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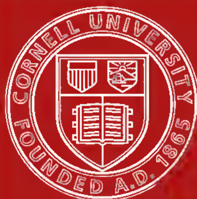

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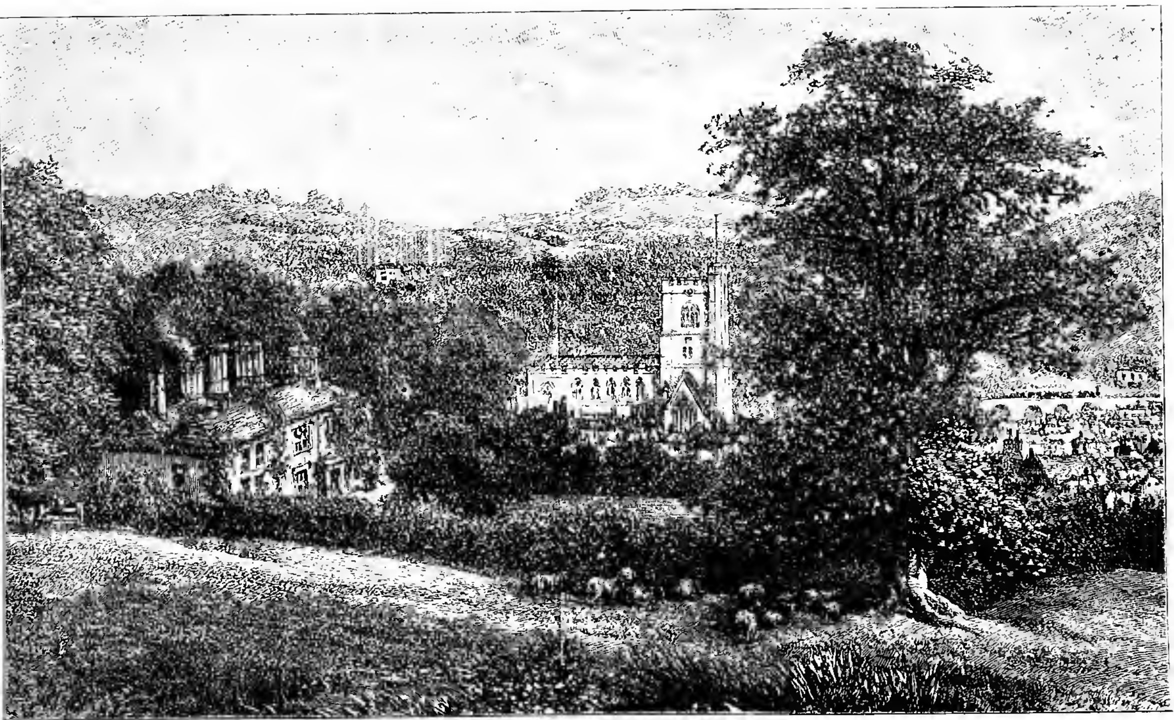

COWPER'S BIRTHPLACE, BERKHAMPSTEAD.

[Page 130.

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BY

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WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

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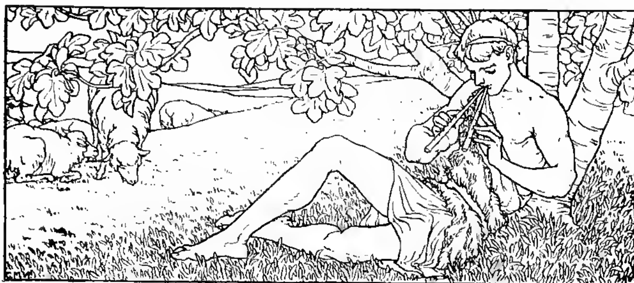

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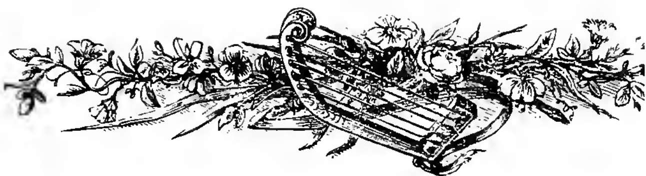

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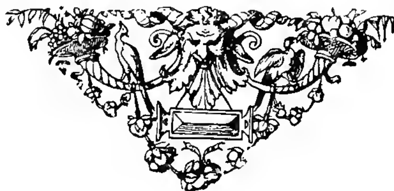


MILTON.

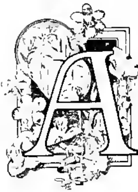
John Milton,

Born December 9, 1608; died November 8, 1674.

"O mighty-mouth'd inventor of harmonies,
O skill'd to sing of Time or Eternity
God-gifted organ-voice of England."

TENNYSON.

MILTON.



REMARKABLE difference between Shakespeare's life and Milton's lies in the fact that, while the materials for a topography of Shakespeare's life are so vague and scanty, those for a topography of Milton's are so exact and abundant. All that we can tell of Shakespeare's movements from place to place during the two-and-fifty years of his existence in the world is that he was born at Stratford-on-Avon in Warwickshire and spent his youth there or thereabouts, removed to London and resided there mainly for about twenty years, but returned to Stratford when he was a little over forty, spent his last years there, and died there. Respecting Milton, on the other hand, the records are so precise that we can tell, almost with certainty, and often with positive certainty, where he was, and what he was doing in

any particular month or week, or even occasionally on any particular day, that may be selected for inquiry out of the sixty-six years of *his* earthly existence. The difference depends partly on the difference of the external circumstances and settings of the two lives, and partly on the difference of the character and temperaments of the men themselves. No need here, however, to dwell on the causes of the difference. It is with the fact that we are concerned. In what follows we are to see how Milton may be tracked through his successive places of residence, or of more brief abode, from his youth to his death.

AT CAMBRIDGE.

1625—1632.

It was in February 1625, the month before the death of James I. and the accession of Charles I. to the throne, that Milton, till then resident in his father's house in Bread Street, Cheapside, in the very heart of Old London, went to Cambridge for the completion of his education; and he continued in residence there, save for runs up to London or other absences, for seven years and five months, bringing him from the seventeenth year of his age to the twenty-fourth.

The Miltonic associations left in Cambridge by those seven years and five months of Milton's student-life are numerous and important. Indeed, though Cambridge University has had the honour of having

educated a far larger number of the chief English poets than Oxford,—counting as she does among her *alumni* Chaucer presumably, and certainly Spenser, Marlowe, Milton, Cowley, Dryden, Gray, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, and Tennyson,—it is Milton among all these of whose student-life in Cambridge visitors to the town, or even the residents, are most forcibly reminded by still-preserved objects and traditions. The town, it is true, is much larger than it was between 1625 and 1632, when it may have numbered, townspeople and gownsmen together, about 10,000 inhabitants; but the aspects of the main streets, and of their appendages, have hardly altered. The Cam flows past, peacefully sluggish, now as then, with its netting of water-plants, and the "reed-beds" of which Milton speaks, though hardly with what, in an angry moment, he called its "sedge-swamps"; and the changing seasons pass over its banks, and over all the flat English scenery that stretches away from them, effecting the same alternations in the landscape now as then,—from its face in winter, when fields and meadows are white with the snow-crust, to the return of rich green spring and summer, with those wonderful May evenings in especial when all the tree-fringed country lanes about Cambridge are resonant, more plentifully than any other tract of English ground known to me, with the full-throated songs of nightingales. The sixteen Cambridge Colleges of Milton's time, with every one of which he must have been familiar both outside and inside, are

still extant, each with its extended history of the many years that have elapsed since he looked upon them, but each with its older history still bedded in its fabric and remembered. Above all, his own College of Christ's survives, and much as it was. "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all," said the historian Fuller of this particular College of the sixteen in his *History of the University of Cambridge*, published in 1655. This was said with reference to the "many divines," of excellence in Fuller's opinion, whom the College had recently bred, and not at all with reference to the fact that his contemporary, Mr. John Milton, had also belonged to the College. If the eulogy were to be repeated now, however, that fact would certainly come into the account. Not that all Cantabs would even then admit the historical supremacy among the Cambridge Colleges which the eulogy claims for Christ's, but only those who, choosing to make a great poet, rather than a great philosopher or a great mathematician, the representative genius of Cambridge all in all, should forget that Bacon and Newton were also Cambridge men, and that it is Trinity College that owns both of these.

At all events, whatever honour the possession of Milton does reflect upon Cambridge is best realised when we station him at Christ's. You may stand in the street now, and look at that College along its whole exterior front. You may enter the gateway and see the quadrangle and the cloisters where young

CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.
(Milton's rooms to the left of first doorway.)

Milton moved about in gown and cap among the scores of his fellow-collegians,—unpopular among them at first, as he himself tells us, because of his feminine appearance and fastidious tastes and morals, so that they nicknamed him "The Lady," and the rougher men among them would call out "*Domina!*" after him insultingly as he passed; but ere long respected and admired as the discovered supreme among them all, the leader in their Latin debates and declamations within the College, and the champion of their College when it was pitted in such things against the other Colleges on any great field-day in the public schools. You can see the hall and the chapel of Christ's where some of those ex-

hibitions took place; and, standing in the hall, you can imagine Milton, in his undergraduate days, seated somewhere at one of the lower dinner-tables with the other undergraduates,—the future satirist Cleveland and the Irish-born Edward King the two best-remembered of them,—while Dr. Thomas Bainbrigge, the master of the College, presided at the upper table, with Messrs. Chappell, Meade, Tovey, Sandilands, and the other fellows and dons at his right and left. But you can see more. They show you, up one of the staircases on the left of the quadrangle, the very rooms, consisting of a small sitting-room and a smaller bedroom, which Milton occupied,—not alone, however, but in partnership, as was then the fashion, with one or two chums,—during his undergraduateship, and possibly through the whole of his time at Christ's. It may add to your interest in inspecting them to know that it was in these rooms that Wordsworth, present at a festive party in them one night during his studentship at St. John's between 1786 and 1789, so far forgot himself in the excitement of drinking toasts to Milton's memory as to have got tipsy, he tells us, for the first and only time in his life. Further, in the grounds behind the College, they show you the gnarled, but still branching, remains of an old mulberry-tree, called now usually "Milton's Mulberry," from a fancy that Milton in particular must have often sat under it and eaten of its fruit.

Better, however, than any mulberry-tree, or any

remains of stone and lime, in authentication of Milton's seven years and five months of residence in Christ's and connection with Cambridge generally, are the relics from his own pen which those Cambridge years have left us. They distribute themselves into those

OLD MULBERRY-TREE IN THE GROUNDS OF CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

written in his undergraduateship between 1625 and 1629, and those written between his taking his B.A. degree in January 1629 and his admission to the full M.A. degree in July 1632. They consist of seven academic Latin prose-essays, four Latin familiar epistles, seventeen pieces of Latin verse in hexameters, elegiacs, and other metres, and, in English, eleven of

his minor poems, mostly short, but including his *Elegy on the Death of a Fair Infant*, his noble ode *On the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, and his *Epitaph on the Marchioness of Winchester*. They all breathe the atmosphere of Cambridge, some of them indeed having been expressly occasioned by incidents in the history of the University or of the town; and, together, they constitute a kind of autobiography of Milton through his Cambridge course. Among the most significant of them all for its autobiographical purport is the little piece to Shakespeare's memory. Is there even yet in our language a burst of Shakespeare-worship more absolutely satisfying in its enthusiasm, or more profoundly exact in its expression, than that which was penned by the young Cambridge scholar some day in 1630, only fourteen years after Shakespeare was dead, and when, had he been alive, he would have been but in the sixty-seventh year of his age?—

> "What needs my Shakespeare for his honoured bones
> The labour of an age in pilèd 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
> Hast built thyself a livelong monument;
> For whilst, to the shame of slow-endeavouring art,
> Thy easy numbers flow, and that each heart
> Hath from the leaves of thy unvalued book
> Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
> Then thou, our fancy of itself bereaving,

> Dost make *us* marble with too much conceiving,
> And so sepulchred in such pomp dost lie
> That kings for such a tomb would wish to die."

AT HORTON, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

1632—1638.

On leaving Cambridge, a fully-fledged M.A., Milton went to reside at Horton, a quiet country village in Buckinghamshire, about twenty miles from London and four from Windsor, to which his father, now approaching his seventieth year, had retired, with ample acquired means, for rest and leisure after the cares of his London business. To both father and mother it may have been somewhat of a disappointment to know that the son of whom they were so proud had by this time abandoned all thoughts of the Church or of any other profession; but their deference to him was boundless, and they acquiesced in what he himself proposed. This was that he should lead thenceforward, in his rustic seclusion with them, a purely intellectual life,—the life of a student and man of letters. Accordingly, through the five years and nine months from July 1632 to April 1638, or from Milton's twenty-fourth year to his thirtieth, we have to imagine him domiciled with his parents at Horton, with books in all languages for his steady occupation within doors, and music for his favourite recreation, but with walks or rides over the surrounding country for his habitual exercise, and sometimes a visit to London for a special purpose. It was the calmest

and most idyllic portion of his whole life, and is of especial interest in his literary history.

To the Horton time belong three of his preserved Latin letters, his fine Latin poem *Ad Patrem*, and, besides some more casual things in English verse, the exquisite companion poems *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*, the little fragment of a pastoral masque called *Arcades*, the larger and more perfect masque of *Comus*, and the beautiful pastoral monody of *Lycidas*,—this last a tribute to the memory of his former fellow-collegian at Christ's, Edward King, who had been drowned by shipwreck in the Irish Sea in August 1637. On account of these poems, and on Milton's account generally, a pilgrimage to Horton any summer's day is peculiarly worth while for any one who may have the opportunity. The village itself, indeed, is but a small straggling of houses amid trees at the meeting of three lazy cross-roads ; and the country round, though well wooded, is prevailingly flat, and in the sleepiest style of flat English verdure,—the slow and blackish Colne for its main stream, with pollards along its banks, and runnels of water from it and to it, minnows visible in them, at the sides of the roads and intersecting the meadows. It is vain to try, as some have done, to identify the scenery of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* with that of Horton. Nowhere in that neighbourhood is there even a suggestion of the "mountains" with "barren breast" and the "labouring clouds" resting upon them of the one poem, or of the "wide-watered" sea-shore required in the

BY THE THAMES, A MILE FROM HORTON.

ENTRANCE TO THE VILLAGE OF HORTON.

(*The gateway on the right leads to the modern house built on the site where the house of Milton's father stood.*)

other; and these and other incongruities suffice to show (what might have been inferred independently) that the scenery in both poems is eclectic and visionary,—scenery invented to suit the two contrasted moods of cheerfulness and melancholy. Still, as the poems were written at Horton, local influences may have crept in. The early morning scene in *L'Allegro,* where the cheerful youth walks out at dawn to hear the sky-lark high in the air, and the horns of the hunters out with their hounds, may have been from actual Horton experience, while almost certainly the " towers and battlements bosomed

high in tufted trees" in the same poem are a glimpse of Royal Windsor from the Horton vicinity. Similarly, the night scene in *Il Penseroso,* where the pensive youth, walking on and on over "the dry smooth-shaven green," watches the full moon pendent over a well-known oak, and sometimes "stooping through a fleecy cloud," may also be credited to Horton. Who knows, and what does it matter? The visitor to Horton, as he walks through the village, or anywhere round it, feels that, at all events, he is on the ground with which Milton's footsteps were familiar through more than five most interesting years of his youth and early manhood. That was the ground which once knew his figure and his voice, and sustained, and partly prompted, his daily musings. But the impression need not remain thus vague. It may be made keener by the sight of actual objects reminding one more definitely of Milton's residence in the place. The house in which he lived with his parents and his younger brother, and at the window of which "through the sweet-briar or the vine, or the twisted eglantine," one might fancy him, as in *L'Allegro,* bidding "good-morrow," on his return from those early morning walks of his, to the later-risen members of the family, is no longer extant. It was pulled down in 1798. They still, however, point out its site,—occupied now by a modern mansion, within a gateway, in the road through the village, and near the old parish church. And then that old parish church itself! It is a most venerable-looking piece of English ecclesiastical anti-

HORTON CHURCH.

quity, dating in the main from the thirteenth century, with walls still strong, a solid square tower, and a fine old Norman arch in the entrance porch. It stands just off the road; and in the cemetery which separates it from the road are two very old yew-trees. Between those yew-trees, and up the path through the cemetery leading to the porch, Milton must have walked on many Sundays, to attend service and listen to the discourses of Mr. Goodal, then rector of Horton Parish. Up the same path he must have walked,—he on one side of his aged father and his brother Christopher on the other,—at the head of the little procession of mourners, on that sad April day in 1637 when there was the funeral of his mother. She was buried within the church; on the chancel floor of which one may still see the plain blue stone that covers her grave, and read the inscription on it: "*Here lyeth the body of Sara Milton, the wife of John Milton, who died the* 3*rd of April* 1637." That plain blue stone, were there nothing else, would suffice to consecrate Horton.

Although the connexion of the Milton family with Horton was to last till 1640, Milton's own connexion with the place came to an end in April 1638. In that month, leaving his widowed father at Horton, with his younger brother Christopher, and that brother's newly-wedded wife, to take charge of the old gentleman and the household, he himself set out, with an English man-servant for his valet, on the

Continental tour on which his heart had long been fixed.

Passing through France and Paris, he spent about a year in Italy, chiefly in Florence, Rome, and Naples, and returned to England, by way of Geneva and Paris again, in August 1639, having been absent about sixteen months in all. The recollections of those sixteen months of his foreign travel, and especially of the Italian cities he had visited, and the eminent and interesting men he had met in them, and with some of whom he had formed friendships, were to abide with Milton through all his future life. Some of them are embalmed in the few pieces of Latin or Italian verse, written abroad, which he had brought home with him, or in autobiographical passages in his subsequent writings. While Rome and Naples dwelt strongly in his memory, Florence had won his affections most :—

> "O, how mighty was I, when, stretched by the stream of the Arno,
> Murmuring cool, and where the poplar-grove softens the herbage,
> Violets now I would pluck, and now the sprigs of the myrtle,
> Hearing Menalcas and Lycidas!"

The days of violets and myrtles were nearly over for Milton when he wrote these lines, though he did not yet foresee the fact. Harsher employment was in front of him than that of culling wild-flowers and listening to pastoral or other poetic ditties.

IN ALDERSGATE STREET, LONDON.

1640—1645.

After Milton's return from his Italian tour he hovered for a while between resumed residence with his father at Horton and a modest town-lodging in a tradesman's house in St. Bride's Churchyard, Fleet Street, *i.e.* as nearly as the locality can be now identified, in that part of the present Farringdon Street where it bends off from the foot of Fleet Street, and one is within sight of Ludgate Hill and St. Paul's. It was in the first weeks of this hovering between country and town that he wrote his *Epitaphium Damonis,* the most beautiful of all his Latin poems, and the most intense of them all in autobiographical interest, commemorating as it does his grief over the death, during his absenee abroad, of the half-Italian Charles Diodati, his bosom-friend since the days of their boyhood together at St. Paul's School. The experiment of mere lodgings in London, however, was but temporary. "He made no long stay in his lodgings in St. Bride's Churchyard," we are informed by his nephew Edward Phillips; "necessity of having a place to dispose his books in, and other goods fit for the furnishing of a good handsome house, hastening him to take one; and, accordingly, a pretty garden-house he took in Aldersgate Street, at the end of an entry, and therefore the fitter for his turn, besides that there are few streets in London more

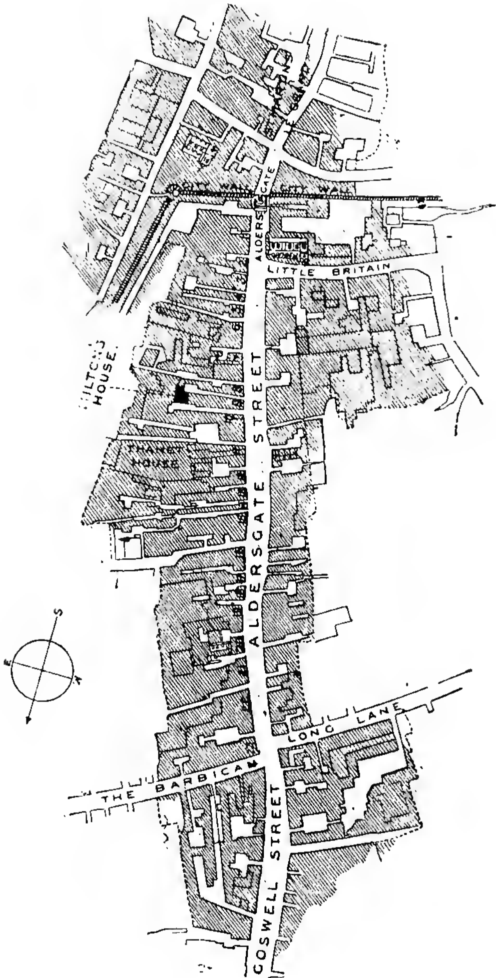
free from noise than that." The removal must have been early in 1640; from which date onwards till late in 1645 Milton, as tenant of the "pretty garden-house" in Aldersgate Street, was for the first time a London householder on his own account. One guesses that it was still his father that mainly supplied the means, though there may have been some contribution to the expenses by a family arrangement in another quarter. Milton's elder and only surviving sister, Anne Milton, who had married in 1624 a Mr. Edward Phillips, but had been left a widow by the death of this husband in 1631, had married for her second husband a certain highly respectable Mr. Thomas Agar; and the arrangement now was that her two young boys by the first marriage,—Edward Phillips, about ten years of age, and John Phillips, about nine,—should board with their uncle in the Aldersgate Street house for their education under him.

The Aldersgate Street of 1640 had the reputation of being one of the "genteelest" suburbs of London. Among Milton's neighbours in the street, or close to it, were several knights and official gentlemen of distinction; and two or three noblemen had their town mansions in the same suburb. All is woefully changed in the Aldersgate Street of the present day. No longer a suburb "free from noise," it is a dingy thoroughfare of roaring traffic, leading from the core of London, at the General Post Office in St. Martin's-le-Grand, northwards to Goswell Street, and so,

through that continuation, to further still populous densities of street and road about Islington and beyond. Although one or two antique houses survive in the present Aldersgate Street, they are welded now into the continuous frontage of shops, warehouses, distillery-yards, &c., on both sides, through which the traffic passes; and the open garden-spaces that were once behind on both sides have long disappeared, built over now with blocks of poor tenements that seem jammed together anyhow, and are accessible only by labyrinths of alleys. Not a vestige of Milton's "pretty garden-house," of course, is to be looked for now among these labyrinths, and the only question is whether the site of the house can be identified in the present range of the longish street. I believe that this can be done.

Let the reader look first at the sketch on page 36 of old Aldersgate Street as a whole, constructed mainly from the map of Aldersgate Street Ward given in Strype's enlarged edition of *Stow's London*, published in 1720, but with reference to a facsimile reprint of the older large-scale map of London in 1658, engraved by Faithorne, and edited by Newcourt. Between these two maps one ought to be able to re-imagine Aldersgate Street very much as it was when Milton was a householder in it.

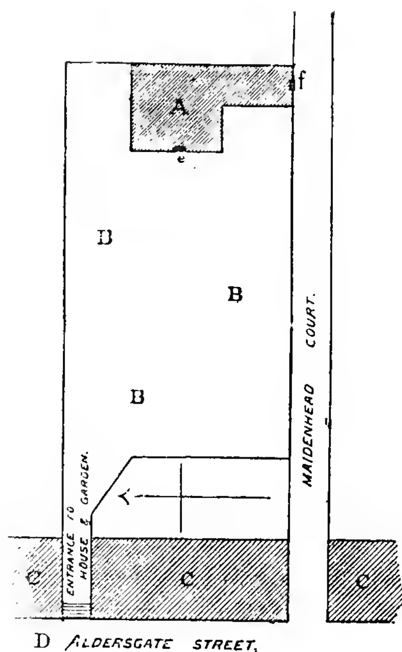
A peculiarity of the street, it will be seen (or hardly a peculiarity, inasmuch as it was a feature common to many of the streets of Old London), was the number of little breaks in it by the courts which it sent off


ALDERSGATE STREET
GOSWELL STREET
LITTLE BRITAIN
LONG LANE
THE BARBICAN
CITY WALL
CITY WALL
ALDERSGATE
THANET HOUSE

on both sides. The names of most of those courts are still preserved, or were preserved till very recently. We need concern ourselves only with the succession of the courts on the east side, *i.e.* on one's right hand in walking from St. Martin's-le-Grand. First on that side, just after one had entered the street by Aldersgate, was a pretty extensive court, called Castle Inn Court, from the name of the inn to which it led; next on the same side was a little court called Cook's Hall Court; next, another little court called Greyhound Court; after which, in succession, still on the same side of the street, came Cock and Bottle Court, Bell Alley, Golden Lion Court, Rose and Rainbow Court, Nettleton Court, and Maidenhead Court. Just beyond Maidenhead Court one came to an arched passage by steps through one of the houses of the main street, leading to a longish inner court, left nameless in Strype's map, but known since the end of the last century as Shaftesbury Place. Then came White Hart Inn Court; and then an interruption in the shape of Thanet House, the fine mansion of the Earls of Thanet, standing within its own grounds, but with one of its faces to the street, and several accesses to it *from* the street. This passed, and also two more courts, called Angel Alley and Horn Alley, you came to Jewin Street, the single opening out of Aldersgate Street on the east side of consequence enough to be named a "street." Crossing Jewin Street, you had still six or seven more courts to note in the rest of Aldersgate Street on the same side,—

Cradle Court, Crown Court, Hare Court, &c.,—before you came to the broader cross street called Barbican, marking the actual termination of Aldersgate Street on that side, as Long Lane did on the other.

Altogether there were, and perhaps still are, more than twenty courts, alleys, or passages, larger or smaller, out of Aldersgate Street on the right hand from its commencement at St. Martin's-le-Grand to its termination at Barbican. Now, as Milton's house was "at the end of an entry," one or other of those still existing, or recently existing, courts or alleys must have been the "entry" in question if the house was on that side of Aldersgate Street. But the house *was* on that side of Aldersgate Street, and the tradition of its whereabouts on that side of the street survived in the neighbourhood till within recent memory. From a communication with which I was favoured in 1871 by a correspondent whose recollections of the neighbourhood, and family connexions with it, extended back to between 1810 and 1820, I am able to say that the undisputed local tradition then was that the house which Milton had occupied and the garden attached to it were in that particular oblong at the back of Aldersgate Street which lies between Maidenhead Court (marked 9 in the map) and what is now Shaftesbury Place (marked 10), and that, while the main entry to the garden and house from Aldersgate Street was by the passage leading to what is now Shaftesbury Place, there was also a door from the house into Maidenhead Court



itself. The above ground-plan, adapted from one sent me by my informant of 1871, will make the description clearer. *A* is Milton's house, secluded in the south-east corner of the oblong; the space *B*, *B*, *B*, now choked up by three parallel rows or blocks of crowded tenements, was the garden belonging to the house; *C*, *C*, *C* represents the line of houses fronting Aldersgate Street and shutting in the garden-space behind from the view of that thoroughfare; *D* marks the arched passage or "entry" through one of these

which was the main access from Aldersgate Street to Milton's garden and house ; *e* is the probable position of the main door of Milton's house ; and *f* marks the side exit from Milton's house into Maidenhead Court.

My informant's recollection of the house itself was that it was substantially built of "wood and brick" ; but I have seen an independent and later account of it, describing the walls as of "lath plastered with clay and straw." Either description of the house in its comparatively decayed condition in the present century would suggest that Phillips's description of it during his uncle's tenancy of it from 1640 to 1645, when Phillips himself lived with him in it, was perfectly accurate. By the standard of that time the "pretty garden-house" at the end of an entry from Aldersgate Street must have been reputed "a good handsome house," fit in every way for a gentleman-scholar and his collection of books. Phillips's stress on the phrase "at the end of an entry" may imply that the access to the house with which he was most familiar in his boyhood, and which he recollected best, was the long one by Maidenhead Court. The court, however, does not seem to have been so named in Milton's time. An older name for it, I learn, and probably the name in Milton's time, was Lamb Alley.

The reason for being so circumstantial as to the site and appearance of this one of Milton's many residences is that the five years, or five years and a

half, which he spent in it, bringing him from the thirty-second to the thirty-seventh year of his age, were about the most momentous in his whole life. Here it was that, abandoning or postponing the poetic schemes and dreamings with which he had returned from Italy, he plunged into politics, and became a public polemic and pamphleteer. Here it was that, in 1641, when the great Revolution in the British Islands which had been initiated by the Scottish Covenant of 1638 had communicated itself to England, and the English Long Parliament had been engaged for some time in its immense work of "making thunders and lightnings," there were written in succession those five tremendous anti-Episcopal pamphlets of Milton by which he constituted himself the champion-in-chief of the "Root-and-Branch party" of Church Reform, advocating the entire abolition of Prelacy in the English Church, and the substitution of a new national Church framed somewhat after the Scottish Presbyterian model. Here it was that, when the strife of mere Parliamentary debate had been exchanged for the strife of actual civil war, and the unfurling of the King's standard at Nottingham in August 1642 had been the signal for the division of the whole population of England into the two opposed factions of Royalists and Parliamentarians, Milton threw in his lot avowedly with the Parliamentarians. It was in the house in Aldersgate Street that he sat on that Saturday, the 12th of November 1642, famous in the annals of London, when it was known

that the King's army had come within seven or eight miles of the city, and there was a universal panic among the Londoners in the expectation of an immediate attack, the tramp of Prince Rupert's cavalry in among them, the sack and pillage of their houses, and some massacre of revenge. What was he doing in the house that day? Writing a sonnet to be nailed or pasted up on the door of the house (door *e*?) in case things should come to the worst—

> "Captain or Colonel, or Knight in arms,
> Whose chance on these defenceless doors may seize,
> If deed of honour 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 deeds as these."

The whole sonnet is worth reading at this point. Whether written in calm seriousness, or in a freak of grim humour, it might not have been very efficacious if one of Prince Rupert's captains *had* led a sacking party up either entry from Aldersgate Street: but fortunately its efficacy was never tried. A march of the London Trained Bands and Volunteers to Turnham Green warded off the threatened assault; the King's army wheeled back northwards; and London was saved.

Not till seven months later have we another glimpse of the interior of the Aldersgate Street house; and it is of a very different character. It was in June 1643 that there was that extraordinary flutter of silks and

muslins in the house which was caused by the return of Milton from a brief holiday in the country, bringing with him his young bride, Mary Powell, and a bevy of her sisters and bridesmaids. The two boy-nephews, who had known nothing of their uncle's purpose in his holiday-jaunt, were greatly surprised by the incident, and by the "feasting held for some days in celebration of the nuptials"; and the surprise was more general when it came to be known that the bride was of a strongly Royalist family, living close to the King's headquarters at Oxford, and that Milton had actually fetched her from that focus of Royalism. But the wonder was not yet over. The bevy of sisters and bridesmaids having departed, the young wife had not been much more than a month without them when, accustomed as she had been to "a great house and much company and jollity," she found the "philosophical life" she was leading with her husband in the Aldersgate Street house very dull and irksome. Would he give her leave to have a few more weeks with her family in their Oxfordshire home of Forest-hill before settling down definitely to the duties of her new home in London? To this request, sent from the family, but contrived apparently by herself, Milton yielded—and with very unfortunate result. When the time for her promised return came, not only did she not return, but the correspondence on the subject ended with an insulting message from Forest-hill to the effect that she would never return. The King having about this time had some successes

in the war, the Powells had begun to "repent them of having matched the eldest daughter of the family to a person so contrary to them in opinion"; and Mrs. Powell, the mother, a very resolute woman, had taken the matter into her own hands.

Thus deserted in July or August 1643, Milton lived on in the Aldersgate Street house for two years more, adjusting himself to his new circumstances as well as he could. Hardly had his wife gone when the house received a new inmate in the person of his aged father. On the breaking up of the Horton household in 1640, the old gentleman had gone to reside at Reading with his younger son Christopher, then just called to the bar and in some local employment there on the King's side; but, having been driven from Reading by the stress of the war in that neighbourhood, he had now come to reside permanently with his elder son in London. As about the same time there was some accession to the number of Milton's pupils, in consequence of applications from friends for the admission of their sons as day-scholars to the privilege of sharing the lessons he was giving to his two nephews, the house was by no means empty. Nor was Milton's sole occupation in it that of teaching his pupils. It was here that, without any open reference to his own case, but converting his own case into a reason for re-questioning one of the fundamental institutions of English law, he penned in succession, between August 1643 and March 1645, his four terrible Divorce pamphlets, the essential doc-

trine of which was that the mutual incompatibility of any two married persons from any irremovable cause whatsoever ought to entitle either or both to divorce and to liberty to marry again. Into this special series of pamphlets on the Divorce subject there were interjected in 1644 two others,—one the small *Tract on Education*, addressed to Samuel Hartlib, the other the immortal *Areopagitica, or Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*, addressed to the Parliament.

The effects of the six new Aldersgate Street pamphlets on Milton's reputation, especially of the Divorce pamphlets, were immediate and disastrous. If he had been unpopular already with many on account of his Anti-Episcopal pamphlets, he was now an object of execration for the orthodox of all denominations. The Westminster Assembly of Divines being then in session, with some Scottish divines in it, and a Scottish auxiliary army having come into England to assist the English Parliamentarian army against the King, and to forward that endeavour after a uniformity of religion and of Church-government to which both nations were pledged by the Solemn League and Covenant enacted between them in September 1643, the ascendancy of Presbyterianism in England seemed secure. The only question now in debate was whether the Presbyterian system to be set up in England should be the absolute Presbyterianism, with no toleration of anything else and with unlimited powers of discipline against sectaries and heretics, for which the Scots and the Presbyterians generally con-

tended, or whether there should be some amount of liberty, outside the Presbyterian Establishment, for dissenters and nonconformists. The Presbyterians longed to make an example of Milton, pointing to him publicly as a heretic and sectary of the most abominable sort, and a choice specimen of the excesses to which the principle of toleration would lead ; and few even among the Independents,—of whom there were five or six in the Westminster Assembly, with a growing number in the community at large,—would have extended the toleration for which they argued so energetically to such an extreme case as Milton's. Was not his Divorce speculation more than a religious heresy ; was it not a moral heresy, sapping the very foundations of human society ? In fact this was what was said almost universally round about him in London. He was denounced in pulpits, attacked in pamphlets, complained of to Parliament itself ; he found himself, to use his own striking expression, "in a world of disesteem." One consequence was that he snapped his connexion with the Presbyterians for ever, favouring rather the Independents thenceforward, though really going beyond the mass of the Independents too, and ranking himself consciously with the Sectaries and Free Opinionists. Henceforward he was in the mood of his famous line—

"New *Presbyter* is but old *Priest* writ large."

IN BARBICAN.

1645—1647.

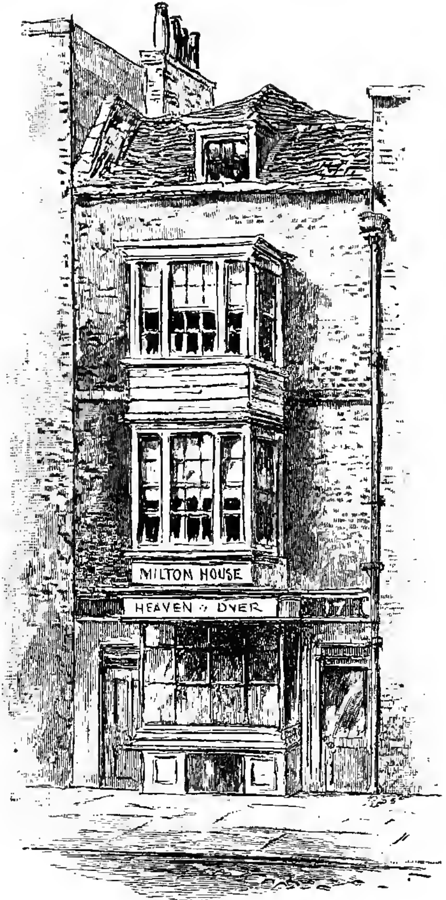
Three or four months before the close of 1645 Milton's personal interest in his Divorce speculation had ceased. The King's cause having been shattered by the Battle of Naseby, the Powells, whose fortunes had already suffered and were at a low ebb, had found it advisable to send back their daughter to her husband as a suppliant for reconciliation. This having been accorded in an interview furtively arranged, she resumed her place in Milton's household. Not, however, it would appear, in the house in Aldersgate Street. That house being no longer roomy enough for all the pupils that offered themselves, a larger house had been taken close by in Barbican. Turn the corner out of Aldersgate into Barbican in our previous cut, and a little way down Barbican you will be at the spot.

Barbican (so-called, according to Stow, "because sometime there stood in the north side thereof a *burgh-kenin* or watch-tower of the city, called in some language *a barbican*") was a very superior suburban street of London in Milton's time, as were most of the streets in the Aldersgate Street neighbourhood. The Earl of Bridgewater, remembered as the Earl of Milton's *Comus*, had his town house in this street; and there were other inhabitants of rank and distinction. Milton's house in the street must

have been one of the best in it after these more aristocratic residences; and it survived all the inevitable changes and deteriorations of the street through the next two centuries, and was visible in a tolerably complete state, as No. 17 Barbican, a brick house with bay windows, and with similar houses to the right and left of it, to as late as 1865. It was then occupied by a dyer of the peculiar name of "Heaven," and was marked for demolition in the interest of an extension of one of the city railways which had been projected and was then in progress. The annexed cut, taken from the *Illustrated London News* of 16th July, 1864, represents the house exactly as it then looked, and as I remember it. The frontage may seem narrow; but the accommodation swelled out considerably at the back, where, it was recollected, there had, till as late as about 1825, been a large open garden-space, containing some fine trees.

Modify this sketch back for the deterioration imaginable in the course of two centuries, and you will have an idea of the once large and handsome house in Barbican which was known as Mr. Milton's private academy for young gentlemen. He may have had about a score of such for day-scholars in it, with perhaps a boarder or two besides his nephews; for, though still "in a world of disesteem" with the orthodox, he had many ardent and trustful admirers in the circle of those who really knew him. The two years he spent in the house at Barbican, at all events,

were his busiest in teaching-work. In the shape of literary occupation during those years there is nothing more to record than that, just at the time of his entering the house, he published, or allowed a bookseller to publish, the tiny volume of his collected poems in English and Latin, original copies of which now fetch such a high price, and that to three English sonnets written in Aldersgate Street and included in that collection he added in the Barbican house five more sonnets and a scrap or two of Latin verse.



MILTON'S HOUSE, BARBICAN.
(As it existed in 1864.)

The two years in the Barbican house, however, were not destitute of incidents of another kind. There, in July 1646, his first child, a daughter named Anne, was born. There, when the surrender of Oxford to the Parliament had virtually ended the First Civil War, and had dispossessed the Powell family from their Forest-hill home, their affairs in sad confusion, and with further penalties for delinquency hanging over them, it was with their son-in-law Milton that Mr. and Mrs. Powell, and some of their children, sought and found refuge. They had lived with him some months when, on the 1st of January 1647, Mr. Powell died. In March of the same year there was the funeral from the same house in Barbican of Milton's own father, after he had lived to be eighty-three or eighty-four years of age. Meanwhile the First Civil War had actually ended, and long and futile negotiation had been going on with the King, first at Newcastle, in his captive condition there with the auxiliary Scottish army, and then, after that army had withdrawn into Scotland in January 1647, in his less strict, but still effective, captivity in the English midlands. Intermingled with these negotiations, and vitally affecting them, was the continued controversy between the Presbyterians and the Independents, assuming every day more and more ominously the form of the final question whether it should be the Parliament, mainly Presbyterian as it was, that should conduct the negotiations and dictate the terms of restoration to his prostrate Majesty, or

whether the mastery, in this matter as in others, should not belong to the army, now mainly an army of Independents and Sectaries, and with Cromwell for its head.

IN LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS, HOLBORN.

1647—1649.

In September 1647, Milton having had enough of the drudgery of schoolmastering, and desiring more time for himself, there was a removal from the large house in Barbican, and out of the Aldersgate Street neighbourhood altogether. It was to a smallish house in that part of Holborn which bordered, and still borders, the spacious area of Lincoln's Inn Fields. All that we know further of the house is that it was one of several that then opened at the back into this area. He remained about eighteen months in the house; and they are about the obscurest portion of his life. He was busy, we are told, over three great prose-compilations which he had projected and had made some progress in already. One was the collection of materials for a Latin Dictionary; another was the compilation in Latin of a System of Divinity drawn directly from the Bible; and the third was the compilation in English of a General History of Great Britain. In the way of poetic product we have nothing from him during the eighteen months but a few scraps of Psalm-translation and a single English sonnet. The sonnet, however,

is one of historical mark. In November 1647 the King had escaped to the Isle of Wight. Pursued thither by the Parliamentarian leaders and agents, and confined in Carisbrooke Castle, he was again in an imbroglio of negotiations from which there seemed to be no outlet, when he clutched desperately at an offered chance of relief. The Scots had been negotiating with him separately; and before January 1648 there had been a secret treaty between him and the Scots, by which, in return for his consent to recognise Presbytery as the established form of Church-government in England, and to suppress the Independents and the Sectaries, they undertook to send an invading army into England for the renewal of the Civil War in his interest and his restoration to kingly power. In May 1648, when the news of this secret treaty had got about, the Civil War *was* renewed by Royalist risings in various parts of England; and in July the invading Scottish army *was* within England, and on its march southwards, under the Duke of Hamilton. This Second Civil War, as it is called, lasted, however, but about three months. Hamilton's invading Scottish army was routed disastrously by Cromwell in the three days' Battle of Preston, August 17—19; and on the 28th of the same month Colchester, where the English Royalists of the South had cooped themselves up, was taken, after six weeks of siege, by Fairfax. Milton's sonnet, written in September 1648, was in the form of an address of congratulation to Fairfax

on this closing feat of the Civil War. But there was fresh rousing for Milton in the events that followed. The army being now supreme, Cromwell and the other army-chiefs had made up their minds what was next to be done, and took their measures accordingly. The Parliament having been shaped to their liking by the ejection from it of the Presbyterians and other resisting elements, Charles was brought from the Isle of Wight for his public trial by a Court of High Commission; and, on the 30th of January 1649, he was beheaded in front of Whitehall. Kingship and the House of Peers were then declared defunct; and England became a Republic, to be governed by the Residue or Rump of the Commons House, with a Council of State of forty-one members of that house, to be annually elected, as Ministry and Executive. It was just at this moment, *i.e.* on the 13th of February 1649, that Milton sent forth from his house in Holborn a pamphlet on which he had been engaged while the King was on his trial. It bore the portentous title: *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates: proving that it is lawful, and hath been held so through all ages, for any who have the power, to call to account a Tyrant or Wicked King, and, after due conviction, to depose and put him to death, if the ordinary Magistrate have neglected or denied to do it.* It was, in fact, a daring defence of the Regicide in all its circumstances, and the first manifesto by an English citizen of adhesion to the new Republic. The consequence was natural enough. In March 1649,

Milton, then in his forty-first year, was offered, and accepted, the appointment of Latin Secretary, or Secretary for Foreign Tongues, to the new Commonwealth Government. His salary was to be £288 13s. 6d. a year, worth about or somewhat over £1,000 a year now. The appointment necessarily involved another change of residence.

