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The Autobiography

of

Alfred Austin

Poet Laureate

1835–1910

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

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TORONTO

Mrs. Alfred Austin

from a miniature painting by W. T. Scott Barber

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II

MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
ST. MARTIN'S STREET, LONDON

1911

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CHAPTER I

The Poetry of the Period—Letters from Swinburne—Mrs. Beecher Stowe and Lady Byron—*A Vindication of Lord Byron*—Letters thereon — *Off Missolonghi* — Letters from Madame de Boissy — *The Golden Age*—Departure for Berlin.

In the year 1869, when the expression of my thoughts and feelings in verse, save of a satiric kind, had ceased, and it seemed as if my long-cherished hope of its being the channel of Poetry must, I cannot say how woefully, be abandoned, I wrote in *Temple Bar* a paper on Tennyson. It was suggested to me by what I thought the excessive estimate of his work, as compared with that of some of his very greatest predecessors. It was written, I have often been told, with vigour, but I myself soon came to think, with excessive rigour. Mr. George Bentley was much pleased with it, and asked if I could not follow it up with other papers of a similar kind.

Shortly after the appearance of the paper on Tennyson, I met for the first time Frederick Locker, at the house of a neighbour in Kent. We were playing Croquet, then in the heyday of its popularity; and, in the course of the game, Locker

asked me if I had read a paper on Tennyson in *Temple Bar*, published anonymously. I had neither desire nor reason to conceal the authorship, and so I answered, "Yes, for *I* wrote it," though I knew he was an intimate friend of Tennyson. He seemed much interested, and told me that Matthew Arnold had said to him, the day before, "Whoever wrote it has hit the nail on the head"; which, Locker added, signified Matthew Arnold's agreement with its purport, viz. to point out that Tennyson's muse was rather a feminine than a masculine one in tone and power.

Papers on Browning, Swinburne, Matthew Arnold, Roman Catholic Poetry, and Spiritualist Poetry followed, and were republished in my own name in a volume, *The Poetry of the Period.* It was so frankly outspoken throughout that it was not unnatural the author should have to pay the penalty of his candour for many a year to come, and of this he had no right to complain. It will be narrated, later on, how any resentment on the part of Tennyson died away; and, on my reviewing Swinburne's *Bothwell* favourably, I received a cordial letter from its gifted author. I here append the letter, and another I had from him later, and before I incurred his wrath in 1885.

THE ORCHARD, NITON, ISLE OF WIGHT,
July 10*th*, 1874.

DEAR SIR—It will seem to you rather late in the day for me to acknowledge your letter of May 24th, or to assure you of the pleasure I have derived from its frank and

generous expression of sympathy and praise. But in common with my other correspondents you will, I hope, admit the excuse of necessity. For some weeks I had not leisure, and when I had leisure, for some weeks more I was not well enough to write even a note that was fit to be read. Now at last I am able to tell you how sincerely I appreciate the tone at once of your article and of your letter; not the less but the more for all past debates and differences of opinion on matters of art or other, which indeed now only serve to heighten my sense of the generosity and frankness of the praise bestowed on my last work. I have very seldom read any criticism on myself which gave me such genuine satisfaction as your notice in the *Standard*, even before I knew the name of the writer. I hope when my projected trilogy of *Mary Stuart* is finished—of which the last part will be as it were the epilogue of the central tragedy to which *Chastelard* was designed as the prologue—each section of the poem will take its proper place and be read and judged in its proper light as part (if I may say so) of an epic or historic whole. To have mixed up the broader political or national interests with which I have attempted to deal in the second or central part, with the prelude which treated of the last episode of the heroine's girlhood—the last tragic glimpse or reverberation of her early years in France among lovers and singers who could not hold their own in a strange country and a changing time—would have been incompatible with my plan and incongruous with my project. *Chastelard*, begun at college when I was yet an undergraduate, could not and was never meant to be more than a mere love-play played out between two single figures before the curtain should rise, as in actual history, on the wide and crowded stage of her lifelong tragedy.

Excuse the egotism of this excursion, and believe me, yours very sincerely, A. C. Swinburne.

The Pines, Putney Hill, S.W.,
April 26, '83.

Dear Mr. Austin—I am much obliged by your reference to Tacitus, and think the suggestion as to Milton's

obligation in that quarter a very happy one. But it would not surprise me to hear of some closer original for the great verse in question, considering his habit, in youth, of foraging among the most obscure scientists and fishing up fine phrases out of the metrical morass inhabited by such very small fry as Preti. I must ask Mr. Addington Symonds, the historian of the Renaissance, if he can trace the figure any further; if not, it may be very naturally taken as a loan from Tacitus to Milton, repaid with interest by the transfiguration of noble prose into glorified poetry.

Believe me, with renewed acknowledgment of your courtesy, yours very sincerely, A. C. SWINBURNE.

I never met him, and my answer in *Macmillan's Magazine* in 1885, called a *Vindication of Tennyson* (since republished in my *Bridling of Pegasus*, 1910), to his article on "Tennyson and Victor Hugo," renewed, I am sorry to say, an unfriendly feeling on his part. On writing *Madonna's Child* in 1873, which I deemed could lay claim to be regarded as Poetry, I at once arranged with Mr. Bently to withdraw *The Poetry of the Period* from circulation.

In 1869 Mrs. Beecher Stowe, the American authoress of a popular but scarcely dispassionate novel on the Negro Question in the United States, suddenly startled her English readers by publishing in *Macmillan's Magazine* a conversation with Lady Byron, the widow of the Poet, in which it was alleged that the real cause of the separation of Byron and his wife was revealed. I read it at once with close attention, saw its incoherencies, inconsistencies, and absolute incom-

patibility with incontrovertible facts, and rapidly wrote *A Vindication of Lord Byron*, that was without a day's delay published in the *Standard*. It attracted much attention, and was pirated and hawked about Fleet Street for a penny. Written under time-urgency, it was enlarged considerably by me in a few days, and published in pamphlet form by Messrs. Chapman & Hall. If one's education at the Bar has been of any service to one, as I feel it has, all through life, on the important point as to what is conclusive evidence and what is not, I do not think I can be far wrong in asserting that it disposed of Lady Byron's story as retailed by Mrs. Beecher Stowe. I unearthed the fact that Mrs. Leigh was, in Byron's closing years, the medium selected by Lady Byron for communication with him. I pointed out this fact to the then Mr. John Murray, who conveyed it to Mr. Abraham Hayward, who in turn wrote an article in the *Quarterly Review* to help to dispose of Lady Byron's assertions and Mrs. Beecher Stowe's "revelations."

The following letters will strengthen the affirmation I have made, and, in fact, speak for themselves :

KNEBWORTH,
Sept. 20, 1869.

DEAR SIR—I am very much obliged by your courtesy in sending me your very able vindication of Byron and Mrs. Leigh. I knew the latter well, and no one who did know her well could for a moment credit so monstrous a tale.—Yours truly, LYTTON.

WALTHAM HOUSE, WALTHAM CROSS,
3rd Oct. '69.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—It seems that the "Vindication" is having a considerable sale.

. . . .

I find both from the American Press and from letters from correspondents that Mrs. Stowe is much more hardly handled there than she is here.

I still feel that no more outrageous piece of calumny—in the real sense of the word—was ever published; or, as I think, with lower motives.

. . . .

I am, yours always, ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

PENMAENMAWR,
Sept. 21, '69.

MY DEAR SIR—Many thanks for your "Vindication." I am glad to see that you have been able to strengthen it by various important letters. Notably Lady S——'s (who I wish had given her name in full), though very badly written, is very valuable. It throws such an exquisite air of ridicule on the "incest" charge and "the child," against a woman almost old enough to be Byron's mother—a mother of six children, and living constantly with her husband. Robertson's letter is also very valuable as showing the existence of the state of mind in Lady Byron in her latter years, which both you and I had affirmed. The war seems to rage as hotly as ever. The long correspondence in *The Times* of Saturday is all on the right side. . . .

Is it a fact that Mrs. Stowe is now in England? I met Mr. Newman Hall yesterday, who says she is at Scarborough. If so, it looks very like her having come over to negotiate personally the sale of her slander; and one might very well suppose the letter of "An American Traveller" proceeding from herself.

Trusting that your reprint will have a wide circulation, and wishing you a prosperous journey to Italy, I remain, my dear sir, yours faithfully, WILLIAM HOWITT.

ALFRED AUSTIN, Esq.

12 Norfolk Road, Brighton,
29/9/69.

Dear Sir—You will see by the *Daily News* and *Pall Mall Gazette* that I have had my hands very full; and therefore will, I hope, excuse my delay in acknowledging the receipt of your conclusive pamphlet.

Can you help me in forcing Earl Russell to publish Byron's Memoirs from the copy taken by Mr. Moore's orders and most probably in Russell's possession?

. . . .

I am disinclined to exposing poor Lady Byron's private life and peculiarities to the public; but if I have an opportunity I may inform you privately,—how she drove her daughter, her elder grandson, and her servants away from her. Lord Ockham preferred screening coals at Sunderland and working in Scott Russell's yard to living with his grandmother. More than once all her servants left her—once in a body, till she had only a page to do everything. But enough.—Yours very truly, John Robertson.

Alfred Austin, Esq.

And, in another letter to me, he says:

Two days ago a man who knew Lady Byron from twenty to thirty years, seized my hand and held it while he assured me how thoroughly he agreed with me, saying, "In truth, she lived on delusions. I never knew a more deluded woman."

Delusion is the proper word; not imagination or hallucination.

To the Editor of the "Daily News."

Paris,
Sept. 16, 1869.

Sir—I feel it to be due both to the readers of the *Daily News* and to myself to affirm my full acquaintance with the history of Lady Byron, and especially the period of her married life and separation. The denial I gave of the truth of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's narrative rested on Lady Byron's

own written testimony, contained in those papers to which (according to your leading article of Saturday) I have not access. I have been prevented from writing this earlier by absence from home.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

WENTWORTH.

There, one might have thought, the matter could have been allowed to rest, as it did till Lord Lovelace wantonly reopened it a few years ago. I felt it to be my duty *audire alteram partem*, and accordingly read *Astarte*. In the entire volume there is only one document of any real value, and that is a letter *alleged* to have been written by Byron to Augusta Leigh. It is the letter of an illiterate schoolboy, and everybody will allow that Byron could write first-rate English prose. Moreover, the letter is printed *unsigned*, and no portion of the MS. is produced in the Appendix, as it is with many other documents of no incriminating character. The result was that, after gaining scandalous notoriety, *Astarte* had the same fate as Mrs. Beecher Stowe's article. General incredulity consigned it to oblivion.

About a month before the time at which I am writing these lines—November 8, 1909—Mr. Richard Edgcumbe, a friend of mine own whom I have known for some forty years, wrote a volume, *Byron, The Last Phase*, published by Murray, in which he claims to show that Augusta Leigh pretended to be guilty of the charge against her—which, as a fact, she never did—in order to screen Mary Chaworth, the wife of Colonel Musters.

The suggestion is in itself most startling, from the improbability of its being true. His whole theory is based on pure assumption, and built on the same unsound foundation. Let me give one instance of this. After arguing that the well-known stanzas addressed to "Thyrza" were addressed to Mary Chaworth, without adducing any evidence that they were, he thus continues:

"These three pieces comprise the so-called (why 'so-called'?) Thyrza poems, and, *in the absence of proof to the contrary*, we may reasonably suppose that their subject was Mary Chaworth."

I may say that the volume is written according to this method throughout. The result being that the author has confronted one mystification with another; if possible, still more unsubstantial.

From my earliest years I have always had the highest estimate of Byron as a Poet; and though of late years a preference for a less manly, more morbid, and what is called a more "subtle" form of poetry has widely prevailed, I have never wavered from that opinion and have defended it by showing that it is in accordance with traditional canons of criticism, and was the opinion of Goethe, Sir Walter Scott, and Shelley. So one is not in bad company. In regard to his character, the good and bad qualities were inextricably mingled; but it should never be forgotten that the worse ones were in no small measure atoned for by his noble conduct and death in Greece, which Mr. Edgcumbe narrates admirably. It is for that

reason that I shall append the poem *Off Missolonghi,* composed by me when sailing past it at nightfall, more than ten years later.

OFF MISSOLONGHI

I

The lights of Missolonghi gleam
Before me, now the day is gone ;
And vague as leaf on drifting stream,
My keel glides on.

II

No mellow moon, no stars arise ;
In other lands they shine and roam :
All I discern are darkening skies
And whitening foam.

III

So on those lights I gaze that seem
Ghosts of the beacons of my youth,
Ere, rescued from their treacherous gleam,
I steered towards truth.

IV

And you, too, Byron, did awake,
And ransomed from the cheating breath
Of living adulation, stake
Greatness on death !

V

Alas ! the choice was made too late.
You treated Fame as one that begs,
And, having drained the joys that sate,
Offered the dregs.

VI

The lees of life you scornful brought,
Scornful she poured upon the ground :
The honoured doom in shame you sought,
You never found.

VII

"The Spartan borne upon his shield"
Is not the meed of jaded lust;
And, ere your feet could reach the field,
Death claimed your dust.

VIII

Upon the pillow, not the rock,
Like meaner things you ebbed away,
Yearning in vain for instant shock
Of mortal fray.

IX

The futile prayer, the feeble tear,
All that deforms the face of death,
You had to bear, whilst in your ear
Hummed battle's breath.

X

You begged the vulture, not the worm,
Might feed upon your empty corse.
In vain! Just Nemesis was firm
'Gainst late remorse.

XI

Too much you asked, too little gave,
The crown without the cross of strife.
What is it earns a soldier's grave?
A soldier's life.

XII

Think not I come to taunt the dead.
My earliest master still is dear;
And what few tears I have to shed,
Are gathering here.

XIII

Behind me lies Ulysses' isle,
The wanderer wise who pined for home.
But Byron! Neither tear nor smile
Forbade you roam.

XIV

Yours was the bitterest mortal fate,
  No choice save thirst or swinish trough
Love's self but offered sensuous bait,
  Or virtuous scoff.

XV

Yet was it well to wince, and cry
  For anguish, and at wrong to gird?
Best,—like your gladiator, die
  Without a word!

XVI

There be, who in that fault rejoice,
  Since sobs survive as sweetest lays,
And yours remains the strongest voice
  Of later days.

XVII

For me, I think of you as One
  Who vaguely pined for worthier lot
Than to be blinked at like the sun,
  But found it not.

XVIII

Who blindly fought his way from birth,
  Nor learned, till 'twas too late to heed,
Not all the noblest songs are worth
  One noble deed:

XIX

Who, with the doom of glory cursed,
  Still played the athlete's hollow part,
And 'neath his bay-crowned temples nursed
  A withered heart.

April 1881.

An interesting episode happened to me when I published the "Vindication." Shortly after its appearance (1869), Sir Hubert Jerningham, attached to the British Embassy in Paris, with whom I had

no personal acquaintance, wrote to me to say that Madame de Boissy, formerly the Contessa Guiccioli, had read it with great interest, and that I should probably hear from her. I did; and, as will be seen in the following letters, she asked me, if I ever came to Florence, to pay her a visit at her villa, some little distance outside it. Staying with Thomas Adolphus Trollope at his villa at Florence, for a little while very shortly after, on my way to Rome, I availed myself of the invitation, and spent an afternoon with her at her villa. It was evident that she had been an exceedingly pretty woman, for her appearance was still comely. I found she had more or less forsaken her native tongue and preferred to speak French. It will be observed that her letters, which I will now reproduce textually, are written in that language.

CHÂTEAU DE BALLEROY, par BAYEUX,
CALVADOS, *Sunday.*

SIR—I had the honour of forwarding both your letter and the pamphlet which you sent me, to Madame de Boissy, Villa Boissy, par Settimello, Florence.

I am very glad you have written to me to ask whether I had done so, as it affords me the opportunity of asking you to favour me with a copy of your interesting work.—Very truly yours, HUBERT G. H. JERNINGHAM.

I return to the Embassy to-morrow.

VILLA BOISSY A SETTIMELLO, par SESTO
(près FLORENCE), *octobre* 3, 1869.

MONSIEUR—Le malheureux et odieux tentatif de Mrs. Stowe pour nuire à la mémoire de votre Illustre Concitoyen

se convertira, je l'espère, dans un triomphe pour lui, et dans sa complète justification, puisque de nobles caractères comme le vôtre assument sa défense.

Soyez mille fois récompensé, Monsieur, de votre belle action, par la reconnaissance de tous ceux qui aiment la Vérité et la Justice et abhorrent l'exagération de ces *Vertus dont on fait des Vices*—pour me servir de l'énergique et belle expression du grande Poète que vous avez vengé.

Quant à ma reconnaissance en particulier, soyez sûr, Monsieur, que mes paroles seraient incapables de vous l'exprimer. Je suis en Italie, à ma campagne près de Florence, et ce n'est que aujourd'hui que je *reçois* votre lettre si flatteuse pour moi, et si généreuse. Mr. Jerningham m'a écrit de Paris, m'annonçant l'envoi d'un livre; je pense ce sera votre ouvrage, et je l'attends avec le plus grand désir.

Si vous revenez à Paris, j'espère bien que vous voudrez me procurer le plaisir de vous remercier de vive voix, et en attendant, veuillez, Monsieur, agréer l'expression de ma plus vive reconnaissance et de ma plus haute considération.

MARQUISE DE BOISSY.

VILLA BOISSY (A SETTIMELLO),
octobre 29, 1869.

MONSIEUR—Je viens de recevoir vos ouvrages que je lirais avec le plus grand intérêt, et je vous en remercie.

Je n'ai encore fait que parcourir la brochure sur Lord Byron, mais j'ai vu déjà que c'est une belle et complète vindication de l'odieux Roman de Mrs. Stowe, et pour prouver que c'est une calomnie issue d'un état d'allucination et de méchanceté, vous avez su réunir des documents précieux. C'est une réquisition triomphante qui déplace Lady Byron du piédestal de la *divinité* (forgé par la dame Romancière) pour l'envoyer aux petites-maisons.

Quant à ce qui regarde la conduite de Lord Byron en général, et en dehors de ses rapports conjugaux, permettez-moi de vous dire que la justice y est moins complète: mais cela peut se comprendre:—vous avez connu le Poète et non l'Homme, si ce n'est comme le plus illustre calomnié de notre siècle. Je crois avoir deviné la cause pour laquelle

Mr. Jerningham ne m'a pas envoyé votre *Vindication*; il n'est peut-être pas du même avis que vous sur le *peu de sagesse* de l'*ouvrage* qu'il a voulu honorer de sa traduction. Quant à moi, je ne puis être juge compétent qu'à un seul point de vue ; je n'ai jamais eu aucune prétention littéraire. Si c'est donc à son peu de mérite littéraire que votre critique s'adresse, je n'ai que à me soumettre à votre jugement, mais si elle se réfère à la véracité de tout ce que je dis dans ces volumes, dont le seul but était de payer mon tribut à l'amitié et à la justice (et qui *devait et n'a pu* rester anonyme), alors je proteste. Si c'est que je n'ai pas dit assez de mal de Lord Byron, ne voulant pas en inventer pour faire la cour à ceux qui ont intérêt à le calomnier, je ne pouvais pas être sage aux dépens de ma conscience. Et si c'était vrai que j'eusse perdu de mon influence sur son cœur avant sa mort, j'ai eu du moins le bonheur de ne pas m'en apercevoir—ni par sa conduite envers moi, ni par ses paroles, ni par ses lettres—ce qui est déjà une grande consolation. Je vous ai parlé franchement, Monsieur, et maintenant je veux vous assurer que je vous suis fort reconnaissante de la noble part que vous avez prise à la vindication de mon Illustre Ami.—Je viens de lire reproduites, et traduites en Italien dans la *Nazione* d'hier, les lettres de Lady Byron à Mrs. Leigh à *l'époque de la séparation des époux*, publiées par le *Quarterly Review*; jamais un triomphe de la vérité sur la calomnie n'a été plus lumineux! Voici, Monsieur, la photographie tirée il y a déjà huit ans à Paris. Son mérite est celui de l'art; mais vous me l'avez demandée et je vous l'envois.

Agréez en attendant mes compliments et croyez que je serais toujours charmée de vous revoir et de vous répéter de vive voix les expressions de ma considération.

MARQUISE DE BOISSY.

VILLA BOISSY (A SETTIMELLO),
novembre 2, 1869.

MONSIEUR—Je vous remercie de votre explication, qui est plus qu'une justification, et je vous assure que je l'admets sans restriction aucune. Je voudrais bien que le public fût aussi juste que vous dans son appréciation de la conduite et

du caractère moral de mon Illustre Ami. Mais les hommes de talent comme vous tiennent dans leurs mains un cale de la balance pour former et reformer les opinions de leurs semblables. Je suis donc bien heureuse d'être sûre de la votre.

Votre satyre est charmante, et le monde serait meilleur s'il y avait beaucoup de jeunes gens qui pourraient dire comme vous

> I claim the precious privilege of youth
> Never to speak except to speak the truth.

Je serais toujours charmée, Monsieur, de vous revoir ici et à Paris et d'avoir l'honneur de faire la connaissance de Madame Austin.

Croyez-moi en attendant avec la plus parfaite considération,

Marquise de Boissy.

Villa Boissy (a Settimello),
octobre 24, 1869.

Monsieur—Je suis charmée de vous savoir à Florence et avec l'aimable intention de me procurer le plaisir de vous voir, et l'occasion de vous exprimer de vive voix le sentiment que je vous ai témoigné par ma lettre.

Le mercredi depuis deux heures on est toujours certain de me trouver, et je garderais l'espérance qu'il vous soit possible de me faire l'honneur de votre visite ce jour-là. Veuillez en attendant agréer les expressions de ma considération et reconnaissance. Marquise de Boissy.

P.S.—Je ne veux pas vous laisser ignorer que de la Station de Sesto à Settimello il y a un quart d'heure de promenade.

TRANSLATION

Villa Boissy (a Settimello), by Sesto,
(near Florence), *October* 3, 1869.

Sir—The wretched and odious attempt of Mrs. Stowe to injure the memory of your illustrious fellow-countryman will, I hope, be converted into a triumph for him and a complete

justification, now that such noble characters as yours undertake his defence. May you be rewarded a thousand-fold for your fine action, by the gratitude of those who love truth and justice and hate the exaggeration of those *virtues which are made vices*, to use the forcible and fine language of the great poet that you have avenged.

As to my own special gratitude, I can assure you, sir, that any words of mine would be insufficient to express it to you. I am in Italy, at my country-place near Florence, and only to-day have I received your too flattering and generous letter to me. Mr. Jerningham has written from Paris, announcing the dispatch of a book to me. I suppose this is your pamphlet, and I await it with the greatest desire.

Should you return to Paris, I hope you will give me the pleasure of thanking you personally, and meantime I beg you, sir, to accept the expression of my warmest gratitude and my highest esteem. MARQUISE DE BOISSY.

VILLA BOISSY (A SETTIMELLO),
October 29, 1869.

SIR—I have just received your books, which I will read with the greatest interest, and for which I thank you.

I have, as yet, only glanced through the pamphlet on Lord Byron, but I can see already that it is a fine and complete vindication from Mrs. Stowe's odious story; and, to prove it to be the outcome of hallucination and of wicked malice, you have been able to produce the most valuable documents. It is a triumphant and searching verdict, which lowers Lady Byron from her pedestal (erected by the romancing lady) as a divinity, and consigns her to a mad asylum.

As regards the general conduct of Lord Byron, aside from his conjugal relations, allow me to say that you do him less complete justice; but this is intelligible: you know the Poet but not the Man, except as the most calumniated and illustrious man of our time. I think I can guess the reason why Mr. Jerningham has not sent your *Vindication* to me. He does not, perhaps, agree with you as to the *unwisdom* of my *work* which he has honoured by translating.

Personally, I can lay no claim to being a competent judge except from one point of view. I have never had any literary pretensions. If, then, it is to its small literary merits that your criticism is directed, I can but submit to your verdict; but if it refers to the veracity of all that I say in those volumes, whose sole object was to pay my tribute to friendship and to justice (and which *ought not, and could not*, remain anonymous), then I protest. If it is that I have not spoken enough ill of Lord Byron, nor tried to invent it in order to please those whose interest it is to calumniate him, I could not be wise at the expense of my conscience. And if it be true that I had lost my influence over his heart before his death, I had, at least, the happiness not to perceive it, either in his conduct to me, or in his words, or in his letters, which is, at all events, a great consolation. I have spoken frankly, sir; and now I have to assure you that I am deeply grateful to you for the noble part you have taken in the vindication of my Illustrious Friend.

I have just read the reproduction and translation into Italian, in the *Nazione* of yesterday, of the letters of Lady Byron to Mrs. Leigh at *the time of the separation between the husband and wife*, published in the *Quarterly Review*; never was there a more convincing triumph of truth over calumny!

Herewith, sir, is my picture, photographed eight years ago in Paris. Its merits are due to art; but you asked for it and I send it.

Pray accept my compliments, and believe that I shall always be charmed to see you, and to repeat by word of mouth the expression of my regards.

MARQUISE DE BOISSY.

VILLA BOISSY (A SETTIMELLO),
November 2, 1869.

SIR—I thank you for your explanation, which is more than a justification, and which, I can assure you, I accept without reserve. I only wish that the public were as fair as you in their judgment of the conduct and moral character of my Illustrious Friend.

But men of talent like you hold in their hands the scales to weigh, and to form, and reform the opinions of their fellow-men. I am, therefore, very happy to be certain of yours.

Your satire is charming, and the world would be better for having more young folks who could say like you,

> I claim the precious privilege of youth,
> Never to speak except to speak the truth.

I shall always be charmed, sir, to see you here, and in Paris, and to have the honour of making Mrs. Austin's acquaintance.

. . . .

MARQUISE DE BOISSY.

VILLA BOISSY (A SETTIMELLO),
October 24, 1869.

SIR—I am charmed to learn that you are in Florence, and are kind enough to propose giving me the pleasure of seeing you, and the opportunity of expressing to you *de vive voix* the feelings that I expressed in my letter.

On Wednesdays, after two o'clock, you are always certain to find me, and I cherish the hope that it will be possible for you to honour me by your visit on that day. Please accept the expression of my regards and gratitude.

MARQUISE DE BOISSY.

P.S.—I think I ought to let you know that the station of Sesto, for Settimello, is a quarter of an hour's walk from here.

The following characteristically warm-hearted and impatient letter, from dear Anthony Trollope, came as he and Mrs. Trollope were starting for the Antipodes, in 1871:

ATHENAEUM,
May 5, 1871.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—Very many thanks for your introduction and kind farewell letter. Alas for us, the wretched ambition

which wrecked the "Queen of the Thames" on its homeward journey has caused our vessel to be postponed eighteen days, and we do not sail till the 24th,—which is an incredible nuisance to us, busy as we homeless wanderers are. We are in all the misery of living about among friends and pot-houses, going through that very worst phase of life which consists in a continuous and ever-failing attempt to be jolly with nothing to do. I cannot believe the Old Testament because labour is spoken of as the *evil* consequence of the Fall of Man. My only doubt as to finding a heaven for myself at last arises from the fear that the disembodied and beatified spirits will not want novels. For your sake I will trust that there may be left enough of the prevailing spirit of our present nature to make satire still palatable.

A most faithful adieu to you and your dear wife! I hope you may go on and prosper, and earn all the success and renown which your honesty and intelligence deserve. I write to Tom to-day.—Yours most faithfully,

ANTHONY TROLLOPE.

Stationariness in one's own home began by degrees to show that the taciturnity of the Muse was yielding to a spontaneous impulse to express one's thoughts in verse, though in a form ostensibly wanting in the romantic spirit. I suspect I was passing through a period of somewhat excessive ethical austerity, that, I am glad to think, was but brief. Under its influence, I wrote another satire, *The Golden Age*, in the same metre as *The Season*, but lacking in the sprightly levity of that earlier work. But it grew out of the same moral subsoil as the former and every later work, viz. a distaste for ostentatious opulence, and for the luxury and vulgarity that come of it. More laboured than *The Season*, it was in effect less finished; and it

had the grave defect of the moral being too obvious and dominant.

Its course was for a time suddenly interrupted by the selection of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern as a candidate for the throne of Spain, the formal announcement of which and the angry opposition of Napoleon III. and the French nation closely following the declaration made by Earl Granville, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, only a few days previously, that he had never known the peaceful European situation so free from cloud or menace.

It seemed to me, who for nearly four years had been paying close attention to and writing continuously on Foreign Affairs, a very incautious utterance. The ominous phrase, "Nous sommes asphyxiés," perpetually passed from mouth to mouth in France in consequence of the daily increasing influence of Prussia over Germany north of the Main, might have warned that statesman and the Government of Mr. Gladstone as to the eruptive condition of Continental international relations. Nor should they have been blind to the steadily expanding strength of the Prussian Army.

I had reprehended the phrase in the *Standard* as unreasonable in itself and dangerous to peace, and at the same time had written adversely to the internal direction of affairs in France, alike in that paper and in a weekly one called *The Imperial Review*, started and supported,

directly or indirectly, by Henry Cecil Raikes, a member of the House of Commons, and Chairman of Committee when the Conservative Party came into office. I therefore followed with the utmost interest the rapid evolution of the hostile attitude of France and Prussia with the obvious threat of war, the diplomatic conduct of which has recently been recorded in the minutest detail by M. Émile Ollivier, then the French Emperor's President of the Council, in the *Revue des deux Mondes* of 1909. I doubt if there could be adduced, in the whole course of history, another instance of such ineptitude, wavering, and infatuation, as M. Ollivier narrates.

When, at length, impelled by military presumption and popular infatuation, France declared war, I rapidly wrote, impelled by indignation, the poem, *The Challenge Answered*, and sent it to one of the London daily papers—I do not remember which of them. I sent it, of course, with no ulterior purpose, but I shall tell, directly, how serviceable it turned out to be. I thought France utterly in the wrong, and I am bound to say, notwithstanding my affection for that country, I think so still; nor, having read every word of what M. Émile Ollivier has written on the subject with so much ability and absolute knowledge, can I see my way to abandoning that opinion.

Bismarck's account of the final refusal of the King of Prussia to see Benedetti again, after the French Ambassador had pressed on King William

with lamentable pertinacity an unreasonable and intolerable demand, shows it was, no doubt, curt and provocative. But I cannot think it was in substance untrue; and Napoleon III. and his advisers had brought it on themselves by their incredible infatuation in refusing to be satisfied with the withdrawal of Prince Leopold's candidature alike by his Father and by the Spanish Government.

Had they been content with that withdrawal, the whole world would have felt that France had achieved a striking diplomatic victory. But I am sorry to be obliged to conclude that the Gallic Cock wanted to crow over the Prussian Eagle; and the Emperor, M. Ollivier, the Duc de Grammont, and their colleagues, ought to have known that Bismarck was not the man to tolerate such a conclusion to long and tedious negotiations.

I entertained just as little doubt that France would be defeated as that the real cause of the war, jealousy of the growing power of Prussia, was indefensible. My wife's elder sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Cockerell, were staying with us at the time; and I remember his saying to me, thinking, as he did, what most Englishmen thought, "Of course the French will go to Berlin." "On the contrary," I replied, "the Prussians will march to Paris." He thought me mad.

On the following day Anthony Trollope came from Waltham Abbey to spend a day or two with us; and shortly after his arrival, I received a pressing

letter from the Editor of the *Standard* asking if he could persuade me to try to obtain permission to join the Head-Quarters of the King of Prussia, but adding that I should have to rely entirely on my own personal endeavours and private influence, since the Correspondent of the *Standard* at Berlin, on making such an application, had met with a curt refusal. It was not wonderful; for the Editor, most perversely in my opinion, had suddenly inserted articles of a somewhat violent kind against both Prussia and its King.

I read the letter aloud; and Anthony Trollope at once said, "If you can get permission, you will be a lucky fellow, for there is not a man in Europe who would not like to go to the Seat of War." I looked at my wife, who said, "Go, if you like," in a tone and manner indicating full consent and approval. All hesitation on my part vanished; but, before complying with the Editor's desire, there were certain conditions I should have to lay down. These were that, while I did not presume to interfere with his editorial views, I could not accede to his request, in the circumstances, unless he left me absolute liberty to write from my own point of view in the letters sent him by me, and engaged to print them all, and without any alteration. His reply was affirmative; and, on the morrow, for warlike operations had begun, I took farewell of my wife, and started on my tentative journey.

CHAPTER II

Franco-German War—Join King of Prussia's Head-Quarters—Interviews with Bismarck—At Versailles—Siege of Paris—Laurence Oliphant—Surrender of Metz.

LEFT entirely to my own resources and expedients in somewhat adverse circumstances, since the *Standard* was daily writing in a more hostile spirit to Prussia, its King, and its policy, and, moreover, myself utterly inexperienced in such missions and without introductions of any kind, I felt that it would be idle for me to attempt to proceed to Head-Quarters in the field without first obtaining permission to do so in Berlin.

I knew no one there; so I made direct for the Hague, where Karl von Bunsen, whom, together with his wife, we had known in Florence, was Prussian Minister. Fortunately I found him at his post, dined with him, and started on the morrow for Berlin, with introductions to his elder brothers Ernst and George, like himself the sons of Baron Bunsen, at one time Prussian Ambassador to the Court of Saint James's. He told me that his brother Ernst, whose habitual residence was in London at Hanover Gate, had

gone to Berlin to superintend the organization of the Red Cross Society, and that George was at that time on the best terms with Count Bismarck and the closest with the Crown Prince, beside being a member of the Prussian Parliament.

My difficulties seemed to be in no small measure diminished by this lucky stroke ; but the journey to Berlin was attended with a good deal of obstruction and delay, for Prussian troops were being conveyed to the Seat of War along every railway line. They were in the highest spirits, shouting "Nach Paris ! nach Paris !" amply justified by the successes their comrades had already achieved, counterbalanced by nothing more hopeful on the part of their antagonists than the historical *Tout peut se rétablir* of the Emperor Napoleon.

It would be as tedious to record minutely the obstacles I met with on my way to Berlin as it was to be confronted by them. They were overcome at last, and I met with the heartiest reception from the two Bunsen brothers ; George shortly becoming one of the most valued friends I ever had — encyclopaedic in mind and attainments, buoyant in spirits, warm of heart, and enjoying the domestic companionship of his English wife and his sprightly young children.

He at once communicated with Count Bismarck, standing personal guarantee for my trustworthy conviction that France had put itself in the wrong by the Declaration of War, and that, if admitted to the King's Head-Quarters, I should write with

unfettered independence, and in no degree hampered by the editorial opinions of the *Standard.*

Swift on his telegram there came a reply from Bismarck: "Tell Mr. Austin to go to the War Office, where official permission to join us will be given." But, on hastening to the War Office, I was received by its Head, General von Roon, as distinguished in manner as he was handsome in appearance, who received me with the disciplined though amiable formality of his class, but informed me that he was under strict orders to give no such facility as I desired, save by the direct personal order of the King.

I bore this disheartening reply at once to George von Bunsen, who introduced me to Count von Eulenberg, the Home Minister, and the only Minister left in Berlin of any influence. At my request he gave me, but not very hopefully, a letter to the War Office, saying that it seemed to him the tenor of Count Bismarck's telegram showed that it had been sent with the King's approbation. But a second visit to the War Office was as fruitless as the first, though the reception extended to me was equally courteous.

Meanwhile, the battles round Metz were being fought. I had bought a horse at the Prussian "Tattersall's," and hired two attendants to accompany me on my journey westward. My impatience and disappointment may well be surmised, though my good friends, the Bunsens, did everything in their power to bid me be of good cheer,

and had introduced me to the resident *Times* correspondent in Berlin, Dr. Abel, a linguist and philologist of the first class, and as encyclopaedic in book knowledge and literature as Bunsen himself. Be it said, in passing, that the only third person to equal them in that respect is my friend, Dr. Max Nordau, all three of German nationality, though two of them of the Hebrew race, so remarkable for many-sided capacity. With Abel I formed an acquaintance that gradually ripened into friendship, and led to several visits from him to us in England in after-days, together with no little interesting correspondence.

At length came the anxiously expected telegram from Count Bismarck to George Bunsen: "Tell Mr. Austin to go again to the War Office. It is the order of the King." I did so, and a written Official Permission to proceed to the King's Head-Quarters, and to go anywhere at the Seat of War in the occupation of the German troops, was at once given me.

My kind friends accompanied me to the station, and off I started, with my Arab stallion "Emperor" and my two attendants, for Cologne, which it took two days to reach, and I arrived on the 22nd of August. And after that I had to be satisfied with a military train, my "carriage" being a horse-box, and I wrote a letter to the *Standard*, having for my writing-desk an inverted bucket and for my bed clean straw.

Our progress was irritatingly slow; and it

was not till we reached Saarbrück, on the 25th, that I found myself among the evidences of the recent fighting. There were railway trucks, some closed, some open, conveying the wounded to the rear. Others were on the station platform, limping, squatting, pale and haggard, kindly attended to, but looking utterly wretched. Some were being helped along by a couple of comrades, round whose necks they clung with feeble arms. Others lay on stretcher beds, awaiting their last breath. A number of ladies sate sewing what looked like shrouds. It was my first experience of war, and I could not help being moved by it.

. . . .

Without taking my readers through the well-known engagements culminating at Sedan and the surrender of the French Emperor, I will hasten on my road to overtake the King's Head-Quarters. This I did on September 5th at Rheims, and I cannot do better than quote the exact words written respecting my first interview with Bismarck :

An Interview with Bismarck

Rheims (the King's Head-Quarters),
September 6.

I had the luck yesterday morning to fall in with the Royal *cortège* just as it was quitting Rethel, and I came on with it here. A short way out of the town three or four more carriages drove to the front. In one was the King's secretary, and by his side Count Bismarck. I noticed that the carriage pulled up, and immediately Herr Abeken descended, came back to where I was, and said that Count Bismarck would be obliged if I would ride up to the carriage

and be presented to him. It was the first time I had seen the distinguished statesman, so much the subject of curiosity.

He was profuse in his apologies for what he described, with much humour, as the stupid red-tapism of the War Office, which had kept me so long from the scene of action in spite of the permission he had obtained for me from the King, and as his Excellency is perfectly aware why I sought that permission, and in what capacity I am here, you may consider a good part of the polite regrets as addressed to yourself. "At any rate," he added, with sly satire, "you shall go fast enough now." The *cortège* was in full motion; and, with the expression of my thanks, I turned my horse's head. He detained me a moment to ask for something I had written concerning this war, and which was published in a Berlin paper. I handed it to him. "I know it already," he said, "but I want it for General von Roon, to show him how wrong he was not to send you to the front at once." The man knows everything, even to the veriest trifles, and talks with a merry *bonhomie* very remarkable.

. . . .

The following day I had another and a longer interview with Count Bismarck; not quite across the walnuts and the wine, but over, at least, that champagne, in the heart of whose native soil we are, and which is now flowing so freely down German throats. He was full of talk, and all of the liveliest kind. "We shall stay here to-morrow, I think," he said, "and perhaps the day after. *We must give the Parisians time to cook in their own juice.*" He made very merry over the new French Ministry, of whose composition I now heard for the first time. But he had also his jokes against his own countrymen. He had just received a letter from home. "My wife writes," he said, "that I complain of our German bands and their bad music, but adds that they are just as badly off in that respect at Frankfort." I inquired about his son, who, I had heard, had lost both legs at Mars-la-Tour. He answered merrily that he was hit only in one, and that one he should save, though the ball went in at the thigh and came out near the knee. He and his horse and

the saddle had five wounds among them—the horse two, the saddle one, and the rider two. "It is well," he said, "the French fire so hurriedly and at such a distance, for their weapons are magnificent. But every sportsman knows what is the effect of aiming at an entire covey of partridges, instead of covering a single bird. You hit none. That is their case, luckily for us."

He went on to describe the fortunes of his other son on the same day; how he was seen to fall with his horse, and was left for dead, but how he met his father, safe and sound, the same evening. The Minister himself had a little share in the events of that day's battle, which he related with much gusto. He was appealed to by a French priest, who found himself at a critical moment kept for the nonce a prisoner. There were good reasons for his detention, into which it is not necessary to enter; but the priest appealed to his gown, and protested violently against the detention. "It is quite right," said the Minister, "for all that. If you were to attempt to go I would shoot you myself." At length the moment arrived when the priest could safely be released. By that time his good humour had returned, and he departed with the polite assurance that the Minister, in his long career of civil duty, had not forgotten the trade and functions of a soldier. The compliment was narrated with evident satisfaction, for in this land civilians are looked down upon, and I have myself heard the phrase applied to Count Bismarck, "He is only a civilian." He is himself not of that opinion, as the anecdote shows. But in whatever character we regard him, he is certainly one of the heartiest, frankest, and most genial of mankind.

As I bring this letter to a close the square of the cathedral is crowded with people; a military concert is going forward, and some of that villainous music of which Count Bismarck spoke is being served out to us. It is patriotic, but discordant, and atrociously noisy. And the grand old pile, born of other centuries, looks calmly down upon the distracting din, and surely wonders if we have really improved upon the much-abused ages that lifted it in piety to the skies.

A Conversation with Count Bismarck

The King's Head-Quarters, Rheims,
September 13.

I had yesterday a long interview with Count Bismarck; and as the dialogue, to which you may be sure I contributed as little as I possibly could, was, on this occasion, exclusively political, I hasten to lay it before my readers—preserving, as far as possible, the very words that were uttered. If I succeed in reproducing something of their directness and causticity I shall be fortunate. Be pleased to bear in mind that the conversation was conducted in English, which Count Bismarck prefers to speak with Englishmen, seeing that he speaks our tongue, if not with absolute fluency, at least with force and a certain familiarity.

To my opening observation that we had not gone as fast as, when I first had the pleasure of seeing him, he had jocularly promised I henceforth should, his Excellency replied that few people had any idea of the difficulty of transporting an army of 300,000 men. "And remember," he said, "first they fronted the west; then they turned and fronted the north; then the north-east; and after Sedan, besides seeing after 100,000 prisoners, they had to wheel right round and march south-west again." "The German troops march well," he added; "they have actually made their 30 English miles in a day, with, of course, a rest afterwards; but 10 miles a day continuously is the most that can be counted on." I asked if he thought the French would defend Paris. "We shall not attack it," he answered. "What will you do then?" I asked. "We shall enter it without attacking it. We shall starve it out." I urged that it would require 1,200,000 men to invest Paris. He explained that it would not be invested in that sense. "But," he said, "we shall post our armies round it, according as is thought best; and we have 50,000 cavalry who will answer for the rest. They will perpetually sweep and scour the parts not actually occupied by our troops, and not a morsel of food will be able to enter Paris. Why should we attack and undergo fresh sacrifices gratuitously? There are fighting

persons in Paris, who might give us trouble the first, and possibly the second day, if we attacked. The third day, if we leave them alone, they will be more troublesome to Paris itself, food becoming scarce. We will begin with the third day. Why run our heads against a wall?"

He spoke with the utmost confidence of this system, and I leave his views just as they were stated. When I suggested that, whilst Paris was being thus starved into submission, time would be given for the formation of a new French army south of the Loire, he replied: "Not an army, only numbers of armed people. We took 1500 of such near St. Menehould with a single squadron of dragoons. It is possible that the Frenchman may be made a good soldier in three months; but we shall not give him three months, and in any case the so-called army will be without officers deserving the name. If they insist on fighting, well and good. They will be slaughtered. But it is a pity."

Touching upon the prospects of peace, he inquired, "With whom? Through whom? With the *gentlemen of the pavement* and their representatives? When I saw the Emperor," he went on, "after his surrendering himself a prisoner, I asked him if he was disposed to put forward any request for peace. The Emperor replied that he was not in a position to do so, for he had left a regular Government in Paris, with the Empress at its head. It is plain, therefore," continued Count Bismarck, "that, if France possesses any Government at all, it is still the Government of the Empress as Regent, or of the Emperor." When I asked if the flight of the Empress and of the Prince Imperial might not be regarded as an abdication, he said very positively, "I cannot so construe it. The Empress had been forced to go by the *gentlemen of the pavement*, as the Corps Législatif had been obliged to suspend its sittings; but the action of the gentlemen of the pavement was not legal. They could not make a Government. The question was, Whom does the fleet still obey? Whom does the army shut up in Metz still obey? Perhaps Bazaine still recognises the Emperor. If so, and we choose to let him go to Paris, he and his army would be worth considerably more than the gentlemen of the pavement and the

so-called Government. We do not wish to dictate to France her form of government; we have nothing to say to it. That is her affair." I pointed out that it would be extremely difficult for the French people at the present moment even to employ the means necessary for ascertaining the national will. "That is their look-out," replied his Excellency; "we know what *we* want, and that is enough for us."

This observation led up to what Germany will consider indispensable conditions of peace. Count Bismarck disclaimed all desire of increase of territory or population for mere increase' sake, and it was a nuisance to have German subjects who speak French. "But," he continued, "the present is the twenty-fifth time in the space of a hundred years that France has made war on Germany on some pretext or other. Now, at least, our terrible disease of divided unity being cured, we have contrived, by the help of the hand of God, to beat her down. It is idle to hope to propitiate her. She would never forgive us for beating her, even if we offered the easiest terms in the world and forbore from asking for the expenses of the war. She could not forgive you for Waterloo, and it was only by accident that she did not make war upon you on account of it. She could not forgive Sadowa, though it was not fought against her, and she will never forgive Sedan. She must therefore be made harmless. *We must have Strasburg, and we must have Metz*, even if in the latter case we hold merely the garrison, and whatever else is necessary to improve our strategic position against attack from her. We do not want the territory as territory, but as a *glacis* between her and us.

