a deep and indelible impression on his imagination. It is just the scenery to awake the poet, where the soul and the organization of the poet exist. The deep solitude; the stern mountains, with all their changes of storm and sunshine, now blazing and burning out in all the brightness of a clear sun, now softly beaming beneath the slanting light of evening, and now black as midnight beneath a gloomy sky, looking awfully forth from their sable and yet transparent veil of shadow. These, and the sound of waters, and the mild beauty of the low, heath-clad hills and soft glens, where the birch hangs its weeping and fragrant branches over the [Pg 545] lovely harebell and the secret nest of the grouse, were the imagery which surrounded the boy Byron during the summer months; and the boy "was father to the man," seeking out ever afterward, from land to land, all that was lovely and sublime in nature.

But he was now called upon to say,

"Adieu, then, ye hills, where my childhood was bred.
  Thou sweet flowing Dee, to thy waters adieu!"

and the scene changed to England; solitude to cities; poverty to fortune; and the nameless obscurity of the juvenile mountain wanderer to title and unimagined fame.

Before, however, quitting this favorite scene of the early life of Byron, which he never again visited, I must notice it under the aspect which it happened to present to me from the particular time of my arrival. It was on the 18th of August, just one week after the commencement of the grouse-shooting season, and every inn on the road was crowded with sportsmen and their servants. Lord Castlereagh, on his way to his shooting-ground in Braemar, was my next neighbor on the mail from Aberdeen; and his wide acquaintance with the sports of various countries, the *capercailzie* and bear-shooting of the north of Europe, in particular of Russia, made his descriptions of them, as well as of the deer-shooting of Braemar—his particular sport—very interesting. But the weather of that wet summer was at this time outrageously rainy, and from every wayside inn the lugubrious faces of sportsmen were visible. As we drew up at the village of Banchory, the window was thronged with livery-servants, and a gentleman at an open upper window, eyeing anxiously the showery clouds hanging upon the hills, caught sight of Lord Castlereagh, and called out, in a tone of momentary animation quickly relapsing into melancholy, "Ha, Cass! are you there? Here I have been these four days, and nothing but this confounded [Pg 546] rain. Not a foot have I yet been able to set upon the heath. There are six of us."

"Who is that who addresses you so familiarly?"

"Oh! it is Sir John Guest!" Poor Sir John! What a purgatory!

On went the coach. At Ballater again thronged was the door with livery-servants; the rain was falling in torrents; there were nine shooting gentlemen in the house, not one of whom could stir out. After taking luncheon, Lord Castlereagh went with the mail to Braemar, and I, with expanded umbrella, issued forth to explore the neighborhood as well as I might, but was speedily driven back again by the deluging rains, which made every highway an actual river. The next day was Sunday, and the sun rose with a beauty and warmth which seemed to say, "Gentlemen sportsmen, you shall at least have fair weather for church." A more glorious day never was sent down over mountain and moorland; and few are the scenes on which fine summer weather confers a greater beauty than on those around Ballater. Along these fine valleys, the country people, all health and animation, in cordial conversation streamed along to and fro from church. I climbed the dark moorland hills, where the wild flocks scudded away at the presence of a stranger, and the grouse rose up in whole coveys, with a startling whirr and strange cries, and gazed down into the vales on the most lovely little homesteads, on their crimson heathery knolls, amid their beautiful little woodlands of birch. Above arose on every side the solemn and dreary bulks of Loch na Garr, Morven, and Culbleen. It was a day and a scene among a thousand. Night fell; morning again—rose Monday morning! Hundreds of anxious sportsmen throughout the Highlands, and thousands of their anxious attendants, eager for a chance for the hills—

"And the rain fell as though the world would drown!"

When I looked out of my bed-room window, there were men and boys standing in front of the inn, casting dreary looks at the ragged and low-sweeping curtains of clouds that shrouded every hill, [Pg 547] and then longing looks at the windows, if the slightest possible breaks in those clouds occurred, hoping to be called and engaged as guides and game-carriers on the hills. Keepers were walking about, and bringing bags of shot in. Men and boys, already looking wet and dirty, as if they had tramped with their strong shoes some distance out of the country to come hither, asked them if they thought it would take up; and they cast knowing looks at the clouds and shook their heads. But anon! as if in very desperation, there were dogs let loose, which ran helter-skelter over the bridge toward the hills, full of eager life for the sport; and gigs full of gentlemen, three or four together, packed close, in white hats, or glazed and turned-up wide-awakes, and their shooting-jackets close buttoned up, with their guns erect at their sides, setting off for their shooting-grounds. They were determined to be at their stations, perhaps some ten miles off, and take the chance of a change in the weather. Good luck to them!

I took my way back again to Aberdeen; and lo! at Banchory the inn door still crowded with livery-servants, and poor Sir John Guest still seated at the selfsame window, with long and melancholy face watching the clouds! Truly the sporting, not less than the Christian life, has its crosses and its mortifications.