IN OFFICIAL RESIDENCE AT WHITEHALL.

1649—1652.

For the first few months after Milton's appointment to the Foreign Secretaryship to the Commonwealth and its Council of State, he lived in lodgings "at one Thomson's, next door to the Bull Head Tavern at Charing Cross, opening into the Spring Garden." You pass the spot on your right hand as you round the corner at Charing Cross towards the Horse Guards and Whitehall. As soon as possible, however, he crossed from the Spring Garden side of the street to the other, and took possession of official rooms which had been provided for him in Whitehall itself. All that now remains of Old Whitehall is the Banqueting House, designed by Inigo Jones and finished in 1622, out of one of the windows of which King Charles had stept to the scaffold; and one has to consult old engravings to be able to re-imagine the extent of the original Palace on both sides of that recently erected portion. It was a long straggle of buildings, with courts, galleries, gardens, &c., occupy-

ing, for its front towards St. James's Park, all the ground between Scotland Yard and Canon Row, but with intricate detachments backward to the Thames, and uniting there in a reverse and imposing river-front. At the time with which we are concerned the whole had been converted into a range of governmen, offices, with chambers of residence for the more important officials, and suites of apartments for the families of such chiefs of the Council of State and the Parliament as required or desired that accommodation. The rooms assigned to Milton were in a building at the Scotland Yard end of the long range, famous afterwards as the central station of the London Police. For the better furnishing of the rooms, there was voted to him, after a while, the use of some of the curtains and other hangings which had belonged to the late King.

To write the history of that portion of Milton's secretaryship which connects itself with his residence at Whitehall would be little less than to write the history of the first three years of the English Commonwealth. Suffice it here to note rapidly the chief personal associations of Milton with the people at Whitehall and the ongoings there during those three years. It must have been now, and probably in Derby House, Canon Row, where the Council of State was holding its meetings when Milton entered on the duties of his secretaryship, that he first shook hands with Cromwell. In July 1649,—by which time the place of meeting had been transferred to Whitehall

itself,—the great soldier was off for his command-in-chief in Ireland and the recovery of that island to English rule after her eight years of rebellion ; from which service he did not return to London till May 1650, and then only for a month in preparation for his next service. The scene of that next service was Scotland, where young Charles II., brought over from his exile on the Continent, had been proclaimed King of the Scots, after having satisfied them by swearing to Presbyterianism and the Covenants, and whence they threatened an invasion of England for the suppression of the Commonwealth and the extension of his sovereignty into that realm. While Cromwell was thus absent, the management of the ordinary affairs of the Commonwealth was in the hands of those colleagues of his whom he had left in the Parliament and the Council of State in Westminster; and it was among these that Milton moved about. It was necessarily with the members of the Council of State that he was thrown into the closest relations. There were partial changes in the composition of the Council from year to year ; but among the more permanent members were President Bradshaw, Fairfax, Sir Harry Vane, St. John, Hasilrig, Whitlocke, Ludlow, Fleetwood, and Sir Gilbert Pickering. With these, and with a score or two more of the Commonwealth politicians, Milton must have become personally familiar in the exercise of his secretaryship. While the acting official for the main business of the Council of State was Mr. Walter Frost, their general

secretary, Milton had to attend the Council whenever any foreign business engaged them, translating for them any foreign documents that came, and receiving instructions from them for the letters of reply or the independent despatches to foreign princes and states which he was to draft in Latin. It was also part of his duty to be present at interviews with ambassadors or envoys arriving from abroad, and to receive and interrogate other foreigners on behalf of the Council. For the first year or so of his secretaryship, it is true, these proper duties of his post did not tax him much,—foreign princes and states then regarding the new English Republic with alarm and horror, and fighting shy of all avoidable dealings with it. Gradually, however, they were compelled to change their tactics, and Milton had more and more work in the shape of foreign correspondence. But, even when this kind of work was at its slackest, the Council found him plenty of other occupation. He was their recognised factotum for all such services of a literary kind as were required by the Commonwealth, or at all events for all such services as were of especial importance. It was by direct commission from the Council that he wrote, besides a number of minor things, three of his best-remembered pamphlets. First, in May 1649, came his *Observations on Ormond's Articles of Peace with the Irish Rebels.* Next, in October 1649, came his *Eikonoklastes,* or counterblast to the famous *Eikon Basilike* that had been put forth, just after the execution of Charles, as the royal

martyr's own dying testimony to his subjects, and had been in circulation among the Royalists, with raptures of admiring belief in its genuineness, in tens of thousands of copies. Then, in April 1651, after many months of laborious preparation, came the prodigious Latin *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano,* intended to be read over all Europe as the reply of the English People and Commonwealth to the vilification of them that had been published, at the expense of Charles II., by the great Leyden scholar, Salmasius. This last, by which Milton, as the conqueror of the great Salmasius, became at once a European celebrity, was certainly written in his official residence at the Scotland Yard end of Whitehall. Nor did his literary services to the Commonwealth cease with that performance. A fact not generally known is that through the whole year 1651 Milton, living in that residence, was the editor of a London newspaper. Through that whole year he was the licenser, and therefore the superintending and responsible editor, of the government newspaper called *Mercurius Politicus,* with Marchamont Needham under him as sub-editor. Not only did he license through that year every number of the paper as it appeared; but his own hand, I believe, may be traced throughout the year in the more important of the leading articles. One leading article, I feel sure, must have been wholly his. The occasion was worthy of his pen. Cromwell, victorious in Scotland by his great Battle of Dunbar, fought on the 3rd of September 1650, had been in possession since then of

Edinburgh and of the whole of the southern Scottish shires, and was groping his way towards Stirling in order to crush the relics of the Scottish army encircling Charles II. there, when Charles and the Scottish forces gave him the slip by suddenly decamping from Stirling, pushing themselves southwards to the Border, and marching into England. Cromwell, leaving Monk in charge of Scotland, marched after them; and on the 3rd of September 1651, the anniversary of his victory at Dunbar, there was his still more momentous victory at Worcester, shattering the combined forces of the Scots and the English Royalists who had joined them, and trampling out, as it seemed, the cause of the Stuarts for ever. Milton's leading article in the *Mercurius Politcus* was a pæan of religious fervour and exultation over this great Battle of Worcester. It appeared in the number for September 4—11; and the Londoners were still reading it when Cromwell was back among them, hailed with shouts of acclamation as the hero and saviour of the Commonwealth. From the 16th of September onwards his portly figure was to be seen once more about Whitehall, and Mr. Secretary Milton had new opportunities of studying him and becoming acquainted with him. The result, in May 1652, was this ever-famous sonnet:—

> "Cromwell, our chief of men, who through a cloud
> Not of war only, but detractions rude,
> Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
> To peace and truth thy glorious way hast ploughed,

> And on the neck of crownèd Fortune proud
> Hast reared God's trophies and His work pursued:
> While Darwen stream, with blood of Scots imbrued,
> And Dunbar field, resounds thy praises loud,
> And Worcester's laureate wreath: yet much remains
> To conquer still; Peace hath her victories,
> No less renowned than War."

IN PETTY FRANCE, WESTMINSTER.
1652—1660.

When the Sonnet to Cromwell was written, Milton was no longer resident in Whitehall. His health, never robust, had been giving way, and his eyesight, weak for a good many years past, had of late been failing more rapidly and alarmingly; and, whether on this account, or because, after Cromwell's return and resumed residence in the part of Whitehall called "The Cockpit," it became necessary to dislodge some of the occupants of the rest of the Whitehall range of buildings, the official rooms in Scotland Yard had been left, early in 1652, for a more private dwelling-house in the neighbourhood. It is described as "a pretty garden-house in Petty France, Westminster, next door to the Lord Scudamore's, and opening into St. James's Park." The skirt of St. James's Park once known as "Petty France" is now "York Street," —the change of name dating from the early part of the eighteenth century, when an Archbishop of York set up his town-house in the street. Go, therefore, into the present York Street, Westminster; and at a spot on the right hand of that now mean-looking street, if you have entered it by its Queen-Anne-

Square end, you will be where Milton's house stood, with Lord Scudamore's next to it. The entrance to the house, as to the other houses in the row, was from the street; but at the backs of the houses there were gardens leading straight into the Park. In fact, the chief windows of the houses being at those backs, and looking over the gardens into the Park, and the access to the Park being by doors from the gardens, the houses may be said to have been *in* the Park, or to have had their superior front towards the Park. The better to realise this, go round to the Park, and stand in that part of Birdcage Walk which is now lined by Wellington Barracks. Imagine those barracks removed, and you will see whereabouts the gardens of Milton's house and Lord Scudamore's came down into the Park.

Milton occupied the house in Petty France for no less than eight years. The associations of the house with his biography through those years are very memorable. Here it was that, about the middle of 1652, when the house had hardly become familiar to him, there fell upon him the calamity of his complete and incurable blindness. His Sonnet to Cromwell of May 1652 and his Sonnet to Vane in July of the same year mark between them the exact date of that calamity, and must have been dictated to an amanuensis. His blindness, however, by no means put an end to his Foreign Secretaryship, but only altered the conditions of it. Mr. Walter Frost having died and been succeeded in the main secretaryship by

Thurloe, and a subordinate having been brought into Thurloe's office for routine portions of the work that had belonged to Milton, it was still Milton himself that was the responsible Foreign Secretary. Led across the Park to Whitehall to attend any Council meeting when foreign business was on hand, or receiving in his house in Petty France instructions from Thurloe as to what was wanted, he continued to draft, although now by the method of dictation, all the chief Latin despatches to foreign powers. So through the whole of 1652, when the Fourth Council of State held office; and so for the Fifth Council of State, till April 1653, when that Council of State was dissolved by Cromwell, along with the Rump Parliament itself, and Cromwell, as Lord General of the Commonwealth, assumed the Dictatorship. Not even then were the services of the blind man dispensed with. Approving as he did of Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump, he retained the secretaryship through the rest of 1653, doing some work for Cromwell's military council and for Cromwell's Assembly of Notables, called afterwards "The Barebones Parliament"; and, after Cromwell's Dictatorship had been converted, in December 1653, into his formal Protectorate, it was still the blind Milton, though now with an assistant ranking almost as his colleague, that Cromwell depended upon for all foreign despatches of special importance. Vanquished Scotland having by this time been incorporated with the Commonwealth, the series of those Latin despatches of Milton's drafting

for Cromwell figure thenceforth as Cromwell's own, by bearing his now semi-royal signature, "OLIVERIUS, ANGLIÆ, SCOTIÆ, HIBERNIÆ, &c., PROTECTOR."

An incident in the house in Petty France just about the time when this series began was the death of Milton's wife, leaving him, in his forty-fifth year, a widower with three young daughters, the oldest not eight years of age, the youngest an infant. With these little ones pattering about the house in the charge of a servant, we see the blind man struggling on through three years of widowerhood, mostly in solitude, though visited by admiring foreigners and other friends, and summoned now and then to Whitehall for a colloquy with the Protector. His occupations through those three years were various enough. Besides the dictation of the state-letters required from him by the Protector,—most famous among which are those of 1655 in which Oliver rolled over Europe his detestation of the massacre of the Vaudois Protestants, and his resolution, if necessary, to let the avenging thunders of an English fleet be heard in the Mediterranean,—one notes, as marking the same years, the publication of his Latin *Pro Populo Anglicano Defensio Secunda*, containing his splendid panegyric on Cromwell, the publication of its sequel entitled *Joannis Miltoni Angli pro Se Defensio contra Alexandrum Morum*, and the dictation of five more of his Sonnets and of some of his Latin Familiar Epistles. In November 1656 he married his second wife, Catherine Woodcock; and in February 1658, after

she had been in the house in Petty France with him for but fifteen months, he was again a widower by the death of this wife also,—the "late espoused saint" of the last of all his Sonnets. In the same year, 1658, there is reason to believe, he began in earnest the dictation of his *Paradise Lost,* thus reverting at last to the great subject on which he had projected a poem as early as 1640, before he had been whirled into the turmoil of prose-polemics. That fact also is to be remembered as one of the distinctions of the house in Petty France.

Milton can have made but small progress in the poem when his leisure was again interrupted. On the 3rd of September 1658 Cromwell died; then followed the brief Protectorate of his son Richard; and, after Richard's abdication in April 1659, the Commonwealth entered on that year of anarchy and agony, caused by the struggle for supremacy between the pure Republicans of the Restored Rump Parliament and the surviving Cromwellians or Army-chiefs, from which there was no possible issue save by voting the continuance of the Commonwealth in any form to be hopeless, and restoring the Stuart kingship.

Through this miserable time the polemical spirit was again so roused in Milton that he spoke startlingly to his countrymen several times out of his blindness. In 1659, while still officiating a little in the Foreign Secretaryship, but conjoined now in that post with Andrew Marvell, he sent forth two English pamphlets, expounding and advocating a doctrine

which had been the chief, if not the sole, ground of difference in politics between him and the late Protector. While Cromwell, on assuming the Protectorate, had made up his mind that the sustentation of a State-Church, with toleration of dissent from it, was a national necessity, and it was he in fact that had conserved Church Establishment in England, Milton had adopted most strenuously the opposite theory of Absolute Religious Voluntaryism; and, now that Cromwell was dead, and there was a better chance of a hearing for this theory in the ferment of miscellaneous Republican scheming and experimentation that had followed, the two pamphlets were for that object. Any interest they had was soon absorbed in a more enormous question. The drift towards a recall of the Stuarts had become more and more obvious; and Milton, dismissed from his secretaryship in the end of 1659, and more and more aware of that drift by the rumours that reached him, could think of nothing else. His last exertions in the Petty France house were for the aversion of the dreaded catastrophe. His exertions were in various forms, but chiefly in the form of his pamphlet entitled *Ready and Easy Way to establish a Free Commonwealth*, propounding a means by which the Republic might yet be preserved, and vehemently prophesying to his countrymen the consequences of a restoration of the Stuarts. The pamphlet was published in March 1660; and there was a second edition of it in April, more vehement than the first. All in vain.

Monk, who had come from Scotland to steer the London confusion, though with no distinct preconception then in what direction it was to be steered, had obtained all the light necessary; communications had been opened with Charles II. in Holland; on the 1st of May 1660 the Commonwealth was declared at an end; on the 25th Charles landed at Dover; and on the 29th he was in London, accepted as sovereign, and amid tumults of enthusiastic welcome. Meanwhile all the chief Commonwealth men, and especially all who had been in any way concerned with the trial and execution of Charles I., were fugitives hither and thither for their lives, those of them happiest who had escaped beyond the bounds of Britain altogether, whether to the Continent or to America. Blind Milton was fugitive with the rest. They had taken him out of his house in Petty France, and concealed him in a friend's house in Bartholomew Close.

It is surely matter for regret that a house in which Milton had thus lived for eight years, and which he had invested during those eight years with so many interesting associations, no longer exists. It might easily have been preserved; for it existed entire till about seventeen years ago, known then as No. 19, York Street, Westminster, and familiar to all the neighbours as "Milton's House." There had, of course, by that time been a degradation of the character and look of the whole street from the lightsome elegance for which it must have been reputed among

the Westminster people of the days when it bore the name of Petty France ; and the house that was Milton's had suffered with the rest. But the degeneracy had been gradual, and as far back as the beginning of the present century the house must have been still of some respectability. It was then the property of Jeremy Bentham, whose own town residence was in the immediately adjacent Queen Anne Square ; and in 1810 Bentham made a present of the tenancy of it to his friend and disciple, James Mill. Actually for some months in that year the Mill family lived in it, and John Stuart Mill, then a child of four years, must have toddled about its rooms. The Mills having left it because they found it unhealthy, it received in the following year another distinguished tenant in William Hazlitt. He lived in it for some years, paying rent to Bentham, and having a quarrel with that philosopher eventually on account of an alteration affecting the convenience of the house. Proud of being its proprietor, Bentham had caused a tablet to be set up high on its back wall bearing the inscription, "SACRED TO MILTON, PRINCE OF POETS." This had been done apparently before Hazlitt's tenancy of the house, and it was not to this that Hazlitt objected, but to an encroachment on the back-garden made in or about 1813. Bentham, Mill, and some associates of theirs having about this time formed themselves into a propagandist brotherhood called *The Chrestomathic School,* it was thought desirable that the members of the brotherhood should have a

piece of garden ground on which to meet and hold peripatetic consultations, and Bentham not only offered the garden of his own house in Queen Anne Square for the purpose, but enlarged that garden by annexing to it the garden of Milton's house. This he did by building a high wall across what had been Milton's garden, so as to leave no garden at all at the back of the house, but only a small bit of stone-flagged area. In this docked condition, and with the further deteriorations of aspect inevitable in a crowded and decaying London neighbourhood in the course of another half century, the house remained till 1866, when I first became acquainted with it. It was difficult to realise that what one then saw as No. 19, York Street, Westminster,—the lower portion turned into a poor shop, and the upper floors let out to separate poor tenants,—could ever have been the pretty garden-house next door to Lord Scudamore's which Milton inhabited, or could have been thought suitable a hundred and fifty years afterwards for men in the circumstances of James Mill and Hazlitt. One noted, however, that the front towards York Street was hardly in its original state; and the total impression was considerably improved when, entering by a small door at the side of the shop and ascending a dark and narrow staircase, one came to the upper apartments. The chief room in the first floor in particular (which must have been the chief room of the house in Milton's time) was a large enough and still rather handsome room to the back, looking over

MILTON'S HOUSE IN PETTY FRANCE.

Bentham's brutal wall to the other obstructions beyond it, Wellington Barracks the last and most recent of them, intervening between the house and St. James's Park. Over Bentham's wall hung the top branches of a cotton-willow tree, which may have

been a relic from Milton's garden, and was said, of course, to have been of Milton's planting. The impression gained in antiqueness when, descending the stairs again, one stepped out into the small bit of stone-flagged area which Bentham's wall had left attached to the house at the back. There, by craning the neck and looking up, one could see Bentham's tablet to Milton; and, observing the general appearance of the house on that side,—the back from modern York Street, but once the true front towards the Park,—one could be pretty sure that there had been no essential or structural change there since Milton's time. What one saw was a three-storeyed old house of red brick, narrowish but still neat, and each storey sufficiently windowed.

For ten years more the house still remained extant. My last inspection of it was, I think, in 1875. Next year, in spite of some remonstrances, with suggestions of a form in which it might have been preserved, it went down under the pickaxe. The huge pile of modern buildings known as the Queen Anne Mansions, and let out as residences, flat above flat, at great rents, for families of rank and fashion and very wealthy bachelors, had then been erected close to the house; and a projected extension of this pile over the ground occupied by the house was too profitable a speculation to be stopped by sentimental or historical considerations. Milton's house was demolished utterly; and all that one can do now, standing in York Street, is to imagine the ghost of its fabric as built irrecover-

ably somehow into the last-raised portion of the huge Queen Anne Mansions.

IN JEWIN STREET.

1661—1664.

How it happened that Milton, a prominent official of the Commonwealth Government, the most notorious defender of the trial and execution of Charles I., the most ferocious pamphleteer to the last against the recall of the Stuarts, escaped at the Restoration from the vengeance that fell upon most of the chiefs of the Commonwealth and upon all the Regicides within reach, is too intricate a story to be told here. Enough to say that, though he was specially named for prosecution and punishment, and though some of his most offensive pamphlets were burnt by the hands of the hangman, he did, by very dexterous management in his behalf, escape with life and liberty. In August or September 1660, having left the friend's house in Bartholomew Close, Smithfield, where he had been in hiding for four or five months, he did not return to his house in Westminster, but quartered himself in some much more obscure house which had been taken for him in the part of Holborn where there is now Red Lion Square. Here, hardly venturing to go out, he passed those later months of 1660 during which there were the hangings and quarterings of so many of the condemned Regicides, recently his associates. Possibly he remained in the same house till as late as the 30th of January 1661, when, to mark that anni-

versary of the death of the Royal Martyr, there was the additional Restoration horror of the digging up of the dead bodies of Oliver Cromwell, Bradshaw, and Ireton, and the gibbeting of them at Tyburn. But the thoroughfare of Holborn was too dangerous for the abode of a blind man who knew himself to be now an object of execration with the London mob, and indeed to be hardly yet quite safe from the Restoration authorities. He had actually been taken into custody for a while on some pretext or other, his privilege by the Indemnity Act notwithstanding, and had been released only on the payment of heavy fees. On all grounds a removal to some quieter part of London than Holborn was desirable. Accordingly, early in 1661, he was back once more in his old Aldersgate Street neighbourhood. The house into which he went was one in Jewin Street—already described as the first turn of the dimensions of a real "street" out of Aldersgate Street on the right hand as you walk from St. Martin's-le-Grand. On referring to the map on page 36 it will be seen as a short cross street, intermediate between Milton's former garden-house in Aldersgate Street, and that of his later and larger house in Barbican.

As Jewin Street was a newish street in Milton's days, it is possible that the house which he entered in 1661, and which he was to inhabit for about three years, bringing him from the fifty-third year of his age to the fifty-sixth, still exists somewhere in the present Jewin Street. The difficulty of identification

in such cases arises from the fact that, even in such a great city as London, it was not till about the middle of the eighteenth century that the practice of numbering houses in streets came into use. Till then the occasional letters and parcels intended for private persons living in any particular street reached them easily enough if addressed by the mere name of the street, while for people carrying on any kind of business there was the obvious device—now surviving only for hostelries—of distinguishing their houses and shops by sign-boards. Tenacious local tradition, as we have seen, has triumphed over this difficulty by keeping in memory the exact spots of some of Milton's London residences; but in the case of the Jewin Street house we have no such help. Somewhere in that short street we know it to have been; but of what size or shape it was, or even on which side of the street it stood, one inquires in vain.

With allowance for that defect we have the means of imagining, vividly enough, the years of Milton's life which the house enclosed. Now and here it was that, an outcast from the Restoration world of men and things, and thought of throughout that world, and especially among the courtiers of Charles II., so far as he was thought of at all, only as the infamous blind man who had served the Republic, blasphemed Charles I., and been Oliver's secretary, and whom it had been an overstretch of mercy to leave unhanged, he found himself, as he tells us,

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those who are familiar with specimens of his peculiarly neat and strong handwriting in his youth and early manhood,—as to the shocking state of manual helplessness to which he had been reduced by the eleven intermediate years of his absolute disuse of the pen, and by the stiffening of his fingers all that while from the effects of confirmed and painful gout. In looking at it, one can see that the alleviation even of this particular form of his helplessness must count for something among the various benefits which Elizabeth Minshull brought into his household. Not only were the daughters brought under better control by their young step-mother, though resenting her introduction into the house, and not only was there greater comfort generally in the domestic management, but there was now at hand a competent reader for Milton independently of the daughters, and a competent amanuensis also for his ordinary dictations. But, in fact, whether before the marriage or after, Milton's requirements for help for his readings and dictations were largely supplied by other services than the inmates of the house in Jewin Street could themselves render. Though he describes his condition after the Restoration as having been one mainly of "solitude," one is not to suppose that all his former friends had forsaken him. On the contrary, we learn that not a few of them, Andrew Marvell for one, were still faithful, and visited him now and then with undiminished admiration and respect. Then, his two nephews, Edward and John Phillips, both of them now making

their living by literature in combination with schoolmastering or private tutorship, dropped in occasionally to assist him in whatever might be going on. All round Jewin Street, too, there were families whose religious and political principles accorded with Milton's, and who thought of him, with all the more reverence on that account, as the resident celebrity of their neighbourhood, the great gentleman-scholar now in eclipse. From among these families there were never wanting young men who were glad to volunteer as readers or amanuenses for Mr. Milton for an hour or two every day as often as he wanted them. There was even a competition for the privilege of such service, so that a succession of young men had to share it by turns.

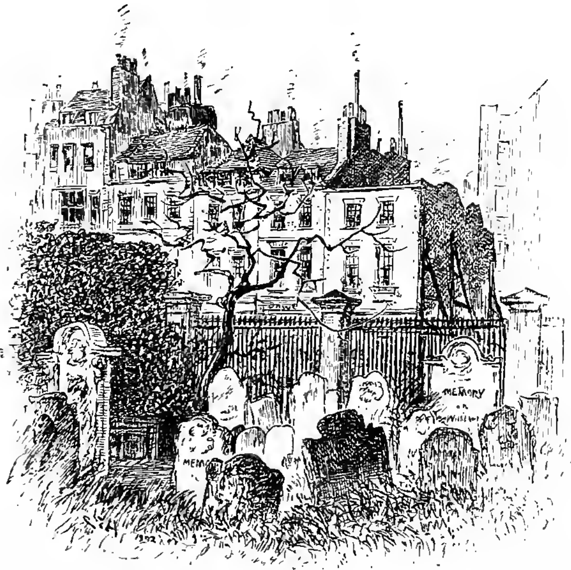
What were the employments of the blind man for which so much help was needed? The answer to that question completes our view of Milton in Jewin Street. There, as before, his blindness notwithstanding, he was surrounded with books, and his commerce with books was incessant. Hence the necessity of readers, and even of a staff of readers. But the readings and consultations of books, though in part for mere miscellaneous pastime and recreation, were not wholly of that kind. A large proportion of them were for the specific purposes of the two great literary labours of his own which he had brought with him into Jewin Street, and in which he had been persevering there indefatigably. One was his Latin System of Divinity, compiled directly and entirely from

the Bible, though with reference, for agreement or for refutation, to the works of commentators. The other,—and it is for this that some recollection of the unascertained house in Jewin Street ought to be imperishable in the history of English literature,—was the continuation of his *Paradise Lost.* Begun, as we have seen, in 1658, in the house in Petty France, but little more than begun there, the poem was resumed in 1661 in Jewin Street, and was carried on so effectively there, by the method of the mental composition of pieces of from twenty to forty lines at a time, and dictations of these pieces to whatever amanuensis chanced to be available, that within a year from the date of Milton's third marriage, as I calculate, or say about the spring of 1664, the first seven or eight books of the text as we now have it were safe in manuscript.

IN ARTILLERY WALK, BUNHILL.
1664—1665.

The honour of the completion of *Paradise Lost* does not belong to the house in Jewin Street, but to another house, to which Milton, with his wife and daughters, removed early in 1664, if not late in 1663. It is described by his nephew as having been "in Artillery Walk, leading to Bunhill Fields," and by another contemporary as having been "in Bunhill, opposite the Artillery Garden wall"; and the two designations mean the same thing. The removal was to no great distance, for it kept Milton still

within the same parish of St. Giles, Cripplegate, in which his Jewin Street house was included ; but it took him into a part of the parish somewhat aside from that street and from the whole of the Alders-



SOME OLD HOUSES IN BUNHILL ROW, OVERLOOKING THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER OF BUNHILL FIELDS BURIAL GROUND.

(*Artillery Walk was to the left.*)

gate Street purlieu which he had hitherto favoured, and more in contact with the open country north of London.

Bunhill or Bunhill Fields was then the name for a large space of vacant ground or park, with trees and windmills on it, biting into the built London on that

skirt, and connecting itself with a similar but narrower vacancy farther inwards called Moorfields. Since 1622 the portion of Bunhill Fields nearest Moorfields had been walled in, under the name of the "Artillery Ground" or "Artillery Garden," to serve as an exercise-ground for the London trained bands and other soldiery; after which the name of Bunhill Fields had been reserved more particularly for the unenclosed space left beyond the Artillery Ground. The subduction, however, hardly affected the airiness of the situation of Milton's house. Though not directly opposite the "Fields," it was in a lane leading to the "Fields" along the wall of the Artillery Ground, and called therefore "Artillery Walk." It was, in fact, one of a single row of small houses looking over the wall into the spacious Artillery Ground, and having small gardens of their own behind. Let any one go now from the present Jewin Street to the nearly adjacent street called Chiswell Street, and then turn out of Chiswell Street into what is still called Bunhill Row; and a little way up this Bunhill Row on the left hand he will pass the site of Milton's house in what was once "Artillery Walk." No longer now, however, at that point will he see the wall of the Artillery Ground which Milton's house and the others in the old "Walk" overlooked. The Artillery Ground still exists, but it is shut out from the view of the present dense row of houses forming the left side of Bunhill Row by an equally dense row of houses that has arisen on the right or

opposite side, converting the once single-rowed and semi-rural "Walk" into a double-rowed and populous street. Behind the concealing houses on the right hand of Bunhill Row is still the old Artillery Ground; and access to it is easy enough for those who may inquire after it. Indeed, it is hardly the quest of the site of Milton's house that now brings visitors into that remote London neighbourhood, but partly the celebrity of this old Artillery Ground in the annals of London, and partly the celebrity of another piece of ground of later enclosure close by. While much of the open space that once lay beyond the Artillery Garden, still retaining its old name of "Bunhill Fields," has been covered irredeemably by the brick and mortar of the ever-outstretching maze of London streets in that direction, a portion of it has been preserved in what is now known as "Bunhill Fields Burial Ground." Not when Milton began his residence in Artillery Walk, but while he was resident in it, this portion of the Fields, just at the end of the Artillery Walk and of the Artillery Garden, was bricked in to serve as a burial-ground for Dissenters of those numerous sects who objected to the burial service of the Church of England, and were, on that and other accounts, under the ban of the Restoration powers. It continued to be used for the purpose, and is sacred now as containing the tombs or graves of the Independent divines Dr. Thomas Goodwin and Dr. John Owen, the Baptist John Bunyan, the Quaker George Fox, Daniel Defoe, Dr. Isaac Watts, and other

eminent Nonconformists. Although this distinction of the neighbourhood was not foreseen by Milton, it is to be remembered in connexion with the fact of his residence in Bunhill from 1663 or 1664 onwards.

Having planted him in this residence, we need at present note only that one great association of his life with it which consists in the fact that here certainly, before July 1665, or within the first eighteen months, or at most two years, of his tenancy of the house, he had concluded the dictation of his *Paradise Lost*. For, precisely at this point, there was a break in his residence in the house near Bunhill Fields, and we have to follow him thence for a while to another place of residence, out of London altogether.

Since April 1665 the Plague had been in London, its ravages tending every week towards that fearful rate of mortality which causes the year between that April and the next to be remembered with such ghastly definiteness in the annals of London as "the year of the Great Plague." People who could afford to leave the plague-smitten city were fleeing from it in thousands, and dispersing themselves, for safety, into all parts of the country. So from all quarters of the city; but there was a special reason for flight from the quarter where Milton had his abode. The rate of mortality having begun to exceed the possible means of burying the dead individually, "plague-pits," as they were called, had to be opened in several suburban spots, into which corpses could be thrown

MILTON'S COTTAGE, CHALFONT-ST.-GILES.

collectively and indiscriminately; and one of the places chosen for these "plague-pits" was Bunhill Fields,—the first hint and origin, in fact, of the subsequent appropriation of a larger space of the same vacant ground to be the regular cemetery for Dissenters. Whether urged by the vicinity of this special horror or not, Milton was one of the thousands whom the Plague drove from London. He had asked a young Quaker pupil and admirer of his, named Thomas Ellwood, who had made his acquaintance in Jewin Street, and who was now living in Buckinghamshire, to find a cottage somewhere for him in that county; and, Ellwood having accordingly taken "a pretty box" for him in the village of Chalfont-St.-Giles, there was a hasty removal of the Milton family thither. The date, as I reckon, must have been in or about July 1665.

AT CHALFONT-ST.-GILES.

July 1665—March 1666.

Chalfont-St.-Giles is a small and very secluded village in the south of Buckinghamshire, about five miles from Amersham and four from the now famous Beaconsfield. It is thirteen miles farther north in the county than Milton's former residence at Horton, and is distant from London about twenty-three miles in all. Coming upon it by the usual route from London *viâ* Rickmansworth, you descend steeply into a quiet and sleepy hollow, containing a straggling street of old houses, with an old inn or two among them, and the

old parish church just off on the left hand; and, having gone through this street, you ascend again till the village and the hollow end, and you are once more on an elevated country road. The "pretty box" which Ellwood had taken for Milton was a cottage on the left hand exactly at the terminus of the village on this its upward slope out of the hollow.

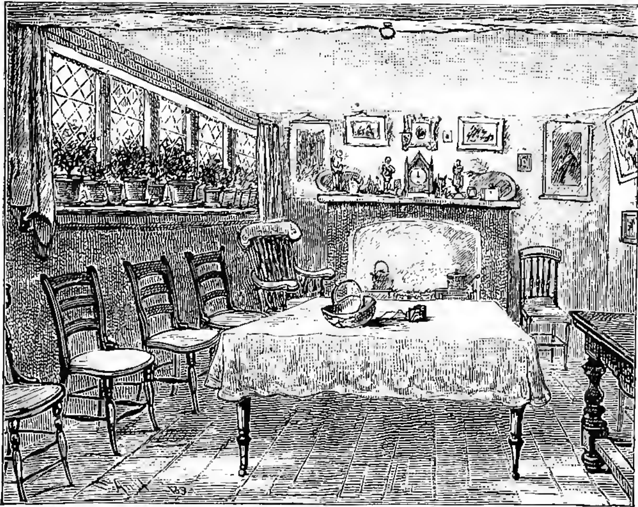
It is by a kind of caprice that so much has been made of the recollection of the particular seven or eight months of Milton's life which he passed in his rustic retreat at Chalfont-St.-Giles. Not only was his stay there short and casual; but there is no certain record of any occupation of his at Chalfont comparable in importance with what is known of his occupations in all or most of his many other residences. Nor is there the compensation of being able to connect what one might imagine of his restful thoughts and musings while at Chalfont with the visible aspects of things, then as now, in and about that quiet Buckinghamshire village. The external world for Milton, wherever they took him, had been for the last thirteen years but one and the same surrounding sphere of impenetrable opaque; and, unless he had become acquainted with Chalfont in the days preceding his blindness, all that he could now know of it, as they led him about in it or on the roads near it, was that it was a hollow somewhere in the country, with houses in it whence one heard human voices and other sounds.

It is easy, nevertheless, to account for the dispro-portionate recollection of Chalfont-St.-Giles in the biographies of Milton, and for the fascination of that village now for pilgrims on Milton's account. In the first place, the cottage at Chalfont-St.-Giles is the sole tenement once inhabited by Milton that is now cer-

MILTON'S COTTAGE, FROM THE FIELD AND HILLSIDE ADJOINING IT, CHALFONT-ST.-GILES.

tainly extant. While all his other houses have dis-appeared one after another,—the house in Petty France the last of them,—this humble cottage has survived, and is under such care now that it will, one hopes, be long preserved. One can see it on its old site at the end of the village, a small fabric of brick and wood, its flank to the road, but its front, with the attached little bit of paled-in garden, at right

angles to the road, and looking to the open fields beyond; one can enter the tiny rooms, and examine the old latticed windows, and the other relics of the antique cottage-furnishing of Milton's time which still remain in them; one can sit at the front door,

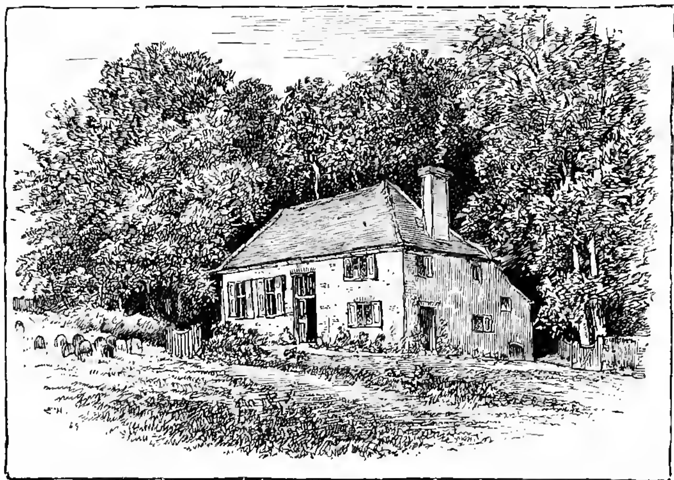


ROOM IN MILTON'S COTTAGE, CHALFONT-ST.-GILES.

where once there was the porch in which the blind man sat in the autumn months of 1665, inhaling the garden scents, and listening to the songs of birds and the lowings of the fielded cattle. This mere continued existence of the cottage, were there nothing more, would suffice to account for the peculiarly strong recollection now of the few months of Milton's life

which were passed at Chalfont-St.-Giles. But much of the interest of the cottage is due to the record by the young Quaker Ellwood of one incident in it during Milton's brief tenancy. Ellwood, whose own residence at the time was in the adjacent village of Chalfont-St.-Peter's, where he lived as a make-shift Latin tutor in the family of Isaac Pennington, the chief Quaker gentleman of those parts, had been prevented, by an accident to which Quakers were then constantly liable, from waiting on Milton on his first arrival. Pennington and he, with eight other Quakers, had been thrown into Aylesbury Jail for assisting at the attempted burial of one of their persuasion without Church rites and in unconsecrated ground; and not till after a month's imprisonment had they been released. Then Ellwood made haste to see Milton in the Chalfont-St.-Giles cottage, with the result, as he tells us, that Milton lent him the manuscript of *Paradise Lost* to read at his leisure, and that, when he returned the manuscript on a second visit, he ventured, after due thanks, to remark, "Thou hast said much here of Paradise Lost, but what hast thou to say of Paradise Found?"—whereupon, continues Ellwood, Milton "made no answer, but sat some time in a muse." But for Ellwood's record of this incident, it would perhaps have hardly been remembered that Milton was ever in Chalfont-St.-Giles at all; but the record is valuable on other grounds. It is a distinct proof that Milton had finished his *Paradise Lost* in Bunhill, and had brought the complete manuscript

copy of it, or indeed more than one such, with him to Chalfont; and it disposes therefore of the supposition of some that the poem was finished at Chalfont. But what of the further supposition that *Paradise Regained* was begun at Chalfont? All the evidence is against the claim of Chalfont to that credit either.



JORDANS.—THE OLD QUAKER MEETING-HOUSE AND BURIAL-GROUND NEAR CHALFONT-ST.-GILES.

At the utmost we may imagine that the silent "muse" into which Milton fell on Ellwood's suggestion of the new subject did not end when Ellwood had gone, but continued. *Paradise Regained* may have been thought of at Chalfont, but there was hardly time there for more.

The interest with which Chalfont-St.-Giles and its neighbourhood have been invested by Milton's temporary abode there blends naturally with the independent interest which the locality possesses as a seat and refuge of Early English Quakerism. At Jordans, in the vicinity, may be seen the old Quaker meeting-house of those Buckinghamshire parts, with the attached burial-ground which contains the graves of many of the worthies of the Quaker community. Isaac Pennington was buried there in 1679, honest Ellwood himself in 1713, and the more celebrated William Penn in 1718. Milton's connexions with the Quakers were so numerous, and his sympathies with them in their persecution so marked, that one recognises a certain propriety in the fact that the custody and care of his cottage at Chalfont-St.-Giles has been undertaken at last by the Society of Friends.

BACK IN ARTILLERY WALK, BUNHILL.

March 1666—November 1674.

The Plague having nearly ceased in March 1666, Milton was back by that time in his house in Artillery Walk, and it might have been expected that his *Paradise Lost* would be out in the course of the next few months. There may have been negotiations for the purpose, but the publication of the poem was not to be an event of the year 1666. In the September of that year, when the Londoners had hardly recovered from the panic of the Great Plague, they were staggering again under a second immense cala-

mity. By the "Great Fire" of that month, which raged for four days, all that had been the densest and most populated heart of Old London, from the Tower to Temple Bar, measuring 436 square acres in extent, was left a mere chaos of heaps of charred and blackened ruins, whence smoke could be seen rising for months afterwards. Business of all kinds was paralysed, the publishing houses with the rest. Not till the following year, when the first shock of the calamity was over, and the Londoners had begun to address themselves energetically to the work of re-edifying the burnt city, resuming business meanwhile as well as they could in the unburnt fringe of suburbs, could Milton begin the printing of his epic. His own neighbourhood of Bunhill had escaped the conflagration, as had also, though narrowly, the whole of the adjoining Barbican, Aldersgate Street, and Jewin Street neighbourhood; and it was with a printer "next door to the Golden Lion in Aldersgate Street" that Milton made his bargain for the printing. This was in April 1667; and in August 1667 the first copies of *Paradise Lost* were out.

What a book to make its appearance in the Restoration world of Charles II., and amid the productions of the Restoration wits! So we reflect now; and the sensation was correspondingly powerful then. Not immediately, perhaps, but gradually as copies of the poem got about, and the opinions of it by the most competent of the Restoration wits themselves found expression, the effect was to turn all eyes once more

THE OLD GATEWAY. ENTRANCE TO ST. GILES'S CHURCH, CRIPPLEGATE.

upon the extraordinary blind Republican who had been living for so many years, outcast and generally infamous, under the cloud of his political antecedents. Here, after long silence, the blind man, whose early poetry had been all but forgotten, swamped as the recollection of that had been by the detested series of his Revolutionary and Regicide prose pamphlets, had stepped forth again in his first and all but forgotten character, and that in no ordinary fashion, but as the author of a poem to which there was indubitably nothing comparable of its kind in the whole previous range of English Literature! Why, in such a case, not be generous; why let Mr. Milton's antecedents interfere with the recognition due to so splendid a reappearance? Of this reaction of feeling in Milton's favour, even among the chiefs of the Restoration world itself, in consequence of his *Paradise Lost*,—gradual since the publication of the poem in August 1667, but in full tide, as we may reckon, in April 1669, when all the copies of the first edition had been sold out,—he was himself aware. One detects a noble expression of his consciousness of the reaction in his description afterwards of the resuscitation of the fame of Samson by the crowning exhibition of that Hebrew's prowess among the Philistines :—

> "But he, though blind of sight,
> Despised, and thought extinguished quite,
> With inward eyes illuminated,
> His fiery virtue roused
> From under ashes into sudden flame,

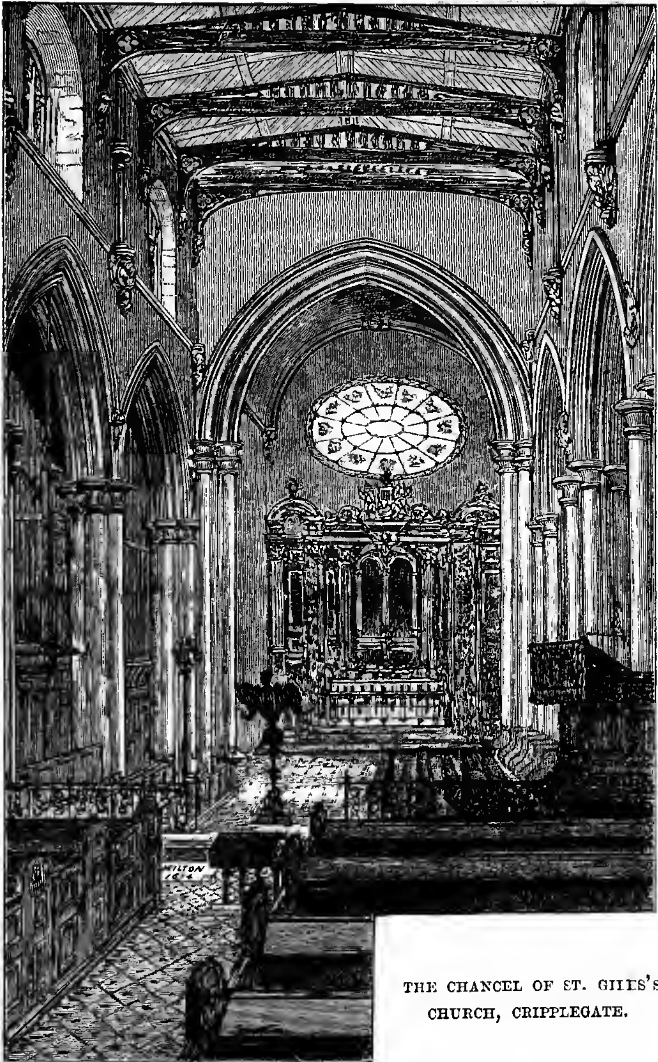
> And as an evening dragon came
> Assailant on the perchéd roosts
> And nests in order ranged
> Of tame villatic fowl, but as an eagle
> His cloudless thunder bolted on their heads."