"At the commencement of this war, had the Emperor displayed energy, he might have attacked Southern Germany before we could have done anything. Why he did not do it we do not know to this day. He had an army of 150,000 men, ready to be moved in a day. We cannot do that—we are too poor. But France can afford it; and having missed doing the energetic and daring thing once, she would know better next time, and would do it if we do not take precautions and make it

impossible by improving our frontier. Had the attack been made at once on South Germany we should have lost its assistance, not because the South Germans are not well disposed, but because they would have been crushed. The late King of Würtemberg said to me one day, 'You are always very frank with me; I will be frank with you. If the French were to pounce upon my people, and I were eating soldier's bread in your camp, how should I feel? My people, oppressed with exactions, would beg of me to come home and make terms with the conquerors. The shirt is nearer to the skin than the coat, and I should have to do it.' These were the words of the late King of Würtemberg to me, and they describe the situation such as it must always remain if we do not make ourselves strong against French attack on that side. That is why we must have Strasburg and an improved frontier. *We will fight ten years sooner than not obtain this necessary security.*"

I asked if he had received any communications from M. Jules Favre. "Not directly," he answered, "but through Lord Granville, and indeed also through Vienna. M. Favre is anxious to know if I shall receive communications from him, and if it will be possible to open negotiations for peace on the basis of the integrity of the French territory. To the first question, I can only say that everything that comes from or through Lord Granville will receive my best attention, though I cannot at present recognise M. Jules Favre as Minister of Foreign Affairs for France, or as capable of binding the nation; and as to the second question, I am only surprised that he did not ask if Germany would not defray all the expenses of the war. The position of the French is worse than ever. Had the Emperor still been at the head of affairs, he and his system had friends in Austria, in Italy, even in Russia. All are afraid to catch the contagion of Republicanism, and consequently the Republic, if it is to be, will be without friends."

Such was the tenor, and, indeed, the language of the conversation of yesterday. I will venture to say that it is of considerable importance that it should be laid before the English public; for it represents the mature and serious

views, not only of Germany's greatest and most influential Minister, but likewise of the whole nation.

We leave Rheims to-morrow morning, and are promised a long *étape* forward.

. . . .

The day after the Battle and Surrender of Sedan I had happened to meet Sir Henry Havelock in the street at Sedan, who was in charge of the Red Cross convoy. He kindly gave me some welcome tea, and asked me to take charge of two ladies who were with him, occupied in the same charitable manner, as well as all his Red Cross carts, horses, and attendants, till he himself overtook us at Chaumes. This I did, and there left them. How could I do otherwise? The route to Paris from Meaux was plain enough, and I had every reason to suppose Havelock would follow in due course, and pick them up at Chaumes. But, two days after my arrival at Versailles, he appeared, and asked me where they were. I knew of his explosive temper, and perceived from his face he would probably give me a taste of it. So, anticipating him, I feigned, myself, to be angry, and replied, "Why, of course I left them at Chaumes. What else, in the name of common sense, could I have done with them. The utterly inaccurate information you gave me, in the garden of the hotel at Meaux, caused me to lose touch of Count Bismarck and the King's Head-Quarters, which has greatly inconvenienced me as a newspaper correspondent." The ruse completely succeeded.

The cloud passed from his face; he owned the fault was not mine; and we were at once, what we remained throughout the war, the best of friends.

Within a week after the above incident, we rode out together one day from Versailles for several miles along the high-road, until challenged by a German sentry. I pulled up at once, but Havelock did not, being mounted on a French mare he had picked up, it being ownerless, the day after the Battle of Sedan, and that had an exceedingly hard mouth; but in a minute or two he returned to where I was waiting for him. Meanwhile, however, there came bustling up a Prussian lieutenant, who said, "You are both under arrest." He had a pistol in his hand, and I said to him, in French, he having spoken German, "Before we go into that matter, you might as well lay aside your pistol, since, as you see, my friend and I are both unarmed. As a fact, you have nothing to arrest me for, as I pulled up my horse the moment I was challenged. My friend could not do so, for his animal has a hard mouth and cannot be stopped at once." He replied that he had nothing to do with that; that we were both under arrest, and he should send us back to Versailles in that state. I asked him what that meant and entailed. He replied that two mounted soldiers would attend us. I told him, if that was all, he might send the whole German army with us. The more, the merrier.

At this point, Havelock, whose face was growing

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darker and darker, but who had hitherto remained silent, broke in, and declared that nothing on earth would make him submit to being arrested, no matter what the ceremony might be. He himself was a soldier, an officer in the British Army, and on the Staff of the Commander-in-Chief in Ireland. For a time the fussy young subaltern stood to his guns, but finally gave in, asked us to accept his card, and if we would give him ours. This we did; and the tragi-comical incident ended by his asking leave to call on us, if he ever came to England.

On my arrival at Versailles, after a night or two spent there as best I could, I was given a room at the Hôtel des Réservoirs, which was crowded with German officers, by the special favour of the landlady, a Frenchwoman of course, extended to me by her on my telling her that I was not another "Prussian," but an Englishman. When I ventured to say, after my first breakfast, that the coffee was not worthy of the credit of French *café au lait*, she said that it was quite good enough, according to the Irish phrase, for "the likes of *them*," the hated foe, but that I should have what they made for themselves, and which she was sure I would find excellent; which I did.

Two days later, Count Bismarck arrived at Versailles, and, accidentally going into the street just as he was getting out of his carriage, I said to him I hoped I had given a faithful account in the *Standard*, that had been so widely copied, of the conversation he had been so good as to hold

with me at Rheims. He replied that he had not read it, but that Abeken had, and he had said it was excellent. Whether he was speaking the exact truth or only employing diplomatic language, in order to leave him free to disown it in case of necessity, I cannot say. He was covered with the dust of travel, and so our conversation went no further. But I thought—perhaps mistakenly—by certain indications within the next fortnight, that it was not his wish—in order to protect himself against being troubled with recriminations on the part of those about the King who objected to a correspondent of the *Standard* being at Head-Quarters at all—to show me the same genial cordiality I had met with from him at Rheims.

My excessive sensitiveness and self-respect, unfitting me, I fear, for my post, may have misled me; and when I asked Baron von Keudell, his private secretary, to say to Count Bismarck that, if he wished it, I would leave the King's Head-Quarters, he replied that he should be sorry if I did so, but that, if I did so, no one would be admitted to take my place. Keudell, moreover, was good enough to be my banker in cashing my cheques, and was always kind and helpful to me. He played the piano with great skill and taste, and I was told he often did for his Chief what Dante relates in the *Purgatorio* Casella had done for him on earth—soothed and refreshed his troubled spirit.

The perpetual noise and bustle of the hotel,

and the all-pervading smell of the horribly bad cigars smoked by the German officers, led me to shift my quarters into private apartments not far off, where I found quiet and adequate comfort. The wife of the concierge lighted my fire, at which I cooked my own breakfast. I dined at "Châtel's," hard by, in company with General Walker, the English Military Attaché to the German Army, and, in due course, with several newspaper correspondents, all of them endowed with pleasant conversational power; so that we always formed a small *table d'hôte*, ranging from six to nine or ten. With General Walker I soon formed an intimacy which I think may accurately be designated friendship. We often rode together, and were the fellow-guests from time to time of an English widowed lady, who had married a well-known Italian noble, and was herself *grande dame* and the kindest of hosts. The proprietor of the *Standard*, Mr. Johnstone, had relations of his name living at Versailles, and I frequently dined with them on a Sunday. The family consisted of Mr. Johnstone and three daughters.

The "Siege of Paris" was an utter misnomer, for besieged it was not. But it was invested, in order that it might be cut off from the rest of France, and, to recall the phrase used to me by Count Bismarck at Rheims, *stew in its own juice*. How, in such circumstances, I found material for an almost daily letter to the *Standard*, remains a wonder to me; for I was utterly ignorant then of

military tactics and strategy. The peculiar position in which I was placed by the hostility still editorially shown by the newspaper to the foreign victors placed me at a still further disadvantage, and altogether made me, in my opinion, a very inferior correspondent. The life was, for the most part, monotonous and singularly peaceful; expeditions on horseback to places in the neighbourhood of Paris—Saint-Cloud, Montmorency, etc.—being what I most vividly remember of the first weeks of the Investment.

Much was written then, and later, of the rapacious and destructive conduct of the invaders; but I can testify that they strictly observed the following regulation. If they found villages or houses utterly deserted, they regarded them as "spoils of war." But if their tenants remained in them, then, though a war contribution was imposed, private property was respected and not appropriated. To cite a conclusive instance, my wife, in one of her letters, asked me to ride over to Marly-le-Roi, where a dear friend of ours had a house, and in which, though she herself had gone to England, she had left two female domestics. I did so at once, and found that not a single china cup or saucer, much less any larger articles of furniture or decoration, had been removed from its place. Marly was occupied by a certain number of Landwehr men, many of whom I found with young French children on their stalwart shoulders; thus consoling themselves for their separation from

their own children, who, like those of Byron's dying Gladiator, were "far away."

One day, when I was sitting in my newly hired apartments, there was a knock at my door, which I went and opened. "Does So-and-so lodge here?" inquired my visitor. "No," I replied; "but are not you Laurence Oliphant?" He answered that he was, and then pronounced my name. "A happy mistake of yours," I said. "Won't you come in?" He did so, and stayed with me for an hour, in which we laid the foundation of a friendly intimacy for the rest of the war, not interrupted by its conclusion. He was one of the most interesting and attractive men I ever met; and in that opinion I am not singular. He was the correspondent of *The Times*, and served the interests of that paper most admirably. As a matter of course, I was well acquainted with the more prominent features in his career, his part-editorship of *The Owl*, his tenure for a short period of a seat in the House of Commons, and his exceptional popularity in what was then still London Society, now no longer existent, but replaced by a number of different London Societies. We rode much together, when there was nothing else to do—nothing, I mean, arising out of the "Investment" of Paris; and his adventurous spirit was useful to me in leading me far afield, and once or twice in being made a target by French sentries on the other side of the river. As we were both in civilian dress, the practice

on us of these imperfect marksmen was unwarranted, though our being where we were showed that we must be connected in some way with, and therefore tolerated by, the "Prussians."

A somewhat humorous episode, peculiarly welcome in a rather monotonous existence, occurred one morning when I walked down to General Walker's rooms, and found him at home, and evidently in a state of much exasperation. "Just imagine," he said, "what the Foreign Office and the War Office at home have done! As you know, Henry Hozier is out here, professedly and exclusively on Red Cross business. I have discovered that, as a fact, he has been sent to write dispatches on military matters to his superiors, without my ever being informed of their intention. So just listen to the letter I have written to Lord Granville."

When he had finished reading it, I said, "An admirable letter. But, of course, you know that it is practically an offer of the resignation by you of your present post as *Military Attaché* to the King's Head-Quarters, which may possibly be accepted." He was silent for a moment or two, and then said he had not intended his letter to convey that meaning. "Then," I said, "you had better burn it." He made no direct reply, but gave one equally not to be mistaken, when he said, "At any rate, I will never speak to Hozier again." "That is very awkward," I said; "for, quite unaware of what you have told me, I

have made an appointment with him here." At that instant the door opened, and the servant announced, "Colonel Hozier!" *Tableau!* But General Walker, who perhaps could boast no remarkable ability, was a thorough man of the world, and a perfect English gentleman; and he satisfied himself by treating his unacknowledged locum tenens with well-bred coldness.

Another perhaps yet more amusing, though less agreeable, occasion for the display of his good-breeding was afforded at breakfast one morning at the Hôtel des Réservoirs. A well-known newspaper correspondent walked up to the table and very rudely, as I thought, said, "You promised to lend me your saddle to-day, General Walker, and now I am told you cannot do so." "I am sorry to say," he replied, "that is so; for now I find I must ride in the King's suite this afternoon." "I beg you will never speak to me again, General Walker!" exclaimed the correspondent, to my amazement. "I certainly never shall, Mr. R——," was the General's reply; and we went on with our breakfast.

But my amazement was not yet at an end; for, later in the day, another correspondent, who asked my opinion concerning the incident, on hearing me reply, "I thought Mr. R. utterly in the wrong," quaintly said, "But you must remember, if General Walker is an intimate friend of the Crown Prince, Mr. R. has dined with the Prince of Wales!" My sense of humour was

tickled, and I felt almost grateful to him for introducing the funny into a sanguinary campaign, as Shakespeare relieves the most serious of his plays with his Dogberrys and his Gobbos.

As an illustration of the fundamental contrast between the French and the Germans, and indeed between the Latin and the Teutonic stock, happening to have my hair cut at Versailles by a French haircutter on the very day the official news reached us of the surrender of Metz, I said, as gently as I could, I was sorry to see that more misfortunes had befallen his country, in spite of the gallant efforts to avert them. He asked what it was I alluded to. "The Fall of Metz," I said. He was cutting my hair behind. When I spoke, he wheeled suddenly round, put his arms akimbo, and said, "Do you believe that? If it is true, why don't they have fireworks, and set the Grandes Eaux in the Palace Gardens playing?" They certainly had done neither, but simply placarded on the walls a printed leaflet, no larger than, if as large as, the page on which these words are written, that, on such a day, Metz had surrendered, with so many *drapeaux*, Field-Marshal Bazaine, so many officers, men, cannon, muskets, etc. That was all. I made no further observation, but kept silence till my incredulous hairdresser had done with me. Like almost every one in France, he did his business most carefully, as though he were engaged in a work of art of which he was proud.

CHAPTER III

Thiers at Versailles—Letter from him—Arrival of Odo Russell—The Army of the Loire—"Perquisitioning" Experiences—Robbery at General Walker's.

For a time, the Fall of Metz acted as a tonic on the Army of Investment; but, as the effect gradually wore off, I noticed a sense of weariness and almost of depression on men's faces, and, more than once, private soldiers lying down in carts, with tears rolling down their cheeks, doubtless from home-sickness. It was not possible to bring up siege-guns powerful enough to compete with those in Mont Valérien and other French forts round Paris, a circumstance that caused Bismarck much irritation. Once there was a distinct scare, and a fear that the investment would have to be raised. But it passed away. Not so the bitterly cold weather, that kept the roads as hard as iron. Coming out from dinner one evening, we thought, from the state of the sky, Paris must be on fire. But we soon discovered that we were being treated to a splendid *Aurora Borealis*. One's own impatience and sense of weariness were equal to those of the nominal combatants, whose organiza-

tion of the Post was faultless. I wrote to my wife, as she to me, almost every day, and no single letter was ever lost or delayed.

But, at last, an important variety has been introduced. M. Thiers has really arrived. Versailles is the first *étape* of his passionate pilgrimage round the Courts of Europe to beg their intervention on behalf of his country.

THE VISIT FROM M. THIERS

October 30.

Nearly a week ago M. Thiers was said to have been at Versailles, and the very hour, both of his arrival and his departure, was stated with extreme particularity by those who ought not to be either the sponsors or the victims of false reports. I was one of the many dupes of such confident assertions, and, I fear, misled you in turn. I am not wrong this time, however; for I saw the famous historian this morning with my own eyes. I can also tell you that he quitted Versailles at noon—for his departure also did I witness—and is believed to have gone to Paris. I refuse to pledge myself for more than I saw; but people who have no right to be mistaken affirm that he had an interview early this morning with Count Bismarck. I have had no time to sound the statement thoroughly; but we may assume it to be true. The septuagenarian statesman looked as fresh as a boy, and, I may add, as happy as one. He breakfasted at the *Réservoirs*, at the hour at which I always find myself there of a morning, and he danced and buzzed about with all that liveliness of manner which is his peculiar property. You would not have thought that the ruin of his country sat upon his heart, though, no doubt, it does. Perhaps he deemed it right to put on a brave face before the enemy. Perhaps Count Bismarck had captivated him by that frankness of manner with which he delights and amuses the world.

It so happened that just as he stepped out of the hotel to

take his seat in the carriage which was to bear him away an entire division of the Landwehr of the Guard, 9000 strong, came down the street fifing and drumming, on their way to Marly-le-Roi. Wonderful fellows! Their average height could not be less than five feet ten inches, if not five feet eleven inches, and their average age the manly, muscular thirty. Not a boy among them. I confess I never saw so many fine men together, though an unbiassed American gentleman standing by said that the Breton Garde Mobile in Paris matched them in appearance, though not in evenness and excellence of age. I forgot to ask Lieutenant Alversleben, who was with them, and was good enough to ride up and exchange a few words with me, where they were coming from; but he, I know, has been stationed at Champlan during the last fortnight or so. Their destination, he told me, was Marly-le-Roi, which, now that the defect is going to be remedied, I may state, has hitherto not been as strongly guarded as was desirable. Henceforward, with these seasoned Landwehr men in it, it will be unsurpassably strong. M. Thiers's carriage for a time could not budge for the swift and broad procession of them. Some lookers-on imagined that Bismarckian subtlety had arranged the rencontre; but it needs no special common sense to tell us that the thing was but a coincidence.

Will his visit hasten the advent of peace? There never was a case in which it was more apparent to honest men that hostilities ought to cease; but, unhappily, never a case in which circumstances contended more cruelly against duty and desire. There are one or two knotty points—not to call them absolute Gordian knots—which at first sight seem to defy solution. It is only reasonable to suppose that Lord Granville had entertained them before he sent his recent pressing invitation to the Powers, to the combatant and neutral. Yet war, and all the considerations which turn upon war, are apparently so foreign to the thoughts of English statesmen, that it is by no means impossible that the cardinal difficulties have been overlooked. An armistice, or suspension of hostilities, or whatever name we like to give a truce from maiming and killing, will never be accepted by

the stronger party unless the conditions of it contain the germ of a final cessation of hostilities—in other words, of peace itself.

Lord Granville, we will say, proposes such a suspension. Very well, but on what terms, and with what object? That the existing Government of National Defence may come to an understanding with Germany, or that France may nominate a more responsible agent for the purpose? If the former, then Germany will at once introduce into the armistice the principle that is to leaven the Peace Treaty. This principle involves the cession of territory. Will the Government of National Defence accept the principle? I imagine not. The most they could do would be to say that they will leave it to others to do so, if so inclined. Then comes an armistice, simply for the purpose of summoning a Constitutional Assembly. But who's to vote? Alsace? Lorraine? Yes, says the Government of National Defence. No, says Count Bismarck. And then where are we? There is a way out of every difficulty; but occasionally none but a violent one; and Lord Granville, however praiseworthy his efforts, has his task set. If he, or he backed by the whole of Europe, persuade Germany to leave French territory intact, then he will have convinced the most obstinate people I ever met, and proved that the age of miracles is not past. From French good sense and submission all that is to be hoped for must proceed. Men say that the conquered will never rest till they have their revenge. Even proceeding on this unhappy principle, they cannot have it now. They had better make peace, and begin hatching their ambitious schemes *de novo.*

I received this note from M. Thiers just as he was starting afresh on his bootless journey:

Lundi, 7 novembre.

Monsieur—J'ai été si occupé à Versailles, que je n'ai pu répondre à toutes les lettres que j'ai reçues, et que je n'ai trouvé la vôtre qu'en mettant ordre à mes papiers le jour même de mon départ. C'est là le motif seul qui m'a

empêché de vous répondre et de vous recevoir. Je vous aurais remercié des services que vous avez rendus en Angleterre à la cause de notre malheureux pays si mal servi par la fortune et par les hommes. Mais ce que je n'ai pu faire de vive voix, je le fais par écrit et avec une grande vivacité et sincérité, croyez-le bien. Je n'ai pu obtenir l'armistice aux conditions qui auraient pu le rendre acceptable pour nous, et je pars avec le chagrin de n'avoir pu, malgré tous mes efforts, arrêter l'horrible effusion de sang qui désole tous les cœurs honnêtes et généreux.

Recevez, monsieur, l'assurance de mes plus affectueux sentiments. A. THIERS.

TRANSLATION

Monday, 7th Novr. (1870).

SIR—I was so busy at Versailles, that I was unable to answer all the letters I received, and only found yours, on sorting my papers, the very day of my departure.

This is the only reason for my neither answering nor seeing you. Otherwise I should have thanked you for the services you have rendered in England to the cause of our unhappy country, so ill served by both fortune and men.

But, what I could not say by word of mouth, I now do in writing, and, believe me, with the greatest warmth and sincerity.

I have failed to obtain an armistice on conditions that we could accept, and I am leaving with sorrowful regret that, despite all my efforts, I have not been able to stop the horrible bloodshed which is grieving all honest and generous hearts.

Pray accept, Sir, the assurance of my most affectionate regards. A. THIERS.

THE INVESTMENT OF PARIS

THE KING'S HEAD-QUARTERS, VERSAILLES,
November 19.

Mr. Odo Russell, accompanied by Captain Robbins, arrived here this morning at ten o'clock, after a journey which

covered the best part of seven days. A forty-eight hours' halt at Brussels accounts for a portion of the time so spent, during which a carriage and horses were bought for the further prosecution of his travels, and such diplomatic counsels were held as it suits the imagination of each individual to surmise. Not a little to his surprise, he found that Count Bismarck—for I will presume that to that genial statesman the politeness should be attributed—had even at that early stage made preparations for the journey being both agreeable and devoid of danger. A Prussian official had been dispatched to the frontier to escort England's Assistant Under Secretary of State the entire way to the King's head-quarters, and the earliest acquaintance Mr. Russell made with the condition of war which prevails in fair France was an escort of 150 Uhlans.

As his road lay from Bouillon, past Sedan and Mezières to Boulzicourt, the imposing precaution was perhaps not an idle one; still, one can scarcely translate the presence of so formidable an escort as other than a well-intended compliment. At Boulzicourt the unsafe road was exchanged for the unsafe rail, if we are to judge by the answer Mr. Russell received at this point to one of his questions. He inquired where a group of very respectable-looking but strongly guarded Frenchmen was going to be sent to. "I am going to send them into the other world," was the answer. "They have upset one of our trains. One of these respectable gentlemen is a maire." From Boulzicourt to Rheims was a matter of some seven hours.

At Rheims the travellers were informed by their obliging official escort that they were not to put up at any hostelry, for every preparation had been made for their arrival, and he should have the pleasure of conducting them to the private residence of that great benefactor of his species, Monsieur Rœderer. Mr. Russell had already experienced a foretaste of this considerate German hospitality on French soil at Sedan, where, when the hotel bill was called for, it was found to be already paid; but, though there can be no question that these delicate attentions ordered to be paid to our English envoy to Versailles were most kindly meant, and

will be acknowledged by all Englishmen in the spirit in which they were devised, one can quite understand how the subject of them should have had some scruple in accepting them, and should have done his best to escape from them when he opined that they might possibly not accord with his mission.

France is a conquered country, as far as concerns those departments occupied by Prussian arms; and a representative of a country, not only at peace with France, but profoundly commiserating her lot, would naturally shrink from ridding himself or being politely rid of the ordinary outlay and obligations of travel, possibly at the expense of the conquered people. Mr. Russell therefore gently persisted in seeking the shelter of that old inn which cowers under the *façade* of the glorious cathedral, and once did house, most properly at the expense of the French nation, a couple of wayfarers. They were the simple parents of the famous maiden of Domrémy. One rarely in this world can be quite sure if one is doing right, and it must have been trying to a chivalric mind to learn on the following morning that a dinner had been prepared expressly, and a circle of select guests had, by the decision I have explained, been deprived of a promised pleasure. Nor was much taken by the move. Count Bismarck appears to inspire his agents with somewhat of his own admirable finesse; for, again, when the landlord of the Croix d'Or was asked for the score, he averred that he had received the strictest orders not to present it, and earnestly pleaded that he might not be pressed, since his compliance with the request would only get him into trouble.

These trifling details will not be thought insignificant by those who are following the present wavering temper of European Cabinets. Rheims was quitted at two o'clock of the afternoon, and Nanteuil reached by eight. Here for the moment the railway comes to a dead stop, though we are promised that in a few days it will be in working order as far as Lagny. Nanteuil, as you know, is close to Meaux; and here Mr. Russell and Captain Robbins fell back upon the carriage they had brought from Belgium. Leaving Meaux at

midnight, and crossing the Seine at Villeneuve-Saint-Georges —again under cavalry escort, but this time of more modest proportions—they arrived at Versailles, as I have said, at ten this morning. Mr. Russell is not likely to do more to-day than announce his arrival to Count Bismarck; and it is perhaps as well that such is the limit of his intentions. "Blood and iron" would perhaps not be the most correct definition of the much-dreaded Prussian statesman's personal constitution. He has been ailing for a day or two, and I believe that his own account of the attack is that it is owing to the momentary defeat of the Bavarians near Orleans. Assuredly this man has a grim wit!

And what has Mr. Odo Russell come to Versailles for? Perhaps you already know; for it not unfrequently occurs that what is a profound mystery in one place is at the same moment an open secret in another. Mystery there unquestionably is on the subject at Versailles; and if for once I seem to speak with somewhat of the misty ambiguity of an oracle, I must ask your readers to pardon me, on the plea that it is sometimes not permitted to a man to speak otherwise. Let me, however, begin by saying, not oracularly at all, that Versailles is a long way from Berlin; and that, whilst there are more points than one which England and the North German Confederation may naturally desire to discuss, as the Italians say, *a quattr' occhi*, or face to face, the long absence of Count Bismarck in "foreign parts" has for some time rendered such a course impracticable.

Lord Augustus Loftus is doubtless well employed at Berlin, and probably cannot be spared from his post. Therefore, the coming of a special envoy from the Foreign Office, who may be supposed to be peculiarly well acquainted with its interior mind, to the place where the Prussian Court and the best part of the Prussian Cabinet happen to be, need excite no very great wonder. Have not Count Bernstorff and Lord Granville been firing paper pellets at each other for some time now on the question of our neutrality laws and their incidence on the interests of Germany? and is it not believed that even that *Deus ex machina*, Count Bismarck himself, has more than once participated in the argumentative fray? Is

it not true, moreover, that neither side has convinced the other, and that the feeling of Germany, both uninstructed and instructed, is that England is inflicting on its interests a daily injury, and that marked irritation in one country, which is now beginning to infect the other, has been the consequence? And if this be the state of affairs, would it not of itself be sufficient warrant for Mr. Odo Russell's visit? No one, certainly, would blame the English Government for any attempts to explain *viva voce* a position they have failed satisfactorily to explain by pen and ink.

But is this all for which he has come? I beg your readers to observe that I have not affirmed he has come for that object at all; and I may add, that there are those who connect his arrival with the new demands of Russia. There is this to be said against such a view, that Mr. Russell had received his instructions to proceed to Versailles before it was asserted that Russia was seeking for a revision of the treaty which cramps her naval energies in a sea peculiarly her own. But then an envoy may be sent for one purpose, and may be kept at his post for another. There *is* a Russian question; that would seem to be pretty clear. Existing, it will have to be dealt with; and no one single person, perhaps, needs more to be consulted concerning it than the political chief of the nation which has now pitched its tents in the very heart of another. I cannot hope that anything I wrote in your columns so far back as last August, when I was still in Berlin, waiting for the King's permission to proceed to the seat of war, yet dwells in anybody's mind; but what is happening now strongly recalls it to the person who wrote it. I spoke of the natural antagonism which exists between Russia and Germany, and of the artificial bonds of amity which screen it from the view of the general world. That such is really the case, no one, I presume, who professes to study the politics of the two nations in question ever dreams of doubting. Is it, then, quite inconceivable that Russia, in bringing forward at this juncture the Black Sea question, and thereby seeming to provide herself with an excuse for arming, is only striving to hide from Count Bismarck her real intentions? England witnesses with sorrow the humilia-

tion of France, and would, I gather, witness with distress the loss of her two fairest provinces.

But are sorrow and distress the words that would duly describe the sentiments of Russia on the subject? I submit that annoyance, jealousy, and alarm would be words nearer the mark. That France should have been badly beaten cannot but have pleased every Russian; but there is a limit to the luxury of revenge, and the limit occurs when it is confronted by the sentiment of self-interest. France is now quite weak enough and Germany quite strong enough for the purposes of Russia; and if the unequalising process is to be carried any farther, do not be surprised if the great Eastern Power should ask for some compensation.

The shallow pedants who imagine that the term balance of power is an antiquated sophism will probably soon learn, if they do not perceive already, the rashness of their assumptions. Russia certainly has forgotten neither the phrase nor the thing; and may not the present move indicate a resolution, taken not a moment too soon, not to see Germany profiting by recent events, without a share of advantage accruing elsewhere? I will say no more at present, save that I shall not be surprised if the disfavour lately extended by Count Bismarck to England were at once to be abated, and if those little civilities on which I dilated at the commencement of this letter be the prelude to civilities of a more conspicuous kind. What a direct bearing all this has on peace negotiations, whenever they are resumed, any one can see at a glance. And here there opens up another vista for the speculative mind in connection with Mr. Odo Russell's visit.

HEAD-QUARTERS OF THE KING OF PRUSSIA, VERSAILLES,
November 27.

If any of those gifted ladies of letters whose charming works mainly compose the English modern school of fiction are in search of new, untrodden ground, they could not do better than pay Versailles a visit at the present moment. Outwardly, perhaps, our situation seems to offer more matter

and inducement to sensational writers than to the quiet pens of which I have spoken; but behind all the clatter of Prussian pontoon trains, the rumble of Prussian fourgons, the roll of Prussian drums, and the clanking of Prussian sabres, there is a peaceful, pathetic French *vie intime*, an insight into which would afford abundant subjects for that domestic fiction founded on fact which we associate with such honoured names as that of the late Mrs. Gaskell. To-day is Sunday, a day which the God of Battles—wonderful title!—takes no recognition of; still, it has its influence even in the midst of the hurly-burly and rage of war, and we know it withal by certain kindly signs. In the afternoon visits, not of ceremony but of friendship, are paid; and it would be strange if in a round of such visits to home-keeping French people, and to those who, either by marriage or long residence, have become naturalised in the land, such a writer as might come here on the errand I have named did not gather some short and simple annals suggestive of a tearful volume.

Versailles has its Quartier Saint-Germain, in fact if not in name, just as much as Paris; and thither must our steps be bent if we are in search of the touching. The house you enter shall speak to you of elegance and ease. You know that before you have passed its portal. Here is the spacious courtyard; there stand the tidy but now tenantless stables, unless, perhaps, their occupants are artillery horses or cavalry chargers. The hall may not be large, but it bespeaks a thousand pleasant domestic things; and the servant who ushers you into the presence of Madame has fidelity and long service written in his face. How graciously are you received, and in the midst of how much that ministers to the happiness of life, and contrasts with the dingy hotel or meagrely furnished lodgings you have, perhaps, just quitted! At first you would suppose that no tidings of war, much less of national pain and dolour, had reached this agreeable abode; for both host and hostess have summoned a smiling face to their aid, in order that you may be sure you are welcome. Perhaps you are serving with the enemy, sympathising with him, singing his praises,

publishing the greatness of his victories, extenuating his faults, advocating his views, seconding his ambition ; perhaps you are the enemy himself. No matter. *Noblesse oblige.* You are a visitor, and you must be graciously encountered. You are a man, and you must be treated humanly.

The sweet manners of this heavily punished people can never be sufficiently extolled, and the bitterness of defeat and of national humiliation has still left them enviable patterns of beautiful urbanity. The roar of the cannon robs them of their sleep ; requisitions have robbed them of their carriages, their horses, and the power of taking the pure air of Heaven ; torn-up railroads and closed banks have robbed them of their dividends, and deprived them of their means of purchasing at the same time that a horde of hungry locusts and interrupted markets have driven up the price of nearly every conceivable commodity ; they are reduced from ease to anxiety, from plenty to want, from privacy to daily intrusion, from comfort to every form of inconvenience : and yet they are soft, and gentle, and mild in their ways, low in their voices, affable in their address, smiling, polite, and hospitable. How would it be in England ? Shall I pause for a reply ? Or shall I go on to inquire, how would it be in Germany ? Such as I have described it to you, however, is it in France.

Nor does this gentleness, so agreeable to those who are the objects of it, spring from want of spirit : "I am only a woman," said a lady yesterday, who was illustrating the truth of what I am affirming, "but if my voice carries any weight, let there still be war, let there still be resistance. Let us all be killed, if it be necessary. Would you not do the same in England, monsieur ?" I assured her that I hoped we should. And only five minutes before this same patriotic person had been inquiring from me if there was any manner of means by which coupons payable in Paris in the month of October might be negotiated elsewhere. It is no use having an income in such days as these. I was asked by one kind lady, at whose house I called, if I would care to go to such and such an hospital, outside the city gates. I gladly assented, and the day and hour were

named. But how were we to go, I asked; for the distance is considerable? "On foot, of course," was the reply; and when I suggested that it was too far—I do not mean for me, but for feet less accustomed to tramp long miles—I was answered, with a laugh, "Oh, but we cannot afford to drive in these hard times."

A couple of hours later a pretty sight might have been seen elsewhere, but not far off. An old French lady, aged eighty-four, but in full possession of all her faculties, was "receiving" two or three of my intimate friends, when an "officer" was announced, who had come with a "requisition." Let him be shown in, was the order. In he came, very tall and very imposing. Ancient Madame, very short, but very dignified in bearing, rises and salutes him. His errand? Stabling in her château, outside the town, for thirty-three horses. "And if I refuse to give it you?" The question was a dangerous one, but the man had tact. "Then I should be very sorry, but I should go elsewhere." It is pretty certain he would have done nothing of the kind, but his judicious reply disarmed the brave old lady. He should have the stabling, and his men should be put up likewise. How many mattresses did they want? The officer smiled. None, unless Madame was good enough to give them; his men were accustomed to sleep on straw. His very politeness aroused suspicion. "You are not a Prussian?" "No, I am a Pole." "Then you are a Catholic?" "No: but all my men are." "How is that?" "The misfortune of birth," was the happy answer. And so stabling for thirty-three German horses and quarters for thirty-three German soldiers were extracted from a French lady burning with patriotism, and without one single angry word having passed.

No accumulation of misery seems to ruffle the external grace of this amiable people. I cannot speak to you more in detail of their domestic pinchings and strivings. Something is being done to alleviate their worst wants; but let no one suppose that all who are suffering "call out." Indeed, I know of more than one case in which assistance is being solicited for others by those who need it

still more themselves. How would folks in England, accustomed never to give money a thought, like to receive the helpful pittance of a hundred francs? And would they be found, the day after they had received it, carrying a pot of jelly and a packet of cigarettes to the wounded of the nearest hospital? For gracious manners, in this instance at least, really cover gentle and generous hearts. How the poor *blessés* yearn for the coming of these ministering angels! And, with a fine naïve selfishness peculiar to the sick, they reproach their kind patronesses if it seems to them that too long an interval has elapsed between one visit and another.

Another piece of intelligence from Paris there is, which, I think, ought not to pass unrecorded, the more so as the person concerned, being shut up there, will still be able to do good by stealth without having to blush to find it fame. I would speak of the admirable charity of our countryman, Mr. Wallace, to whom, many of your readers will remember, was bequeathed the bulk of the disposable property of the late Marquis of Hertford. At the commencement of the trouble of the capital, and when he had only just touched his large fortune, he spent £1000 in equipping an ambulance for the French garrison; the same that was captured by the Prussians the first day they came, the 19th of September, and was returned by them to the French. Since then, I am informed, Mr. Wallace has been busy in every conceivable way in ministering to the wants of the besieged of all nationalities; £200 per month, I believe, being the sum he contributes to the fund for the relief of distressed English people. Yet, not content with doing good when he can himself see its effects, and as though the performance of works of mercy in one quarter renders obligatory their performance in another, he is anxious to discover how best he can distribute £20,000 among the London poor. Withal, though thus mindful of his own countrymen in their native land, he elects to remain in Paris until it shall have passed through its present distressful straits.

December 22.

In the Place Hoche, to-day, was a troop of cavalry, and cavalry patrols were to be seen in most of the streets. I

have not been able to hear the reasons which dictated this search for so many months after Versailles has become a German city—in fact, the chief city of the German Empire, though I entertain no doubt that the reasons were good and sufficient. Just as Frenchmen have not ceased fighting in the field, so they have not abandoned plotting in the closet. And small blame to them; but at the same time the Prussians are equally *dans leur droit* in striving to counteract and foil their patriotic designs. War makes its own laws, we have been often told in this campaign, and the absolute axiom was fairly illustrated yesterday. "Have you your key with you?" asked my concierge, as I passed into the street. "*Oui*, Madame," for it is an easier mode of disposing of it than travelling out of your road to hang it on a nail. "Pray leave it with me, then; *car ces gens là sont capables d'enfoncer la porte.*" I don't doubt it, so I left my key with her. They did not honour me with a visit, however; but my friends were not so fortunate. One would have thought that they had known their business sufficiently well not to invade General Walker; but, though their calling only caused them to be shown the door, after proper explanation of his position, they did not pass him by.

With a like want of proper instructions they forced their way into Mr. Odo Russell's apartments. His man-servant had gone with a letter to Count Bismarck, and, on returning, explained with what difficulty he had got to the Rue de Provence. In his absence the woman of the house opened the door to the invaders; and the first thing Mr. Odo Russell knew of what was going on was brought to his cognisance by the sight of half a dozen soldiers making themselves at home in his quarters. Imagining it to be "a billet," he explained that they could not billet themselves there, but would doubtless find what they wanted by applying downstairs. Without saying that such was not their errand, they were proceeding to perform their duty. Luckily, Mr. Odo Russell had a visitor at the moment in the next room in the shape of an aide-de-camp of the King. His appearance immediately settled the question, and an officer then came up from

below with a world of apologies. The correspondent of one of your contemporaries lodges on the same staircase, and he, being on the point of going out, was made to re-enter his apartment, but was saved from further trouble only by an intervention somewhat similar to the one I have just described. I cannot say what was the result of the perquisition. I saw no piles of discovered chassepots, and no groups of trembling *francs-tireurs* dragged from closets or wine caves. For aught I know, however, it may have answered its purpose.

It was my fate, though, as I say, I was not personally "perquisitioned," to be mixed up with the matter later in the day, and in a way scarcely agreeable. Half a dozen of us were at dinner, when a servant came from a lady I have already once mentioned in this letter to ask if General Walker would be good enough to go over to her house, which is hard by where we were dining, for she wished particularly to speak to him. On his return he said, with a grave face, that he would be glad if I would accompany him to the rooms of Inspector-General Innes, for the servant of the house in which the lady resided affirmed that the soldiers who had been there that afternoon had stolen all his crosses and orders. You will remember that Dr. Innes went down to Beaugency last Monday morning, in order to assist in the relief of the appalling misery which the late hard fighting in that quarter has left as its legacy. We went over, I confess, in a state of partial incredulity, for we did not see how the woman of the house could know that the objects said to be missing were even there at all, or had been left behind by their owner.

But the sight of his apartment, together with the woman's story, soon satisfied me—I do not like in so grave a matter to speak for General Walker, considering his relations here with the military authorities—that the allegation of plundering was but too well founded. She led us to a chest of drawers, all of which had been opened—I do not mean violently, for there was no key to them—and which still remained open, several of their contents of no special value being thrown on the top, and

pointed out the precise one in which, for the first time, she had that day seen the missing articles. She immediately recognised their value, but did not notice that any of the soldiers removed them. The only thing she did see them take was a military coat, with the usual amount of gold braid, etc., on it, and a belt; but when they reached the street the corporal took both these from them, and restored them to her. It was not, as I gathered, till some hours later that it occurred to her to go again to the rooms and see if anything else had been abstracted, and it was then she noticed that the orders had gone. It was already ten o'clock, but General Walker was good enough to accede to my suggestion that it was not too late to acquaint the military authorities of what had occurred, and that they would very naturally complain if any time were lost in apprising them. I have only to add that the utmost readiness was shown to investigate the matter without delay and with the utmost energy.

I cannot, however, help observing that nothing of the kind could have occurred had the search been conducted in a more orthodox manner, and common soldiers not been left to perform it without sufficient supervision. Doubtless, too, they thought that the property in question belonged to a French, not an English officer; and here is a fresh illustration of the doctrines and practices now in vogue. As I have before said, the conquerors are acquiring the settled belief that everything they see in France belongs to them. This is one of the demoralising results of prolonged war. A cant phrase has sprung into existence to meet the exigencies of the case; and a thing that has been appropriated is not said to be stolen or taken—that would shock ears polite—but "saved." It is said to be taken from the pillaging vocabulary of the Bavarians. A wrong deed seems no longer wrong when it can be turned into a joke; and wit covers fully as many sins as charity. "If I do not save it, somebody else will," is, I was assured by a German officer the other night, the common remark and excuse; and one is reminded of Lucan's observation, "*quidquid multis peccatur inultum est.*" Everybody "saves," and so nobody is blamed.

A friend tells me that he was in a lovely villa the other day from which everything had disappeared save a few charming objects of virtu on the mantelpiece, and that he distinctly heard, in answer to a remonstrance that these were yet left, the whisper, "Never mind those; they are saved"—meaning thereby what I have explained. I have seen a letter from the neighbourhood of Orleans, in which the writer says—"All notion of the rights of property has been annihilated by the war." So it is.

I feel quite sure that the conquerors commenced this struggle and carried it on for a time with remarkably clean hands; and I do not believe, even yet, that any Continental army would behave in this one particular of plundering a whit better than they are now doing; but (with the exception of their treatment of women, which, after all, is an important point) though they are marked by no special iniquities, they can scarcely now lay claim to that pure and lofty character which was at first most properly attributed to them. I fear more *mauvais sujets* will return to Germany than quitted it. The hand, we know, becomes subdued to what it works in, and dirty work is, alas! but too plentiful.

I mentioned yesterday a letter written by a French gentleman who had seen the Army of the Loire after its defeat, and who wrote in despairing terms of his country. Here is another, which I believe to be authentic, though I have not the same means of judging as in the former instance:

"My dear Sir—You have comprehended my silence, and the grief which it causes me. The Army of the Loire, so glorious for a moment, is reduced to ashes, and is in an incredible state of rout, no matter what the journals say. God be thanked, I am still alive, but have a terrible cold.

"The Prussians pursue us everywhere, and leave us neither truce nor mercy. I think we shall halt, or that the Prussians will halt when they have precipitated us from Marseilles into the Mediterranean. I will confess to you that these disastrous feats of arms are due to incapacity, ignorance, and to the bad spirit of our *têtes de colonne*, not to say to their treason.

"Blois is being bombarded to-day. It will not hold out

long. I am also much concerned which route I should take in order not to be made prisoner. To crown my luck, I am with a score of men detached between Blois and Beaugency, and my general gives me no order to rejoin him; but as soon as I know that Blois has surrendered, I shall make for Tours, across the fields, for I do not want to be a prisoner.

"A cold prevails which plays the deuce with us. We have neither food nor pay. Our convoys have been plundered by the enemy. In a word, we are utterly done for.

"I will stop, for the story breaks my heart and I dare nourish no hope as to the future. I have not been able to come across your Provençal *franc-tireur*.

"Good-bye, my dear sir. My kindest remembrances to everybody, and prepare to defend your city. It is possible that they will send the remnants of our army to Lyons to be re-formed. I need scarcely say I hope so, with all my heart.

"SUEVRES, 11*th December*."

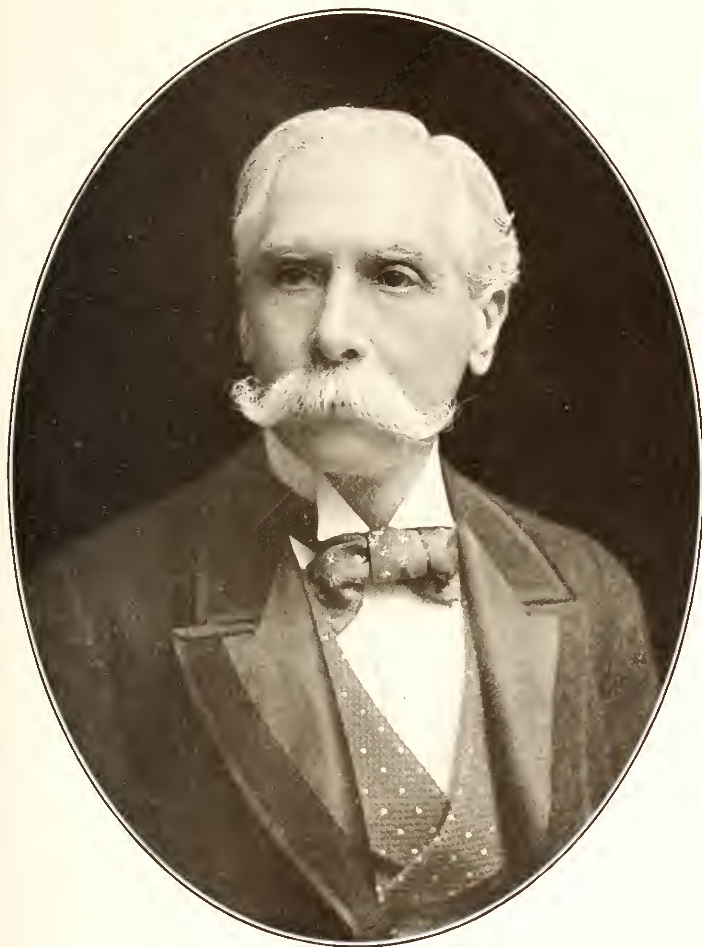
There is, however, another side to the picture. The whole world now knows that the "remnants of the Army of the Loire" have fought splendidly, though, perhaps, by this their energy is exhausted. Moreover, I have seen another letter from the Loire, in which it is affirmed that the German troops are sorely tried, and by no means full of their ancient spirit; that the patriotic ardour with which they entered upon the struggle no longer animates them now that they are so far from their homes; and, moreover, that they are moved with pity for their enemy. It will not do, however, supposing this account to be accurate, which I believe it to be, to rush to the conclusion that Germany will slacken in its action or waive in it terms. As long as those who direct its fortunes stand firm, the rank and file will have to go on fighting. And I *know* that Count Bismarck still asks from the neutral powers nothing better—and, indeed, nothing else—than that Germany should be left alone to dictate its own terms. No compromise is asked for—none would be accepted. Therefore, let no delusions be cherished. I think English public opinion has been raging against the potent Chancellor somewhat unjustly of late, as perhaps it has

found out by this. He does not for one moment pretend to alter or modify the independence of Luxemburg, and distinctly disavows any wish to incorporate it with Germany. He simply complains of breaches of neutrality by Luxemburg, and, I fear, he complains not without cause; and, naturally, the injury cannot be allowed to go on unchecked. Probably the warning given by him to the people of the little state—a trifle brusquely, perhaps, *more suo*—will be sufficient.