Lord Byron's first journey in England was with his mother, to see his ancestral abode—his abbey and estate of Newstead. It was a considerable step from the rooms over the shop at Aberdeen, or the little hut at Ballatrich, with £123 a year; but yet, for a lord, it was no very magnificent subject of contemplation. The estate had been dreadfully denuded of wood, and showed a sandy nakedness of meager land, the rental of a great part of which would be high at ten shillings an acre. The old abbey was dilapidated, and menacing in various places to tumble in. The gardens were a wilderness of neglect:

[Pg 548]

"Through thy battlements, Newstead, the hollow winds whistle;
  Thou, the hall of my fathers, art gone to decay;
In thy once smiling garden, the hemlock and thistle
  Have choked up the rose which late bloomed in the way."

The place was, after a time, let to Lord Grey de Ruthyn, who let ruin take its course, as the old lord had done. When the old lord died, the host of crickets which he had fed are said to have taken immediate flight, issuing forth in such a train that the servants could scarcely move without treading on them. When Lord Grey's lease was out, he and his hounds took their flight in like manner; but this was some years afterward, and for the present Mrs. Byron betook herself to Nottingham, and placed her son under the care of Mr. Rogers, the principal schoolmaster there, and under that of a quack, one Lavender, to straighten his feet. Thence they removed to London, where they resided in Sloane Terrace, and Byron was sent to Dr. Glennie's school at Dulwich. Thence he was removed to Harrow, and during the years he spent there Mrs. Byron went to reside again at Nottingham, and afterward at Southwell, with occasional visits to Bath and Cheltenham. Harrow and Cambridge were, of course, for the chief part of the years of his minority, his proper homes, but the vacations were chiefly spent at Southwell, with frequent visits to Newstead and Annesley. Before his minority, however, expired, Lord Grey de Ruthyn had quitted Newstead, leaving it in a deplorable state of dilapidation, and Lord Byron incurred great expense in repairing the abbey, much, indeed, beyond the reach of his resources. His income was small; for the best part of his ancestral property had been sold by the late lord, especially the Rochdale estate, which was afterward recovered. The allowance for his education was all that he could claim from his trustees, and his mother's small income was eked out by a pension of £300 per annum. The debts incurred by him for the repairs of Newstead not being legally recoverable, as they were incurred by a minor, remained for years unpaid; and the importunities of his [Pg 549] creditors were one of the strongest motives for his early traveling abroad. The failure of his hope of marrying Miss Chaworth, and adding her estate, which adjoined his own, to Newstead, was, both in affection and in point of fortune, a severe blow. His embarrassments finally compelled him to sell Newstead, and to make a *marriage de convenance*, which, to a person of his peculiar temperament, habits, and opinions, was certain to result in trouble and disunion. From these causes his life became unsettled and imbittered, and scarcely had he reached the period at which his fame ought to have made his native land the proudest and happiest of all lands to him, when he abandoned it forever, and

"In the wilds
Of fiery climes he made himself a home,
And his soul drank their sunbeams: he was girt
With strange and dusky aspects: he was not
Himself like what he had been: on the sea
And on the shore he was a wanderer."

The Dream, vol. x., p. 249.

Of Newstead and Annesley I have given a particular account in The Rural Life of England. To these I must refer, and have only to add that, in the hands of Lord Byron's old schoolfellow, Colonel Wildman, Newstead is restored and maintained as all lovers of English genius would wish it to be, and is ever open to their survey. Since that account, too, the old hall of Annesley has undergone a renovation, and that scene of melancholy, desertion, and decay there described,

exists now only in the volume which recorded it. In the present paper Southwell and Harrow will chiefly demand our attention.

Southwell, during the period of his Harrow school-life, became a most favorite resort of his. His mother had settled down there. Body and mind were now in progress of expansion toward manhood. His relish for society, his love of fame, and his love of poetry, were every day more and [Pg 550] more developing themselves. But his world yet was only the school world. He was shy in general society. Here, however, he formed a group of friends of superior taste and education, in whose quiet little circle he became speedily at home, and for a time into this circle he seemed to throw himself, with all his heart and youthful enthusiasm. The Pigotts, the Beechers, the Leacrofts, &c., were his friends. Here he used to spend his summer vacations; here, it seems, he spent nearly the whole of one year. His dogs, his horses, firing at marks, swimming, and private theatricals, were his amusements, and for a time Southwell was his world. The Pigotts were his great friends, and there he went in and out, spent his evenings or spent his days, to his great contentment. A wider and a gayer world had not yet opened upon him, and for a season Southwell and his friends there were every thing to him. Of course, in this little circle he was the great hero; it is not often that a little Cathedral town can catch a live lord; nothing could be done without him; every flattering attention awaited him; and for a time he was not too conversant with the great world for the little one of Southwell to be spoiled to him. Hence he made occasional visits to Newstead and Annesley, with whose heiress he had fallen deeply in love. Here he began to cultivate more sedulously the composition of poetry, in which he was warmly encouraged by his most intimate friends, the Pigotts and Mr. Beecher, all persons of very refined taste, and here, eventually, he put his first volume to press, with Ridge, a printer at Newark. It was from Southwell that he made an excursion to Scarborough with his young friend Mr., since Dr. Pigott, and was much smitten with a fair Quakeress, to whom he addressed the verses published in his Hours of Idleness. But he had not been long at Cambridge, and seen something too of London, before the charm of Southwell had vanished, and we find him protesting that he hated Southwell. "Oh! Southwell, Southwell, how I rejoice to have left thee, and how I curse the heavy hours I dragged [Pg 551] along, for so many months, among the Mohawks who inhabit your kraals!" During the time that he spent there, his hours certainly did not drag very heavily. It was only on looking back from a gay scene that they appeared so to him. No one who now visits that quiet village will be surprised that a scene so still, though so naturally pleasant, could not long hold a spirit of so restless a caste. For, by his own experience,