Whether intended or not to express Milton's consciousness of his own sudden transmutation in the regards of the Restoration world, when he was in his sixtieth or sixty-first year, out of his previous character of loathsome prose-monster into that of the supreme living poet of England, compared with whom the contemporary men of letters of the Restoration were but as so many "tame villatic fowl" overtowered by an eagle, the passage is not too strong for that historical application.

The fact appears more prosaically in the accounts that have come down to us of the changed state of matters in and around the house in Bunhill through the last four or five years of Milton's life. Hitherto the visitors that found their way to that house had been few, and chiefly from among Milton's old acquaintances of the Commonwealth connexion, or from among the various and more extreme sects of the London Nonconformists, with now and then a foreign scholar, French, German, or Dutch, caring nothing about the ups and downs of English politics in his curiosity to see the man still so much talked of all over the Continent as the Latin antagonist and slaughterer of Salmasius. From about 1668 or 1669, however, there was a marked difference. Then

began that concourse of all sorts of persons round Milton for the honour of his acquaintance,—"much more than he did desire," we are told,—which was to go on increasingly as long as he lived. Among those who now came about him were not only foreigners and Nonconformists as before, but many of the most eminent persons, for rank or literature, in the courtly world itself. The generous Dryden was one; Dryden's literary brother-in-law Sir Robert Howard was another. The Earl of Anglesey, one of the statesmen of Charles II., and the man who had been Monk's chief coadjutor in managing the Restoration, liked nothing better than to visit Milton and converse with him freely; and there were "others of the nobility" in sufficient number. It is to the painter Richardson, a mere child at that time, but the collector afterwards of all the information he could obtain about Milton at first hand, that we owe the most vivid picture of Milton's receptions of those visitors. "I have heard many years since," says Richardson, "that he used to sit in a grey coarse cloth coat at the door of his house near Bunhill Fields without Moorgate 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." Such reception at the door of the house might simplify procedure in most cases, but would not suit in all weathers, or when the visitors were of a select sort. We hear, accordingly, of little musical parties sometimes in the chief room,

when Milton would pay a gallant compliment to some lady on her singing, or of rarer small supper-parties, when he would be "delightful company," the most urbane of hosts, and, though "no joker," full of cheerful and affable talk, often or generally with a flavour of the sarcastie. On such occasions he was much more abstemious than he required his guests to be from the liquors that were on the table, reserving himself for the invariable pipe of tobacco and glass of water with which he closed the day at nine o'clock after visitors were gone. We have a glimpse or two of these small hospitalities, musical or other, in the house in Artillery Walk even before 1670, while the three daughters were still in the house to share in them; but they seem to have been more frequent after 1670, when the daughters had been boarded out "to learn some curious and ingenious sorts of manufacture that are proper for women to learn, particularly embroideries in gold and silver," and Milton and his careful wife were left peacefully together. The occasional hospitalities and receptions within doors, however, were without prejudice, it is to be understood, to the chances which Milton's admirers and acquaintances had of meeting him in his out-of-door walks in the vicinity of Bunhill or even further inwards in the London streets. Then the vision we have of him is that of a blind, fresh-complexioned, and lightish-haired man, of middle stature or somewhat less, and of slender figure, dressed still usually in a grey suit, and with a small silver-hilted sword



THE CHANCEL OF ST. GILES'S CHURCH, CRIPPLEGATE.

by his side, piloted about by some boy or more mature companion, partly for exercise and partly for calls at favourite book-shops. Blind though he was, it was only by his gait that you knew it, for his eyes were clear and without speck or blemish. Nor, though the face was sad and careworn, did it tell the age at which he had arrived. From the still lightish hair and a tinge of colour still in the fair complexion, you would have judged him younger than he was.

The calls at bookshops are not a mere guess. Since the publication of *Paradise Lost* anything else that might come from Milton's pen was welcome enough to the book-buyiug public, and his dealings with publishers in the course of the four or five years through which we have been tracing him had consequently been pretty numerous. First in 1669 came a trifle in the shape of an English compendium of Latin Grammar, fished out, doubtless, from among his old papers; then, in 1670, he published, in a handsome volume, his *History of Britain to the Conquest*,—all that he had written of his once projected larger History of Britain; next, in 1671, came the small and precious volume containing his *Paradise Regained* and his *Samson Agonistes* together; next, in 1672, a Latin compendium of Logic,—another salvage, doubtless, from old manuscript stock; and in 1673, besides a second and enlarged edition of the collection of his Minor Poems in 1645, there appeared a new English pamphlet of his dictation, entitled *Of True Religion, Heresy, Schism, and*

Toleration, consisting of a mild dilution of some of the principles of his earlier and greater pamphlets by way of adaptation of them to a passing crisis of some anxiety in the Restoration politics. All these issued from the house in Artillery Walk, and have to be added to our associations with that vanished tenement in Bunhill. The prose publications of the set can have been but of moderate interest at the time, even with Milton's name to them; but, among all contemporary books, were there any that can have been received at once as of such mark and value as the *Paradise Regained*, the *Samson Agonistes*, and the new edition of the *Minor Poems*? They completed, for estimate by Milton's contemporaries, the list and varied array of his productions in verse through his total literary life of nearly fifty years; and they must have swelled and intensified the chorus of applause still rising round his great epic.

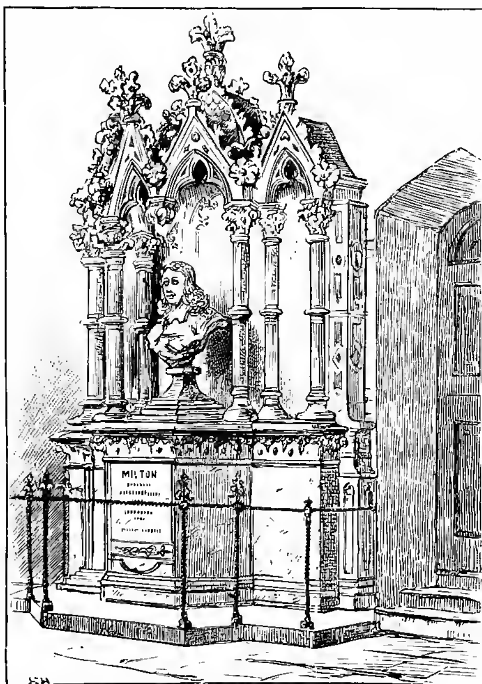
We have thus reached the year 1674, the last of Milton's life. To this year, I think, must belong one more glimpse of him, for which we are again indebted to the accurate Richardson. Among persons still alive to as late as about 1730 who had seen and talked with Milton in his house in Artillery Walk was a certain Dr. Wright, an aged clergyman of Dorsetshire; and Richardson, having been fortunate enough to meet this Dr. Wright, had obtained from him a recollection of the interview. "He found him," reports Richardson, "in a small house—he thinks but one room on a floor. In that up one

pair of stairs, which was hung with a rusty green, he found John Milton, sitting in an elbow-chair, black clothes and neat enough, pale but not cadaverous, his hands and fingers gouty and with chalk-stones. Among other discourse, he expressed himself to this purpose,—that, was he free from the pain this gave him, his blindness would be tolerable."

It cannot have been long after this interview when all Milton's pains were over. Industrious to the last, he had sent to the press that year the second and revised edition of his *Paradise Lost*, and also a small volume containing a selection of his Latin Familiar Letters, together with his juvenile Academic Essays at Cambridge; and among manuscripts still lying about him, to wait for publication at some time, were preserved copies of his Latin State-letters for the Commonwealth and Cromwell, and (what he was specially anxious about) a complete copy, in the hands of various amanuenses, of his Latin System of Divinity direct from the Bible. With this last work his thoughts were still occupied when he was seized with his final ailment,—"gout struck in," the physicians called it; and of this he died on Sunday the 8th of November 1674, at the age of sixty-five years and eleven months.

As he had avowedly in the last years of his life belonged to no ecclesiastical denomination, and as his wife was a devout Baptist, to be known as such through her long subsequent widowhood of fifty-three years, the expectation must have been

that his burial would be in the Finsbury Fields Cemetery close at hand, already for several years the customary burial-ground for Dissenters. He was not buried there, however, but in the parish church of



MEMORIAL TO MILTON IN ST. GILES'S CHURCH.

St. Giles, Cripplegate, where his father had been buried nearly twenty-eight years before. It was thither that, on the 12th of November, there was the funeral procession from the house in Artillery Walk,

and through the few intervening streets, that conveyed the body of Milton for sepulture with all the rites of the Church of England burial service at his grave. The funeral was attended, we are told, by "all his learned and great friends in London, not without a friendly concourse of the vulgar." The people of Bunhill and its purlieus, it appears, had turned out in considerable numbers to see the last of their famous blind man.

David Masson.

HERBERT.

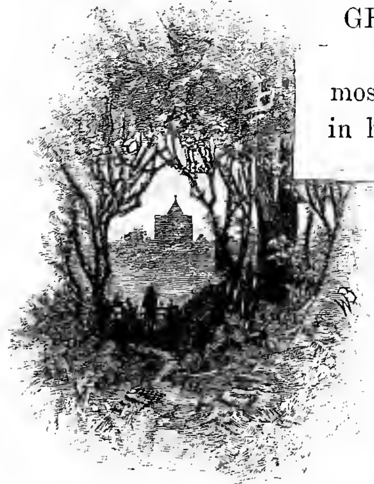
George Herbert,

Born April 3, 1593; died March 3, 1633.

"*Know you, faire, on what you looke?*
Divinest love lyes in this booke.
When your hands untie these strings,
Thinke yo' have an angel by the wings."

RICHARD CRASHAW.
"On Mr. George Herbert's Booke."

HERBERT.



GEORGE HERBERT, in character one of the most saintly of men, was, in his biographer, one of the most fortunate. For his life-story has been told for us by good old Izaak Walton, most delightful of anglers and most genial of men. The work is worthy of the worker. There is in it such sweetness of spirit and grace, and about it such breath of old-world fragrance, that, as Wordsworth says, the feather whence the writer's pen was shaped might have dropped from an angel's wing.

Our poets, as a rule, are not found in king's houses,

or clothed with soft raiment. They have usually learnt in suffering what they taught in song. George Herbert, however, was an exception to the rule, for he sprang of a knightly house on the Welsh borders, and was born in Montgomery Castle on the 3rd of April 1593. The Herberts enjoyed a plentiful estate, which they dispensed with liberal hand. The first shadow that fell on the life of George was the death of his father, which happened when he was quite a youth. He was thus left to the care of his mother, who fortunately for him was a sort of ideal type of gracious womanhood. She was the daughter of Sir Richard Newport, of High Arkall, in the shire of Salop, and was one of those gifted women such as men of genius have often had for mothers, who with strong individuality of character rise to the occasion when the strain of heavy responsibility is unexpectedly devolved upon them. Of ready wit, yet cheerful gravity, of gracious sweetness blended with high intellectual power, she was the centre of a circle which included some of the most distinguished men of her time. She had seven sons and three daughters, which she used to say was Job's number, and Job's distribution. Two of her sons, Herbert and George, presented in the seventeenth century such contrast of character and career as we find repeated in our own time in the case of the two brothers, Francis William and John Henry Newman. George Herbert was the devout, almost passionate worshipper of the Church and the faith of Christ, while his

brother Edward, better known as Lord Herbert of Cherbury, of cold, sceptical temperament, has been claimed as the father of English Deism, his book, "De Veritate," being an argument against revealed religion. Strange, indeed is the mystery, as Keble says, that

> "Brothers in blood and nurture too,
> Aliens in heart so oft should prove."

Educated at home till he was twelve years old, George was sent to Westminster School, from whence, in 1608, he was, as King's scholar, elected to Trinity College, Cambridge, his life for the next sixteen or seventeen years centering in the University town. Having been made Master of Arts in 1615, and being blessed with a high fancy, a civil and sharp wit, and with a natural elegance both in his behaviour, tongue, and pen, he was, four years later, chosen Public Orator to the University. At this stage of his life this distinction chimed in with his humour. In one of the letters he says: "The Orator's place is the finest in the University, though not the gainfullest. But the commodiousness is beyond the revenue, for he writes all the University letters, makes all the orations, be it to king, prince, or whatever comes to the University. To requite these pains he takes place next the doctors, is at all their assemblies and meetings, and sits above the proctors; is regent or non-regent at his pleasure, and suchlike gaynesses, which will please a young man well." In this his public capacity it became his duty to say civil things to James I. when

he honoured the University with his presence. The King, who had great capacity for believing civil things when they were spoken concerning himself, took a liking to the young orator, and called him to be in attendance on his person when he went that way to hunt at Newmarket, or fly the falcon at Royston. George's hopes began to rise; why should they not? He was high in the King's favour; he was often in company with Sir Francis Bacon, the "great secretary of nature and all learning"; and he was not meanly valued and loved by the most eminent and powerful of the court and the nobility. What if he should come to be Secretary of State? Meantime the King gave him the sinecure of £120 a-year, which had been held by Sir Philip Sidney; with this and his annuity, and the advantage of his college and his oratorship, he was able to enjoy "his genteel humour for clothes and court-like company."

The world went very gaily with the young orator then, and he was not without hopes that it might go more gaily still. But He who trains our lives, and leads us by a way that we know not, had other thoughts for him than he had for himself. The world in the sunshine of which he was now basking was not the one in which his noblest work was to be done or his truest glory won. He must therefore arise and depart. His good friends the Duke of Richmond and the Marquis of Hamilton were laid low by death, and what was more significant still, within

IN GEORGE HERBERT'S MEADOWS.

a brief space of time the King himself died too; then came new people, making a new world, in which there proved to be a scanty place for him.

Enforced retirement brought enforced reflection. He woke up as from a dream, coming to his own true self. It was a time of great struggle, "for ambitious desires and the outward glory of this world are not easily laid aside," but a man must sometimes lose his life in order to find it, and George Herbert came out of that time of sternest discipline a new-born man, born from above. An altered life followed upon the altered feeling, and in process of time we find him carrying out a long-cherished wish of his mother's, and giving himself to the service of the Church.

His first parish was that of Leighton Bromswold, in Huntingdonshire. The prospect was not brilliant, for the roof of the church had fallen in, and the building had been in a ruinous plight for twenty years and more. In those old days churches were sometimes roughly handled. In the same diocese in which Herbert began his clerical career inquiry had to be made about morrice-dancers, hawks and hounds being brought into the church; in the next county a curate had amused himself by baiting a bear in the church at Christmas, and a rector and his church-wardens signalised Shrovetide by having cock-fights in the chancel at which crowds were gathered and wagers laid; while in one parish, a few miles to the west, the lord of the manor pulled down the church, sold the lead and the bells, and turned the chancel

into a kennel for his hounds, and the steeple into a dovehouse for his pigeons. So that while Herbert found his church in pitiable plight, he was no worse off than some of his neighbours. But he soon set about reform, and with funds from his own family and many noble friends, he left the long-dilapidated building, as Walton says, for workmanship a costly mosaic, for the form an exact cross, and for decency and beauty one of the fairest churches in the land.

But it is with a charge in the south-west, and not with this parish in the Midlands, that the fairest memories of Herbert's life are associated. As the wayfarer goes from Salisbury to Wilton, the pleasant seat of the Earls of Pembroke, some two miles on the road he finds himself in the peaceful little hamlet of Bemerton, where, if he have but the least spark of poetry in his soul, he will be sure to linger and look round. For the interest of this tranquil spot is not to be measured by the extent of its acres or the number of its people. Three rectors at least have made the place memorable. In the old parsonage, over the way from the church, lived Norris, the poet and divine, and Coxe, the traveller and historian, and if they are not remembered in its associations it is because a greater name still has overshadowed theirs with saintly memories and poetic fame. Beyond all others George Herbert is and ever will be the parson of Bemerton. The people will tell you that his hands planted the aged fig-tree still spreading its broad leaves over the rectory wall, and the medlar-tree still

putting forth its fruit in the rectory garden. It was he who restored from decay both church and parsonage; and the meadows near, made beautiful with spreading trees, and fragrant with flowers and the sweet breath of kine, are called his meadows still. "I have now brought you," says gentle Izaak, "to the parsonage of Bemerton, and to the thirty-sixth year of Herbert's age, and must now stop and bespeak you to prepare for an almost incredible story of the great sanctity of the short remainder of his holy life —a life so full of charity, humility, and all Christian virtues that it deserves the eloquence of St. Chrysostom to commend and declare it."

For the details of that saintly life we must refer our readers to Walton himself, for if they seek for them elsewhere they will be in danger of losing the aroma of the wine. It is enough to say that in prayerful spirit Herbert resolved to be true to his vocation in an age when men stood quite as much in need of good examples as of good precepts, and he tried so to live as by his humble and charitable life to win upon others and bring glory to Him whom he had taken for Master and Lord. Pleasant stories linger about the country-side suggestive of his loving spirit and kindly helpfulness to burdened men. As, for example, this: On his way to Salisbury he came upon a poor man with a poorer horse, which had fallen under its load. It was a case for sympathy, but for sympathy of practical sort, so he flung off his coat and fell to helping the man first to unload and lift

up, and then after that to load his horse. His town friends when he reached them were surprised to see him, usually so trim and neat, now so soiled and discomposed, and one of them ventured to suggest that he had rather disparaged himself by employment so undignified; to which he replied that what he had done "would prove music to him at midnight," whereas the omission would have made discord in his conscience every time he passed the place where the poor man needed help.

A poetical soul, the one delight of his life in the way of recreation was music, setting and singing his own hymns and anthems to viol and lute. They were as the days of heaven upon earth to him when he could go over to Salisbury and hear the organ-roll in the cathedral there. The building itself rising in simple majesty from luxurious lawn and girdled with noble trees; its exquisite symmetry and fair proportions, its windows as many as the days of the year, its marble pillars counting as many as the year counts hours, and its gates as numerous as the moons of the year—all this stately pile gave him pleasure, as it has given to men in every generation since; but the billowy majesty of the music within stirred him more deeply still, lifting his soul heavenwards till he seemed to hear "church bells beyond the stars" and there came "the sound of glory ringing in his ears."

After three brief but memorable years of Christ-like service this saintly soul passed to that higher sphere whither his thoughts had so often gone before him.

As the time drew near for him to go, he took from beneath his pillow and handed to a friend the manuscript of a book which from that day to this has had enduring place in good men's hearts. It was his wish, he said, that it should be taken to his old friend and former neighbour in Huntingdonshire, Nicholas Ferrar, of Little Gidding, "and if he can think it may turn to the advantage of any dejected soul, let it be made public; if not, let him burn it, for I and it are less than the least of God's mercies." The book thus modestly ushered into life had for its title, "The Temple; or, Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations." It has been described as the enigmatical history of a difficult resignation. It would be easy to point out blemishes in the book, such as its verbal conceits, its grotesque puns, its odd metres and occasional obscurities, and it would not be difficult to show that its churchiness is extreme and its sacerdotalism unscriptural. But, somehow, one has no heart to find fault with it. It is a book to be taken as a friend to be loved, rather than as a performance to be criticised. As a manual of devotion it is as though a seraph covered his face with his wings in rapturous adoration; as a poem it is full of that subtle perception of analogies to be found only in works of genius; while the passage on "Man" shows how the poets in their loftiest moods may sometimes anticipate some of the most wonderful discoveries of science and some of the sublimest speculations of philosophy.

The book may be described as a psalter in verse, an

anticipation, in the manner of the seventeenth century, of Keble's "Christian Year." The conception is that of an Ideal Church. It begins, as the actual building does, with the church porch, in other words, the moralities of life; the sound, sober utterances of common sense precede what has to be said of the struggles and aspirations of the life within. Putting his counsels into rhyme—for a verse may find him whom a sermon flies—he would have men be sober, chaste, and diligent; to live by rule, for houses and commonwealths are built by rule, and the trusty sun is not to be enticed from his ecliptic line; who lives by rule is, therefore, in good company, while he who keeps no guard upon himself is slack, and rots to nothing at the next great thaw. Bringing us past the church porch itself, he shows us there is much to see and learn. There is an altar—"a broken altar, Lord, thy servant rears, made of a heart and cemented with tears"; there is a sacrifice, the crucified Christ, central to all things, His face pale, His eyes full of a far-off look of love and sorrow, and His lips uttering the awful question of desertion, asking of heaven, earth, and hell alike, "Was ever grief like mine?" It is as we look on that sorrowful face of His that we solve otherwise inscrutable mysteries. Philosophers have measured mountains, fathomed the depths of seas, and states, and kings—

"But there are two vast spacious things,
The which to measure it doth more behove:
Yet few there are that sound them—Sin and Love."

GEORGE HERBERT'S CHURCH AND VICARAGE, BEMERTON.

As to the first of these, how much has been done to guard us from it? Lord, with what care hast Thou begirt us round!

> "Pulpits and Sundays, sorrow dogging sin,
> Afflictions sorted, anguish of all sizes,
> Fine nets and stratagems to catch us in,
> Bibles laid open, millions of surprises,
>
> "Blessings beforehand, ties of gratefulness,
> The sound of glory ringing in our ears;
> Without, our shame; within, our consciences;
> Angels and grace, eternal hopes and fears."

Having thus taken us into the Temple, everything there is turned to pious use, the church monuments and music, the church floor and windows, the very lock and key. But Sunday, when the church has its reverent worshippers, stirs him to the most exquisite thought of all. To him it is—

> "The day most calm, most bright,
> The first of this, the next world's bud,
> The couch of time; care's balm and bay:
> The week were dark, but for thy light:
> Thy torch doth show the way.
>
> "The Sundays of man's life,
> Threaded together on time's string,
> Make bracelets to adorn the wife
> Of the eternal glorious king.
> On Sunday Heaven's gate stands ope;
> Blessings are plentiful and rife,
> More plentiful than hope."

Some of the other poems also, which go to make up the unity of the Temple, are exquisite with a fragrance all their own. That on Virtue, for example, in which the poet tells us that sweet day, the bridal

of the earth and sky, must die, and the dew weep its fall to-night; the sweet rose in colour rich and brave, whose root is ever in its grave, must also die; so must sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses:

> "Only a sweet and virtuous soul,
> Like seasoned timber, never gives;
> But though the whole world turn to coal
> Then chiefly lives."

The poem with the quaint title of "The Pulley" has been often quoted. It tells how, when God at first made man, He, from a glass of blessings standing by, poured on him all he could. Strength first made a way, then beauty flowed, then wisdom, honour, pleasure, everything but rest, there God made a stay; rest in the bottom lay:

> "For if I should (said He)
> Bestow this jewel also on my creature,
> He would adore my gifts instead of me,
> And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature:
> So both should losers be.
>
> "Yet let him keep the rest,
> But keep them with repining restlessness:
> Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
> If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
> May toss him to my breast."

Even more quaintly named is the beautiful lyric, "The Quip":

> "The merry world did on a day
> With his train-bands and mates agree
> To meet together where I lay,
> And all in sport to jeer at me.

"First, Beauty crept into a rose,
 Which when I pluck'd not, 'Sir,' said she,
'Tell me, I pray, whose hands are those?'
 But Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

"Then Money came, and chinking still,
 'What tune is this, poor man?' said he
'I heard in music you had skill.'
 But Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

"Then came brave Glory puffing by
 In silks that whistled, who but he?
He scarce allow'd me half an eye.
 But Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

"Then came quick Wit and Conversation,
 And he would needs a comfort be,
And, to be short, make an oration.
 But Thou shalt answer, Lord, for me.

"Yet when the hour of Thy design
 To answer these fine things shall come,
Speak not at large, say I am Thine;
 And then they have their answer home."

Space will not allow us to do more than indicate "The British Church," "The Collar," "The Flower," "Aaron," and "The Elixir" as taking place with those among the gems of the book. But the very crown and flower of all is the poem on "Man," which is Miltonic in its sublimity and conception:

"For us the winds do blow;
The earth doth rest, heaven move, and fountains flow.
Nothing we see, but means our good,
As our *delight*, or as our *treasure*:
The whole is either our cupboard of *food*,
Or cabinet of *pleasure*.

"The stars have us to bed;
Night draws the curtain, which the sun withdraws:
Music and light attend our head.
All things unto our *flesh* are kind
In their *descent* and *being*; to our *mind*
In their *ascent* and *cause*.

"More servants wait on man
Than he'll take notice of: in every path
He treads down that which doth befriend him,
When sickness makes him pale and wan.
Oh, mighty love! man is one world and hath
Another to attend him."

JOHN BROWN.

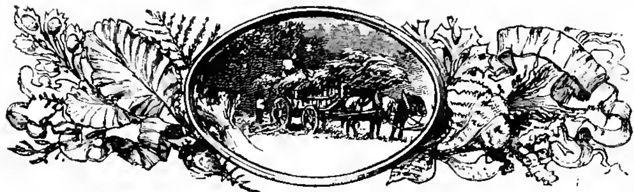
COWPER.

William Cowper,

Born November 26, 1731; died April 25, 1800.

" O poets, from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless singing!
O Christians, at your cross of hope a hopeless hand was clinging!
O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths beguiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you peace and died while ye are smiling."

MRS. BROWNING.
"Cowper's Grave."



COWPER.

WE have all of us probably gazed with eager interest on spots visited by us for the first time, but previously made familiar after a fashion through some favourite passage in literature. To me, I confess, it seems to matter little whether that literature be fact or fiction. If it be the latter the imagination of the writer has all but created it into a reality for me. I have on several occasions, for example, explored the battle-fields of Towton and Waterloo. The marks of the latter conflict are visible to all men still, but in the former it is also easy to make out all the main features of the battle. Traditions lingering among the villagers show the scenes of particular episodes; the blended red and white roses grow over the two great mounds which cover the dead, and a broken tomb in the churchyard marks the burial-place of one of them. The wind blows gently over the hill;

there is no one in sight; you give full play to your imagination concerning that terrible Palm Sunday four hundred and twenty odd years ago, and are assured that your imagination cannot be very unlike the reality.

I turn to another reminiscence—that of a visit to Lesmahagow, in Lanarkshire, and the old castle hard by, which Sir Walter Scott has made known to us by the name of Tillietudlem. In Lesmahagow churchyard you may see the graves of the brave Covenanters, and at Tillietudlem the window out of which Cuddie Headrigg's sweetheart poured the scalding broth on his head. What reader of "Old Mortality," visiting either spot, would not think it infidelity to question the details which the great magician has woven before the eyes of his imagination? I have many a time, walking on the Great North Road of our forefathers, imagined the lumbering waggon bringing up Roderick Random and Strap from Edinburgh, have seen in fancy Daniel Quilp shambling down Bevis Marks to visit Sampson Brass, and Falstaff running away in the dark down Gadshill. It requires a vigorous effort of the will to distinguish these scenes from those of actual history, concerning which I have wistfully asked myself before now, standing on the respective scenes, "What was the exact position of Charles I.'s scaffold, and of Louis XVI.'s? Which way did they look? Which way did the old woman come who brought the faggot to burn Huss, when he made his comment, *O sancta simplicitas*?"

It is somewhat different when you visit localities which poets have made famous without attaching fictitious scenes to them. Rydal and Ulleswater were beautiful before Wordsworth ever saw them, but he has taught us to seek out and appreciate their beauties. Nobody, probably, would have discovered the loveliness of the flat lands of Lincolnshire and Bucks, if Tennyson and Cowper had not made them ground as sacred and dear to English hearts as the poets of old made Parnassus and Tempe, and shown us how to rejoice in them.

Strangely different are the destinies of the poets' haunts according to their respective localities. Dickens's London will have almost entirely disappeared by the end of the nineteenth century. Two scenes only of Milton's life can in the least be identified. The landscape which inspired "L'Allegro," at Horton, cannot be very different from what it was; the house at Chalfont is the only habitation of his which has not been pulled down. He never saw it, for he was blind when he went there; but it was a righteous action of the people to preserve it as he left it. There was pathos in the word addressed to me by an inhabitant of the village, as I walked down the street: "That was an old butcher's shop, sir; you can see where the window was; you may depend upon it that it was there that Milton used to buy his meat." It was pleasant to hear any word of reverence for the memorials of a great man, though in this case it was certainly of the slightest character. Gray's

"Elegy" is so beautiful that it is no wonder that half-a-dozen churchyards contend for the honour of being that of the poem. But the interest of this poem is not that of locality. The slight touches of description would apply to half the village church-yards in England.

But when you come to memories of Cowper, you find them manifold, unmistakable, and in many cases exactly the things as he saw them. Far from the busy world, the greater portion of his localities have remained unaltered. It is my purpose to show this, and to ask the reader to accompany me over the ground which I have visited because of love and reverence for the amiable and gentle man.

Our first scene, indeed, has one disqualification, such as I have noted in the case of some of our other writers. At Berkhampstead he was born on the 26th of November 1731. The Rectory as seen in the picture is not the home of his birth, which was pulled down about fifty years ago, to be replaced by a new house on the same site. The noble church is that of which his father was rector, and the landscape around it lived in Cowper's memory vividly all his life, though he never, I believe, visited it after his father's death. In a Latin poem, *Votum,* written at Olney, he expresses his longing to end his days and be buried at his native place:

> "Fata modo dederint quas olim in rure paterno
> Delicias, procul arte, procul formidine novi,
> Quam vellem ignotus, quod mens mea semper avebat,
> Ante larem proprium placidam expectare senectam,

> Tum demum, exactis non infeliciter annis,
> Sortiri tacitum lapidem, aut sub cespite condi."

The relic which will most attract the visitor of to-day is the grave of his mother within the altar-rails. She died when he was only six years old, poor child! and fifty-three years later, Mrs. Bodham, her great-niece, gave Cowper her portrait. The poem which he wrote upon it, probably the most beautiful elegy in the language, is hardly more touching than the letter which he wrote acknowledging the gift. The picture is now in the National Portrait Gallery, presented, if I mistake not, by the late Mr. Bodham Donne, a great-grand-nephew of Mrs. Cowper. It shows a singularly sweet and gentle face; light flaxen hair, without any band or comb, streaming down upon the shoulders. A few years after her death, Mr. Cowper married again, but their son had left home. His intercourse with his step-mother was always slight, friendly but not affectionate.

The next few years of the boy's life can be rapidly summarized. He was sent first to a village school in Hertfordshire, within a year of his mother's death, where he was cruelly bullied; at ten years of age he went to Westminster school, where he became an excellent scholar, and he was fond of writing verses even in those days. On leaving school he went into a solicitor's office for three years, then to the Temple, and was called to the Bar in 1754, but never practised. Through family influence he was made a Commissioner of Bankrupts, with an income of £60

a year, and he wrote a few magazine papers. But his career was suddenly checked by the terrible calamity of madness, and he was sent to a lunatic asylum for two years. Being discharged cured in 1765 he resolved to live in London no more, and retired to Huntingdon so as to be within reach of his brother, who lived at Cambridge. His relatives agreed to subscribe an annual allowance for him, but he soon got into difficulties of ways and means through inexperience, and was in rather a bad way, when a young man who had just returned home to Huntingdon, after taking his degree, noticed him in church, and after a few days spoke to him. This young man, William Cawthorne Unwin, was the son of Morley and Mary Unwin. Morley Unwin was the non-resident rector of Grimston, in Norfolk, who made an income at Huntingdon by taking pupils, and Cowper describes him as a very excellent and pious man, though the records of his parish contain several complaints of his neglect of duty there. After a few weeks' intercourse, Cowper became an inmate of their home (shown on the extreme right of the cut on the opposite page), and so began a connexion which was only terminated by death.

Cowper is pronounced by Southey "the best letter-writer in the English language," and this is no extravagant praise. A few of those letters which have been preserved date from before his insanity, but now that he settled down with the Unwins the series becomes full and regular. Not a dream of their ever

THE HOUSE OF THE UNWINS, HUNTINGDON.

being published entered his head, but his friends felt that there was a wonderful charm about these letters, and preserved them. From them we gather a very interesting account of his daily life at Huntingdon. After breakfast they read the Bible or a sermon, at eleven went to church, where there was daily service; then each went his or her own way till dinner-time at three. Cowper varied his occupations, reading, walking, riding, gardening. After dinner they sat conversing in the garden in fine weather; when it was otherwise they stayed indoors and sang hymns. In summer-time, after tea a long walk, then supper, a hymn, and family prayers.

It was no doubt a pleasant life for the shy, retiring man, and nothing disturbed their tranquillity until, without warning, it was suddenly destroyed. Mr. Unwin was thrown from his horse and killed in June, 1767. His son had recently left home on his ordination to a curacy, and his daughter, the only other child, was about to be married. Mrs. Unwin and Cowper were thus left alone; just at that moment John Newton, the curate of Olney, called on Mrs. Unwin at the request of a friend, and hearing of their perplexity concerning the future, agreed to look out for a house where they could live together. He found one at Olney, to which they moved in September, 1767, and here they lived a curious, Platonic kind of life for more than nineteen years. It is with Olney, therefore, that the poet's name is most closely associated, and the visitor thither to-day will find no

difficulty in identifying almost every scene which Cowper describes, whether in his poems or in his letters. To make this clear it will be necessary to enter into some details.

A wide, almost deserted street, from which narrow footways on each side lead to two other parallel streets, makes up one moiety of the little town. Let us follow the street down. It widens out as we pass along into a large open space—the market-place. Facing you at the end of the street, in this market-place, is Cowper's house.

Now I beg the reader's attention to the picture representing that spot. The fine elm (now protected by a circular iron railing) was there in Cowper's time; the front of the house, too, is much as he left it, but it had imitation battlements, and the interior has undergone a few alterations. Two roads pass on from this market-place, past the house. Let us first follow that to the left. The reader will see a row of cottages; they are covered with thatch, and have a somewhat squalid appearance, and are still known, as they were to the poet, as "Silver End." Following the road down you soon come to the slow-winding Ouse. You cross it by a foot-bridge, ascend a gentle hill, and are in less than a mile at the village of Clifton Reynes, with a pleasant parsonage, and a quaint and interesting church. In those days the incumbent thereof was a Mr. Jones, with whom Cowper soon formed a slight acquaintance. Mrs. Jones had a pretty, graceful sister—Lady

COWPER'S HOUSE IN THE MARKET-PLACE, OLNEY.

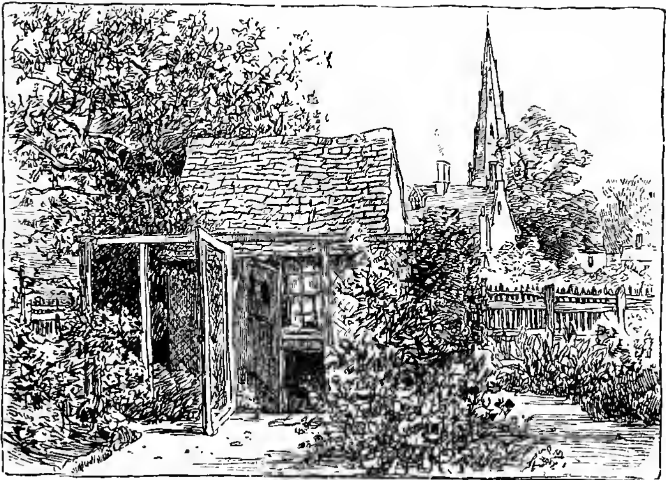
Austen—who used occasionally to visit her; but some years elapsed before this lady and the poet met. The two villages, though so near, were absolutely separated, when, as was very frequently the case, the river was swollen and the mud in the roads knee-deep. Now let us return to the market-place. To the right, a few yards from our sight in this picture, is a road which almost immediately branches into two; one ascends a hill to the right, and goes up to the village of Weston Underwood, two miles off; the other winds round to the left towards the river. Pursuing that, we pass the church on our right and the vicarage on our left, and soon reach the long bridge which leads to the village of Emberton, on the same ridge as Clifton Reynes. I feel confident that the reader will have no difficulty in following this detail; it will enable him to understand the pictures, and also the allusions which we have to make to the poet's writings.

First, take the vicarage. It stands back to back with Cowper's house. The gardens behind the two houses adjoin, and are separated by a wall. In that vicarage in those days, lived John Newton, who was the curate in charge; the eccentric, disreputable vicar, Moses Browne, being non-resident. Newton was a man of remarkable physical power, five years older than Cowper, vigorous and burly, too, in his strenuous preaching of the theology which he had imbibed from Whitefield. He had come into a most difficult charge: the people had been neglected for

years; they were poor, improvident, degraded, and there were no resident gentry. He was a good preacher, and the people (Olney had a population of 2,500) crowded the church. It has been altered since his days, but they have wisely left the gallery which he caused to be built in 1765, to accommodate his many hearers. Still he was deeply disappointed, and his journals are full of complaints of the unprofitableness of his labour. Unfortunately, with the most excellent intention towards Cowper, he injudiciously employed him not only to visit the sick indefatigably, but to take part in the fervid, excited prayer-meetings which he had established. It was too much for the shy, nervous man; he became gloomy and despondent. The proposal that they should jointly produce a volume of "Olney Hymns" was a happier idea. It gave Cowper congenial occupation, and was the cause of his first appearing in print as a poet. The volume was not published, however, until 1779.

Here, then, we have the conditions of the poet's first years at Olney: a population poor and half heathen; a spiritual guide whose theology was of the narrowest Calvinistic type, a companion kind and gentle, but ill-educated, and himself well-read, though with few opportunities of getting books; tremulous and nervous, but with a rich fund of humour, and keen powers of observation. With his companion, Mrs. Unwin, he soon entered into a marriage engagement; the fact is explicitly stated both by Newton,

who more than any one in the world was in their confidence, and by Bull, an Independent minister of Newport Pagnell, one of their most constant visitors. But a second attack of madness in January, 1773, caused the engagement to be first postponed, and finally abandoned. There used to be a fair held every May in the market-place, in front of Cowper's



THE SUMMER-HOUSE.

windows. To be out of the sight and hearing of it, Cowper went, in 1773, to the vicarage, and once there, entreated not to be sent back. Newton had not the heart to refuse him, and there he remained for a whole year. It was during this attack that he again took up the occupation of gardening, and when he returned home in May, 1774, he threw himself into

it vigorously, as well as into carpentering. And then it was that a little classic spot took its origin, which will always be dear to pilgrims to Cowper-land.

It is very seldom that you find a place, known only to you by reading, answer to the ideas which you had formed of it when you come to visit it. For definite ideas you do form beforehand, if you have been interested by your book. I had read Cowper's Poems and Letters with great care, and had seen pictures of many of the localities, and in nearly every case the reality answered wonderfully to the conception. But, somehow, I had thought of Cowper's garden as rather sloping upward from the house, and the summer-house as at the top of the slope under the wall; this was a mistake. The garden at the back is quite level, and the little summer-house is in the middle of it. The poet had first built himself a green-house, but he soon turned it into a sitting-room, lining it with matting, and making a new floor. There are many amusing notes about this green-house, but it has now disappeared. But the summer-house is still as he left it, and the spectator looks on his very workmanship. And in this little spot the greater part of his poems were subsequently written. He slowly recovered, though a deep melancholy still frequently oppressed him; resumed correspondence in 1776, after a four years' interval, and in his letters began to enclose poems, which he was now constantly composing, to whosoever his correspondent happened to be. It was not till 1780 that, at Mrs. Unwin's suggestion,

he began his larger compositions, and in 1782 he published his first volume. There is hardly anything in that volume of local description. The series of longer poems are inspired by what he has read in the newspapers, or remembers of his former London days. The smaller pieces are fables, translations, meditations over his books. It was a happy expression of

INTERIOR OF THE SUMMER-HOUSE.

the late J. R. Green, that the recluse in an out-of-the-way village set himself in this first volume the task of becoming a Christian Juvenal. One amusing note concerning these satires comes opportunely here ; it is thoroughly characteristic of Cowper. He was unsparing in his denunciations of customs and habits to which he himself was not addicted, such as ora-

torios, whist-playing, fox-hunting. In his poem "Conversation" he is quite fierce against smoking, calls tobacco a "pernicious weed," and says it is "unfriendly to society's chief joys." But our picture of the interior of this summer-house shows a movable board on the floor. It covered a recess which the satirist constructed to contain Mr. Bull's pipes. In other words, after he had written his verses he formed his friendship with Bull, who was an inveterate smoker, and whose visit to the little spot was the signal for lifting the board and taking out the pipe.

A more important instance of charity prevailing over prejudice is seen in this. Whilst the poems were in the press he became a warm friend of a gentleman who had recently come to reside at Weston Underwood, Sir John Throckmorton, a Roman Catholic. Cowper had written some fierce lines against the Roman Church in his "Expostulation." He now sent to the printer and had the leaf cancelled, substituting for them lines 390—413. In my own copy of the first edition the cancel is quite visible. It is certainly a gross wrong to his memory that a few modern editions, issuing from firms devoted to theological party, should restore the rejected lines without a hint that he had withdrawn them.

