

picture of social life for the half-century preceding her death, the volume has considerable worth, apart from the interest which her personal character excites. On the latter account, especially, we are grateful for the labor which Dean Trench has taken in rescuing these "Remains" from oblivion.

2. — *The Correspondence of LEIGH HUNT.* Edited by his Eldest Son. With a Portrait. London: Smith, Elder, & Co. 1862. 2 vols. Small 8vo. pp. viii. and 333, 331.

A READER of these volumes who should form his estimate of Leigh Hunt's character as a letter-writer from the first of them, would be likely to entertain a rather unfavorable view of the intellectual capacity of that pleasing essayist and poet. The earlier letters from Hunt's own pen, though composed in his usual "chatty" style, are singularly trivial and uninteresting, and scarcely reward any one for the time spent in their perusal, while many of those addressed to him will be read with a feeling of disappointment. But in the second volume the letters are much more entertaining, and among them are several very interesting and characteristic productions. It is, however, to be regretted that Mr. Thornton Hunt, the editor, had not bestowed more care on their proper arrangement and their elucidation by explanatory notes. Many of the letters are obviously misdated, and are printed without regard to the connection of subjects, and very few have been properly annotated. Among Hunt's correspondents were most of the English literary celebrities of the last half-century; and in one or the other volume are letters to or from Shelley and his wife, Talfourd, Lord Brougham, Barry Cornwall, Jeffrey, Landor, Lord Macaulay, and others. One of the most delightful is a joint letter from Robert Browning and his wife, dated Bagni di Lucca, October 6, 1857, from which we cannot deny ourselves the pleasure of quoting two passages. In the part written by the former we read:—

"I am still too near the production of *Aurora Leigh* to be quite able to see it all; my wife used to write it, and lay it down to hear our child spell, or when a visitor came, — it was thrust under the cushion then. At Paris, a year ago last March, she gave me the first six books to read; I having never seen a line before. She then wrote the rest, and transcribed them in London, where I read them also. I wish, in one sense, that I had written and she had read it."

In the part written by Mrs. Browning we find the following passage:—

"When we came here from Florence, a few months ago, to get repose and cheerfulness from the sight of the mountains, we said to ourselves that we

would speak to you at ease, — instead of which the word was taken from our own mouth, and we have done little but sit by sick-beds and meditate on gastric fevers. So disturbed we have been, — so sad ! our darling, precious child the last victim. To see him lying still on his golden curls, with cheeks too scarlet to suit the poor, patient eyes, looking so frightfully like an angel ! It was very hard. But this is over, I do thank God, and we are on the point of carrying our treasure back with us to Florence to-morrow, quite recovered, if a little thinner and weaker, and the young voice as merry as ever. You are aware that that child I am more proud of than twenty *Auroras*, even after Leigh Hunt has praised them. He is eight years old, has never been ‘*crammed*,’ but reads English, Italian, French, German, and plays the piano, — then, is the sweetest child ! sweeter than he looks. When he was ill, he said to me, ‘ You pet ! don’t be unhappy about *me*. Think it’s a boy in the street, and be a little sorry, but not unhappy.’ Who could not be unhappy, I wonder !”

Every reader will also be much interested in a correspondence with Lord Macaulay and Mr. Macvey Napier, editor of the Edinburgh Review, relative to Hunt’s contributions to that journal. One of these letters we must copy at length, with a word or two of explanation. In one of his letters to the editor Hunt proposed to write a “ short article,” if he could “ find a *chatty* subject,” which phrase alarmed Napier, and in his reply he took occasion to express surprise at Hunt’s too frequent use of colloquial and even “ vulgar ” expressions, and to criticise his style ; adding, however, that he should be glad to receive an article of ten or twelve pages, written “ in an amusing but gentlemanlike tone and style.” Hunt was much irritated at this, and at once applied to Macaulay to know what he should do about it. The answer is remarkable, both on account of its practical wisdom and its kindly spirit, and can scarcely be too highly commended in either respect.

“ Albany, 29th October, 1841.

“ MY DEAR SIR, — I do not wonder that you are hurt by Napier’s letter, but I think you a little misunderstood him. I am confident that he has not taken any part of your conduct ill, and equally confident that by the expression *gentlemanlike*, which certainly he might have spared, he meant not the smallest reflection either on your character or manners. I am certain that he means merely a literary criticism. His taste in composition is what would commonly be called classical, — not so catholic as mine, nor so tolerant of mannerisms which are produced by the various tempers and trainings of men, and which, within certain limits, are, in my judgment, agreeable. Napier would thoroughly appreciate the merit of a writer like Bolingbroke or Robertson ; but would, I think, be unpleasantly affected by the peculiarities of such a writer as Burton, Sterne, or Charles Lamb. He thinks your style too colloquial ; and, no doubt, it has a very colloquial character. I wish it to retain that character, which to me is exceedingly pleasant. But I think that the danger against which you have to guard is excess in that direction. Napier is the very man to be startled by the smallest excess in that direction.

Therefore I am not surprised that, when you proposed to send him a *chatty* article, he took fright, and recommended dignity and severity of style, and care to avoid what he calls vulgar expressions, such as *bit*. The question is purely one of taste. It has nothing to do with the morals or honor.

“As to the tone of Napier’s criticism, you must remember that his position with regard to the *Review*, and the habits of his life, are such that he cannot be expected to pick his words very nicely. He has superintended more than one great literary undertaking, — the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, for example. He has had to collect contributions from hundreds of men of letters, and has been answerable to the publishers and to the public for the whole. Of course he has been under the necessity of very frequently correcting, disapproving, and positively rejecting articles; and is now as little disturbed about such things as Sir Benjamin Brodie about performing a surgical operation. To my own personal knowledge, he has positively refused to accept papers even from so great a man as Lord Brougham. He only a few months ago received an article on foreign politics from an eminent diplomatist. The style was not to his taste; and he altered it to an extent which greatly irritated the author. Mr. Carlyle formerly wrote for the *Review*, — a man of talents, though, in my opinion, absurdly overpraised by some of his admirers. I believe, though I do not know, that he ceased to write because the oddities of his diction and his new words compounded *à la Teutonique* drew such strong remonstrances from Napier. I could mention other instances, but these are sufficient to show you what I mean. He is really a good, friendly, and honorable man. He wishes for your assistance, but he thinks your style too colloquial. He conceives that, as the editor of the *Review*, he ought to tell you what he thinks. And, having during many years been in the habit of speaking his whole mind on such matters almost weekly to all sorts of people, he expresses himself with more plainness than delicacy. I shall probably have occasion to write to him in a day or two. I will tell him that one or two of his phrases have hurt your feelings, and that, I think, he would have avoided them if he had taken time to consider.

“If you ask my advice, it is this. Tell him that some of his expressions have given you pain; but that you feel that you have no right to resent a mere difference of literary taste; that to attempt to unlearn a style already formed, and to acquire one completely different, would, as he must feel, be absurd, and that the result would be something intolerably stiff and unnatural; but that, as he thinks that a tone rather less colloquial would suit better with the general character of the *Review*, you will, without quitting the easy and familiar manner which is natural to you, avoid whatever even an unreasonably fastidious taste could regard as vulgarity. This is my honest advice. You may easily imagine how disagreeable it is to say anything about a difference between two persons for both of whom I entertain a sincere regard. Believe me, dear sir, yours very truly,

“T. B. MACAULAY.”

In reading these letters, one cannot help expressing a regret that Mr. Thornton Hunt has not been able to bring forward more of the same character, and that so large a part of his volumes is utterly worthless and uninteresting.