> "Quiet to quick spirits is a hell."

Most of his old friends have long left the place. Dr. Pigott, to practice at Nottingham; others are dead. Miss Pigott still lives in the house which her society and music made so agreeable to him. Mr. Beecher too still lives, and has not lived without setting the stamp of his mind on the age. To him we are, in fact, indebted for the New Poor Law. Long before the old act was rescinded, he resolved to test its powers, and he proved that if exerted they were equal to the utmost necessity of the country. He and his friend, the Rev. Mr. Lowe, of Bingham, enforced these powers in their respective parishes, where the poor's rates had grown to an equality with the rental, and the spirit of pauperism showed itself in its worst shape, that of the demoralized indolence and insolence of the young and able-bodied laborers. These gentlemen began by adopting the plan of refusing any relief to such except in the shape of labor. They insisted on all such as they pleased coming into the house, and there carried out the plan of separating husbands, wives, and children. The uproar that this produced was terrible. The people threatened to destroy the authors of this scheme, and demolish their property. Soldiers were obliged to be called in at Bingham, and finally the magistrates triumphed. The paupers were reduced to obedience, and the parish rates fell to a nominal sum. These facts and results were published by Mr. Beecher in a pamphlet, which, falling into Lord Brougham's hands, became the seed of the New Poor Law. The [Pg 552] merits of that law do not claim discussion here; it was only necessary to point out this great fact of the life of that early friend of Lord Byron, whose influence was so great with him as to induce him to commit his first volume to the flames.

In the summer of 1845 I paid a visit to Southwell. The day, for a wonder, was fine, for a more rainy or cold June never passed. The little town looked very pleasant in its quietness. Every one knows how a Cathedral town does look; all asleep in the sunshine, if sunshine there be. A few shops, that seem to be expecting customers sometimes; a large inn, that must, too, have visitors sometimes, or it could not exist. A number of pleasant villas in their pleasant gardens, full of roses, and green plots not shaven quite so close as in greater and smarter places, amid a great deal of greenness every where in gardens, crofts, and meadows. The old minster standing aloft in venerable and profoundly silent majesty, in its ample green burial-ground.

The minster at Southwell is much finer than I had supposed. It has three square towers; two at the west end, and one, I think, near the east. It is Saxon; has fine, zigzag archway doors at the west, and also at the north and south porches. In the north porch, each side is lined with those crossed arches, which form pointed arches, and are supposed to have first discovered them to the builders. The outer walls have also zigzag bands. The windows have been inserted, many of them, since the minster was built. Some are early English; some of the Perpendicular Order; but there are also round-headed ones, and round-headed blank arches on the walls of the tower. All is in perfect taste, according to the time in which the work was done, and is kept in excellent preservation. The inside is particularly neat, and the reading-desk is a brass eagle, which, having been found at the bottom of the lake at Newstead, where it is supposed to have been thrown at the dissolution of the abbey by the monks, would be an object on which Lord Byron would look [Pg 553] with great interest. It contained writings connected with the estate, which the angry monks

might wish to destroy.

We looked into the ruins of the old palace adjoining the minster yard, where Cardinal Wolsey was entertained on his last journey to York, and found ourselves in a lovely garden, the walls of which were the gray and irregular ruins of this ancient fabric, and the house running along one side of it, evidently, though old, built partly up out of its material. Every one knows how charming such an old house looks. Its low range, its irregular windows, its front partly overhung with roses, jasmines, and figs; the open porch, and the peeps of goodly pictures, or rather the frames of the pictures, rich curtains, and furniture—the attributes of wealth; and the greensward of the court garden filling with its velvet the area between the old and rugged walls.

Under the obliging guidance of Dr. Calvert, I went round to see the people with whom Byron used to associate; unfortunately, Miss Pigott was in London. We had a glimpse of her entrance-hall, and that was all. The house is one of those old-fashioned, rather darkish houses, that one sees in such places, and in the hall were heaps of busts, apparently phrenological specimens, and so on.