I must return once more to the market-place. On my visit there I went into a shop opposite Cowper's front windows, to make a trifling purchase. The vendor said: "Famous shop this, sir; this is the shop where Cowper first saw Lady Austen." It is quite

true. She had become a widow, and was now spending much of her time with her sister, Mrs. Jones, at Clifton. One day Cowper saw from his window the two ladies shopping opposite, was much struck with Lady Austen's appearance, and with a little difficulty persuaded Mrs. Unwin to invite her to tea. And thus a friendship began which had an important influence on the poet's life. She was lively and amusing as well as pretty, and she was as much attracted towards Cowper as he towards her. Before very long, on Newton's removal to the rectory of St. Mary Woolnoth, in London, she took up her residence in the vicarage, and a doorway was made through the wall which divided the gardens, so that a continual intercourse might go on. For a good while only pleasantness resulted from the new state of things. It was the most sunny period in Cowper's life. One evening she told him, doubtless in a delightful manner, the story of John Gilpin. He lay in bed laughing the whole night, and next morning proceeded to versify it. The biographers imply that he produced this ballad at breakfast-time next morning, which certainly is not probable. I met at Olney with an old man who told me that he was the nephew of the barber who used to dress Cowper's wig (by the way, the block which he used is now preserved in the summer-house), and that the poet wrote the ballad piecemeal, and used to give the successive portions to the barber to read, written on odd bits of paper. Neither Lady Austen

nor Cowper ever dreamt that this was the poem which was to make him famous, but it was so. The published volume had hung fire, though the reviews had mostly been civil to it. Lady Austen now begged him to try his hand at blank verse, and gave him a subject. "The Task" was the result. That, too, might have fallen as flat as its predecessor but for "John Gilpin," which had been published by William Unwin anonymously in the *Public Advertiser*, and had already attracted some notice when Henderson, a well-known actor, read it with some other things to a public audience, among whom was Mrs. Siddons, at Freemasons' Hall. It "brought down the house" so effectually that scores of editions were printed, besides continuations and parodies; and pictures of the famous horseman were seen in all the print-shop windows. The Library of the British Museum has quite a "John Gilpin" collection of literature. And when Cowper proceeded to publish "The Task," and found that he had not quite matter enough for a volume, he added this and two other poems. "John Gilpin" was even named on the title-page at the instance of the publisher, who rightly judged that it would add to the popularity of the book. People bought it expecting to find much racy matter; and were surprised, but not disappointed, to receive a volume of serious but delightful verse.

It was received with enthusiastic favour, and common consent at once placed the author at the head of the poets of the age. It is sad to have to tell that

"Come, Evening, once again, season of peace;
Return, sweet Evening, and continue long!"

The Task.

before the book was published the friendship with Lady Austen had ceased, and the causes are not obscure. A tender feeling had grown up and increased in her heart towards the refined and gentle poet; she was conscious that she had brought much sunlight into his life, and she would fain have married him. His friend and biographer, Hayley, who writes with studied obscurity about it all, says that Cowper "returned her tenderness with innocent gallantry." That is hardly the expression to use of the following lines, which he addressed to her on learning that she wore a lock of his hair in a diamond star on her breast. She gave them to a nephew years afterwards. Hayley never saw them, nor knew of their existence :—

"The star that beams on Anna's breast
Conceals her William's hair;
'Twas lately severed from the rest
To be promoted there.

"The heart that beats beneath that breast
Is William's well I know,
A nobler prize and richer far
Than India could bestow.

"She thus his favoured lock prefers,
To make her William shine;
The ornament indeed is hers,
But all the honour mine."

Her tender feeling was reciprocated, but there were insurmountable obstacles. No doubt the marriage engagement with Mrs. Unwin was at an end, but it would hardly be possible for human nature not to feel jealous, after their many years together, to find

the chief place in his heart usurped by a recent acquaintance. And Cowper in honour felt that, and sacrificed his affection to his gratitude. But it was a serious loss to him, and from that day onward melancholy again began to grow upon him.

I have already said that Cowper's first volume of poems is altogether devoid of any local descriptions. The second, consisting principally of "The Task," is full of them. Perhaps it is hardly necessary to remind the reader of the origin of that work. Lady Austen begged him to write something in blank verse. He replied that he lacked a subject. "Subject! Nonsense!" was the reply. "You can write on anything. Take this sofa for a subject." And so he did. Hence the general name, "The Task"; and hence the first book of it, "The Sofa." The opening lines indicate at once the haphazard origin. He begins with a comic historical introduction; the progress from benches to three-legged stools, then to chairs, settees, sofas. Then he hopes that he may not be compelled to lie on a sofa because of gout, and this leads him to tell us that he is very fond of walking. And so at length he is under way, and from this moment "The Task" is a description of his Olney life; and it is wonderful to observe how descriptions written more than a hundred years ago answer to the present aspect of the country. Let us start with the first poem in the volume by way of illustration. (For convenience' sake I may mention that I am using the Globe edition.) He says (lines

140-3) that he finds, though he is no longer young, that his love of walking has not diminished, nor yet his power; that the scenes that soothed or charmed him when young are still soothing and of power to charm him now. And in his first draft he then went on immediately to describe his walks. But he afterwards inserted lines 144-153, addressed to Mrs. Unwin. This interpolation is a curious and touching morsel of literary skill. As I have already noted, though he began the poem to gratify Lady Austen, he broke off communication with her before finishing it, though not long before. Then it was that whilst preparing it for the press he inserted those tender lines to the old companion that he feared he had slighted.

But let us follow him in his walk with his "dear companion." They are on an eminence, looking down on the "slow-winding Ouse." The eminence, so referred to, is the road from Olney market-place up to Weston Underwood. The Ouse flows through the vale on the left, and there is an extensive view as you ascend. But our poet soon gets off the high road, moves away into the footpaths on his right, and so arrives at the cottage which he calls the "Peasant's Nest." The cottage is as he saw it, but the "ring of branching elms" that almost hid it is gone, and the place is tolerably conspicuous in the landscape. The "colonnade" (line 252), the "rustic bridge" (line 267), the "proud alcove" (line 278), the "little naiad" (line 328), the "wilderness" (line 351), the "grove" (line

354), all are there, and the descriptions might have been written yesterday. One change there is, unfortunately; the mansion which formed the centre of this estate was pulled down in 1828.

> "The folded gates would bar my progress now
> But that the lord of this enclosed demesne
> Admits me to a share."

So does the poet thank Sir John Throckmorton for allowing him a key of the gates leading into his gardens and private grounds. The gates are there still, but the space within is blank.

Of Sir John Throckmorton I have already said a few words. He came to reside at Weston in 1782. on his brother George's death, though he did not succeed to the baronetcy till 1791, when his father died, at the age of ninety-two. Cowper and he became the closest of friends. The poet's descriptions in his letters of the kindness and sweetness of Mr. Throckmorton and his wife are quite enthusiastic.

In that most delightful book of Dean Burgon, the "Lives of Twelve Good Men," he chooses as his "good layman" his brother-in-law, Charles Longuet Higgins. It was impossible to have made a better selection or to have treated the subject in a more graceful and beautiful manner. I have two reasons for alluding to this life. When I visited Olney in 1884 a kind lady, to whom I carried letters of introduction, offered to drive me over to Turvey, a village four or five miles distant, of which Mr. Higgins was the Squire. She assured me that he would be glad

to welcome me, and that he had some relics of the poet. I gladly accepted her kind offer, and though I saw these with much interest, there were two things which delighted me yet more that day. The first was the picturesque old Squire, with his antique black garments, his beautiful long white hair, and snowy collar turned over on his shoulders, and withal his exquisite courtesy; and the second was his brother-in-law and future biographer, Burgon—of manners and address as sweet and winning as his own—who happened to be staying in the house when I visited it. He told us two stories of Cowper, of which more presently; let me fall back upon his biography of Mr. Higgins just now. Mr. Higgins's father was a lad of eighteen when Cowper emerged into fame on the publication of "The Task," and the poet on hearing that the young man was able to repeat many of his poems by heart, invited him to "a dish of tea." (All readers of last century literature will recognise the strict orthodoxy of that expression.) It was the beginning of a permanent and close friendship. Dean Burgon says he heard Mr. Higgins in his old age pour out most entertaining reminiscences of the Olney circle. I must quote one paragraph:—

"It is evident from many a hint in Cowper's letters, and especially from what I used to pick up from Mr. Higgins, that the great charm of these social gatherings was the table-talk; to which—what need to say it?—Cowper was ever the chief contributor. 'We dined yesterday at the hall,' he writes,

'and spent our four or five hours there very agreeably, as we always do, except when the company is too large for conversation.' Mr. Higgins used to explain that it was not so much *what* 'Mr. Cowper' said, as the way he said it,—his manner of relating an ordinary incident,—which charmed his auditory, or convulsed them with merriment. Moreover, they knew that something delightful was coming before it came. His eye would suddenly kindle and all his face became lighted up with the fun of the story, before he opened his lips to speak. At last he began to relate some ludicrous incident, which, although you had yourself witnessed it, you had failed to recognise as mirthful. A bull had frightened him and caused him to clear a hedge with undue precipitancy. His shorts became seriously lacerated; and the consternation with which their modest occupant had effected his retreat home —holding his garments together, in order that his calamity might escape detection—was made extravagantly diverting. Once, in the grey of the evening, while adjusting his shoe-buckle on the step of a stile, the village post-woman advanced towards him, and on reaching the stile—little dreaming who was behind it, and what he was about—inadvertently planted the sole of her foot on the back of the poet's head. He —as little dreaming who was overhead—tossing up suddenly, seemed to himself to have caused the astonished female to make a kind of rotatory somersault in the air. The fun of such described adventures of course depended in part on your knowledge of the

persons and the localities discoursed of; but above all, it resulted from the playful humour—call it, rather, wit—which was at all times prepared to construct out of the slenderest materials an amusing incident. So ready and so graceful, in fact, was the poet's fancy, that he knew how to make an amusing story out of *nothing.* Did there exist any way of writing down the buzzing of a gnat—so as to distinguish the droning noise he makes at the distance from the stridulous sound by which he announces that he has at last found you out on your sleepless pillow—I would convincingly illustrate what I have just been saying. But it is *not* possible; and so the story must remain unwritten, and at last depart with me."

I am afraid it is a daring proceeding on my part if I endeavour here to revive the good Dean's story, that it may *not* die. At the interview of which I have spoken he told the story, and certainly succeeded in making us laugh heartily. He prefaced it with the remark, "You have written a 'Life of Cowper.' I will tell you a story of him which I defy you to put into your next edition, or to write down at all." But it seems a pity not to try. Cowper is in bed; one of those heavy-curtained affairs which in his days were held to be indispensable. Enter a gnat by the window, who begins to sing (*pp*),—

"Bz-z-z-z, I've come to see Mr. Cowper; I know he's here, bz-z-z-z-z."

All this the Dean imitated with great skill, keeping to his *pianissimo,* and all in monotone.

Slightly crescendo, a tone higher. "Bz-z-z-z-z, here's the bed, which is where he is, I know, bz-z-z-z, —ah! all right (*forte*), I have got inside the curtains, bz-z-z-z (*fortissimo*); hooray! bz-z-z-z, here he is, here's his nose, bz-z." *Silence.*

Well! as the Dean said, there was not much in the story, but it was very droll to hear him imitate the buzz, and the change of intonation. You seemed to hear the beast gradually drawing nearer, waxing triumphant, and finally silent when he alighted on the object sought. The poet told it to amuse the Throckmorton children.

The relics which I saw at Turvey were, the poet's shoe-buckles, which Mr. Higgins used to wear at his dinner-parties, a letter or two of Cowper's, and the chest of drawers in which his cat was lost for two or three days. She had got into one of the drawers in his bedroom, and gone to sleep, and a maid shut the drawer without observing her. (Poem, "The Retired Cat," p. 378. The epitaph on the same page is to Mr. Higgins's grandmother.) There is also a three-wheeled chair, which formerly belonged to the Throckmortons. On one occasion the youngsters, having carefully set all the doors of the passages open, coaxed Cowper to get into it, and then, paying no heed to his entreaties, ran him in triumph and laughter all over and over the place.

One relic of the poet, the hutch which he built for his hares, and of which he wrote a charming account in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, June, 1784,

OLNEY FROM THE MEADOWS.

was bought by an enterprising speculator for £5 a few years ago. I am told it is at present in Liverpool. Two other reminiscences of the poet are connected with that visit which I made to Turvey. The one is the Poplars at Lavendon, which you pass on the way from Olney. It will be remembered that the poet laments their having been cut down, and so his being deprived of a grateful shade which he often sought on summer days:—("The poplars are felled; farewell to the shade," p. 323). From their roots another race has since sprung up, and there it is to-day. The other was Yardley Oak, to which my kind guide drove me after leaving Turvey. The poet, it will be remembered, began a poem upon it, one of his best though it is but a fragment, in 1791. He speaks of it as evidently in its last days:

> "Embowelled now, and of thy ancient self
> Possessing nought but the soooped rind."

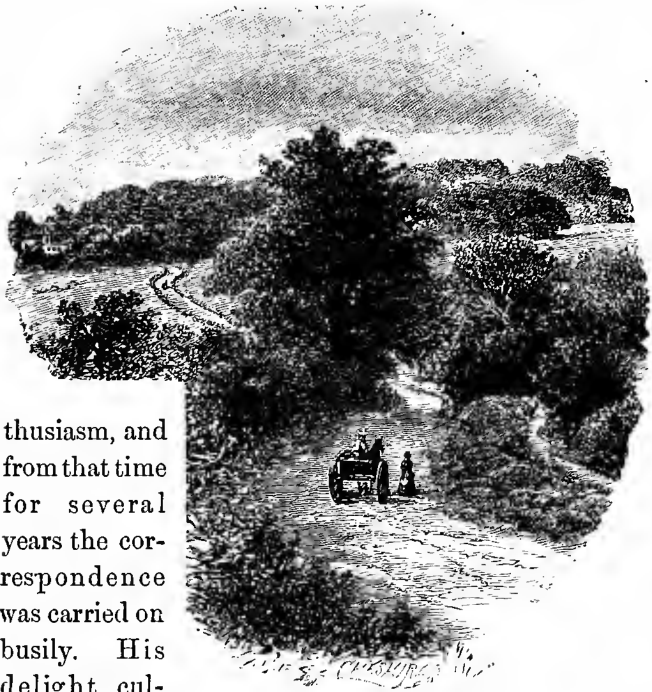
Even so; yet there it is still, just a hundred years after he wrote, and it still exhibits a noble appearance in its magnificent decay. They have railed it round now, and put props under the heaviest boughs. I took a couple of acorns from it. Its leaves were of goodly beauty.

It would be endless work were I to recount the various scenes recognisable at Olney, which he has made as classic as Horace his Sabine farm, and the fountain of Bandusia, the Sacred Way, and the Temple of Vesta. It is hardly too much to say that you may

fix on the scene of every little incident with which he has enriched our literature, such as "The Dog and the Water-lily." I could show the reader the very spot. There are two localities, however, on which I must say a word. The first is the bridge leading from Olney to Emberton, with the delightful description of which he begins Book IV. of the "Task," "The Winter Evening." The post was coming in from Newport Pagnell; the poet's residence is just beyond the poplar-tree in the centre, very near as the bird flies, and the "twanging horn" would, therefore, be quite audible as he sat in his little parlour; and he describes himself as settling down cosily for the evening with the newspaper which the postboy has brought him. In the picture before us the left path goes up to Weston; in the distance, on the right, is Clifton. But there is another spot, absolutely fixed, which to me was most interesting, moving to pity and sympathy when I lighted on it. I have to go back for a minute before coming to it.

The "Task" was published in June, 1785, and one of the joys connected with it was the renewal of his intimacy with his relations. Lady Hesketh was his first cousin, and the sister of his youthful love, Theodora Cowper. The breaking of his engagement with her had been followed by the cessation of all intercourse. Lady Hesketh had gone abroad in 1767, and had become a widow in 1782. She had retained a friendly feeling for him, and had contributed to make him an annual allowance; but no letter passed

between them for nineteen years, and he did not send her, or indeed any of his relations, his poems as they appeared. Soon after the publication of the "Task" he was delighted one morning to receive from her a letter of congratulation; he answered it with enthusiasm, and from that time for several years the correspondence was carried on busily. His delight culminated when she wrote proposing to pay him a visit in the following June (1786). "June," he replied, "has never been so wished for since June was made." Anl this brings me to the second locality to which



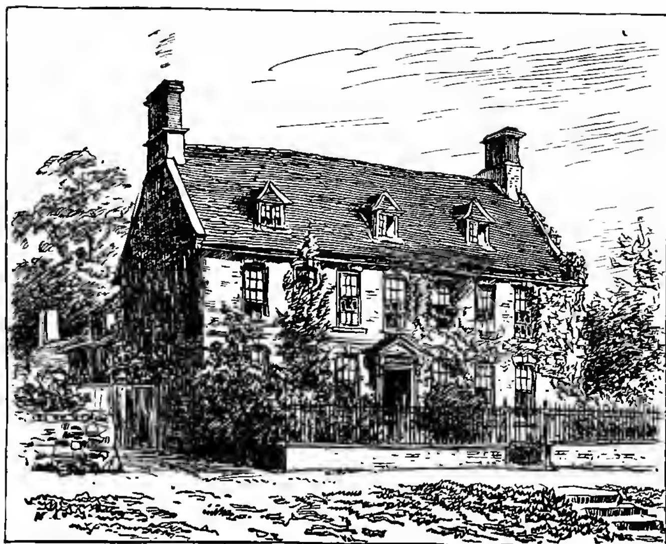
TO WESTON UNDERWOOD.

I have made reference. On the 12th of June he was expecting her; she was to reside at the vicarage, and her servant, Mrs. Eaton, was to stay with Cowper, and he wrote to give her some directions about her journey. She was coming through Newport Pagnel, therefore over the long bridge. The road passes round to the right into the market-place. The traveller would in the ordinary course of things enter that way, and so drive to our poet's front door. But he entreats that Mrs. Eaton shall not come this way.

"Soon after you shall have entered Olney, you will find an opening on your right hand. It is a lane that leads to our dwelling. There your coach may stop and set down Mrs. Eaton; when she has walked about forty yards she will spy a green gate and rails on her left hand; and when she has opened the gate and reached the house door she will find herself at home."

There is the lane just as described; he is right about his distance; Mrs. Eaton would pass his garden and summer-house at the end of her forty yards' walk. But if instead of setting her down at the end of this lane the coach had simply turned into the market-place it would have pulled up at the very front door. Why should it not? Because the poor poet was so sensitive that he would fain have no observers of any visitors to him.

Lady Hesketh—though at the first moment of meeting his courage failed him, and he would not even speak—soon brightened him up, and he wrote to a



COWPER'S HOUSE, WESTON UNDERWOOD.

friend that he had never been so happy since he came to Olney. The clouds, indeed, soon returned after the rain ; but not until his cousin had persuaded him that Olney was a dull place to live in. It was muddy and often flooded, and in winter months he was sometimes a prisoner for days together. The Throckmortons had a house to let at Weston Underwood, and offered it to them. Lady Hesketh furnished the money for the removal, and thither they went after nineteen years' residence at Olney.

Our illustration shows us their new residence, and again we see it now as it was then. It is on the high road, a little beyond the gates which led to the

Throckmortons' mansion. Here he and his companion lived from November 1786, till July 30, 1795. There were some sunny days during that period, but they were fewer than at Olney. He had only been a fortnight at Weston when his friend William Unwin, making a tour through the southern counties, was seized with fever, and died at Winchester. He is buried in the Cathedral; I found the stone which covers him in the nave a few weeks ago. The loss told upon Cowper heavily, and he had a paroxysm of furious madness. He slowly recovered, and made some new friends. The first was a young student from Glasgow, named Rose, who was deputed by that University to deliver him a congratulatory message, and came thither on his way to London to do it in person. The visit is noticeable because Rose gave him a copy of Burns's first published volume, and he expressed to a friend his sense of its remarkable merit. The friendship with Rose proved lasting; next came to him John Johnson, his "first-cousin once removed" on his mother's side. This proved a most valuable acquisition. The young man brought some poetry for his judgment, which was unfavourable; but, nevertheless, "Johnny," as he soon came to be called, was delighted with his genial relative, and soon after brought him the famous portrait of his mother, of which we have already spoken. At Weston, Cowper made his translation of Homer, and undertook, though he was never able to carry it out, a sumptuous edition of Milton's

Works for Boydell, as a companion to his well-known Shakespeare. But this Milton engagement was the occasion of his translating the Latin poems of the latter, and also of his contracting yet another valuable friendship, that of Hayley. It began with some correspondence about the Milton, and resulted in Hayley afterwards becoming his biographer.

A neighbouring clergyman—John Buchanan, vicar of Ravenstone—conversing with him, after the Homer was finished, about a new subject, proposed to him the "Four Ages of Man," and elaborated his ideas, "Infancy—Youth—Manhood—Old Age," in a really thoughtful and suggestive essay, which interested Cowper so much that he set to work upon it. The manuscript of this essay, with two lines in Cowper's handwriting, is in my possession, through the kindness of Mr. Greatheed, the grandson of another of the poet's friends.

It was quite an event in Cowper's life when he came out of his retirement for six weeks to visit Hayley at his home on the Sussex coast. But now the heavy clouds had developed into storm. Mrs. Unwin was stricken with paralysis, and round and round the little garden at the back of the house at Weston the poor querulous, stricken woman, unable to walk or to read, insisted on his dragging her day after day in a Bath chair. Within doors she sat silently by the fire. Lady Hesketh might have wrought some deliverance for him, but she was ill and had been ordered to Bath. Hayley gives a graphic

and terrible description of the couple when he visited them in 1794. Cowper was now again a raging lunatic, refusing to eat, and insisting from hour to hour that the devil was coming to fetch him. Lady Hesketh returned, but the case was now past treatment. The only hope was in change of scene, and Johnny Johnson came and fetched them away to Norfolk. The poor poet, unseen by any one, wrote on a window shutter, in a bedroom looking into the garden, these two lines :—

> "Farewell, dear scenes, for ever closed to me ;
> Oh ! for what sorrows must I now exchange ye."

They were not even noticed until some years had passed, when Mr. Higgins discovered them. There is no doubt of their being in Cowper's handwriting, and they are carefully preserved.

The two invalids were moved two or three times by their affectionate friend Johnson, in the vain hope of finding some relief for them. The final settlement was at East Dereham, in Norfolk, and here, in December 1796, Mrs. Unwin died. Mr. Buchanan was anxious for him to return with Johnson to Weston. Some very interesting and considerate letters from him are in my possession appended to the document to which I just now referred.

But Cowper was past moving any more. He lived three years longer, lovingly tended by Johnson, gentle, and, on the whole, more cheerful, than he had been when he left Weston. He was sad and gloomy, no doubt, but yet was able to shake off his misery when

MONUMENT AND GRAVE OF COWPER IN THE CHAPEL OF ST. EDMUND, EAST DEREHAM CHURCH.

occupied in revising his poems, a work which Johnson found the best occupation for him. Now and then he would even write a new piece; his "Montes Gla-

ciales," the English translation of it, and "The Castaway" were all written the year before he died. The last, suggested by an incident which he had read in "Anson's Voyage," is one of the most finished, and the most powerful, of all his productions.

He died on St. Mark's Day, 1800, and is buried in St. Edmund's Chapel, East Dereham Church. The touching inscription on his monument was written by Hayley. It runs thus:—

"IN MEMORY OF

WILLIAM COWPER, ESQ.,

BORN IN HEREFORDSHIRE, 1731,

BURIED IN THIS CHURCH, 1800.

"Ye who with warmth the public triumph feel
Of talents dignified by sacred zeal,
Here, to Devotion's bard devoutly just,
Pay your fond tribute due to Cowper's dust.
England, exulting in his spotless fame,
Ranks with her dearest sons his favourite name:
Sense, fancy, wit, suffice not all to raise
So clear a title to affection's praise.
His highest honours to the heart belong;
His virtues formed the magic of his song."

WILLIAM BENHAM.

THOMSON.

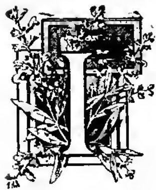
James Thomson,

Born September 11, 1700; died August 27, 1748.

"*Long, long thy stone and pointed clay*
Shall melt the musing Briton's eyes;
Oh, vales and wild woods, shall he say,
In yonder grave your Druid lies."

William Collins.
"On the death of Mr. Thomson."

THOMSON.



IN any list of the English classics Thomson's name has an assured and honoured place. A monument in Westminster Abbey beside Shakespeare's, a chapter in Johnson's "Lives of the Poets," innumerable editions of "The Seasons," and a page in every school collection of literary specimens, are obvious proofs of this assurance. His merits, however, have not been exempt from the usual experience of standard authors. They have had their day of full recognition, and they have had their intervals of partial neglect. He was one of those happy poets on whom Fame calls in their lifetime; but the springtide of his power was probably attained towards the close of the eighteenth century, when he had already been fifty years in his grave. New influences then began to play, which partly absorbed his own, and partly carried the popular imagination into new channels. And just at present

Thomson's reputation is a pious tradition rather than a visibly potential reality.

It seems strange that this should be so, in an age which gives unmistakable and increasing welcome to the apostles of the new naturalism; for it is no exaggeration to say that the discoveries of Jefferies and of Burroughs were well-known to Thomson, and that Thomson presented his transcripts of nature with perfect truth, freedom, and beauty, and sublimity of effect. One of the secrets of Thomson's power our new naturalists possess, namely, fulness of knowledge, acquired by careful sympathetic study; but for the felicity of his expression of the phenomena of nature he stands to this day unmatched. His pages are broadcast with these felicities of phrase. Such are his castled clouds, for ever flashing round a summer sky; the sleepy horror of his waving pines; the still song of his harvests, breathed into the reaper's heart; his sturdy boy grasping the indignant ram by the twisted horns; his lively-shining leopard, the beauty of the waste; his ruddy maid, full as the summer rose blown by prevailing suns; the slender feet of his red-breast, attracted by the table crumbs; his light-footed dews; his isles amid the melancholy main. One does not need to pick and choose; they start from the opened leaves.

How often since Thomson wrote have our prose writers brought their descriptions to a climax by a loan from "The Seasons"! No one who has read Hugh Miller's marvellous realisation of unwitnessed

aspects of the earth in geological time can forget the telling effect with which one grand scene is flashed and for ever fixed upon the imagination by Thomson's magnificent line—

"A shoreless ocean tumbles round the globe."

Thomson's verbal felicities have all the appearance of spontaneity. They sprang from the peculiar character of his relation to nature. This relationship was unique. No poet, no writer, ever so completely and healthily identified himself with nature. Nature absorbed him, if one may use the word. In nature he lived, and knew no other life. It was not the mystic union into which Wordsworth sought from time to time to enter, nor that in which Shelley dreamed away his few mortal years. There was more, much more, of the frank enjoyment of the schoolboy wandering in the woods in Thomson's intercourse with nature than the rapt enthusiasm of mystic or metaphysician.

Neither was his attitude that of the teacher. Natural science he liked: it was his favourite study at Edinburgh University; and often in his poetry he gave his mind free range in speculation of the causes by which nature works her effects, and of the operations by which her effects are accomplished. But science was as completely subordinated to poetry in Thomson as it was in Milton. Everybody knows why Milton, with good knowledge of the Copernican theory of the build of the universe, yet preferred the

Ptolemaic system of sphere-within-sphere. And if Thomson, by an amusing transition, altered his explanation of the origin of fountains in a later edition of "Autumn," it was probably done, less for the purpose of bringing it into accord with scientific truth, than for the pleasure of indulging his imagination in a congenial freedom of range which the true theory so amply presented. The result was a noble effort of poetry conceived and executed with something approaching to Miltonic grandeur.

But he was no spy upon nature, eager to make discoveries and, like the new naturalists, finding his reward in being first to make report of them to the dwellers in towns. The wealth of boon nature was at his command, but he did not seek to trade in it. To him to know nature was its own inexpressible reward. Almost as little was his attitude that of the preacher. He did not greatly care to pose as the religious interpreter of natural emblems and the expounder of natural mysteries. He assumed, indeed, the *rôle*, but with a reluctance which his elaborate rhetorical flourishes fail to hide.

At those times he did not speak as one moved by genuine inspiration, but as he was forced by a sense of conventional duty. Too often, indeed, with his splendid abilities for higher work, did he take up the tone of the preacher, but only when he had reflected that the inculcation of some moral would in this or that connection be expected from him. It did not come spontaneously; it was merely assumed, mostly

THOMSON.

(From the painting in the National Portrait Gallery.)

in deference to the usage of an age which was nothing if it was not didactic, but partly also in a fancied appropriateness to his professional status as a divinity student who had not yet quite given up hopes of licence. Hence the occurrence of those passages in "Winter" and in "Spring" which expose him to the charges of prolixity and tumidity. The charges are manifestly unfair when brought, as they too often are, against his style as a whole. In fact he is never prolix except when he suffers himself to be forced into the preaching strain. When he has free choice of his theme, and more especially when the subject is exceptionally familiar and congenial to him, he loses all suspicion of self-consciousness, and is at once natural and original, picturesque always, and often melodious. Is there, for example, a single word or turn of phrase to which exception could be justly taken to-day in his picture of the winter robin? And what can match in melody the few numbers—to take an instance, not often quoted, among many that offer—with which the poet heralds the visionary advent of summer?

> "From brightening fields of ether fair disclosed,
> Child of the sun, refulgent Summer comes!"

Thomson is at his best when obeying the gentle impulses of his own genius, and then he conveys the idea of one who is careless or rather unconscious of an audience, and sings only for his own delight. A story, probably apocryphal, is told of him which

illustrates perfectly his natural attitude towards the great ear of the public. He was in a skiff on the Thames one moonlighted evening of summer, and, like Thyrsis in the Masque, was meditating his rural minstrelsy in some sweet Caledonian air on the flute. A little fleet of pleasure-boats suspended their oars to listen. Suddenly the music ceased, and the musician, surprised to find that he was not alone, moved away into the dusk, but not without the remonstrance of his listeners. "Oh, why did you stop?" they called after him. "For the same reason that I began," was the reply to their appeal, "for my own pleasure." Probably if he had acceded to their request, he would not have played so well. At least his verse never shows to the same advantage when he seems conscious of his audience.

On the other hand he is at his best when, lost or absorbed in his subject, he surrenders himself with complete abandonment to the enjoyment of it. Then he is like the voice of Nature herself, overheard soliloquising in the woods. To his contemporary and intimate friend Collins he was a Druid. It is the happiest epithet that could be applied to the poetical disposition and practice of Thomson—for his life was of a piece with his poetry, or rather his poetry was the expression of his ordinary and habitual life. He was perhaps the first of our British poets to live the purely poet-life, as distinct from the life of the literary artist such as that of Pope. But he was no high-priest of Nature in the sense in which

THE VALE OF SYLVAN JED.

Wordsworth is regarded by his admirers. Yet Wordsworth has conceived his character: the lines descriptive of the Wanderer will fit Thomson—

> "By the native vigour of his mind,
> By his habitual wanderings out of doors,
> By loneliness, and goodness, and kind works,
> Whate'er in docile childhood or in youth
> He had imbibed of fear or darker thought
> Was melted all away; so true was this
> That sometimes his religion seemed to be
> Self-taught, as of a dreamer in the woods,
> Who to the model of his own pure heart
> Framed his belief, as grace divine inspired
> Or human reason dictated with awe.
> And surely never did there live on earth
> A man of kindlier nature."

Thomson's religion puzzled Lord Lyttelton, who was the most considerate of his friends and the kindliest of patrons, and who is said to have written a book to Christianise him. "The Seasons" reveal him as a healthy pagan whose religion was of the woods, and this, coupled with his love of nature, was what Collins doubtless meant when he called him a Druid. It is probable that the designation was suggested to Collins by Thomson himself. At least Philomelus, in "The Castle of Indolence," whom one has little difficulty in identifying with the bard of the First Canto reformed of his one vice, is significantly presented as a Druid wight. Of all modern critics Campbell alone has caught up the metaphor, making charming use of it in his apology for Thomson's redundancy of style, which he compares to the flowing vesture of an ancient Druid moving serenely among his venerated oaks.

If we give up to Byron the sea as his congenial element, to Shelley the sky, and to Scott the freedom of dale and glen, not less appropriately may we claim for Thomson the grandeur of the dim woodlands. While nature at large was his range, nature in all her shows and forms, as made or modified by the procession of suns and seasons, and not merely the trim gardens of Pope and the well-tilled farms of Cowper, the woods were in a special sense his haunt, his daily walk and ancient neighbourhood. Again and again in his poetry, his earliest and his latest, we come across passages sympathetically descriptive of the glories of sylvan scenery and the joys of woodland life. There are, without exaggeration, dozens of references to the phenomena of woods in each of the "Seasons," and the preference for a home in the woods as the acme of earthly happiness is repeatedly expressed. His walk in Spring is under lofty elms where the rook builds his airy city, and "ceaseless caws amusive." In Summer he found the shelter among bowery shades of pines, and oaks, and "ashes wild resounding o'er the steep," as delicious to his soul—

> "As to the hunted hart the sallying spring
> Or stream full-flowing, that his swelling sides
> Laves as he floats along the herbaged brink."

Autumn found him inhaling "the breath of orchard big with bending fruit." His Winter retreat was the edge of the groaning forest. In imagination he was equally at home among tropical forests and Scottish

SOUTHDEAN MANSE.

woods. Before Scott he sang the land of brown heath and shaggy wood; he saw in romantic view Caledonia's

> "forests huge,
> Incult, robust, and tall, by Nature's hand
> Planted of old."

Nor was the solitude of congregated trees only a visionary repose for his imagination. It was the experienced pleasure of his life. His youth from earliest infancy was spent in the vale of sylvan Jed. He was born indeed, it is believed, at Ednam, a pastoral hamlet in the north-eastern nook of Roxburgh, but his connection with this part of his native county

is merely nominal; and a tradition, by no means undeserving of notice, refuses even the nominal connection of his fame with Ednam, asserting that at the time of his birth his mother had gone to live in her father's house at Widehope, in a different though not far distant parish. Be that as it may, he was an infant of just two months old to a day when his father, the Rev. Thomas Thomson, was inducted into the parish of Southdean, and the household, of which he was the fourth child, was transferred from the manse of Ednam to another manse of the Scottish Church at the opposite end of the same county. A monument in the form of a pyramid, locally known as "The Pin," has been erected in the neighbourhood of Ednam, to "point the musing Briton's eye" to the birthplace of Thomson, but it cannot be too strongly emphasised that Southdean and its surroundings awoke the infant powers of the young poet, and was beyond all question the place of his poetical birth. Thither, and not as is customary to Ednam, the pilgrim to the land of Thomson must go who would make acquaintance with the rural scenes and rustic manners with which the observation and imagination of Nature's own poet were at the first and at their freshest happily exercised.

From November 1700 to February 1716, that is, for the whole period of his infancy and boyhood, the initial two months of his life only excepted, Thomson's home and continuous abode was the manse of Southdean; and there undoubtedly the foundations of

his mind were laid. No more agreeable task—if task it should be called—could be undertaken by the student of Thomson than to roam this region with the book of "The Seasons" in his hand and allocate

SOUTHDEAN PARISH CHURCH.
(*Erected in* 1699; *dismantled* 1876.)

the idealised descriptions of that delightful series of poems to their original and abiding source in the local landscapes. In all essential particulars of natural scenery the country in and around Southdean is the same to-day as it was in Thomson's youth

time, and rustic manners and traditionary modes of life have not greatly altered in the interval of almost two centuries. "Winter" is especially rich in reminiscences of Southdean. The whole region from Southdean down the Jed to Jedburgh, which may be regarded as the range of Thomson's happy boyhood, is, it will be acknowledged, singularly well qualified to nurse a poetic childhood.

Amidst such variety of landscape as the region presents, varied infinitely by the "seasons' difference," the mingled seclusion and freedom of the woods, with their endless diversity of form and hue, and light and shade effects, entered and occupied his mind with pre-eminent charm. His daily walk to and from school for several years was through part of the ancient forest of Jedwood. One noble specimen of that ancient forest, a venerable and vast-spreading oak, now clamped and supported in its extreme age against hastening decay, still stands by the roadside about a mile above Jedburgh, looking probably scarcely older than it showed to the eyes of the schoolboy, Jemmy Thomson. On holidays, and especially during the summer school vacations, young Thomson was an occasional visitor at Marlëfield, the estate of Sir William Bennet, situate a couple of miles from the village of Morebattle. Bennet encouraged learning and poetry, dabbled in verse himself, and was never happier than when entertaining the wits and humorists of the Scottish capital—Allan Ramsay among the rest—at his country seat on Kale

A RELIC OF JED WOOD.

Water. It was probably through his mother's family, the Trotters of Widehope, that young Thomson was brought under the notice of the hospitable Bennet; it is certain that no inconsiderable part of the education of his senses was continued at Marlëfield, and it is significant that the theme of his best juvenile effort at rhyming was the woodland scenery in the grounds of Marlëfield :—

> "O what delight and pleasure 'tis to rove
> Thro' all the walks and alleys of this grove,
> Where spreading trees a checkered scene display,
> Partly admitting and excluding day;
> Where little birds employ their narrow throats
> To sing its praises in unlaboured notes."

Another woodland haunt of his youth, but on the opposite bank of the Tweed, in the valley of the Ale near Ancram, long remained the familiar possession of his memory. Writing from England to his early friend Cranstoun, the village doctor at Ancram—"I see you," he says, "in the well-known cleuch, beneath the solemn arch of tall, thick-embowering trees, while deep, divine Contemplation, the genius of the place, prompts each swelling, awful thought. There I walk in spirit, and disport in its beloved gloom." It is no exaggeration to say that every minute he could spare—and he managed to spare many—during that part of his life which he spent in Scotland, comprising the first twenty-four and a half years of it, he devoted with frank delight to the freedom of country air, and, for choice, the seclusion of sequestered woods. Was it an angling excursion in the college vacation? The rod, and the creel, and all the preparation of "slender watery stores" are rather a pretext for surprising Nature than a serious proposal to make a big basket. Even the pocket-copy of his favourite Virgil is only for silent companionship. The poet-angler is soon reclining at full length under some spreading ash, watching the wood-pigeon, as, after much preliminary flapping, it shoots the air on liquid wing; by-and-by, lulled by the vocal woods and waters, he is lost for the solid day in lonely musing.

There was little of academic culture about Thomson. With the warmth of living suns in his heart, the cold criticisms of college class-rooms had no effect upon

him. Studious he was, but it was the curriculum of Nature he followed. Her exuberance was his, her riches, her careless redundancy. Her perfume, too, and not the smell of the midnight lamp, breathed through his studies. At the outset of his career at Edinburgh University, it is worth remembering, a single day's trial of the strict discipline and confinement of college and town was as much as he could endure. He turned up at the manse door, vainly daring to convince his father "that he could study as well or better on the haughs of *Soudan*." Not till he went to England did he become familiar with the midnight oil. Then it was that the necessity of composition brought on him the habit of late hours. It was in Scotland he saw the dawns and sunrises which he described so gloriously in England. The poet precedes the poem, and Thomson was none the less a poet in Scotland that he wrote nothing sufficiently valuable for publication till he went to live in England. His attempts at versification before he was twenty-four were merely exercises, and as such he had the good sense to regard them, dooming them ruthlessly to the flames when they were numerous enough to make a bonfire. It was his annual practice, possible only to a robust though as yet undeveloped genius, and it augured well for future achievement. All the pretty stories about the manuscript of "Winter" being in Thomson's pocket when he came up to London in March 1725 must be abandoned.

In Scotland he only lived the poet-life; it was in England that he wrote his poems. He enjoyed a poet's life in Scotland with a zest which was not exceeded even in the experience of John Wilson; in England, without quite losing the joy of a poet's life, he enjoyed a poet's reputation. The business of his life, if one may use the word in speaking of a poet of nature, began in England. He had come up, fired by a noble resolution: "I will do all that is in my power, act, hope, and so either make something out, or be buried in obscurity." He was neither over-fearful of his fate, nor was he inclined to rate his deserts as small. What he did bring to England with him in the absence of any accomplished work fit for publication, was a consciousness of poetical power, and a steady determination to prove it. It may further be conceded that the bent of his genius lay towards some great and serious subject involving some description of the phenomena of nature. The daring character of his plan, deliberately laid, and with full perception of the prevailing taste, to which he opposed the hostility of a revolution, was only equalled by the industry with which he carried it through.

Thomson latterly sank into a somewhat lazy and slovenly man; but he was never either a lazy or slovenly poet. The mere amount of his verse, applying to it the measurement of arithmetic, is astounding: it is perfectly sufficient to establish his reputation as a voluminous poet. A simple calculation reveals the fact that for the twenty-two years of

his active poetical life—that is, the period during which he was engaged in the composition of verse—he wrote on an average six hundred lines per year, independent of the five dramas—*Sophonisba, Agamemnon, Edwin and Eleanora, Tancred and Sigismunda,* and *Coriolanus*—and a few compositions in prose.

His industry was still further displayed in the innumerable, certainly the unnumbered, alterations which he was incessantly making in the text of "The Seasons." A variorum edition of this poem has been often spoken about, and sometimes attempted; but the Hercules for the laborious task has not yet appeared. The changes made in the text of each successive edition were of every possible kind; the author added and expanded, withdrew and condensed, distributed and divided. Single words and isolated phrases were abstracted from every quarter of the poem, and the surplus of new matter, beyond what was necessary to balance the matter withdrawn, amounted to many hundreds of lines. The edition of 1746, the last to be issued in the poet's lifetime, was, when compared with the original edition of "The Seasons," published sixteen years before, substantially a new poem. The alterations were perhaps, on the whole, an improvement; they free him at least from the charge of slovenliness, though, as Johnson pointed out, the gain they effected in respect of refinement was accompanied by a loss in respect of vigour of style.

During a large part of the time taken up in these

varied activities Thomson had few opportunities of indulging his passion for the solitude of woods; but when they offered they were accepted with avidity. At one time we find him the guest of the Queensbury family among the shades of "Ham's embowering walks." At another, he is finding repose with Pelham in "the sweetest solitude of Esher's groves." One has a suspicion that he paid his court to Dodington for the privilege of enjoying "the secret bowers and winding walks"—not to mention the "downy peaches" and "shining plums" of the orchard—at Eastbury. And even his affection for Lyttelton seems to have been heightened by his recollection of Hagley Park—the British Tempe—where "the scene was not inferior to the society," where indeed he was "*most* charmed with its sweet embowered retirements, and particularly with a winding dale that runs through the middle of it."

He was eleven years in England before he could venture on a snug garden-house of his own at Richmond, and sit in some degree of comfort under the shade of his own trees. His means did not admit of the purchase and enjoyment of an ampler shade. Even the unpretentious villa in Kew-foot Lane began to be insufferably like a residence in town. After seven years' occupancy of it he wrote: "I have lived so long in the noise of the town (or at least its distant din) that I begin to forget what retirement is." The real or imagined seclusion of a wood was a necessary condition of his poetising. Dodington expected

THE THAMES VALLEY FROM RICHMOND HILL.

great things in the way of poetry when Thomson set out on a tour of Europe; the poet was scarcely across the Channel when he naïvely wrote to his big patron that he had left his Muse behind him, and that probably she would remain in the woods of Eastbury till his return. His inspiration was in the woods: "The Muses," he wrote to Lord Lyttelton, "whom you obligingly say I shall bring along with me, I shall find with you—

'In the Worcestershire dale with woods o'erhung'—

the Muses of the great simple country, not the little fine-lady Muses of Richmond Hill."