CHAPTER IV

Russia's Renunciation of Treaty of Paris—Severity of Weather—*Christmas, 1870*—The Battles of Connerré and Montfort—Jules Favre at Versailles—Capitulation of Paris—Enter it with Oliphant—To Berlin for Triumphal Entry of Troops.

But if, in a military sense, day followed day uneventfully, the tedium was relieved diplomatically by the Russian denunciation of the Black Sea Clauses of the Treaty of Paris which took place at the end of the Crimean War; a denunciation actually suggested to Russia by Bismarck, who, with his usual diplomatic tortuousness, affected to be taken by surprise by it, and to regret it. The Cabinet of Mr. Gladstone, in which Lord Granville was the Foreign Secretary, was completely taken in by Bismarck's dissimulation, and sent Mr. Odo Russell, as he then was, and the Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Office, to Versailles, to discuss the matter with him. I knew Mr. Russell well, and had seen much of him in Rome in the winters of 1865-66 and 1869-70, where he was the officious, not the official, medium of communication between the British Government and the Vatican. He arrived in the trying cold



Alfred Austin.
1900.

From a Photograph by Langfier.

weather I have spoken of, had caught a severe chill on the journey, and at once wisely went to bed. He sent me a note, asking me to go to see him, which I hastened to do. He had then never met Count Bismarck, and was anxious to learn from me what the great man, as he called him, was like. I told him all I could of the impression Bismarck had made on me, saying I thought him a master-mixture of menace, wheedling, strength, and charm. I then left the invalid to his rest. But, ten minutes after I had gone, Bismarck walked into his bedroom, and entered at once on his diplomatic wiles. Mr. Russell was not a man to be imposed on easily; and I soon learned that he made a most favourable impression on his powerful visitor, which was only strengthened by time, and caused him, later, to be sent as the Ambassador from the Court of Saint James's to Berlin in 1871. I have known many of our Ambassadors to European Courts from that time onwards, and two or three intimately. But none of them has ever seemed to me to equal Lord Ampthill (as he became in 1881) in the gentleness-in-strength and strength-in-gentleness which are, I suppose, the most valuable gifts in a diplomatist. Not travelling, as he himself told me, beyond his instructions from home, he informed Bismarck that if Russia persisted in the Renunciation, it would be regarded as "an unfriendly act," a phrase not much differing from a menace of war. When that failed to be successful, Mr. Gladstone's Cabinet swallowed

its threat, as the phrase is, and declared in Parliament that Mr. Odo Russell had only expressed his own private opinion. I have always rather wondered that Gambetta, who had escaped from Paris in a balloon, and was now Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the Government of National Defence, did not declare that whether England intended or not to honour its own signature, France would do so, and order the French Fleet to proceed to the Black Sea. He might thereby have brought about a general European War, in which France would no longer be without allies.

Knowing the English negotiator to be the most discreet of men, and aiming at a like discretion, I asked him no questions concerning the progress of his mission, leaving it to him to tell me what he thought right. It was not long before he told me that he would probably have to remain at Versailles for some time, as such was the wish of the Government at home. By degrees, he made the acquaintance of other correspondents, who had called on him; and to them all he showed much discreet politeness.

One correspondent there was, long since dead, of much accomplishment, an excellent linguist, a good musician, an amusing companion, and full of amiability. I am afraid I began by being on my guard against what I thought a slight excess of that quality, but he soon broke it down. One day he asked me to dine with him to meet Prince Charles of Hohenzollern

and Mr. Odo Russell. I gladly accepted the invitation. What I chiefly remember in connection with it was the supremely good bottle of Château Yquem, from the cellar of the Réservoirs, in the course of the excellent entertainment; for it was with peculiar pleasure I thus met the innocent German author of the War and the English diplomatist who had come to Versailles, I trusted, to put an end to it. We avoided all but military speculations as to the probable duration of the Investment and the campaign generally.

Before this interesting evening, and early after Mr. Odo Russell's arrival at Versailles, I had said a word of warning to him about what I have called the rather too affable ways of this particular correspondent. After the dinner I have spoken of he naturally enough bantered me on my original admonition. But he laughs best who laughs last; and one afternoon, going to the English emissary's rooms, I found him with a look of ironical gravity on his face. "A slight tragedy," he said, "has happened to Mr. —— and myself. I imagine you have noticed that he had come to call me by my plain surname. Not to be too exacting, though I think my official position would have warranted me in doing so, I made no observation. But when at last he called me 'Odo,' unadorned, I thought it was incumbent on me to reprove the familiarity. Mr. ——," laying humorous stress on the Mr. ——, "and I are no longer bosom friends." I was forbearing enough not to say to him, "I told you so."

But I think I succeeded, up to a certain point, in healing the breach later.

As the winter deepened, the frost hardened ; and, in the absence of other forms of excitement, we heard, with a thrill of curiosity, that Mr. Home, the medium, had come to Versailles. He at once began taking note of the Englishmen who were at Versailles, either in the Hôtel des Réservoirs or frequent visitors to it, and I was included in his survey of observation. I told him I should gladly be present at some exhibition of the peculiar power he claimed, and, thanking me, he said he should not forget to let me know if he held any *séances.* I heard of his holding them, but was never invited to be present at them. Perhaps he had taken stock of me, and thought he perceived that I was wholly free from that spurious imagination that is the victim of illusion and delusion. As far as I remember, he left Versailles without having made any exhibition of his "spiritualistic" gifts before any prominent members of the Army of Occupation.

The attitude and general deportment of the French population under the distressing circumstances of the War are well deserving of record, as showing the well-bred manners of the race. I happened to come across a deputation of men similar in position, for the most part, to those of our own Rural County Councils, who had come to obtain a reduction of the war charges imposed on their own particular area for taxation, and I invited

them to sup with me. After a little sighing and lamenting, which were quite natural, they were the most cheerful, genial, and sprightly of guests. One of them, observing a photograph on the mantelpiece, inquired if he might ask who it was. "It is a photograph," I said, "of my wife." They all looked at it in turn, and asked me how I could possibly leave such a young and charming-looking person for this horrible war. Their leave-taking was, as usual in France, gracious and almost courtly, so different from the hasty, unceremonious farewell of my own dear brusque countrymen, with its terse "Good-bye; many thanks."

It fell to my lot, happily, to entertain some of my own countrymen on Christmas Eve; Mr. Odo Russell, General Walker, W. H. Russell (familiarly Billy Russell), and a few other less well-known men being the guests. I remember how cold my rooms seemed to me, for the bitter black frost had increased in intensity, and the fire I could get was unsatisfactory as a heat-giver. But the food was good, for, shut out from entering Paris, excellent supplies of all sorts found their way to the Versailles market.

After dinner Mr. Odo Russell took a sheet of paper from his pocket, saying, "Perhaps none of you are aware that, among my many accomplishments, is that of a Poet, as I trust the verses I have in my hand will show. But I have often heard it said that Poets read their own compositions very badly, and will therefore ask our host

to read them to you for me." So I read these, my verses, to my guests. Here they are :

CHRISTMAS, 1870

Heaven strews the earth with snow,
That neither friend nor foe
May break the sleep of the fast-dying year ;
A world arrayed in white,
Late dawns, and shrouded light,
Attest to us once more that Christmas-tide is here.

And yet, and yet I hear
No strains of pious cheer,
No children singing round the Yule-log fire ;
No carol's sacred notes,
Warbled by infant throats,
On brooding mother's lap, or knee of pleasèd sire.

Comes with the hallowed time
No sweet accustomed chime,
No peal of bells along the midnight air ;
No mimes or jocund Waits
Within wide-opened gates,
Loud laughter in the hall, or glee of children fair.

No loving cup sent round ?
No footing of the ground ?
No sister's kiss under the berried bough ?
No chimney's joyous roar,
No hospitable store,
Though it be Christmas-tide, to make us note it now ?

No ! only human hate,
And fear, and death, and fate,
And fierce hands locked in fratricidal strife ;
The distant hearth stripped bare
By the gaunt guest, Despair,
Pale groups of pining babes round lonely-weeping wife.

Can it be Christmas-tide?
The snow with blood is dyed,
From human hearts wrung out by human hands.
Hark! did not sweet bells peal?
No! 'twas the ring of steel,
The clang of armèd men and shock of murderous bands.

Didst Thou, then, really come?—
(Silence that dreadful drum!—)
Christ! Saviour! Babe, of lowly Virgin born!
If Thou, indeed, Most High,
Didst in a manger lie,
Then be the Prince of Peace, and save us from Hell's scorn.

We weep if men deny
That Thou didst live and die,
Didst ever walk upon this mortal sphere;
Yet of Thy Passion, Lord!
What know these times abhorred,
Save the rude soldier's stripes, sharp sponge, and piercing spear?

Therefore we, Father, plead,
Grant us in this our need
Another Revelation from Thy throne,
That we may surely know
We are not sons of woe,
Forgotten and cast off, but verily Thine own.

Yet if He came anew,
Where, where would shelter due
Be found for load divine and footsteps sore?
Here, not the inns alone,
But fold and stable groan
With sterner guests than drove sad Mary from the door.

And thou, 'mong women blest,
Who laidst, with awe-struck breast,
Thy precious babe upon the lowly straw,
Now for thy new-born Son
Were nook and cradle none,
If not in bloody trench or cannon's smoking jaw.

Round her what alien rites,
What savage sounds and sights—
The plunging war-horse and sulphureous match.
Than such as these, alas!
Better the ox, the ass,
The manger's crib secure and peace-bestowing thatch.

The trumpet's challenge dire
Would hush the angelic choir,
The outpost's oath replace the Shepherd's vow;
No frankincense or myrrh
Would there be brought to her,
For Wise Men kneel no more—Kings are not humble now.

O Lord! O Lord! how long?
Thou that art good, art strong,
Put forth Thy strength, Thy ruling love declare;
Stay Thou the smiting hand,
Invert the flaming brand,
And teach the proud to yield, the omnipotent to spare.

Renew our Christmas-tide!
Let weeping eyes be dried,
Love bloom afresh, bloodshed and frenzy cease!
And at Thy bidding reign,
As in the heavenly strain,
Glory to God on high, on earth perpetual peace!

VERSAILLES, 1870.

With the turn of the year, and further entry into January of 1871, there was a feeling that the War was approaching its end. General Ducrot was reported to have registered a vow to force his way with his relieving force into Paris, or die, but did neither; and Prince Frederick Charles was keeping at bay in the west another army commanded by General Chanzy. Weary of the incident-wanting Investment, Oliphant and I resolved to go in search of him, and see part

of the final struggle. Snow had fallen and lay everywhere. But we thought we would drive, at any rate, as far as Chartres, and only take to horseback when we must; our grooms following us with our mounts a little more leisurely. The Cathedral of Chartres rose out of snow, that lay as far as the eye could see; so it rather lacked colour, and in some of its exquisite exterior detail, flakes had lodged and not melted. The sight of it was delightful after the pretentious architecture of the "Roi Soleil" at Versailles. But our motto was "On!" and, as we approached Connerré, we heard a sound which, once listened to, can never be mistaken for any other.

Fortunately, our compulsorily leisurely pace in our light carriage had allowed our saddle horses to overtake us, and at once we "changed seats." But it was too late, in these short winter days, to reach the scene of action before dusk, and then dark fell on it, and all we could do for that evening was to look for shelter and beds for the night. As we were doing so, and ended by succeeding, a somewhat reduced German cavalry band came, at a foot's pace, through Connerré, playing the "Watch on the Rhine," which assured us of being unmolested for the night.

The following morning we were up betimes; fighting had been going on during the whole of the beautiful winter day, January 11th, with the usual result. The French were pressed back on all sides by a German force, numerically very

inferior, but in every other respect immeasurably superior. The battles of Connerré and Montfort left the French utterly defeated. How with such materials Paris was ever to be relieved baffled my comprehension.

. . . . . .

The very morning after my return to Versailles there was a sortie from Paris on a large scale, and, before night, no little fighting. Anxious to make out where was the chief position aimed at by the French, who were, for the most part, Regulars and not mere National Guards, I made for the aqueduct between Louveciennes and Marly, where I found several battalions of the Landwehr of the Guard posted and well screened from the sight of the enemy. I went to the very spot from which I had seen the needless strenuous sortie from Paris on the 21st of October, or shortly after the Investment, and found there Count Gottberg and some other members of the Crown Prince's Staff, General Walker, Colonel Lennox, and Captain Hozier. As the afternoon advanced, the fierceness of the combat and the firing slackened. The last French fort to go silent was Mont Valérien, whose resemblance to the Aventine, crowned with Santa Sabina and its sister convents, struck me more than ever.

I abstain, as I have done all along, from entering into details of the fighting, for they have been described several times by experts in strategy and tactics, of whom I am not one. It is enough to

recall that, by the time of which I am writing, January 21st, Chanzy, Bourbaki, and Faidberbe had all met with want of success in their efforts to relieve the French Capital, and that on January 24th Jules Favre arrived at Versailles to discuss with Count Bismarck terms of peace. After the peace, Bismarck narrated to Busch, in his often cruel manner, who, in turn, narrated it to the world, the salient point of the negotiations; how Jules Favre, with theatrically adorned cheeks, addressed him as though he was a Legislative Assembly, and began by declaring, "*Pas un pouce de notre territoire, pas une pierre de nos fortresses,*" language so different from the measured diplomatic phrases of Thiers.

But Bismarck soon convinced the Foreign Secretary of the Government of National Defence how futile were such declarations, and the utmost that could be granted was a suspension of hostilities while a National Assembly should be elected to accept or reject the Terms of Peace, which, as far as cession of territory was concerned, were identical with Bismarck's statement to me in the Archbishop's Palace at Rheims, shortly after the Battle of Sedan, "We must have Metz, and we must have Strasburg." Naturally, Jules Favre had to return to Paris to confer with his colleagues; Bismarck diplomatically paying him the compliment of riding as far as Sèvres by the side of the carriage that carried the French negotiator back to the Capital. By the 29th all had been arranged

in the above sense; and the artillery of the 5th Corps occupied Mont Valérien, the most conspicuous and most terrible of all the outlying defences of Paris. I entered with them.

Our road lay first direct to La Celle St.-Cloud, and thus we soon reached the entrance limit, beyond which none of us had yet gone, even on the two hot days of October 21st and January 19th. The ways were much encumbered with military trains; but both men and drivers were in the best imaginable humour, and cleared a space for us to pass with the utmost alacrity. How pretty, and, let me add, how peaceful it all looked! Once past the village of La Celle St.-Cloud you might have thought yourself at Burnham Beeches. We had left our carriage at the foot of the hill, for it still remained quite uncertain whether in those narrow lanes we should be able to advance with four wheels; but at the crest we encountered a charming captain of artillery, who assured us that we had no reason to doubt that we could pull through, and who very kindly sent a soldier to bring us up our conveyance. It was some little time in coming, and part of the interval was spent in his showing me a copy of verses written by one of the privates of his battery, which he said he should be delighted if I could present to the English public through the medium of your columns. Alas! he little knew how few Englishmen speak or even understand German compared with the number of Germans who speak English. Despite his excellent intentions, we soon found that progress, save on foot, was irritatingly slow; and leaving our conveyance once more, but this time in the stable-yard of a pretty château, in the lane which debouches on the high-road which leads from Bougival to Rueil and Nanterre, and hits it first before you reach Rueil, we proceeded with tortuous diligence to gain that Imperial route.

We found it in a most animated condition, for over and above the troops and their trains which had arrived at it by the same road as ourselves, others had come by Bougival, and it seemed the rendezvous of everything and

everybody that was making for Mont Valérien. That important point, however, was three miles off, and as it was already close upon three o'clock we began to regret that we had not stuck to our carriage. As good luck would have it, I caught sight, a little ahead, of that of the Deputy Inspector of Hospitals, Doctor Innes, standing stock still, and found, on reaching it, that its driver was at his wits' end what to do. Happy thought! Go as fast as you can to Valérien, where you are sure to find your master, and you shall take us with you. *Dictum factum*; and, without more ado, we were proceeding merrily along that grand, broad road I have just mentioned. Now and then we stopped and alighted, for the road, besides being considerably blocked at intervals with artillery and other troops, was full of interesting bits, which invited closer scrutiny. Already a good many folks had come out of Paris to look for their houses, and in too many instances they found, in both senses, nothing but shells.

One end of Rueil has suffered considerably, and nothing could be more grievous or afflicting than to see the faces of those who arrived to behold their homes roofless, and blackened walls sickening the gaze where once hung the tokens of taste, the proofs of comfort, and the mementoes of friendship. Here, if ever, was ocular demonstration that omelettes cannot be made without the breaking of eggs; but when the egg happens to be the nest-egg, ah! it is sad indeed. Already even had the barricades, by which the road had of course been broken, been sufficiently removed, and the ditches filled in, for carriages to pass; but the gaping wounds of the pleasant villas alongside will not so easily be bound up. As for the people themselves, their attitude was just what a reasonable person would have expected from human nature. Their visages carried a double and conflicting expression: one of sorrow and chagrin that France, and especially wonderful Paris, should have been brought thus low; the other of joy that hard blows and deadly thunders were suspended, if not terminated for ever. I cannot say that any of them looked famished, though doubtless you will hear of individual cases and assertions to the contrary. The

men gladly accepted cigars; the women willingly exchanged conversation. Some of the latter, of course, professed themselves very *malheureuses*; but Frenchwomen easily own to that condition. Three sprightly damsels, standing at the gate of a house that had not suffered, and past which a number of sheep were at that moment being driven, answered our salutation with the assurance that they were very glad to see us, because we brought them mutton. At any rate they were not too hungry to laugh merrily, and justify the reputation of their countrywomen for charming and innocent coquetry.

We got clear of the trains and the troops by the time we were out of Rueil, and we soon reached the last German sentry, a stalwart Landwehrman of the Guard. The new outpost line hereabouts stretches from Rueil to Suresnes. Between Rueil and Nanterre the ground rises steadily, and our progress again was slower, for which we were thankful, considering that the interest was deepening at every step. On our immediate right was the famous Windmill, its works and battery, and all between us and St.-Cloud was the open ground over which the French had advanced in the two sorties I have named. The high-road we were traversing was the very one along which Ducrot and the French right wing moved as recently as the 19th of this month. On reaching Nanterre, the road bears sharp away to the right, till it reaches the Rondpoint, whence you may branch off to Courbevoie or take the direct road to the Champs Elysées; but our path lay again very sharp to the right, and so direct to the fortress. In this last bit of avenue the trees had been spared; along all the rest of our road they had been cut to the ground, and every stick of them carried away for firewood. You may ask if we had not become anxious by this time whether we had not most improperly appropriated a friend's carriage; but just before reaching the gateway of the fort we overtook Dr. Innes and his party. We had thus most fortunately brought him exactly what he wanted. In another moment we were crossing the broad ditch, and lifting our heads to read above the gateway, cut into the hard stone, "Forteresse du Mont Valérien." Another stride, and we were inside it. Just at

that moment—ten minutes to four—a flag was run up on the summit of the central barrack. It was a tricolour—black, pink, and white. Why pink? *Nimium ne crede colori*; it was the new flag of the German Empire, all the same. A bit of red could not be found, so pink was used as a makeshift; and as that little pennon fluttered in the winter wind, men felt assured that Paris had passed under the Forks.

On the last day of that eventful February 1871, I had the pleasure of driving the King's literary secretary, Dr. Meyer,—well known in England as the greatest Welsh scholar living,—first to Mont Valérien and afterwards to St.-Cloud. The day was gloriously fine and sunny. His Majesty arrived at the fortress, driven in an open carriage and four, and preceded by a singularly handsome escort, about a quarter of an hour after we reached it. Count Moltke, General Roon, and General Blumenthal were also there.

Just as on Sunday, our road had lain through La Celle St.-Cloud, Reuil, and Nanterre, but I suggested that we might return by St.-Cloud, and my companion was good enough to approve the idea. We were amply repaid by what we saw. The approach to St.-Cloud from Suresnes is at all times lovely, but just now it presents features of horrible interest, and is not Horror the very element and soul of the situation? You skirt the Seine the whole way, and at last you see towering in the air the graceful steeple of the church. Ah me, what a sight! It alone remains unroofed and unblackened of all the goodly buildings which from gentle inclines look down upon the silver river. "With silent finger pointing up to Heaven!" Surely steeple never did that so significantly before. After the sortie of the 19th, the besiegers got it into their heads that if the besieged were to sally again, and possibly get hold of St.-Cloud, they would find there most admirable cover. So they fired the entire

place, and now nothing is left of a single dwelling-house but four walls "staring at each other." I cannot think it was necessary, or, at any rate, indispensable; but the thing has been done, and the goodly village of St.-Cloud stands black and bare against the hill and sky.

The château itself, you know, was shelled and destroyed by the French themselves long ago. Valérien did that pretty piece of work. I sauntered yesterday among its ruins, and picked up bits of porphyry and marble, as one does at the Baths of Caracalla, or in the Villa of Hadrian. Graceful marble statues have been shivered to fragments by the crushing shot and shell. Here lies the head of some bewitching nymph, there the tail of a disporting dolphin. A Venus, meretriciously French, has lost her head and arms, but she still contrives to be seductive, as a Pradier would understand that word in art. I pick up lumps of burnt and twisted glass. They were once a chandelier which shone over fair women and brave men. The windows have clean gone, and you step through the gap into the charming garden. On the terrace the Sicarius in bronze still whets his blade, and nigh to him Hercules crushes the head of the Hydra; for these fronted only the Prussian Battery—Battery No. 1—and the Prussians left the palace alone. Musing among all this wreck, this ruin of a palace so dear to Imperial arts, I am told that the Château of Meudon has, accidentally, just shared its fate. "*Aliter post fulmina Terror*," I read on the shield of Minerva just opposite, which has accidentally been spared, and I pray that just and enduring Terror may really be instilled into many hearts when they see and sigh over the depths of desolation wrought by war's unsparing thunderbolts, and may henceforth worship Pallas for her wisdom, if not for her panoply.

On the following morning I called betimes on my good friend Mr. Odo Russell, and seeing on his table a large Foreign Office seal on an official envelope he had opened, I said, "May I take this

empty envelope?" "What do you want it for?" he asked. "I think," I said, "you know I should never compromise you in any way, and that is why I ask you to be kind enough to press for no more explicit answer." "Take it," he said.

When I left him, I sought out Laurence Oliphant, and, fortunately at once finding him, I asked him if he would come with me and let us try to get into Paris. He evidently thought the attempt would be useless; but he said he would come. We bought all the provisions my small carriage would hold—turkeys, fowls, hams, and loaves of white bread—and made for the hither side of the bridge over the Seine at Neuilly. There we were stopped by French officials, who asked what we wanted. "To enter Paris," I said. "See! the English Foreign Office Seal, which I got this morning." Beyond this I affirmed nothing. After a short conference, the official who had challenged us returned, with the welcome words, "En avant, Messieurs!" We crossed the bridge, and were in Paris.

Before long we reached the Bois de Boulogne, passed under the Arc de Triomphe, drove down the Champs Elysées, across the Place de la Concorde, and thence to the Hôtel Chatham, where we found comfortable quarters, but scanty provisions. But at a quite second-rate Restaurant we dined well enough, off soup, fish from the Seine, bottled asparagus, and an omelette; and I soon discovered that well-to-do persons who had

exercised due foresight had enjoyed to the last a sufficiency of everything necessary for subsistence except bread. As I have said, Oliphant and I had brought with us a certain stock of provisions, etc.,

with the intention of distributing them among those of our friends and acquaintances whom I knew to have been mewed up in the capital. You do not usually offer a distinguished man of letters a fowl, a sausage, some bread, sugar, etc. Yet I confess I was simple enough on my arrival to rush off to the Quartier St. Germain, and press those things upon the acceptance of my good friend M. Forgues, whose valuable and highly esteemed criticisms on English literature in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* have made him known—by name, at least—to many of our countrymen. He was as adroit as French gentlemen invariably are when any one has committed a mistake, and though it was obvious that he could not help being amused at my superfluous zeal, he at the same time thanked me warmly for what he was good enough to call my kindness. But, frankly, he was in no want of what I had brought him. He had in his larder abundance of everything that ministers to life, save good white bread; horse, ass, and Australian mutton. He assured me, moreover, that his condition was that of everybody, raised above the indigent classes, who had shown the slightest foresight.

He consented, as did some other friends, to come and help eat a turkey I had brought from Versailles, but I am bound to add that none of them manifested the appetites of famished people. M. Forgues told me a story which, though not relating to the food question, in as far as it touches upon the war and distinguished names, is, I think, worth repeating. I happened to observe that I found it strange that M. Gustave Doré's two pictures—that is to say, prints of them—"The Marseillaise" and "The Rhine," the latter especially, should still be conspicuously displayed in the shop windows. "At the very commencement of the war," said M. Forgues, "I met M. Gustave Doré, and we discussed our chances of success. He was

positive we should take the Rhine provinces; I was equally sure we should not. 'I will bet,' I said, 'a complete edition of my works against a complete edition of yours that we do not acquire them.' Alas! he lost, and the bet has just been paid. I now possess all M. Doré's works, and I never received anything so valuable with so much regret."

Another strange incident occurred on the occasion on which M. Forgues related the story of this little, but suggestive wager. M. de Lesseps was good enough also to come and help dispose of what I cannot help calling this ridiculous turkey, brought all the way from Versailles so gratuitously, and for which I imagined the Parisians would have struggled with more eagerness even than some of them are displaying in order to enter the Constituent Assembly. M. de Lesseps described to us, in a manner which made the matter intensely interesting, the last hours of the Empress at the Tuileries, and the devices by which, as all the world knows, he got Her Majesty out of Paris. All at once he began, in the strangest way, to deviate from recognised history, and incidentally mentioned her passage through Belgium to England. "But she did not go through Belgium at all," said we who knew better. "Did she not?" said M. de Lesseps. "I thought she did; but you know I remained here, and am, therefore, in ignorance of what really happened afterwards. Please, therefore, complete for me the story I commenced for you." Was it not strange? The leading actor in the drama knew nothing of the play beyond the third act!

I must say that everybody here agrees in asserting that the bombardment of the city did not hasten by one second its surrender; and I have not been unfeeling enough to suggest, to ears naturally so sensitive, that it perhaps indirectly did so by forcing on the calamitous sortie of the 19th. Certainly you have to scan the Capital with very curious eyes before you see the marks of the bombardment. Everybody, too, raises his voice in admiration of the women, who displayed against force and famine alike a patience, a fortitude, a silent uncomplaining endurance, which I, for one, can sincerely characterise as truly feminine. In hours of danger no brave man was ever

made less brave by a woman. She may nerve his arm; she never paralyses it. So has it been in Paris, especially during the bombardment. Among the things sold to-day on the Boulevards were fragments of Prussian shells thrown into the city; but they did not seem to be in much request.

I have spoken of food in detail. Let me speak of it both in detail and in gross. There has already arrived from Dieppe 37,000 kilogrammes of flour; 23,000 of coffee, butter, and biscuits; 30,000 of salt, rice, cheese, and other groceries; 21,000 of fish; 4000 of potatoes; 10,000 of oats; several hundred sheep; and to-day some oxen. Coal, too, is being received. Turbots have to-day fetched from 20 to 45 francs; whitings a franc, some two. Sóles ran from 3 to 18 francs a pair. A fine mackerel fetched as much as 7. Potatoes varied from 90 centimes to 1 f. 40 c. the pound. Butter was as low as 4 f. 50 c. the pound; and you could get eggs for 3 f. 75 c. the dozen. To-morrow the prices will be much lower.

34 Rue Pigalle,
Monday Evening, February 29, 1871.

Dear Mr. Oliphant—We have to thank Mr. Austin and yourself for a splendid *revitaillement*, which we found on our return home this afternoon. Our only danger now is indigestion, and I hope you will both of you think it your duty to come and inquire in person how we have got through the process of "assimilation," to which we have been so long unaccustomed.—Believe me, yours truly,

(Madame) F. de Peyronnet.

I remained in Paris till the Election in the Capital of Representatives in the National Assembly was over, attending, in company with Oliphant, several obstreperous but instructive public meetings; and then, leaving him in Paris, I prepared to turn my face homeward, with inexpressible joy, after seven months of absence. But, before starting, I had to decide on my route, and

obtain a *laissez-passer* from some German General. The only port in German possession was Dieppe, and I obtained what I needed from the Bavarian General von der Tann, bought a light carriage to which "*Emperor*," my Arab horse, had to be harnessed, settled with the body-servant I had brought from Berlin, and started on my way, accompanied by my young German groom, George, also engaged in Berlin, and now of age for military service, and hoping to be a private in the "Red Hussars."

The cold weather of the winter had passed away, leaving the roads somewhat heavy; and "*Emperor*," too light for successive days of draught, showed signs of fatigue. So, at Rouen, whose splendid churches I saw for the first time, I sold the carriage bought at Versailles, mounted George on my horse, and hired a conveyance for myself and luggage, from place to place, till I reached Dieppe. It was, as I have said, in German "occupation"; but I found I could not take a horse out of the country without local French permission. This I obtained from depressed but kind and courteous functionaries, and got my horse on board with some difficulty, by aid of a cattle-truck, for other expedient there was none, on the first steamer that started for Newhaven.

My wife had made many inquiries as to "*Emperor*," but had no suspicion that I was taking him home for her; so I contrived to reach Swinford Old Manor after dark, that he might be brought round the next morning, "as a surprise,"

to the front door. She had passed most of the time of my absence among my own people in the North of England; but, happily, was alone at Swinford to receive me.

But the home peace and loving rest I had counted on was not to be quite mine as yet. Letters came from Laurence Oliphant, urging me to return to Paris as soon as possible, for, as he said, the Commune had possession of the Capital, and Civil War between it and the French Army at Versailles was at the point of breaking out. But my wife, considering there would be real danger in my doing so, strongly begged me not to go, and I read from afar of the earlier stages of that dire event. But when, in their desperation, the Communists had fired several of the chief public buildings in Paris, and Thiers had possession of the City, he telegraphed: "Come at once. All danger is over." I was then allowed to go, having as a travelling companion, Antonio Gallenga, an old friend, and a valued writer on *The Times*. Thus I saw the ruins of the Tuileries, the Ministère des Finances in the Place de la Concorde, still smouldering and smoking, the desolation on the hill of Montmartre, the extensive and destructive effect of the Bombardment by Thiers (so different from the harmless happenings from the Germans), the column of Napoleon the First in the Place Vendôme, lying in fragments on the pavement, and all the fulfilment of Bismarck's anticipations when Jules Favre begged that the National

Guard might not be disarmed, and the Chancellor cynically consented.

All I then saw was a fortuitous aid to me, of the most valuable kind, in the writing a few years later of the Fourth Canto of *The Human Tragedy*, and the completion of that poem by the terrible illustration of the too often tragic results of the yearning of many noble minds for the time when a generous, universal, and peaceful Cosmopolitanism will, to cite a pertinent phrase of Tennyson's, "Keep a fretful world in awe."

The following two letters from Laurence Oliphant after we parted in Paris tell their own story. After his marriage he and his wife returned to Salem on Erie to live under the rigorous despotism of Mr. Lake Harris, which, we fear, did not minister to their married happiness—all which is told, I fancy, in the life of him written by Mrs. Oliphant, his kinswoman.

9 RUE DU CENTRE,
March 8, 1872.

MY DEAR AUSTIN — My correspondence has suddenly become so overwhelming, and from such a delightful cause, that I have only time to write you a line to tell you that my destiny has come at last; and as I know that no one can appreciate better than you the value of a companion for life, for I remember what you used to say of yours, you will congratulate me that I too have at least found one who has thorough sympathy with me in every thought and feeling, strange as you know mine are, so that we have come together upon the only ground which I believe to be lasting, and are mutually penetrated with the soothing and satisfactory conviction that we have always been intended for each other.

The lady is a daughter of the late Mr. Le Strange of Hunstanton, Norfolk, and both families are perfectly satisfied and delighted. I do not know when the next stage of the performance will take place.—Yours very truly,

L. Oliphant.

June 17, 1872.

My dear Austin—Very many thanks for your kind remembrance of me. I shall read *The Human Tragedy* with great interest, increased by the association which it has in my mind with your description to me of its programme during our cold drive through the snow to Le Mans. I shall certainly hope the next time I come to England to see more of you than I have been able to do this time, and then I hope I shall have my wife with me, when it will give me great pleasure to introduce her to Mrs. Austin.—Believe me, yours very sincerely, L. Oliphant.

In order to round off my letters relating to the Franco-German War, I think my readers may like to re-read my account of the "triumphal entry" of the German army into Berlin in June 1870. Here it is:

THE FESTIVITIES IN BERLIN

The Eve of the Entry

Berlin, *June* 15.

Eleven months ago I traversed the same ground I have just been traversing, and my destination was the same famous city, whose name was then in everybody's mouth, thanks to the false prophets of the Parisian Boulevards and the cries of an excited but since how deeply humiliated people. I well remember how, delayed at every turn by the stream of German power and prowess rolling towards the Rhine, and with tens of thousands of warriors in their prime singing that song of watchful defiance, which has since gone the

round of the world, I conceived the confident belief that victory must perforce attend the banners of so united, so prompt, so enthusiastic, yet so disciplined a nation. There was no swaggering, no rash promises of swift success dominant among those tremendous hosts, borne in miles upon miles of railway trains to the seat of war; but there was a certain air upon those manly brows, serious, yet not devoid of joy, full of valour, yet not unmindful of peril, which bespoke final triumph. The citizens who had to remain at home—the men of middle age, the matrons, the young girls, the children—flocked to the various stations on the road, and made the journey of these their fighting brothers one long ovation. Nor were hearty cheers and words of brave encouragement the only contribution of the non-combatants to the sinews of war. They brought gifts with them—gifts from the larder, the kitchen, the cellar—and in the homeliest, yet most loving way imaginable, the maidens of Germany might have been seen feeding the bearded men, who were off to defend the commonwealth and Fatherland against the threatened stride of the aggressor. It was my lot to see them afterwards in action, and to attend their victorious footsteps from the moment that, by their first swift and impetuous courage, they made their own territory safe and inviolable, to the day when, after unyielding patience, after the trials of many months and the shock of many battles, they entered the capital of the foe that had challenged them, and signed a peace unequalled in history.

And now they are about to commemorate their amazing successes, to thank the Lord of Hosts in the good old German fashion for being on the side of their strong battalions, to do honour to their Emperor, their princes, their statesmen, their strategists, their soldiers, who, with a unanimity of action and good-will unparalleled, carried them through a world of difficulties to an heroic conclusion. All the stronger, too, seems the contrast to me, because it so happens that as last year I made my way from Berlin to Paris, so this year I make my way from Paris to Berlin. It is from the still smoking rafters of the Tuileries, from the utter wreck of the finest portion of the Rue de Rivoli, from

the ruins of the Hôtel de Ville, from the wreck of stone and mortar which once were Auteuil, Passy, and Asnières, that I have come to the Unter den Linden, gay and joyous with many coloured flags, and lined with hundreds upon hundreds of captured French cannon; to the Brandenburg Gate, alive with triumphal wreaths, illuminations, and rejoicings; to Berlin, the very heart of Prussia, and the virtual capital of one and united Germany, radiant with joy and patriotic pride, crammed from basement to roof with children of the Fatherland, all determined, at whatsoever cost, at whatsoever torture of heat and plague of discomfort, to be present at the great military spectacle which, like some ancient medal, stamps and for ever commemorates the resolution, prowess, and success of their great leaders and themselves.

The Germans are a serious people; but for the moment they are wild with joy. The whole Empire is making holiday, counting its mighty gains, celebrating its astounding victories. They are esteemed a thrifty race; but they are spending with a large heart now that the moment of triumph has come. I dare not say how much has to be paid for the small room in which I write, still less for the small seat in the small window in the Unter den Linden that I shall be able to call my own to-morrow. It would only lead to anticipations I cannot but disappoint. The occasion will be magnificent; but who can rise to it? Of one thing we are pretty certain, and that is of fine weather. "God," said a pious old woman this evening, "has been so good to us all along that He surely will not deny us His sunshine now." Apparently not. It is a night full of stars, of warmth, and of summer scents, and we cannot but awake to a fair and cloudless day.

The Triumphal Entry

Berlin, *June* 16.

The whole city was afoot almost with the full coming of the sun, but beyond its precincts the preparations for the wonderful festivities of this day had commenced at even an earlier hour. Like every capital, and more especially a capital of an essentially military monarchy, Berlin is well

provided with barracks; but during the sad and melancholy days of war they had to be turned into hospitals for the sick and wounded; and when these have been removed and restored to life and health, time is requisite for disinfection, and even the ordinary garrison of Berlin requires to be stowed away in unusual places. How much greater is the pressure now will be understood when it is remembered that to-day not only had the whole *corps d'armée* of the Guards, nearly 40,000 strong, to take part in the celebration, but their numbers were swelled by detachments from every regiment in the Confederation. They have been dotted about the suburbs of Berlin, and their first task this morning was to muster and march to the Tempelhofefelde, where they were to be received and inspected before the Emperor at eleven o'clock. It is needless to say that this was one of the spots marked out for public favour; but I have left to your own resident correspondent to describe the brilliant opening spectacle which marked that remote locality. Suffice it to say here that the troops were drawn up in three lines. First came the first division of the Guards, supported by a certain number of miscellaneous detachments; then the second division, similarly strengthened; then the entire cavalry of the Guard. On the right were the captured French colours; on the left, the artillery, that terrible artillery, that carried such terror into French hearts, such havoc into French ranks.

I did not witness that particular part of the programme, but all the remainder has passed before my eyes. I employed the breathing time given me by abstention from it in traversing the route along which all the troops were at a later hour to pass, and which consisted of the Belle-Alliance-strasse, the Königgrätzstrasse, and the Unter den Linden, in all a journey of not less than three good English miles. You will have some idea of the enormous amount of guns and mitrailleuses taken from the French, when I say that this entire Via Triumphalis was lined with them, and not sparsely, but more densely even than they would have been placed had they been drawn up with their murderous muzzles to the foe. Each bore the date and place of its

capture, and stood an innocuous prisoner, frowning in flowery chains. I had seen them covered with dust at Beaumont, foul with mud and blood at Sedan, overturned and littered with snow at Le Mans, dismounted at Issy, untouched at Valérien, surrendered with tears and curses at Paris. Now they looked almost spic and span, burnished up for the occasion, marvellous trophies with the polish on, the toys of triumph, the pets of the victor.

How I am to describe to you the other aspects of the streets honoured by the astounding show, and more especially the Unter den Linden, I know not. The Brandenburg Gate, after all—let us confess it—the noblest, for the simplest, military monument in the world, can gain but little by the arts of the decorator and the florist; but the grand stone pilasters and arches, and surmounting glory of pawing war-steeds, driven by the god of victory, bore well the super-incumbent mass of flowers, and festoons, and laurel wreaths. The Pariserplatz, the fine open space surrounded by private palaces on the Linden side of the gate, from the earliest hour sparkled like a garden of many-coloured plants relieved by plentiful green. Yet the green was only foliage severed from parent trunks and twisted into fanciful shapes, and the plants and flowers were human beings. You will say the fair sex predominated. They did, or seemed to do; and here, as all down the Linden, the favourite contrast was white and blue. Every house in the Platz was alive with beauty in its brightest colours—every house save one.

There was a palace at whose windows no face was seen, on whose roof there clustered no daring crowd, that flaunted no banners, was hung with no green leaves or flowers, but whose shutters were gloomily put to and closed. Can you not guess whose house this was? It was the French Embassy, the same on whose window-sills the heroes of 1813 had come and sharpened their sabres, the same which in 1870 was with difficulty saved from the fury of a Berlin mob. Here Count Benedetti dreamed plans of strange aggrandisement and annexation for his Imperial master; here was drawn up in mystery and silence, that culminated in publicity and scandal, the famous Secret Treaty; here Colonel Stoffel

wrote those marvellously candid and prophetic reports to His Majesty Napoleon III., and was not believed, or at least not heeded. But the people of Berlin are too busy this bright forenoon to think of foreign statecraft, present or future; and though I confess I mused awhile on that vacant, dreary, and hermetically sealed mansion, I saw no other eyes turned in its direction.

"Der Kaiser ist da!" The last time I heard these words was under the walls of grim but bootless Sedan, and I confess I started as, just when the clocks tolled out the first half-hour after noon, I once more heard the familiar shout, and again from German throats, "Der Kaiser ist da." But this time it was their own Emperor, and not the Sovereign of their prostrate foe, whom they greeted with the many-voiced salutation. Yes, the Emperor, whom the people of Berlin still love to talk of as the King, had reached the Brandenburg Gate, and with a seat in the saddle, despite his seventy winters, and many spent in the wars, as firm and straight as that of the youngest and most terrible lieutenant of dragoons, was in their midst, on horseback. After inspecting the troops at the Tempelhofefelde, His Majesty had put himself at the head of the first division, and marched part of the way with them up the long and handsome street abutting on the Thiergarten, which bears the name of the decisive victory of the campaign we once thought wonderful of 1866.

But he had other work to do, whilst his beloved Guards marched on steadily in the summer heat; and, attended by a staff, whose brilliancy either for nobility of descent or for lustre of arms we shall vainly seek to match elsewhere, he hurried forward to the top of the Linden. Did the aged Monarch feel, like Faust, that the blood of youth was once more leaping and dancing in his veins as he gazed on the fair sight which there welcomed his arrival? Sixty young and beautiful damsels, chosen children of the most honoured and revered burghers of Berlin, crowded round the delighted old man, and, in the name of Germany, offered him love, and greeting, and a golden crown. They were all dressed in blue and white, and blue was the colour of the riband that

gathered up their plaited tresses. For it has long been the talk in Berlin that no foreign furbelows, no sensuous bodices from the Boulevards, no hideous towers of borrowed hair, no vile corrupting costumes of the conquered, should mar the native beauty of this maiden deputation. The Gretchen costume should be theirs, the village costume of her whom we called Margaret—the Gretchen immortalised by Goethe, brought down to the masses by the intoxicating music of Gounod—before the fiend threw sparkling jewels in her path and lured her with splendour to destruction. If Germany is wise, Germany will always be of the self-same mind she has been this day, will stick to her virgin white and simple blue, to her time-honoured plaits and bunches of honest ribbon, to her innocent girls, to her thrifty, busy, and home-keeping matrons, who from such alone are made. They made a pleasant sight certainly for Kaiser Wilhelm's eyes, and for many eyes not quite so old. I know not what they said, or rather what was said by their fair leader, the daughter of sculptor Blaeser, who had not yet exhausted his share of the honours of the day, as we shall see anon; but we may be sure it was of King, and Germany, and Fatherland that they spoke of. It is in moments of exultation that men rise above themselves and seek for utterance from softer yet deeper voices than their own. Even war has its goddess; and, O beloved Peace, who shall begrudge thee thy Eirene? Most fittingly, therefore, does Germany find vent for its emotional joy through bevies of maidens, and the Monarch who has almost lived in armour receive the auguries of domestic tranquillity from the peace-loving angels of the hearth.

It was difficult, after this pretty spectacle, for the Town Council of Berlin to excite for itself all the interest it deserves; but the Emperor, at least, was attentive to their expressions of loyalty, love, and devotion, and responded with an apparent warmth which left no room for doubt as to its sincerity. But now it was necessary for me, if I was to see anything of by far the most important and impressive ceremony of the day, to make the best of my way by side streets to the back of the University, in one of the windows

of which your provision had secured me a seat. For the benefit of those of your readers who do not know Berlin, and even for the sake of those who do, but who want their memories refreshed, let me describe the main features of the renowned thoroughfare which has gained from its lime trees the appellation of Unter den Linden. As I have said, the moment you pass from the Thiergarten, through the Brandenburg Gate, you find yourself in the Pariserplatz; and when you have once traversed this handsome square, you have the choice of several avenues down the Linden; for there are two double rows of trees, forming a central and broader alley, and two narrower side ones. Outside the latter is again a carriageway, and beyond it is the pavement, flanked now by palaces and private residences, now by public offices, and now by shops. At last you come to a magnificent equestrian statue, known to the whole world, the statue of Frederick the Great, by Rauch. Here the lime trees cease, and you would be, as in the Pariserplatz, in the middle of a large square, but that the entire thoroughfare, a splendid broad street, is carried on right away to the Schlossbrücke, or Castle Bridge, adorned on either side by the finest buildings in Berlin. On the left are the Academy, the University, the Arsenal, and the Guard House; on the right the King's Palace, the Opera House, and the Palace of the Crown Prince. The statue of the Great Frederick stands between the Royal Palace and the Academy.

Between nearly all of the edifices I have named there are fine open spaces, which on the present occasion have been turned into highly decorated tribunes, or, as we should say, grand stands. This morning they were filled with the representatives of the rank, fashion, the civil merit, and wealth of Germany; and the buildings themselves gave every window, and nook, and projection, and even roofs, up to the soaring and searching curiosity of those who had money or influence sufficient to gratify it. Down in the splendid street itself there were two lines of what, with the permission of M. Jules Favre, I will venture to call the populace; but their numbers were necessarily regulated by the military requirements of the occasion. In the outer alleys of the Unter den Linden

proper they had congregated in tens of thousands, and some of their aspiring spirits had, unchecked, provided themselves with cool and domineering, if, perhaps, somewhat hard, perches in the branches of the famous limes.

But I must be still more precise in my description than I have been. When the lime trees cease, up rises Frederick's statue. It looks down the street towards the bridge, and full on its right is the King's Palace. Then comes a vacant place, which to-day was the "Opera House Tribune," filled with men shouting "Hoch!" and ladies waving a world of white handkerchiefs. Then comes the Opera House itself, dedicated Apollini et Musis. Then there is another vacant space, again partly filled up with a bright and densely tenanted tribune, but partly protected from any such invasion, since, almost flush with the street, there stands in this space the statue of that tremendous and rude old soldier, the iron-hearted Blücher. Beyond, yet once more, is the Palace of the Crown Prince, and then, nothing, save the river. Here, however, for the moment, let us stop; for it was immediately at Blücher's statue, as we all know, that the Emperor, when he reached it, would halt, and there, attended by his suite, inspect the march past of the whole body of troops who took part in the triumphal entry.