We went then to the house where Byron's mother lived. It is at the opposite end of the town, or village. It is called Burgage Manor, and stands on the top of a sloping green, called Burgage Green, very pleasantly, and at the back looking over a pleasant stretch of country toward Farnsfield. The house is a good, large, and pleasant house, but has, it seems, been considerably enlarged since Mrs. Byron lived in it; in fact, another half built to it in front. Unluckily, the lady who now inhabits it was absent too, so that we could learn nothing particular about it. It was undergoing painting, and we entered it, and walked about the lower rooms, which are just good, pleasant, modern rooms. The hall has a number of middling portraits, apparently belonging to the [Pg 554] lady's family. A Mary Childers; several ladies of the name of Mace, a Rev. Jackson, without a Mr., a John, or Thomas to his name; just thus—Rev. Jackson, a sandy-haired, schoolmaster-looking man, leaning on his elbow, and apparently trying to look very full of calculation. One picture was very funny. It was that of a little girl of about five or six years old, in an old-fashioned dress, and her hair dressed in a very wiggish fashion, and apparently powdered. She occupied the center of the picture, and stood facing you, and on each hand a white rabbit was partly rearing up and looking at her, and under the three figures stood their names—Mary Mace, Mary Burton, and Mary Beecher. No doubt there was some story connected with them. I suppose Mary Mace and Mary Beecher were play-fellows of the little girl, and that she had called her two white rabbits after them.

Near this house, but on the opposite side of the green, or, rather, of this corner of the green, is the house of Major Leacroft. This is the house where Byron used to join in private theatricals. The family which he was acquainted with is gone; the proprietor dead; and this Major Leacroft is another sort of man, a wealthy recluse, and collector of pictures.

In going from one place to another, we went round by the Greet, the stream in which Byron used to bathe, and where he dived for a lady's thimble, which he took from her work-box and threw in. The Greet is a mere brook, and for the most part so shallow that a man would much sooner crack his skull in it than dive very deep, unless it were above the mill, where the water is dammed up, or just below the mill-wheel by the bridge, but that is too public, being in the high road. Such is Southwell, in Nottinghamshire, which will always be livingly associated with one of the happiest periods of the life of Lord Byron.

Harrow being so near the metropolis, will naturally draw many visitors, as another of the [Pg 555] happiest scenes of Byron's youthful life. Here he represents himself to have been eminently happy, and always looked back to this period of his youth with particular affection. The school-room where he studied, the tomb where he used to sit in the church-yard, and the spot where his natural daughter, Allegra, is buried, will always excite a lively interest. This tomb is still called by the boys at Harrow, "Byron's tomb," and its identity is very accurately fixed by himself in a letter to Mr. Murray, when giving direction for the interment of his daughter. "There is a spot in the churchyard, near the footpath, on the brow of the hill looking toward Windsor, and a tomb under a large tree, bearing the name of Peachie or Peachy, where I used to sit for hours and hours when a boy. This was my favorite spot; but as I wish to erect a tablet to her memory, the body had better be deposited in the church. Near the door, on the left hand as you enter, there is a monument, with a tablet containing these words:

'When Sorrow weeps o'er Virtue's sacred dust,
Our tears become us, and our grief is just:
Such were the tears she shed, who grateful pays
This last sad tribute of her love and praise.'

I recollect them after seventeen years, not from any thing remarkable in them, but because from my seat in the gallery I had generally my eyes toward that monument. As near as convenient I could wish Allegra to be buried, and on the wall a marble tablet placed, with these words:

In Memory of
Allegra,
Daughter of G. G. Lord Byron,
Who died at Bagna Cavallo,
In Italy, April 20th, 1822,
aged five years and three months.
'I shall go to her, but she shall not return to me.'

These are interesting landmarks to the visitor, who will find the path to the tomb beneath the large elm well tracked, and the view there over the far-stretching country such as well might draw the musing eyes of the young poet. Captain Medwin says he saw the name of Byron "carved at Harrow in three places, in very large characters—a presentiment of his future fame, or a pledge of his ambition to acquire it." The play-ground and cricket-ground will also be visited with equal interest. There we see in these a new and eager generation of fine lads at play, and then we have a lively idea of what Byron and his cotemporaries were at that time, now less than forty years ago. No one was a more thorough schoolboy, in all the enjoyment of play and youthful pranks, than Lord Byron, as he himself, in verses addressed to one of his school comrades, shows us, and as all his schoolfellows testify of him. [Pg 556]

"Yet when confinement's lingering hour was done,
Our sports, our studies, and our souls were one:
Together we impelled the flying ball,
Together waited in our tutor's hall;
Together joined in cricket's manly toil,
Or shared the produce of the river's spoil;
Or plunging from the green declining shore,
Our pliant limbs the buoyant waters bore:
In every element, unchanged, the same,
All, all that brothers should be, but the name."