Fond of solitude, and finding genuine satisfaction in the enjoyment of it, Thomson was by no means averse to society. He was, indeed, an eminently sociable man. His power of making friendships was remarkable, and, what is still more remarkable, he made none which he did not retain. Constancy in his attachments was an essential feature of his conduct. Men of all dispositions—even the frivolous, the jealous, and the irritable—felt at home in his company. He did not make a single enemy, even among his poetic brethren. He was "that right friendly bard" to every one of them. Even at Twickenham there was a standing rule for the servants that Mr. Pope was always at home to Mr. Thomson. He can hardly be said to have chosen his friends; they were rather attracted to him, and, though in his heart he had special favourites, he was of too genial a dis-

VIEW OF POPE'S VILLA FROM THE THAMES.

position not to make all welcome. He was especially true to his early friends, to those who had known him before he became known to the world, the Cranstouns and Mass Johns of his native Teviotdale, the Mallochs and Armstrongs who accompanied him to England. To the members of his family he was the kindest of brothers. His friendship did not take the form of letters or visits, but his silence or absence was no proof of any decay of affection. "Do not imagine," he wrote, "that because I am a bad correspondent that I can ever prove an unkind friend or brother."

It is to be regretted, for the sake of his own reputation, that he did not maintain a more active correspondence with Scotland. A few visits to his native land, after English recognition of his genius, would have awakened in his countrymen that personal affection which was the one thing wanting to make him as dear to the national heart of Scotland as ever was Scott or perhaps even Burns. Once only, a few months before his death in August 1748, he seri-

ously meditated a return to Scotland. The visit might have given him a new lease of life, new hopes, new themes for poetical treatment; but the despondency into which he had sunk when Amanda, or rather Amanda's family, threw him over, was too deep for the exertion, and the visit remained unpaid.

POPE'S VILLA AT TWICKENHAM.

The rejection of his suit by the family of the Youngs, with which he sought a connection by marriage, was the great, indeed the only, disappointment of Thomson's life. A new light has recently been cast upon the circumstance by the publication of Mr. Allardyce's "Scotland and Scotsmen in the

Eighteenth Century." "It was Mrs. Young, a coarse, vulgar woman, who constantly opposed the poet's pretensions to her daughter, saying to her one day, 'What! you would marry Thomson? He will make ballads, and you will sing them.'" The quotation is the testimony of John Ramsay, of Auchtertyre. Thomson, however, had other sources of income, actual and potential, than the precarious means of "a metre balladmonger." He had influential political friends, and he had already filled one or two comfortable offices under Government. It was the expectation of a post in the service of the Government, sufficient to secure him an independency and give him an opportunity of cultivating his poetical talents, that first brought him to London; he had written his "Britannia" with that object in view; and he had expressed his ambition in "Autumn," in his address to Speaker Onslow, as a "panting for public virtue, and a desire fondly of trying to mix the patriot's with the poet's flame." The sale catalogue of his effects showed that he was living in easy and even luxurious circumstances when he proposed to Miss Young; besides the plate and valuable paintings with which his house was well provided, his cellar was stocked with a rich variety of wines and ales.

Any sketch of Thomson, however brief, would be incomplete without some reference to his patriotism. In England, where he made many friends, he was the centre of a Scottish colony of literary adventurers,

whom he encouraged and aided, and of whose nationality he was never ashamed. His kinsmen took advantage of the soft side of his nature and *sorned* upon him—that is, lived at his expense. He admired the manhood of England—he was as ready to admit as the Irish poet that the English were "the lords of humankind." But his systematic use of the word "British" and "Britannia" was significant: the Scots were in no way inferior. "The English people are not a little vain," he wrote, "of themselves and their country; but Britannia too includes our native country Scotland." He became no *petit-maître*, like the renegade Malloch; it was rather the other way with him.

Unstudied and slovenly in his dress and address, he seemed to the finical Shenstone to have nothing of the gentleman in his appearance—"he crept along, unpromising of mien"—though Shenstone allows that "he made amends for this deficiency by his refined sense." His countryman, Dr. Robertson, of Kew, judged him better: "he had simplicity without rudeness, and a cultivated manner without being courtly." In speech he preserved the northern accent unsoftened to the last. His barber at Richmond used to tell how the poet addressed him as "Wull." Oratorial Dodington, the man of postures and pomposity, was offended at his broad accent, and striking the manuscript from his hand told him he could not read his own verses.

His love for Caledonia was no less genuine and

deep than Scott's: it was less catholic, being, like his poetical genius, what one may be allowed to call geographical. Scott's imagination, as everybody knows, was mainly historical. Scotland was to

RICHMOND CHURCH—THOMSON'S BURIAL PLACE.

Scott, first and foremost, the "land of my sires." The clan feeling was a-wanting in Thomson. Fostered at the gate of Reedsdale, reared at the very point of the Border which was most frequently touched by marauders and moss-troopers, with its

memories of hunts and fights and Otterburns—chronicled and unchronicled—innumerable, he turned from legend and history to the charm of rural nature as he saw it, and the toils and circumstance of rustic life as it surrounded him. "The Seasons" are a series of geographical rather than topographical poems—notably "Summer." Once or twice he essayed the domain of historical poetry. "Liberty" was one of those essays, and with all its beauties—so much neglected—it can hardly be called a success. Space, rather than time, was the element in which the imagination of Thomson disported. And yet one of the greatest honours of Thomson's achievement was the service he did in helping forward—perhaps even of inaugurating—the movement of a true union between Scotland and England. He burned to do his country a real service which history might acknowledge. He did it when he wrote "Rule Britannia."

HUGH HALIBURTON.

WORDSWORTH.

William Wordsworth,

Born April 7th, 1770; died April 23rd, 1850.

" The complaining millions of men,
Darken in labour and pain ;
But he was a priest to us all
Of the wonder and bloom of the world,
Which we saw with his eyes, and were glad."

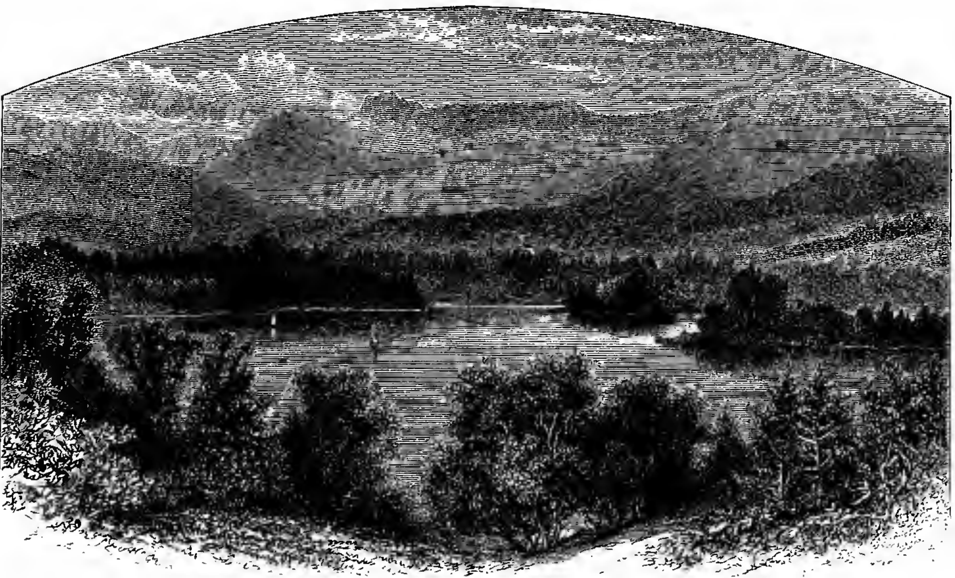
MATTHEW ARNOLD.

WORDSWORTH.

HE century now drawing towards its close has been remarkable for certain very distinctive developments both of poetry and of painting. In both there has been a recurrence to nature as the true source of inspiration. The "pre-Raphaelites" followed the Lake poets at a long interval, but not too long to exclude the possibility of a real connection between the revolution in poetry wrought by the latter and the tentative revolution in painting suggested, but not worked out, by the former. Apart, however, from "pre-Raphaelite" controversies, Mr. Ruskin has familiarised us with the fact that whatever may be the superiority of old masters in idealising the human form, modern painters have left nearly all their predecessors far behind them in landscape painting. Poussin, Claude, and Rubens left some wonderful pictures of natural scenes. The easy grace of nature,

her repose, or her vigour was suggested on their canvases with a power that "finds" us, as Coleridge used to say of certain books. But the observation and knowledge of modern painters are more detailed, and their sense of nature's life far more close and real. It is not merely the freshness, or the vivacity, or the restfulness of nature that we get from them, but almost the murmur of the trees, and the whispering of the sedges, and even the fragrance of new-mown hay. Now surely it is more than a coincidence that the same century which, in its beginning, saw a new school of poets drawn to the romantic wilderness of the Lakes by their love of nature, saw also in its mid-course the growth of a style of landscape painting unrivalled in the records of art.

If, instead of the Lake school of poets generally, we consider only their high priest, William Wordsworth, the impression becomes still stronger that the painting of the mid-century found its inspiration in the poetry of the first decades. Or if that is not the case, then at any rate the worship of nature has been "in the air." It has laid a spell on the last three generations of Englishmen, and Wordsworth was the founder of the religion. Except in the case of Shelley, this adoration of nature was not found inconsistent with Christian belief. But there can be little doubt that to Wordsworth truths spoken by "fountains, meadows, hills, and groves," or revealed by a "splendour in the grass, a glory in the flower," came home with a convincing and compelling force,



GRASMERE.

such as by most people is expected only from the Bible.

> "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
> Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought,
> And givest to forms and images a breath
> And everlasting motion, not in vain
> By day or starlight thus from my first dawn
> Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
> The passions that build up our human soul;
> Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
> But with high objects, with enduring things—
> With life and nature—purifying thus
> The elements of feeling and of thought,
> And sanctifying by such discipline
> Both pain and fear, until we recognise
> A grandeur in the beatings of the heart."

This is not an isolated nor an exaggerated description of the poet's attitude toward the world and man. The "Prelude" and the "Excursion," which, if length determined the matter, were his chief works, are throughout their nearly twice ten thousand lines an expansion of the above verses.

So intense was this poet's devotion to "fountains, meadows, hills, and groves" that he reversed the relations usually occupied in poetry by landscape and figures. The interest of poetry is usually centred round some human passion, and the circumstances of scenery are introduced only to heighten that; somewhat as a photographer will throw in a background of balustrade or curtain to set out the civic dignity of his aldermen or churchwardens. But Wordsworth reverses all this, and proceeds, like the landscape painter, to whom the wood, or the mere, or the mountain is everything, and the shepherd

with his sheep merely an enlivening incident. There are, of course, exceptions. A poet who wrote so much did not always write in precisely the same mood. But his dealings with human passion, his sketches of character are slight and superficial, compared with his searching sense of nature's charms and his spirited insight into her meaning.

Take, for instance, "Peter Bell," one of his best-known narrative poems. The author tells us it was written with the deliberate design of proving that "the imagination not only does not require for its exercise the intervention of supernatural agency, but that, though such agency be excluded, the faculty may be called forth as imperiously, and for kindred results of pleasure, by incidents within the compass of probability, in the humblest departments of daily life." "Supernatural agency" is replaced by weird scenes of nature under the ghostly light of the moon. There is a long prologue describing a flight of fancy among the stars. The first part, almost as long, is wholly taken up with the misguided Peter Bell's indifference to landscape scenery. The poor wretch's callous depravity is summed up in the words—

> "He roved among the vales and streams,
> In the green wood and hollow dell;
> They were his dwellings night and day,—
> But Nature ne'er could find the way
> Into the heart of Peter Bell.
>
> "In vain, through every changeful year,
> Did Nature lead him as before;
> A primrose by a river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more."

" A host of golden daffodils ;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze."

It is true that the incident which awakens the ruffian to a sense of his sins is a human tragedy. But the story is of so slight a character that the appearance of the drowned man's face in the pool seems introduced to heighten the effect of an eerie night scene among woods and rocks, rather than to form the real motive of the poem. An old man had fallen off his ass and been drowned. The animal waits for its dead master. Peter finds it and tries to steal it, but cannot make it budge until he has recovered the body, and then the faithful brute carries the horrified "potter" to the widow's home. This incident is expanded into about a thousand lines, in addition to the prologue. And the enlargement is effected by a diligent, loving, and powerful portrayal of the scenery amidst which it happens. We think, therefore, that we are justified in saying that Peter, the corpse, and the ass are accessories to a great landscape painting, and that the landscape is not a mere background for them.

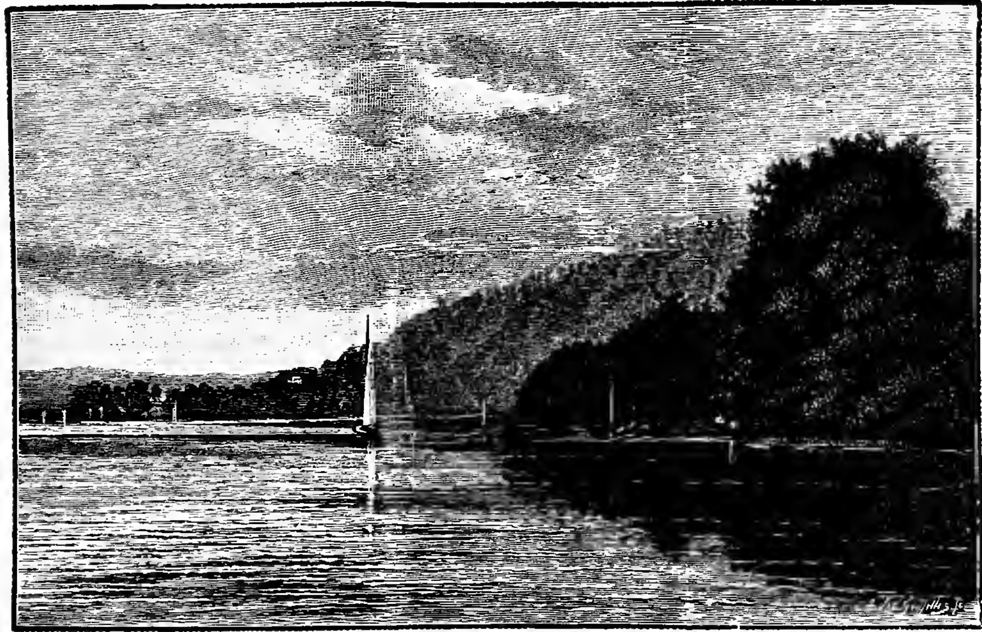
Even in Wordsworth's masterpiece, the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood," where we might expect that human nature would be the sole subject, it is not so. On the contrary, the main topic is the rose of dawn that brightens the aspect of nature for infancy and early youth—

> "There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
> The earth, and every common sight,
> To me did seem
> Apparelled in celestial light,
> The glory and the freshness of a dream."

This is the theme of which all the melodious lines that follow are only so many variations. To the clear eyes and open heart of the child, the rainbow and the rose, the moon, "looking round her when the heavens are bare," the "waters on a starry night," and the daily resurrection of the dawn, had a freshness of fascination which use and wont have lost. With fine poetic idealism Wordsworth interprets this early sense of nature's mysticism as a gleam from a forgotten world, where the unborn soul inhabited eternal light. But the motive of the beautiful speculation is not metaphysical, still less theological; it is the high spirituality of the ideas cherished by the poet concerning the communion of nature and man. He is not content to explain the vividness of the child's ecstasy at primrose-time by the new vitality of its blood and nerves. No. "Heaven lies about us in our infancy"; and this delight is the "trailing cloud of glory" with which we "come from God, who is our home."

Full of the music of this passage, memory naturally recurs to the picture drawn by the poet of himself as a naked infant sporting by Derwent's banks, now racing over the sunny grass, now plunging in the current—

> "Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
> In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
> Made one long bathing of a summer's day;
> Basked in the sun, and plunged, and basked again
> Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
> The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
> Of yellow ragwort; or, when rock and hill,



WINDERMERE.

(From a photograph by Payne-Jennings.)

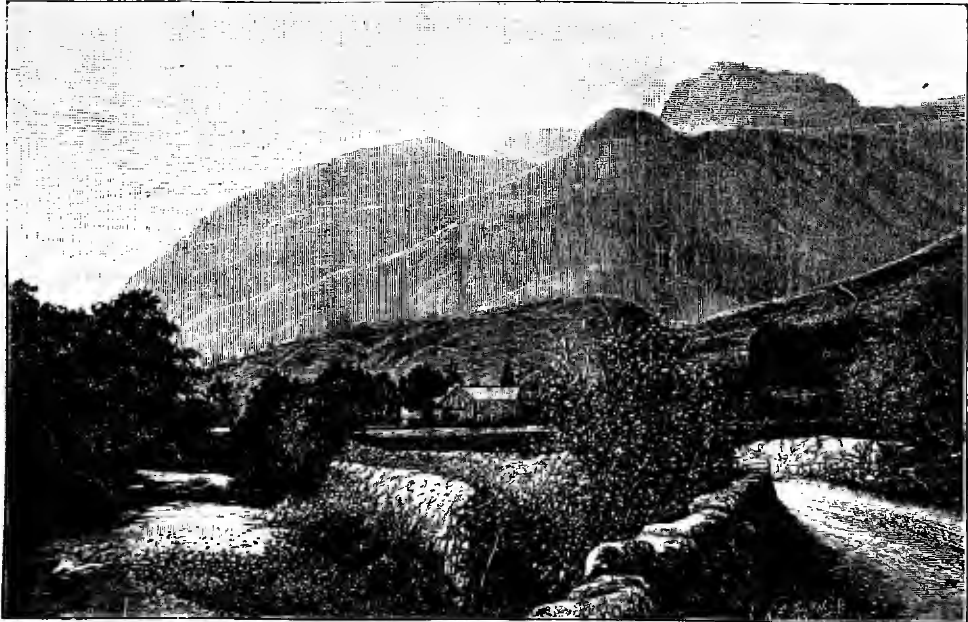
> The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,
> Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
> Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
> On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
> Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport,
> A naked savage, in the thunder shower."

The man who wrote these lines said truly, "The child is father of the man." He had proved it in his own experience. The infant that so luxuriated in a state of nature on the banks of the Derwent retained through boyhood, youth, manhood, and old age a preference for mountain solitudes, rather than the whirl of society, and a marked tendency to see more of God in nature than in man. His mother died when he was eight years old, and before he was fourteen he lost his father. Neither he nor his brother, the future Master of Trinity, knew much of home-life in their early days. They were both sent to school at Hawkshead, near the Esthwaite Lake. Neither here nor at college did the young poet win any renown by progress in scholarship. At school he learned much more from fell and waterfall, from cloud and sun and star, and from the creatures of the woods, than he did from masters. As a healthy, stalwart lad he enjoyed climbing, rowing, running, and skating, as much as the most carnally-minded animals among his peers. But he had clear premonitions of his destiny to serve nature as a prophet and bard. The discipline of the school was easy, and the boys had so much freedom that, in times of frost, when the lights began to glimmer in their

cottage homes, he and his companions would skate into the darkness of the lake, and rush on "like a pack loud chiming," "not a voice idle," while "smitten with the din, the precipices rang aloud." Then touched with a melancholy whose meaning he could not know, the unconscious poet would hide himself from the uproar in some silent bay, or swerve aside "to cut across the reflex of a star." Or, in spring and summer days, he would be up amongst the hills, babbling with the brooks, whistling and calling to the birds, or, suddenly arrested by the vision that burst upon him as he topped a commanding height, he would stand and gaze, all faculties absorbed in contemplation. Then did he experience the first movements of the inspiration which gave the key-note of his highest strains—

> "Those obstinate questionings
> Of sense and outward things,
> Fallings from us, vanishings;
> Blank misgivings of a Creature
> Moving about in worlds not realised."

At Cambridge, to which university he proceeded, he accomplished no such success as is usually expected from youths of genius. "Such glory was but little sought by me," he says, "and little won." In the earlier months of his residence at the university he charges himself with "loose indifference, easy likings, aims of a low pitch." But his vacation visits to his beloved Lakes revived him; and though he gained no honours, he made good use of his later



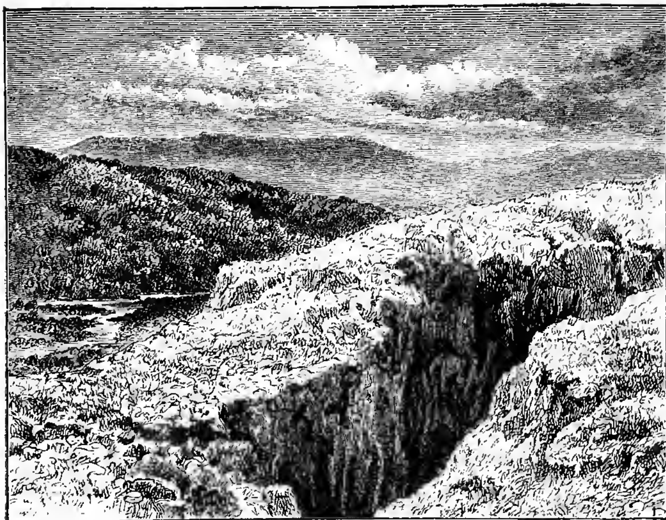
THE LANGDALE PIKES.

(From a photograph by Frith.)

terms at college. During his third summer vacation he visited Switzerland and crossed the Alps; but, if we may judge by the effect upon his poetic reminiscences in "The Prelude," he certainly did not find so much inspiration amongst the snow-clad mountains as among the green or craggy vales of his native land. Returning to England he resided in London for a time, and then, attracted by the absorbing interest of the French Revolution, he visited France, and spent about a year upon the edge or in the very vortex of the storm. But the impression made upon us by his recollections is that, though inclined at that time to Republicanism, his sympathy with the human emotions of the age never had the intensity of his mystic communion with nature—

> "Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
> Of the Bastile, I sate in the open sun,
> And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
> And pocketed the relic, in the guise
> Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
> I looked for something that I could not find,
> Affecting more emotion than I felt."

After sojourning for the greater part of a year at different places on the Loire, he returned through Paris about a month after the September massacres of 1792. Here he was half tempted to plunge into the social strife, and do what he could to lead it to better issues. It was a mad thought, if, indeed, anything entertained by so moderate and sober a mind could rightly be called so. But there was no danger of its coming to fruition; and happily the only result was



THE DUDDON VALLEY FROM BLEANSLEY BANK.

the elaboration in his own fancy of an ideal demagogue, for whose portrait we may be grateful—

> "Nor did the inexperience of my youth
> Preclude conviction that a spirit strong
> In hope, and trained to noble aspirations,
> A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
> Is for Society's unreasoning herd
> A domineering instinct, serves at once
> For way and guide, a fluent receptacle
> That gathers up each petty straggling rill
> And vein of water, glad to be rolled on
> In safe obedience."

It must be obvious to the most hasty reader how well these lines describe a conspicuous figure of an age that had scarcely dawned when Wordsworth died. In

particular, the notion of a "fluent receptacle" that gathers up into itself the desires and emotions of a multitude, would go far to justify the poet's comparison of his own foresight to that of the ancient prophets.

This sketch of Wordsworth's training for his mission may perhaps help some of his readers to understand how it was that his thoughts became so much abstracted from mankind, and so much concentrated on nature. From his earliest hours personal gifts and circumstances united to consecrate him nature's bard. His disinclination to the intellectual rivalries of Cambridge threw him back upon himself at the very gates of society. The French Revolution awakened in him a mild interest, due more to classic dreams about Harmodius and Aristogiton than to any really democratic temperament. The wild excesses and unpardonable cruelties of that human tornado disappointed his hopes of man. But nature never failed him. For him the life of God was more manifest in the sweeping heavens and the foaming flood and the marching shadows, than in the fretful fever of human passion. And so he sought his rest by a secluded lake, singing to himself—

> "It is beautiful;
> And if a man should plant his cottage near,
> Should sleep beneath the shelter of its trees,
> And blend its waters with his daily meal,
> He would so love it that in his death-hour
> Its message would survive among his thoughts."

As Professor Knight has well remarked, "no poet

in English literature—none in any literature—is so intimately identified with *place* as Wordsworth is. He has both consecrated and interpreted the whole district of the English Lakes. There is scarcely a rock or mountain-summit, a stream or tarn, or even a well, or grove, or forest-side in all that region which is not imperishably associated" with him. But it is not solely within the circuit of his beloved hills that we can follow him. At Racedown, at Alfoxden, at Coleorton; over Salisbury Plain with its weird monoliths and gibbet-chains, up the Wye to Tintern and Goodrich Castle; by Loch Lomond side and through the Trossachs to Melrose—nearly every footprint is marked by some flower of verse, some exquisite poem or memorable line.

Nor would it be difficult to trace him in his wanderings abroad; but interesting as such an excursion might be—and surely it would be pleasant to watch the solitary poet wooing to companionship the kingfisher at Goslar, or to surprise him napping before the Venus de Medici at Florence—it would occupy more space than we have at disposal.

Of all books that might be commended for such a pilgrimage the best is the poems themselves with the numerous characteristic notes in which Wordsworth has recorded his impressions and recollections. In the matter of detail, much, doubtless, has been altered since the poet's days, but the broad features of the landscape remain the same, and, indeed, many imperishable memorials—like the stone still known to

BRATHAY BRIDGE.

(From a photograph by Frith.)

a few on which "dear Mary's name" was inscribed at the foot of Grasmere Lake—still exist to gladden the eyes of his admirers.

The first "home" of Wordsworth's manhood was at Racedown, in Dorsetshire. In 1794 a legacy of £900, bequeathed by a munificent friend, released the poet from immediate monetary care, and he and his sister Dorothy settled down on £70 or £80 a year in "the old farm-house" set amid daffodil meadows and lanes hung with honeysuckle and wild roses, within sight of the sea from the neighbouring heights of Lambert's Castle and Goldencap. Thus began that life-long companionship to which Wordsworth owed so much of his inspiration, of his achievement, of his happiness—

> "She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
> And humble cares and delicate fears;
> A heart—the fountain of sweet tears—
> And love, and thought, and joy."

Here the unsucccessful tragedy, *The Borderers*, was composed; here they were visited by Coleridge and Mary Hutchinson, the poet's future wife. In 1797 the little household migrated to the fine old manor of Alfoxden, near Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire. In the famous holly grove and among the green walks of this romantic spot were experienced those "happy moments" which inspired the best of his early lyrics. It was in the course of a walk from Alfoxden along the Quantock Hills one spring afternoon in 1798 that "The Ancient Mariner" was

sketched out by Coleridge and Wordsworth. To those who remember the line in "Christabel"—

> "The one red leaf, the last of its clan,"

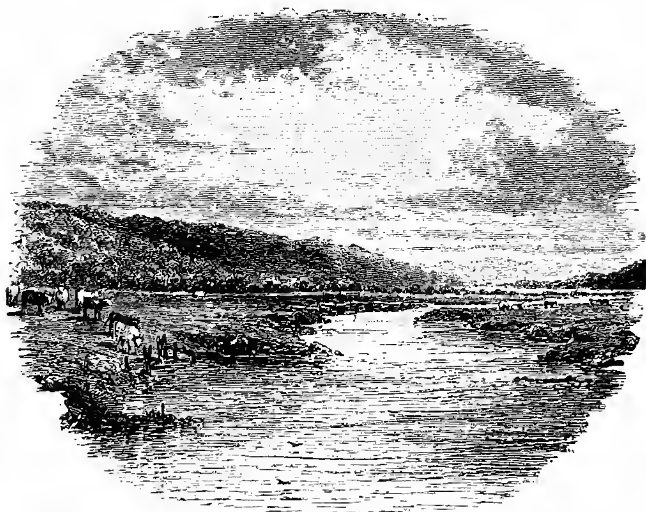
one trifling entry in Dorothy's journal for this year may be of interest—

> "William and I drank tea at Coleridge's. A cloudy sky. Observed nothing particularly interesting—the distant prospect obscured. One only leaf upon the top of a tree—the sole remaining leaf—danced round and round like a rag blown by the wind."

The winter of 1798-9 was spent in Germany; and Goslar, the dreary town on the edge of the Hartz Forest, is memorable as the birthplace not only of the "Lucy" cycle of poems, but of "The Prelude." After a sojourn of nine months at Sockburn-on-Tees, the home of Mary Hutchinson, Wordsworth and his sister arrived at their "hermitage," Dove Cottage, Grasmere, on the 21st December, 1799. This "lovely cottage in the guardian nook" was their home for the next eight years—the most fruitful and inspired years in Wordsworth's long life. Its little rooms, its small garden and orchard are haunted by memories which will endure as long as English literature lasts. Happily, in spite of all the changes that have taken place, the building once more wears the appearance familiar to the poet and his friends; and, thanks to the enthusiastic energy of the Rev. Stopford Brooke, it has been purchased and vested in trustees as a precious public monument.

It is impossible to move a step in this region, or, indeed, for miles around, without thinking of Words-

worth, of Coleridge, of Scott, Southey, De Quincey, Christopher North. Like the aged Leech-gatherer, they seem in our mind's eye to pace about the hills continually; like Joanna's laughter, tossed from peak to peak over half a county, their voices come to us from Silver How, Loughrigg and Fairfield. And



"THY WATERS, DUDDON! 'MID THESE FLOWERY PLAINS."

curiously enough, too, notwithstanding the supreme haunting presence of the poet himself, it is somehow mostly of Dorothy and Coleridge that one goes dreaming when one thinks of the early years at Grasmere. Passages in her journal keep rising in the memory: "William tired himself with seeking an epithet for the cuckoo"; "William read Spenser now and then

aloud to us (Dorothy and Mary Hutchinson). We were making his waistcoat"; "William worked at 'The Pedlar' all the morning. He kept the dinner waiting till four o'clock"; "William went to look at Langdale Pikes. We had a most invigorating walk. The hips were very beautiful, and so good!! and, dear Coleridge! I ate twenty for thee when I was by myself."

In October, 1802, Wordsworth married Mary Hutchinson, whom he had known from childhood. Dorothy, who acccompanied her brother to the Hutchinsons and returned with the newly married couple, records the event in her diary in a manner which Professor Knight seems to have singularly misunderstood. He refers to the "commonplaceness of the note," the "extreme matter-of-factness and brevity of the entry recording an event so momentous to her brother." Let the reader judge for himself whether the few lines in which the event is mentioned can be more inadequately described than by the words "matter-of-factness" and "commonplaceness"—

"On Monday, 4th October, 1802, my brother William was married to Mary Hutchinson. I slept a good deal of the night, and rose fresh and well in the morning. At a little after eight o'clock, I saw them go down the avenue towards the church. *William had parted from me upstairs.* When they were absent, my dear little Sara prepared the breakfast. *I kept myself as quiet as I could,* but when I saw the two men running up the walk, coming to tell us it was over, *I could stand it no longer, and threw myself on the bed, where I lay in stillness, neither hearing or seeing anything* till Sara came upstairs to me, and said, 'They are coming.' This forced me from the bed where I

lay, and *I moved, I know not how, straight forward, faster than my strength could carry me,* till I met my beloved William, and fell upon his bosom."

The marriage added another worshipper, Muse, and amanuensis to the Grasmere household—

> "A perfect woman, nobly planned
> To warn, to comfort, and command;
> And yet a spirit still, and bright
> With something of angelic light."

Years afterwards, when De Quincey was publishing his indiscreet disclosures in the *Edinburgh Magazine*, and Henry Crabb Robinson told Wordsworth that De Quincey had written "that Mrs. W. is a better wife than you deserve," the poet replied vehemently, "Did he say that? That is *so* true that I can forgive him almost everything else he says."

Whether at Dove Cottage, the Parsonage, Allan Bank, or Rydal Mount—whither the Wordsworths went in 1813—the poet's footsteps traversed still the same familiar region; the peasants saw him "go bumming, and muffling, and talking to his sen; but *whiles* he's as sensible as you or I." "Did you ever see Mr. Wordsworth?" the present writer once asked an old man at Grasmere. "Mr. *Wudsworth!* Ay, did I." Pressed to give some of his recollections, the worthy soul described how the poet would stop and stare at a tree or would stand gazing at a boulder "as if he saw something in it."

Did space allow it would be interesting to note the growth of the poet's popularity, the tardy arrival of fame, the influx of visitors who came in increasing

numbers as the thirty-seven years of the residence at Rydal Mount slipped away. But we must pass briefly even over the bereavements, sorrows, and cares which also fell to his portion. Dorothy, the helpful, inspiring sister, became a confirmed invalid about 1830. She was then in her fifty-seventh year, but one is slow to associate age or decay with so blithe and bright "a spirit of the grassy hills."

In a letter to the Lambs in the January of the year just mentioned, she writes—

> "My brother and sister are both in excellent health. In *him* there is no failure except the tendency to inflammation in his eyes, which disables him from reading much. . . . However he has a most competent and willing amanuensis in his daughter, who takes all labour from mother's and aged aunt's hands. His muscular powers are in no degree diminished. . . . He is still the crack skater on Royal Lake, and, as to climbing mountains, the hardiest and the youngest are yet hardly a match for him. In composition I can perceive no failure, and his imagination seems as vigorous as in youth."

Wordsworth was then sixty, with twenty years of life still before him. With this last glimpse of him, through his sister's proud eyes, let us close.

Through the influence of Mr. Gladstone a pension of £300 from the Civil List was conferred on the aged poet in 1842. In the following year he was appointed Laureate in succession to Robert Southey; of other honours and recognitions it is unnecessary to speak. Seven years later, on the 23rd April—the day on which Shakespeare was born and on which he died—"just when the cuckoo clock was singing noon," Wordsworth passed away "very, very quietly."

He was buried on the 27th in Grasmere churchyard under the shadow of one of the yews which he had himself planted. Beside him lay his daughter Dora, and the children who had died in infancy.

HENRY C. EWART.

SCOTT.

Sir Walter Scott.

Born August 15, 1771 ; died September 21, 1832.

" Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue
Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows
Follow this wondrous potentate."

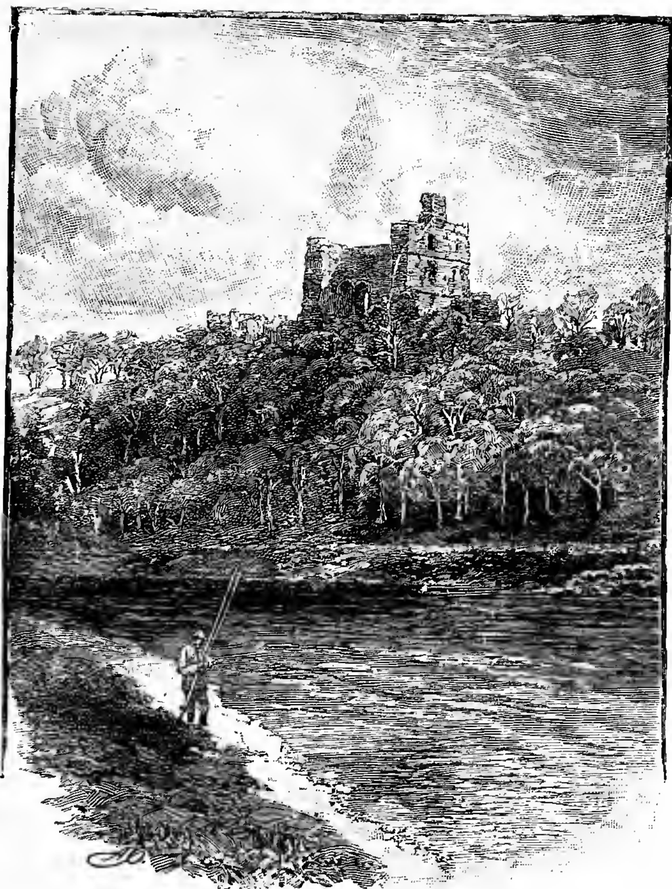
SCOTT.

SIR WALTER SCOTT, "the whole world's darling," and the "beloved writer who has made a chief part in the happiness of many young lives," died more than fifty years ago. No author probably has given more pleasure to old as well as to young, but he has done far more than this, and for elevation of purpose, for purity of tone, and for the sweet humane spirit that breathes through all he wrote, deserves to rank with the benefactors of the race.

And Sir Walter merits our love and admiration not as an author only, but as a man. Indeed, his works and his character are so closely linked together that it is impossible to view them apart. The charm of Scott's nature pervades every page of his writings, and there we see, as in a mirror, his contempt for what is ignoble, his love of nature and of country, his moral purity and that gentleness which, as one of

Shakespeare's shepherds tells us, is the mark of a gentleman.

Walter Scott's ancestors won the reputation they possessed in Border forays, and he delighted in tracing his relationship to Auld Wat of Harden, of whom, as of other mosstroopers, his grandmother had many a story to tell. His father, a Writer to the Signet in Edinburgh, or, as we say in England, a solicitor, was a shrewd, serious man of business of the best Scottish type; to his mother, a good, affectionate woman, the daughter of a physician, Scott used to say he was indebted for many a striking story of the past that was stored up in her memory. Walter, one of a large family, was born in Edinburgh, August 15th, 1771. An infantile complaint made the boy lame, and this lameness was his companion for life. In some ways it was an advantage. The child was sent into the country, and "when the day was fine," he writes, "I was usually carried out and laid down beside an old shepherd among the crags and rocks round which he fed his sheep. Here I delighted to roll about all day long in the midst of the flock, and the sort of fellowship I thus formed with the sheep and lambs impressed my mind with a degree of affectionate feeling towards them which lasted throughout life. The impatience of a child soon inclined me to struggle with my infirmity, and I began by degrees to stand, to walk, and to run." The happiness of these baby days at Sandy-knowe is recalled in some beautiful lines in the introduction to the third canto



NORHAM CASTLE.
(" *Marmion.*")

of "Marmion." After saying that poetic impulse was given "by the green hill and clear blue heaven," the poet adds—

> "It was a barren scene, and wild,
> Where naked cliffs were rudely piled;
> But ever and anon between
> Lay velvet tufts of loveliest green;
> And well the lonely infant knew
> Recesses where the wallflower grew,
> And honeysuckle loved to crawl
> Up the low crag and ruined wall.
> I deemed such nooks the sweetest shade
> The sun in all its round surveyed."

There he gained an early love of nature and of the ballads recited by the country people. Even in early boyhood he read immensely and forgot nothing. Gradually he became strong, and was sent to school, where, despite his lameness, he showed great physical energy, and also gained his first laurels as a story-teller. At thirteen, while staying with his aunt at Kelso, a place very dear to him afterwards, not only for its beauty, but from these youthful memories, he became acquainted with "Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry," and from that hour ballad poetry had for Scott an irresistible fascination. "I remember well," he says, "the spot where I read these volumes for the first time. It was beneath a large platanus-tree in the ruins of what had been intended for an old-fashioned arbour in the garden. The summer day sped onward so fast that, notwithstanding the sharp appetite of thirteen, I forgot the hour of dinner, was sought for with anxiety, and was found still entranced

in my intellectual banquet. To read and to remember was in this instance the same thing, and henceforth I overwhelmed my school-fellows and all who would hearken to me with tragical recitations from the ballads of Bishop Percy. The first time too I could scrape a few shillings together, which were not common occurrences with me, I bought unto myself a copy of these beloved volumes; nor do I believe I ever read a book half so frequently, or with half the enthusiasm. To this period also I can trace distinctly the awaking of that delightful feeling for the beauties of natural objects which has never since deserted me."

Then followed an apprenticeship to his father, but Scott's work as lawyer's clerk was suspended in the second year by a severe attack of illness. The youth, as he lay in bed, was not allowed to talk, but he plunged into romantic literature with the utmost ardour and delight. Once more in sound health he returned to his desk, and spent his days of leisure in roaming over the country, so that his father said he was better fitted for a pedlar than a lawyer. This, however, was not just. Scott was never an idler, and showed already in those young days of what sterling stuff he was made. Whatever he did was done with his might, and fond though he was of enterprise and of an out-of-door life, he was never afraid of drudgery. "Labour," he said in after years, "is absolutely the charter by which we hold existence," and it will be seen how nobly he acted on this principle. A

delightful companion Scott must have proved in those young days, for his good-humour was inexhaustible, and so were his stories; he was full of courage too, and in spite of his lameness was ever foremost in enterprises that involved danger and great physical exertion.

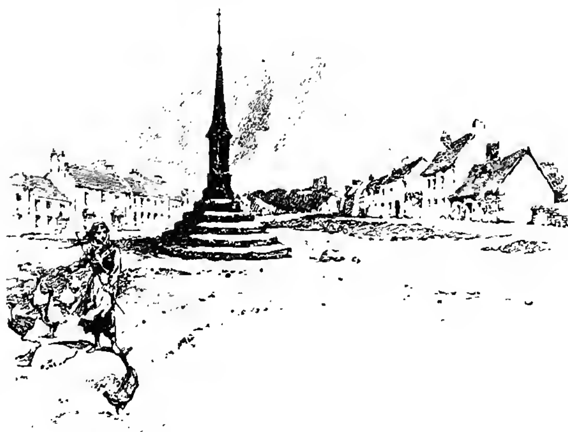
"Eh me!" said a companion in one of Scott's wild rambles, "sic an endless fund o' humour and drollery as he then had wi' him. Never ten yards but we were either laughing or roaring and singing. Wherever we stopped how brawlie he suited himself to everybody! He aye did as the lave did; never made himsel' the great man or took ony airs in the company." Modesty, indeed, was conspicuous in Scott throughout life, and the most popular writer of the century displayed perhaps the least consciousness of genius. After a time he left his father's branch of the profession, and was called to the bar. He was not successful as a barrister; but ultimately gained a good legal appointment, and his knowledge of law, which was by no means slight, was turned to admirable account in the novels. To the shrewd sagacity with which his countrymen are credited, Scott united an ardent imagination and a depth of feeling which, though kept under stern restraint, was at times overpowering. There were moments when his best friends felt that his world was not theirs, and that he needed to fight his own battle in solitude and silence. An early disappointment in love left its mark upon the poet for life; but his marriage, not long after, proved

on the whole a happy one, and at the age of twenty-six a man with Scott's love of literature and of nature, and with a capacity for work only to be matched by that of his friend Southey, was not likely to indulge too much in vain regrets. Meanwhile, by his long and frequent rambles through the Border country he loved so warmly, as well as by his studies in German and in the ballad literature of Scotland, he was, as a friend said, "making himself," and preparing, though apparently without knowing it, for the real work of his life. His first appearance in print was as a translator of Bürger's "Lenore" and "Wild Huntsman," and he afterwards translated Goethe's early drama, *Goetz*. This, too, was the period of his original ballads, which show some of the fire and energy with which the poet was soon to electrify the world in the "Lay" and "Marmion." None but a true poet could have written lines like these—

> "Through the huge oaks of Evandale,
> Whose limbs a thousand years have worn,
> What sullen roar comes down the gale
> And drowns the hunter's pealing horn?
>
> "Mightiest of all the beasts of chase
> That roam in woody Caledon,
> Crashing the forest in his race,
> The mountain bull comes thundering on.
>
> "Fierce on the hunter's quivered band
> He rolls his eyes of swarthy glow,
> Spurns with black hoof and horn, the sand,
> And tosses high his mane of snow."