But the King—we cannot think of him but as King here, here under the shadow of the statue of Frederick of Prussia, here right in the presence of avenging Blücher—the King has not yet arrived. He must be coming down the Linden, for a multitudinous chorus of "Hochs" reach our ears, and we, too, soon catch the infection, for martial music, and horses, and horsemen glittering with sabre and plume, are coming this way. *Seniores priores*; here is old General Wrangel, full of years and honours, ready to chant his "Nunc dimittis," now that he has seen this day. Why should I take you through a catalogue of names, illustrious though many of them be? You, perhaps, are as impatient as we were, and you want to hear of the greatest of them all. Here they come, three abreast; thinker, strategist, and organiser—Bismarck in the centre, Von Roon on the right, Moltke—he who is always humble, and would ever ride afar

off—on the left. How the air rings with grateful greetings! But they pass; and fresh music and fresh horsemen, fresh faces and fresh martial splendours tread upon one and another in dizzying succession. "The King! The King!" Wonderful old man: he looks every inch of what he is, the martial head of a martial race, a child of Brandenburg, a son of the barren sand that has been made to yield good fruits, and to bear not bread alone, but heroes. Truly, if human voices are any test of human hearts, these Germans worship their Sovereign. After him, but at respectful distance, came his son and his nephew, the field-marshals whom, breaking through all precedent and the habits of his house, he has made, bearing their batons, and they, the so-called rivals, riding lovingly side by side. You scarce knew for whom men shouted and for whom women waved applause, for the acclamations never ceased; rising, however, to wild vociferation as a swiftly gliding figure clomb to the very summit of Frederick's statue, and placed a laurel wreath on that immortal head.

But the King is awaiting the troops, and with the same swift, serried step with which I have so often of late seen them go forth to battle, they come. I said I have just arrived from Paris. Well, let us not slay the slain; but it would, perhaps, be well if M. Thiers, who, the day after to-morrow, is going to review his "incomparable army," could be here, and first look on this picture and then on that. At their head is a forest of colours and eagles, but not their own. These are the *spolia opima*; these are the dazzling trophies of war. You cease to wonder when you behold those who won them. They come down the Linden, under the trees, four abreast; but as they reach the statue and enter the open space, they run forward, as I have seen them run when there was hot scent afront, and swiftly as the eye can follow them they form into close column, and even pressing forward till they come almost within hail of the King, they present a terrible forest of burnished helmet-spikes and glittering bayonets. Then they advance in columns of companies, all in heavy marching order, yet all fresh as the morning, saluting their monarch and cheered by

the nation. There are no such 30,000 foot-soldiers as these elsewhere. They are the very pick and flower of a vigorous and manly race, nurtured to arms, sworn to discipline, inoculated to victory.

There is no hitch, no blunder, no stoppage, in this magnificent military clockwork, whose wheels withal are living flesh and blood. How simple is this fighting gear of theirs, yet how effective! All the colour they carry is in their flashing steel; the rest is sober blue of the darkest tinge. Yet wreaths of green encircle their victorious muskets, and they walk with the step of conquerors who have never experienced a check. It is their solidity, their muscular thews, their unfaltering stride, which make this grandeur. The tailor has done nothing for them. When will this moving forest of bayonets come to an end? Still they come; rushing down the Linden at double-quick time, forming in close columns under the great statue, marching in companies 250 strong, past their delighted King, who sits in the sun, never weary whilst there still are soldiers to welcome. At last, however, there is a pause, a very brief one, to be followed by redoubled cheers, wilder enthusiasm, and a yet grander pageant. We hear the clatter of hoofs, and the Cuirassiers of the Guard debouch upon the open space. They are covered with dust, man and horse, fresh and clean as they were two hours ago; but their breastplates glimmer and glitter in the sun, and their helmets make a sea of shining steel. Can cheers be louder than those which greet them? Wait an instant, and you shall hear yet heartier welcome.

Black and white pennons flutter in the breeze. The Uhlans, the famous Uhlans, who were to the French a sort of peculiar people, a strange and mysterious race, a visitation from heaven, or rather from the antipodes of heaven, are galloping, lance in rest, over stony pavement, as though they still scoured the plains of sacred Champagne, or carried terror into the heart of Touraine. One of them is down. Then another. And yet another. But they are up again swifter than thought, and they have passed away. Then there is a roll, as of thunder coming nearer. It is the turn of the terrible gunners. It is ill work swinging round a sharp

corner over slippery stones, full tilt, and with a big gun at your heels. Three times there is grief, but no bones are broken, and the faithless hoofs are soon afoot again. An hour has gone, and there is a lull. But the King stirs not, and some begin to wonder if the march past is over. They have seen but half. The First Division has filed past; that is all. The second is yet to come, and with the second is a greater number of mixed detachments, a vaster body of cavalry, a heavier force of artillery. For another hour and a half—indeed, until well-nigh upon four o'clock—the grand cohorts flash past, until those well-filled tribunes almost grow weary of showering down upon them the honours they so richly deserve.

Ever and anon, however, there comes a stimulus to jaded enthusiasm. Now the Crown Prince leaves his sire's side, and heads his regiment as it comes down the Linden. Now it is that gallant hussar, Prince Frederick Charles, who, leading the men he knows so well how to handle, calls forth plaudits as fresh as those of two hours ago. Long before this stage of the proceedings had been reached I had left my window in the University, and made my way to a tribune almost opposite Blücher's statue. I had no earthly right there, and I was politely told so. But, when I named the nature of my errand, all objection was most graciously waived, and in a moment more I encountered my good friend, Professor Lepsius, so honourably known to fame; and, thanks to him, a difficulty was solved which had been haunting me all the morning. For when the march was over, there would still remain the unveiling of the statue of the King's father, Frederick William III., a ceremony which would have taken place last August but for the outbreak of the war with France. The statue stands in the very centre of the Lustgarten, the handsome square which has the old Schloss on one side, on another the façade of the Museum, on a third the Cathedral, and on the fourth the river.

I had had no time to secure myself a place to witness this closing ceremony, the most solemn and select of all; but my happy *rencontre* with the learned professor carried me over all obstacles. Guided by him, I soon found myself out of

the noise, and dust, and glare, and tumultuous splendour of the streets, and walking in the classic coolness of sunless halls, tenanted by the silent witnesses of Greek glory and genius. I was in the Museum. What a strange contrast, and one that, as I hurried through rows of familiar marble forms, compelled me to inquire if all this gun, drum, blunderbuss, and thunder was a good exchange for academic groves, and what Mr. Tennyson so finely calls "Passionless Bride, divine tranquillity." I was not left, however, to answer the question; for in another moment I was in the full sunshine again, under the portico of the Museum, and with the Lustgarten before me. Right opposite was the Schloss, in front of which was erected a temporary but effective statue of Germany, welcoming to her maternal arms her two new children, Elsass and Lothringen. In the very centre of the Lustgarten was the statue, but it was still hidden from the vulgar gaze. Just beyond it was a small elegant tent, where the Kaiser, the Empress, and the Crown Princess were shortly expected. Round the statue stood the choir of the Cathedral, and the Town Council of Berlin; but their ineffectual fires soon paled before the arrival of the same glittering horsemen of high degree, the Emperor in their midst, who had been the centre of every preceding ceremony. Most of the troops were already on their way home; but the river side of the square was held by detachments of the Infantry of the Guard, whilst facing them were solidly massed a regiment of Cuirassiers, then one of Dragoons, next the well-known Zeithen or Red Hussars, and, finally, a body of Uhlans. A gun is fired, the first of a long salvo, and in the twinkling of an eye, amid renewed cheers and bursts of rival music, the statue stands in the sunlight. There is much spirit in the form of the patriotic monarch, much in the brave bronze steed that bears him.

But this is not the moment for art criticism. This is a culminating point in a great nation's history. German unity has been achieved, and by the son of the man who left the achievement as a sacred bequest of duty. "Now God be thanked!" burst forth the trumpets in a solemn and well-known hymn, dear to all German hearts, and reverence due

is paid to High Heaven for the happy close of mighty enterprises. One has been assisting at the greatest military spectacle, the sternest and most terrible embodiment of force that the world has ever seen. Yet I feel that, deep down in its heart, it is not a war-loving nation that did the tremendous deeds it has thus been celebrating; that despite the sacrifices the leaders have imposed and the people have cheerfully endured, peace, enduring peace, is the most cherished aspiration of their breasts; and that if the whole world be animated by sentiments of manly justice, such as beat in the bosoms of these reasonably exultant conquerors, the sword may yet be turned to the ploughshare, and an end for ever be put to spectacles so grand, yet in a sense so full of reproach, the one that will for all time be associated with this memorable day.

The following two letters from Mr. Odo Russell, who was appointed Ambassador at Berlin shortly after the close of the Franco-German War, are, I think, still interesting and amusing. Bancroft was the American Ambassador at Berlin, and, evidently, had taken exception to the convenient conventionalities of our older and more complex civilizations. All that is altered now, and there are no more delightful and popular members of the Corps Diplomatique than the representatives of the United States in Europe.

British Embassy, Berlin,
18th Sept. 1872.

My dear Austin—Many thanks for your letter of the 15th from Villa Romana. It is really most kind of you to have written and warned me of the soreness existing among my colleagues about the employment of the phrase "daignera recevoir" in the notification addressed to them by their Doyen of the Czar's intention to give them an audience.

A hint in time is one of the greatest boons friendship can

confer, and how few friends will take the trouble of writing as kindly as you have done!

Of course, I need not tell you that the soreness of the Dip. Body, Bancroft described, must be that of some very youthful *Chargé des Archives*, or of the dear old Republican Minister himself. Every European Dip. knows that circulars issued by Diplomacy in the service of Royalty respecting audiences, etc., are not composed by Doyens or their Secretaries, but are merely copied from forms adopted at the Congress of Vienna for our guidance to all eternity. The circular in question was identical with that issued the day before for the Emperor of Austria's reception by his own Ambassador, and both circulars were copied from the forms of the Vienna Congress, deposited in the Chancelleri of the Belgium Minister, Baron Nothomb, our Doyen for the last twenty years before my appointment.

If, therefore, Bancroft complains I can only refer him to Metternich, Talleyrand, Castlereagh, Hardenberg, etc., on Mertens!

To satisfy the Republican Austerity of American Diplomacy, the Sovereigns of Europe have "deigned to receive" them at Court in black pants, white vests, and fancy ties. I suppose they will next insist on Emperors requesting the honour of their company at an audience!

Republicans who object to etiquette should avoid European Courts,—"Forestieri" who won't accept the laws of the carnival should keep out of the Corso!

I hope you found Mrs. Austin better on getting home. Pray present my respects to her, and remind her of the photo you promised me in her name.

I hope it will not require the presence of three Emperors to bring you back to Berlin—in quieter times we might be more sociable. With many thanks for your kind note, believe me, yours sincerely, ODO RUSSELL.

BRITISH EMBASSY, BERLIN,
27th Oct. '72.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—Your letter reached me after the Emperor William's award had settled the "San Juan" question.

Our enthusiasts for Arbitration (our "Georges Dandins") have now had a dose of it, and will have another to swallow when the Claims Commission at Washington present their bill. After your personal experience of Bancroft, you must have recognised his "last manner" in the *New York Herald* account of British intrigues at Berlin.

I told you all along that I am not fond of settlements by Arbitration — I prefer steady, quiet, safe, unsensational Diplomatic action.

The question now belongs to the past, and if it should really by its death inaugurate a new era of good and friendly feeling between us and our Cousins, *We* shall be the gainers, as I said to Bancroft in shaking hands with him over the award.—Yours, O. R.

CHAPTER V

Mr. Mudford becomes Editor of the *Standard*—Russo-Turkish War—*Tory Horrors* — Political Speeches — Disraeli and Bismarck—Congress of Berlin—Letters from Addington Symonds—Stand for Dewsbury — Defeat and Resignation of Lord Beaconsfield — Departure for Greece.

I COULD not help feeling that the *Standard*, when I first wrote for it in the autumn of 1866, and for some little time onward, was under the reign of King Log. It is not surprising, therefore, that the proprietor of the paper, as journalistic competition became keener and more strenuous, grew dissatisfied with such easy-going management; all the more so because there were no signs of more active direction taking place. This dissatisfaction ended by the editor receiving notice that his services were to be dispensed with, and by the proprietor's eldest son being appointed as his successor. Not from any neglect or incapacity on the part of the new editor, though probably his not having been familiar previously with journalistic experience was a grave disadvantage to him, but for strictly family reasons, the arrangement was of brief duration, the office being conferred for a time on a man,

dead now for many years, who, though not without practical capacity, was a "pig-headed Tory"—for there always are such persons—of an extreme kind. It was only necessary for a Party or a policy, whether at home or abroad, to be called Conservative for him to defend it through thick and thin—a course that has never recommended itself to me.

A glaring instance arose when he lent the strongest support to the Duc de Broglie and Marshal MacMahon; this seemed to me to be fatuous, since not only based on a misnomer, but certain to end, as it did, in utter failure. Accordingly I refused to write in that sense. Thereupon, though I had been only passive, the proprietor interfered, and, quite irrespectively of any opinion of his own, told the editor that my view must be acted on. He bowed to this decision, and nothing further occurred.

Meanwhile, the substitution of telegraphic for postal correspondence from abroad, and the necessity of dispatching copies of the paper into the provinces by earlier morning trains, had rendered the conditions less easy and agreeable to its contributors; and, though I still was treated with kindly and privileged consideration, it became necessary for me, every now and again, to go to London late in the evening, and spend the night there, in order to write a leader on the Continental news arriving from hour to hour. This new condition was perfectly reasonable, and I accepted it without demur. For a considerable time I had remained

sceptical concerning the influence of the press on public opinion; but, by degrees, I felt forced to modify that view. This gave me much more interest in journalistic work, while still subordinating it to my interest in Literature, and, most of all, in Poetry.

But early in 1878 an entire revolution took place in the conduct of the paper, the offices of both editor and manager being conferred for life on Mr. H. W. Mudford by the proprietor. I mention his name because the *Standard* steadily advanced in influence and, I understood, in circulation under his direction, and his position was soon known to every one interested in politics and journalism. No sooner was he appointed than he sought a personal interview with me, and in the frankest manner spoke of the "great value" I had been and was to the paper, and expressed the hope that he might count on my co-operation with him. He hinted that, if I would accept the offer, I could be appointed editor of the paper under his general management, at a salary more than double, I believe, of that enjoyed, at the time, by the editor of any other daily paper. In order to preclude the possibility of the suggestion being entertained by him, I said, in the friendliest manner, that an offer of ten times the sum suggested would never induce me to give up my country life, even for its own sake, but also because it secured for me freedom and leisure for the dedication of such capacity as I might have,

to Poetry. He then asked me if I should object to having a telegraphic wire to Swinford, to place me in connection with Ashford, and so with London, in order that he might communicate to me about five o'clock in the evening the latest news to serve for the subject of a leader for the following day. The rent of the telegraphic wire would be defrayed by the paper; and, knowing that I wrote with exceptional rapidity, he assumed I should have no difficulty in dispatching it from Ashford by train at a little after eight o'clock. The number of leaders he engaged to accept per week was named; and he added that a yearly holiday of five consecutive weeks would be at my disposal, without any deduction from the regular honorarium. Sometimes, no doubt, but not oftener than was necessary, he would have to ask me to come up to London to write at the office at night. I raised no objection; and our relations from that time till my appointment to the Laureateship and discontinuance of journalistic work were uninterruptedly agreeable. I made no secret of my opinion that he attached too high a value to my co-operation, but he uniformly, and with equal frankness, disagreed with me.

At the date of the commencement of his rule at the *Standard*, the international situation was both complex and critical. The Russo-Turkish War was on the eve of breaking out; and Mr. Gladstone, returning to the fray from a retirement he had described as definitive, but which proved to be ephemeral, entered with passionate oratorical

vigour on what was known at the time as the Midlothian Campaign, and enforced still further his vehement rhetoric by the famous pamphlet called *Bulgarian Horrors*. To me, whether rightly or wrongly, both seemed exceedingly mischievous. They had no effect on the course of the war; and, though they did not cause Lord Beaconsfield to deviate from the policy he had marked out for this country, they split its public opinion into two angry camps. Entertaining this opinion, I wrote, with great rapidity, a reply to his pamphlet, in the form of an ironically respectful letter addressed to the right honourable gentleman, giving it the title of *Tory Horrors*. It would be affectation to suppress the fact that, if a wide circulation and much notice constitute success, it succeeded. In a characteristic letter Mr. Disraeli, then Prime Minister, wrote to me as follows from Windsor:

Dear Mr. Austin—The Queen spoke to me to-day with warm but discriminating appreciation of your *Tory Horrors*. It is a spirited composition, and, what is rare in pamphlets in these days, it is true.—I am, yours very faithfully,

B. Disraeli.

I remember "old" John Murray, the publisher, telling me he was at Hawarden when my pamphlet arrived, and described how Mr. Gladstone, imagining it to be written in agreement with his own views, retired with it at the end of breakfast, and after reading it, returned with that look of displeasure on his face that, in the course of his

thunder-and-lightning career, overawed so many persons, alike in the House of Commons and elsewhere. But he was magnanimous enough, in my case, to write and ask me to breakfast with him. With a wider experience of political life than I then had, I should have gone, and have since felt that I was wrong in my response to a flattering courtesy. My reply was an excuse, deferentially worded, and this I followed by leaving my card on him. Thereupon he wrote again, expressing his regret that I had not inquired if he was at home.

I confess, penitently, that my conduct was ungracious; the only possible excuse for it being that I was suffering from honest patriotic indignation, and that I thought the great Leader of a powerful Party was what Cavour on a memorable occasion told Garibaldi to his face in the Subalpine Parliament, that he was "Un cattivo cittadino" ("A bad citizen").

The opportunity of repairing in some degree my fault did not occur till the last day in December, when, taking the train in London to return home, I heard that the dying statesman was in it, on his way to Cannes. I wrote on my card, "With sincere wishes that you may have a Happy New Year," and sent it in to him.

Looking back on that period of one's life, and also before and after it for some years, I often wonder, in these my reposeful and comparatively unproductive days, at the unceasing active movements of one's mind. Fast on the outbreak of the

Russo-Turkish War, and immediately after the publication of *Tory Horrors*, I also wrote and published a poem, seventy-five pages long, called *Leszko the Bastard: a Tale of Polish Grief.*

The greatly increased influence of the *Standard* under Mr. Mudford's editorship had the effect of stimulating inquiry concerning his leader-writers; and my participation as such soon became widely known, and was extended by the success of *Tory Horrors*. The bulk of mankind are much more interested in Politics than in Literature, more especially than in Poetry; and so I found myself, if I may use the phrase, rather more sought after than harmonized with my tastes, averse as I was, and have always been, to what is termed being "lionized," in however slight a degree. But, while the number of our acquaintances grew, we made not a few real friends whom I have valued exceedingly. I should wish to add that the social gifts and personal attraction of my wife, so much greater than my own, contributed not a little to the attention lavished on us. Appealed to on several occasions for assistance by Conservative candidates at electoral meetings, I not infrequently gave it, and found that the facility in speaking, so long and carefully practised at the Westminster Debating Society, had not wholly left me; and I enjoyed the special form of physical pleasure in addressing large audiences, and in sometimes securing a hearing from audiences of mixed opinions.

But the impression left on me was that of the deplorable ease with which this can be done by any one, more by readiness, volume of speech, and management of the voice, than by convincing argument. I remember that, at the time of the Midlothian Campaign, Lord Derby said no one could face and obtain a hearing from any large unpacked public meeting. I can only say that I spoke at Exeter to such an audience, and soon was patiently heard throughout. A rather droll incident closed the visit. My umbrella, much needed at the time, disappeared. A few days after reaching home, I received a brand-new local rather Gampish one with a massive ivory handle, a gift from the city, on which was inscribed my name and the date of the Meeting. I still have it, and use it on the occasion of sudden sallies into the garden during a downpour!

When Mr. Disraeli sent the British Fleet in 1878 through the Dardanelles, and summoned Indian troops to Malta, thereby arresting the advance of Russia to Constantinople, and causing the Armistice of San Stefano, the memorable Congress of Berlin was projected and arranged among the European Powers. Lord Salisbury and Lord Beaconsfield were designated, as much by public opinion as by themselves and their colleagues, for the British Plenipotentiaries. Before leaving England, the latter sent me word, through his private secretary, "Montie" Corry, as he was called by his friends,

and whom I already knew, that he would be glad to see me at Downing Street, then his private as well as his official residence.

I had not before had discourse with him. *Vidi tantum*, etc. I found his manner and his greeting as simple and cordial as in public life, from the long habit and necessity of self-defence and self-protection, it was the opposite. After a few conventional words, he said, "Tell me about Bismarck. You know him, and it is many years since I saw him."

It was characteristic of his frank candour in private life among his friends, as till his death I had several occasions to observe, that he should confess that when Bismarck, on his visit to this country with the King of Prussia, had sketched out to him his future policy, now successfully achieved, he thought him, as he said, "a great charlatan." Naturally, his opinion had materially changed; and he was most anxious to hear every particular about him I could remember.

He asked me about Lord Wolseley, and what age he was. "Two years older than I am," I said. "Still young," he observed, and I answered that "I liked to think it young." "And I do think it young," he added, incidentally showing his abiding belief in the power of the young, "the trustees of posterity" as he called them on the last page of *Coningsby*.

He then spoke sympathetically of myself, expressing the hope that I should be heard of

more in the political sphere. "You have dedicated your earlier years to Literature, and can occupy your later ones with public affairs. That is the proper course." I did not agree with this, but abstained from saying so, lest I should seem to be wanting in admiration for his own career, which doubtless had been in harmony with his own temperament and ambition. I took leave of him with the impression that he entertained for me the kindliest feeling; an impression that was deepened by the experience I enjoyed during the few remaining years of his life.

Almost immediately after what I have just described I was asked by the editor of the *Standard* to attend the Congress in the character of its Correspondent. I could not well refuse, but told him I feared I should acquit myself but indifferently of the mission, because of my unwillingness to sacrifice self-respect in the pursuit of information, whether from Prince Bismarck, Lord Beaconsfield, or Lord Odo Russell, because of my acquaintance with them. He seemed to attach no importance to this objection, and offered terms and conditions which, from a material point of view, were more than satisfactory. Accordingly, I went, and stayed as long as I could be of any real use in Berlin.

But it turned out as I had foreseen. Other papers sent correspondents who were, in every particular, as capable for the task as myself, and, I must add, I trust without offence, were ready

to make the personal sacrifice I have just alluded to, in order to be of use to the journals they served, possibly without feeling that they were making any such sacrifice. But the position of a newspaper correspondent in a foreign Capital, especially at critical international moments, is in the nature of things not easy, and sometimes far from pleasant. His object is, of course, to make as much use of Ministers and Ambassadors there as possible; and their object is to do the same by him.

It is open to them to give him true information, or information scarcely true, but which they wish to be accepted as such, so that he may disseminate it, and thereby produce the effect they desire. Personal and political regard for truth are two distinct things in their minds. Bismarck would never have hesitated to mislead a correspondent, or to disown having used language he had unquestionably employed. In a memorable instance, the German Ambassador in Paris, who was for some years German Ambassador in this country, a man in private life of the strictest honour, acted in that manner to the correspondent of a leading London newspaper.

Neither during the Franco-German War, nor at the Congress, could I bring myself to be exposed to such disagreeable experiences. I was invited to several private gatherings where the Plenipotentiaries were present, but carefully forbore from asking them for details which, they could reply, were by the regulations of the

Congress to be regarded as strictly secret. At one of these gatherings at Lord Odo Russell's, Lord Beaconsfield stood with his back to the mantelpiece, with a look of deterring dissatisfaction on his face; and I observed that no one seemed to venture to approach him. That did not prevent me from addressing him, and asking if I might have the pleasure of presenting my wife to him. His look at once relaxed, and he described to us a visit he had been paying to Potsdam, and talked in his interesting way of Frederick the Great's flute and the *Meunier Sans Souci*. He then passed to the subject of the casts in Berlin of the great Classical Statues, and lamented their absence in London. But I observed that, after our talk with him, he resumed his air of severe anxiety, and it was easy to infer that the deliberations and decisions at the Congress were not altogether in agreement with his wishes.

It soon transpired that the impression I received from Lord Beaconsfield's aspect on the above occasion was a correct one, and that he had signified his intention of quitting the Congress. The morning but one after ushered in an exceedingly hot day, and I was walking across the Square opposite the hotel where we were staying, when I saw him approaching, leaning on Mr. Corry's arm. I was about to salute him and pass on, but he stopped, and made a chaffing remark. I could see that his mood was altered,

and guessed that things were going better. The Russian Plenipotentiaries, as the public learned later, had yielded to his ultimatum. He had gained his point. It was as he rose to leave the Congress then, and walked out of the room, that Bismarck exclaimed, "There goes a Man!"

Of course I saw much of my valued and delightful friend, George von Bunsen, his wife, and sprightly children; and it was to him that I was indebted for an introduction to Count Andrassy, in the Zoological Gardens, where we had been dining, after the habit of the Berliners, at four o'clock. It is not possible to describe the charm of Andrassy's appearance and manner. It was almost feminine, without ceasing to be manly; and his conversation was so frank and fluent that he seemed to have nothing in his mind he wished to keep from you—the most valuable accomplishment in a diplomatist.

As soon as the more important points of the Congress had been settled, I left the German Capital for the third and last time. Every one knows the message Lord Beaconsfield brought home to the British People, "Peace with Honour!" I thought, at the time, he made a tactical blunder in not following it up at once with a Dissolution of Parliament. He allowed its existence to linger on for some little time, during which, as the result showed, the effect of his triumph had vanished.

In the midst of the dust and din of politics, it is pleasing to be able to revert occasionally to more

enduringly interesting subjects, and I here insert some letters I received from that fine scholar and man of letters, Addington Symonds. Reading them again revives one's keen regret for his comparatively early death.

FESTINIOG, NORTH WALES,
August 13, 1873.

MY DEAR SIR—It was very gratifying indeed to me to receive such a letter as you have written me about my translations from Poliziano, admiring as I do what both in poetry and in criticism you have produced. You have the right to speak about *ottava rima*, and therefore your approval is the highest praise I could desire.

I have never used this metre in original work, though it seems to me well suited to narrative verse in English as in Italian; but it is possible that much practise of Terza Rima in original poetry may have given me some command of a metre which interlaces rhymes as much as the octave stanza does. Since you take interest in these matters, I may say that I hope soon to print a similar study of Boiardo with translations from his *Orlando Innamorato*, in the *Fortnightly*, of which it would give me much pleasure to send you copy.

Your criticism of the line, "Had wrought himself crowned, etc.," is very just. As it stands the line is rough. I wished to emphasize Vulcan's carving of himself, and to make "crowned with Love's perfect palm" a sort of afterthought. But by placing "Himself" first in the line as you propose, I should gain quite as much emphasis as is required, and realize more smoothness.

I am indeed grateful to you who are passed *magister artis* in the gay science of both poetry and criticism for your taking the trouble to express your kind opinion of my work and thus giving me much pleasure.—I am, very truly yours,

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

ALFRED AUSTIN, Esq.

My address is Clifton Hill House, near Bristol.

Hôtel Buol, Davos Platz, Graubünden,
Switzerland,
Feb. 9, 1879.

Dear Mr. Austin—I am doubly grateful to you, both for your kind thought of sending me your review of *Many Moods*, and also for your kind words published about the book.

The article is one which gives me great pleasure; I need scarcely say that to be so welcomed by one who is himself a poet, is a source of genuine joy to me, for the words in my preface were thoroughly sincere, and I doubt my own right to that sacred name.

I specially enjoyed your remarks on *I Tre Felici*. Any recognition of a poem written in octave stanzas by a man who has handled them with your mastery is grateful to a simple student of the earlier Italian writers. By the way, a book of mine just coming out (*Sketches and Studies in Italy*) contains a translation of Poliziano's *Orfeo*, chiefly in ott. v., which might interest you as an amateur and master of the metre.

I wonder whether you think the achievement of *Many Moods* sufficient to justify a second and bolder venture on my part? I have many poems from which to choose for publication, and among these a few of greater audacity than any which I gave the world in that first pilot balloon of verse. This is, however, a question which I do not expect to have answered.

I am sufficiently indebted to you already.

Davos does for my health fairly well; but owing to a variety of causes I am not very strong just now. It is an odd isolation living here, but I have my family with me.

Good-bye, and believe me, always most truly yours,

John Addington Symonds.

Hôtel Buol, Davos Platz, Switzerland,
Oct. 28, 1881.

My dear Mr. Austin—On my return yesterday from Venice I found your letter.

. . . .

My health is much improved by being here. But I can never be a strong man. I have built myself a house, where I hope to begin to live next summer. I can work pretty well. As you observe, the completion of my book on the Renaissance in Italy shows that one can read and write even here.

I am in doubts what labour to attack now that that work is finished.

The impulse to write verse comes upon me whenever my hands are empty. But—you can fill that aposiopesis up with all the buts that must occur to me.

How much the most of all things in this invalid's life do I regret the impossibility of conferring with men whose aims in the world are not dissimilar from mine! How good it would be to be able to exchange thoughts with you, for example, about the possibilities and scope of poetry in this age. Believe me, I am really deeply touched by your memory of me.

. . . .

Believe me, very truly yours, J. A. Symonds.

Alfred Austin, Esq.

Hôtel Buol, Davos Platz, Switzerland,
Dec. 20, 1881.

Dear Mr. Austin—

. . . .

What made me take up my pen to-day was the reading of your first article upon Mat. Arnold's criterion of poetry. It strikes me as a very valuable contribution to the art, I will not call it the science, of criticism. Perhaps I am the more inclined to welcome your views since they seem to me almost identical with what I expressed myself two years ago in a *Fortnightly* article on M. Arnold's Preface to his *Selections from Wordsworth.* If I remember rightly (for I have no copy of the article), I used the same phrase as yours, viz. that the poet does not give us a criticism but a presentation of life, to indicate the point of my divergence from Arnold.

I look forward with expectation to the more constructive

part of your theory, when you will attempt the definition and description of poetic representation.

I hope I may not miss it.—Believe me, very truly yours,

J. A. Symonds.

Hôtel and Pension Buol, Davos Platz,
Switzerland,
Jan. 6, 1882.

Dear Mr. Austin—I just rise from the perusal of your second paper on the "Canons of Poetical Criticism," which is in my opinion one of the most solid and irrefutable contributions made to the philosophy of literature. I am perhaps partial in this estimate; for I agree with all your arguments, and have already for a long time adopted your conclusions. Most thankful am I that you did not chance to see my article on Arnold's *Wordsworth*, if the reading of it would have hampered you in the working out and setting forth of your theory. It ought to be pleasant to both of us to notice the undesigned coincidence between our views, and to accept reciprocal corroboration. For my part, it is wholly satisfactory to see what I had only adumbrated thus organized, completed, and systematically established.

If we cling fast to these canons, we have at least some method for criticism of poetry, based upon a sound psychological foundation. The critic's remaining difficulty, the debatable ground for the play of predilection and personal bias, will lie in the regions only of technique, and of what you aptly call transfiguration. What I mean is this. Critics may agree about our canons; but will certainly differ very much about the minor points of presentation, versification, ornament, etc. And they will differ about what constitutes transfiguration.

I should heartily sympathize with the attempt, if you could be induced to make this, to carry on your method into the field of technique, and the field of the definition of poetical imagination.

It appears to me that your two essays are so valuable that, if continued and expounded, they would form a treatise on poetical aesthetics, than which nothing more helpful could

be put into the hands of students. Finally, the only point in your theory which I should be inclined to question concerns lyrical and reflective poetry. I know hardly any purely reflective poetry which seems to me of quality as noble as the best purely lyrical poetry. Therefore I should myself have been inclined to fortify and enforce the qualifying passage you have introduced at the bottom of p. 137. The fact, of course, is that the poetry of pure thought, and the poetry of pure emotion can hardly be found at all. But the latter, when it does appear, as in Sappho's ode κεῖνος ἐμοί, seems to me more poetry than the former as represented by Goethe's *Im Namen Dessen*. When Thought enters the region of poetry, when it finds Transfiguration, it is always penetrated with emotion.

The purely thought passages in the *Divina Commedia* and *Paradise Lost* only deserve the name of poetry, I submit, because they are in verse, and verse of a very noble technical quality.

But if I were to go on writing, I should not end. These things are matters for what is denied me, conversation.—Believe me, very sincerely yours, J. A. Symonds.

Alfred Austin, Esq.

When the Dissolution of Parliament, postponed by Lord Beaconsfield for nine months too long, occurred in March 1880, I do not know what possessed me to consent to seek to enter the House of Commons. I certainly felt no eagerness to do so; but I suppose that many speeches, not ineffective, I was told, and manifesting at least fluency and copiousness of diction, were the impelling force at the back of the decision. If there was any other operating influence, it was the wish of Lord Beaconsfield, whom I now saw pretty frequently, that I should do so. Had my own desire been keener, I should have proceeded with more delibera-

tion and in a way less hasty. The official Party Managers are too flustered on such occasions, and too indifferent, in case the candidates have no special local influence, as to where those whom, for the most part, they regard as outsiders shall "stand," except that, perhaps, they seek to induce men deemed exceptionally forcible speakers to contest constituencies the most difficult to be won.

It was this consideration, I suppose, that led them to urge me to fight Dewsbury, where the chance of success was of the faintest kind. They accompanied the request with an offer of £500 towards the expenses of the contest. Had I waited a little longer, the Prime Minister, too much occupied at first to do so, would have taken care that I was sent on a less desperate errand. It will seem strange to many if I add that I have never ceased to bless the inexperienced precipitation that led me to go, blindfold, into certain failure. To have succeeded elsewhere, and entered the House of Commons, would have been the direst misfortune my own errors of judgment ever inflicted on me.

My wife accompanied me to Dewsbury, where we found ourselves the guests of the kindest, simplest, and most primitive Yorkshire manufacturing folk imaginable. They spoke with the broadest West Riding pronunciation imaginable, recalling to me the speech of working-folk familiar to me in boyhood. To my wife it was an entirely new experience, but one she heartily enjoyed, from their being free from all pretence, and imbued

with whole-heartedness and a touching pride in a candidate who, with southern manners and speech, understood them, their dialect, and their rough broad pronunciation. They dined in the middle of the day, and gave us of their best, and tried to find out what we needed and desired.

Walking through the Town with our hosts shortly after my arrival, I was made acquainted with any well-known Conservative voter we met; and one of these, with north-country frankness, said to me, "Eh, but you're a very little un." "You wait," I replied, "till you see my wife"; and the answer quickly went the round of the place, and satisfied them that I should be justified in saying, "I'se Yorkshire, too," and not easily disconcerted.

A Meeting had been arranged for the following evening, to be held in the largest warehouse of the town, and admission was to be open to all. Mr. Rowland Winn, afterwards Lord St. Oswald, then one of the Whips of the Party, and whose place, Nostell Priory, was only a few miles distant, took the chair; and at eight o'clock I found myself on a well-raised platform, and in presence of some three thousand persons, two-thirds of whom, I was told, were out-and-out Radicals. When, after a few words from the Chairman, I rose, I was greeted with adverse shouts that completely drowned the cheers of my supporters. I made no attempt to speak, but stood quietly facing the storm till, for an instant, it subsided. "One

moment," I said, as quickly as possible, "you are three thousand, and I am one. It is plain, therefore, you can silence me, if you like. But" —and I stretched out my right hand towards them, appealing to their generosity—"will you?" There was a burst of cheering from them all, and they heard me from first to last without any further hostile interruption. At the end of the meeting, several of them came to me and said, "We enjoyed your speech, and we're very sorry, but we can't vote for you." They were Gladstonians to a man, and as little to be converted by argument as their impetuous and sonorous leader.

It was uphill, and, I soon saw, futile work; but, as a matter of course, I went through it with a good face, and hopeful look, to the last. Easter intervened, and gave candidates throughout the country a respite from their haranguing. We sought our retirement at Ullswater, whose beauty and peacefulness soon restored me to true self-consciousness; and contrasting these with electioneering noise, and the rapid speeches of the past few days, I said to myself, "What a fool you are!"

On my return to Dewsbury at the close of the Easter reprieve, the contest was conducted in the usual manner on both sides, strenuously and noisily, though it was plain to me that it must end in the defeat of the Conservative candidate by a large majority. Such proved to be the

Swinford Old Manor.

1867 to 1911.

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case, though all that was possible had been done to avert it; Mr. Spencer Stanhope, now Sir Walter, who was contesting the division where his influence was great, coming over more than once to support me. At a private meeting on the evening after the Declaration of the Poll, held by the leading Conservatives of the place, I was formally told that they wished to take on themselves the entire expense of the contest, and could not allow me to contribute anything to it.

Thus they were generous in their kindness to the last; and both my wife and myself took farewell of these hearty Yorkshire folk with genuine regret. On our way home through London, where disappointing results were coming in from all quarters, I called on the Whips, and returned them the £500 contributed by the Party, as I have said, before I went to Dewsbury, towards the outlay on my candidature. They frankly avowed it was most opportune and welcome, and that nothing of the kind, as far as they knew, had ever been done before!

The following letter from Matthew Arnold, written in 1880, is interesting as showing his opinions on both literature and politics:

Athenaeum Club, Pall Mall,
July 27th, 1880.

Dear Mr. Austin—Your example will set me to work, reading Obermann again: I read him periodically, and it is some years since I read him last. Perhaps the best account

of him is that given by Sainte-Beuve in his *Chateaubriand et son Groupe Littéraire*; then there is George Sand's beautiful Preface to one of the editions of Obermann; by all means get that Preface and read it, if you have not read it already.

You have always been a kind reader of my poems—indeed I may say of my productions generally. I liked Edmond Holmes exceedingly and was much interested to hear of his marriage. He will tell you what sort of a life it is that a school inspector leads, and how difficult it is for him to pay any visits but official ones; you may be sure I would not be in your neighbourhood without coming to see you. The *Life of Deák* is by my niece, whom you know; she will be pleased to hear of your remembering her and that you like her book.

The Liberals are so unripe, and the Tories have so many merits, that you are secure against being either converted or extirpated in your lifetime or mine, I think.—Ever most truly yours,
MATTHEW ARNOLD.

During the next few years, I was frequently pressed to stand for constituencies where the local Conservatives assured me I was all but certain to be returned. To all these applications I turned a deaf ear, while not refusing, from time to time, to speak on behalf of other candidates. My experiences at Taunton and Dewsbury had contributed to my knowledge and understanding of political life and the national character, and therefore aided one's education on "things in general," in my opinion more advantageous to Poets than a life exclusively given over to retirement. But the time dedicated by them to such instruction should be of limited duration, and not interfere with the main and greater purpose of their days.

To the two annexed inquiries the replies were similar—a polite negative; and my address to the Leeds Committee states some of my reasons:

Conservative Central Office,
St. Stephen's Chambers,
Westminster Bridge, S.W., *May* 13, 1884.

My dear Austin—I was a great oaf to-day when in seeing you I did not ask you a question which I wanted to put to you.

Would you under any circumstances be disposed to stand anywhere? There are one or two places of great importance in themselves who would be very glad to get you if they could. But the first question is whether you would consent to stand in any case, and then whether you were anxious to come in.—Believe me, yours truly, Edward Stanhope.

The following letter was written in reply to an invitation to contest one of the Divisions of the Borough of Leeds at the General Election:

Swinford Old Manor,
May 8, 1885.

My dear Sir—I thank you and those gentlemen who are acting with you for your letter. But I have no intention of seeking admission to the House of Commons. Had it been otherwise, I should have been proud to represent a division of the flourishing town in whose vicinity, as you kindly remind me, I was born.

Did the motives that govern this determination repose upon considerations of private convenience, there would be nothing more to be said. But it is upon public grounds, and for political reasons, that I am unable to accept any of the invitations to stand for Parliament, of late repeatedly addressed to me, and I feel I owe it to you and others to explain, as briefly as I can, my repugnance to a career which most men covet, and apparently all men regard as a distinction.

I suppose it is a proposition which none would dispute, though few, I fear, trouble themselves to analyse it, that no man has a sufficient excuse for entering the House of Commons unless he believes that, by so doing, he can serve his country and strengthen the Empire. Now, whether I am right or whether I am wrong, I am profoundly of opinion that the country is being demoralised and the Empire is being imperilled by that Assembly, which has gradually concentrated into itself all the representation of the State, only to find itself impotent against the manœuvres of the Cabinet, when led by a bold and dexterous tactician. Were I to dwell upon the most recent fruits of government by the House of Commons and the creatures of its choice, I should have to write you, not a letter, but a lament. It is enough to say that no man any longer is proud of being an Englishman. With a gigantic expenditure, but a skeleton Army, and an improvised Fleet, is it wonderful if we have forfeited our honour, and had to ransom our existence?

It is our machinery, our Constitutional machinery — in other words, the House of Commons—that has wrought all this mischief, and prepared all this shame. I often hear men say, "if we could only get rid of Mr. Gladstone." The observation proves the shallowness of the political understanding of those who make it. Mr. Gladstone is only the figure-head of an unseaworthy vessel. He is what fifty years of Party strife, Parliamentary devices, and public speaking have made him. They would have made Ajax an electioneering agent, and Nestor a vainglorious sophist. They say that when the Battle of Thrasymene was being fought, the contending forces were so furiously engaged, an earthquake rolled unheededly away. The very foundations of the Commonwealth are being undermined, and the pillars of the Empire shaken. But the House of Commons has been too fiercely occupied with Franchise Bills and Redistribution Bills to heed the convulsion.

The House of Commons is, doubtless, an excellent sounding-board for the voice of personal ambition—a first-rate arena for a gladiator whose tongue is his sword. But I look upon the gift of popular oratory with the gravest

mistrust. It is in silence that all great works are written, and all great deeds are done. Men of action found Empires, rhetoricians destroy them. Alas! alas! Had the present Prime Minister been a stammerer and a stutterer, or had he loved his country enough to impose a curb on his congenital volubility, England would not be where she is— "now, none so poor to do her reverence."

It is only outside the House of Commons that these truths can be urged, and only, I believe, by people outside the House of Commons that they can be clearly apprehended. Believing, as I do, that until Foreign and Imperial policy, the Army and the Navy, are committed to safer keeping than that of 650 representatives of the people putting cross questions, and fifteen Cabinet Ministers returning crooked answers, there is no help for it but to go on jolting from blunder to blunder, and descending from abasement to abasement, I will do what little I can, outside the House of Commons, to discredit its authority and to curtail its functions. To ask a man to enter it, in order to serve his country, is to ask him to waste his life, and break his heart, over an impossible undertaking.—I am, sir, your obedient servant, ALFRED AUSTIN.

For the rest, the writer who permits himself to be diverted from Literature by the possession of some gift, actual or imputed, useful in a public and Parliamentary adventure, in opposition to his temperament, is attempting to serve two masters. This conviction governed the remainder of my life. The gift of ready and effective speech, employed in the House of Commons, is the shortest and surest road to notoriety and what is called success. It would perhaps be invidious to express one's opinion, in prose, on that subject, since so many men in these days follow it. But, thirty years later, in *Sacred and Profane Love*, I recorded my

convictions in verse. It was scarcely calculated to please those who treat Parliamentary wrangles and platform harangues as the most important of all things, though I should cheerfully allow that these, indulged in with moderation and courtesy, are of interest to the State. My intention in publishing it was neither to please nor displease, but, I suppose, to give imaginative form to a realistic fact.

The more immediate consequences to oneself from the Dewsbury Election were in one respect very agreeable, in another very humorous. My selection for the Carlton Club, without any canvass or application of my own, was a generous recognition I could not but appreciate. But when Colonel Taylor, the most agreeable of men, asked me, on behalf of the Party Whips and the Conservative Central Office, if I would assume the management of the latter, I felt that the demoralization of defeat could no farther go! But it was all of a piece with the peculiar ways of Party Government, and was long ago satirized by Beaumarchais in his *Mariage de Figaro*. Let a man display what is thought ability in any department of Politics, and it is forthwith assumed he is fit for every political appointment and any administrative office. Had England been searched through, a person more unfitted for such a post than myself could not have been found. I do not mean I could not have discharged its duties, had I devoted my entire mind to it, for to say the contrary

would be insincere. But while the country swarms with men equal to such a task and eager for such drudgery, I was amused to reflect how little they knew the person to whom Colonel Taylor and his colleagues honestly thought they were paying a compliment. It only reminded me of the saying of Goethe, "Happy is it for us that we do not know who those are for whom we live and write."

The most noteworthy and admirable sequel to the General Election and the defeat of Lord Beaconsfield, was the dignified and magnanimous attitude of the aged Statesman. No murmur of complaint ever passed his lips; and, when attempts were made to saddle this person or that for what had occurred, his invariable observation was, "I will have nobody blamed." When a final estimate is made of his whole career, if indeed it is not already made, this truly noble and patriotic conduct, contrasting so strikingly with the unworthy ebullitions of Bismarck in his compulsory retirement from power, should never be forgotten, and should be held to more than counterbalance any less worthy incidents in the early days of his public career, when he was treating the world as "mine oyster, which I with sword will open."

Between the close of the General Election, that ended with the Resignation of his Ministry, and his death, I often saw him, and always in Curzon Street, generally lunching with him, his two other guests being his Secretaries, Lord Barrington and

Lord Rowton. He would be plaintively solicitous if the latter was late, asking, "Where is Montie?" and, after we had sate down, he was quietly but characteristically entertaining, mingling with anecdotes both of recent and remote times strokes of good-natured humour. "I wonder," Barrington once asked, "where the editor of the —— gets his full and accurate news?" Lord Beaconsfield looked preternaturally wise as he replied, "I suppose he gets it from the *other* papers," which, though inherently absurd, seemed at the moment to be true, and to account for the fact.