But the whole of this poem, called Childish Recollections, published in the Hours of Idleness, is filled by the charms of recollected school delights at Harrow. Here his schoolfellows, among others, were Lord Clare, for whom, through life, he retained the warmest attachment, Lord Delaware, the Duke of Dorset, to whom he addressed one of his early poems, Colonel Wildman, who afterward purchased Newstead, Lord Jocelyn, the Rev. William Harness, &c. He says, "P. Hunter, Curson, Long, Tattersall, were my principal friends. Clare, Dorset, Colonel Gordon, De Bath, Claridge, and John Wingfield, were my juniors and favorites." Last, and not least, Sir Robert Peel was his cotemporary, and it is now with very odd feelings that we read the anecdote in Byron's life, that when a great fellow of a boy-tyrant, who claimed little Peel as a fag, was giving him a castigation, Byron came and proposed to share it. "While the stripes were succeeding each other, and poor Peel writhing under them, Byron saw and felt for the misery of his friend; and although he knew that he was not strong enough to fight ****** with any hope of success, and that it was dangerous even to approach him, he advanced to the scene of action, and with a blush of rage, tears in his eyes, and a voice trembling between terror and indignation, asked very humbly if ****** would be pleased to tell him 'how many stripes he meant to inflict.' 'Why,' returned the executioner, 'you little rascal, what is that to you?' 'Because, if you please,' said Byron, holding out his arm, 'I would take half.'" [Pg 557]

With Harrow, we take leave of the years of innocent boyhood. His removal to Cambridge, and his now long residences in London, led him into those dissipations and sensualities which continued to cast a sad foil on the greater part of his after life. To Cambridge he never appeared much attached, and rather *resided* there occasionally as a necessity for taking his degree than from any pleasure he had in the place. His rooms in Trinity College, Cambridge, are nearly the sole locality which will there attract the attention of the admirers of the poet, except the Commoners' hall, in which now the long tossed about statue of him by Thorwaldsen is about to be erected.

It was during his being a student of Cambridge that Newstead Abbey fell into his hands by the expiration of Lord Grey de Ruthyn's lease, and that he went thither, and repaired it to a certain extent, and furnished it at an expense far beyond his resources at the time. Here, with half a dozen of his fellow-collegians, among whom was the very clever and early-lost Charles Skinner Matthews, he spent a rackety time. He had got a set of monks' dresses from a masquerade warehouse in London, and in these they used to sit up all night, drinking and full of uproarious merriment. "Our hour of rising," says Mr. Matthews himself, "was one. It was frequently past two before the breakfast party broke up. Then, for the amusements of the morning, there was reading, fencing, single-stick, or shuttle-cock, in the great room; practicing with pistols in the hall; walking, riding, cricket, sailing on the lake, playing with the bear, or teasing the wolf. Between seven and eight we dined; and our evening lasted from that time till one, two, or three in the morning. The evening's diversions may easily be conceived. I must not omit the custom of handing round, after dinner, on the removal of the cloth, a human skull filled with Burgundy. After reveling on choice viands and the finest wines of France, we adjourned to tea, where we amused ourselves with reading or improving conversation, each according to his fancy; and after sandwiches, &c., retired to rest." [Pg 558]

It may well be imagined what a scandal this occasioned in the neighborhood. During this time there were still work-people employed in the repairs of the house; and I recollect a master-plasterer, who, at the same time, was doing work for my father a dozen miles off, relating, to our astonishment, the goings on of these gay roisterers. Byron himself says, that

"Where Superstition once had made her den,
Now Paphian girls were known to sing and smile."

And the person here referred to particularly mentioned one young damsel, dressed in boy's clothes, that Byron had there, no doubt the same who about the same time lived with him at

Brompton, and used to ride about on horseback with him at Brighton. Here, at this time, his dog Boatswain died, and had the well-known tomb raised for him in the garden where the poet himself proposed to lie. Here he employed himself with writing his scarifying English Bards and Scotch Reviewers, which appeared about the time that he came of age, and so amply avenged [Pg 559] him of the Edinburgh reviewers. Being, as he informs us, about ten thousand pounds in debt, he left his mother in possession of Newstead, and set out on his foreign tour. In two years he returned to England, not only triumphant, by the great popularity of his satire, over all his enemies, but having in his portfolio the first two cantos of his inimitable Childe Harold. From this moment he was the most celebrated man of his age, and that at the age of twenty-four. At one spring he ascended above Sir Walter Scott with all his well-earned honors. From the most solitary and friendless, because unconnected, man of his rank, living about town in clubs and lodgings, for his few college friends were scattered abroad in the world, he became at once the great lion of all circles. Lord Holland, Rogers, Moore, &c., were his friends. He was besieged on all sides by aristocratic blue-stockings and givers of great parties. His life was, for four or five years, that of the most perfect Circean intoxication of worship and dissipation; yet during this period he poured out the Giaour, the Bride of Abydos, the Corsair and Lara, poems of great vigor and beauty, and new in scene and spirit, but by no means reaching that height of poetical wealth and glory which he afterward mounted to. Then came his ill-starred marriage, and in one short year his utter and lasting separation from his wife. This unfortunate marriage, against which he was strenuously warned by his most experienced friends, became the blight of his whole life. To the last he persisted in protesting that he never knew the cause of his wife's withdrawal from him; but Lady Byron, in a paper addressed to his biographer since his decease, has assigned as the reason that she believed him insane, or, if not insane, not safe to live with. No wonder that his excitable temperament was lashed to a pitch of phrensy little short of madness, when such were his pecuniary embarrassments that, in the one year of his living with his wife, nine executions were [Pg 560] levied on his goods, his rank only saving him from a prison. It is easy to perceive the effect of this on the proud and sensitive mind of Lord Byron; and when the hand that should have soothed him was coolly withdrawn from him on the occasion, the finish was put to mortal endurance. Banished, as it were, by the abhorrence of his country—of that country which, from worshiping him, turned as suddenly to denounce him—believing that in the abandonment by a wife there must be some hideous cause, he went forth never to return.