Writing of these verses the poet Campbell said, "I have repeated them so often on the North Bridge (of

Edinburgh) that the whole fraternity of coachmen know me by tongue as I pass." Scott's poetry, indeed, abounds in the vigorous, rushing lines which no one familiar with them in youth is likely to forget in after-years. In 1802 appeared "The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border," the fruit of many a hunt for



NORHAM VILLAGE.

ballads in the wild Border country. It was the poet's first great literary success, and it is still more interesting because it showed unmistakably the bent of his genius. Those volumes are, as it were, the blossoms from which came the rich and abundant fruit of later life.

Three years after the "Minstrelsy" the "Lay of the Last Minstrel" was published; and this brilliant and picturesque poem made Scott's name familiar all

over England. How well he deserved his fame I shall afterwards try to show. The sale of the "Lay" was immense, that of "Marmion," which followed in three years, still larger, and this, followed by the "Lady of the Lake," raised Scott's reputation to the highest point as a writer of verse. He took the reading world captive, obtained such sums for his work as no poet had ever before received, and yet showed no sign of elation at this unbounded popularity. Literary vanity is the foible of weak men. Scott was one of the manliest, and, indeed, so far from being proud of his verse was inclined to underestimate it. When his little girl was asked how she liked the "Lady of the Lake," she replied with perfect simplicity, "Oh, I have not read it; papa says there is nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry." The story is told also of his eldest boy coming home from the High School at Edinburgh with blood upon his cheeks. He had been fighting with a boy who had called him a lassie. On inquiry it turned out that he had been called the Lady of the Lake, which he thought an imputation on his manliness—for he had never heard of the poem.

Scott was about forty years old when the "Lady of the Lake" appeared. Three years later "Rokeby" was published, and two years after that the "Lord of the Isles." Before this, however, he felt that his reign as the "Monarch of Parnassus" was approaching its close, and that Lord Byron, who gave him this title, was taking his place in public opinion. And Scott

never doubted that the public had chosen rightly. They may have done so in this case, but poetry is far too fine a thing to be estimated by the popularity it attains, and Sir Walter, who received thousands of pounds for his verses, knew well that Wordsworth, who gained nothing, was his superior in this divine art. It is not to be supposed that poetry was Scott's only work at this time. He was Sheriff of Selkirkshire, he was a clerk of Session, an appointment that occupied him four to six hours daily for six months out of the twelve, he wrote for the *Quarterly Review*, he edited an edition of Dryden's works in eighteen volumes, and was preparing an edition of the works of Swift in nineteen. Unfortunately, too, he had entered into partnership with his printers, and this, the one great blunder of Scott's life which affected him till its close, involved constant labour and anxiety.

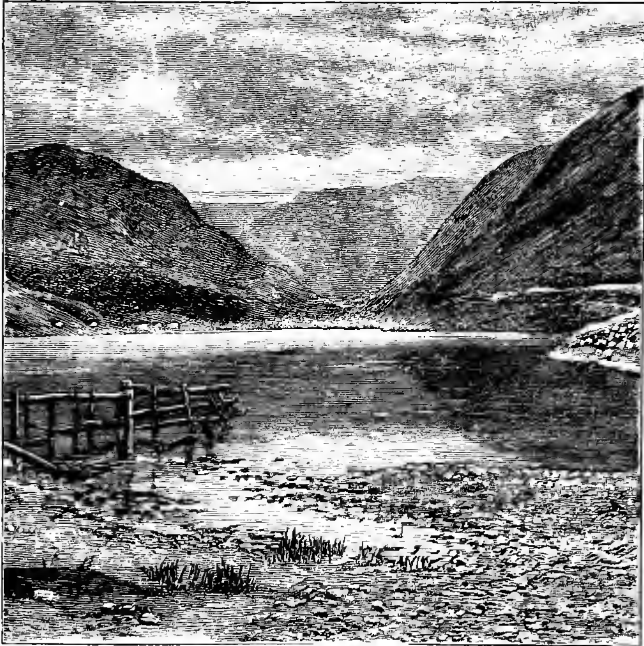
In his early married days he had a pretty cottage at Lasswade, six miles from Edinburgh, to which in after-days he looked back with delight. Afterwards he removed to Ashestiel, near Selkirk, and "a more beautiful residence for a poet could not be conceived." His biographer gives a pleasant picture of an old-fashioned garden, with holly hedges and broad green terrace walks, and a deep ravine close under the windows, down which ran through thick foliage a mountain rivulet on its way to the Tweed. Around were the green hills, and the whole scene was one of pastoral repose. Two boys and two girls formed the

family circle, unless to the children we add the dogs, which seemed a part of the household.

Scott was in the habit of rising at five in the morning and beginning work at six, so that between nine and ten, when the family met for breakfast, he had done enough, as he said, "to break the neck of the day's work." Two hours' more labour after the morning meal left him free for the day, and it was his rule to be on horseback by one o'clock. To visitors he seemed like a man of leisure, but this was because he knew how to make the best use of his time. His maxim was "never to be doing nothing."

Scott's horse, Brown Adam, was perfectly quiet with his master, but would not allow any one else to mount him, and broke the arm of one groom and the leg of another when they tried to do so. "Camp was at this time the constant parlour dog. He was very handsome, very intelligent, and naturally very fierce, but gentle as a lamb among the children. As for the more locomotive Douglas and Percy he kept one window of his study open whatever might be the state of the weather, that they might leap out and in as the fancy moved them." "He seemed," Lockhart adds, "to consult not only their bodily welfare, but their feelings in the human sense. He was a gentleman even to his dogs." Camp died at his master's house in Edinburgh, and Scott excused himself from dining out that day on account of "the death of a dear old friend." Like their playmates, Camp and the greyhounds, the children had at all times free access

to their father's study; he never considered their prattle as any disturbance, and would break off in his work at their request to repeat a ballad or a legend. He taught them to think nothing of danger,



ST. MARY'S LOCH.
("*Marmion.*")

and as they grew older accustomed them to his reckless delight in fording dangerous streams. "Without courage," he said, "there cannot be truth; and without truth there can be no other virtue." "No man," says Scott's biographer, "cared less about popular

admiration and applause, but for the least chill on the affection of any near and dear to him, he had the sensitiveness of a maiden."

"He considered it as the highest study, as well as the sweetest pleasure of a parent, to be the companion of his children; he shared in their little joys and sorrows, and made his kind, informal instructions to blend so easily and playfully with the current of their own sayings and doings, that so far from regarding him with any distant awe, it was never thought that any sport or diversion could go on in the right way unless *papa* were of the party, or that the rainiest day could be dull so he were at home."

And not only his own children but all children were dear to Scott, and learnt to love him; so too did their four-footed "fellow-mortals." Dogs and horses readily attach themselves to the masters who love them, but Scott had still humbler friends and followers. One day upon starting from Abbotsford with a number of guests for a grand coursing match, his daughter Anne, screaming with laughter, exclaimed, "Papa, papa, I knew you could never think of going without your pet." The pet was a little pig that had formed a strong attachment to Scott, and was constantly eager to follow him when he rode out with his dogs. He was tronbled also with a similar proof of regard on the part of an affectionate hen.

When at Ashestiel, as there was no church within seven miles, Scott read the prayers and lessons of the day to his household and to neighbours who liked to

attend, and then in fine weather he would walk with his family to some favourite spot and have a cold dinner in the open air. He had his Bible by heart, and on these occasions would give biblical lessons to his children in a way they could understand and enjoy.

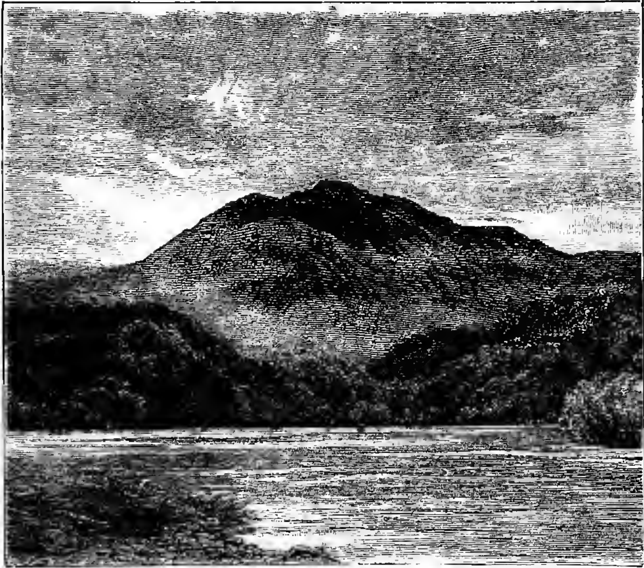
He was forty-one years old when he removed from Ashestiel, and bought the estate of Abbotsford, with its small farmhouse and one hundred acres of land. How the acres increased by constant purchases, and how the cottage was changed by the magician's art into a castle, or as he preferred to call it, "an old Scottish manor-house," which is now visited by pilgrims from all parts of the world, I must not stay here to tell. The most brilliant memories of Scott are associated with Abbotsford, and so also are the saddest. He wished to found a family, and yet within sixty years after his death he had but one direct descendant living. It would be unjust, however, to accuse Scott of a mere vulgar ambition. With all his worldly sagacity, he was ruled by his imagination, and this, as has been pointed out, is the clue to what seem like the contradictions of his character. Anything like pretension or purse-pride was utterly alien to his nature. He honoured worth in the poor as much as in the rich, and, as one of his dependants said, treated them all as if they were blood relations.

The removal from Ashestiel to Abbotsford, five miles lower down the Tweed, opens a new era in Sir Walter's life. He never ceased to be a poet, for,

like Shakespeare, he was of imagination all compact, and year by year learned more of nature's secrets, but at this time his best work in verse was done. I think then that before following his steps while he takes possession of a new world as the greatest of romance writers, it may be well to try and understand the work he did as a poet.

In the first place I should like to point out why I think that many readers may judge of Scott unfairly. The poetry with which they are most familiar is full of self-consciousness. The modern poet seldom looks directly at the world of nature, but views it as it is mirrored in his own heart. He is not content to tell what he sees, but links natural objects to personal emotion, and to subtle moods of mind. This is done in all the finest work of Wordsworth; it is done to a large extent by Tennyson and Browning. And many a small versifier of the day follows the vein of these great poets, and while striving to be profound succeeds only in being obscure. Scott belongs to a different order of poets. He is essentially the poet of action, and although there runs through all his verse a sweet undercurrent of feeling, its most prominent characteristic is force of representation. What he could do he has done admirably. He can tell a tale in verse with a picturesqueness and glow of poetic fire that has never been surpassed. He can describe a battle with a vividness unequalled by any poet since Homer; he can make the pulses bound with the love of country, he can sing a song with the

sweetness and pathos of our Elizabethan poets, his pictures of nature are always accurate, and he has abundant invention. These are splendid gifts, and to them I may add the healthy, out-of-door freshness of his verse, and the way in which it clings to the



BEN VENUE AND LOCH ACHRAY.
(" *Lady of the Lake.*")

memory. There is no poet perhaps whose lines are more easy to remember, few poets whose best passages are more worthy of remembrance. Much of " Marmion," his finest poem, was composed in the open air, and in the saddle, and the impetuosity of the verse expresses the mood of the writer. He said in

after years that he had many a grand gallop amongst the braes when thinking of "Marmion." At that time the invasion of the French was expected, and Scott worked with his usual energy as a cavalry volunteer. "In the intervals of drilling he used to delight in walking his powerful black steed up and down by himself upon the Portobello sands within the beating of the surge; and now and then he would plunge in his spurs, and go off as if at a charge, with the spray dashing about him. As they returned to town, he often placed himself beside a friend, and repeated the verses that he had been composing during these pauses of their exercises."

This passage from the biography is very significant, and will help us to understand and appreciate the characteristics of Scott's poetry. Wordsworth's study, too, as his maidservant truly said, was in the open air. He was "always booing about," a silent, meditative man, who "talked a deal to hissel',"

> "And murmured to the running brooks
> A music sweeter than their own."

With great depth of feeling Wordsworth was shy and cold in manner, seldom speaking to the children or country folk that crossed him in his walks, and seldom seen to smile. He was, as he said, one of the happiest of men, but he did not circulate his happiness. "He was not," said a Cumberland farmer, "a man as folks could crack wi', nor not a man as could crack wi' folks." "Many a time," he added, "I've

seed him a-takin' his family out in a string and niver geein' the deariest bit of notice to 'em; standin' by hissel', and stoppin' behind agapin', wi' his jaws workin' the whoal time; but niver no cracking wi' them nor no pleasure in 'em—a desolate-minded man, ye kna." And the good man added that it was "poetry that did it—a queer thing that would like enough cause him to be desolate."

In character no two good men could be more opposed than Wordsworth and Scott, and as poets the contrast between them is as striking. Wordsworth's finest work was done in lonely rambles among the hills where, "with an eye made quiet by the power of harmony and the deep power of joy," he saw "into the life of things." Scott, with more blood in his veins, did not so much contemplate Nature as delight in her. Enough for him that he could rejoice in the sight of her beauty, feel her breath upon his cheeks, listen to her manifold voices, and gain, not a new faculty of interpretation, but a fuller sense of enjoyment. His genius was fed less upon meditation than on action, and there is a strength and swiftness of movement in his verse which carries the reader with it. His poetry has faults which will not be found in poets who brood over their lines with loving anxiety and care, but in spite of carelessness and of a flow of verse too little under restraint, it has merits which the more artful poetry of our day seems to lack, and which no English poet can be said to share with Scott. The greatness of his fame as a

novelist has done much to lessen his reputation as a poet, for readers and critics are unwilling to believe that an author can be highly distinguished in two departments of art; and Sir Walter's general disparagement of his poems has, perhaps, increased the disposition to estimate them too lightly.

In July 1814, appeared Scott's edition of "Swift," and in the same month "Waverley," a novel in three volumes, was announced. The excitement and interest excited by this tale cannot easily be exaggerated. It opened up a new world, and a beautiful and varied world it was. Goethe said it might be placed beside the best works that have ever been written, and he thought Scott never surpassed or even equalled it; but this is not the general opinion, and indeed such is the versatility of his genius as a romance writer, that it is seldom two or three people talk together about the novels and agree in preferring the same tale. Wonderful was the rapidity with which a part of the story was written, the second and third volumes having been begun and finished between June 4th and July 1st, during which time Scott was in Edinburgh attending his duty in court for some hours daily. A number of years passed before Scott admitted that he was the author of "Waverley" and of its successors, but many readers suspected that there was but one man living who could have written them. In 1815 "Guy Mannering" appeared and was received with the heartiest welcome. The price was one guinea, and two thousand copies were sold

the day after publication. Then came a visit to London, where Scott and Byron were the literary lions of the season. Scott's next novel was "The Antiquary," one of his most artistic works, and of this delightful story six thousand copies were sold in six days. No sooner was it finished than two more romances were started, "Old Mortality" and "The Black Dwarf," and published before the end of the

MELROSE ABBEY.
("*Lay of the Last Minstrel.*")

year. On the publisher asking Lord Holland's opinion of these stories he exclaimed, "Opinion! we did not one of us get to bed last night—nothing slept but my gout." A severe illness troubled Scott for some time in the following spring, yet he did much laborious literary work in the course of the

year, and by the end of it had also finished "Rob Roy." Six months later came "The Heart of Midlothian," which, had it not been unwisely lengthened out, might perhaps be called the author's greatest achievement. In none is the interest of the narrative more vivid, and in none are the characters drawn with a more masterly hand. The painful illness occurred again in the spring of 1819. Yet in the midst of pain, which often forced him to cry out, he is said to have dictated the greater portion of "The Bride of Lammermoor," all "The Legend of Montrose," and almost the whole of "Ivanhoe." In the annals of literature there has perhaps been no achievement more wonderful than this, for there is no failure of power in these romances. "Ivanhoe" has always ranked among the most popular of the series, and "The Bride" is assuredly one of Scott's supreme efforts. Yet strange to say, upon his recovery, he did not recollect a single incident, character, or conversation the book contained, nothing, that is, to which he had himself given life. The facts on which the story was grounded he remembered perfectly, but had entirely forgotten the way in which he had used them. So ill was he one night that he thought himself dying, and took a solemn farewell of his children. After saying that he relied on the merits and intercession of our Redeemer, he laid his hands on their heads and added, "God bless you! live so that we may all hope to see each other in a better place hereafter. And now leave me that I may turn my face to the wall." Happily Scott

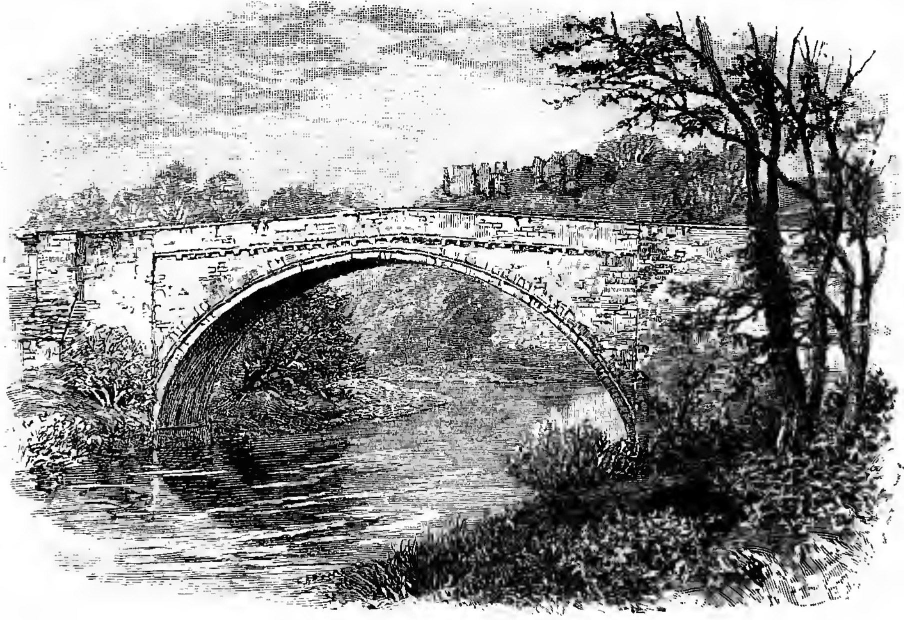
fell into a deep sleep, and when he awoke after many hours his physician said that the crisis was over. He was but forty-eight, but the illness made him look like an old man, and his hair, which had been but slightly sprinkled with grey, became snow white.

The next fact of importance in Scott's life is his baronetcy, an honour which for his son's sake he was glad to receive. And although titles do not confer distinction upon men of letters, yet as a recognition of genius they are surely not unwelcome, and if ever man merited this mark of favour it was Walter Scott.

In 1821, at the age of fifty, Sir Walter was at the height of his prosperity. He was the observed of all observers, the best-known and the best-loved man in Great Britain. How full of vigorous life he was in those days! During the season Abbotsford was crowded with guests. Noblemen, men of letters and of science, politicians, foreigners, and country neighbours, all flocked to the poet's hospitable roof, and the poorest relation found as warm a welcome there as the most distinguished visitor. Never was there a more genial host, and the most timid person felt at home when Scott had clasped his hand. It has been said that the busiest men have the largest leisure, and the saying was true in Sir Walter's case. His biographer says that at this brilliant period of his career he was living three or four lives in one. He was bargaining for land, superintending workmen in-doors and out, keeping up a large correspondence, attending daily for a good portion of the year to his

official duties, and visiting friends or receiving them with the apparent leisure of a country gentleman. And in addition to this full life he was all the time engaged in literary labours which may be justly called stupendous. One of his chief refreshments was to escape from books and guests into the woods which he had planted. He said he could work at the woodman's craft from morning to night. "There is no art or occupation," he wrote, "comparable to this; it is full of past, present, and future enjoyment. I look back to the time when there was not a tree here, only bare heath; I look round and see thousands of trees growing up, all of which, I may say almost each of which, have received my personal attention." And all the time Sir Walter was in the woods his imagination was creating scenes for a new romance, or, as he said, "running its ain riggs in some other world." As yet that imagination showed no signs of exhaustion. Certainly there was no falling off in "Kenilworth," in "The Pirate," or in "The Fortunes of Nigel," each so unlike the others, and in its own way so great. Within two years four more tales appeared. "Peveril of the Peak" is, I think, in large measure a failure, but "Quentin Durward," "St. Ronan's Well," and "Redgauntlet" are works of art worthy of the author. "Redgauntlet" has indeed a special interest, since Scott, to some extent, reveals himself in it.

If I were to follow step by step Sir Walter's wonderful career my story would grow too long. It must



TWISEL BRIDGE.
(*"Marmion."*)

suffice to point out some of its interesting features. It was a saying of Swift that if Addison had proposed himself for king he would hardly have been refused, and Sir Walter's popularity among all classes was rather that of a well-beloved sovereign than of a private person. In 1822 George IV. visited Edinburgh, and the poet took an active part in the arrangements for his reception. Sir Robert Peel relates how Sir Walter proposed that they should go together up the High Street of Edinburgh before the king passed through it. "I said to him, 'You are trying a dangerous experiment. You will never get through in privacy.' He said, 'They are entirely absorbed in loyalty.' But I was the better prophet; he was recognised from the one extremity of the street to the other, and never did I see such an instance of national devotion expressed." Two or three years later Sir Walter's eldest son, Captain Scott, was married, and his father went to Ireland to see the young couple under their own roof. There the same honours awaited him which he had received in his own dearly-loved city.

"If his carriage was recognised at the door of any public establishment, the street was sure to be crowded before he came out again, so as to make his departure as slow as a procession. When he entered a street, the watchword was passed down both sides like lightning, and the shopkeepers and their wives stood bowing and curtseying all the way down, while the host of boys huzzaed as at the chariot-wheels of a conqueror."

Rogers, too, relates that when Scott dined at a gentleman's house in London, all the servant-maids asked leave to stand in the passage to see him pass. Applause like this would have injured a weaker man, but Scott was unaffected by it, and in the height of his popularity he was just as simple-minded, as loving, and as fond of lowly things and persons, as in the days of his youth. There never was a more thorough gentleman in the best sense of the word. "My love," he said once to his daughter, who had expressed her dislike of something because it was vulgar, "you speak like a very young lady; do you know, after all, the meaning of this word 'vulgar'? 'Tis only *common*. Nothing that is common, except wickedness, can deserve to be spoken of in a tone of contempt; and when you have lived to my years, you will be disposed to agree with me in thanking God that nothing really worth having or caring about in this world is *uncommon*."

At fifty-three, with his eldest daughter married to Lockhart, who was destined to be his biographer, with his eldest son happily married also, with Abbotsford completed, and linked to a thousand associations, surrounded by affectionate friends, loved by every one on his estate, in possession of a large income, and blessed with good health and a wonderful serenity of spirit, Sir Walter seemed to possess every earthly felicity. And not yet was his flow of fancy dried up, as the "Talisman," and "Woodstock," "Anne of Geierstein," and the "Fair Maid of Perth," were to prove.

But now the clouds began to gather, and sorrows came to Scott, as they come to all of us. Good and happy in his extraordinary prosperity, it remained for him to show how nobly and with what invincible courage he could face the fall of his fortune. No man probably ever combined such practical sagacity and such business-like application with an imagination so fertile; but imagination was Sir Walter's dominant faculty, and even when engaged in every-day drudgery, he was seeing visions and dreaming dreams. Shakespeare says that when sorrows come, they come not single-file but in battalions, and so it proved in Scott's case. The failure of his publisher, and of the printing-house in which he was a partner, left him with a debt of £117,000; Lady Scott's health had been long declining, and she died soon after the failure. Scott manfully resolved, by dint of hard work, to pay off the entire debt. The resolution was a noble one, but he died a martyr to it. In two years he gained for his creditors nearly £40,000, in five years he reduced the debt to £54,000, and there can be little doubt that had a few more years of strength been given, Scott would have cleared the whole sum. The task he laid upon his strength, however, was too great, and he was seized with paralysis. Even then his heroic determination still chained him to his desk, and his last novel, "Count Robert of Paris," was written after more than one paralytic stroke told him that the end was near. It was in these latter years, but before his first seizure, that he

wrote the "Tales of a Grandfather" for Johnny Lockhart, a child he dearly loved, who died not long afterwards. The best portion of the Tales relates the history of Scotland, and a later portion treats of French history. It is said that the reception of the first tales was more rapturous than that of any one of Scott's works since "Ivanhoe," and I cannot imagine any person reading these beautifully-told stories without the keenest pleasure.

I ought to have mentioned that Sir Walter's creditors generously resolved that he should keep possession of Abbotsford; and the sympathy he received from every quarter must have been very cheering. From one anonymous admirer he had an offer of £30,000. And other offers of help were made; but he was too proud and too independent to accept any of them. There are few pages in literary biography more affecting than the Journal which Scott kept in these last sad years. His friends saw how bravely he held his head above the waves, but they did not know until the Diary revealed it, how deeply he had suffered from the storm. Yet in this time of sorrow he could write, "Our hope, heavenly and earthly, is poorly anchored if the cable parts upon the stream. I believe in God, who can change evil into good, and I am confident that what befalls us is always ultimately for the best."

At length it became evident to the "Great Magician" himself that his wand had lost its power, and that the large brain and heart with which he had

achieved his conquests were exhausted. It was resolved that he should try the effect of a voyage to Italy, and the Government placed a vessel at his disposal. Before he sailed, Wordsworth came to Abbotsford to say farewell, and it was then he wrote the sonnet which ends with these noble lines :—

> "Lift up your hearts, ye mourners ! for the might
> Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes ;
> Blessings and prayers in nobler retinue
> Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows
> Follow this wondrous potentate. Be true,
> Ye winds of ocean and the midland sea,
> Wafting your charge to soft Parthenope ! "

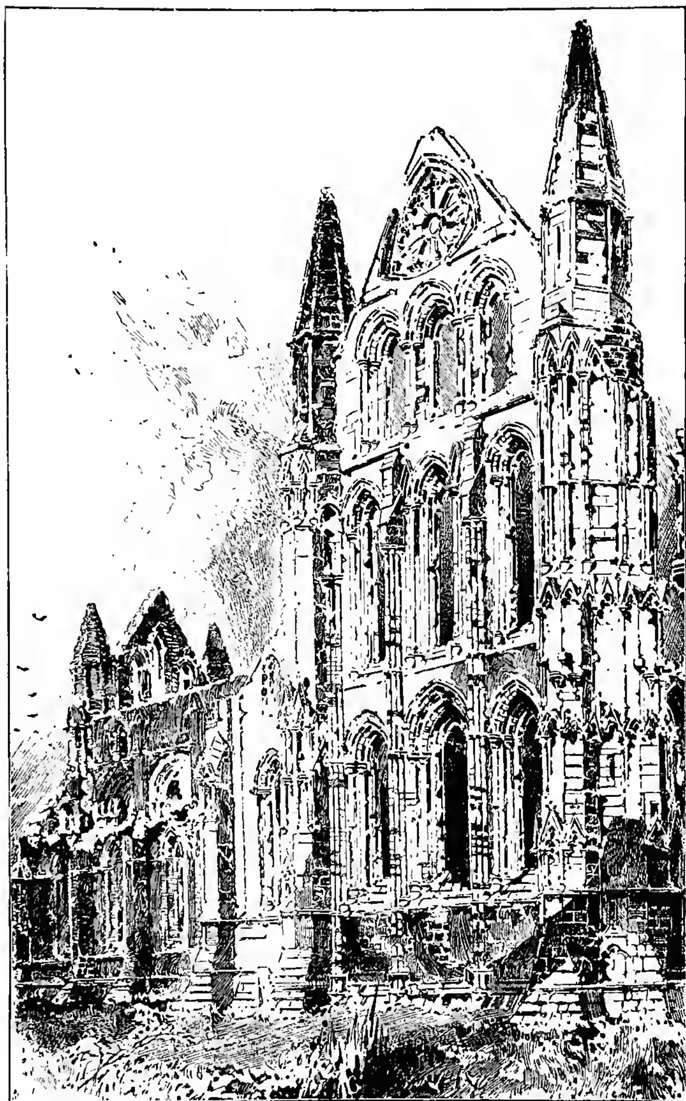
In Italy he was received with enthusiasm ; but worldly honours were of no avail to cheer Sir Walter, and the death of the great poet Goethe, the news of which reached him at Naples, increased his desire for home, that he might die among his own people. Reaching London, he lay for some days at an hotel in Jermyn Street in a half-conscious state. There it was that Allan Cunningham, on walking home one night, found a group of working-men at the corner of the street, who stopped him and asked, as if there were but one death-bed in London, "Do you know, sir, if this is the street where he is lying ?" Scott's one desire now was to reach Abbotsford, and when reaching it he was greatly affected. He asked to be wheeled through his rooms, saying frequently, "I have seen much, but nothing like my ain house ; give me one turn more." The next day he was drawn to a window in the library, that he might gaze upon the

Tweed, and desired his son-in-law to read to him. When asked from what book, he said, "Need you ask? There is but one." And when Lockhart had read the fourteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, he said, "Well, this is a great comfort. I have followed you distinctly, and I feel as if I were yet to be myself again."

It is remarkable that, while listening as if it were new to poetry he had known all his life, his recollection of what was read from the Bible appeared to be lively; and when his grandson, a child of six years old, repeated some of Dr. Watts's hymns by his chair, he seemed also to remember them perfectly.

It was in July that Scott reached Abbotsford, and he lingered on until the middle of September. "At half-past one P.M., on the 21st, Sir Walter breathed his last in the presence of all his children. It was a beautiful day, so warm that every window was wide open, and so perfectly still that the sound of all others most delicious to his ear—the gentle ripple of the Tweed over its pebbles—was distinctly audible as the family knelt around the bed and his eldest son kissed and closed his eyes."

And now I have reached the most difficult part of my pleasant task; most difficult, because there is so much that might be said about Scott as an author, while the space in which to say it is necessarily limited. Glancing over the shelves that hold the twelve volumes of his poetry, the forty-eight volumes of the Waverley novels, and the miscellaneous prose



WHITBY ABBEY.

("*Marmion.*")

works in twenty-eight volumes, the reader familiar with what Sir Walter has done will be reminded of the wealth and originality, the variety and high moral purity of all that he has left us.

No man of letters ever did so much for his country as Sir Walter has done for his native land. By the force and sweetness of his genius—for in a great poet the heart and the imagination work in concert—Scott, as Mr. Palgrave has pointed out, removed the antagonism that had always existed between the Lowlander and the Highlander. Indeed, the Scotland we know may be almost called Scott's creation, so dear and so familiar has he made it to us. And in doing this he gave utterance to the patriotic spirit which is the source of all social and political virtue. Our first and warmest affections must be given to home and country, and if a man professes to love the human race as much as his own family, we may be pretty sure that he does not greatly care about either. The love of country animated Scott's life, and inspired all his finest work. So, too, did the spirit of Christianity, although the poet's religious views are rarely expressed in any definite form. And then, through all his works, there will be found, as already hinted, what, for want of a better term, I may call an out-of-door atmosphere. The reader feels the breeze upon his face, scents the mountain air, enjoys the beauty of mountain scenery, and engages, while sitting in his arm-chair, in the vigorous sports and occupations of the country. Novel-reading generally, unless in-

dulged in with great caution, is enervating to the mind. It carries us into an ideal world, and too often unfits us for the rough one in which we have to fight a daily battle; but on reading the Waverley novels there is, I think, not only a keen sense of pleasure, but a sense also of intellectual gain. We learn much in them of men and of affairs, catch something of Scott's own healthy imagination, and feel as if he had inspired us with a portion of the energy and power that give life to his pages. "All is great in the Waverley novels," said Goethe; and it is this greatness that affects us, although perhaps unconsciously.

I do not forget that the chief purpose of the generality of readers in taking up a story book is to gain amusement. They object, and rightly, to fictions written in order to convey instruction or to express the author's views. The novelist's object, like the poet's, is not to preach, but to delight, and should he attempt to "sermonise," his book is sure to prove a failure. The teaching of a great artist will be probably unrecognised by the teacher, and is like that of Nature herself, gentle, persuasive, and indirect. Scott is the least dogmatic of writers, and wholly without self-consciousness; but through his noble imagination and insight into life, we learn to love and honour the things that are pure and lovely, and to despise what is despicable. In these days of sensational fiction, when a murder or a mystery is looked for on every page, and the reader, instead of

wholesome food, is dieted on richly-spiced cake and cayenne pepper, the moderation and sobriety of Scott may not always be appreciated. Even the tranquil beauty of the stars will fail to charm when the sky is illuminated with fireworks. Taste, however, can be cultivated, and the love of good literature, if it be acquired early, is one of the most lasting enjoyments of life. I do not know a better or more trustworthy indication of this love of what is sane and wholesome in fiction than an affection for Scott's works. Let me point out some of their characteristics, and why I think Sir Walter Scott the most delightful of all writers of romance.

It is one of the first requisites of the novelist that he should have a good story to tell and know how to tell it, and in this respect there are several masterpieces among the Waverley novels. Nothing can be more admirable than the choice of subject and the management of the plot in "Old Mortality," "The Bride of Lammermoor," "The Fortunes of Nigel," "Quentin Durward," "Kenilworth," and I might add "The Heart of Midlothian," were it not, as I have said already, that Scott has injured this splendid fiction by prolonging the story after the interest is over. Another prominent mark of these tales is their wonderful variety, their richness in incident and life. The reader becomes acquainted with public men and public affairs, with the homeliest domestic details, and the humblest people. He is brought into the company of kings and queens, of beggars and clowns,

of mercenary soldiers and chivalrous gentlemen, of eccentric wits and humorous pedants, of magistrates and lawyers, of servant girls and high-born ladies; and whether the plot is laid in the twelfth century, as in "Ivanhoe," or in the eighteenth, as in "Guy Mannering" and the "Antiquary," there is the one touch of nature which makes the reader feel as if all these people were something more than creatures of the imagination and must have played their parts on the stage of life. Naturally Scott is most at home on his native soil, and in picturing scenes and people familiar to him all his life. Yet I think there is as much truth to nature and to history in the wonderful portraits of Louis XI. and Charles the Bold in "Quentin Durward," of King James in the "Fortunes of Nigel," and of Mary Queen of Scots in the "Abbot," as in the characters which he may be said to have drawn from living persons. We cannot say, of course, that the historical personages that figure in Scott's pages talked as he makes them talk, but the reader feels sure that if they did not they ought to have done so. And the homelier characters, like Maggie Mucklebackit in the "Antiquary," or Meg Dods in "St. Ronan's Well," or Dandy Dinmont in "Guy Mannering," are to the reader as much alive as if they were in the flesh.

For readers who care less for vivid portraiture of character than for exciting incident, there is assuredly no lack of the latter in the Waverley novels. Turn, for instance, to the description in the "Legend of

Montrose" of Dalgetty in the dungeon, to the interview between Morton and Burley in the cave in "Old Mortality," to the midnight murder of the miser Trapbois in the "Fortunes of Nigel," to the trial by combat in the "Fair Maid of Perth," to the picture of Jeanie Deans in the barn with ruffians, to the startling scenes with De la Marck in "Quentin Durward," to the escape of Rob Roy from his captors, and to such novels as "Ivanhoe," the "Talisman," "Kenilworth," and "Waverley," which abound in the most spirit-stirring action. The author of "Marmion" never fails for want of vigour, and never loiters by the way when the plot requires that he should move over the ground swiftly. Where Scott does loiter is in the playful introductions to his novels, which, delightful as they are to many, may be found tedious by readers who are in haste for amusement.

Dean Stanley, in an address to students many years ago, spoke of "the profound reverence, the lofty sense of Christian honour, purity, and justice that breathe through every volume of the romances of Walter Scott." This is most true. True virtue and true religion are always reverently treated by him, and if he laughs at the eccentricities and quaint expressions of Puritan or Covenanter, he never despises a man, however fanatical he may be, whose faith is genuinely sincere. David Deans, in the "Heart of Midlothian," for instance, is a narrow-minded and fanatical Cameronian, who when his poor daughter Effie was accused of child-murder, would not have a lawyer to defend

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shop, of rustic lovers, of gipsies or fish-wives, of justices of the peace "dressed in a little brief authority," and of people partially insane, is given with a truth to nature which even Shakespeare has not surpassed.

I should like, had space permitted, to give some illustrations of Sir Walter's delightful humour; of his profound pathos, often called forth, as in the "Antiquary," by the sorrows of the humblest people; of his great tragic power, which probably reaches its height in the "Bride of Lammermoor," and of the love with which he describes the different aspects of nature. It has been said that of all the great names of literature none was so dear to Dean Stanley as that of Walter Scott; and Hawthorne, the American novelist, after saying how much Scott had done for his happiness when young, added, "I still cherish him in a warm place, and I do not know that I have any pleasanter anticipation as regards books than that of reading all the novels over again."

JOHN DENNIS.

MRS. BROWNING.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning,

Born March 4, 1809; died June 29, 1861.

"You my moon of poets."

ROBERT BROWNING.

MRS. BROWNING.

LIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING was born in 1809. Her birthplace was Burn Hall, Durham. She was christened Elizabeth Barrett, and her full name was for a time Elizabeth Barrett Moulton. But soon after her birth her father, Mr. Edward Moulton, took the name of Barrett on succeeding to some property; and the family removed into Herefordshire. The early years of the poetess were spent in her beautiful home near Ledbury. The house is described as delightfully situated on sloping park-like land, well timbered, and with the prospect of pleasant hills, white over with sheep.

> "Green the land is where my daily
> Steps in jocund childhood played,
> Dimpled close with hill and valley,
> Dappled very close with shade;
> Summer snow of apple-blossoms running up from glade to glade."

The house itself was built by Mr. Barrett, and bore witness to his tastes. An organ stood in the hall. The windows were Moorish in form. Turrets broke the line of elevation. In the room occupied by Elizabeth Barrett there was a stained-glass window. The child was fond of flowers. She was pleased with her success in growing some white roses. She had a bower of her own. It was sheltered by trees, a linden and a hawthorn, both clad with ivy.

> "'Twas a bower for garden fitter
> Than for any woodland wide;
> Though a fresh and dewy glitter
> Struck it through from side to side,
> Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning plied.
>
> "Rose-trees either side the door were
> Growing lithe and growing tall,
> Each one set a summer warder,
> For the keeping of the hall,
> With a red rose and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the wall."

In this happy home, named Hope End, she had kindly companions. "Papa was bent on spoiling me." He encouraged her early literary efforts. He was her "public and her critic." Besides her father, there was her blind tutor, Hugh Stuart Boyd. "This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848." He bequeathed to her two books, Æschylus and Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock.

> "These books were those I used to read from, thus
> Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
> The darkness of his eyes; now, mine they mock,
> Blinded in those by tears.
>
> ". . . Books, lie down
> In silence on the shelf, there, within gaze;
> And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
> Chime in the day which ends these parting days."

She began her studies early. Her aptitude for learning was remarkable. At eight she could read Homer in the original. Her mind was soon saturated with the influence of Greek writers. She possessed a rare and deep knowledge of Greek literature. As a child she lived among Greek heroes. "She dreamed more of Agamemnon than of Moses, her black pony." She took deep draughts of poetry, Greek and English; but she drank also from nature's fountain. Her pony carried her about the country, and she delighted in the fair, calm English scenery which surrounded her home.

> "The tangled hedgerows, where the cows push out
> Impatient horns and tolerant churning mouths—
> * * * * *
> Hills, vales, woods, melted in a silver mist,
> Farms, granges, doubled up among the hills;
> And cattle grazing in the watered vales,
> And cottage-chimneys smoking from the woods,
> And cottage-gardens smelling everywhere."

In the house, too, nature had other smiles and other company for her. She had brothers and sisters. The joyousness of child society, with its interchange of hopes and fears and strange imaginings, with its

little quarrels, its unwritten code of quaint honour, and its unconscious discipline.

The shadows fell soon on this bright and happy life. The first blow robbed her of healthful activity. She was not a strong child. "She had," writes Miss Mitford, "a slight, delicate figure"; but there was no insignificance about her. "A shower of dark curls" fell "on each side of a most expressive face." She had "large tender eyes richly fringed by dark eye-lashes, and a smile like a sunbeam." But when she was fifteen an accident so seriously injured her that she was compelled to live an inactive life. She attempted to saddle her own pony in the field. She fell with the saddle upon her and injured her spine. Five years later other shadows darkened her life. Her mother was taken ill with the illness which at length proved fatal. Heavy money troubles came at the same time. Mr. Barrett, through the fault and misconduct of others, lost a sum of money, which left him a comparatively poor man. With courageous affection he kept the knowledge of his losses from his sick wife, and made such arrangements that no change should give her any hint of his difficulties or deprive her of her happy home. But when Mrs. Barrett died the changes came. The bright, glad house had to be abandoned, and, after two years spent at Sidmouth, Mr. Barrett established his household at 74, Gloucester Place, in London. But there were more shadows to come. At the age of twenty-eight Miss Barrett broke a blood-vessel in the lungs, and was compelled

to go to Torquay. There a further trouble fell upon her. She was still an invalid when her favourite brother, who came to see her, was drowned by accident, and she had the agony and suspense of being a witness of the catastrophe. The shock to her weak and fragile system imperilled her life, and for seven years she was confined to her couch. She had reached her thirty-seventh year.

And now over the middle arch of her life the shadows melted away. The lingering May came at last, and with it the singing of the birds. Miss Barrett had for some time been recognised as a poetess. The *Quarterly Review*, in 1840, had spoken of "her extraordinary acquaintance with ancient classic literature," and "the boldness of her poetic attempts." The article had criticised her mannerism, and her tendency to the over-strained, which was attributed to her enthusiasm for Æschylus; but her merits were clearly acknowledged. The poem on Cowper's grave had been pronounced a beautiful one; and in conclusion Miss Barrett was declared "to be a woman of undoubted genius and most unusual learning." This was high praise from an influential quarter. It must be remembered the poems under review were "The Seraphim and other Poems" (1838); "Prometheus Bound and Miscellaneous Poems" (1833); and "The Romaunt of the Page" (1839). At that date "Casa Guidi Windows," "Poems before Congress," "Aurora Leigh," and the "Portuguese Sonnets," had not been written, and

later the "Prometheus" was rewritten. Thus the smile of the critic had come; and the sunshine of love was coming.