I generally remained with him for a time after the other two had left, and I always had occasion to note the warm-hearted simplicity of his character. "Come and see my tree," he said, on my first visit to Curzon Street; and he was as pleased to have it as though it were one of the trees of leafy Hughenden. His sitting-room was upstairs, and conspicuous in it was the standing-desk at which he was writing *Endymion*, his last book, published in 1880, and the letters, not published, and perhaps never to be published, that he wrote regularly to the Queen, describing to her the progress of his novel; assuredly, the most astonishing ones ever written by a subject to his Sovereign, at once familiar and respectful.

"See what my gracious Sovereign gave me at Christmas," I remember his saying, as he opened an "édition de luxe" copy of George

Eliot's *Romola*, in which was written, in her flowing hand, "To the Earl of Beaconsfield, K.G., from his affectionate Sovereign.—VICTORIA, R.I." As he closed the volume, he said, "I showed this to ——," naming a prominent member of the new Ministry, who entertained, I happened to know, a warm admiration and liking for him, "and he did not like it. But," he added, "I cannot read *Romola*." "Oh, you must not tell anybody else that," I said. "Well, I cannot," he replied. I then said I was all the more sorry to hear that he could not, for I should shortly publish a drama on *Savonarola*. "That is different," he said; "I shall certainly read that." He never did, for, shortly before it was published, he had passed away.

The last time I lunched with him or saw him was the day before I was starting on a holiday of some weeks to Greece and Constantinople. My first bourne was Rome, to spend a few days with my dear friends, Thomas Adolphus Trollope and his second wife, who were living in the Via Nazionale. He had the post of correspondent to the *Standard*, to which Mr. Mudford had appointed him on my recommendation. He was then sixty-seven, but abounding in physical and mental vigour, and, as was invariably the case with him in all he did, taking his new task as seriously and strenuously as though there were none other in the world. He had free access to the British Embassy, both as friend and correspondent, and I owe to him my acquaintance,

which soon ripened into friendship, with Sir Augustus and Lady Paget, and their daughter, then in the very bloom of her maiden grace and beauty, afterwards Lady Windsor, and now Countess of Plymouth, than whom I have never had a kinder or dearer friend. Had I not promised to meet a travelling companion, "Tom" Wells, a popular member of the "Fabs" (Foreign Architectural Book Society), a delightful travelling companion, and the most unselfish man I have ever known, at Brindisi, I should have been tempted to linger on in Rome. Every day, while I stayed, I either played lawn tennis at the Embassy, or rode with Sir Augustus, his wife, and daughter, in the Campagna; covering in an afternoon many a mile on grass, on the seemingly flat but in reality rolling and undulating expanse of that, then, romantic and picturesque desolation.

CHAPTER VI

Greece—Delphi—The Poet's Bay—Corinth—Salamis—Athens—Interview with King of Greece — Constantinople — Death of Lord Beaconsfield—Dine at Embassy—Bucharest—Sir William White —Return to England—*At his Grave*—Letter from Lord Lytton.

On my way to Brindisi, I slept at Capua, where I found none of the luxurious living that demoralized the Carthaginians. The floor of my bedroom was of brick; the huge bed was so high that it required a leap-frog jump to get into it; and breakfast was of the same primitive character. I took train betimes for Brindisi, *via* Foggia, passing, after reaching the latter place, through a part of Italy then unknown to me, the newest features being the huge carob trees in which the coast-line abounds. We should have liked to make straight for the Gulf of Corinth, but we found our boat was carrying assistance to an Island where an earthquake had brought distress to its inhabitants. That task once accomplished, we steamed for Patras, passing by Missolonghi, during which, in the moonlight, I wrote the poem previously quoted. It was at dawn that we entered the Gulf of Corinth, and towards evening that we disembarked

at Salona, in order, on the morrow, to go to Delphi.

The accommodation on the steamer would have been sufficiently good had it not been for the presence of a number of brawny tatterdemalions who had been called to arms by the Greek Government to enforce its dissatisfaction with the arrangements concluded by the Congress of Berlin. They invaded the deck nominally reserved for first-class passengers, and slept in their frowsy and ill-smelling rugs. But the night we passed at Salona was more trying still; for beds there were none, and we were offered mattresses on the floor, the bare recollection of which is enough *renovare dolorem*, to renew the sensation of that night, and the howling and barking of big scavenger dogs. At last we sallied out, and passed the remaining hours till dawn on the clean shingle by the water's edge, and watching as we talked the ripple of the moonlight on the whispering waves.

After a frugal breakfast of black coffee, made in Eastern fashion, tough bread, and "rahāt lakoum," we started, on foot, for Delphi, following the lead of our guide as he thridded his way through scrub by paths often undiscernible by us, but familiar to him. As we ascended, the views of the Gulf shifted from moment to moment with expanding splendour, and the twin Peaks of Parnassus glorified, both visually and spiritually, our gradual advance. France had not yet begun excavating

at Delphi, and it was difficult to believe, as we approached it, that gods and men had once foregathered in this consecrated spot. Bare-legged matrons and maidens were washing their linen in the Castalian Fountain; and shortly there emerged the Head Man of the place, some six feet four in height, perfectly proportioned, magnificently attired, and deferentially dignified in manner, followed by a troop of stalwart fellows in simple mountain dress. Our means of communication were scanty; for had I addressed them in classical Greek, as Mr. Gladstone did when he officially visited the Ionian Islands and I was quite incapable of doing, they would no more have understood me than I did their colloquial Hellenic pronunciation. But the Head Man made us understand that, if we would pass the night there, they would kill a kid, and we and they would, after the fashion of the *Iliad*, feast all day till the setting of the sun. His disappointment was great when, with the help of the guide, we told him we must away again in two or three hours.

We had counted on solitary roaming and exploration of our own; but they evidently thought that hospitality made it necessary for them to accompany us wherever we went. At last I said to Wells that our only chance of eluding them was to lie down, and pretend to be tired and to want a siesta. This we did. Thereupon they all lay down, too, making no pretence of slumber,

but falling asleep, one and all, and snoring in harmony. We then rose as silently as possible to our feet, and hurried away. Presently we came in sight of a small modern-looking Greek Church, and an Archimandrite who evidently had charge of it. He led us within, where we found nothing modern, though of course nothing classical about it. It was dark and gloomy; and when we emerged from it, the sunlight for a few moments was dazzling. Hard-by was a Poet's Bay tree covered with yellow flowers. I suppose the Priest saw I was admiring it, and tore off a lovely spray, and gave it to me.

I have here described briefly, in prose, my visit to the sacred seat of the oracle of Apollo. But in *At Delphi* among my *Lyrical Poems* I give a fuller and an equally faithful account of it, since the latter expresses the emotions as well as the incidents I there experienced.

Returning to the Gulf of Salona, we took boat to the Isthmus of Corinth, there disembarked, and mounted on foot to Acro-Corinth, whence we enjoyed a view almost more impressive even than that from the Roman Capitol. To our right was a goodly portion of the Peloponnesus, below us to our left the Gulf of Corinth, in the foreground afront us the broken columns marking the site of Corinth where Paul preached, and, dimly afar, but not too dim to be descried, the Acropolis and the Parthenon. On descending to Corinth, we hired mules and a guide, and instructed him to take

us to Megara, and to as comfortable a lodging there for the night as it was likely to provide. We started about sundown, and, when we reached the Bay of Salamis, the full moon was rising over it. Skirting the Bay over the roughest of paths for some hours, we reached Megara about ten o'clock, where our guide, with the shifty cunning of too many of his race, took us to a dirty-looking house, where the only occupant was an old crone, doubtless his grandmother, and the only furniture two rush-bottomed chairs. "If you have oaths," I said to my companion, "prepare to utter them now." I verily believe he was too mild-natured to know any; but I swore for two, in language the guide did not in the least understand; but he saw I was in no mood to be duped or imposed on, and he at once took us to a grocer's shop, where we found two brothers, who spoke either English or Italian, I forget which, warmly welcomed us, and showed us two bedrooms where we might sleep.

A simple but sufficient supper was provided for us; and, in passing from it to my bedroom, I caught a glimpse, but a rapid glimpse only, of as lovely a young girl as I ever beheld. She was in workday attire and doubtless had been preparing our room, and was, as the brothers told me, their sister. Evidently she was jealously guarded from our sight, in Oriental fashion. I was hoping I should catch sight of her again the next morning, and that perhaps she would wait on us at breakfast. That excusable love of what is beautiful was disappointed, for

one of the brothers attended our morning meal, while the other was arranging for a little carriage to take us to Athens. But when we had taken farewell of our amiable and moderately charging hosts, and disposed ourselves in our seats, there came to the door, and stood there motionless, a vision of beauty that, now thirty years later, I can vividly recall. It was the young sister, arrayed in a lovely Greek dress. We doffed our hats, which she acknowledged by a slight inclination of her head; and the carriage started, and we were borne away to Eleusis. It was my first and last visit to Megara.

There was nothing, in those days at least, to detain one at Eleusis. So one had to be satisfied with recalling what one remembered of its Mysteries, among which figured the visit, and its consequences, of "Julian the Apostate," about whom and whose strange career and tragic end I long meditated writing a drama; a conception that never came to the birth. Silence fell on us both as we approached Athens late in the afternoon, and then on foot mounted to the Acropolis. It is to be regretted that Byron visited and wrote of Athens, in the Second Canto of *Childe Harold*, before his genius had attained its full expression, as in the Third and Fourth Cantos, eight years later. No poetry was ever hailed with enthusiasm so much in excess of its merits as the first and second; just as no admiration of the third and fourth could be excessive. The cause, however, is intelligible enough, and has often been pointed out. A

handsome young peer, unknown to the crowd, but credited by it with the conquering air, the already seared heart, and the spirit of adventure, and endowed with a copious vocabulary, and complete mastery over language and versification, conjoined with occasionally lordly negligence, suffice to account for his waking one morning, as he said, and finding himself famous.

The laughter of the gods would attend the man who attempted to adorn still further what Byron touched on. It never occurred to me at the time to express in verse what I felt in presence of the Parthenon; nor do I feel tempted to express it now in prose. But it was one of the greatest moments of my life.

Less than thirty, but fully twenty years later, I put into the mouth of Winckelmann a reminiscent page, which I venture to cite:

O for one morning on the Acropolis!
With Salamis afront me, and, around,
The steeds of Hyperion, and the dark
Unplunging coursers of deliberate Night
Pacing the marble pediment unheard;
Recalcitrant Centaurs bridled by their manes
By Lapithae implacable, and Fate
With granite gaze watching the things foretold.
And then the long procession, gods and men,
Panathenaic, toward the Temple reared
By the imperishable race that chose
Wisdom for their Divinity, and, thus
Initiated, found in faultless form,
Or wrought or sung from mundane formlessness
The secret of serenity. Virile Rome,
Intent on warfare till the world was won,

Gave ageing Hellas hospitality,
Guest not ungrateful. But the hasty hours
I spent at Paestum and Parthenope,
Have made me live so that I must not die
Till I have seen the violet sunset fade
Along the friezes of the Parthenon.

Dining one evening with our Minister accredited to Greece, I received the next morning a note from him saying that the King would be pleased to see me. I found him to be a man of the simplest address, inherited from the Northern Capital where he was born and trained. After shaking hands, he begged me to be seated, and asked what was the state of public opinion in England respecting the demands of Greece for a rectification of frontier, which the Berlin Congress had failed to satisfy. I could not honestly return a favourable answer, and I saw this did not surprise him, though he was as cautious in the expression of his own views as it behoves a Constitutional Sovereign to be. Delyannis, the most wary and circumspect of statesmen, was Prime Minister; but the most interesting figure then among Greek politicians, and the ablest, was Tricoupi, between whom and myself was formed, I think, as close a friendship as a comparatively short visit to Athens rendered possible; and this was much assisted by his kind and hospitable sister who lived with him.

His ambition for the enlargement of the Hellenic kingdom was burning and all but unbounded; and that something which draws men personally

together must have been rapid in its action, seeing that I did not conceal from him my belief that the general trend of European Politics, and most of all the policy of Austria, would prevent the fulfilment of even a portion of his dream. When, a little later, he came to England, where I saw him once more, he found that the difficulties I had indicated were insurmountable; and now, when, as I write these words, the transformation of Turkey from a despotically and infamously ruled State to a self-governing and self-conscious Nation has taken place, the territorial expansion of Greece seems more remote than ever.

Of the modern Greeks, and the Athenians more especially, I carried away a not very favourable impression; and no one can read Byron's magnificent lyric, *The Isles of Greece*, without perceiving that Byron, who, alas, was never duped, not even by his own enthusiasms, had the same opinion of them, as testified by the scornful lines, where he asks what is left the poet, and replies:

> For Greeks a blush—for Greece a tear,

and then burst forth these glowing but disdainful stanzas:

> Must *we* but weep o'er days more blest?
> Must *we* but blush?—Our fathers bled.
> Earth! render back from out thy breast
> A remnant of our Spartan dead!
> Of the three hundred grant but three,
> To make a new Thermopylae!

What, silent still? and silent all?
  Ah! no;—the voices of the dead
Sound like a distant torrent's fall,
  And answer, "Let one living head,
But one arise,—we come, we come!"
'Tis but the living who are dumb.

In vain—in vain: strike other chords;
  Fill high the cup with Samian wine!
Leave battles to the Turkish hordes,
  And shed the blood of Scio's vine!
Hark! rising to the ignoble call—
How answers each bold Bacchanal!

Visiting Marathon, and "musing there an hour alone," he could only "dream that Greece might still be free." In a sense she was freed by the combined Fleets of England, France, and Russia when they destroyed the Turkish fleet at Navarino.

But much water has flowed into the usually dry bed of the Ilyssus since then; and, save for the gift by us of the Ionian Islands, which, as I saw when, on the same tour, I visited Corfu, and drove to Paliocastrizza, have been allowed to slip back to material semi-barbarism, the Hellenic kingdom stands pretty much where it did. Roads which England left in perfect condition are a mixture of ruts, stones, and dust; and valuable forts have been dismantled and left to decay. Such at least was their state in 1881. I also visited Marathon, and sailed past Sunium's marble steep, and repeated the closing couplet of his splendid poem:

A land of slaves shall ne'er be mine:—
Dash down your cup of Samian wine.

I found the following letter waiting for me at the Poste Restante on arrival at Constantinople. It gave me grave anxiety and a heavy heart. Our great chief died on the 18th:

19 CURZON STREET, W.,
April 14, 1881.

DEAR MR. AUSTIN—It is almost needless for me to say that for nearly a month I have hardly been absent from this house, except to sleep at my own. My dear chief has been, and is still, very ill, but if things go on as they have done for the last twenty-four hours, he will pull through. The cold east wind, blowing as it did furiously and without the slightest moisture in the air for about a fortnight, was terribly against him. Lord Rowton's return and the change of weather have done an immensity of good, and as the digestive powers and desire for food are beginning to increase, we are really a little more cheery to-day.

The anxiety of all for Lord Beaconsfield's health, and the latest news thereof, has not been equalled since the dark days of the Prince of Wales' illness.

. . . .

—Believe me, yours very truly, BARRINGTON.

ALFRED AUSTIN, Esq.

I received your letter of the 7th from Athens last night.

The change from Greece to Constantinople presents as striking a transformation scene as one can behold in the experience of travel. The toleration that is the inevitable offspring of Liberty did not yet prevail in the Turkish Capital. The Moslem still scowled in Saint Sophia against the sight-seeing Christian intruder; and, in proclaiming from the Minaret "There is no God but God," the Muezzin joined with the affirmation of a Creed,

contempt for all others. To visit a land and a race that had the courage of their opinions was, in that respect, not unwelcome, heartily as I rejoice over the more tolerant spirit young Turkey has displayed on dethroning the late Sultan.

When Lord Salisbury uttered the somewhat cryptic words, "We placed our money on the wrong horse," he was alluding, to a certain extent no doubt, to the interference in favour of Turkey as against Russia by the Cabinet of which he was a member. But he had in his mind an incident never yet, so far as I know, made public, but which at the time he told me of "in confidence," but concerning which the duty of secrecy has now passed away. His denunciation of the Sultan in a speech delivered at the Mansion House can hardly have been forgotten. But, when he delivered it, he believed that Russia would co-operate with him in compelling Abdul Hamid to abdicate. One evening, at Balmoral, the then reigning Czar virtually promised to do so, but very shortly after withdrew his promise; in all probability, as Lord Salisbury said to me in relating the incident, due to the advice of the Russian Ambassador, and a certain indecision of character. The last eighteen months have shown that we did not "put our money on the wrong horse," after all; another instance of that foresight of Lord Beaconsfield in which he manifested his superiority to all other English Statesmen.

It was in the streets of Constantinople that I

heard of his death, from my travelling companion, who had just seen the telegraphic announcement of it in the Club. Not unforgetful of his looks when I bade him good-bye after luncheon, the day before starting for the East, and having read of his ominous illness for some days, I fully expected to hear at any moment the news just communicated to me, and felt there was a tragic appropriateness in its reaching me in "the City which he saved."

I had been invited by Mr. Goschen, afterwards Lord Goschen, to dine with him at the Embassy, and did so. He had been sent out by the Government as Minister Plenipotentiary to make certain final arrangements with the Turkish Government. I was carried in the local palanquin by four bare-legged ragged fellows, who kicked the scavenger dogs out of the way from my rather comfortless hotel to the bottom of the marble staircase of the Embassy, where, though a gloom arising from the news of the morning affected us all, I passed an agreeable evening, made more so by the presence of the First Secretary of the Embassy, Frank Plunket, an old schoolfellow of mine at Oscott, and his wife, whom I had known as a very young girl at Florence. With them I dined on the following evening.

I forget how I made the acquaintance of Admiral Hobart Pasha, who occupied an official position under the Turkish Government. But I remember thankfully the kindness both he and Lady Hobart showed me; mounting me on an

Arab from their own stable, and riding with me among the red-flowering Judas trees, and more quietly, by reason of the condition of the so-called road, round the double walls of the city, more picturesque in their desolation even than those of Rome when these were first seen by me in 1862. They took me also to the Sweet Waters, where the beauties of the Seraglio were allowed a certain amount of freedom in the open air, and likewise to the Selamlik, where I was granted a front place in a balcony fronting the Mosque where the Sultan came to pray. He arrived in a low victoria drawn by four piebald ponies, the reins that were in his hand being white. The whole turn-out seemed to me more fitted to a favoured Parisian "cocotte" than to the blood-thirsty Ruler of a Great State. The contrast to its emasculated character was made all the more striking by the splendid thews and muscles and elastic carriage of the troops, physically the finest I had seen since the Guards started from their barracks in Trafalgar Square for the Crimea.

From Constantinople we took boat through the Bosphorus and the Black Sea to Varna, and thence went on to Rustchuk, where we crossed the Danube in the most primitive of keels, on my way to Bucharest, where I spent an exceedingly interesting evening with Sir William White, our Resident Minister, and shortly to be nominated Ambassador to the Sublime Porte. I found him in every respect equal to the reputation he had already

acquired. The railway journey through Roumania to Buda-Pesth was slow, but presented many novel scenes. Peasants of both sexes seemed mostly engaged in dancing and lying about. At Buda-Pesth, then beginning its building of imposing streets lavishly laid out, I spent the evening with my old friend Franz Pulszki, restored to his native land, but, following on his return there, bereaved of his charming wife and comely daughter. I had not seen him since I left Florence in May 1865, and naturally found him, as doubtless he found me, somewhat older. But the vigour of his conversation and the strength of his lungs were but little impaired. This was the last of the interesting experiences of my journeying in the East. My first pilgrimage, on returning home, was to Hughenden, its churchyard, Lord Beaconsfield's resting-place.

AT HIS GRAVE

I

Leave me a little while alone,
Here at his grave that still is strewn
With crumbling flower and wreath;
The laughing rivulet leaps and falls,
The thrush exults, the cuckoo calls,
And he lies hushed beneath.

II

With myrtle cross and crown of rose,
And every lowlier flower that blows,
His new-made couch is dressed;
Primrose and cowslip, hyacinth wild,
Gathered by Monarch, peasant, child,
A nation's grief attest.

III

I stood not with the mournful crowd
That hither came when round his shroud
Pious farewells were said.
In the famed city that he saved,
By minaret crowned, by billow laved,
I heard that he was dead.

IV

Now o'er his tomb at last I bend,
No greeting get, no greeting tend,
Who never came before
Unto his presence, but I took,
From word or gesture, tone or look,
Some wisdom from his door.

V

And must I now unanswered wait,
And, though a suppliant at the gate,
No sound my ears rejoice?
Listen! Yes, even as I stand,
I feel the pressure of his hand,
The comfort of his voice.

VI

How poor were Fame, did grief confess
That death can make a great life less,
Or end the help it gave!
Our wreaths may fade, our flowers may wane,
But his well-ripened deeds remain,
Untouched, above his grave.

VII

Let this, too, soothe our widowed minds;
Silenced are the opprobrious winds
Whene'er the sun goes down;
And free henceforth from noonday noise,
He at a tranquil height enjoys
The starlight of renown.

VIII

Thus hence we something more may take
Than sterile grief, than formless ache,
Or vainly-uttered vow;
Death hath bestowed what life withheld,
And he round whom detraction swelled,
Hath peace with honour now.

IX

The open jeer, the covert taunt,
The falsehood coined in factious haunt,
These loving gifts reprove.
They never were but thwarted sound
Of ebbing waves that bluster round
A rock that will not move.

X

And now the idle roar rolls off;
Hushed is the gibe and shamed the scoff,
Repressed the envious gird;
Since death, the looking-glass of life,
Cleared of the misty breath of strife,
Reflects his face unblurred.

XI

From callow youth to mellow age,
Men turn the leaf and scan the page,
And note, with smart of loss,
How wit to wisdom did mature,
How duty burned ambition pure,
And purged away the dross.

XII

Youth is self-love; our manhood lends
Its heart to pleasure, mistress, friends,
So that when age steals nigh,
How few find any worthier aim
Than to protract a flickering flame,
Whose oil hath long run dry!

XIII

But he, unwitting youth once flown,
With England's greatness linked his own,
And, steadfast to that part,
Held praise and blame but fitful sound,
And in the love of country found
Full solace for his heart.

XIV

Now in an English grave he lies:
With flowers that tell of English skies
And mind of English air,
A grateful Sovereign decks his bed,
And hither long with pilgrim tread
Will English feet repair.

XV

Yet not beside his grave alone
We seek the glance, the touch, the tone;
His home is nigh,—but there,
See from the hearth his figure fled,
The pen unraised, the page unread,
Untenanted the chair!

XVI

Vainly the beechen boughs have made
A fresh green canopy of shade,
Vainly the peacocks stray;
While Carlo, with despondent gait,
Wonders how long affairs of State
Will keep his lord away.

XVII

Here most we miss the guide, the friend.
Back to the churchyard let me wend
And, by the posied mound,
Lingering where late stood worthier feet,
Wish that some voice, more strong, more sweet,
A loftier dirge would sound.

XVIII

At least I bring not tardy flowers,
Votive to him life's budding powers,
Such as they were, I gave—
He not rejecting: so I may
Perhaps these poor faint spices lay,
Unchidden, on his grave!

HUGHENDEN, *May* 1881.

I found the following letter from Lord Lytton awaiting me on my return home:

PARIS,
May 3, 1881.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—A thousand thanks for your interesting letter, which finds me here. Lord Beaconsfield's death is indeed a terrible and irreparable loss, which seems to find us wholly unprepared for the effects of it. The Party is already, I think, beginning to suffer from them. Our increasing isolation in Europe fills me with alarm. For I scarcely see how it can now be arrested or repaired. The French, when they have established their protectorate at Tunis, will not, I expect, be slow to extend their attention to Morocco. And meanwhile they have already been admitted to a recognised partnership with us in Egypt. I think we ought to have said to France, "We have no objection to your taking Tunis, if you like, but it will oblige us to take Egypt." Italy barks but can't bite, and what if Bismarck should find it worth his while a few years hence to renew to Gambetta the proposals he made to the late French Emperor about Belgium?

When do you return to England?—Yours very sincerely,

LYTTON.

CHAPTER VII

Strenuous Work—Holidays—Recall of Lytton from India—Letters from him—Letter from Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton—Visit to Knebworth—Conversation at Hatfield—Lytton appointed to Paris—Visits to Embassy—*National Review*—Letter from W. J. Courthope—Visits to Hatfield—Death of Lord Salisbury—Sonnet to him.

Looking back, in these days of comparative repose and relaxation from work, I sometimes feel astonished at what I did, and what no doubt others have done or could do, in the meridian of life, when a man's powers and impulses are strongest. Though, I believe, blest with a sound constitution, yet not enjoying uninterrupted freedom from passing ailments, I was engaged in a multitude of occupations of divers kinds. I never remitted my own special and most cherished one, but gave prompt response to any lyrical or more sustained poetic suggestion from within, yet, at the same time, wrote, on an average, five leading articles a week for the *Standard*, did my full share in editing the *National Review*, wrote for it many papers both political and literary, contributed occasionally to the *Quarterly Review*, whilst not reducing, in any degree, the time dedicated to riding, lawn-tennis, the cultivation of friendships,

and as much society as I ever cared for. To these I should add the pursuit of gardening, which grew apace and I have never abandoned for the last thirty-five years. I went abroad, generally to Italy, but sometimes to Switzerland, for a four or five weeks' holiday annually, during which I abstained altogether from work, save it happened to be of the sort named first in the above list. I suppose it was the variety of these occupations, the keenness I could not help feeling for them all in turn, and my rural and open-air life, that enabled me to pursue them all without being conscious of effort, much less of burden or fatigue. I remember once asking Tennyson, after reading a passage in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal how William had gone to bed "very tired" with writing the "*Prelude*," if he had ever felt tired by writing poetry. "I think not," he said, "but tired with the accompaniment of too much smoking." As to myself, I do not smoke, not being able to like it after due experiment, and have always been moderate in the drinking of wine, and never feeling attracted by any form of alcohol.

Now, to turn to weightier subjects, the defeat of the Party led by Lord Beaconsfield in the General Election of 1881 was followed, as it was sure to be, by the recall of Lord Lytton from the Indian Viceroyalty. I thought at the time, and still think, that the general drift and aim of his policy in dealing with the Amir of Kabul, and other Indian Border questions, was sound.

But the miscalculations of his chief Financial Adviser, Sir John Strachey, for which of course he accepted full responsibility, gave his adversaries, both in India and at home, a plausible excuse for the ungenerous treatment of him, himself the most generous of men.

I here append two letters from Lytton referring to his own administration in India, and events there in 1885, subsequent to his return to England.

KNEBWORTH HOUSE, STEVENAGE,
6th Jny. 1882.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—I am still confined to bed by bronchitis—and very poorly. But your considerate kindness and goodwill in other matters induces me to write to you about one in which I am much interested, though more for the sake of others than my own. There is no part of my Indian Government which I recall with greater satisfaction than its financial administration, and the result of that administration. These, however, are entirely due to the genius of Sir John Strachey, from whom I received the most efficient and devoted aid in all matters, and whom I regard as one of the few real statesmen now living. The wonderful success of our financial measures, however, which have bequeathed to the present Indian Government a considerable permanent surplus, notwithstanding a large reduction of taxation effected by my own Government, was in the last moment obscured, and thrust out of public notice, by a most provoking and discreditable blunder in the military estimates, for which Sir John Strachey was no more responsible, and which he could no more have prevented than the man of the moon. Disgusted with the calumnies heaped on him by the party now in office, he resigned when I did. But, foreseeing what has since occurred, that unworthy attempts would be made by the present Ministry to transfer to his successor all the credit of the work done by him, I conjured him to leave on

official record the results of his financial administration, and an adequate exposition of the principles by which they were obtained. He was apprehensive that a Minute written for this purpose would be "burked" after his retirement from office, and he decided to state the facts of the case with greater freedom and unreserve in a short history of our financial administration directly addressed to the public, in a more popular form. This work he has now completed, and it will shortly appear. It has been done with great care, and is really a masterly piece of work. I am not, of course, without a personal interest in it, because it contains my complete vindication from a great deal of misrepresentation. But to this I have long become indifferent, so far as it concerns myself only. And it is mainly in the cause of tardy justice to Sir J. Strachey himself that I am now anxious. It is a work which deserves, and will I think attract, notice.—Ever yours sincerely, LYTTON.

KNEBWORTH HOUSE, STEVENAGE,
12th April 1885.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—Welcome home! I am sorry to think I shall miss you at Monte Carlo. In spite of all the swagger in our Press about "India" springing to arms, &c., our situation I believe to be far more difficult and powerless than the public dreams of—owing to years of neglected precaution. I hear, privately, that Dufferin is alarmed, as well he may be, by the discovery of the tremendous effort and serious risks involved in an expedition to Herat, with no base, *practically*, nearer than the Indus. According to my information, moreover, Herat is in a very defenceless condition. One thing is certain. The moment war is declared, Russia can with ease be into Herat, long before we could get there even with the assent and aid of the Afghans. But the attitude of the Ameer is (I learn) puzzling those who choose to take it for granted (Heaven knows why—except that it was a comfortable hypothesis), that the moment he was attacked or threatened by Russia he would throw himself into our arms. He does not evince by any means the desired anxiety about his N.W. frontier—and I should think it

highly probable that he will object to the admission of a strong British army into his country under (what will appear to him) the pretext of defending that portion of it which is most distant from India, and least under her own control. How are we to make Afghanistan our battlefield without his assent and that of his people? And unless we do this, how are we to reach Russia in C. Asia? And, again, what more embarrassing than to have to take the field in a more or less *defensive* campaign, against the trained forces of a civilized power, being ourselves largely dependent on the disciplined and loyal co-operation of an extremely barbarous, self-willed, and suspicious horde of irregular troops? Finally, a local war with Russia in C. Asia can do us no sort of good. Defeated in such a war, we are lost—successful in it, we only, at the cost of a huge and exhaustive effort to ourselves, beat her off for a few years at most, till she is ready to advance again—we don't cripple her, for we don't get near the heart of her position or any of its vital parts. Could we break up her base on the Caspian, we should free India for ever from a great incubus. But how are we to do this? There she is inaccessible to us. Can we worry her in the Caucasus, or strike a heavy blow at her in the Black Sea? This alone would be effectual. But for such a campaign years of preparation should have been spent in consolidating alliances with Persia and Turkey, and strengthening instead of weakening these powers. I don't see what we can do now. And these things are lost sight of by our enthusiastic journalists.—Ever sincerely yours, LYTTON.

It will be remembered that I had some acquaintance, though but slight, with his Father; and the exchange of books with the son had led to interesting written correspondence between us before we had ever met. But shortly after his return to England, we made each other's acquaintance, and he was not long in asking me to spend a couple of days at Knebworth.

As I entered the train at King's Cross, the only other occupant of the compartment I was put into was a big and noticeable man, whom I did not recognize. But he spoke to me at once, asked me if I was not Alfred Austin, and told me he was Sir Fitz-James Stephen, adding the inquiry if I was going to Knebworth, whither he himself was bound. Of course I knew much about him by reputation, the moment he told me his name, and what a powerful support he was, as a first-rate journalist, to the then *Pall Mall Gazette*. I found him a delightful and expansive companion, and one greatly enjoying and interested in his own chief work. Having been one of Lytton's mainstays in India, he was now his most vigilant and vigorous defender. The only other guest was an ex-Indian official of less note, but evident capacity, and good conversational ability, even at the table of a supremely good talker like our host. The visit was most agreeable; the more so as it laid the foundations of a friendship that grew with time, and led to my intimacy with his Family. I returned from Knebworth, where his son is living, only a few days ago. Thus, I have known four generations of Lyttons, counting among these Victor Lord Lytton's children, and those of Lady Betty Balfour; a circumstance perhaps as unusual as, in this case, it is pleasant to dwell on.

My slight acquaintance with Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton, by which name he is perhaps still best

known, began, as I think I have mentioned incidentally elsewhere, with a letter, exceedingly generous but very difficult to decipher, that he wrote me about my candidature and speeches at Taunton in 1865. I met him but once again; and that was at an evening reception at Grosvenor Gate by Lady Beaconsfield shortly after her nomination to a peerage. But though that was the last time I saw the first Lord Lytton, some posthumous associations of, I think, an interesting kind may be added to what I have just been writing. *Kenelm Chillingly*, his latest novel, was published shortly after his death in 1873, and in a copy of it I possess is written: "Given by the son in obedience to the injunctions of the Father." But many years later, in 1908, the following note, written by Bulwer, then Lord Lytton, to the Editor of the *Standard*, came into my hands accidentally:

Dear Sir—Permit me to thank you for a most generous article on myself which appeared in your journal yesterday. I wish I could think I had merited half such generosity. Permit me also to request you to convey my thanks to the writer of the article, which my son bids me say, "he shall place among his heirlooms." If the writer do not object to give me his name confidentially, he would add another obligation to that which he has conferred on—Yours very truly,
Lytton.

December 24, 1872,
Argyll Hall, Torquay.

This second one from his son Robert came to me direct, and I received it in January 1873:

Argyll Hotel, Torquay,
Tuesday night, January 22, 1873.

Dear Mr. Austin—I cannot regard you as a stranger—we have long been acquainted with each other—or at least I have long been acquainted with you; and you have recently placed me on the list of your permanent debtors. I am glad to learn from yourself that I was not mistaken in attributing what is by far the ablest, as well as the most generous, recognition of my dear father's genius which has yet been elicited from the Press by his cruelly premature death, to the kind writer of that nobly courageous notice of his life and work which so recently appeared in the *Standard*, and which I read with so much grateful emotion during the last days of our last earthly companionship. From the depths of my heart I thank you. I may not live till the time comes, but I am confident the time will come when his countrymen will regretfully recognise in him perhaps the last representative of the highest type of Englishmen, but certainly the only English writer whose universality of genius and culture can bear comparison with that of the greatest writer of the only nation which seems destined to inherit the responsibilities and the glories of the intellectual and moral position once occupied and prized by our own country in the community of nations.

My dear father's life was terminated by the sudden aggravation of a disease of the ear from which he had suffered for the last thirty years. But his end, thank God, was peaceful and free from pain. It was his wish to be interred with great privacy in the vault of the family mausoleum at Knebworth. I have embalmed all that now remains on earth of what was earthly in him. My loss is measureless and irreparable. Without him I seem lost in a wilderness of wants without a guide. Your letter has deeply touched me, and if my gratitude be incoherently expressed, I feel sure that you will pardon, because I know you will understand, all that must necessarily be imperfect in this assurance that I am, dear Mr. Austin, your sincerely obliged,

Rt. Lytton.

I shall probably leave Torquay to-morrow or the day after. Should you ever have occasion to write to me, my best address will be 62 Grosvenor Square. R. L.

It will be observed that the first note was written as long ago as 1872. I was the writer of the article referred to. On coming across his letter in 1908, I sent it to Lady Betty Balfour, who sent it on to the present Dowager Lady Lytton. From her came the following letter:

HOMEWOOD, KNEBWORTH, HERTS,
17*th February* 1908.

MY DEAR MR. AUSTIN—Betty Balfour has sent me the very interesting note from my father-in-law about your generous article on his work, and I have ventured to take a copy of it, as Victor hopes to write about his grandfather, and there are not many letters. The hand of death was already on my father-in-law, though he was writing hard at *The Parisians* and just finishing *Kenelm Chillingly*, which he used to read to us with great emotion in the evening, as he brought in the touching story of his first love.

We had a happy Xmas dinner with the John Forsters and Mr. Julian Young (the actor's son), a clergyman, but very full of anecdote and wit, at Torquay, and left a few days after. By the 17th of January my father-in-law was unconscious, and died on the 18th in his son's arms. It was very sudden, but he had had bad pain at the back of his head for some months previously.

I showed the letter to Victor yesterday, and the article is, I am sure, safe with the papers. We hope the Lyttons are going into dear Knebworth House next July, and then you must come and have a peep of us all once again.

I should like to show you this dear little house, but I wish my flowers would grow as yours do in Kent.

I often read your lovely *The Garden that I Love*, and keep the nice note you sent with it, pasted in.

I hope you are going for your usual trip to lovely Italy. I am very lazy about going far away now, and my dear Conny, who takes such perfect care of me, does not like travelling. How many seem to be passing away, but I have four grandchildren to cheer me.—Ever yours very sincerely,

Edith Lytton.

I return Lord Lytton's note.

I have just returned (1909) from paying the anticipated visit referred to; but I have stayed at Knebworth three or four times with Robert Lytton, as I will call him, to distinguish him both from father and from son. It was at one of these visits I met "Ouida" for the first time, though I saw her again more than once in London and in Florence, and heard from her several times. She invariably treated me with kindness; and when, in the decline of her days, she fell into distress, it must be owned by her own excessive expenditure, I did what I could, in conjunction with Lady Paget, the widow of Sir Augustus, and Mr. George Wyndham, to secure assistance for her from the Civil List, where our applications were finally successful.

Her last years were lonely—spent at Lucca—far from "the busy haunts of men" that she loved. She wrote the poem *To A. A.* in one of her books which she sent me to read on my journey home. And in 1895 a reproachful letter, because I did not go to see her at Lucca. Poor Ouida! She had a touch of genius, and its supposed accompaniment, fecklessness and recklessness. The last line of the poem betrays the latter quality; for even poets would find it as difficult to lie on "newly

mown grass of Parnassus" as Pegasus to graze on it!

To A. A.

Go, gentle singer of the throstle's lay,
Dear rhymster of the buds and blooms of May;
Deep peace attend you on your homeward way,
Back to Philistia's o'ercrowded day,
Where smiling leisure is a friend scarce known.

But you, where linnets lint and thrushes nest,
Will hear their music gladly in your breast,
And, by the Poet's necromancy blest,
Steep'd in a scholar's happy dreams will rest
On grasses of Parnassus freshly mown.

OUIDA.

FLORENCE, *April* 25, 1891.

ST. ALESSIO, LUCCA,
24th April 1895.

DEAR MR. AUSTIN—I received your second kind note. St. Alessio is the name of the place. My post-bag goes into the town (Lucca) in the vain hope of receiving correspondence regularly. Vain indeed! "Quando c' è ne tante bisogno perdere una parte," says the postmaster. I wish I had known you were at Florence. I should have begged you to come here. Nobody does come, but perhaps *you* might. The climate is much better than Florence, *i.e.* cooler in summer and warmer in winter, but it is less bright. I don't know what to do about publishers. I don't like offering myself. Do you know Auberon Herbert? He writes to me often, and his little book of verses is charming; it is like Italian *stornelli* and *rispetti.* I don't know whether you heard of my mother's death? I shall miss her as long as I live, and if the knowledge that all are dead who cared for me be bracing, I have that tonic. Here is an egotistical letter! Pardon it, and believe me, ever sincerely yours, OUIDA.

Look out for article on acting by me in *Nineteenth Century.*

I remember, likewise, that when, shortly after his recall from India, Robert Lytton made his first speech in the House of Lords, I drove with him from Buckingham Gate, where he occupied a house he had hired, to the House of Lords, and listened to the vindication of his policy towards the Amir from his own lips. I also remember Lord Beaconsfield saying to me, a few days after, that the speech was according to the best traditions of the Upper Chamber, and that Lord Lytton had caught the manner—quiet, modest, but impressive—always welcome to its audience. I thought then, and think still, that far less than justice has been done to Robert Lytton's gifts and merits as a Poet.

But he was handicapped by the excessive fluency of his manner of composition, and likewise by the excessive length given by him to themes not fit in themselves for prolonged treatment. Of the latter drawback *Glenaveril* and *King Poppy* were instances. I well remember the fervent heat with which they were produced. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that he seemed intoxicated by the delight their production gave him. Nor need I refrain from adding that no corrective to this was supplied under his own roof, where, from the irresistible charm of his nature, he was lavishly loved and worshipped. No poet I have ever known was so generous as he in his appreciation of other poets. I am aware that, with one of the latter, and likewise with a prominent politician, a breach, never healed, came in their

friendship. But the cause had, in neither case, anything to do with Literature; and in neither, in my opinion, did the fault lie with Lytton.

In the year 1887 the British Embassy in Paris became vacant by the retirement of Lord Lyons, who had occupied it for many years with so much distinction and practical success. I once met him at Highclere, during the lifetime of the late Lord Carnarvon, when he was the only guest there, beside myself, for a couple of days. A vacant Embassy naturally arouses general interest and curiosity, more especially in the Foreign Office and diplomatic circles, as to who is to fill it; and Lord Lytton was among those whose claims were discussed, only to be depreciated once more by those Party politicians who habitually belittled him, by reason of his having been made Viceroy of India at the suggestion of Lord Beaconsfield, and his unwavering Conservatism.

Lord Salisbury was Prime Minister, and likewise Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, at the time; and I had for some time enjoyed his confidence. Moreover, I had been a guest at Hatfield when Lytton was also there; and I well remember a peculiarly interesting conversation during a walk of some duration we three took together. I therefore was not without more than one opportunity of talking over the vacant Embassy with Lord Salisbury, and of urging, with moderation and due deference, Lytton's claims. "It is true," I said, "Lytton is a Poet, and therefore, as we all know, and are sure to

be reminded, devoid of sane judgment, particularly in Politics, just like his Father and Lord Beaconsfield himself. But did you ever hear him, either privately or publicly, say anything foolish or unpractical respecting the politics of the hour?" He thought silently, as was his habit, for a few moments, and replied, "No, I never did. But——" and then asked me a question. I answered that I could supply the information he wanted from an infallible source, at the same time naming it.

I was soon in a position to supply it. He honoured me by saying that, if I wished to do so, I might privately tell Robert Lytton I had reason to believe he would be appointed to the post. He was then living in Cavendish Square, in the corner house at present occupied, I believe, by Mr. Asquith, the Prime Minister. I went there and availed myself of the confidential permission. This was followed, immediately afterwards, by the official announcement of the appointment. It soon became universally known, and not open to contradiction, that he was the most successful British Representative ever sent to Paris, alike with the official world, and the literary, the artistic, indeed all the various classes in the French Capital; and I look back with unalloyed satisfaction to what small share I had in the appointment.

In the course of his tenure of the important post, I once interrupted a holiday journey to Florence in order to spend a few days with him at the Embassy in Paris, and never paid a more

congenial visit; rendered such not only by himself, but by the present Dowager Lady Lytton and their young children. Every evening I went with him to some theatre; and, on our return from it, had political talks confirming my previous experience that this most various, playful, and delightful of conversationalists at once became serious and hard-headed when diplomacy or politics were the theme. So untiring was his capacity for work, that, when I bade him good-night, he sate down to write a Dispatch or semi-official letters to his more important correspondents. I well remember the late Lord Cranbrook, that chivalrous politician *sans peur et sans reproche*, telling me that when he was Secretary of State for India, and Robert Lytton was Viceroy, he every week received, in addition to an official dispatch, long private letters elucidating it.

I need hardly say that one of our evenings at the theatre was passed at the Théâtre Français, in a box placed at his disposal, and which we occupied with Lady Lytton, and his second daughter, Lady Constance. The play was the French translation, in verse, of the Oedipus, the part of the fated King being acted by Mounet-Sully, who, Lytton always said, was the best Hamlet he had ever seen. That Lord Lytton's interest in the stage was remarkable, and intelligent, the following letter to me demonstrating it is, I think, interesting:

December 19, 1881.

I have read with the greatest interest your excellent paper on Pietro Cossa. I am ashamed to say I never heard of

him before. But I am horribly ignorant of contemporary Italian literature. Your criticism of his work appears to me very subtle as well as sympathetic. I must also say at once that your exposition of the dramatic principles on which your *Savonarola* was composed has interested me exceedingly. Against those principles I have not a word to say, and I think you have adhered to them with great skill and success. But for an effective acting play, other conditions are, I think, required. My own notions about the secret of success in the composition of acting plays are very crude. I have never seriously thought them out. Possibly they are all wrong, and at any rate I feel very diffident about them, because I don't think I have the dramatic faculty, and my notions of dramatic effect are derived from observation rather than instinct.

It would be pleasant to discuss them with you "one of these fine days," but I could not attempt to do so now. Roughly speaking, I look upon a good acting play as an apparently insoluble problem flung down before the audience sharply at the outset, and then solved by the author, in his three or five acts as the case may be, by a series of surprises which the spectator cannot foresee, but which his imagination is encouraged to discount up to the last moment. The range of passions and circumstances out of which such a problem can be effectively constructed does not seem to me unlimited. Love, for instance, is rarely effective on the stage, unless it is in some way or other associated with the hearth. The love or jealousy of a wife or husband is generally interesting, that of young lovers hardly ever. Perhaps it is that the public instinctively feels that in the issue of married loves and hates great social interests and consequences are involved, whereas in the other case the interests and consequences are purely or mainly personal. But there are probably other and better explanations. I only notice the fact.

Of course the problem is of the highest order when it is created by character, of the lowest when created only by circumstance. And a play which is by no means dramatically constructed may nevertheless be an effective

acting play in consequence of the masterly presentation of some character which derives all its strength and interest from the natural genius of its creator. That is the case, I think, with many of Shakespeare's plays, and I think it has had an unfortunate effect upon English drama. Lesser writers have thought to catch his genius by imitating his form—form which, I am convinced, his genius would have vastly improved if, living in our time, he had still written plays. They would do much better to imitate Voltaire. For though there can be no receipts for creation, there certainly are receipts for construction, and the French are their best manufacturers.

Great writers no doubt create great characters, and great characters create great situations. But to say the truth, I doubt whether a writer of the greatest natural genius could produce really effective acting plays without considerable personal contact with the stage, reference in the course of his work to particular actors, and ungrudging submission to their tyrannical exactions. But Basta!—Yours very truly,

LYTTON.