The limits of this work will necessarily confine any minute account of the homes and haunts of our poets to those only which lie within the British isles; I shall, therefore, only summarily trace the progress of Byron's wanderings and abodes from this period; and before doing this, I will point out in a few lines the residences which he occupied during the five years of his London life. Before he went abroad, Gordon's Hotel, Durant's Hotel, both in Albemarle-street, and 8 St. James's-street, were his homes. On his return from his first tour, he took on a lease for seven years a suite of rooms in the Albany, of Lord Althorpe. The year of his married life was chiefly spent at 13 Piccadilly Terrace. The clubs which he frequented were the Alfred, the Cocoa Tree, Watier's, and the Union.

In his first tour he traversed Portugal, Spain, Greece, and Turkey, tracking his way in light by the composition of Childe Harold. Now, abandoned by the one heart that he had chosen to be his domestic stay and solace through life, assailed bitterly by that public which had so recently devoured with avidity his splendid poems, regarded as an infidel and a desperado, he went from the field of Waterloo across Belgium, along the Rhine, through Switzerland into Italy, which became his second country, retaining him till a few months before his death. Every step of his progress was illustrated by triumphs of genius still more brilliant than before. From the moment that at Waterloo he exclaimed

"Stop, for thy tread is on an empire's dust," [Pg 561]

till that in which he concludes with his sublime apostrophe to the Ocean, he advances from Alp to Alp in the regions of genius. Every one that traces the banks of the Rhine is made to feel what additional charms he has scattered along them; and how infinitely inferior are all, even the most enthusiastic and elaborate descriptions of its scenery from other pens.

"The castled crag of Drachenfels
  Frowns o'er the wild and winding Rhine,
Whose breast of waters broadly swells
  Beneath the banks which bear the vine,
And hills all rich with blossomed trees,
  And fields which promise corn and wine,
And scattered cities crowning these,
  Whose fair white walls along them shine.

"And peasant girls, with deep blue eyes,
  And hands which offer early flowers,
Walk smiling o'er this paradise;
  Above, the frequent feudal towers
Through green leaves lift their walls of gray,
  And many a rock which steeply lowers,
And noble arch in proud decay,
  Look o'er this vale of vintage bowers."

Volumes of description could not give you so vivid a feeling of the characteristic features of the Valley of the Rhine as these lines. And thus through the Alps, "The palaces of Nature," Byron advanced into Italy, the land of ancient art, heroic deeds, and elysian nature. At Geneva he fell in with Shelley for the first time, and henceforth these two great poets became friends. At Diodati, on the Lake of Geneva, he spent the autumn, then advanced to Italy, and took up his abode in Venice, where, in the Palace Mocenigo, on the Canal Grande, he lived till December, 1819, *i. e.*, about three years. His next remove was to Ravenna, where he had splendid apartments in the Guiccioli Palace. In the autumn of 1821 he quitted Ravenna, having resided there not two years, and took up his residence in the Lanfranchi Palace on the Arno, which he describes as large [Pg 562] enough for a garrison. In the autumn of 1822 he quitted Pisa for Genoa, having resided at Pisa a year. At Genoa he inhabited the Villa Saluzzo at Albaro, one of the suburbs of that city, where he continued to live till the July of 1823, not quite a year, when he set sail for Greece, where in a few months his existence terminated.