Mr. Browning had recently become a visitor at Mr. Barrett's house. He was the author of "Sordello and Paracelsus," "Pippa Passes," and "Strafford." He was then engaged in writing "A Soul's Tragedy." To him the soul of man was of the deepest interest. "The historical decoration was purposely of no more importance than a background requires." His "stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul; little else," he said, "is worth study." There was literary and ethical sympathy between Miss Barrett and Mr. Browning. Deep and strong attachment quickly followed. In the autumn of 1846 they were married, and the sunshine which had so long vanished returned when she became Mrs. Browning. The shadows, which had for twenty years more or less darkly overhung her life, departed, and the fifteen years which still remained to her were full of brightness, for they were spent under the clear Italian sky and in the sweet and appreciative companionship of her husband, whose tender and chivalrous love for her outlived her life. In Florence, in the large drawing-room of Casa Guidi, which "opened on a balcony filled with plants," and looking out upon the iron-grey church of Santa Felice, she can be recalled by those who knew her there. It is difficult, says Mrs. Richmond Ritchie, to realise her save as a wife and a mother, "so vivid and complete is the

MRS. BROWNING.

(*From the painting by Rudolf Lehmann. By permission of the artist.*)

image of her peaceful home, of its fireside where the logs are burning, and the mistress established on her sofa, with her little boy curled up by her side, the door opening and shutting meanwhile to the quick step of the master of the house, and to the life of the world without, coming to find her in her quiet corner." Such was her home till the midsummer of 1861, when the end came. In that drawing-room of Casa Guidi she received her friends, English and Italian. Its kindly doors were open to the poor exile, Walter Savage Landor. In the same room, with the sound of the music from the church opposite, or of the flowing life of Florence in the street below, she wrote, thinking how Vallombrosa had charmed the eye of Milton, who had first made its leafy beauties known in England :—

> "Your beauty and your glory helped to fill
> The cup of Milton's soul so to the brink,
> He never more was thirsty when God's will
> Had shattered to his sense the last chain-link,
> By which he had drawn from Nature's visible
> The fresh well-water. Satisfied by this,
> He sang of Adam's paradise, and smiled,
> Remembering Vallombrosa."

But her heart was with the men who were striving for Italian liberty, and with those who had fallen in the struggle. She gave tongue to hope even in despair :—

> "The world shows nothing lost,
> Therefore, not blood. Above or underneath,
> What matters, brothers, if we keep our post
> On duty's side? As sword returns to sheath,
> So dust to grave, but souls find place in Heaven.
> Heroic daring is the true success."

She looked forth from Casa Guidi windows and saw the changing fortunes of that prolonged struggle. She felt with the hopes and the fears of a great people. She saw

> "annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,
> Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath the thong,
> And Austria wearing a smooth olive-leaf
> On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress
> The life from these Italians' souls in brief."

And seeing this, she broke into passionate prayer:—

> "O Lord of Peace, who art Lord of Righteousness,
> Constrain the anguished world from sin and grief,
> Pierce them with conscience, purge them with redress,
> And give us peace which is no counterfeit."

From Casa Guidi windows she noted how the world was busy. It had "grown a fair-going world." England was drawing to the Crystal Palace the flowing ends of the earth from Fez, Canton, Delhi, Athens, and Madrid. Rich and rare commodities of splendour and of price were being sent for exhibition from all quarters of the world, but men were too busy with commerce to think of right, or of the souls that were groaning in slavery:—

> "What gifts for Christ, then, bring ye with the rest?
> Your hands have worked well: is your courage spent
> In hand-work only? Have you nothing best,
> Which generous souls may perfect and present,
> And He shall thank the givers for? no light
> Of teaching, liberal nations, for the poor
> Who sit in darkness when it is not night?"

Had England no remedy for the wrongs of women and children? Could not Austria release the bound, and restore the exiles? Could not Russia give repose to hunted Poles, and gentle ladies bleached among the snows? Had America no mercy for the slave?

"Alas! great nations have great shames, I say."

But however man disappointed our hopes, God was above all, and hope for the golden age could not die:—

"We will thank God. The blank interstices
Man takes for ruins, He will build into
With pillared marbles rare, or knit across
With generous arches, till the fane's complete.
The world has no perdition, if some loss."

At Casa Guidi she wrote also "Aurora Leigh," though the last pages were finished under the roof of her friend Mr. Kenyon. To him she dedicated the poem, and in his hands she left the completed work, which she considered "the most mature of my works, and the one into which my highest convictions upon Life and Art have entered." In this work the same breath of hope fills the close which inspired the concluding lines of "Casa Guidi Windows":—

"The world's old,
But the old world waits to be renewed,
Towards which, new hearts in individual growth
Must quicken, and increase by multitude
In new dynasties of the race of man;
Developed whence, shall grow spontaneously
New churches, new economies, new laws,
Admitting freedom, new societies,
Excluding falsehood: He shall make all new."

She seemed to see the dawn of better things:—

> "'The first foundation of that new, near day,
> Which should be builded out of heaven to God.'

The rank which Mrs. Browning occupies among English poets is a matter of dispute, but she has fairly earned a right to sit among them. Her right is established if we appeal to the multitude who have read her works by thousands, and to whom at least her minor poems have yielded unfeigned delight. There are few selections of shorter English poems which would exclude "Cowper's Grave," or "The Cry of the Children." There are few selections of sacred verses which do not include "He giveth His beloved sleep." But her right to a place among the throned ones does not depend on the suffrages of the multitude, but on the reverent admiration of cultured and thoughtful men. The writer in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* goes so far as to say—and though I cannot agree with his views I quote them—"Her lyrical capabilities were of the highest order; she was greater, probably, in this particular, than either Campbell or Tennyson. . . . . The heart which has always given our lyric poets their greatest power was the strength of Mrs. Browning; her song was a living voice, eloquent with passion." George Eliot spoke of the delight which the "Casa Guidi Windows" gave her, and of the noble expression the poem contained of the true relation of the religious mind of the past to that of the present. George MacDonald called

her the princess of poets. Professor Dowden says, "The violin's fulness and the violin's intensity are in the 'Sonnets from the Portuguese.'" Professor Bayne declares that "in melodiousness and splendour of poetic gifts Mrs. Browning stands, to the best of my knowledge, first among women."

To such recognitions of her powers did the child who rejoiced in her rose-bower at Ledbury finally attain. Like so many who have achieved greatness, she was weak and delicate; and to the last she seemed to those who knew her a fragile creature. "She was a pale, small person, scarcely embodied at all." She had "slender fingers," and when she spoke she did so "with a shrill, yet sweet tenuity of voice." Mrs. Ritchie can "recall the slight figure in its black silk dress, the writing apparatus by the sofa, the tiny inkstand, the quill-nibbed penholder, the unpretentious implements of her work. 'She was a little woman; she liked little things.'" But in this frail frame there lived a glowing spirit which could feel keenly and aspire nobly. It is quite true, as Professor Dowden says, that "the poems of Mrs. Browning which we remember with gratitude are not those that were derived from her learned studies, nor those that show her ineffectually straining after a vague sublimity of thought, but those that come to us straight from 'the red-ripe of the heart.'" It is this intensity of loving, generous, and noble feeling which is seen everywhere in her writings that attracts us. We recognise that we are listening to one who thinks

no base thought and scorns all wrong, and who desires to lift all life everywhere into purer and healthier heights. She longs to see social life purged from wrong, and national life everywhere from all taint of tyranny. She desires to see literature inspired after some noble fashion. "We want," she wrote, "the touch of Christ upon our literature, as it touched other dead things; we want the sense of the saturation of Christ's blood upon the souls of our poets, that it may cry through them in answer to the ceaseless wail of the sphinx of our humanity, expanding agony into restoration. Something of this has been perceived in art when its glory was at the fullest. Something of a yearning after this may be seen among the Greek Christian poets, something which would have been much with a stronger faculty." This paragraph expresses the passionate desire for the consecration of all gifts to worthy ends, and the ennobling of the minds of men thereby. The elevation of aim governs the range of flight in human lives: a lofty design goes far to secure some noble achievement. Behind Mrs. Browning's success we trace a generous and exalted purpose. But great as was her success as a poetess, there are some, perhaps, who will account it even a greater success to have won the tender and worshipful love of so noble a genius as her husband. In a London drawing-room one day a lady asked Mr. Browning for his autograph. He did not reply, and the lady imagined that he had disliked being asked. A few days afterwards Mr. Browning called again, and

outstayed all other visitors. When all had left, he drew out of his pocket a manuscript, and handed it to the lady, saying that he had brought for her acceptance something which was more worthy than anything he could write. It was the MS. of one of Mrs. Browning's shorter poems. We seem to hear the echo of the words we know so well:—

> "I love thee freely as men strive for Right;
> I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
> I love thee with the passion put to use
> In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith,
> I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
> With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
> Smiles, tears of all my life! and if God choose,
> I shall but love thee better after death."

W. B. RIPON.

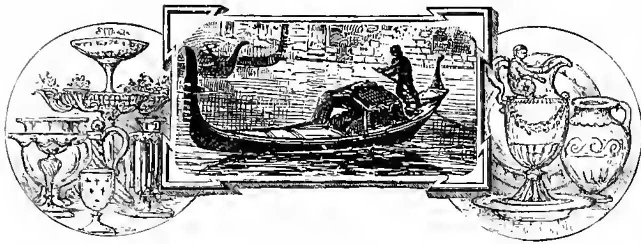
ROBERT BROWNING.

Robert Browning,

Born, May 7, 1812; died, December 12, 1889.

"*A great poet in spite of some of the worst defects that ever stood between a poet and popularity.*"

JUSTIN McCARTHY.



ROBERT BROWNING.

ROBERT BROWNING is the modern English poet who more conspicuously than any other of our day has imitated Wagner in the use of discords. Indeed, much as he loved music, the last thing one could say of the great mass of his verse, is that it is musical. There are great exceptions of course. There is a fine rhythmical passion in "How they brought the good news from Ghent to Aix." I have heard "A Toccata of Galuppi's" so read as to live in the memory by virtue of its music alone, though it requires great art so to read it, for there are plenty of rough places which it needs a genuine poet's feeling to make plain. But as a rule Browning's poetry, even when most musical, is full of unevenness, and jolts the reader quite as much as it delights him. Even as a poet he loved ejaculation and all forms of abrupt speech, or, indeed, of abrupt feeling. As a child he burnt a Brussels lace veil of his

mother's, to see the "pitty baze" (pretty blaze) which it made. That sudden outbursting of light had a great charm for him in later life.

Mr. Buchanan has noticed the resemblance between Browning's bearing and that of the skipper of a small sailing brig—the keen penetrating eyes and rough and abrupt manner that had trained itself to deal peremptorily with all sorts of men. And it may be questioned whether verse ever pleased him half as much by its harmonies as it did by its *surprises*, by the unexpectedness to which rhyme lends itself—the sudden falls and sudden rises in the mood and attitude of thought and feeling which it contrives to express. Such poems as "The Grammarian's Funeral" and "Soliloquy in the Spanish Cloister" show the kind of charm which verse had for Browning, far more characteristically than the long roll of "A Lost Leader," or the stately rhythm of "Saul." Here, for instance, is the series of successive thunderclaps in which Browning delights:—

> "This low man goes on adding one to one,
> His hundred's soon hit:
> This high man, aiming at a million,
> Misses an unit.
> That, has the world here,—should he need the next,
> Let the world mind him!
> This, throws himself on God, and unperplexed
> Seeking shall find Him.
> So, with the throttling hands of Death at strife
> Ground he at grammar;
> Still through the rattle, parts of speech were rife:
> While he could stammer
> He settled *Hoti's* business—let it be!—
> Properly based *Oun*—

Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down."

And he used with admirable effect the discords to which verse lends itself, to express bursts of the most malignant passion. Take, for instance, the following from the "Soliloquy in the Spanish Cloister":—

"There's a great text in Galatians,
Once you trip on it, entails
Twenty-nine distinct damnations,
One sure, if another fails;
If I trip him, just a-dying,
Sure of Heaven as sure can be,
Spin him round and send him flying
Off to Hell, a Manichee?"

This is the remarkable poem which concludes with—

"Or, there's Satan!—one might venture
Pledge one's soul to him, yet leave
Such a flaw in the indenture
As he'd miss till past retrieve;
Blasted lay that rose-acacia
We're so proud of: *Hy, Zy, Hine*,
'St there's Vespers! *Plena gratiâ*
Ave Virgo! Gr-r-r—you swine!"

It is evident that verse treated after this fashion is used rather to startle and produce surprise, than to fill with the sense of melody and concord. And in a very large proportion of Browning's poetry, verse is certainly used more for the sake of the amusement and slight intellectual fillip which great ingenuity in the production of rhyme affords, than for the purpose of pleasing the ear or softening the heart. Beauty was never

Browning's chief object in his poetic work. Rather did he love to perpetuate and explain the more or less grotesque forms of human inconsistency and paradoxical passion. Probably no poet ever had a larger command of what I may call the abrupt gestures of impatient minds. He delighted, too, in studying the sophistry of technical skill, and was a most acute observer of the fury of baffled spite. In "The Ring and the Book," for instance, he takes almost as much pleasure in displaying the cut-and-dried pleadings of the ecclesiastical lawyers, and the mean cowardice and cunning shifts of the murderous villain, Count Guido, as in painting the passionate purity of Pompilia, and the wise and wistful musings of the aged Pope. Browning's biographer, Mrs. Sutherland Orr, has given him credit for possessing a great mastery of words. And that no doubt he had, but not of the words which we are most accustomed to associate with the imaginations of a poet. He had very little mastery of Miltonic words, words which fill the soul with the impression of grand organ tones, and no command of words which melt and subdue it to the pathetic humility and tenderness of Tennyson. Browning's mastery of words was almost entirely in the region in which words startle us by the shock of their sudden and unexpected impact—by the jaggedness of their incisive bite, or the quaintness of their grotesque combinations. His words often affect us like showers of pebbles projected from a sling singularly well handled by an adroit marksman who cares much

more to bring down the Philistines who oppose him than to cheer on the children of light with whom he allies himself. No one could pelt with words like Browning. He had a keen eye, too, for brusque turns of thought which converted circumstances that would have silenced anyone else into positive advantages for his own case. Mrs. Orr relates that as a child he clad himself in something that would look like a surplice or Geneva gown, climbed into an arm-chair and preached to his little sister with so much vehemence that she was frightened and began to cry, upon which he turned to an imaginary sacristan and said with all the sternness of an offended ecclesiastic, "Pew-opener, remove that child." One sees in his poetry just that kind of nimbleness in turning unfavourable accidents to his own advantage in his use of rhyme and rhythm. For example, take the poem called "Old Pictures in Florence," and notice how it delights Browning to set himself apparently impossible rhyme-problems, and then to solve them in some unexpected fashion :—

> "I, that have haunted the dim San Spirito,
>   (Or was it rather the Ognissanti?)
> Patient on altar-step planting a weary toe!
>   Nay, I shall have it yet! *Detur amanti!*
> My Koh-i-noor—or (if that's a platitude)
>   Jewel of Giamschid, the Persian Sofi's eye;
> So, in anticipative gratitude,
>   What if I take up my hope and prophesy?"

Nothing could be more remarkable for ingenuity

and resource than these rhymes, but nothing also more remarkable for oddity of gesticulation. Hudibras rather than Milton seems to have been Browning's model in the department of rhyme. He did not love to fuse his verse into an expression of a single mood or attitude of mind, but rather to leave it bristling with the quips and cranks of an eager and impatient intelligence. There is a letter to Miss Haworth, written in 1838, in Mrs. Sutherland Orr's "Life of Browning" (p. 96) which seems to me most characteristic of the poet's inner style and method. It runs thus :—

"*Tuesday evening.*—Dear Miss Haworth,—Do look at a fuchsia in full bloom and notice the clear little honey-drop depending from every flower. I have just found it out to my no small satisfaction,—a bee's breakfast. I only answer for the long-blossomed sort, though,—indeed, for this plant in my room. Taste and be Titania; you can, that is. All this while I forget that you will perhaps never guess the good of the discovery: I have, you are to know, such a love for flowers and leaves—some leaves—that I every now and then, in an impatience at not being able to possess myself of them thoroughly, to see them quite, satiate myself with their scent,—bite them to bits—so there will be some sense in that. How I remember the flowers—even grasses—of places I have seen! Some one flower or weed, I should say, that gets some strangehow connected with them. Snowdrops and Tilsit in Prussia go together; cowslips and

ROBERT BROWNING.
(From a photo by Elliott & Fry.)

Windsor Park, for instance; flowering palm and some place or other in Holland."

That remark of Browning's, that in order to possess himself thoroughly of the flowers he most cares for, he is apt "to bite them to bits," is very characteristic. How often, in one of his rougher poems, does he not seem to be biting his subject to bits, in order to possess himself of its very soul!

Browning was himself perfectly sensible of the deficiency in the fusing power of his own genius—of which, however, he greatly underrated the singularity and freshness. In assuring his friends that his wife's genius was greatly superior to his own—which it certainly was not except in this one respect that she was far more sensitive to the various aspects and effects of sentiment, and that she suffused all her language more completely with the glow of individual emotion than ever he himself did—he used this remarkable expression:—"She has genius; I am only a painstaking fellow. Can't you imagine a clever sort of angel who plots and plans and tries to build up something,—he wants to make you see it as he sees it,—shows you one point of view—carries you off to another, hammering into your head the thing he wants you to understand; and while this bother is going on, God Almighty turns you off a little star. That's the difference between us. The true creative power is hers, not mine." * That is most unjust to

* "Mrs. Sutherland Orr's "Life and Letters of Robert Browning," p. 244. Smith, Elder & Co.

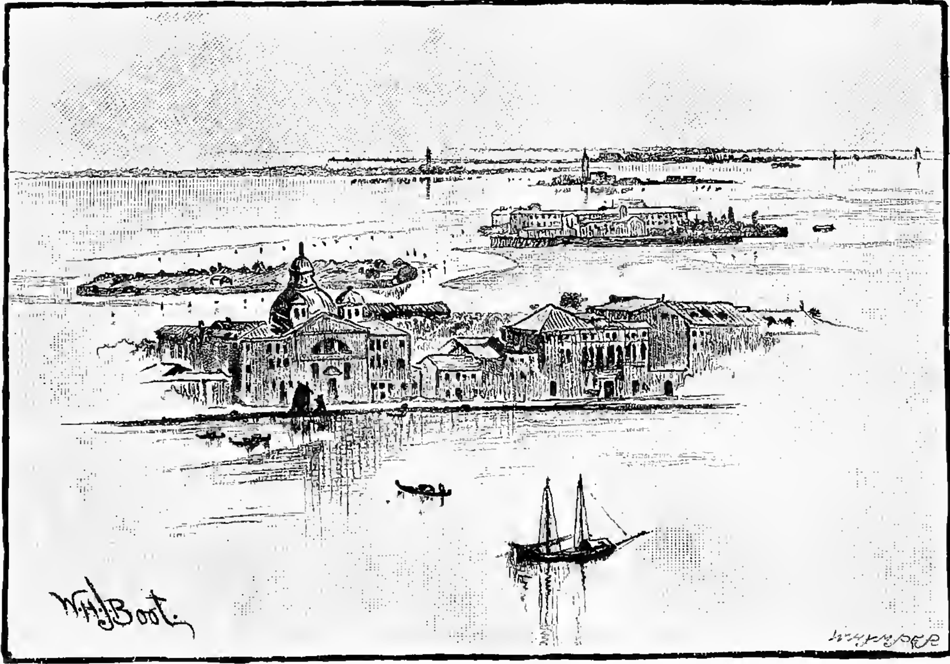
himself. He had a profusion of originality to which Mrs. Browning could not even pretend, but it is true that he rarely indeed imparted to his poems the passion and thrill of any over-mastering emotion. Nor, indeed, did he impart this effect to his letters. Even in the letters which he wrote after his wife's death, an event which broke him down completely for the time, there is the same manner of showing his correspondent "one point of view," "carrying him off to another," and "hammering at him the thing he wants him to understand," which he found so prosaic as compared with his wife's singleness and glow of feeling. In the majority of his poems the freshness of his ingenuities is astounding, but his work is more or less of mosaic work, and has not the softness and richness of a great painting. That, too, is why his letters are so disappointing. They are letters of fact, not letters of sentiment or passion, seldom even of wit or humour. His tendency was to multiply facets, not to produce single and complete wholes.

But artist or no artist, he was a great spiritual teacher, disguised as a man of the world ; and a very shrewd, and sometimes shrill, man of the world like Lord Jeffrey, though with access to imaginative and moral depths that Lord Jeffrey knew nothing about. No one could by any possibility have mistaken Mr. Browning for one of the consecrated order ; he had not even the consciousness of nature's consecration in his manner, as many poets have had. On the contrary he wished to take every opportunity of proclaiming

himself unconsecrated and unconventional to the last extreme; indeed he was determined to pitch his voice exactly at the note that suited his own immediate humour, whether that derogated from his dignity or not. He was like some of the minor prophets in his roughness, but he had none of their solemnity. His manner was that of a shrewd citizen of the world, and, though he adopted verse as his medium of speech, he did so rather to show how familiar he could make it than how much it added to the depth or compass of his utterance. And yet though his manner was thus familiar, and sometimes one might say almost rude, he scarcely ever spoke without bringing home to the listener matter of the most deep and solemn import. He was the true lay preacher, and so much of a layman that it was difficult to catch the idea that he was preaching after all. He did not intend to catch the temper of the preacher, and never did; but he cried aloud, and spared not to tell men, in his own peculiar fashion, of their grossness and of their transgressions, and of the only source of hope.

But he did it in his own way, and a very singular way it was. The first lesson he is always insisting on is the curious irreligiousness of a great many religious people. Indeed, a very superficial acquaintance with Browning might give the impression that he was a cynic. What can be more cynical in effect than that wonderful picture, from which I have already quoted, of the monk of the Spanish cloister, who detests his

superior and the meek, innocent tastes of that superior, with a malignity, of which it seems impossible to sound the depth, and who yet blends that malignity with a fierce self-approving orthodoxy which enables him to feel the self-satisfaction of superior piety? The virus of deadly hatred pervades the soliloquy from beginning to end, and yet it is as full as it can hold of superstitious faith. The reader who reads that soliloquy for the first time with its climax of scornful malediction, "G-r-r-r, you swine," would think that the drift of the poet was to paint conventual life as one long hypocrisy. But if he goes deeper he sees that it is nothing of the sort; that Browning frequently discerns as much ardent piety under the cowl as he does at times superstitious malice. Again, if one takes up carelessly "Christmas Eve and Easter Day," and reads the marvellous description—seldom equalled for vigour in any poem of any age or country—of the few Methodists who come into the little Bethel where the supposed writer of the poem takes shelter from the December storm, one imagines at first that Browning was doing his best to expose the utter hollowness of this particular form of fanaticism. Yet no one who reads the poem through can doubt for a moment that while he puts the ugliness, and the weakness, and the narrowness of this kind of faith in the front of the battle, he depicts the feeble spiritual flame that is struggling upwards through this confused and smothering and smoky mass of combustibles, quite as vividly as he suggests the



THE ADRIATIC FROM THE CAMPANILE.

"wood, hay, and stubble," which has to be burned away :—

" Well, from the road, the lanes or the common,
In came the flock: the fat weary woman,
Panting and bewildered, down-clapping
Her umbrella with a mighty report,
Grounded it by me, wry and flapping,
A wreck of whalebones; then, with a snort,
Like a startled horse, at the interloper
(Who humbly knew himself improper,
But could not shrink up small enough)
—Round to the door, and in,—the gruff
Hinge's invariable scold
Making my very blood run cold.
Prompt in the wake of her, up-pattered
On broken clogs, the many-tattered
Little old-faced, peaking, sister-turned-mother
Of the sickly babe she tried to smother
Somehow up, with its spotted face,
From the cold, on her breast, the one warm place;
She too must stop, wring the poor ends dry
Of a draggled shawl, and add thereby
Her tribute to the door-mat, sopping
Already from my own clothes' dropping,
Which yet she seemed to grudge I should stand on:
Then stooping down to take off her pattens,
She bore them defiantly, in each hand one,
Planted, together before her breast
And its babe, as good as a lance in rest.
Close on her heels the dingy satins
Of a female something, past me flitted,
With lips as much too white, as a streak
Lay far too red on each hollow cheek;
And it seemed the very door-hinge pitied
All that was left of a woman once,
Holding at least its tongue for the nonce.
Then a tall yellow man like the Penitent Thief,
With his jaw bound up in a handkerchief,
And eyelids screwed together tight,
Led himself in by some inner light.
And, except from him, from each that entered,
I got the same interrogation—

'What you, the alien, you have ventured,
'To take with us, the elect, your station?
'A carer for none of it, a Gallio!'
Thus plain as print I read the glance
At a common prey, in each countenance,
As of huntsman, giving his hounds the tally-ho.

* * * * *

I very soon had enough of it.
The hot smell and the human noises,
And my neighbour's coat, the greasy cuff of it,
Were a pebble-stone that a child's hand poises,
Compared with the pig-of-lead-like pressure
Of the preaching man's immense stupidity,
As he poured his doctrine forth, full measure,
To meet his audience's avidity.
You needed not the wit of the Sibyl
To guess the cause of all, in a twinkling:
No sooner got our friend an inkling
Of treasure hid in the Holy Bible,
(Whene'er 'twas the thought first struck him,
How death, at unawares, might duck him
Deeper than the grave, and quench
The gin-shop's light in hell's grim drench),
Than he handled it so, in fine irreverence,
As to hug the book of books to pieces;
And a patchwork of chapters and texts in severance,
Not improved by the private dog's-ears and creases,
Having clothed his own soul with, he'd fain see equipt yours,—
So tossed you again your Holy Scriptures.
And you picked them up in a sense, no doubt:
Nay, had but a single face of my neighbours
Appeared to suspect that the preacher's labours
Were help which the world could be saved without,
'Tis odds but I might have borne in quiet
A qualm or two at my spiritual diet,
Or (who can tell?) perchance even mustered
Somewhat to urge in behalf of the sermon:
But the flock sat on, divinely flustered,
Sniffing, methought, its dew of Hermon
With such content in every snuffle,
As the devil inside us loves to ruffle.
My old fat woman purred with pleasure,
And thumb round thumb went twirling faster,

> While she, to his periods keeping measure,
> Maternally devoured the pastor.
> The man with the handkerchief untied it,
> Showed us a horrible wen inside it,
> Gave his eyelids yet another screwing,
> And rocked himself as the woman was doing.
> The shoemaker's lad, discreetly choking,
> Kept down his cough. 'Twas too provoking!
> My gorge rose at the nonsense and stuff of it,
> So, saying like Eve when she plucked the apple,
> 'I wanted a taste, and now there's enough of it,'
> I flung out of the little chapel."

There we have the very essence of Browning's genius—his marvellous vision, his brusque familiarity of style, his hatred of convention, his power of combining words and using rhythm and inventing rhyme, so as to wake the reader up and make him stare, rather than so as to fascinate him; and his power to preach, even while expressing his utter disbelief in preaching. Nor do any of his poems insist more graphically than this one, though many insist more powerfully, on the frequent irreligiousness of religious people. The bishop who "orders his tomb at St. Praxed's Church" is much more really irreligious than these good Methodists; nay, so is Bishop Blougram; and so, too, in his lighter, license-loving way, is Fra Lippo Lippi. But it would be hard to give the irreligious side of any genuine religion a more repulsive garb than Browning gave it here, for in the case of the monk of the Spanish cloister, a yet more revolting picture, there was no genuine religion at all; while here it is clear that Browning intended to paint a heart of religious fervour. Indeed, in the same

poem he goes on in his singularly brilliant delineation of the Göttingen professor, who explains away Christ as a human being glorified by myth, to draw a contrast as sharp as possible to the Methodist heat without light, by giving his readers the best example he could find of light without heat, of faith dissolved away by super-subtle analysis into a rationalistic superstition, as really misleading as superstitions of the gloomier and more sensual kinds.

But Browning, though he likes nothing better than to teach us the irreligiousness so commonly found in religious people, is equally eager to impress upon us what he is always impressing, the kernel of religiousness in irreligious people. There is nothing he enjoys so much as to make us see what a queer miscellaneous world we live in, how full it is of discouraging perplexities of all sorts, how full of rough, common, coarse evil, blended with rough, common, coarse good. He is strangely cosmopolitan in his range. He gives us powerful etchings of subjects chosen from all times, from many centuries before Christ to the nineteenth century after him ; from all races, Jewish, Arabian, Spanish, Italian, French, German, Russian, English ; from all churches, Heathen, Jewish, Christian, Catholic and Protestant of all sects and types ; from all literary schools, classical, mediæval, modern ; from men and women of all callings, clerical, legal, medical, philological, artistic, poetical, orthodox, sceptic, indifferentist ; from all kinds of characters, saintly, good, commonplace, bad, devilish ; and in all

SALA IN THE PALAZZO REZZONICO, VENICE.

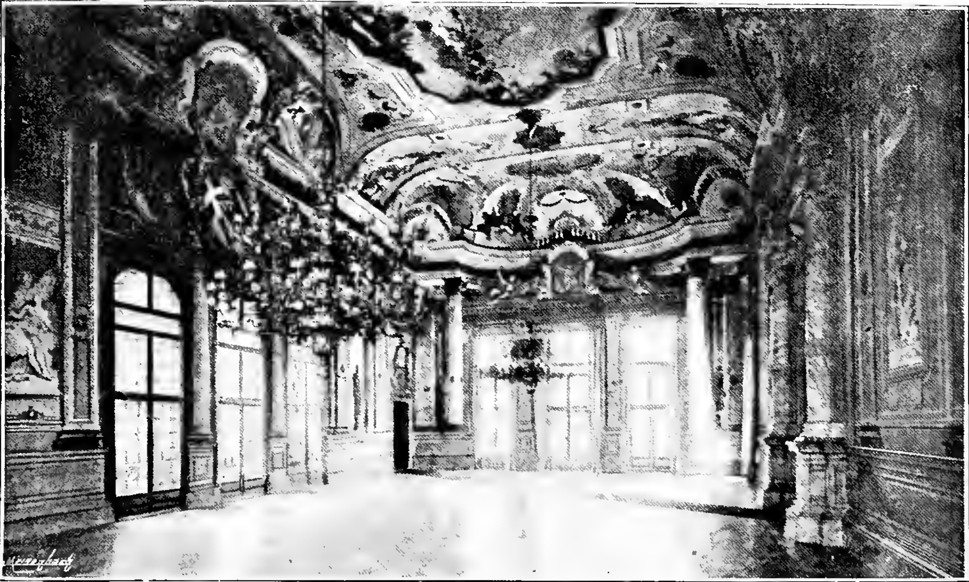
this wonderful mass of humanity, which seems to be taken from every odd corner of the earth's history, Browning delights to show us how there is to be found somewhere a token of spiritual life, either waxing or waning, either growing into power or flickering into extinction. Whether he paints a saint or a murderer, a passionate, sinful woman or a cold and scheming ecclesiastic, a spiteful monk or a devotee

of the most technical philology, a Methodist preacher or an Arab physician, a mediæval painter or an impostor who trades on the desire to open communication with the dead, the spiritual aspect of the man's character, the conscience, or the excess of conscience, or the want of conscience, the thing that comes nearest to spiritual desire, or that most emphatically signals the moral void where such a desire flickers and dies away, is the characteristic feature which remains in the reader's memory. Familiar in his manner, but exceptionally wide in his range of subjects, and constitutionally averse to "morals" as Browning always is, you cannot study one of his pictures without the conviction that it is a photograph printed on the mind of a man who, though understanding fully the common and generally coarse clay of which man is compounded, always cares most of all to discern the tongue of flame which is somewhere to be found imbedded within it, either struggling upwards to the God who is a "consuming fire" for all evil, or struggling downwards to that Tophet which is a consuming fire for all good. That is what makes Browning so great a lay preacher. He is careless of the conventional moral. His pictures at times appear to contain almost unrelieved gloom, at other times unrelieved paradox. He paints a devil like Count Guido Franceschini almost as willingly, I was going to say as blithely, as he paints a noble ruler of the Church like Pope Innocent, or a hero like David, yearning to give his life for Saul. He is as

eager to delineate the half-animal malignity of "Caliban upon Setebos," or the almost wholly animal cunning of "Mr. Sludge, the Medium," as he is to paint the judicial peremptoriness with which the Russian Titan, Ivan Ivanovitch, blots out the life of the woman who had let the wolves take her children instead of defending them at the cost of her own life-blood, or the noble Italian passion which breathes through such a nature as Pompilia's in "The Ring and the Book."

But fond as Browning is of the alloys of human nature—fonder, I think, a great deal on the whole than he is of the less mixed forms of good—he always fixes attention on the critical characteristic which tells us in what direction, upwards or downwards, the nature delineated is moving, and there it is for certain that the chief interest for him and his readers centres. This is the second great lesson of the great lay preacher—that the world is on the whole a moral world in its true drift and significance, though a moral world such as keen-eyed laymen discern, and not such a world as the clerical class, whether ordained or unordained, represent it to be; a world full of all manner of coarse material and common clay, in which it is very hard to discern at first sight even a vestige of spiritual conflict; a world where earthly pleasures and passions are prominent and of great bulk, where the nobler kind of passion often takes the oddest and most subtly-disguised forms, and yet a world in which the keen-eyed layman, the man

with Browning's eye for common things, can always find the secret sign of the working, past or present, of some nobler passion, amidst the din and confusion of incoherent wants and interests. And wherever you find this, there you really find the kernel of life or death, that which gives character and meaning to everything else. What Browning seems to teach so impressively is that only to an eye that looks straight into the world with a wish to see things as they are, not as a preacher would like to find them, is the full significance of the spiritual working of the world visible. Without recognising the singular variety of human passion and action—here its apparent caprices, there its slow persistency and half-petrified habits; here its disheartening coarseness, there its still more disheartening refinements of evil; here the dreary years through which the conflict of good with evil remains undecided, and seems even to make no progress, there the abruptness with which a sudden change takes place, referable, apparently, to no intelligible principle—it is impossible to take the measure of human nature as Browning has taken it, and fail to attain the confidence which he has attained, that at the heart of all this unintelligible universe, "the Lord's controversy" is still going on, though it looks as if in one nature it might remain undecided for a century, while in another the battle rages fiercely and yields its issue in an hour. To Browning's eye the huge miscellaneousness of the world is one of its chief interests. In one great lump of slow vitality he



BALL ROOM IN THE PALAZZO REZZONICO, VENICE.

finds just the faint sign of a little leaven, which will end, sooner or later, in a transformation of the whole; in another slender and vivid life he finds all flame; in another intellectual nature, again, he finds reason and will pre-eminent, and it is hardly possible with merely human tests to say how the strife has turned, yet Browning can see that it has been waged, and that sooner or later the issue, to him still doubtful, will come to light; in another all penetrated by deep ruts of habit, like Browning's "Halbert and Hob," it is easy to see that the day has been fought, and perhaps won, though the victory has been gained at the cost of a general wreck of the man's physical organization, which renders any further progress in this world all but impossible. But no student of Browning can doubt that the world he paints is real, that, as in the real world, his heart busies itself with chaos as well as order, and yet that the true significance even of all this chaos, and of all this sometimes incipient and sometimes degenerating and decaying order, is the spark of spiritual life within it, that here is the focus in which the creative purpose centres, and the chief end even of all the physical and intellectual and emotional scaffolding, within which the spirit of devout faith is guarded and reared to its full growth. I will give as the briefest illustration of what I mean the close of the dramatic idyl—certainly no idyl, if idyl carry with it any association with the adjective "idyllic,"—painting the fierce Yorkshire father and son, "old Halbert and young Hob." A deadly

struggle has ended in the father's recalling how he had nearly turned *his* father out of doors into the bleak winter weather, and how he had recoiled from his evil intention at the last moment, and the grim story closes thus :—

> "Straightway the son relaxed his hold of the father's throat,
> They mounted side by side to the room again : no note
> Took either of each, no sign made each to either ; last
> As first, in absolute silence, their Christmas night they passed.
> At dawn the father sate on dead in the self-same place,
> With an outburst blackening still the old bad fighting face :
> But the son crouched all-a-tremble, like any lamb new yeaned.
> When he went to the burial someone's staff he borrowed—tottered and leaned,
> But his lips were loose, not locked, kept muttering, mumbling. 'There !
> At his cursing and swearing,' the youngsters cried ; but the elders thought 'In prayer.'
> A boy threw stones ; he picked them up and stored them in his vest.
> So tottered, mumbled, muttered he, till he died, perhaps found rest,
> 'Is there a reason in nature for these hard hearts?' O Lear,
> That a reason out of nature must turn them soft, seems clear !"

That is a story of grim hereditary brutality, ending in tragedy, dreary retribution, and a long twilight of something that looked like penitence. And then comes the poet's asseveration that if there be a reason in nature, in the law of heredity, for these hard hearts, or at all events for some of them, the softening influence which melts the stony heart in them is to be found in the "reason out of nature," which bids that

brutality swell into a passion that brings remorse, while remorse brings first humiliation, and then its fruit, humility. That is what I mean by saying that, however chaotic, however discouraging may be the material of Browning's pictures, there is always something in them which gives us the true relation between the spiritual and the intellectual or bodily life of man, and makes us feel that the heart of the mystery is, after all, to be found hidden within the folds of some inscrutable but divine purpose, and not in the mischance of a chaotic origin.

And this leads me to observe that there is none of the feeble optimism of his age in Browning. He is no poet who exults in the enormous preponderance of good over evil in human life. He does not appear to know whether there is such a preponderance. So far as he is a theologian, he is no universalist. He paints the petty, intense, and overflowing malignity of the monk in the Spanish cloister with as calm and steady a hand as he paints the loyal passion of David and his visions of a loyalty deeper and purer than any which even Saul could excite in him. Moreover, Browning shows us no glimpse of any escape from that petty malignity into a larger and less suffocating life. He paints the cruel and murderous vindictiveness of Count Guido towards Pompilia,—of whose goodness this devil in human form yet feels so instinctively certain that his confidence in her rises higher than his confidence in God himself,—and he paints it with as sure an eye and as firm a hand as

he paints Pompilia's maternal loveliness and the old Pope's justice. Here again he never gives us a hint that for Count Guido's utterly unrepentant vileness there is any visible escape from the hell of cowardice and villainy to which he seems to have doomed himself. In Browning's world men make their own future, and while Ned Bratts and his wife just contrive tardily to snatch themselves out of a life of violence and

> Fifty years' flight! wherein should he rejoice
> Who hailed their birth, who as they die decays?
> This — England echoes his attesting voice:
> "Wondrous and well — thanks, Ancient Thou of Days!
>
> Robert Browning

FACSIMILE OF LINES BY MR. BROWNING WRITTEN FOR THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE WINDOW IN ST. MARGARET'S, WESTMINSTER.

crime, by gratefully welcoming the exalting influence of Bunyan's faith, he gives us visions enough of natures which have chosen the downward path, and have plodded in it so steadily and so far that their prospect of finding any hand to snatch them out of it is faint indeed. The feeble optimism and universalism of his day found no echo in Browning.

On the other hand, no one has taught more positively than Browning that life, if confined to this

earth and without any infinite love in it, is not the life which has filled the noblest minds with exultation, nor, indeed, any shadow of exultation. "Christmas Eve" is a much more characteristic poem in many ways than "Easter Day." It has more of the raw material of Browning's genius in it, and more of that vigorous etching in which he has never had a superior, hardly even a rival. But "Easter Day" is fuller in its indications of Browning's own spiritual convictions than even "Christmas Eve." It contains in more explicit form than any other of Browning's poems the confession that unless the beauty of nature is a mere foretaste of something durable and even eternal, it is not a source of peace but of perpetual pain; that unless art can promise itself an endless vista beyond anything which it accomplishes in this world, art gnaws for ever at the soul which it possesses. Michael Angelo's greatness, for instance, lay in his artistic insatiableness,—in the inadequacy of such visions as he had on earth to satisfy him:—

> "Think, now,
> What pomp in Buonarroti's brow,
> With its new palace-brain where dwells
> Superb the soul, unvexed by cells
> That crumbled with the transient clay!
> What visions will his right hand's sway
> Still turn to form, as still they burst
> Upon him? How will he quench thirst
> Titanically infantine
> Laid at the breast of the Divine?"

And if art is a mere worm that gnaws at the heart unless it has faith in an immortal future, still more is

human love an unutterable anguish without the eternal horizons of divine love on which to gaze. And on this Browning insists, intimating his own belief in the Christian story of the incarnation which was meant to show at once the origin and the infinitude of that love of which we have in our hearts but a faint echo, or at best a slowly-expanding outflow.

> "Thy soul
> Still shrunk from Him who made the whole,
> Still set deliberate aside
> His love!—Now take love! Well betide
> Thy tardy conscience! Haste to take
> The show of love for the name's sake,
> Remembering every moment Who
> Beside creating thee unto
> These ends, and these for thee, was said
> To undergo death in thy stead
> In flesh like thine: so ran the tale,
> What doubt in thee could countervail
> Belief in it? Upon the ground
> 'That in the story had been found
> 'Too much love! How could God love so?'
> He who in all his works below
> Adapted to the needs of man
> Made love the basis of the plan,—
> Did love, as was demonstrated:
> While man, who was so fit instead
> To hate, as every day gives proof,—
> Man thought man, for his kind's behoof,
> Both could and did invent that scheme
> Of perfect love: 'twould well beseem
> Cain's nature, thou wast wont to praise,
> Not tally with God's usual ways!"

With that deep theological criticism—that it is hardly reasonable to think man's dwarfish imagination the source of a nobler gospel than any authorised

by God—I may leave Mr. Browning's claim to be regarded as one of our truest religious teachers. Surely no theological conviction can go deeper than his, that if the Christian revelation opens out a love which is "too good to be true," that is only another way of saying that we, in spite of all our pettiness and evil, can surpass God in the conception of immeasurable love — without which, nevertheless, we could never have known either the meaning of the word, or the reality of the thing.

R. H. Hutton.

TENNYSON.

Alfred Lord Tennyson.

Born August 6, 1809; died October 6, 1892.

"None sang of Love more nobly : few as well ;
Of Friendship none with pathos so profound ;
Of Duty sternliest-proved when myrtle-crowned ;
Of English grove and rivulet, mead and dell ;
Great Arthur's Legend he alone dared tell ;
Milton and Dryden feared to tread that ground ;
For him alone o'er Camelot's faery bound,
The 'horns of Elfland' blew their magic spell."

AUBREY DE VERE.

TENNYSON.

WHEN William Howitt devoted a brief chapter in his "Homes and Haunts" to Alfred Tennyson, some five-and-forty years ago, the information at his disposal was of the most scanty and unsatisfying description. The poet was born at Somersby, a sleepy Lincolnshire hamlet; he was sent to school at Louth from his seventh till his ninth or tenth year, and then after a course of parental education he went up to Cambridge. That was practically all the biographical straw it was possible to gather for the tale of bricks.

"Of the subsequent haunts," William Howitt writes, "we can give no very distinct account. I believe he has spent some years in London, and he may be traced to Hastings, Eastbourne, Cheltenham, and the Isle of Wight."