On the afternoon of the same day we had been to the Reception of the Comte d'Haussonville at the French Academy; and I could with difficulty say which of the two I enjoyed most. But I remember observing, as we emerged from the latter, "There is no lack of good breeding in England, and no paucity of intellect; but intellectual good breeding, such as we have just been listening to, is, I fear, not to be met with there." He emphatically agreed with me. The best conversational power of the Parisians is nowhere to be equalled; and I enjoyed another illustration of this at a breakfast at the Embassy to some half-dozen French guests of distinction, among whom were the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and M.

Jules Simon. I sat next to the latter; and I can remember that when, in referring to the writings of Monsieur Martha, he found I was familiar with them, he discoursed with even more freedom than before.

I have been at the Embassy in Paris more than once since, when Lord Dufferin had succeeded to the post. His charm of manner was universally felt; but I have heard it remarked that, while *he* strove to be agreeable to the French, the amiable effort not escaping the notice of that shrewd race, his predecessor was attractive to them by that warm inner sympathy he had by nature with all the finer activities of the mind. But the Faubourg St. Honoré—which I have known since 1855, when I stayed with a cousin who was Resident Engineer of the Paris and Cherbourg Line, then in course of construction, and had an apartment in the Rue d'Aguesseau exactly facing the Embassy—is to me now a street of intermingled sensations of pleasure and pain; for it was there poor Lytton died.

I had seen him in London very shortly before, and said to him he was not in a condition to travel. His answer was that the parsimony of the British Treasury compelled him to do so. We heard the news of his sudden death in 1891 while at Hewell Grange, the Worcestershire home of Lord and Lady Windsor, as they then were, and where Lord and Lady Salisbury were among the guests, Lord Salisbury having

to appear and speak at a public meeting in Birmingham, to be followed by Mr. Chamberlain.

It was the first time they appeared together on the same platform. The ladies of the house-party dined at Highbury, while we men did so at Birmingham in the Hall where the speeches were delivered. On the morning of the day, seeing Lord Salisbury passing into Lord Windsor's study, I said to him, "I suppose you are going to think over what you will say to-night." "No," he said, in his ironical way, "rather to think what I must not say." I remembered that wise reply when, in the course of his speech, out came the famous utterance about the "Village Circus," and I thought to myself, "*Hélas! C'est plus fort que lui.*" On our return to Hewell that evening, a telegram told him that Robert Lytton was no more. All that was mortal of him was brought to England, and laid in the little church in Knebworth Park, where, among many others, I paid my last sad homage to his obsequies.

Only a few hours before writing the foregoing words, the first post brought me a note from his devoted widow, saying, "I have found a photograph of his portrait by Watts, which you may like to have. It is not quite himself, but still like him as a Poet, and therefore precious, and I know you will value it." The date of the note is shown by the following few additional words. "I hope you liked A. J.'s speech" (at Birmingham about the Budget). "I thought it very fine and

helpful, and Betty" (Lady Betty Balfour) "much admired it."

It is a pleasure to know that Robert Lytton's son and successor, though not claiming the rare genius of his Father and Grandfather, is a man of high seriousness, excellent parts, fastidious sense of honour, and independent judgment. The development for building purposes of that portion of the Knebworth estate that adjoins the Railway Station, has added materially to its value; and Lord Lytton is anxious to establish there what is called a Garden City. Long let to strangers, Knebworth is now his home. Lady Lytton I knew well when she was nine years old; and not long ago she showed me a large volume of Shakespeare in which were written her name and mine, after I had seen her act the part of Juliet in the great balcony love-scene, on the top of the summer-house in the garden of the villa near Kingston occupied by her mother, a gifted and charming woman who, alas! fell a victim not long afterwards to the trying climate of our Indian Empire.

I hope the record of friendships such as these will not seem superfluous or trifling in an Autobiography of one in whose life friendship has played so large and helpful a part. I frequently linger over them lovingly in thought. They widened and sweetened existence, and the recollection of them serves to do so still.

In 1883 the *National Review* came into being,

and I received the following letter in 1887 from my co-editor, W. J. Courthope, on his appointment as Civil Service Commissioner:

St. Stephen's Club, Westminster,
24th August 1887.

My dear Austin—I grieve for the necessary consequence of the enclosed. But I had myself arrived at the conclusion that I could not hold the editorship consistently with my position as one of the chiefs of a State Department, and I spoke to W. H. S. yesterday on the subject. He told me he was disposed to take the same view, but that he would think over the matter and give me his opinion. Now, it appears, some Radical busybody thinks he sees his opportunity, and as you will perceive Smith's letter is written to me *formally*, so there is an end of all debate on the matter.

I am very sorry to have to give up the work in itself, for I have enjoyed it, but I am ten times sorrier to think that a link that has so long bound us must of necessity be severed. It is no light thing to say that for nearly five years we have been able to work together in such an undertaking in practically unbroken harmony, and the fact speaks to a congruity in feeling, instinct, sympathy, and taste which makes the idea of our dissolution of partnership really painful to me. You have throughout always treated me in the spirit of true and generous friendship, and I cannot sufficiently thank you for the kindness, temper, and forbearance you have shown to me in all our dealings. If in the future you should ever care to consult me in the old friendly and familiar way, you may be sure that my opinion will always be entirely at your service for whatever it is worth. Meantime I trust that we shall often meet, even if not in council, and you must remember that whenever you wish to stay in town our house will be always open to you, so long as we have an unoccupied room.

I will write to you hereafter about a few matters of business; I feel that I cannot say more now, and will therefore only subscribe myself, my dear Austin, yours affectionately, W. J. Courthope.

In 1883 I paid the first of many visits to Hatfield with my wife.

It would be affectation to pretend that culture, travel, and refinement have not a special charm, and are not heightened by noble traditions nobly maintained. All these had their home at Hatfield, and we found ourselves among most congenial surroundings both indoors and out, and the beauty of Hatfield House and its long and chequered historical associations were an additional pleasure to us.

Lord Salisbury had the reputation, perhaps not inaccurately, of being of secluded mind and habits, which many attributed to shyness. I believe the truth to be, rather, that he was wholly absorbed in work, political or scientific, and cared little for relaxation outside his own domestic circle, in which he was the object of the warmest affection and dutiful reverence. If, as many members of both Parties believed, he honoured me with exceptional confidence, alike in conversation and correspondence, I can only attribute it to his observing that, as far as political and public questions were concerned, our minds, if I may venture without vanity to say so, were cast in somewhat the same mould, and that, like him, my concern in Politics was for the welfare of the State, not my personal advantage.

The consequence was that I was enabled to offer suggestions to him which would otherwise have been unwarrantable, and which, to the best of my

recollections, he accepted on various occasions. Among these, I may mention the nomination to an Under-Secretaryship in his Second Ministry of a well-known politician who was hesitating in his adherence to the Liberal Party; the invitation addressed by him to a politically unknown and then young Conservative peer, since most usefully active in many national interests, to second the Address in the Upper House; and the conferring of a Baronetcy on a member of the House of Commons who had served the Party by the assistance he had given to an influential evening paper.

During the Boer War, when things were at their worst, and certain Foreign Powers were conferring as to an offer of mediation, I ventured to urge him to say publicly, not leaving it either to the Secretary for the Colonies or the Unionist Leader in the House of Commons, that such an offer would be regarded as an unfriendly act. "Of course," he said, "you know what that means?" I answered affirmatively. Two days later he publicly made the announcement.

In 1898 when I retired from all journalistic work on the *Standard* or elsewhere, Lord Salisbury wrote me the following letter:

HATFIELD HOUSE, HATFIELD, HERTS,
Feb. 19, 1898.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—I am very sorry to hear that you are meditating a retirement from public work. The readers of the *Standard* will be great sufferers from your resolution,

and so will the interests of the Conservative party. But health stands before everything; and no one can doubt that you do rightly and wisely.—Yours sincerely. SALISBURY.

With a kindly generosity I prized highly, he also wrote to me on the fall of his Administration, "I cannot leave office without telling you how useful you have been on more than one critical occasion." I should like to add that I never concealed from the Editor of the *Standard* that I always subordinated the interests of the paper, whether in writing or in suggesting, to those of the State.

In all my relations with it I always received the most flattering consideration. The following letter was written to me, on his retirement, by one of the Sub-Editors in 1891 :

5 TEMPLE GARDENS, LONDON, E.C.,
May 20, 1891.

DEAR MR. AUSTIN—I feel moved, somehow, to write you a few lines, as this is probably the last time I shall be in communication with you. Your article to-day so perfectly absorbed and embellished the slight sketch I telegraphed that I cannot help referring to it. It was an article in which I felt reluctant to alter a single word. As one who, during these seven years past, has only had a journeyman's connection with literature, I can speak of the pleasure some of your work has afforded me. It is so easy, perched on an assistant-editor's chair, to criticise and amend the work of others that I sometimes feel guilty. I have now definitely relinquished journalism for law, and shall no more wear my little brief authority in Shoe Lane. It will make no difference to any one; but for my part I shall always, if you will permit me to say so, regard it as a pleasure and an honour that I was for a few years associated with you in my work on the *Standard*.—Believe me, yours very sincerely. JOSEPH R. FISHER.

ALFRED AUSTIN, Esq.

I remember, with like pleasure, when I had been Poet Laureate for some little time, and having ceased to write for the *Standard* or any paper, and we were spending the winter and spring in Florence at the Villa Cedri, that on my publishing in *The Times* "The East to the West and the West to the East," the two being Great Britain and the United States, Lord Salisbury, then at the Foreign Office, wrote to me, "The Muse on this occasion has been an excellent diplomatist."

It was in the year 1903 that, in common with the entire nation, I had to grieve at his death. He was buried, as he had lived, with dignified privacy, at Hatfield. I then felt moved to publish the following sonnet, which was written at the time of his relinquishment of office in July 1902 :

"THOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT"

Great, wise, and good, too near for men to know,
Till years shall pass, how good, how wise, how great,
And Time shall scan, with vision clear if slow,
This modest master-servant of the State.
The protestations vehement, the brawl
Of jostling market-place, the deafening blare
Of factious battle—he disdained them all,
For wisdom pointed, duty lay, elsewhere.
Patient he worked, intent he waited till,
No more by conscience bound to guard and guide,
The hopes of seed-time harvest might fulfil,
Then hung his sickle by his own fireside.
But days unborn will keep his record green,
The nobler Cecil of a nobler Queen.

CHAPTER VIII

Mrs. Edward Stanhope—Richard Jefferies—*A Defence of English Spring*—Grant Allen—Sir Garnet and Lady Wolseley—Egyptian Expedition—Wolseley's Dissatisfaction at War Office—Sir Francis and Lady Jeune—And other Friends—Mr. and Mrs. Chamberlain.

In my long life I have received many requests of all sorts and sizes. In one case a dignitary of the Church asked me to get him a bishopric, and another, an archdeaconry. What the individual mentioned in the following letter wanted I forget, but I am convinced I spent valuable time in trying to procure it for her; for what man worth the name could resist the insidious flattery of the writer, the late charming Mrs. Edward Stanhope!

111 Eaton Square, 188–.

Dear Mr. Austin—I feel very guilty for plaguing you again for Miss T., whose plea I *ought* to have laid before you when you paid us that pleasant little visit. I thought of it once or twice while you were here, but you succeeded in—as usual—making all you talked about so interesting (especially Bismarck), that a cloud of oblivion fell upon me before you left the house—on the subject of Miss T. *Don't* trouble to answer, but in sending her note I shall have acquitted my conscience; and she is so earnest a soul, that I

know you will be kind if you can. Wondering where you are, and sending this quite *dans le vague*—Believe me, yours very truly, LUCY O. STANHOPE.

The Wolseley episode passed over quite happily.

It is not possible in a Biography that includes participation in so many various subjects of interest, to write chronologically. In the earlier portion of my narrative I did so; but after 1866, and onward, I have had to drop chronological threads and then take them up again as occasion required. The previous Chapter, for instance, opened with the year 1881, and what followed on the defeat of Lord Beaconsfield's last Ministry; and I have, in the preceding one, recorded my hearing of his death in Constantinople. The publication of *Soliloquies in Song* has likewise been mentioned; and not till 1885 did I publish anything, when Messrs. Macmillan issued *At the Gate of the Convent and Other Poems*, of much the same size as *Soliloquies.* The editing of the earlier numbers of the *National Review* must have taken up much of my time in 1883 and 1884; and the year 1885 was crowded with incidents, or, to speak more correctly, critical events, to none of which did I remain a stranger. They had this additional personal interest for me that they led me to make or increase my acquaintance with men of distinction, whose friendship it is a special pleasure to recall.

I will here print the following sad letter which

I received in 1885 from poor Richard Jefferies, the gifted author of *The Gamekeeper at Home*, and other delightful out-door books, for which I have the greatest admiration. He died in 1887.

THE DOWNS, CROWBOROUGH, SUSSEX,
Sept. 16th, 1885.

DEAR SIR—I get on so badly with my correspondence (and still worse with MS.) that I trust you will excuse the time I have taken to answer your kind letter. It is with difficulty that I can sit upright long enough to finish a letter or two, so that the days go by and nothing is done. Always nothing done—a reflection that upsets me very much every night. For I find the distress of compulsory idleness far greater than pain. All that has been written in the last four years now has been accomplished under severe suffering and often when physically helpless, and for four years I have been practically shut off from intercourse with others, so that you will understand a letter like yours is valuable to me, giving moral support. I seem to have exhausted almost the whole round of medicine in vain, and begin to think that the prediction of my Brighton doctor, put forth two years since, is perhaps near the truth—that no treatment or course would be effectual in England.

From the top of this hill, I am told, there is a view of the hills at Dover, so that it must include Ashford. I am afraid that the altitude is hardly sufficient to affect me. In slight cases I am told it is often successful. For me a more Alpine character is, I fear, necessary.

I hardly know how to acknowledge the kind remarks you have made about my literary work—such approval is of great value coming from so distinguished a writer as yourself. Please receive my thanks both for these remarks and for the sympathy which led you to take an interest in my condition. I can assure you it is *very* welcome to me.—I remain, faithfully yours, RICHARD JEFFERIES.

ALFRED AUSTIN, Esq.

I have always feared his sufferings and death were caused by the hardships he underwent in observing Nature under all her conditions.

In 1885, also, the writing of my Poem *A Defence of English Spring* called forth a letter from Mr. Grant Allen. The incident will be best explained by my quoting the poem and Mr. Grant Allen's letter.

A DEFENCE OF ENGLISH SPRING

FEBRUARY 1885

That is the artificial springtide of our imitative Northern poets. Strange that till the present century hardly any English versifier—save Shakespeare, in a stray note or two—ever ventured to put on paper the real features of our warping English March or of our fickle English April. The calendar of our poets, especially as regards spring, is borrowed, or was borrowed till the end of the eighteenth century, not from the daily reports of the Meteorological Office—pardon the obvious anachronism—but from the "classical" calendar of Virgil and Theocritus. Stranger still that the absurd defiance of plain observation thus introduced should have infected even the vocabulary and the stock phrases of everyday life, so that we talk to-day of a "perpetual spring" as the ideal of a perfect climate: whereas if we ever thought of what we were saying (which we don't do) we would certainly talk instead of a perpetual summer. The common expression is correct enough in the mouth of a South European, for whom spring is the delightful middle breathing space between the draughty chilliness of open winter and the sweltering aridity of high August noontide; but it is simply ridiculous on the alien lips of the remote Hyperborean Briton. Nobody who took his language and his ideas direct from nature could ever dream of holding up as the model of a delicious climate that alternation of swirling, dusty nor'-easters and boisterous, drenching sou'-westers which we in England recognise as spring.—*Extract from an Evening Paper*, April 5, 1883.

Unnamed, unknown, but surely bred
Where Thames, once silver, now runs lead,
Whose journeys daily ebb and flow
'Twixt Tyburn and the bells of Bow,

You late in learnëd prose have told
How, for the happy bards of old,
Spring burst upon Sicilian seas,
Or blossomed in the Cyclades,
But never yet hath deigned to smile
On poets of this shivering isle,
Who, when to vernal strains they melt,
Discourse of joys they never felt,
And, pilfering from each other's page,
Pass on the lie from age to age.

Well, now in turn give ear to me,
Who, with your leave, friend, claim to be,
Degenerate, but withal allied,
At least on mother Nature's side,
To Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, all,
Foremost or hindmost, great or small,
My kindred, and whose numbers ring
With woodnotes of the English Spring:
Leave for awhile your polished town,
Unto my rural home come down,
Where you shall find such bed and board
As rude bucolic roofs afford,
And judge, with your own ear and eye,
If Spring exists, or poets lie.

Welcome! Now plunge at once with me
Into the nearest copse you see.
The boles are brown, the branches gray,
Yet green buds live on every spray.
But 'tis the ground most wins your gaze,
And makes you question, with amaze,
What these are! Shells flung far and wide
By Winter's now fast-ebbing tide,
In language called, for him who sees
But grossly, wood-anemones.
Those, too? Nay, pluck not. You will find
That they maintain a silent mind.
You do not understand? I meant
They will not talk to you in scent.
Sweet violets you know; but these
Have their own rustic way to please.

Their charm is in their look, their free
Unfrightened gaze of gaiety.
Are they not everywhere? Their eyes
Glance up to the cerulean skies,
And challenge them to match the glow
Of their own bluer heaven below.
Anon the trunks and boughs fall back,
And along winding track on track,
Lo! wheresoe'er you onward press,
Shine milky ways of primroses;
So thick, there are, when these have birth,
Far fewer stars in heaven than earth.
You know them, for their face one meets
Still smiling in your London streets;
And one I loved, but who with Fame
Sleeps quiet now, hath made their name,
Even for those, alas! who share
No fellowship with woodlands fair,
Wherever English speech is heard,
A meaning sound, a grateful word.
Yet unto me they seem, when there,
Like young things that should be elsewhere,
In lanes, in dells, in rustic air.
But looked on here, where they have space
To peep from every sheltered place,
Their simple, open faces seem—
Or doth again a poet dream?—
The wondering soul of child-like Spring,
Inquisitive of everything.

Now frowns the sky, the air bites bleak,
The young boughs rock, the old trunks creak,
And fast before the following gale
Come slanting drops, then slashing hail,
As keen as sword, as thick as shot.
Nay, do not cower, but heed them not!
For these one neither flies nor stirs;
They are but April skirmishers,
Thrown out to cover the advance
Of gleaming spear and glittering lance,
With which the sunshine scours amain
Heaven, earth, and air, and routs the rain.

See how the sparkling branches sway,
And, laughing, shake the drops away,
While, glimmering through, the meads beyond
Are emerald and diamond.
And hark! behind baptismal shower,
Whose drops, new-poured on leaf and flower,
Unto their infant faces cling,
The cuckoo, sponsor of the Spring,
Breaks in, and strives, with loud acclaim,
To christen it with his own name.
Now he begins, he will not cease,
Nor leave the woodlands any peace,
That have to listen all day long
To him reciting his one song.
And oft you may, when all is still,
And night lies smooth on vale and hill,
Hear him call "Cuckoo!" in his dream,
Still haunted by the egoist theme.

Out of the wood now, and we gain,
The freedom of the winding lane:
Push through the open gap, and leap;
What! have you tumbled all aheap?
Only a scratch. See! ditch and bank
With the same flowers are lush and rank,
With more beside. As yet but single,
The bluebells with the grasses mingle;
But soon their azure will be scrolled
Upon the primrose cloth-of-gold.
Yes, those are early lady-smocks,
The children crumple in their frocks,
And carry many a zigzag mile,
O'er meadow, footpath, gate, and stile,
To stick in pots and jugs to dress
Their cottage sills and lattices.
As yet they only fleck the grass;
But again hither shortly pass,
And with them knolls that now are bare
Will be a blaze of lavender.
What lends yon dingle such a sheen?
How! Buttercups? No, celandine.

Complete in its own self, each one
A looking-glass is for the sun,
Soon as his waking hours begin,
To see his own effulgence in.
Crave you for brighter still, behold
Yon clusters of marsh-marigold.
This is our rustic wealth, and found
Not under, but above the ground;
Mines that bring wealth without its sting,
Enrich without impoverishing.

Yes, Cuckoo! cuckoo! cuckoo, still!
Do you not feel an impulse thrill
Your vernal blood to do the same,
And, boylike, shout him back his name?
But though he loudest, longest sings,
Music is shook from myriad wings.
Hear you the lark advancing now,
Through seas of air, with rippling prow?
They say that from the poet's tears
Spring sweetest songs for unseen ears;
And, from its moist and lowly bed,
The lark mounts up aloft to shed,
In heavenly fields beyond our view,
Music still drenched with earthly dew.
The robin, that in winter cheers
With his lone voice our lonelier ears,
Though warbling still on neighbouring bough,
Sings all unheard, unnoticed now.
Chatter the jays, the starlings flute,
There's not a single throat that's mute.
From tree to tree the finches flit,
Nor once their carols intermit.
The willow-warbler mounts, then drops,
And in his silvery solo stops
Just as it bubbles to the brim,
To hark if any answer him.
High on a bare conspicuous spray,
That none may doubt who chants the lay,
Proud of his undisputed skill
To breast whatever note he will,

The thrush runs revelling all along
The spacious gamut of his song;
Varies, inverts, repeats the strain,
Then sings it different again.
The blackbird, less expert than he,
Coaxes and scolds alternately;
Then, with a sudden scream and rush,
Is off into another bush,
Feigning to fear for life and limb,
Though none have interfered with him.
But listen! ne'er on urban bough
Was perched the note you caught just now.
Hush! move a little down the lane;
When we have passed, he'll start again.
There! Did you ever hear a strain
Of such apotheosized pain,
Such sadness almost sung to bliss,
Blending of woe and joy like this?
Yes, he descants all day, despite
The name he borrows from the night.
Though then perchance the wails increase,
When doth true anguish ever cease?
He is the poet-bird that sings
Through joy, through sorrow, through all things.
'Tis only we that do not hark
Until our own bright days grow dark.

Now, think you that I gleaned all this,
This mite of wisdom, wealth of bliss,
In dusty shelf and yellowing tome?
Is it not rather that I roam,
From dawn to noon, from noon till eve,
Ready to gladden or to grieve
With every aspect, impulse, mood,
Of Nature's active solitude?
Ah! if you knew the hours on hours
One lives with birds, one spends with flowers;
How many a time one's eyes grow wet
By gazing on the violet;
How often all one has to show
For days that come, and days that go,
Are woodland nosegays all ablow;

You then, I think, would scarcely deem
One's songs of Spring a borrowed theme,
But own that English poets learn,
In every hour, at every turn,
From Nature's page, from Nature's speech,
What neither book nor bard can teach.
Nor deem this pride. I am to her
A student and interpreter,
Loving to read what lessons lurk
In her unlettered handiwork,
To find the helpful meanings writ
In waves that break, in clouds that flit,
Some balm extract for weeping eyes
From rain that falls, from dew that dries;
Infer from her uncertain text
A hopeful creed for souls perplexed,
To them her busy calm impart,
And harmonise the human heart.

Halt we a little here, and gaze.
Gambol the lambs, their mothers graze,
While cloudland shadows o'er the grass
In noiseless billows break and pass.
Beholding these, would you not say
The world was born but yesterday?
And while the years such scenes unfold
Afresh, it never can grow old.
Yon yeanlings, by their dam's warm fleece,
Fixed image of ephemeral peace,
How cunningly and snug they cower
From driving gust and drenching shower.
One symbol more, for me at least,
Who, let the world blow north or east,
By mother Nature once reclined,
Am sheltered from each bitter wind.

Yet deeper lessons may we read
In this unacademic mead:
The wisdom of untutored sense,
Sagacity of reverence.
See! the lambs kneel, that they may drain
From life's sweet source a deeper strain.

And if from Nature's lavish breast
We would imbibe the fullest, best,
All that she is so prompt to give,
That we may learn, that we may live,
Howe'er you proud town-sceptics view it,
We too must bend our knees to do it.

Confess this is not bookish lore;
'Tis feeling only, and no more.
Poets lack what you learning call,
And rustic poets, most of all.
Why from the plain truth should I shrink?
In woods men feel; in towns they think.
Yet, which is best? Thought, stumbling, plods
Past fallen temples, vanished gods,
Altars unincensed, fanes undecked,
Eternal systems flown or wrecked;
Through trackless centuries that grant
To the poor trudge refreshment scant,
Age after age, pants on to find
A melting mirage of the mind.
But feeling never wanders far,
Content to fare with things that are,
The same old track, the same loved face,
Familiar genius of the place;
From nature's simples to distil
Homely receipt for homely ill;
And finds, betwixt the sky and ground,
The sunshine of its daily round.
So swallows, though awhile they range
In quest of joy, in chase of change,
Once tenderer instincts flood their breast,
And twittering voices brim the nest,
Grown far too wise and well to roam,
Keep circling round the roof of home.

Now understand you, friend, why here
I linger passive all the year,
And let old thoughts and feelings gain
Their growth, like lichen, on my brain?—
Why the loud gusts of blame and praise,
That blow about your London ways,

To me are but as wind that shrills
About my orchard daffodils,
Only to make them shake their scent
Unto a wider continent!
But ere you go, if go you must,
Take this from me, at least, on trust.
In that fair tract 'twixt hill and main,
I sang of in my earliest strain,
Where fades not flower, nor falls the leaf,
And Godfrid brought Olympia grief,
Oft have I heard, as Spring comes round,
The snow-fed streams begin to sound;
Oft have I seen the almonds bloom
Round Dante's cradle, Petrarch's tomb;
Been there when banksia roses fall
In cataracts over Tuscan wall;
Oft watched Rome's dead Campagna break
To asphodels for April's sake;
Smelt the green myrtle browsed and left
By clambering goats in Ischian cleft;
Gathered the cistus-blooms that lay,
Like flecks of fresh unmelted spray,
Round Paleocastrizza's bay;
Drunk of the nectar wafted o'er
The wave from Zante's perfumed shore;
Plucked Delphi's flowering bays that twine
No garlands now for brows divine;
Stretched me on Acro-Corinth's brow,
Just when the year was young as now;
Have half-way up Hymettus heard
In Attic grove the Attic bird;
Sailed past the crimson Judas-trees
That flame o'er Stamboul's narrow seas,
And marked the cuckoo, from the shore,
Bid wintry Danube thaw once more.
But none of these, nor all, can match,
At least for him who loves to watch
The wild-flowers come, hear wild birds sing,
The rapture of an English Spring.
With us it loiters more than where
It comes, it goes, half unaware;

Makes winter short, makes summer long,
In autumn half renews its song,
Nor even then doth hence depart,
But hybernates within my heart.

THE NOOK,
HORSHAM ROAD, DORKING,
Feb. 18, 1885.

DEAR SIR—I have just read your beautiful and vigorous answer to an old *Pall Mall* article of mine upon the English spring. I cannot but be glad that I first penned the calumny in question, since it has called forth so felicitous a rejoinder. But I can't resist the impulse to write and tell you that the poetical conjecture as to my origin and habits contained in the opening lines is unfortunately by no means the correct one. The muse has misled you. Pegasus has gone astray. As a matter of sober truth, I am a Canadian by birth, brought up in a very wild and beautiful part of Canada (on one of the Thousand Islands), but I believe I love English soil and English flowers and English seasons with a love as great as even you do. Most probably you have never before heard my name: but for many years I have watched each successive English spring with the closest observation, chronicling the first arrival of coltsfoot or arum or celandine or primrose in my own diary (chiefly in Devonshire) and contributing rural articles to the *Pall Mall* and *St. James's*, which have since been reprinted under the titles of *Vignettes from Nature* and *Colin Clout's Calendar*. Pray kindly excuse these personal details: but I am at once so proud of having called forth your graceful poem, and so touched by the wicked accusation of Cockneydom, that I couldn't avoid writing to vindicate my anonymous self. As to the main argument, that the eighteenth-century poets took their "etherial" spring from the Latin poets rather than from English nature,—why, in spite of your dissent, I stick to it still. Nobody loves the English spring better than I do: but it is not, I maintain, the same as the Italian one. The article in question was written at Lyme, Dorset, just after my return from an Italian trip, when I happened to feel the distinction between the two very acutely.

Here is a great pother all about a poetical peg on which to hang a pretty set of verses! Pray excuse it, and don't take the trouble to acknowledge this purely personal letter. When a poet hurls iambics at our devoted heads, we little people must needs answer, *crassa Minerva*, in our own fashion.—Yours very faithfully, GRANT ALLEN.

The same post brought me his charming book *Colin Clout's Calendar*, with the following inscription in it:

POETÆ · CLARO ·
VERIS · BRITANNICI · VINDICATORI ·
MVNVSCVLVM · QVALECVNQVE ·
D · D ·
PÆNITENTIÆ · PIGNVS ·
OBSCVRVS · IGNOTVS · INNOMINATVS ·
AVCTOR ·

KAL. MART.
A. S. MDCCCLXXXV.

He, too, has joined the majority, I regret to say.

It must have been in the year 1873 that we first met Lady Wolseley, at the house of a neighbour, the Rev. Montague Oxenden, brother of the well-known Bishop, and father of two charming and beautiful daughters, Flora, since become Lady Macgregor, and Mrs. William Finch-Hatton. I sat next to Lady Wolseley, who, as I told her when I knew her more intimately, struck me as an ideal type of the beauties of the Reign of Queen Anne, and in manner, conversation, and tastes possessing its finish and its quiet sense of humour and irony as best shown in Addison's prose. That

Alfred Austin on "Paddy."

very day she had heard of the burning of all her furniture and the mementoes of the various campaigns of Sir Garnet, in the destructive fire at the Pantechnicon in London. A more "modern" person would have bewailed her lot in a demonstrative manner. Lady Wolseley, doubtless feeling it no less, spoke of it with a dignified resignation. But cheerfulness, rather than gravity, coloured her conversation. My wife invited our hostess and her to lunch with us on the following day, and they did so. When we parted at the Park gate she said that, if I could tolerate other people's babies, she should be happy to show me hers if I called when I was next in London. Thus I made an early acquaintance with Frances Wolseley, to whom a few years later were addressed the lines which follow:

To Frances Wolseley

Little maiden just beginning
To be comely, arch, and winning,
In whose form I catch the traces
Of your Mother's gifts and graces,
And around whose head the glory
Of your Father's fame and story,
O'er whose cradle fortune-guided
Mars and Venus both presided,
May your riper years inherit
Female charm and manly merit,
So that all may know who girt you
With vivacity and virtue;
Whence you had the luck to borrow
Pensive mien without its sorrow,
Dignity devoid of coldness,
Sprightliness but not its boldness,

Raillery untinged by malice,
Playful wit, and kindly sallies,
Eloquence averse from railing,
Each good point without its failing.
And when, little bud, you flower
Into roundness, bloom, and power,
Fate no fainter heart allot you
Than the brave one that begot you,
So that you a race continue
Worthy of the blood within you,
Handing down the gifts you bring them,
With a better bard to sing them.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

14th February 1877.

Sir Garnet was away in Ashanti when I first met his wife, but I made his acquaintance shortly after his return to England. Our friendship was as immediate as it had been with her. He was every inch a soldier, born to lead and to command by the spell of character, voice, and optimistic cheerfulness. One felt one would have readily gone into action with him anywhere. I once heard him say to a young subaltern who asked him what was the best way to "get on" in the army, "Try to get killed." He had done his best in that line himself, but happily had survived to be, as he was then popularly called, "our only General." They were occasionally our guests at Swinford, where he played lawn-tennis with as much eagerness as though it was a battle, I myself playing also with the utmost keenness, while Lady Wolseley looked on us with a certain aloof toleration, as rather "nineteenth century."

I often saw them in their own homes in London, first in Portman Square, and afterwards in Hill Street, in both of which I met some very interesting persons. At the former, I was once placed at dinner next to George Eliot, who was good enough to talk with me during the whole of the meal. Had her conversation been less good than it was, her musical voice would have kept me a listener. "Is that Mrs. Austin?" she said, looking across the table; and on my saying "Yes," she added, "I thought so; a poet's ideal wife."

We took the first opportunity of going to call on her at her request in St. John's Wood. But there I found pervading her house an attitude of adoration, not to say an atmosphere almost of awe, thoroughly alien to my idea that persons of Genius, save in their works, should resemble other people as much as possible, and not allow any special "fuss" to be made about them. I do not say the fault lay with her. I am pretty sure the blame lay with others. But, in addition to this drawback, she rather astonished me by saying, incidentally, that the British Government in India had no right to prevent widows from immolating themselves on the death of their husbands, or to interfere with the Car of Juggernaut. When we got into the open air, I said to my wife, "In politics, and all practical affairs, 'that way madness lies.'" She heartily agreed with me.

It was under Lord and Lady Wolseley's hospitable roof that I first met Sir Evelyn Wood, since

well known to me and warmly admired from that time onward, and Sir Redvers Buller, whom Lord Wolseley once described to me as the bravest man he had ever met. Sir Evelyn had, fortunately, I ought rather to say has, something of the wide interest in matters not directly of a military tenor, which I always noticed as so striking in Lord Wolseley. My first meeting with him was at a country railway station, whence both of us were going to spend a couple of days with Lord and Lady Wolseley; and, in the course of our drive, he astonished me by reciting, without a hitch, four long stanzas of a poem I had written some years previously, which, being both military and political, had a strongly indignant tone.

But no one whom I ever met at Lord Wolseley's could compare with himself in all-round capacity and width of interests, and readiness of conversation on all subjects. There still hang in my house a shield and several assegais belonging to Cetewayo from him; and another relic of the Zulu chieftain, a lion's claw, mounted as a scarf-pin, given me by Lady Wolseley. One Saturday in the year 1886 they came to Swinford, to stay till Monday; but almost immediately after their arrival Wolseley took me aside and said: "I fear I shall have to work nearly the whole of the time I am with you. I may tell you in confidence, for it will not be announced till Monday, that I am going to Egypt to try to rescue Gordon and bring him back from Khartoum, but I fear it is too late." He then

described his plan of campaign, about the wisdom of which there is a still-unsettled controversy, and concerning which I am not competent to express an opinion.

I heard from him two or three times in the course of the Expedition. The letter he wrote me from Cairo, after being ordered back by the then Ministry without being permitted to strike another blow after the death of Gordon, boiled over with indignation, expressed in one place by the burning words: "He" (a great Party Leader) "deserves to be torn to pieces in the market-place by an indignant people." When the Opposition were preparing the wording of the Vote of Censure on the Ministry, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who was to move it in the Commons, showed it me at the Carlton Club. I ventured to say: "It seems to me quite unequal to the occasion; for no note of moral indignation is struck in it. It might as well go into the waste-paper basket." Was it not on this occasion that, in the House of Lords, Lord Cairns quoted the lines about our having wept more than once, but never blushed before? I fear we had a second reason to blush a few years later in another part of Africa, for a similarly tame acceptance of failure and shrinking from an obvious national duty, so heavily paid for in blood and treasure.

Under the working of the British Constitution men of masterful mind and character find themselves exasperatingly hemmed in; and this is

especially the case with men of the sword, confronted and overruled as they are by their civilian superiors; and it must be freely allowed that Wolseley, in official harness, was of the temperament that chafes and breaks itself against civilian restraint. His open complaints and laments, in private life, when Chief of the Staff, were continual, and would perhaps have hardly been endured in one of less military distinction and national popularity; and I could not fail to perceive that the new system recommended by the Hartington Commission, and finally adopted, would place him in a more difficult and irritating position than ever, if he was invited to participate in the working of it. One afternoon at the Athenaeum Club, where I had looked in, and found him writing, he said to me: "Have you heard that Buller is to be the Military Adviser of the Secretary of State for War?" I replied that I had not heard it, and should not have believed it if I had. "But it is true," he said; and it very nearly was. But the appointment was never ratified, for a few days later the then Ministry was defeated in the House of Commons, and Wolseley, not Buller, was the choice of the new Administration. "You will regret and rue it," I said to him, "all your life. You will have responsibility without power, the most aggravating thing in the world."

Unhappily, I was a true prophet. Wolseley's laments in private were as frequent and as loud as ever, and on one occasion when he considered, and

openly said, that a certain decision would prove the ruin of the Army, I urged him to resign his post, and state in the House of Lords, of which he was now a member, why he had deemed it his duty to do so. He laughed at the suggestion, saying, "My resignation would be accepted, my speech would be so much wasted breath, and things would go on still worse than before." All I urged was unavailing; but it can hardly be doubted that, however unfairly, even his military position, as I had surmised, was somewhat affected by it; nor could it be improved when, after a fresh change at the War Office through lapse of time, he explained in the House of Lords what, to have produced full effect, should have been explained on the morrow of a spontaneous resignation.

He was not the first, nor will he be the last, masterful spirit that has fretted in vain against a Constitution worked by a Cabinet backed by a majority in the House of Commons. But his name is enduringly written in the history of the British Empire. Among my many other recollections of him, it is pleasant to recall that I was staying with him at the Royal Hospital in Dublin, when he was Commander-in-Chief of the Forces in Ireland, at the time it was announced that he had received from the Crown what he so richly deserved, the Baton of a Field-Marshal.

I here add a more recent letter from him which announced his retirement from public life. He has chosen the better part; and his friends and grateful

fellow-countrymen must wish him many years in which to enjoy his well-earned rest:

FARM HOUSE, GLYNDE, LEWES,
6/6/1905.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—Many thanks for your most interesting note. If I took up any position upon this question of National Defence I should do so in the House. I am pressed to do so in a coming debate, but my answer is "No." My talking and my writing days are over. I have just trod my seventy-second birthday, two over the usual allowance to man. I have played my part in England's great drama to the best of my ability, often under great difficulties, and I suffer at times from the knocks and blows received in its many contests.

I mean to spend whatever time is still in store for me under my own roof, far from the noise and vulgar bustle of that vulgar contention we term public life. Were I ten years younger I should adopt another line.

My kindest remembrances to Mrs. Austin.—Very sincerely yours,
WOLSELEY.

From the list of my closest friends I cannot ever forget Sir Francis and Lady Jeune, and their hospitable kindness to me. I stayed with them, how often I cannot say, first in Wimpole Street, and later in Harley Street, whenever I went up to London for a few days; and it was to Lady Jeune's two daughters, Madeline and Dorothy, while still children—now Viscountess Midleton and Mrs. Henry Allhusen—that I dedicated *The Garden that I Love*. At their home, alike in Wimpole Street and Harley Street, one met many of the most interesting figures of the day, and the few who would not be adequately described by that modest designation. It was at their house that I first met

Mr. Chamberlain. I was placed next to him at luncheon, and he talked to me at once in that free and frank manner that I had been told was habitual with him. It was at the time of the Round Table Conference, and of the misgivings felt by many Liberals concerning Mr. Gladstone's Irish Home Rule Policy. No doubt he was aware of the confidence I enjoyed among the Leaders of the Party to which I belonged; and this probably caused him to be even more frank than usual, rightly deeming that anything of importance he said to me, that was not confidential, would be communicated by me to them. When the guests at luncheon had gone, Jeune said to me, "I noticed that you had a long and seemingly earnest conversation with him" (with Chamberlain). "How did he strike you?" "As being a hard-headed visionary," I replied, "who brings the most business-like and practical mind to bear on the impracticable, not to say the unattainable." Many years later, when we had become intimate, I told him what I had said to Jeune about him. He smiled, and said, "It is not unflattering, is it?" I answered that it was not at all so, or I should not have repeated it to him. But I did not add, what I am sure he will feel no objection to my saying here, that I never afterwards saw reason to rescind my first impression. One perforce writes of him now with mingled feelings of sympathy for his nobly and bravely borne sufferings, and of pride in him, happily still with us, and with a mind unclouded as ever, as

a great British citizen, and a public speaker of unequalled lucidity of language. I twice spent the better part of a day at Highbury, driving there from Hewell Grange, where I was staying with my friends Lord and Lady Plymouth, once after the conclusion of the Boer War, of whose origin, conduct, and conclusion, naturally, we talked much. I never saw a household so united and so unaffectedly "pious," in the Latin sense of that word; and every time I saw them together in London at Prince's Gardens, I went away under the same impression. Of Mrs. Chamberlain perhaps I may say briefly and respectfully that to know her is to revere and admire her.

A certain expression which Mr. Chamberlain sometimes wears has led people who do not know him to think that he is a master in political craft and cunning. I can only say that he has always seemed to me the soul of simplicity and naturalness; too confident and respectful of himself, and too much in earnest, either to conspire or dissemble. It is this quality that enabled and permitted me to be frank and familiar with him in turn; and I never had cause to regret being such with him. As a minor but, I think, significant instance of this, and an indication of a truly manly disposition, I may recall how, thinking that, for a man of his eminent position, he made a mistake in taking so much notice, in his speeches, of critics utterly unworthy of his steel, I ventured to say this to him on the eve of his

intending to make a speech of importance in the House. He recognized that there might be some truth in what I said, and, on the morrow of making the speech, telegraphed to me, "I hope you were satisfied last night?"

My last long conversation is a melancholy one to recall, for it occurred only a fortnight before we all had to recognize that he had to pay a heavy debt for all the energy he had so lavishly spent in the service of a Cause he believed to be bound up with the fortunes of his country. I lunched, *en famille* with him, at 40 Prince's Gardens, and after it he and I sate and talked for an hour, as he smoked what he called the last pleasure medical advice had left him, a big cigar. But he seemed in good health, and his mind was as clear and his speech as lucid as ever. I have no intention to enter here upon a subject then, and ever since, a matter of keen controversy, but may briefly say that in the policy he had been so ardently urging I had travelled part of the way with him, but not the whole of it. This led him to open his mind fully to me, and the changes in it that had gradually gone on, leading to that sudden public announcement that ended in the disruption of the Party of which he was so distinguished a member and so great an ornament, and the collapse of the Unionist Administration. How often his country has since felt the loss of his masterly political activity is grievous to think of. I begged Mrs. Chamberlain not to allow him to address large audiences, and pointed out how

unnecessary it was for him to do so, since, if he addressed five or six hundred instead of as many thousand, every word he said would equally be reported in every paper in the kingdom, and read by every elector interested in Politics. He now addresses them only in writing, but what he writes is as much conned, and exercises as much influence, as in the days when he enthralled the nation by his oratorical power.

CHAPTER IX

Prince Lucifer—Dedication to Queen Victoria for her Jubilee—At Villa Palmieri—San Gimignano and Urbino—Castelli Romani again—Gladstone's Reform and Home Rule Bills—Unionist Ministry—Letter from Lord Salisbury—*The Passing of Merlin.*

Prince Lucifer was published in 1887, the year of Queen Victoria's first Jubilee, and was dedicated to her in the following words:

TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

Madam—On that memorable Midsummer Day when You received the loving homage of Your faithful People, I had no lyric nor Jubilee ode to lay at your feet; for the imagination is overwhelmed, rather than stimulated, by the retrospective contemplation of the half-century of Your happy Rule. But who can forget that, in a special sense, this year is Yours? And therefore, since I have Your gracious permission, I humbly offer You this poor gift; hoping, if it should escape oblivion, that it may do so by being associated with Your touching virtues, and may be remembered along with worthier fruits of Your resplendent Reign.—I am, Madam, Your Majesty's loyal, loving, and dutiful subject,

Alfred Austin.

Shortly afterwards, I passed the greater part of my Spring holiday with my ever kind and hospitable friends, Lord and Lady Windsor, in a villa

at Fiesole, looking down on Florence, which they had rented for the Spring months. My host and I started early one morning to spend a long day at San Gimignano delle Belle Torri, one of the most picturesque old towns in Italy, and having an additional attraction in the frescoes of Pinturicchio.

We got back to Fiesole only just in time to change our things for dinner, and were surprised to find Lady Windsor, and her mother, Lady Paget, who, like myself, was staying there, *en grande tenue*, instead of their usual more simple evening dress. They explained that we all were bidden to spend the evening at the Villa Palmieri, taken that year by the Queen. When I made my obeisance to Her Majesty, she spoke to me of *Prince Lucifer*, calling it "your beautiful Poem." The guests were few; there was music of the less classical kind, preferred by the Queen; and we were asked to write our names in her Album before leaving. Staying with Her Majesty was her beautiful grand-daughter, the present Czarina.

During my visit, I made another much longer excursion with my host, crossing the Apennines, and going to Urbino, Gubbio, the little Republic of Andorre, Forlì, and Faenza. The spirit of Sigismondo Malatesta and his fair mistress Isotta seemed still to possess Forlì, and, most of all, in the exquisite little Gothic church with the Greek exterior, added to it long after its erection; for the initials of Sigismondo and Isotta are intertwined repeatedly

in it; and at one altar at least Isotta personifies the Madonna. The fierce and uncompromising lust of these mediaeval Italian Princelings was tempered only by incongruous superstition, and the belief that they would be able to make peace with Heaven before leaving this world for the other.

Our return journey to Fiesole gave evidence of what can be done by a small compact Italian horse harnessed to a light carriage. Now there is a railway from Florence across the Apennines to the Adriatic. But then the utmost railway accommodation was from Florence to Arezzo, and a light line thence to Gubbio; and of these we had availed ourselves on our outward journey. But we determined to drive the whole way back, and this was accomplished in one day, between an early breakfast and dinner. The only halt we made was at Borgo San Lorenzo, where I remember that in making tea for ourselves, which we had brought with us, we offered some to the old grandmother of the inn. She had never tasted it before, but liked it so much that we gave her what was left of our stores; whereat she wished us happiness in this world, and a front seat in Paradise, in the company of "all the Saints."

Since ceasing to write for the *Standard* or any other paper sixteen years ago, I have always had the additional pleasure of my wife's companionship in my so often renewed and longer visits to Italy. While they were comparatively

brief, and covered only four or five weeks, she deemed it better for me that I should go alone. Moreover, it was hardly worth making so long a journey for so short an absence from home. I always returned with undiminished enthusiasm for the land she also knows so well, and refreshed by the complete change in every respect from one's life in England.