Of Lord Byron's abodes and modes of life we have some graphic glimpses in Moore's life, in Shelley's and Captain Medwin's notices. Every where he remained true to his schoolboy habits of riding on horseback, swimming, firing with pistols; to his love of bull and Newfoundland dogs. Moore describes his house in Venice as a damp-looking mansion, on a dismal canal. "As we groped our way after him," he says, "through the dark hall, he cried out, 'Keep clear of the dog;' and before we had proceeded many paces further, 'Take care, or that monkey will fly at you:' a curious proof of his fidelity to all the tastes of his youth, out of the sort of menagerie which visitors at Newstead had to encounter in their progress through his hall." Soon after he adds, "The door burst open, and at once we entered an apartment not only spacious and elegant, but wearing an aspect of comfort and habitableness which, to a traveler's eye, is as welcome as rare." Captain Medwin somewhere mentions meeting Lord Byron, traveling from one of his places of abode to another, with a train of carriages, monkeys, and whiskered servants, a strange procession; and Shelley, visiting him at Ravenna, says, "Lord Byron has here splendid apartments in the palace of his mistress's husband, who is one of the richest men in Italy. There are two monkeys, five cats, eight dogs, and ten horses, all of whom, except the horses, walk about the house like the masters of it. Tita, the Venetian, is here, and operates as my valet—a fine fellow, with a prodigious black beard, who has stabbed two or three people, and is the most good-natured fellow I ever saw."

Of his house at Pisa, Byron himself says: "I have got here a famous old feudal palazzo, on the [Pg 563] Arno, large enough for a garrison, with dungeons below and cells in the walls; and so full of *ghosts*, that the learned Fletcher, my valet, has begged leave to change his room, and then refused to occupy his *new* room because there were more ghosts there than in the other. It is quite true that there are most extraordinary noises, as in all old buildings, which have terrified the servants so as to incommode me extremely. There is one place where people were evidently *walled up*; for there is but one possible passage, broken through the wall, and then meant to be closed again upon the inmate. The house once belonged to the Lanfranchi family, the same mentioned by Ugolina in his dream, as his persecutor with Sismondi, and has had a fierce owner or two in its time."

The mode of spending his time appears by all accounts to have been pretty much the same every where. Rising about one o'clock at noon, taking a hasty breakfast, often standing. "At three or four," says the Guiccioli, "at Ravenna and Pisa, those who used to ride out with him agreed to call, and after a game at billiards they mounted and rode out." At the two latter places his resort was generally the forests adjoining the towns. At Ravenna, that forest rendered so famous by Dante and Boccaccio, especially for the story of the specter huntsman in the Decamerone; and at Pisa the old pine forest stretching down to the sea. Latterly he used to proceed to the outside of the city, to avoid the staring of the people, especially English people, then mounted his horse, and rode on at a great rate. In the forest they used to fire with pistols at a mark. The forest rides of Byron near Pisa and Ravenna will always be scenes visited with deep interest by Englishmen, and Shelley's description of themselves, the two great poets, in Julian and Maddalo, as they rode

[Pg 564]

"Upon the bank of land which breaks the flow
  Of Adria toward Venice, a bare strand
  Of hillocks, heaped from ever-shifting sand,
Matted with thistles and amphibious weeds,"

is one of everlasting value. Returning to dinner at six or seven, he conversed with his friends till midnight, and then sat down to write.

Thus we have traced this great and singular man from the mountains of the Scottish Highlands, where he roamed as a boy, from land to land, till he stood as a liberator on the shores of Greece, and was seen for a few months riding forth with his long train of Suliote guards, and then was at once lost to Greece and the world. In no short life was there ever more to applaud and to condemn, to wonder at and to deplore. From those hereditary and other causes which we have already noticed, the temperament of Byron was passionate to the excess; but this extreme sensibility, which was the food and foundation of his splendid genius, was at the same time the torture of his existence. Misunderstood where he ought to have been soothed with the deepest tenderness, attacked by the public where he should have been most closely sympathized with, he went forth, as it were, reckless of peace or of character. A series of adulterous connections darkened his glorious reputation, and served to justify in the eyes of the public the accusations of those who had goaded him to these very excesses. But spite of the censures of the world, and reproaches of his own conscience, the powers of his genius continually grew till they even forced

into the silence of astonishment the most heartless of his detractors. To say nothing of those grand and somber metaphysical dramas, Manfred, Cain, and the rest which he wrote in Italy, the poem alone of Childe Harold, ever ascending in magnificent strength, richness, and beauty, as it advanced, was sufficient to give him an immortality second to no other. The wide and superb field of its action—that of all the finest countries of Europe; the great events—those of the most [Pg 565] stirring and momentous age of the whole world; and the illustrious names which it wove into its living mass; the glorious remains of art, and the still more glorious features of nature in Italy and Greece, all combined to render Childe Harold the great poem of his own, and the favorite of every after age. Totally different as he was under different impressions, Childe Harold had the transcendent advantage of being the product of that mood which was inspired only by the contemplation of every object calculated to draw him away from the seductions of society, and the lower tones of his mind; the mood inspired by the most august objects of heaven and of earth —the midnight skies, the Alpine mountains, the sublimities of mighty rivers and oceans, the basking beauties of southern nature, and the crumbling but unrivaled works of man. Filled with all these images of nobility and greatness, he gave them back to his page with a tone so philosophically profound, with a music so thrilling, with a dignity so graceful and yet so tender, that nothing in poetry can be conceived more fascinating and perfect. Every thought is so clearly and fully developed, every image is so substantial and so strongly defined, and the very skepticism which here and there betrays itself comes forth so accompanied by a pensive, earnest, and intense longing after life, that it resembles the melancholy tone which pervades the book of Job, and some of the prophets, more than that of any other human, much less modern composition. We may safely assert that there are a hundred combining causes, in the subjects and the spirit of Childe Harold, to render it to every future age the most lovely and endearing gift from this. Don Juan, the reflex of Byron's ordinary, as this was of his solitary and higher life—his life alone with Nature and with God—has its wonderful and inimitable passages; but Childe Harold is one woven mass of beauty and intellectual gold from end to end.