The poet was to him, as in the main he has since been to the public at large, a "wandering voice"; a

personality as picturesque but as elusive as that of the Scholar-Gipsy of Arnold's elegy and Glanvil's book—

> "Seen by rare glimpses, pensive and tongue-tied,
> In hat of antique shape and cloak of grey."

"It is very possible," Howitt concludes, "you may come across him in a country inn, with a foot on each hob of the fire-place, a volume of Greek in one hand, his meerschaum in the other, so far advanced towards the seventh heaven that he would not thank you to call him back into this nether world."

With what avidity and relish one read those enthusiastic sketches in the "Homes and Haunts"; and, in particular, how delightfully that last sentence piqued the imagination of certain juvenile worshippers of the poet! What romantic possibilities it suggested of wandering down green lanes and through old-world villages, and of meeting by some happy chance the visible owner of that magical "wandering voice"! Of course one felt irritated by the reticence, the meagreness of the biographical details; but then how genuinely poetic seemed the life of this silent dreamer as he flitted beneath the "talking oaks" of the ancient forest, and lingered by moated grange and old mill-dam!

The meagre details of forty years ago have now been supplemented by various biographical sketches and reminiscences, and the lovers of the poet, who note with interest every sight and sound—

TENNYSON'S BIRTHPLACE.

> "Which, from the outward to the inward brought,
> Moulded the baby thought,"

and who take pleasure in visiting the scenes in which he mused and wrote, will find nearly all they could desire if they will but take the trouble to seek for it.

Too much, however, should not be expected from the poetic topographer. The sources whence suggestions spring are often quickly forgotten even by the poet himself; and nothing can be more delusive occasionally than the evidence on which the reader thinks it safe to localise certain passages or poems. For instance, it is stated that the Laureate himself could not, in his later years, say what Christmas bells he referred to in the stanza:—

> "Four voices of four hamlets round,
> From far and near, on mead and moor,
> Swell out and fail, as if a door
> Were shut between me and the sound."

Then again, who would have anticipated that "Break, break," was composed not in sight of "the illimitable sorrow of the sea," but in the early morning in a Lincolnshire lane; or that "Tears, idle tears," was suggested by the ruined beauty of Tintern Abbey; though, indeed, nowhere more keenly than among the ruthlessly demolished arches and cloisters of great religious houses does one grow aware of the *lacrymæ rerum*, the sense of tears in earthly things?

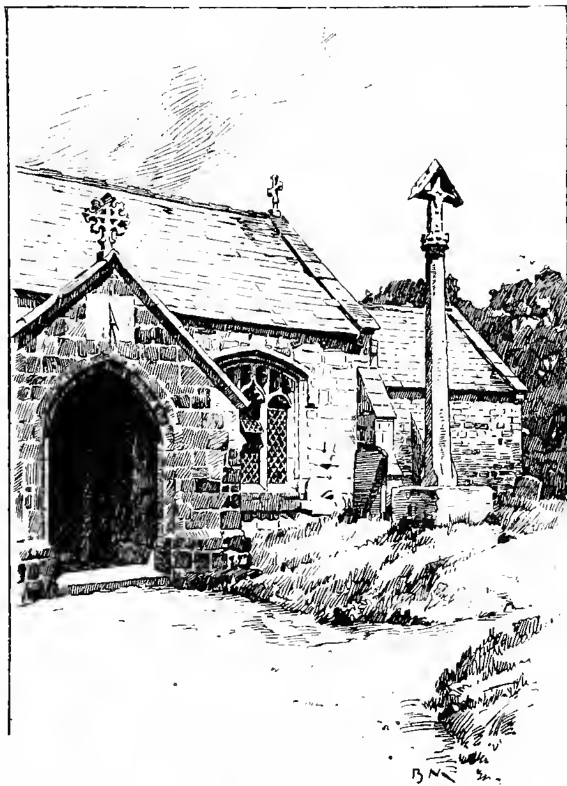
That the poet's first home and the landscapes of

his early years produced a deep impression on his imagination is easily demonstrated. Nor is it strange that this should have been so, for the place of his birth was embosomed in one of the sweetest pastoral scenes in the county. From the ridge to which the road from Horncastle rises, the traveller, looking southward, perceives the old church of St. Botolph's Town (Boston) and catches a glimpse of the historical Wash, with its legend of lost baggage and royal treasure; he sees, massed together by distance, the minster-towers of Lincoln which crown the northern heights of the Witham Valley and form a landmark visible for forty miles; while, beneath him, in a tranquil region of grassy swell and leafy hollow emerge from high evergreen hedgerows and muffling clusters of elm and beech the brick-patched grey tower of Somersby Church, with its two melodious bells, and the red-tiled roof of the Manor-house.

At the Manor-house, then used as the Rectory, Alfred Tennyson was born on the 6th of August 1809, the fourth anniversary of his parents' wedding-day.

In that early part of the century there were scarcely seventy inhabitants in the hamlet. The church was roofed with thatch; and so remote was the spot from the beaten ways of traffic and trade that the old Norman cross, with its image of the Saviour on one side and that of the Virgin Mother on the other, escaped the fury of the Puritan iconoclasts, and indeed still survives to carry us back in fancy to pre-Reformation times.

Two days after his birth the baby poet was carried, under the shadow of the elms and poplars, across the road to the little wicket which opens on the narrow



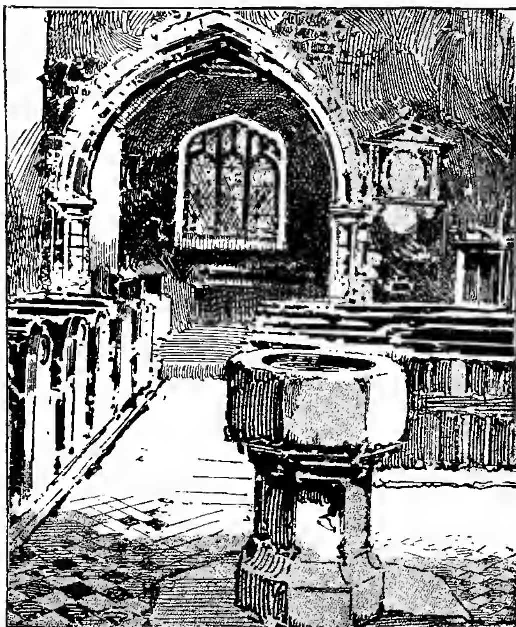
SOMERSBY CHURCH.

path to the churchyard, and so to the church, where he was baptized in the old octagonal font of freestone which had served so many generations. Alfred was

the fourth child, but his eldest brother had died in babyhood. During the next five years two sisters and two more brothers helped to make a lively family circle at the Rectory. By the time he had completed his tenth year the Tennyson children numbered seven boys and four girls.

Ten years in the young poet's life were, however, a vast and eventful epoch. At the mature age of five, as he let the wind blow him along the garden-path, he "heard a voice that was speaking in the wind"; before he was ten he had imbued himself with Thomson's "Seasons," for we find him at Louth on a certain Sunday, when the rest of the household were at church, composing his first verses "on the flowers in the garden," and doing it "after the manner of that poet." "Yes, you can write," brother Charles acknowledged with the serene patronage of a year's seniority, and during the next half dozen years or so they stimulated each other by a generous poetic rivalry.

That no rumour of the great fight at Waterloo reached the Somersby children is a striking evidence of the seclusion of their home, for after all the hamlet was near enough to the sea to have been infected by the "French scare," and Mary Sewell tells how when she was a little girl her father brought one Saturday night from Norwich a piece of scarlet bunting which she made into a flag to be hoisted on Felthorpe steeple as a signal the moment Bonaparte landed. Still if Somersby was excited by no murmur of



THE FONT IN SOMERSBY CHURCH.

> "The great wave that echoed round the world,"

the neighbourhood was alive with other sounds of, it may have been, even graver import to the future Laureate :—

> "The livelong bleat
> Of the thick-fleeced sheep from wattled folds
> Upon the ridged wolds ;"

the noisy babblement and the lulling lapse of the brook that loved—

"To purl o'er matted eress and ribbed sand
Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves;"

the voice of the wind as it blew through

"The woods that belt the gray hill-side,
The seven elms, the poplars four
That stand beside my father's door."

The four poplars have disappeared; only in the "Ode to Memory" do their green spires spring skyward. The brook, however, still runs by the foot of the garden,

"Prattling the primrose fancies of the boy"

as it winds in and out by lawn and grassy plot till it brims into

"The sleepy pool above the dam."

The Somersby stream turns three mills. In the poet's boyhood a fourth stood close to the Rectory, but whether this or Stockworth mill, two miles away, or yet another suggested "The Miller's Daughter," is a point no one can decide.

In the same volume as "The Ode to Memory" (1830) appeared "Mariana." Moated granges, Mr. Napier tells us in his attractive little volume, "The Homes and Haunts of Alfred, Lord Tennyson," still exist in the fenny portions of Lincolnshire, but there are none near Tennyson's birthplace. Three or four miles from Mablethorpe, however, in a bleak treeless expanse near Maltby-le-Marsh, stood a dreary red-brick house with a few trees which the poet's sisters used to call "The Moated Grange."

Doubtful as these identifications are, of one locality at least we may be sure, the great hall in the Rectory,* with groined roof and high ecclesiastical windows, designed by the Rector himself, which is mentioned in the "In Memoriam" :—

> "With trembling fingers did we weave
> The holly round the Christmas hearth ;
> A rainy cloud possess'd the earth,
> And sadly fell our Christmas-eve.
>
> "At our old pastimes in the hall
> We gambol'd, making vain pretence
> Of gladness, with an awful sense
> Of one mute shadow watching all.
>
> "We paused : the winds were in the beech ;
> We heard them sweep the winter land ;
> And in a circle hand-in-hand
> Sat silent, looking each at each."

It is a little curious that no legend has associated the poet with the picturesque old elm at Bag-Enderby, half a mile away. His sisters swung on one of its

* The Somersby estate was offered for sale at the City of London Auction Mart on the 18th August, 1892. It was mentioned that the estate extended to upwards of 1,200 acres and produced a net rental of £1,600 a year. As to the sentimental value of the estate, the auctioneer pointed out that as it was the birthplace of England's greatest modern poet, it should be highly prized by every Englishman of culture and patriotic feelings. The opening bid was £25,000, and this was quickly followed by offers of £500 until the sum of £29,000 was called. The first pause here occurred, and the two next succeeding bids brought the figures up to £31,000. Tenders of £500 were then resumed up to £35,000, which, after a somewhat lengthened interval, was further increased by £250, and a little later augmented by a similar amount. Two more bids of £500 apiece, and £36,500 was reached. This was the last offer made, and, after a short consultation with the legal agents of the property, the auctioneer announced its withdrawal.

great boughs, which has now grown so long that it is said the whole parish can perch on it side by side—a delightful picture of rustics in council which would have rejoiced the soul of the late Mr. Caldecott. Yet who knows but we are indebted for some pregnant epithet or broadcast line to this venerable tree? More than once it seems possible to trace the ideal scenery of the poet's imagination to the early observation of actual localities. Thus, for example, the melodious sonnet, which appeared in "Friendship's Offering" in 1833, and which has been excluded from the collected works, reads singularly like a real experience, of which imaginative use was speedily made in one of the most exquisite of his classical poems. Read these lines:—

> "Check every outflash, every ruder sally
> Of thought and speech; speak low and give up wholly
> Thy spirit to mild-minded melancholy;
> This is the place. Through yonder poplar valley
> Below, the blue-green river windeth slowly,
> But in the middle of the sombre valley
> The crispèd waters whisper musically,
> And all the haunted place is dark and holy,"

and compare them with these lines in strophes v. and vii. of the Choric Song in "The Lotos-Eaters":

> "To hear each other's whisper'd speech;
> To lend our hearts and spirits wholly
> To the influence of mild-minded melancholy;
>
> "Beneath a heaven dark and holy,
> To watch the long, bright river drawing slowly
> His waters from the purple hill."

A slim volume, "Poems by Two Brothers," which

Bag Enderby
the joint living with Somersby.

contained the best of the youthful efforts of Charles and Alfred, was published in Louth in 1827. The little book has since been made accessible to the general public, but it is a curiosity of greater interest to the biographer than to the lover of poetry. Glancing through its pages one can understand the emotion under which Alfred laboured when he inscribed on a stone in the "Holywell Glen," at Somersby, the words, "Byron is dead"; and, by a natural association, one recollects how for many days Charles Lamb kept repeating aloud, "Coleridge is dead!"

In 1828 Tennyson and his brother Charles went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, where their eldest brother Frederick had already preceded them; and here the poet met Arthur Hallam. Tennyson did not reside within the college precincts, but after a brief residence in the Rose Crescent took rooms at No. 54, Corpus Buildings, the last house in the terrace, overlooking at that time the great quadrangle of King's College and within sound of the organ in the college chapel. As one passes along the street trying to conjure up the youthful figures of those days one thinks of the poet's brilliant associates—Brookfield, Thackeray's friend, the "Old Brooks," who became a celebrated London preacher; John Mitchell Kemble, the latter "Luther and soldier-priest"; Trench, Spedding, Milnes (Lord Houghton), Henry Alford, afterwards Dean of Canterbury; and the lines well up in the memory:—

> "Old Brooks, who loved so well to mouth my rhymes,
> How oft we two have heard St. Mary's chimes!
> How oft the Cantab supper, host and guest,
> Would echo helpless laughter to your jest!
> How oft with him we paced that walk of limes,
> Him, the lost light of those dawn-golden times,
> Who loved you well!"

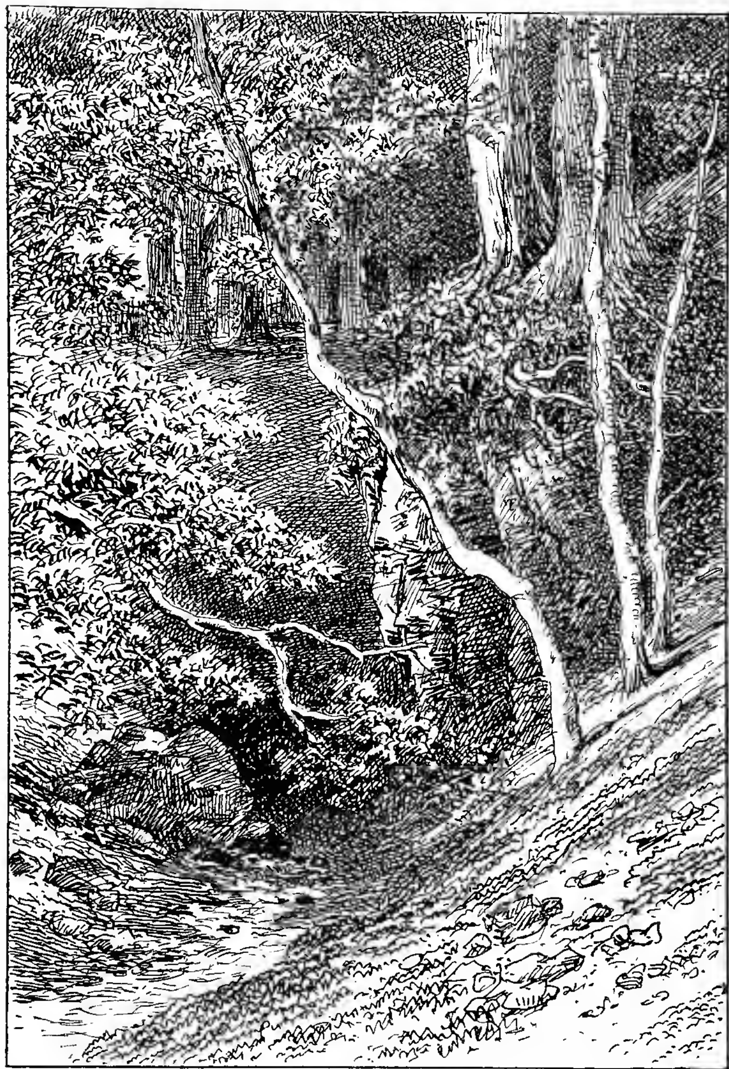
Without usurping the functions of the biographer it may be mentioned here that had it not been for the urging of his father, Tennyson would in all likelihood have refrained from competing for the Chancellor's medal for English verse in 1829. In compliance with the old Rector's wishes he modified and put some finishing touches to a poem he had written some years before on the Battle of Armageddon, and, giving it the prescribed title "Timbuctoo," sent it in. In spite of its enormous success it finds no place in the Laureate's works, though it has happily been included in the recent edition of the "Poems by Two Brothers." Three lines, however—

> "I have raised thee nigher to the spheres of heaven,
> Man's first, last home; and thou with ravished sense
> Listenest the lordly music flowing from
> The illimitable years"—

have been re-cast and preserved in the "Ode to Memory":—

> "Sure she was nigher to heaven's spheres,
> Listening the lordly music flowing from
> The illimitable years."

Wordsworth visited Cambridge in 1830. He was



HOLYWELL GLEN, SOMERSBY.

then sixty, and had yet to wait a dozen years for the laureate's wreath, but his name was cherished and his influence deeply felt among the youthful generation at the University. Whether he ever met the young Medallist who was to be his successor twenty years later, I have not been able to discover, but in all probability he then read the famous prize-poem and other verses, for in a letter written during his visit he observed: "We have a respectable show of blossom in poetry—two brothers of the name of Tennyson, one in particular not a little promising." His appreciation cannot be regarded as excessive if he had seen the volume of "Poems, chiefly Lyrical," published in this year, though it must be admitted that it bore ample evidence of the youth of the author. Among the poems which appeared in that volume, and which were afterwards suppressed, it is interesting to observe a "chorus" from "an unpublished drama written very early." The dramatic form is equally the characteristic of the infantine and of the mature intellect. What was done, what was said—action and speech without the interposition of the personality of a narrator—childhood delights in that. Manhood in the maturity of its power finds that, too, the highest and most direct mode of expression. Every great poet and many who never became poets at all have begun with tragedy. In this particular instance the juvenile dramatist appears to have been under the spell of the marvellous "prologue in heaven" with which "Faust" opens, and one cannot help

thinking he had read Shelley's translation which was published in 1824.

No criticism, it has always seemed to me, is more utterly trivial and mistaken than that which has well been branded as "genealogical"—which at once ascribes every similarity of thought and expression to plagiarism or assimilation. The industrious plodders who imagine that every happy phrase, every beautiful thought found in the works of two writers must be of necessity derived by the one from the other forget, first, that most men and women, being men and women, think and feel and speak pretty much alike—how else should we have common sense?—and, next, that they credit the plagiarist or imitator with a range of reading, a memory, an aptitude for adaptation which would be more astonishing than even the genius which they are at pains to discredit. While, therefore, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred I should assign similarity in any two men worthy of the name of poet to coincidence, or rather to the common inheritance of the age in which they live, and not to deliberate or to unconscious appropriation, in the case of a very young writer there may frequently be a sound justification for taking a course the exact opposite. Tennyson was no doubt a widely read man, and it may have been that, like Byron, he had always a note-book ready to receive any suggestion of thought or phrase which he came across in his reading; but, for my own part, I should imagine that when he was indebted at all, it was to the scientific prose writers

of our own day, not to earlier poets—except in so far as he assimilated the felicities, common to all, of Greek and Latin literature.

In this connection it is well to remember the letter—the only published letter, so far as I know—which the poet himself wrote to a correspondent, and in which he told how, lying among the Pyrenees before a waterfall that came down some ten or twelve hundred feet, he embodied the vision in the striking phrase,

"Slow-dropping veils of thinnest lawn."

The critic—shrewd rogue—pointed out that lawn was the material used in theatres to imitate a waterfall, and advised the poor rhymester "to go to nature for his suggestions." Biography, however, is full of instances of this omniscient fallibility. Who has not read how when Southey was advising Wordsworth that if he wished to be considered a faithful painter of rural manners he ought not to have let his Idle Shepherd Boys trim their rustic hats with stag-horn or fox-tail, "just as the words had passed his lips two boys appeared with the very plant entwined round their hats"? In the letter to which I have referred it is mentioned that a Chinese scholar told Tennyson that in an unknown and untranslated Chinese poem there are two whole lines of his almost word for word. To which startling information, the Laureate quietly responded, "Why not?"

After Dr. Tennyson's death in 1831 the poet did not return to Cambridge. Hallam remained and took

his degree, and in the spring of the following year visited Somersby as the *fiancé* of Emilia, the second sister. In the autumn of 1833, requiring rest and change after an attack of illness, he visited Germany and Austria. On the 15th of September the end came with terrible suddenness:—

> "In Vienna's fatal walls,
> God's finger touched him and he slept."

It was in the winter of 1832-3 that Tennyson published what may be regarded as his second volume, under the title "Poems." It contained "Œnone," "The Lotos-Eaters," "The Palace of Art," "The Dream of Fair Women," "Mariana in the South," "The May Queen," and "The Miller's Daughter," which last, it is said, received the recognition of the Queen, and so brought the volume into some measure of popularity. However that may be, we have here, at the age of twenty-three, the authentic voice of the Laureate. Constant revision, the delicate taste which was ever intolerant of what fell short of perfection, has, it is true, modified these early utterances in an astonishing manner, but they were from the first the true Tennyson, notwithstanding their blemishes and shortcomings. Among the poems afterwards withdrawn were "O darling room, my heart's delight"—an appalling instance of how even genius may lapse—the sonnets "Bonaparte" and "As when with downcast eyes we muse and brood," which have been restored, as they well deserved to

WALTHAM ABBEY.

be, in the collected works, and "The Hesperides," which, despite the noticeable lines,

> "The hoary promontory of Soloë
> Past Thymeaterion, in calmèd bays,
> Between the southern and the western horn,"

has been judiciously left to oblivion.

During the next seventeen years the poet's life appears to have been pretty much as William Howitt described it in the passage which has already been quoted. Once at least during that period he seems to have revisited Cambridge:—

> "I past beside the reverend walls
> In which of old I wore the gown;
> I roved at random thro' the town,
> And saw the tumult of the halls;
>
> "And heard once more in college fanes
> The storm their high-built organs make,
> And thunder-music, rolling, shake
> The prophet blazoned on the panes;
>
> "And caught once more the distant shout,
> The measured pulse of racing oars
> Among the willows; paced the shores
> And many a bridge, and all about
>
> "The same gray flats again, and felt
> The same, but not the same; and last
> Up that long walk of limes I past
> To see the rooms in which he dwelt."

Early in 1837 the Tennysons left Somersby for Beech Hill House, near High Beech, on the skirts of Epping Forest. Down in the hollow, a couple of miles or so away, stood the old Norman pile of

Waltham Abbey, with its memories of Harold, the last of the Saxon kings, and its famous old peal of bells. As the time drew near the birth of Christ the poet heard them chiming through the mist—strange voices, unlike the music of the four Lincolnshire hamlets. A week later they bore him a happier message, as the old year passed away :—

> "Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky !
>
> "Ring out the grief that saps the mind
> For those that here we see no more !
>
> "Ring in the valiant man and free,
> The larger heart, the kindlier hand ;
> Ring out the darkness of the land,
> Ring in the Christ that is to be."

Pleasant it is to know that while we owe "Tears, idle tears" to Tintern Abbey, we are indebted to the old tower of Waltham Holy Cross for this jubilant anthem of the bells. In 1840 the family removed to Tunbridge Wells, and in the following year to Boxley, near Maidstone, a locality associated with the closing section, the splendid epithalamium, of the "In Memoriam." For here, in October 1842, the poet's youngest sister, Cecilia, was married to Edmund Law Lushington, Professor of Greek in Glasgow University. Glimpses of Park House, the seat of the Lushingtons, are preserved, too, in the prologue to the "Princess."

In these latter years the poet seems to have been a frequent visitor in London. We hear of him

sitting up till two and three in the morning, "at which good hour we would get Alfred to give us some of his magic music, which he does between growling and smoking"; and we learn something of his comings and goings through the Carlyles. "Alfred is one of the few British and foreign figures (a not increasing number, I think!) who are and remain beautiful to me --a true human soul, or some authentic approximation thereto, to whom your own soul can say, Brother!" "He often skips me in these brief visits to town; skips everybody, indeed; being a man solitary and sad, as certain men are, dwelling in an element of gloom—carrying a bit of chaos about him, in short, which he is manufacturing into cosmos"—such cosmos, peradventure, as "The Princess," which saw the light among "the fogs and smuts of Lincoln's Inn." "One of the finest-looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusty-dark hair; bright, laughing, hazel eyes; massive aquiline face, most massive yet most delicate; of sallow-brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. . . . I do not meet, in these late decades, such company over a pipe." "Alfred is the son of a Lincolnshire gentleman farrier, I think"; in which thought the smoking philosopher was wrong, as we know. Indeed, one would like to hear what Carlyle would have said to the Tennyson pedigree, stretching back as it does to Edward III. and Philippa of Hainault in a curiously interesting way; for the

poet's great-grandfather married Elizabeth Clayton, and in her mother, Dorothy, the wife of George Clayton of Grimsby, were united two streams of royal descent, one from Lionel, Duke of Clarence, the other from John of Gaunt, both sons of Edward III., and brothers of the Black Prince. These, however, are matters for the biographer.

From 1844 to 1850 Tennyson seems to have lived chiefly at Cheltenham. Possibly it was during this interval that he visited the resting-place of his friend, Arthur Hallam, to whose memory he was slowly building up the most magnificent monument of song that poet ever reared.

During these years he apparently led a wandering existence, studying landscape and picking up those unconsidered trifles of nature which give his poems such an atmosphere of freshness and veracity. He was a frequent visitor at the Howitts' at Lower Clapton, on the edge of Epping Forest. "The retiring and meditative young poet, Alfred Tennyson, visited us," writes Mary Howitt, "and charmed our seclusion by the recitation of his exquisite poetry. . . . . He wished that we Englanders could dress up our affections in a little more poetical costume; real warmth of heart would lose nothing, rather gain by it; as it was, our manners were as cold as the walls of our churches." "We have had Tennyson with us a good deal lately. We quite love him."

It was as well, perhaps, that in those days he should, to some slight degree at least, have experi-

SHIPLAKE CHURCH.

enced that "want of pence" which vexes private as well as public men. Though he was never in actual need, his poems brought him no material reward, and it must have been with a feeling of satisfaction that in 1845 he received the intimation that he had been

granted a pension of £200 a year by Sir Robert Peel. It is pleasant to know that this handsome public recognition of his genius was in the main due to the hearty good-will of Carlyle, seconded by Monckton Milnes.

It must have been either then or earlier that he stayed at the charming little Oxfordshire village of Shiplake, on the Thames. There he wrote the exquisite section in "In Memoriam," beginning:—

> "Sad Hesper o'er the buried sun
> And ready, thou, to die with him,
> Thou watchest all things ever dim
> And dimmer, and a glory done;
>
> "The team is loosen'd from the wain,
> The boat is drawn upon the shore;
> Thou listenest to the closing door,
> And life is darken'd in the brain."

And there, on the 13th of June 1850, a week or two after the publication of "In Memoriam," and a month or two before he received the

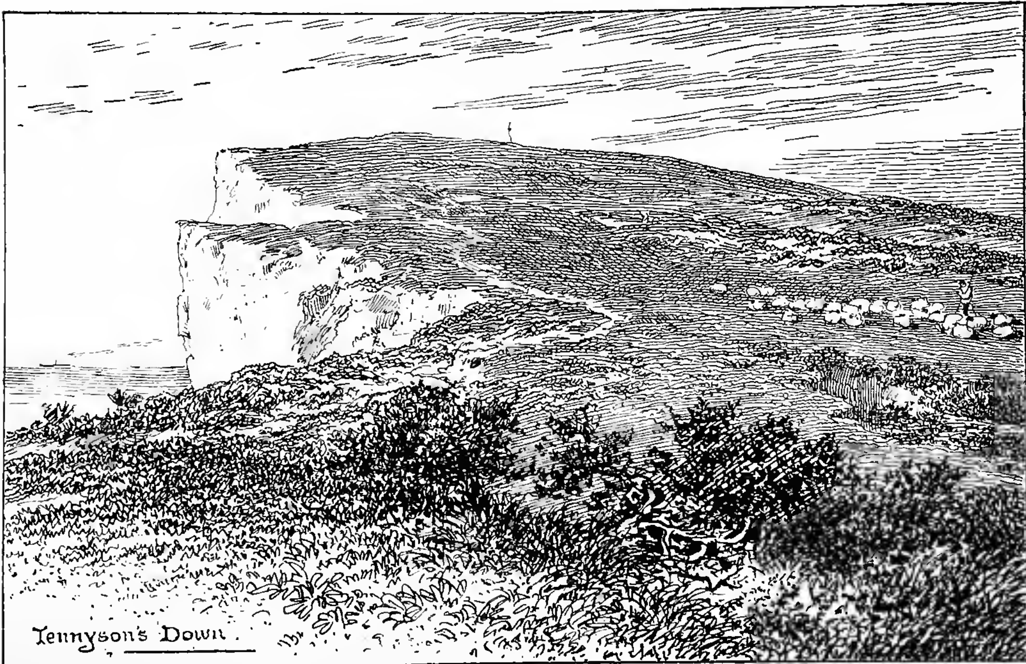
> "laurel greener from the brows
> Of him that uttered nothing base,"

he was married to Emily Sarah, eldest daughter of Henry Sellwood of Horncastle, and niece of the "heroic sailor-soul," Sir John Franklin. Fourteen years previously his elder brother Charles had married the youngest daughter.

Twickenham, already famous in poetic annals, was

the Laureate's home for the next two years or more, and there he composed the superb ode on the death of the great Duke. In 1853 he discovered the old house of Farringford, at Freshwater, in the Isle of Wight; and in the seclusion of its green woodlands at the back of the downs, he took up his permanent abode, "far from noise and smoke of town." He lived on legendary soil, for the summer-house stands in the "Maiden's croft," a field of the old priory dedicated to the Virgin Mary; and in these priory grounds, saith greybeard memory, is concealed the entrance to a submarine passage between England and France—a passage choked up with hoards of treasure guarded by a griffon whose vigilance no man may evade. Hard by, too, are more authentic, if less romantic, traces of an ancient people—prehistoric Phœnicians we are assured—whose homes or sepulchres have been brought to light within the last year or two.

The bracing freshness of the downs, one of which was soon called after the Laureate, the rustic beauty of the leafy lanes, the floral wealth of the woods and fields, the various pictures of sea and clouds, were all that a poet could desire; but if one would wish to see the influence which the island has had on the great minstrel let him read "Maud," where its magic has been most profusely translated into speech. As one returns home late, lantern in hand, through the gloom of Farringford Lane after a day of storm, one remembers, in the pauses of the



Tennyson's Down.

wind, how the poet arose from the vision of that luminous, ghostlike, star-sweet face—

> "And all by myself in my own dark garden ground,
> Listening now to the tide in its broad-flung ship-wrecking roar,
> Now to the scream of a madden'd beach dragged down by the wave,
> Walk'd in a wintry wind by a ghastly glimmer, and found
> The shining daffodil dead, and Orion low in his grave."

Here, too, surely is the "little grove" where he used to sit while

> "A million emeralds broke from the ruby-budded lime,"

and here in a gap of the trees one catches a gleam of white, where

> "the far-off sail is blown by the breeze of a softer clime,
> Half-lost in the liquid azure bloom of a crescent of sea,
> The silent sapphire-spangled marriage-ring of the land."

One might almost fancy, too, that the poet's eyes were directed to the roof-ridges and chimneys of Weston, when he composed the verse :—

> "Birds in the high Hall-garden
> When twilight was falling,
> Maud, Maud, Maud, Maud
> They were crying and calling."

An amusing story, apocryphal or otherwise, is told in connection with these lines. The Laureate, it is said, as he was once reciting them, paused suddenly, and turning to a lady listener, asked, "What birds are those ?" "Nightingales, sir !" faltered the lady, too much overwhelmed by surprise to be quite

aware of what she was saying. "Nightingales!" cried the poet, "what a cockney you are! They were rooks. Caw, caw, caw! Maud, Maud, Maud!"

"Maud," it may be of interest to observe, was the result of a remark of his friend, Sir John Simeon, who thought the little lyric—

> "O that 'twere possible
> After long grief and pain,"

published in the *Tribute* seventeen years before, needed some explanation of the situation. It is this same friend whose memory, as "the prince of courtesy," is embalmed in the stanzas, "In the Garden at Swainston"—

> "Nightingales warbled without,
> Within was weeping for thee,
> Shadows of three dead men
> Walked in the walks with me,
> Shadows of three dead men, and thou wast one of the three."

It is not in "Maud" alone, however, that the influence of the scenery of the island can be traced with some feeling of certainty. The reader can hardly doubt that in the "Idylls of the King" also there are innumerable glimpses of landscape, vignettes of exquisite colour and suggestiveness, which have been reproduced from the poet's daily walks in woodland ways, along the shore where

> "The sharp wind ruffles all day long
> A little bitter pool about a stone
> On the bare coast,"

and

> "Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs."

Farringford

For many years the Laureate lived at Farringford a life of reverie and seclusion, "making poets for the Queen," as the Freshwater boys thought, for did not the "p'liceman often see him walking about a-making of 'em under the stars"? Here he wrote the Arthurian cycle. Here he was visited by the most distinguished men of his time—Prince Albert, Maurice, Kingsley, Dean Stanley, Garibaldi, Darwin, Herschel, Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes—and here, too, the crowd of curious and vulgar excursionists became so constant and pertinacious that in 1867 he was practically driven from the island during the summer months.

He found another place of refuge in a wooded hollow in Blackdown—Green Hill, as it is called—near Haslemere. On the spot, high yet sheltered, inaccessible yet not remote, overlooking aspects of three counties, besides

> "Green Sussex fading into blue,
> With one gray glimpse of sea,"

Aldworth was built, and from 1869 it was the poet's custom to leave Freshwater about June for this safe retreat till the last weeks in autumn, when he returned once more to "plain life and lettered peace" under the shelter of the "noble down."

As far back as 1865 the poet had declined the honour of a baronetcy—an honour which was again set aside three years later. In 1883, at a cost of what he himself regarded as a "great sacrifice" of

personal feeling, he accepted a peerage, and in the March of the following year he took his seat in the House of Lords under the title of Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Freshwater. Though he had now attained the ripe age of seventy-five, the fountain of song still played with the energy and splendour of earlier decades. "Becket" and "Tiresias," and the second "Locksley Hall," were yet to come. In his eightieth year he published "Demeter;" and in 1892 "The Foresters" and the "Death of Œnone" came as farewell gifts to the generation which he had enriched with the treasures of his genius.

Lord Tennyson's health began to fail in 1890, and though he recovered a severe attack of illness in that year he never regained his old vigour. In the last days of September 1892 he was prostrated by influenza and gout, and on the 3rd of October it became known that the illustrious patient was sinking, slowly, but without any hope of restoration. On the afternoon of the 5th he asked for a volume of Shakespeare, and appeared to read for a few moments in "Cymbeline." What passage it was that attracted his interest is not known, but it is conjectured that he paused over the beautiful dirge—

> "Fear no more the heat o' the sun,
> Nor the furious winter's rages;
> Thou thy worldly task hast done,
> Home art gone, and ta'en thy wages;
> Golden lads and girls all must,
> As chimney-sweepers, come to dust."

He fell shortly afterwards into slumber, and a little

after half-past one o'clock on Thursday morning, October the 6th—the full moon shining on his bed, and his family watching round it in that heavenly light—his spirit passed peacefully away.

He was laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, and few pageants in that venerable pile have been more impressive than his funeral. As the workmen hewed out his grave far into the night, amid showers of sparks from the flint and stone of the foundations of the old church, they laid bare the leaden coffin of Dryden. Hard by Browning lay beneath his simple slab. The grave was afterwards thickly strewn with white roses, and the pall on the coffin was the English Union Jack. Within the gray walls were gathered, in sympathy and homage, representatives of all that is noblest, worthiest, most influential in English life, and so the remains of the most illustrious poet of our time were committed to the bosom of the great mother.

On looking backward, it may safely be asserted that in 1850—the year of Wordsworth's death and of the publication of "In Memoriam"—no English poet had a more valid claim than Tennyson to succeed to the Laureateship, and no encomium can be more fittingly bestowed upon Tennyson himself than the characteristic praise which he bestowed on his predecessor, whose long lease of poetic years is curiously comparable with his own. From that date onward he produced a volume and variety of work, the excellence of which placed him far beyond com-

parison with any other poet of his epoch except Browning. Without attempting a comparison between these two "mighty masters of minstrelsy," the estimate of Mr. Justin M'Carthy in his "History of our Times" seems to be fairly accurate—"Browning's is surely the higher aim in poetic art; but of the art which he essays, Tennyson is by far the greater master. In passion, pathos, humour, keenness, and breadth of intellect, the Laureate, if he equalled, did not surpass his sole rival; in the balance of poetic powers he excelled him."

An adept in poetic form, he was pre-eminently sane, and never sacrificed thought to technique. Intense love of beauty, profound reverence for the principle of order, and faultless taste were the dominant and pervading characteristics of his genius; and here we recognise the accuracy of Walt Whitman's perception of Tennyson's feudalism—"the old Norman lordhood quality, crossed with that Saxon fibre from which twain the best current stock of England springs." He was an aristocrat, with apparently little trust that the influence of the democracy of these days could make either for beauty or for the principle of order.

The keen interest taken at the time of his death in all that could be revealed as to his own religious beliefs, the general tendency to regard him as a great moral teacher and to take account of his influence in the matter of lofty aims and ideal living, seem to justify the suspicion that the poet owed his wide-

ALDWORTH, SUSSEX.

spread popularity less to his essential poetic qualities than to the fact that he satisfied a large public craving for some melodious utterance on the mysteries, doubts, and sorrows which visit most sensitive natures in these days of invaded faith and spiritual perplexity. This need was chiefly satisfied by that noble *Requiem*, in the presence of which we forget Shakespeare's sonnets, Milton's "Lycidas," Shelley's "Adonais," and to which we can find nothing comparable in literature since the heart-broken lamentation of David at Ziklag—"Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women." Whatever fate, through the vagaries of literary fashion, the development of culture, the obliviousness of time, may be in store for the bulk of the late Laureate's work, the poem of his great sorrow will assuredly survive. Dr. George Macdonald has not inaptly described it as "*the* poem of our age, *the* poem of the hoping doubters"; and as the world will probably never be without its hoping doubters—though there be those who believe that agnosticism will be supreme in another quarter of a century!—the appeal of "In Memoriam" will be as certainly felt in the future as it has been in the past and is at the present.

In those inspired pages the poet has dwelt on the most inscrutable problems of existence, and has exhausted both philosophy and science with such impassioned art that few are really aware how completely this single poem has crystallised the research and speculation of the Victorian Age. Never have

human hands been held out in more earnest impetration "to the further shore," and surely if it could have been given to the immortals to answer the cry of mortality, the grief and the questionings of "In Memoriam" would have elicited a response from the silence that lies "beyond these voices."

One naturally turns from the "In Memoriam" to the Arthurian Epic. How far the "Idylls" were deliberately intended from the outset as portions of a complex and magnificent allegory, it would be difficult to say. Noble work, especially of this sort, lends itself to allegorical interpretation, and while in the glow and flower of his inspiration the poet often "builds better than he knows," he can perceive in his moments of lucid after-thought how happy beyond his hopes his inspiration has been, and discern the order and design of which he was unaware at the moment of achievement. Whether or not this was the case in the "Idylls of the King," there seems little reason to doubt that for one who delights in the allegory, thousands have enjoyed and will enjoy them as simple and beautiful transcripts of the old legends without after-thought or intention.

In these poems, perhaps, more strikingly than in any other portion of Lord Tennyson's work, the ordinary reader is fascinated by that marvellous and inseparably intimate union of what Mr. Traill calls "the charm of the thought and the magic of its utterance." Line after line clings to the memory with a persistency similar to that of a catching tune.

Fiat Lux!

Thy prayer was "Light—more Light—while Time shall last!"
Thou sawest a glory growing on the night,
But not the shadows which that light would cast,
Till shadows vanish in the Light of Light.

A. Tennyson

Facsimile of lines written for the Caxton window in St. Margaret's, Westminster, presented by the Printers of London, in honour of Caxton, who was connected with the church, and lies buried near the Holy Table.

Indeed, the poet's faculty of musical expression is so exquisite that his blank verse lyrics not only simulate but even appear to excel the perfection of rhyme.

If the limits of this slight sketch permitted, it might be interesting to make some inquiry into the method by which Lord Tennyson accomplished these delightful results, and to attempt to mark the difference between his method and that of Milton or Wordsworth. Mechanical and partial as is the process, it is not unworthy of note that the modulation of Milton's verse, as Professor Masson has pointed out, depends largely on the pause after the sixth and fourth syllables, and, much less frequently, on pauses after the fifth and seventh. In this respect alone Tennyson will be found to show an unmistakable distinction from Milton and Words-

worth, and the student of metrical technique might do worse than examine the nature of the difference.

Though the word "Idyll" is one which, so to speak, the poet appropriated to himself, it is not merely that term which recalls a comparison suggested many years ago between Tennyson and Theocritus. In each we find a kindred gift of vision, a love of colour and form which seems rather to belong to the sister art, and an exquisite faculty of melodious phrasing. The magic of Tennyson's style has permeated the intellect of his generation. As Palgrave has said, to quote him is to name him; and no modern poet has added so copiously to the stock of felicitous quotation.

The dramatic faculty suggested by the "Grandmother," the "Northern Farmer," "Rizpah," and other monologues, proved, when it was applied to the large and crowded stage of tragedy, to be by no means of the first order. If not strictly limited to the interpretation of moods, it was successfully applied only in that restricted area. The ponderous complexity of a great play was, one would imagine, undertaken too late in life—when the habit of the "Idyll" and the brief blank verse narrative, packed with thought and emotion, had become a sort of second nature.

By no more crucial a test can a man be judged than by his ideal of woman, or a poet than by his capacity to write a song. How admirably the Laureate stood either test it is not necessary here to point out. To

few poets has it been given to enjoy so protracted a period of literary activity; fewer still have begun with a "pre-poetic period of Orianas, Owls, and Mermans," and closed with such work as "The Ancient Sage," "Sixty Years After," "The Death of Œnone" and "Akbar's Dream." His last poems were not unworthy of association with his best, though the poet suffered by that cruelest of ordeals—comparison with himself.

If, as Mr. Eugene Parsons, an American writer, asserts, Tennyson "cannot be ranked among the world-poets," it is at least satisfactory to be able to add, on the authority of the same author, that he is more read on the Continent than many others of our great singers. In 1867 alone five thousand copies of his poems in English were sold in France, Spain and Portugal. Translations of his most popular works began in German as far back as 1846, in Norwegian and Danish in 1855, in Dutch in 1859, in French in 1869, in Bohemian and Spanish in 1875, in Hungarian in 1881, and in Italian in 1887. Scarcely less indicative of the intense interest felt in the new work of one who "cannot be ranked as a world-poet" is the fact that "Locksley Hall Sixty Years After" was flashed across the Atlantic by cable on its publication, and scattered broadcast in all the leading papers.

William Canton.