On one of these occasions I found one of her brothers, Mr. H. P. Mulock, a retired Indian Civilian, in a Florentine villa he had taken for a time, and with Mr. and Mrs. Lockwood Kipling staying with him; and we three men, making Frascati our Head-Quarters, drove through the *Castelli Romani*, already well known to me when they were portions of Papal territory. Alike at Tivoli, Subiaco, and Palestrina, I found that material civilization was tentatively at work. Where I had ridden on horseback by a bridle-path, in 1863, from Subiaco to Palestrina, and had given a gold piece of ten francs to a pretty girl I had never seen before, and have never seen since, to the delight of her father and mother and their festal companions, for it was the 25th of March, the *Annunziata* (or what we call Lady Day), there was a broad, well-engineered carriage-road, which we traversed less romantically. I confess that I preferred my recollection to my new experience, though both of my fellow-travellers were the best and most agreeable of company.

Readers with extensive memories about Politics will not have forgotten that, in 1884, Mr. Gladstone introduced an Electoral Reform Bill, to which the Opposition and the House of Lords objected because a demand that it should be produced in its entirety, *i.e.* the Redistribution portion along with the Franchise portion, was refused by the Prime Minister. The Government finally had to give way; and it fell to me to play, perhaps, a decisive part in compelling them to do so.

The Editor of the *Standard* promised me to stand by the House of Lords if, after the House of Commons had, by a strictly Party majority, supported the Government, the Opposition in the Upper House threw out the Bill. This I communicated to Lord Salisbury, assuring him of the thorough-going support of the *Standard*. The engagement therefore was reciprocal and joint. The Bill was then thrown out, on the ground stated, in the Upper House, by a majority of fifty odd. Thereupon a Conference between the two Parties took place, at the suggestion of the Queen, who availed herself of the services of the Duke of Richmond to bring it about. This led to a wise surrender on the part of Mr. Gladstone, who thereupon produced his Redistribution Bill; and so the conflict ended peaceably.

In the following year he brought forward his Irish Home Rule Bill, which led to the secession of his most distinguished and influential followers,

the Duke of Devonshire, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Bright, Lord Selborne, Sir Henry James, and others, and the formation of the Liberal Unionist Party. My interest in the Question was great, but I wrote little concerning it in the *Standard*, occupying myself, as usual, rather with Foreign and International than with Domestic Affairs on the paper. But the new situation naturally led to my making the personal acquaintance of many Liberal Unionists, whom I invited to write, when they would, in the *National Review*. Many of them gladly availed themselves of the opportunity thus offered them of urging their opinions in writing, in which I soon perceived, as Lord Salisbury had told me, I should find them much more expert than most Conservatives.

It was about this time that Mr. Chamberlain was eagerly pressing on public attention the question of Old Age Pensions. I heartily sympathized with the general principle underlying it, but always on the "contributory" method now in full operation in Germany; and as I had some doubt as to whether Mr. Chamberlain had fully thought out the difficulties of the Question, I suggested to him that he should write a paper on it in the *National Review*. This he did. I thought his article left many of the difficulties unanswered, or, at least, unsolved. It has been remitted to a later time for Parliament to pass a Pension Act, vitiated by the absence of contribution on the part of the Pensioners. What I have been

narrating may serve to show that neither the Conservatives nor the Liberal Unionist Party were in any degree reluctant to accept the principle, and to apply it in the joint interest of meritorious old age and the State.

A Coalition Government, such as had to be formed by Lord Salisbury after the Liberal Unionists had acted with the Conservatives, though having still a distinct and separate Party organization of their own, inevitably enforced on its two sections the spirit and influence of compromise; a necessity that made Lord Beaconsfield, some years previously, declare that "England does not love Coalitions." This one, he would assuredly have recognized, was not to be avoided. Mr. Chamberlain was then still imbued with what are called "Liberal" principles of government and legislation; and, while silently voting for Measures avowedly Conservative, he took care to have an equivalent. Hence the "Free Education" Bill, and Local Government in Ireland.

In regard to Elementary Education, I have been a "heretic," and, as far as I know, in a minority of one, for forty years.

I disapproved of Mr. Forster's Compulsory Education Act passed in 1870; not because I was either opposed to or insensible of the advantages of even book knowledge, but because I believed that the pressure of external circumstances and the struggle for life would of themselves inevitably have led

parents to send their children to school, without legal compulsion. I believed that there would be as many children in Elementary Schools, without compulsion, as there are actually now under compulsion. I would have maintained the system then already in existence, of supporting Elementary Schools of every denomination by Government grants, according to their merits, and I enforced this view, in private conversation, by saying, "We shall thus avoid having a 'Religious' question to deal with. As it is, Compulsion will furnish you with a hornet's nest for all time." No one can deny that this prediction has been fulfilled, and that the "Religious" side of Elementary Education is tormenting and dividing Politicians still, without the smallest prospect of coming to an end.

When, therefore, the Unionist Ministry presided over by Lord Salisbury brought in the Free Education Bill — curiously called "Free," when A was compelled to send his children to school, and B was compelled to pay for them—I was once again the "heretic" I spoke of. While it was before Parliament, but not yet passed, I said to Lord Salisbury, "Not a single vote in the constituencies will be obtained by this demoralizing bribery, for the bribed will soon forget all about the bribe. Therefore, at any rate, do not pass the Bill till shortly before the General Election." He smiled, and answered in his ironical way, "Of course not. One should never

bribe till a quarter to four"; in reference to the practice in "the good old times." I remember, too, telling him, when the Home Rule Bill was rejected, and the Unionist Alliance formed, that I had said to Matthew Arnold, who was one of the seceders from the "Liberal" Party, that "it was agreeable to me and other Conservatives not to know for certain, until he and his friends had told us, that we were right!" My little gibe was founded on the air of intellectual superiority, long affected by Liberals, more than one of whom had said to me, in old days, "Are you really a Conservative? For you are not a fool." Again Lord Salisbury smiled, and said, "So it was, and perhaps still is. I rather think they regard the alliance as a *mésalliance*."

Conversations with him on domestic Political questions were nearly always relieved of their excessive seriousness by the wit and playfulness of his mind. But the conversations he so readily granted me were, for the most part, regarding Foreign Affairs, which both looked on as too serious in themselves ever to be treated with levity. His anxiety concerning them was continuous, as was my own interest in them, as chief and almost exclusive writer on them in the *Standard*, where absolute freedom of treatment was most generously entrusted to me by the Editor. I may give as a striking instance of this what occurred when an unanticipated

Revolutionary Movement at Philippopolis united Roumelia to Bulgaria, which Lord Beaconsfield, with the concurrence of the paper, had resisted at the Berlin Congress. I happened to be away from home when the event took place, the news of which reached England on a Sunday. I had no means of communication with the Editor, or indeed with any one. But I saw that the situation in the Balkan territories, and the influence there exercised, had completely changed, and therefore wrote and dispatched by a local train to the *Standard* an article heartily approving what had taken place. To my great satisfaction I saw it in the *Standard* the next morning, occupying the first place among its leaders.

I received a generous and gratifying letter from our great Premier in 1892, when he went to his châlet at Dieppe for a well-earned rest, in August.

Châlet Cecil, Puys, *près* Dieppe
(Seine Infre.),
August 24, '92.

My dear Austin—Many thanks for your very kind letter. It has been a great advantage to me to have your counsel and assistance on several difficult occasions.

A rider who has ridden two horses at once for a longish journey has, no doubt, cause to congratulate himself that he has not had a tumble; and it is open to him, if he likes, to claim that the result is due to his skill. But most impartial persons will be inclined rather to admire the marvellous good temper and training of the horses.

I am beginning to find out how tired I was, and the absence of boxes is very luxurious.—Ever yours truly,

Salisbury.

If not unoften in this Autobiography the narrative shifts from Literature to Politics, and from Politics and Journalism back to Literature, it is because one's life did so. Once again, without further excuse, I revert to the domain of Poetry, to me the most congenial portion of my reminiscences as of my existence.

One of my occupations in 1890 and 1891 was the revision of *The Human Tragedy*. For two consecutive summers of exceptionally seasonable warmth, I sat in the garden for a couple of hours almost every afternoon, occupied with that task. The *ottava rima*, when not used in the light and airy manner of Pulci's *Morgante Maggiore* and Byron's *Don Juan*, but throughout a serious poem, would, I dare say, present not a few difficulties in our tongue to any one not familiar with it. But in the composition of *Madonna's Child*, now the first half of the second canto of *The Human Tragedy*, I had noticed how the narrative, the thoughts, and the descriptive portions of a poem fall as naturally and easily into the *ottava rima* as they do in any seemingly much more tractable form of versification. I went to work with my final revision on the assumption that I should find many faults, and assiduously sought for them. Such was the origin of the final edition —that of 1891—of *The Human Tragedy*, and of the *labor limae* bestowed on it.

In an article in the *Quarterly Review* for October 1908, the writer of the paper, after

expressing a very generous estimate of it, complained of what he deemed determined carelessness on the author's part. Does not the exquisite finish in Tennyson's poetry make us look, in all poetry, for what I think we have no right to expect?

The controversy concerning what are called carelessness and finish in Poetry also is one of long standing. Perhaps it is enough to say here that Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Dryden, Byron, Shelley, would be among the "careless" writers, and Milton, Gray, Pope—though Pope, too, has been charged with carelessness—Keats, and Tennyson, among the "careful ones," in order to show how unprofitable, theoretically, such a controversy must ever be.

Much about the same time as I finished the final revision and definitive edition of *The Human Tragedy* Messrs. Macmillan issued my volume entitled *English Lyrics*, edited by Mr. William Watson. It has always been a source of much pleasure to me to remember that that delightful poet first became known to the public by his fastidiously finished poem, *Wordsworth's Grave*, published in the *National Review*, after I had shown the manuscript of it to Mr. Courthope, still my co-editor, and who was as much struck by it as I was.

So highly did I think of it that I wrote a letter to a prominent living English critic of Poetry, requesting him to show it to the eminent Poet

who was an intimate friend of his, and with whom he lived. To my astonishment, neither of them shared my admiration ; but I fancy their judgment was in some degree warped by a circumstance I had at first not noticed, that a stanza in *Wordsworth's Grave* might be interpreted by them as adverse to a style and school of Poetry that enjoyed their preference. But the public who read verse are not influenced, unless it be for a time by any such bias; and the author of *Wordsworth's Grave* was, by no means slowly, recognized as a supreme master of the poetic craft. He followed it up by a series of prose criticisms that showed him to be as excellent a writer of prose as of verse.

It is with pleasure I recall my acquaintance with the greatest Poet of our time, and certainly the most popular, my never-to-be-forgotten predecessor in the Laureateship. Though I still think there was a strong element of truth in *The Poetry of the Period* published in the year 1870, a belief shared by not a few others, I long since deemed the tone in which it was written unfortunate, and I had subsequently withdrawn it from circulation in 1873.

Tennyson's sensitiveness, of which he made no secret, was known to all ; and this rendered the making of his acquaintance, which I much desired, for a long time impracticable. It was therefore with no small pleasure that I was told that he had said the lines in the

first of the *Three Sonnets Written in Mid-Channel* —

> Amazonian March, with breast half bare,
> And sleety arrows whistling through the air,
> Will be my welcome from that burly Land—

were "quite Shakesperian in character." But it was not till the year 1884 that Mrs. Stuart Hodgson, whom, and whose husband, I knew well, and whose country home was at Lythe Hill, a short walk from Aldworth, signified to me that Tennyson would like to see me.

I took an early opportunity of availing myself of the message, and of offering to go to see him. He was no longer young, save in mind, and I noticed, when I entered at tea-time—I found him seated at the tea-table, and Lady Tennyson lying on the sofa, not far from him—his hands were crippled with gout; and, in pouring out some tea for me, he alluded to this, saying, "Do you take sugar? They won't let me have any. Look there!" I could not help noticing his Lincolnshire intonation, familiar enough to me, born in a neighbouring county, and the suave fastidious utterance of his invalid companion.

After tea, he rose, and asked if I should like to go with him into the garden. As we passed out, I paused to look at a portrait of him done in his early manhood, and observed what a magnificent head of hair he must then have had. "Yes," he said, "so different from what one has now"; to which I replied, quite truthfully, that he had no

cause of complaint still on that score. He noticed the double semi-jocose meaning of the last phrase, and smiled ; and out we passed into the open air.

On my saying it was very good of him to let me come to see him and Lady Tennyson, he replied with something as gracious as, I fancy, he ever permitted himself to say to any one, and at once manifested his undying sensitiveness by adding, "though you once did abuse me, and said I had taken one of my lines from Keats." "Did I," I said. "At any rate, it was long ago." He had liberated his mind about it, and went on to say, "I never could see I was so like Keats." As I thought the remark was made half-inquiringly, I observed that every great Poet is the child and descendant of all preceding great Poets, at least for a time, and until he gets his own voice completely, and that Keats seemed to me, as to many others, his more immediate ancestor. This seemed to satisfy him.

As we walked in the garden, and in the wilder ground beyond it, he asked me several questions about flowers, not indeed for information, which he did not need, but in order, I fancy, to see how much, or how little, I knew about them. He had chosen what was safe ground for me. But when I spoke about "Salvia pātens," he said gruffly, "Salvia what?" I answered that I was well aware that "*pătens* was short in Latin," and that I was only submitting to the *norma loquendi* of the Bar, the stage, and society generally.

He rated this as no excuse, and advised me to call it what it ought to be called. "Do you remember what Johnson said to a lady who asked him whether she should say 'Alexandrĭa' or 'Alexandrīa,' and he replied that he and Bentley would pronounce it long, but that she might pronounce it in any way she liked?" He seemed particularly pleased when, in answer to a further question about a wild flower, I replied, "Ragwort, surely? But I have heard good old bucolics call it bugbane," a name he had not before heard.

I think it was in observing for himself that I was not ignorant of things rural and rustic he felt kindly towards me, far more than from any mere literary talk we had.

When I left, he walked with me as far as the wooden gate that led into the lane I had come by, and, in answer to my expressing the hope I should be welcome if I came to see him again, he said, but in a half-gruff manner, as though he disliked saying anything agreeable, "I shall always be glad to see *you*." But just before this *Au revoir!* he said to me, as we leaned over the gate, "What a vulgar people the English are! They come here, to watch for me; and when they see me, they exclaim quite loudly, 'There's Tennyson.'" I repeated this afterwards to Mrs. Stuart Hodgson, whereupon she said that he would have been much more annoyed if they did *not* come.

I believe this to be true, and to arise from, if

I may use what may seem to some a paradoxical expression, the intricate simplicity of his character. I once heard Hutton and Wilfrid Ward, in talking of him, differ utterly as to his disposition; one maintaining that he was the most self-conscious, and the other that he was the simplest, of men. He seemed to me to be both; but he had been made self-conscious by others, whereas his simplicity was congenital with him, and remained part of himself. To me the union of the two added to his attractiveness; and, after that first meeting, I went away, liking him exceedingly. From what Mrs. Stuart Hodgson told me, I think the feeling was reciprocated. At any rate, he always received me most kindly, and talked freely and fully to me. My only regret is that I knew him only when he was advanced in years.

As an instance of his simplicity, indeed of his *naïveté*, I may mention a little incident that occurred at Aldworth when I was again staying at Lythe Hill. I walked over, by appointment, to see him, and found him well, and thoroughly alert in mind. There had appeared, that morning, in one of the monthly magazines, a poem by him called *The Throstle*. I need scarcely say I had read it; and, reading it, I liked it. This I told him, adding that I supposed he had written it quite recently. He said, "I wrote it some time ago, but revised and altered it recently." I had much interesting talk with him that afternoon. As we sat on a bench in the garden, he described

to me what I need refer to but briefly, for I know he described it to many, how he had worked at the fire-engines, as a volunteer, during, I think, the Rebeccah Riots; and this led to a colloquy about the social prospects before us. "I have always thought," I once said incidentally, "one of the happiest things you ever said is in *Locksley Hall*, dealing with that theme, in the lines—

> Slowly comes a hungry people, as a lion creeping nigher,
> Glares at one that nods and winks behind a slowly-dying fire.

"Do you know where I got that?" he said. "In a Methodist Magazine, where camp-fires are described as being lighted to scare wild beasts in the forest." "You got the fact," I said; "but I am thinking of the way you have applied it. It seems to me admirable." There was a brief pause, that permitted me shortly to add, "But there is perhaps a blemish in the first line, or what you now might think such." "What is that?" he asked eagerly. "The too close approximation," I replied, "of the same vowel in 'l*i*on' and 'n*i*gher.'" "You are quite right," he replied. "No, I am not," I rejoined, "or I should not have been had I meant seriously what I said. But I was thinking of the additional burden you have laid on other poets by your finish and fastidiousness in composition." At this, all his naïf sensitiveness was suddenly aroused, and he said, "It isn't artificial, is it?" I affected not to hear; whereupon he pressed my arm, saying, "Tell me

—it isn't artificial, is it?" "Perhaps it is," I rejoined, "but I think it is the right artifice." This appeared to satisfy him, and all went well till I took my leave.

Walking homeward to Lythe Hill, I met Sir Alfred Lyall, a valued friend of mine, and Mr. Alan Broderick, whom I knew slightly, and both of whom, like myself, were staying with Mr. and Mrs. Stuart Hodgson. They were on their way to Aldworth, and asked me how I had found the Poet. I said he was in excellent form and most gracious and agreeable. At dinner Lyall was sitting opposite me, and I asked him across the table how they had fared in their visit. "Very badly indeed," he said; "but I think we began by making a remark that displeased the Bard. Alluding to the just published little poem *The Throstle*, one of us had the misfortune to say that we supposed it had long been written. 'No,' was the indignant reply, for he evidently fancied that in the question there lurked the idea that he was now too old to write such a lyric. "No, I wrote it last month!'"

It might hastily be assumed that there was a flat contradiction between this statement and the one he had made earlier in the afternoon, but in reality there was no such contradiction. It should be observed that he had said to me, he had written it some time since, but had recently revised it, and to one of his fastidiousness and love of finish this final and, I have no doubt,

severe revision would be regarded as "composition." He was far too truth-loving ever to indulge in those half-truths which, as he himself had said, are almost worse than whole and downright untruths.

I have always much regretted that when, not very long before his death, he asked me to lunch with him, I could not go, because of a very heavy cold from which I happened to be suffering. I have two of his books with his own inscription in them; and, when he died, I agreeably remember, and can never forget, that I was permitted to pay a tribute to his interment. I do not refer to *The Passing of Merlin*, a poem that appeared on the morrow of his death, but to an incident far more personal.

As I have related in a previous Chapter, when I visited Delphi in the month of May 1881, I was filled with admiration of a Poet's Bay, that was in full bloom, and expressed it to the Greek Priest who had shown us the underground Chapel. Before I could stay his hand, he had torn off a spray and given it to me. I bethought of the fate of Marsyas, and in the poem *At Delphi*, written later, referred to it. I had always intended to give the little branch to Tennyson, but had omitted to do so. When he died, I sent it to his son Hallam, the present Lord Tennyson, with a brief inscription attached to it, and begged him to lay it on the pall covering his coffin. After the funeral in Westminster Abbey, Hallam Tennyson wrote to me, saying that he was much distressed to find the

branch from Delphi was missing from the Abbey, and that some one must have taken it. I begged him not to give it another thought, for my tribute to his Father had been paid. By the next post there came another letter from him, saying that he had forgotten, but his wife now reminded him, that the three mementoes placed *inside* the coffin were Lady Tennyson's roses, the volume of Shakespeare that was at his bedside when he died, and the branch of Poet's Bay from Delphi.

THE PASSING OF MERLIN

I am Merlin,
And I am dying,
I am Merlin
Who follow The Gleam.
TENNYSON'S *Merlin and The Gleam.*

I

Merlin has gone—has gone!—and through the land
The melancholy message wings its way;
To careless-ordered garden by the bay,
Back o'er the narrow strait to island strand,
Where Camelot looks down on wild Broceliand.

II

Merlin has gone, Merlin the Wizard who found,
In the Past's glimmering tide, and hailed him King,
Arthur, great Uther's son, and so did sing
The mystic glories of the Table Round,
That ever its name will live so long as Song shall sound.

III

Merlin has gone, Merlin who followed the Gleam,
And made us follow it; the flying tale
Of the Last Tournament, the Holy Grail,
And Arthur's Passing; till the Enchanter's dream
Dwells with us still awake, no visionary theme.

IV

To-day is dole in Astolat, and dole
In Celidon the forest, dole and tears.
In joyous Gard blackhooded lean the spears:
The nuns of Almesbury sound a mournful toll,
And Guinevere kneeling weeps, and prays for Merlin's soul.

V

A wailing cometh from the shores that veil
Avilion's island valley; on the mere,
Looms through the mist and wet winds weeping blear
A dusky barge, which, without oar or sail,
Fades to the far-off fields where falls nor snow nor hail.

VI

Of all his wounds He will be healëd now,
Wounds of harsh time and vulnerable life,
Fatigue of rest and weariness of strife,
Doubt and the long deep questionings that plough
The forehead of age, but bring no harvest to the brow.

VII

And there He will be comforted; but we
Must watch, like Bedivere, the dwindling light
That slowly shrouds Him darkling from our sight.
From the great deep to the great deep hath He
Passed, and, if now He knows, is mute eternally.

VIII

From Somersby's ivied tower there sinks and swells
A low slow peal, that mournfully is rolled
Over the long gray fields and glimmering wold,
To where, 'twixt sandy tracts and moorland fells,
Remembers Locksley Hall his musical farewells.

IX

And many a sinewy youth on Cam to-day
Suspends the dripping oar and lets his boat
Like dreaming water-lily drift and float,
While murmuring to himself the undying lay
That haunts the babbling Wye and Severn's dirgeful bay.

X

The bole of the broad oak whose knotted knees
Lie hidden in the fern of Sumner Place,
Feels stirred afresh, as when Olivia's face
Lay warm against its rind, though now it sees
Not Love but Death approach, and shivers in the breeze.

XI

In many a Vicarage garden, dense with age,
The haunt of pairing throstles, many a grange
Moated against the assault and siege of change,
Fair eyes consult anew the cherished Sage,
And now and then a tear falls blistering the page.

XII

April will blossom again, again will ring
With cuckoo's call and yaffel's flying scream,
And in veiled sleep the nightingale will dream,
Warbling as if awake. But what will bring
His sweet note back? He mute, it scarcely will be Spring.

XIII

The Seasons sorrow for Him, and the Hours
Droop, like to bees belated in the rain.
The unmoving shadow of a pensive pain
Lies on the lawn and lingers on the flowers,
And sweet and sad seem one in woodbine-woven bowers.

XIV

In English gardens fringed with English foam,
Or girt with English woods, He loved to dwell,
Singing of English lives in thorp or dell,
Orchard or croft; so that, when now we roam
Through them, and find Him not, it scarcely feels like home.

XV

And England's glories stirred Him as the swell
Of bluff winds blowing from Atlantic brine
Stirs mightier music in the murmuring pine.
Then sweet notes waxed to strong within his shell,
And bristling rose the lines, and billowy rose and fell.

XVI

So England mourns for Merlin, though its tears
Flow not from bitter source that wells in vain,
But kindred rather to the rippling rain
That brings the daffodil sheath and jonquil spears,
When Winter weeps away and April reappears.

XVII

For never hath England lacked a voice to sing
Her fairness and her fame, nor will she now.
Silence awhile may brood upon the bough,
But shortly once again the Isle will ring
With wakening winds of March and rhapsodies of Spring.

XVIII

From Arthur unto Alfred, Alfred crowned
Monarch and Minstrel both, to Edward's day,
From Edward to Elizabeth, the lay
Of valour and love hath never ceased to sound,
But Song and Sword are twin, indissolubly bound.

XIX

Nor shall in Britain Taliessin tire
Transmitting through his stock the sacred strain.
When fresh renown prolongs Victoria's Reign,
Some patriot hand will sweep the living lyre,
And prove, with native notes, that Merlin was his sire.

I have always thought that Poets pass through three stages in general estimation after their death. If they have been over-extolled, a period of excessive appreciation is pretty sure to be followed by one of excessive depreciation. If they have been underestimated in their lifetime, then a period of exaggerated estimation follows. In each case they are finally allotted their right place in the hierarchy of Poets. There is, at first, either the

crest or the trough of the wave. Then their position is reversed altogether, their renown gets into smooth water, and remains there permanently. It may be that Tennyson was sometimes overextolled in his lifetime; and it was therefore inevitable that he should pay the penalty of a posthumous depreciation, and I think he is passing through this second period now. Many men, whose opinion I respect, declare that, by modernizing Malory, he made a fundamental mistake, and marred the earlier legends. But I cannot surrender my own view that it is in the application of Malory to modern sentiment that Tennyson was right, if the themes were to be treated at all.

I should like to dedicate here a few lines to a dear friend of mine who, in the sphere of a kindred Art, has likewise by his work made a lasting *pacte* with Time, John Everett Millais. It is not my province, and perhaps not within my competency, rejoicing though I have, from my earliest youth, in Painting and Painters, to discriminate what was supremely good, and what was less so, in Millais's work. But no one, I think, would refuse him the gift of infallible craft in landscape painting. It is the man himself I hold most in remembrance, his delightfully manly appearance, his cordial manner, and his warm heart. In his judgment of my work he was touchingly generous; so much so, that I cannot repeat his encouraging eulogies. "I think we artists are nicer to each other

than you writers are," he said. He was a guest at Swinford on several occasions; for my wife had known him longer than I, and among the portraits executed by him is one of her sister, Mrs. Arthur Kennard. I remember the pleasure I was fortunate enough to give him by telling him that, on lunching with Lord Beaconsfield the day after his first sitting to Millais, he had said to me, "I like Millais exceedingly. He so thoroughly enjoys his success."

His closing days were sad, for all his friends. I sate with him, alone, shortly before he passed away. He held my hand in one of his, and wrote a few words in pencil with the other. I was asked by his family to be one of the pall-bearers when his remains were carried to Saint Paul's. Unfortunately, I had gone to Ford Castle, on the Border, for a visit, and, on arriving there, had been attacked by a very severe cold. So I listened to prudent counsel, and, to my great regret, abstained from travelling back south. But I gave expression to what was generally felt for him, in a short poem that appeared in *The Times*. His daughter, who married Charles Stuart-Wortley, as his second wife, has, together with her husband, always treated me with the most affectionate friendship.

Leighton I knew but slightly, though I was well acquainted with his two sisters, whom I first knew in Florence, and on occasion dined with them and their distinguished brother at their

home in London. The last time I saw him was in Arlington Street, where, at Lord Salisbury's, we sate next to each other at a small dinner-party.

Mr. Watts I knew still less intimately; but I noticed, when I had tea with Mrs. Watts, after his death, at Sommerlees, she had framed a sonnet I had written on "Love and Death," and placed it in her drawing-room. He himself had written to me about it; and I was struck by his saying in the letter that, could he have his life over again, he would prefer to have been "Pictor Ignotus." An intimate friend of his, to whom I showed the letter, smiled incredulously. With the Great in any Art, obscurity is neither the due guerdon nor the dominating desire.

GEORGE FREDERICK WATTS, R.A., O.M.

BORN 1820—DIED 1904

I

Loved and Revered. What more than this,
Of sounding glory, silent bliss,
Can crave or win the noble Mind
That works to stimulate mankind,
To find the God within the shrine,
And in the earthly the Divine;—

II

That makes the bare blank canvas glow
With splendid joy or pallid woe,
Transmits to after years the grace
Of maiden form and manly face,
With unextinguishable fire
Shows sons how lived, how looked their sire,
And limns with sympathetic hand
The features of the Mother Land;—

III

That with strokes strenuous and fierce
Can through the quarried marble pierce,
And, gazing deep within it, make
A sleeping loveliness to wake
And live, when all beside grows old,
A youthful glory to behold?

IV

Such like was He whom you may find
Within this silent urn enshrined.
Approach and read. A date, a name,
A little dust, a lasting fame.

ALFRED AUSTIN.

CHAPTER X

Fortunatus the Pessimist—*The Garden that I Love*—First Visit to Ireland—Visits to Friends there—Advice to W. H. Smith—Political Speeches—Lord Randolph's Resignation—Negotiations with Mr. Goschen—Letters respecting them—Mr. Goschen's Acceptance of Office—Letters from Lord Salisbury—Rowton and Lord Randolph—Blunder of Lord Randolph's—Various Letters.

AMONG the several forms of activity to which one lent oneself in the heyday of one's life was the making of Political Speeches, avowedly of a Party character. I did so in several metropolitan constituencies, and at Ashford, Exeter, Chesterfield, Bath, Bristol, Cirencester, Lewes, and Taunton. I dare say I spoke in other places, but they do not at this moment occur to my recollection. It was always in answer to a request from a Conservative member or candidate. I believe such services are not infrequently paid for, either by the candidate or out of Party funds. But my assistance, such as it was, was always rendered gratuitously. The experience was invariably pleasant; for I had no difficulty in speaking extemporaneously after marshalling the order of what one proposed to say in one's mind. I suspect these harangues were less argumentative than rhetorical; a circumstance

that did not leave on one a very favourable impression of one's audiences. To secure their attention depends on tact, temper, and intonation, and as soon as they consider you are worth listening to they listen. They wish to be entertained, as people do when they go to the theatre; and the most successful platform and indeed House of Commons orators are well-graced actors. Having once got hold of your audience, as the phrase is, you have yourself to blame if you lose hold of it.

I confess I rate the gifts that achieve success in this line somewhat cheaply. One has heard what was essentially nonsense lustily cheered because it was delivered with ready confidence, sufficient but not excessive gesticulation, and the occasional use of popular catchwords. But in those days decencies of speech were more observed than at the time at which I write. The Leaders of both Parties set a good example in this respect, which was more or less followed on the platform. Gladstone and Disraeli, though the former spoke with the greatest vehemence, and the latter with piercing satire, never transgressed the limits of parliamentary decorum. I have sometimes thought that the degeneration of manners in the House of Commons set in with Disraeli's quitting it. How often one has seen him, when some member was talking egregious nonsense or in an extravagant manner, unfold his arms, put his eyeglass in his eye, scan the person speaking, then silently let the eyeglass fall, and cross his arms

again. No language could have expressed disapprobation more significantly than this silent action. I do not believe, however, that intemperate rudeness of speech is regarded with favour by the electorate generally, as those who have indulged in it will probably find in the long run.

More than once, after making the political speeches to which I have referred, I was asked why I had left the Bar, as a reasonable amount of success as an advocate always attends fluency of speech. They who asked this question left out of consideration the supreme question of temperament, which, in my case, was more than alien to legal procedure in Court, and the dominant influence of another impulse.

Now and again I willingly responded to the invitation to deliver a Lecture. But, through all these several forms of activity, as I have termed them, there ruled the still small voice of one's main vocation; and after the incident of the Dewsbury contest, I never wavered for an instant in my determination not to cross the line that divides those who are interested in Politics from those who aspire to a seat in the House of Commons. Once or twice more recently I have spoken on non-Party subjects, and for the most part in subordinate co-operation with Lord Roberts on our military requirements, and I have found I still can speak without anything more than mental preparation. But advancing years have made one less

declamatory than argumentative, without altogether forfeiting the indulgence of one's listeners.

Not long after the publication of *Prince Lucifer*, in 1887, I found myself, if not actually writing, habitually meditating *Fortunatus the Pessimist*, which had been moulding itself in my mind for some years back. From none of my works did I get more pleasure while composing it; for, as I had only to say in it what I thought and felt, and the central meaning of which I had always felt even in the early days when I wrote *The Season* in a totally different vein and under entirely different circumstances, I encountered no sensible resistance while developing the romantic details of the story. In it I was still the opponent, though no longer the satirical or aggressive opponent, of the pursuit of wealth and the worship of material luxury. It was published in 1892.

For my own part, and in so far as any man can measure the relative importance of his own works, *Fortunatus the Pessimist* and *The Human Tragedy* occupy among these the first place. Thrice I have seen the lines, occurring in the former,

> There is no office in this needful world
> But dignifies the doer if done well,

printed over the threshold of houses: on one occasion, of a picturesque country inn, on the other, of a villa near Menaggio on Lake Como.

In 1894 Messrs. Macmillan issued *The Garden*

that I Love, and on its appearance a friend, whose opinion I valued, predicted, to my surprise, and with the utmost confidence, its wide popularity among educated readers. The reception it received amazed me; but, on reflecting that it was written in prose, though in its pages were interspersed several lyrics, and reading the hundreds upon hundreds of letters, enthusiastic, and not unoften affectionate, from utter strangers, I began to understand.

It is now over fifteen years since it was first published. It has won for me many friends and many kindly acquaintances, and thus endeared itself to me in a special manner. The true begetter, I am assured, of the many gardening books that have since appeared, and some of which have offered a much closer and wider description of horticulture, it still holds the field, not as a book on gardening, but for other elements in it that have not been reproduced elsewhere.

When *The Garden* first appeared, I was paying my first visit to Ireland, staying, for some days on my arrival, with Colonel, now Sir Herbert Jekyll, who was Military Secretary to the Lord-Lieutenant, Lord Houghton, now Lord Crewe. This involved my leaving my card at the Viceregal Lodge, to which I was kindly invited to luncheon and to dinner. After a few days I moved to the Royal Hospital, where my old friend Wolseley, as Commander-in-Chief in Ireland, was in residence with his wife and daughter; and while I was there

he received the announcement of his being raised to the dignity of Field-Marshal.

From Dublin I went on to Bellair, Ballycumber, King's County, where my wife's people have lived since the time of Cromwell. The estate has greatly augmented in value under her eldest brother, William Homan-Mulock, who for many years during his father's lifetime was in the Indian Civil Service, retiring from it on a full pension. His two brothers, who followed the same career, so honourable to British rule in India, now live within a short distance of Bellair, both having purchased small properties in the neighbourhood of Ballycumber. A visit to Glynwood, a few miles from Athlone, belonging to Edward Dames-Longworth, who married a niece of my wife, preceded a sojourn at Kilkee, on the wild coast of Clare. A striking contrast was offered to it by Killarney and Glengariff, whose exquisite beauty seems to me unrivalled.

These my first experiences of Ireland were described on my return to England in *Blackwood's Magazine*, in a paper entitled *That Damnable Country*, a description applied to it by an English statesman in the time of Elizabeth. It can scarcely be necessary for me to add that I wrote of it as being the very reverse of "damnable."

To me the spell of Ireland is irresistible, and I warmly love it and its people, while not insensible to what most Englishmen regard as their faults. It was not long before I paid it another visit, and

this time in autumn, my first having been in May. Again I felt prompted to write a paper about my wanderings there, which ended in the Joyce Country and the Island of Achill. Messrs. Blackwood re-published the two papers together in book form, under the title *Spring and Autumn in Ireland.* One year it was suddenly announced that Queen Victoria, who had arranged to spend some weeks in the south of Europe, would not go there. The reason was that, at that moment, the Continental Anarchists were unusually busy and restless. On reading the announcement, I said to my wife, "Mark my words; the Queen will go to Ireland instead."

It was the merest surmise, but it turned out to be correct; and, when I asked Lord Salisbury (at that time Prime Minister), from whom the suggestion had proceeded, he replied that it was spontaneous on the part of the Queen herself, who had imparted her decision to him at Windsor.

I have been to Ireland several times since, for it is the land of boundless hospitality as well as enchanting scenery, staying with the owners of Abbey-Leix, at Kilkenny Castle with Lord and Lady Ormonde, and a little later with their daughter, Lady Beatrice, one of the most beautiful of the women of our time, and her husband, General Sir Reginald Pole-Carew. Nor should I omit most genial visits to the Duchess of St. Albans, whom we had known many years previously as Grace Osborne, the beautiful daughter of Bernal Osborne, so well remembered

in the House of Commons and society for his wit, of which he sometimes made rather too unsparing use, though the courtesy and consideration he showed me, much his junior, were invariable.

One's interest and occupations were still so many and so various that, as once or twice before, I have had perforce to pass from one to the other, though at first sight they may seem to have no connection. As far back as 1884-1885, I took a practical interest, and perhaps played some little part, in the controversy between Mr. Gladstone and the House of Lords as to whether the Redistribution portion of his Reform Bill should be produced simultaneously with its other features. The "Old Parliamentary Hand," as he christened himself, wanted to keep the Redistribution half back till the two Houses had committed themselves to the passing of the other half. The controversy is now well-nigh forgotten, and therefore need not be dwelt on at length. It will suffice to say that Gladstone had finally to give way.

But while it still remained unsettled I had a long interview with Lord Randolph Churchill at the Carlton, with the object of persuading him to speak in favour of the position taken up by the Peers. He began and ended with a flat refusal, trying meanwhile to convince me that I was wrong, on the ground that there were no men on our side capable of appealing with any effect to popular audiences, and pouring scorn upon

certain members of the Opposition Front Bench. A few days later he came up to me in the morning-room of the Carlton, and said that he was going to do what I had urged. I then asked the editor of the *Standard* if he would back up the Peers if they in turn would stick to their guns. He said he would do so if he was assured on that point, but not otherwise. This I repeated to Lord Salisbury, and obtained from him in turn a conditional promise such as I had got from the editor of the *Standard*, and the result had no little effect in the peaceful solution of the controversy.

After my return to England, a trifling, but, I think, not unsuggestive incident may here be alluded to. Mr. W. H. Smith asked me one day at the Carlton if I could walk with him to the Treasury, and I did so. On the way he asked if, in case Mr. Walter, the chief proprietor of the *Times*, was offered a peerage, and Mr. Lawson, of the *Daily Telegraph*, a baronetcy, I thought Mr. Mudford, editor of the *Standard*, would expect the latter honour to be offered to him also. I replied that it was in conformity with human nature that he should do so, though I was inclined to think he would not accept it. "But," I added, "what can possess you all to meditate a step that would expose you to the charge of trying to 'nobble the press'? Mr. Walter is a country gentleman of standing, and presumably of ample means. Offer him a peerage, if you wish, on those grounds, and

abstain from, or postpone doing, anything else." This counsel was followed and nothing was done.

I added to my labours and diversified my occupations for several years after the General Election when, as has been narrated, I stood for Dewsbury, by speaking on platforms in constituencies where the candidate appealed to me for such support. Ever since the early days of the "Westminster Debating Society," I had retained readiness, at least, of speech in such circumstances — a gift, I may add, I rate rather low, since it is so often unaccompanied by sound thought or well-ordered argument. At the time of the "*Bulgarian Atrocities*" agitation Lord Derby had declared that no one could appear successfully on any platform in opposition to it. I can only say that I was listened to at Exeter by an open meeting of some three thousand people. Later on at Chesterfield, at Cambridge, at Sheffield, at Bristol, in London, and many other places, I did what I could in aid of the Conservative candidate. The not unnatural consequence was that I was invited to become myself a candidate in various constituencies, among which I may mention Leeds, Rochester, Newark, Norwood, and Sheffield. To all such flattering suggestions I turned a deaf ear.

Lord Salisbury and Lord Lytton wrote to me as follows, in the early and late Autumn of 1886, respecting foreign and home politics:

Sept. 10, '86.

My dear Austin—Your question is a difficult one, and the answer must be very speculative.

The solution which is current among some of the leading diplomatists and financiers is somewhat this. The military power of Russia, which has been reorganized (on the Prussian system) in the last seven years, is becoming very formidable. The French available force has risen from the 350,000 of 1870 to a million and a quarter; and the expenditure on material of war is prodigious and continues rising. Germany shrinks from fighting both at once, and finds even the task of keeping up with French armaments very burdensome. The rumour is that she is resolved to have done with it: that she has purchased the inaction of Russia by the sacrifice of Prince Alexander, possibly by a consent to the occupation of Constantinople; and that Austria is squared by the assurance that in that case she shall have Salonica; and that armed with these securities Germany will in the course of the autumn call on France to disarm, and that war will follow on a refusal. There is some support for this view in the fact that ammunition is being manufactured in Germany at a more rapid rate than usual.

Nevertheless I prefer a more human version of the plot. I doubt any extraordinary development either of French or Russian force. But I think that Bismarck is growing old, and his nerve is giving way. The danger of being caught between a French and a Russian fire has affected his imagination; and he has, undoubtedly, this comparatively new danger to meet with, that the Russian throne is no longer occupied by a Czar devotedly fond of the German Emperor, but by a monarch who has much of the strength that was conferred on the Emperor Paul by the fact that no one could be certain what he would do next. Then Bismarck is somewhat in the position of Richard III. at Bosworth—not only the ghost of France, but of Austria and Denmark and Bavaria pass through his troubled dreams, and wish him disaster. Under the pressure of these feelings he has resolved to purchase his most dangerous neighbour by giving her complete liberty in the Balkan peninsula—possibly with the

intention of letting her and Austria come to blows as a last resource. But I am sceptical of the intended war in the autumn. I doubt whether either the Emperor William or the Crown Prince would agree to it.

Linked on to all these speculations is the question of our position as to the south-east of Europe. It seems evident that no power would be willing to join us in order to save Constantinople; and though we could always make it untenable, and if necessary destroy it, I doubt whether we have the material power to defend it alone. Some people are disposed to argue from that consideration that we should announce our abandonment of all interest in the Balkan peninsula, and leave Russia to do her worst. I see no advantage or defence from such a course. We may ultimately be driven to it by the perverse folly of Turkey, who may at Russia's bidding deliberately throw off our protection. But it would be unwise to anticipate what may be a very distant future. The last card is not played yet. We do not know what policy will be ultimately adopted by the small Balkan peoples, or even by Austria. We do not know what events may happen to Russia herself. Though I am not very sanguine that England will ever undertake to defend the Turkish empire in arms, alone—still there is no wisdom in abandoning the game until it is lost. I think this view is confirmed by the obvious fact that the policy of all the three empires is much more dictated by the character and strength of the men who rule in them than by any inevitable fate or tendency. But there are men on our own side who are for abandoning the traditional policy.

I have told you freely the substance of what I think.—Yours very truly, SALISBURY.

HATFIELD HOUSE, HATFIELD, HERTS,
Sept. 16, '86.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—Many thanks for your interesting letter. I recognise the train of thought in an article this morning. But it is no easy matter to carry out the view you

indicate. Many men have tried to ascertain Austria's intentions: I doubt if any have succeeded, except possibly Bismarck, and he never professes to have done it. I know of no instrument of torture that could be trusted to extract such a secret as that from Kalnoky. At present the German Powers are trying to play the confidence trick. "Go on," they say; "commit yourselves irrevocably to the Turk, and you shall see what we will do." But we are playing the part of the suspicious countryman—I hope not ultimately to experience his inevitable fate.—Yours very truly,

SALISBURY.

KNEBWORTH HOUSE, STEVENAGE,
3rd Oct. 1886.

MY DEAR MR. AUSTIN—

. . . .

The outlook in Europe seems to me a most anxious one for us. Peace will, I presume, be preserved for the present; first because Military Powers rarely go to war in the winter, and secondly because Bismarck cannot possibly afford to provoke an armed combination between France and Russia against Germany. But the whole situation is too tensely stretched to hold together much longer. As for India, I believe our position there to be all but desperate. There is only one diplomatic card we could still play with any chance of scoring a point against Russia for the defence of India, and that is the immediate negotiation of an alliance with China, to come into effect under certain very calculable contingencies. I believe it would be in our power to sweep the Russians out of the Pacific, and restore the whole of the Corean coast (I mean the Manchur Province) to China, and worth our while to do it, on condition of China's advancing along her Turkestan frontier (if Russia forces on us a *casus belli* in C. Asia) and thus threatening one of Russia's three lines of advance upon Afghanistan. But it is extremely improbable that any Parliamentary Government will venture on so definite a policy of preparation till it is too late to prepare.—Ever yours sincerely, LYTTON.

10 Downing Street, Whitehall,
Nov. 30, '86.

My dear Austin—

. . . .

As to the projects of R. C. to take my place, they do not trouble me much. He probably entertains them, and he may possibly succeed. The present course of politics is so distasteful to me, and the position of a peer is really so helpless politically, that I should really welcome a state of things which assured me that the duty of continuing a hopeless struggle was no longer incumbent upon me. But I should hesitate to utter any prophecies about him; the qualities for which he is most conspicuous have not usually kept men for any length of time at the head of affairs.—Yours very truly, Salisbury.

I have mentioned, a page or two back, my experience of the difficulties and the waywardness his colleagues in the Ministry met in conferring and acting collectively with Lord Randolph Churchill. But a more serious problem faced them when he announced to his chief, Lord Salisbury, in a letter written from Windsor Castle, bearing its address and intended for publication, his resignation as Chancellor of the Exchequer. A few days previously we had been staying at Hatfield, where Lord Randolph also was, and likewise Mr. Arthur Balfour. Sitting in the billiard-room with Lord Salisbury on the eve of our departure, I said to him, "Whether you know it or not, Randolph is aspiring to jerk you out of the saddle." "You know," was the reply, "I should not be sorry if he succeeded." "Possibly," I said, "but he must not be permitted to do so."

When, a few days after, the announcement of his resignation was made, I wrote at length to Mr. Goschen, with whom I had then little if anything more than a kindly acquaintance, using every argument I could employ to induce him to fill the gap left by Randolph's step. I was dining with Mr. and Mrs. Charles Earle, in Bryanston Square, where their town house then was, and in the middle of dinner a letter from Mr. Goschen was brought me by hand, saying that if I did not mind coming to a "Liberal" Club, he would be at Brooks's that evening, the last day of the year, at a quarter-past ten. My reply was, of course, that I would be there punctually at the hour he named. It had been, and still was, a day of dense fog, but I kept my appointment to the minute. But fully three-quarters of an hour passed before Mr. Goschen appeared, when he hurried in, begging me to pardon him, for his arrival had been deferred by the fog.

I felt there was no time to be lost, and, indeed, he felt the same, for he said at once, "It is plain by your letter that you want to induce me to take Randolph's place, and become Chancellor of the Exchequer in Lord Salisbury's Ministry. It is true I am a Liberal Unionist, but our organization is completely separate from yours" (as it then was), "and we sit on the opposite side of the House, though below the gangway. Think of the effort, imaginary if you will, to cross the floor of the House. I have no intimate

acquaintance with any of your people. Tell me about So-and-so and So-and-so." I listened while he enumerated his difficulties and stated his objections, and then set to work to the best of my capacity to answer and remove them. He interrupted me more than once, and I listened and replied. At last he said, "I think you have almost converted me." As he said it the clock struck twelve. I jumped up and said, "A Happy New Year! and it will indeed be one if I have succeeded." We parted for the time, and I walked down to the Carlton Club, and left a telegram to be dispatched to Hatfield the first thing in the morning, explaining what had happened, and its result.