In judging the errors of Lord Byron, there is one consideration calculated to disarm severity [Pg 566] perhaps more than all others. The excesses in which he had indulged were made by Providence the means of the severest punishment that could befall him. The cause of Greece aroused his spirit, at that period of life when life should have been in its prime, and a new scene of most glorious ambition was spread to him, that of adding to the unrivaled renown of the poet the still more grateful renown of becoming the savior of a country and a people, whom the triumphs of ancient art, science, liberty, and literature had made, as it were, kindred to the whole world. This august prospect was unveiled to him, and he rushed forward to secure it; but his constitution, sapped by vicious indulgence, gave way; the brilliant promise of new and loftiest glories was snatched from him; he sunk and perished. Reflecting on this, the hardest moralist could not desire a sadder retribution; and they who love rather to seek in the corrupt mass of humanity for the original germs of the divine nature, will turn with Mr. Moore to the fair side, and acquiesce most cordially in the concluding words of his biography. "It would not be in the power, indeed, of the most poetical friend to allege any thing more convincingly favorable of his character than is contained in the few simple facts, that, through life, with all his faults, he never lost a friend; that those about him in his youth, whether as companions, teachers, or servants, remained attached to him to the last; that the woman to whom he gave the love of his maturer years idolizes his name; and that, with a single unhappy exception, scarce an instance is to be found of any one once brought, however briefly, into relations of amity with him, that did not feel toward him a kind regard in life, and retain a fondness for his memory."

END OF VOL. I.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Vinegar.

[2] Ireland, when, in 1793, he collected his "Views on the Avon," was much struck with the likeness of this bust in Thomas Hart, one of this family who then lived in Shakspeare's house.

[3] Visits to Remarkable Places, vol. i., pp. 98-103.

[4] Matthew, xxv., 43-45.

[5] Such are Southey's words.

[6] Colloquies, vol. ii., p. 312.

[7] This word "lost," with a little l in the inscription.

[8] *Mercurius Rusticus.* London. 1638.

[9] Of a scene supposed to occur in this lumber-room, a beautiful mezzotint engraving has been just published by Mr. Mitchell, of Bristol, from a painting by Mr. Lewis, of that city.

[10] G. Cumberland, Esq., in Dix's Life.

[11] Grow.

[12] Water-flags.

[13] Freeze.

[14] Arose.

[15] Robe.

[16] Beggar.

[17] Grave.

[18] Ghastliness.

[19] A small round hat, not unlike the chapournette of heraldry, formerly worn by ecclesiastics and lawyers.—CHATTERTON.

[20] Coif.

[21] The sign of a horse-milliner was till lately, if not still to be seen, in Bristol.

[22] Crucifix.

[23] Begging friar.

[24] Short under cloak.

[25] Glory.

[26] Bishop Carpenter.

[27] Height.

[28] Horace Walpole's Letters, vol. ii., 1840.

[29] For an account of this extraordinary woman, see "The Visits to Remarkable Places," vol. i., p. 318.

[30] I am still, however, afraid that it is too true that the country people are not allowed to visit "Mary's Thorn," though held in such high honor by them. Not only the boards at the park gates, but other information, confirmed this fact; and my passing the house to the tree brought all the family to the window, servants as well as gentlemen, ladies, and children, and no few in number, as if some extraordinary circumstance had occurred.

[31] I must mention one fact regarding the neighborhood of Ayr. Never, sure, Wales not excepted, was there a country so infested with toll-bars. In going to Mauchline, twelve miles, including a slight divergence to take a view of Mount Oliphant, and thus going out of Ayr by one road and coming in by the other, I paid at nine bars, five of them sixpence each. At no one did they give you a ticket to another. New bars were, moreover, building! "How did you like the country?" asked my landlord, on my return. "Oh!" said I, "it is a most *barbarous* country." "Barbarous?" "Yes; there is nothing but *bars*. I must send Rebecca to you." "True," said he, "Rebecca never found any thing more abominable."

[32] In the center of the town is erected a granite statue of the late Duke of Gordon. Seeing a decent-looking man near it, I asked him if he could tell me who executed that figure. "Sir!" replied the honest Aberdonian, with unfeigned surprise, "he never was *executed* at all. It is the Duke of Gordon!"

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