I here append written documents that refer to the above episode:

SEACOX HEATH, HAWKHURST,
28th December 1886.

DEAR MR. AUSTIN—The post has been playing all kinds of pranks, to that extent that I only got your letter of Christmas Day this morning. Lord Randolph has filled our Christmas holidays with political anxieties, and it has scarcely been possible to put them away even for an hour.

To plunge *in medias res* I admit that the situation is different now to what it was when the present Government was formed, and that in many ways. I look on the Irish outlook as even graver than it was then, while politics abroad must also fill one with the very gravest anxiety.

Personally I think the arguments for coalition stronger than they were then; but even now, and partly in consequence of what has happened, there still remains much to be said on the other side. I don't say that you are not perfectly right, but I continue to recognize arguments of the highest and most far-reaching scope on the other side.

I take Lord Randolph's resignation and Chamberlain's speech together. It is pretty clear that they will work together.

What *popular* forces remain on the Constitutional side, at least in the shape of advocates? Will not all the democratic forces now range themselves, or be inclined to range themselves, either with the Gladstonians, or with Churchill and Chamberlain, and will the rallying of the ultra, and to my mind too impatient, democracy under such leadership not be hastened and promoted by the Moderate Liberals leaving the bulk of the party and joining with the Conservatives: will sufficient moderate men in the country rally round them to outnumber or outweigh the other side? May we not be removing an invaluable check on the separatist and anarchic forces, by withdrawing from all association with advanced Radicals such men as have hitherto been able to hold them partially in check? I say again, this is no *conclusive* argument, but still it has to be considered, not from a party view, but from the point of view of the future of the country, and of the Union itself. Coalition would certainly answer in Commons, but would it answer in the country? Would it be certain not to damage both the Conservative and Liberal Constitutionalists, and, through them, their common cause? It seems to me to be a question between the present and the future. If the Government were strong enough to weather the storm without us, it would be best to keep that large portion of the Liberal party, which will stick to Lord Hartington ultimately, though perhaps not now, in hand by not taking a step which the more democratic constituencies are sure to misrepresent and resent; but if the Government can't weather the storm, if the dangers of the present moment are so overwhelming that the situation must be instantly retrieved at any cost, then your arguments should prevail. Without knowing more than I do, at this moment, I can scarcely judge in which direction there lies the greatest risk. Conservative members, or Ministers, or Counsellors, are the best judges on this. The time may have come for a rearrangement of parties, but we should look the fact clearly in the face, that we shall have to

contend with nearly *all* who control or influence the "*masses.*" What will the Tory boroughs do? Will they stick to Lord Salisbury against Lord Randolph?

Many thanks for having written to me so frankly. You see that I have reciprocated your openness by writing to you very fully. I entirely recognize the immense responsibility which rests upon us in the present crisis, and am most glad to hear the opinions of eminent and fair-thinking Conservatives.

I propose to show your letter to Lord Hartington on his return.—Yours very truly, GEORGE J. GOSCHEN.

BROOKS'S,
31st December.

DEAR MR. AUSTIN—I should be very glad to see you *here* at 10.15 if you don't mind coming to a Liberal Club. I am living here: so that I cannot offer a meeting-place elsewhere. —Yours very truly, GEORGE J. GOSCHEN.

69 PORTLAND PLACE, W.,
Monday.

DEAR MR. AUSTIN—If you could come to the Coburg Hotel this evening at 6.15, I would gladly see you. My evening is engaged and I should not be free till very late (at Brooks's). I could see you at 11.30 at the Coburg Hotel, if I heard this would suit you by 8 at Brooks's.

Very many thanks for all you have said and written.

I have a quantity of letters to write, so that before post time I could only see you for a very few minutes.—Yours very truly, GEORGE J. GOSCHEN.

SEACOX HEATH, HAWKHURST,
2nd December [ought to be *January*].

DEAR MR. AUSTIN—Many thanks for your yesterday's note with its hints, as friendly as they were wise. But I was not able to act on them. There are so many points to be considered, both as regards form and substance, that I could not settle the matter at once by a simple "yes" or "no," and many matters had to be thought very carefully over. I hope

that everything may be settled to-morrow afternoon. On Saturday Lord Salisbury heard of my being disposed to accept if the matter could be put in a certain light, and if we agreed substantially on all the chief political issues likely to arise, and we shall see to-morrow whether these "ifs" can be realized.

I was too much pushed on Saturday to be able to see Sir A. Paget, but the foreign aspect of the question has certainly not escaped me. I am deeply impressed by the gravity of the present position in every respect and in every direction.—Yours very truly, George J. Goschen.

Seacox Heath, Hawkhurst,
9th January 1887.

Dear Mr. Austin—It *was* the Coburg Hotel, a private hotel in Charles Street, Grosvenor Square, where I was staying. It was very careless of me not to give the address, and I am sorry for the trouble it caused you.

It is very considerate on your part to have explained your relations to the *Standard* so fully and frankly to me, but I am sure that no explanations were needed to convince me of the extremely public-spirited course which you have taken on this occasion. If you have served the *Standard* you have certainly served me, I will not say by urging my inclusion in the Government (for under present circumstances who can say that that is a matter for personal rejoicing?), but by preparing for me, and securing, a genial and cordial welcome amongst those with whom I shall have to work. You have spoken of me in too flattering terms, thereby increasing the responsibility which I shall feel, and the expectations I shall wish to fulfil, but you have handled with discretion the various topics which we discussed on a certain very foggy night.—Believe me, yours very truly,

George J. Goschen.

A day or two later Lord Rowton said to me, in a voice anybody might overhear, in the dining-room of the Carlton, "It is a new thing for members of

this club to cut their old friends." As everybody knows, Lord Rowton was the most charmingly amiable of men; and I said, also aloud, "You do not mean any one here has been cutting you." "Yes," he answered, "Randolph," who was sitting at luncheon not far off. "Really!" I said, on purpose that I might be overheard, "I never give him the chance"; for we had not spoken to each other at Hatfield. Rowton's offence was to have acted as messenger between the Prime Minister and the Queen, who was in the Isle of Wight, and mine to have assisted in filling up the important ministerial post he had left vacant.

Some years afterwards I received the following letters from Mr. Goschen. The second one refers to his retirement from public affairs and acceptance of a Peerage.

TREASURY CHAMBERS, WHITEHALL,
October 27, 1891.

DEAR MR. AUSTIN—It is very kind of you to speak of my late action in such warm and sympathetic terms. I feel quite convinced that the course which I took was absolutely required by the circumstances of the day, and the great satisfaction clearly felt by the country at large at Balfour's leadership shows, if any further proof were needed, that our common cause has been a great gainer by the final choice.

I see *you* have not forgotten the first days of 1887. "A good deal has happened since then," and at all events I have the satisfaction of feeling that I gave breathing time to the Conservative party to develop a leader from amongst themselves.—Believe me, very sincerely yours,

GEORGE J. GOSCHEN.

Mrs. Alfred Austin.
1907.

From a Photograph by Langfier.

Seacox Heath, Hawkhurst,
26/10/00.

Dear Mr. Austin—I am very grateful to you for your most kind appreciation of my public services, and am glad to believe that, in common with many other friends, you fully understand and sympathize with my motives for imperative retirement. And I am sure, that what I have done is not only a relief to myself which was fast becoming necessary, but was also in the public interest. Five years of a Government without a single change in its personnel is a long spell, and I am sure that a little reconstruction will be advantageous. I write in entire ignorance as yet of what changes are in contemplation. Thanking you once more for your letter, I am, yours sincerely, George J. Goschen.

For some years following the incidents I have described in 1886-87, Lord Randolph Churchill and I did not speak to each other; and he imagined that I enjoyed opposing and belittling him in the *Standard*, in which he was utterly mistaken. To give an instance of this, he was lunching one day at Lady Jeune's, the day following one on which he had, in an interview with an evening paper, openly said that some article that depreciated him was written by me. Lady Jeune, as she afterwards told me, said to him, "Well, Randolph, you have committed a blunder. No one knows Mr. Austin better than I do, and I am sure he will never assail you politically as long as you remain a member of the Conservative Party. But, as a fact, he is at present not in England, and therefore could not have written what you ascribe to him. I had a letter from him this morning

from Monte Carlo." Some little time after, I had the pleasure of escorting some friends to a play at the Lyceum Theatre, and, at the close of it, took them "behind the scenes," to make the acquaintance of Miss Ellen Terry and Irving. I noticed that Lord Randolph was present; and Irving said to me, "Of course, you know Lord Randolph?" "Yes," I replied, "but we never speak to each other." "But, if he spoke to you, you would respond?" "Certainly, I should," I answered. In a minute or two, Randolph came to me, holding out his hand. So there was peace between us.

The three following letters speak for themselves. As respects Mr. M. R. Corbet's, one can only feel thankful that the beautiful memorial of Shelley, by Onslow Ford, has remained in England, to adorn his college at Oxford, and grateful to Lady Shelley for giving it to posterity.

DUNLEY HILL, DORKING,
December 6th, 1891.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—You may like to see enclosed verses by G. Meredith, which appear in yesterday's *Athenaeum*. I went to see him on Saturday, and found him physically rather broken. I am very glad you are going to spend Friday evening with him.

His verse is really inspired by that sort of Celtic antagonism to England which has always made him unfair to England.

Then he lives in England and hears the Babel of voices which indicates dissension, and would prefer the *dominant* voice and personified will—the nation, in some vague way, as person.

His genius seems to break up over needful politics. He

demands National Union in the abstract, and goes in for disintegration (Home Rule) in detail!

You will, I think, find him quite delightful in conversation.—Yours sincerely, FREDK. A. MAXSE.

BOX HILL, DORKING,
Nov. 5th, 1892.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—Your hint of the dedication does me honour. All I fear is, that if your book is associated with the name of a brother in the craft, whose name is not popular, the shadow of one or two of the faults ascribed to him may fall upon you here and there, if by chance, reviewers are inimical and small, say, an "obscurity" or other of my stereotyped spots. It is prudent to take a name for the dedication that is disengaged in Literature, and there are times for acting with prudence. I do but suggest. You will follow your judgment, only let it be quite careful all round, and believe me, I think of the interests of your book. —Ever yours, GEORGE MEREDITH.

CROWS'-NEST, 54 CIRCUS ROAD,
ST. JOHN'S WOOD, N.W.,
Monday, June 20, 1892.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—I have been intending to write and thank you for all your trouble about the Shelley monument, but, as you know, have been so unwell that I have been unable to do anything.

Many thanks for your trouble. Onslow Ford told me, almost simultaneously with the receipt of your letter, that the affair was all off, at any rate for the present. There has been some dispute between the two committees, of Florence and Viareggio, as far as I can make out, and Lady Shelley very naturally will not push the matter any farther. They say they want an Italian to put up a colossal statue to Shelley, so I expect it is really national jealousy that is at the bottom of it. If they cannot find the money for the base, it is not very likely they will be able to find it for a colossal statue.—Yours very sincerely,

M. RIDLEY CORBET.

CHAPTER XI

The Poet Laureateship—Petrarch's Experiences of it—Visit to Windsor—Audience of Her Majesty—*The Conversion of Winckelmann*—Retirement from Party Politics—Letter from Count Paul Metternich—Fiscal Reform—Conversation with Mr. Chamberlain—His Illness—Valescure—General Election—Foreign Estimates of England.

On the 1st January 1896 I was appointed to the high honour of the Laureateship. The newspapers of that date contained the following notice:

> Her Majesty has been pleased to appoint Alfred Austin, Esq., to be Poet Laureate to her Majesty.

It would be most unbecoming in me to make any comment on this occurrence. I always think, with pride and pleasure, that it was conferred on me by the most revered Sovereign that ever sat on the British throne. But, at the time, I reflected, with amusement, on what Petrarch wrote to Boccaccio on his coronation in the Roman capital. Petrarch says: "The Laurel brought me no increase of learning or literary power, as you may well imagine, while it destroyed my peace of mind by the infinite jealousy it aroused; for from that time well-nigh every one sharpened his tongue against

me. It was necessary to be constantly on the alert, with banner flying, ready to repel an attack, now on the left, now on the right. In a word, the Laurel made me known only to be tormented. Without it I should have led the best of lives, as many deem a life of obscurity and peace!"

The 31st of December 1895 was as lovely a winter day as ever favoured our Island; sunny, windless, and, for the time of the year, warm and genial. I was walking in the garden, then recently grown into notoriety, if the word be not too strong, as *The Garden that I Love*, when the postman arrived with the usual second delivery of letters. I observed that one of them was from Lord Salisbury, but as I not infrequently heard from him on political questions, pressing or prospective, I did not associate it with any other matter. On opening it, I read:

30th December 1895.

MY DEAR AUSTIN—I have much pleasure in telling you that the Queen has approved your appointment to the post of Poet Laureate. It will be announced to-morrow.—Yours very truly, SALISBURY.

Next day, shortly after eight o'clock, generous congratulations came pouring in by telegraph from persons of every degree of literary, artistic, and social eminence.

From Sir Edwin Arnold I received the following touching telegram:

Accept my heartiest congratulations with which no grudge mingles, although I myself expected the appointment. I

rejoice at continuance of this appointment, which will be worthily and patriotically borne by you.

EDWIN ARNOLD.

I would rather be the man who could send such a telegram in such circumstances, than be incapable of sending it, yet have written the greatest of poems.

Overwhelmed by the volume of letters and telegrams, I was obliged to send the following letter to the Press :

THE LAUREATESHIP

SIR—Can you spare me a few lines of your valuable space to express, in the only way as yet possible, my deep sense of the kindness that has prompted not only so many men of letters, but so many hundreds of my countrymen and countrywomen of all classes, both at home and abroad, and on both sides of the Atlantic, to send me their generous congratulations? If they knew how numerous these are, they would understand that some little time must elapse before I can acknowledge them all, as I hope in due course to do, *propria manu.*

Thanking you in anticipation for your courtesy, I am, Sir, your obedient servant, ALFRED AUSTIN.

SWINFORD OLD MANOR, *January* 3, 1896.

In the following year was celebrated by the nation the sixtieth anniversary of the Accession of the Queen. Though, as I have already pointed out, it is recognized that no obligation is imposed on the Poet Laureate to write on any event or occasion, I could not help feeling that for such a celebration a Poem by him would be looked for. The whole nation was in a state

of pleasurable enthusiasm, and therefore in the best and most amiable of moods.

My verses appeared in the chief London papers, and I got a specially prepared copy printed for the Queen, which I took down to Windsor, together with some roses from my garden, intending to leave them at the Castle, and return home.

As I entered the gates I met my good friend Mr. Alec Yorke, who stopped to tell me how delighted the Queen was with the Poem, which she had already seen. When I met Sir Arthur Bigge, I asked him to present my offerings to the Queen. "But she wants to see you," he said, and led me into her private apartments. Shortly she appeared, just back from a drive, and received my proffered gift with that mixture of graciousness and dignity observed by all who approached her. A day or two after, I received Her Majesty's two *Highland* books, with Her Majesty's name and my own inscribed in them.

I shortly afterwards published *The Conversion of Winckelmann and other Poems*, the chief of these being *Polyphemus*. Winckelmann's story had haunted me for many years as a theme for poetic treatment; and at last the idea took shape, and was carried out, in a Soliloquy in three parts. In writing it, I had, at least, the advantage of having lived in and knowing Rome as it was in Winckelmann's time (for it was unchanged in 1862), and the somewhat Pagan side of the Papacy in his day. In the

Spring of 1901, at the Villa La Favorita, which we had rented in Florence, I wrote *Flodden Field.* In it I had brought myself, for the first time, to portray the reverse of a good, gentle, and womanly woman, in all its impassioned and tragic features. In this respect, at least, it stands alone among my poems.

Though, on being appointed Poet Laureate, I felt it would be more consonant with the national character of the Office to abstain thenceforth from any public share in Party Politics, I did not cease to take the same interest in them as ever, as affecting the welfare of the Realm and the strength of the Empire.

The following letter from the German Ambassador, Count Paul Metternich, was received by me in 1902. As His Excellency had no objection to its publication, I cite it as a proof of the sentiments I also entertain; and I have always heartily disapproved of expressions calculated to engender different feelings, by others.

September 25th, 1902.

Dear Mr. Austin—

. . . .

As to the estrangement that has taken place of late between our two nations, there is no use concealing the fact, how much one may deplore it. As to the causes, I don't think that they are justly judged in England. The sympathies of a large number of people all over the world were during the war on the weaker side, with the Boers. This is but human, and if an example were needed, England would have set it by often espousing the cause of the weaker. The pro-Boer enthusiasm in Germany

was essentially engendered by sentiment, and was certainly not greater than for instance in the United States and probably less than in many other countries. It has already subsided, though it may perhaps be temporarily revived should the Boer generals visit Germany. It was not for instance dictated by inveterate hatred of England as one may daily read in the English press.

Enlightened men like yourself stood by Germany in her great struggle thirty years ago, because they foresaw that it would be to the mutual advantage of the two nations to be friends. A good many others of your countrymen took the opposite view. A nation's public opinion will always be divided on the merit of a foreign war being waged in which she is not herself engaged. And even then they are not unanimous, as the pro-Boer party in England has proved.

Sentiment is often a bad guide. It readily exaggerates the virtues of the object of its affection and addicts defects to those against whom it is directed. It bursts out into a passion and cries aloud, whilst sober-minded people stand amazed and powerless and have but to wait till it passes by —which it surely does. It has done so in Germany.

Not so in England. Fostered by the press for many months, the anti-German craze in England is at present far greater than anti-English feeling in Germany. Germany is continuously singled out as the country that has been the most hostile to England during the war, whilst the truth is that public opinion of all non-English countries have been pro-Boer. Influential English papers make it their business to dig out from some obscure corner an anti-English utterance that may have been made in Germany, and to hold it up indignantly before their readers in order to show that Germany is the only real danger and enemy of England. The result is that people in England begin to believe in that absurdity. They are daily told that we covet their colonies, and build a fleet to sweep the English off the seas. There is nothing so absurd which a number of people won't believe in the end when they are often told it. It acts as a suggestion like Coleman's mustard on a wall. To destroy the English fleet one must have one at least equally strong. I

have never yet met a German, however pro or anti he may be, who does wish to add to his military expenses new naval burdens to the extent to be a match for England. But even if that phantastic object were achieved, I should like to know which English colony we covet. Let the English Germanophobe glance over an atlas and, however prejudiced he may be for the moment, he will easily detect for obvious reasons that we cannot possibly wish to conquer Canada, or India, or Australia, or South Africa; and, let us say, for the borders of Lake Chad I don't think it is worth while to have a very large fleet. On the other hand, we want and shall have a powerful fleet to assert our position in the world, to assist our trade and to be a valuable ally on the sea. These are aspirations which are not necessarily antagonistic to England. We can be friends, and we can be enemies. In the one case, we would both prosper; in the latter case we would both suffer. Who would be the heavier loser, it is difficult to foretell. I hope it will not come to that.—Believe me, dear Mr. Austin, yours sincerely,

P. METTERNICH.

When Mr. Chamberlain in 1903 suddenly announced his conversion to "Fiscal Reform," coupled with "Colonial Preference," Mr. Balfour hesitated as to what course to take in such new and difficult circumstances, thus farther widening the rent. I wrote a letter to the *Standard*, under the designation of *Quondam*, with the object of helping to lessen the mischief by confining the movement to what I preferred to call "Retaliation," retaliation not inspired by vindictive feeling, but suggested by legitimate self-protection. It represented my own state of mind on the subject, and I have good, indeed conclusive reason, to believe that such at that

time was the state of mind of the Unionist Prime Minister.

I privately called the attention of the Leaders of the Party to the letter, and had communications from them in return, that can scarcely be published as yet. With Lord Goschen I had several conversations on the subject, both at Seacox Heath and at Swinford. The crushing defeat of the Unionist Party at the General Election that followed in due course did not in the least surprise me; but I much regretted what I still regard as the mistaken strategy that caused it, or that at least made it so complete. It must, however, be allowed, by the severest critic of that strategy, that Mr. Chamberlain made splendid amends for his hasty pronouncement by the numerous speeches he made throughout the country. The crowd will follow any really gifted and vigorous Leader, be he Bismarck, Cavour, Garibaldi, Gladstone, or Disraeli; and after eighteen months of strenuous and effective speechmaking to tens of thousands of electors, Mr. Chamberlain could congratulate himself on the patent fact that "Fiscal Reform," as a cry, had made immense progress among the electors. Moreover, though still a sceptic as to "Colonial Preference," I entertained the belief that the menace of "Retaliation" on our part, addressed to avowedly Protectionist countries, might have a certain amount of success. Such success, however, would only assume the character of

"Commercial Treaties"; a result that need not be apologized for by any one who, like the Unionist Leader, repudiated the designation of Protectionist.

But I more than once entertained the fear that Mr. Chamberlain might be taxing his physical powers over much; and such, alas! proved to be the case. In June 1904 it was matter of general knowledge that he had been ordered by his medical advisers to husband his physical resources; and I had myself ventured to suggest to Mrs. Chamberlain that he should confine his speeches to audiences of seven or eight hundred, pointing out to her that, as they still would be reported *verbatim* in the papers, the effect would be much the same as heretofore. Very shortly afterward, I lunched with him and his family in Prince's Gardens, and, after luncheon, had an hour's talk with him alone. Knowing that I had, so far, not been able to give full assent to his fiscal programme, confining my assent, as I did, to retaliatory tariffs in case of clear advantage, he described to me the gradual changes in his mind that had led him to the final declaration of his policy.

I listened silently till he reached the question of Colonial Preference, when I expressed my doubts as to its possibility on any large scale, unless the Colonies became Free Traders or we Protectionists, neither of which seemed to be in sight, and pointed out that, save for a slight

preference of no great value, Canada and Australia, the first especially, were economically Foreign Powers, and acted to us as such. He remarked that he should not have cared to enter on his campaign but for the Imperial Idea, and the hope of uniting the whole Empire in a plan of Naval and Military co-operation. I pleaded that I had been, in theory and aspiration, an Imperialist in that sense for thirty years, and had been labelled a "Jingo" for my pains; and I observed, furthermore, that I thought he had placed himself at a disadvantage, with the Canadians especially, by blending sentiment with business, while they, a very hard-headed people, kept sentiment in the background, and negotiated only as men of business.

He was most patient with my objections; and I much enjoyed the frankness and lucidity of his conversation. I asked him if he remembered the first time we had met, at Sir Francis Jeune's in Harley Street, and the talk we had after luncheon concerning the then proposed Round Table Conference; after which, on my host asking me what impression my companion had made on me, I replied, "He seemed to me to be a hard-headed visionary, who brings supreme business talents to bear on the impracticable." He laughed and said, "Not a wholly unflattering description." "No," I answered, "or I should not have told you of it."

On leaving him, I felt I had been with a

great Personality, the finest thing a man can be, if sincerity and enthusiasm, as in his case, pervade it. But, in common with all his countrymen, I had, within a fortnight, to grieve over a physical collapse, that left the mind as clear, vigorous, and incisive as ever, but compelled him to withdraw from active public life.

Though, myself, having nothing to complain of on the score of health, but, rather, much to be thankful for in retaining at seventy-five one's faculties, physical and mental, if in a diminished but unconsciously waning degree, I reap much benefit from spending three months or so of the winter and early spring in the warmer temperature of the South of Europe; and my wife feels it of equal advantage, while the change is pleasurable to both. Several years previously, in the year 1885, I had spent my annual four weeks' holiday alone at Saint-Raphael. What caused me to choose Saint-Raphael, and how I first heard of it, I cannot recall. It was but little frequented by French people, and unvisited by one's own countrymen. In it there were two small and unpretentious hotels, both since greatly enlarged and liberated from their pristine simplicity, the *Grand Hotel* and the *Beau-Rivage*. I stayed at the former, paying some six or seven francs a day. The Cathedral, now a soaring edifice visible from long distances, was just beginning to rise from the ground. But "sea-front" there was none, and no Villa had as yet been built in or near it. My walks

were among rocks, sands, and pine woods full of white heather and broom. Two miles inland, after a gradual ascent, one came to a little place called Valescure, though, strictly speaking, there was no "place," since there was neither street nor shop, only the little inn where one could get tea or coffee, nestling amid woods with rough narrow pathways through them.

I was at Saint-Raphael from the middle of February to the middle of March, and the charming quiet was enhanced, fortunately, by sunny and fairly windless weather. On returning home, I published and signed a paper in the *National Review* on my pleasing experience, but without naming the spot where I had been. I forthwith received several letters, inquiring where it was and what was its name. I kept my discovery selfishly to myself, as I had no desire to see Saint-Raphael turned into a small copy of Nice or Cannes. The only person to whom I spoke of it was Lord Salisbury, for the purpose of recommending him to buy land in the neighbourhood and build there the villa he was meditating, and that finally he built at Beaulieu. But, in due course, Lord Rendel and Lord Amherst of Hackney purchased a large tract at Valescure, which now has two first-class hotels, many Villas, and two churches, one Roman Catholic and one Anglican. It still has no streets and no shops, though through its almost interminable woods have been made delightful winding and undulating carriage roads.

It was at Valescure that, in the middle of last December 1909, we established ourselves for the better part of three months, at the Grand Hôtel Coirier, in every respect as comfortable and agreeable as any hotel can be. It is not large, has a commanding situation, and is in the heart of a world of woods and mountains. It was while we were there that the General Election took place, in the month of January of the present year 1910. The Ashford Division, in which Swinford Old Manor lies, was an absolutely safe Unionist seat in having such a representative as Mr. Laurence Hardy, whose majority was over 3000; and I was therefore exonerated, on the score of age, from travelling home to vote, and travelling out again to Valescure. But I had the results telegraphed to me, every day, from the Carlton Club.

The general expectation had been that the Unionist Party would win a hundred seats, and might win more. Its gains were a hundred and four. In the late Parliament Mr. Redmond and his followers had voted against the Budget; and therefore a majority was returned against it, thus vindicating the action of the Upper House. Thereupon Mr. Redmond, perceiving his opportunity, declared that he and his followers would vote for anything, including the Budget, if the Government would only destroy the power of the House of Lords so that Ireland might become an Independent Nation.

On the eve of the Elections, I ventured to address the following letter to my Countrymen:

Appeal for Fair Play for the House of Lords

The following appeal by Mr. Alfred Austin, the Poet Laureate, was issued last night from the offices of the National Union:

When, fourteen years ago to-day, I was appointed to the office I have the honour to hold, it seemed to me more consonant with my duty to abstain thenceforth from all public share in Party controversies; nor do I propose to deviate now, in the slightest degree, from that determination. In the few words I venture to address to you, Party spirit will be scrupulously absent.

But the Constitution of these realms is, no more than the safety of the Empire, a Party question; and that Constitution, which has enjoyed the admiration and envy of foreign nations, has consisted for many generations of Kings, Lords, and Commons, co-operating with or counterbalancing each other, for the general welfare of the State.

Still, politics being a practical no less than a theoretical question, and applying the practical test to the present House of Lords, what do we find? That two hundred of its members have served their country in the Regular Army and the Royal Navy, a hundred of these on the battlefield, to say nothing of those who perished in the shock of war; that they have been the most active and the most influential of all our citizens in seconding Mr. Haldane's most praiseworthy efforts to form an adequate Territorial Force for home defence; that one hundred and seventy of them have been, at one time or another, members of the House of Commons; and that their ability in debate is conspicuous, and by no fair-minded person denied. Surely such a body, with such credentials, cannot be accurately described, any more than the Sovereign, as non-representative.

I earnestly ask my fellow-countrymen of all Parties to consider the foregoing facts during the next few weeks; and I have little doubt, if they do so, that, whatever may be

their opinions on other questions, they will stand by the Constitution for which alone I address this appeal to their practical wisdom. ALFRED AUSTIN.

Protecting myself against the suggestion that I am violating the rule I have laid down for myself not to take any public share in Party Politics, by pointing out that the Constitution is outside the limits of Party Politics, I have taken, and shall continue to take, the keenest and most active interest in the unconstitutional attempt to paralyse the power of one of the two co-ordinate Houses of Parliament, and impose on the country the tyranny of one of them. That the attempt to do so will be successful I do not for one moment believe.

The internal reorganization of the House of Lords by itself is another and a perfectly legitimate operation. But I have seen with more than misgiving the suggestion that the hereditary character of all its members should be abolished. Its numbers would, I think, be wisely reduced by its own decision, and inherited Peerages qualifying for a seat might be added to the admission of men of distinction in every department of national and imperial activity. Meanwhile, as I write, the matter is still under the consideration of the Peers, and one must await and watch their decision.

While we were still at Valescure, Mr. Chamberlain arrived at Cannes at the Villa Vittoria, with his devoted wife and daughters, and they invited me to go over from Valescure to luncheon. I found them in a lovely house and garden, and Mr.

Chamberlain in a bath-chair, in the open air, looking wonderfully like his old self, and offering me the warmest welcome. I spent a couple of hours there, he lunching with us, smoking his cigar afterwards, and remaining with me all the time. We talked of the recent Elections, of the prospects of the political future, and of Free Trade, Tariff Reform, and Colonial Preference once more. There was not the faintest symptom of alteration in the clearness of his mind, the strength of his will, and the amiable evenness of his temper. With her usual charming courtesy, Mrs. Chamberlain wrote to me the next day, saying how much they had enjoyed my visit. Shortly afterwards, Mr. Arthur Balfour went to Cannes and, no doubt, had the advantage of more than one conference with his old and sagacious colleague.

We led a life of simple monotonous enjoyment at Valescure, 1909-10, seeing old friends and making new ones. The Duchess of Marlborough and Lady Blandford were at the *Villa* "*Lou Castéou*," built by the late Lord Amherst of Hackney, and now belonging to his widow, and its hospitality was kindly extended to us. At the *Villa Marguerite* I found Lieutenant-Colonel Ronald Brooke and Mrs. Brooke, both of whom were old acquaintances. Like his elder brother Victor, he won great distinction in the South African War, but at the sacrifice of his health, and he is now compelled to pass the larger part of the year abroad. At the Hôtel Coirier was Doctor Leyds,

President Kruger's emissary in Europe during the course of the South African War, a highly educated and exceedingly interesting man. I did not previously know that he is a Dutch citizen, and that his home is at the Hague. When the ice was broken, others found him as agreeable as I did.

On leaving Valescure, we spent some days with Lady Hanbury and her eldest son in their beautiful home at La Mortola, where we had been so often made welcome, also during the lifetime of Sir Thomas. Mr. Cecil Hanbury drove us over in his motor-car one afternoon to Beaulieu, to call at the Villa Maryland on Mrs. Arthur Wilson, whom I had never seen since I met her, as a very beautiful girl, at a picnic given by my more intimate friends in the Northern Circuit, shortly before I left the Bar, fifty years before. I did not expect her to remember me, but she did so, and accompanied her kind welcome with reminding me of what I could assure her I had not forgotten. Both her villa and her garden are among the loveliest on the Riviera, and Miss Muriel Wilson, whom I saw for the first time, added not a little to the enjoyment of the visit.

Turning our face homewards, we passed two nights at Genoa, already well-known to us, in order to see Porto Fino, where the late Lord Carnarvon more than once invited me to visit him. Unfortunately, I delayed too long in availing myself of his kindness.

Porto Fino, Ligure, Italia, 1885.

. . . .

Lady Carnarvon and I have several times said since we have been here how much you would appreciate this place, with its extraordinary beauty of sea and mountain and cliff, where we are making winding paths along the face of it and terraces, and retreats whence we can look down through the stems of pines on the bluest of waters. It is in natural beauty almost perfect; and our house is a great success. I am sorry to think how fast the days are slipping away, and how soon it will be necessary to set our faces northwards.

. . . .

Carnarvon.

Driving from Santa Margherita, a short distance from Genoa by train, to Porto Fino, we spent the rest of the day, on returning to Santa Margherita, with our old friend Mr. Mylius, his wife, to our regret, being away in the United States on a visit to her people there. At their Villa Olivetta at Menaggio, on Lake Como, we have spent, at various times, many delightful days.

Journeying on northward, we made our next halt at Milan, that my wife might see the famous and lovely Certosa at Pavia, and which I myself had seen only once, half a century ago. Her delight in noble architecture, antique sculpture, and the frescoes and easel pictures of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, is fully as great as my own, lending to our foreign travel, especially in Italy, the most enjoyable and instructive of experiences. I need hardly say that I did not leave Milan without once again reverently visiting the Duomo, always associated in my inmost mind and heart

with *Madonna's Child* and Olympia's last endeavour to overcome Godfrid's doubts. Breaking our journey from Milan to Paris at Dijon, we were amply repaid by the architecture of its chief churches, and the antique riches of its Museum. In a quiet street is the ancestral home of the De Vogüé family, which I name because, shortly after our arrival in England, I was grieved to hear of the death of Count Melchior de Vogüé, of the Académie Française, with whose contributions to the *Revue des Deux Mondes* all readers of modern French Literature are well acquainted, and the charm of whose personality and high breeding always struck me whenever, only too rarely, I saw him in Paris. The mention of the *Revue* reminds me of a paper that appeared in it on the morrow of our General Election in January, written by the Comte d'Haussonville, and which led me to send the following letter to *The Times*:

Foreign Estimates of England

Sir—I was reading last night a paper in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* on the January elections by the Comte d'Haussonville, the nephew of the late Duc de Broglie and grandson of Mme. de Staël, and whose reception by the Académie Française I had the good fortune to attend, taken there by the late Lord Lytton when English Ambassador in Paris, with whom, at the time, I happened to be staying. I remember, too, that, on the evening of the same day, we went to the Théâtre Français to see Mounet Sully in the *Oedipus Rex*. Forgive me for mentioning all this, since it makes one regret that nothing akin to the intellectual delights that still exist in Paris are to be found among ourselves.

M. d'Haussonville spent ten days, he tells us, in England during the height of the period immediately preceding the polls. He is a French Liberal of the more moderate type, and he crossed the Channel with no preconception of what was going to happen, unless it was that a serious constitutional change was impending. He did not confine himself to London, but went everywhere where the various leaders of the two Parties were speaking.

What was his conclusion? I give the substance of it in his own words, since these are conveniently few, though the paper itself occupies 52 pages of the *Revue*:

"I once heard the Duc d'Aumale say, what still remains true, 'From my youth upward I have heard people talk of the decadence of England; but I have still to wait for any symptoms of this.'"

The paper concludes with these words:

"England is not on the eve of a political revolution, and still less of a social revolution. It remains, and will remain, what it has been for a hundred years—the model of great and free countries."

Why do I ask you to publish this letter? Because too many of us at home speak and write in a totally different strain, and so encourage foreign jealousy to do the same. I wish M. d'Haussonville's paper could be circulated in a certain Continental country, and likewise in Canada and Australia, many of whose people, it seems to me, cherish a somewhat too complacent estimate of themselves, and a much mistaken one concerning the enduring vigour and persistent vitality of the Motherland.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant, ALFRED AUSTIN.

30th March.

P.S.—In the course of the same paper M. d'Haussonville mentions incidentally that even so shrewd a thinker as M. Melchior de Vogüé believed that England was on the eve of a serious revolution, not allowing, as he should have done, for the serious and tradition-respecting temper of the English people, and for the circumstance that the speeches of members of the House of Lords during the Election, so

superior, even as platform oratory, to those delivered by the members of the House of Commons with one or two exceptions, would alone suffice to save from successful attack any assault upon its existence. Since M. de Vogüé expressed that opinion France has had to regret his death (duly recorded in *The Times*), so sad a blow alike to the Académie Française and the higher literature of France. Only the other day I saw the ancient home of his family in a street in Dijon, so admirably described by Mrs. Edith Wharton in *A Motor Flight through France*.

CHAPTER XII

Winters spent Abroad—Sicily—Villas at Florence—Visits in England, Scotland, and Ireland — Cædmon — Dove Cottage — Death of King Edward VII.—*The Truce of God*—Sir Theodore Martin—*If Time would Halt!*—Conclusion of Biography.

To return to England in the middle of March after three months passed in the sun-warmed south has its risks, if not for health, at least for comfort. But we had the good fortune to cross the Channel in its most tranquil mood, to be welcomed by a week of windless sunshine, and to find the daffodils in the Orchard far advanced in flower, and one's spring Garden beginning to wear the look of vernal hopefulness. Political excitement and Party encounters were still in full activity.

In connection with what I have previously written, I may briefly name some of the places abroad at which we passed our winter sojourns. In 1897-1898, we leased the Villa Cedri, outside the Porta San Niccolò, at Florence, a villa far too large for our requirements, but half a dozen rooms of which we accommodated to English winter needs. To it was attached a large *podere*, that led down to the upper valley of the Arno, where there was one of the

loveliest but least known views of the fair city; and in the neighbourhood were picturesque hill walks, and drives. It was there I composed a short poem, entitled *The East* (Great Britain) *to the West* (the United States), of which Lord Salisbury, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs as well as Premier, said that what he was quite willing to believe was good poetry, was also good diplomacy, which, he added, was more within his competency. Another winter we spent in Southern Italy and Sicily, the latter being a fresh and enchanting experience for us. Crossing the Straits early in the morning, after awaking in the train to a cerulean sea fringed with orange and lemon trees in full fruit, we at once went from Messina to Taormina.

The Convent of San Domenico, we understood, had been turned into an hotel; but I was not prepared, on reaching it, to find myself in a cloistered court-yard of fine architecture, the dining-room an old refectory, and the bedrooms the cells of expelled monks. Of this lovely and romantic hostelry we were the only inmates, save Prince Cerami, to whom it belonged, his wife, and daughter, who were passing part of the year there, having brought with them from Catania their cook, carriage, and horses. Their usual residence was at Catania. Every morning, when I woke, I went to the window to see the upper slopes of Etna flushed rosy pink in the sunrise. It was while staying there that I wrote

Polyphemus, for Aci Reale, the site of the loves of Acis and Galatea, was in view of the Convent.

On leaving Taormina we went to the Castle of Maniace, where we stayed with Viscount Bridport, who was Duke of Brontë in Sicily, a title now held by his son, Mr. Alexander Nelson-Hood, as the representative of Admiral Lord Nelson, who was granted this territorial title by the then King of Naples. We travelled there by the circular railway that runs round the lower ranges of Etna, and were met at the station of Brontë, and driven thence to Maniace, where we spent a delightful time with the kindest of hosts. Perched up there, of course, the thermometer in January was not high; but when we reached Syracuse shortly after, we lay out on the grass for an hour on the early days of the year, in spacious sunshine, looking out on the many-dimpled sea.

Sorrento, Amalfi, Paestum, Naples, Pompeii, Rome, Florence, these are names familiar to the whole world, and places visited by thousands of tourists. But none of them is to be really seen, much less felt, by the traveller enslaved to dates, and too often unqualified to appreciate them at their true value, if imperfectly acquainted with the past and the bygone art of Italy. To relish them at their full worth, leisure, meditation, and some general culture are needed. We loved them all, more and more, every time we visited them.

In 1889, at the Albergo dei Cappucini at Amalfi, we first met our now valued and charming friends and neighbours, Lord and Lady Arthur Butler, then, as now, a singularly handsome couple. A scene of high comedy was being carried on between Lord Arthur and an Irish Home Rule lady in the hotel. Every day Mrs. L—— strewed the tables in the reading-room with Home Rule tracts and leaflets. Equally regularly Lord Arthur collected and burnt them! The good lady no doubt attributed their disappearance to the eagerness of her fellow-guests to devour their contents, little suspecting their real destination!

During the winter of disaster, and to many of depression, not to say of despair, in the Boer War, we did not leave home, feeling that our place was in England. But I never wavered in my belief, and the constant expression of it, that, whatever ill-fortune we might experience for a time in a conflict I had fully expected, we should end by repressing the rebellion and affirming our Sovereignty. My wife and I, between us, had five nephews who shared in the perils and vicissitudes of the campaign. They all had the good fortune to survive these, though not without being wounded.

In 1901 we hired the Villa La Favorita, outside Florence, which, I remember, contained an exceptionally fine portrait of an English Admiral, a member of the owner's family, by Hogarth, and another year Le Fontanelle, above Careggi, where Lorenzo de' Medici died, and having the most beautiful of

gardens imaginable, partly English, partly Italian. It would be ungrateful not to record the kind hospitality we so often have enjoyed under the roof of Mr. and Mrs. Scott Barber; that of Mr. Fiske, the learned owner of the Villa Landor, as well as of a most complete library of Dante and Petrarch, which he gave to Cornell University, in the United States; that of Lady Paget at Bellosguardo; and of Lord and Lady Windsor, now Lord and Lady Plymouth, when, for some years, they leased during the Spring months a villa at Fiesole.

I must not, and hardly could, recall all the historic places in Italy we visited in turn; Venice, of course, Padua, Ferrara, Ravenna, Parma, and Bergamo, the last a special shrine for the lover of north Italian architectural and pictorial art. But, if only by way of contrast, how sharply I remember the Swiss Château D'Œx, with its overshadowing hills, abounding streams, lush meadows, evergreen forests, and, I think, the prettiest-mannered peasant children I ever met; and, later, Rothenburg and Munich, and thence to Garmisch, to the Villa Bethell, belonging to my old Oscott friend, Henry Bethell, and organized by his able and accomplished wife. One of our pleasantest excursions was to the Castles of Touraine, familiar and well-trodden ground, but as fresh to us as though none had ever visited them before; but we took the precaution of going when the holiday season had not set in. *Meminisse juvat.* Life is rendered richer by the recollection of these journeyings, and one has only

to shut one's eyes to see them with those of the mind, in our Kentish home.

But the British Isles have as many places of beauty and interest as the Continent, and one is there spared the uncongenial concomitants of hôtel life by the hospitality of our race. Often a guest at Hewell Grange and St. Fagan's Castle, I have stayed likewise with the Misses Windsor-Clive, Lord Plymouth's sisters, at Oakley Park, another place of his lent to them as a residence, and through which wind the Teme and the Yeo, one a trout, the other a grayling, stream, both affording capital sport. Campsea Ashe always made me welcome during Mrs. William Lowther's lifetime; and her eldest son, the Speaker, and his wife threw open their gates at Hutton John whenever I asked for their hospitality. With Mr. and Mrs. Josceline Bagot I had the pleasure of staying at lovely Levens, with its charming hostess and historic formal garden.

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Lawrence, he the son of the great Viceroy of India, rented Ford Castle for some years, and I went to see the Border once more in that picturesque home. Other well-known country houses, such as Quidenham and Apethorpe, occupied by them for the autumn, found me a visitor. Hornby Castle, the old English home of the Duke and Duchess of Leeds, offered the attractions of both sport and singular refinement; and, being on one occasion in that neighbourhood, to explore

the valley of the Tees and the Greta, the last with its recollections of the runaway marriages made by the blacksmith at Gretna Green, I was most kindly bidden to Rokeby by Mrs. Morritt, to whom I was then a stranger.

Crossing the Border, I more than once enjoyed the society of the still vigorous nonogenarian, Lord Wemyss, at Gosford, with its beautiful hall and double staircase, designed by himself. Once I was staying there late in the fall of the year, and when I had accepted an invitation from the Edinburgh Philosophical Society to open their winter season of lectures. Not very wisely nor tactfully, I had chosen for my lecture the title, "What is Philosophy?" I remember it was a very cold night, and Lord Elcho was taking me into Edinburgh in his open motor-car. Lady Elcho and Mrs. Grenfell, now Lady Desborough, did everything in their power to shield me against the cold night air, and we had much merriment over the somewhat comical but comforting result.

The central purpose of my lecture was to suggest that Philosophy, or the love and search for truth, had little or nothing to do with metaphysics, when rightly understood, and that the real philosophers are the great poets. I still hold that view, rightly or wrongly; but it was stupid of me to air it at all, and most of all before a Scotch audience. They bore with me with exemplary patience, but I felt I had not won their sympathy. It is with

a certain feeling of sadness I recall that, on another occasion, I met the late Lord Lothian at Gosford, a man of rare charm of manner, who invited me to pay him a visit at Monteviot, where I passed three exceptionally interesting and agreeable days. His daughters, all then unmarried, were accomplished amateur musicians, and together formed a small domestic orchestra.

I remember Lord Lothian telling me two stories strongly indicative of character, but one very different from the other. On his inheriting Monteviot he noticed, to his chagrin, that none of the gardeners or under-gardeners touched their hats to him of a morning, or took the smallest notice of his existence. Feeling that persons staying with him would think him unpopular with his dependants, he asked the head-gardener to mention it, adding that the salutation would always be returned by him. Shortly afterward he saw written up on a gate, "If you meets the Markis, touch your hat to him. He likes it."

The other story was that, when Lord Salisbury formed his second Administration, he did not again nominate Lord Lothian Secretary of State for Scotland. "I should not have minded that," he said to me, "but I was rather astonished, and perhaps a little hurt, at his never telling me why I was omitted." "Are you quite sure," I said, "that he never alluded to it?" "Quite," he answered. "But one day he said he hoped I should never have to form a Unionist Administration." "Exactly,"

I pointed out, "that was his characteristically shy way of dealing with personal matters, and I feel sure he intended you to understand his real meaning."

Another very agreeable visit was to the Dowager Lady Airlie, the uniquely charming occupant of Airlie Castle; her recollections, which embraced all the interesting men and women of the time, were told with a uniformly amiable indulgence. Nor do I forget the day she drove me over to Glamis, and the hours it took, under the guidance of two of the comely young members of the family, to see it all.

If I have here briefly and rapidly narrated my recollections of British country homes, it is to record the opportunities afforded by a long life for knowing the many refined homes that lend to this Island its peculiar grace. They are among the most agreeable recollections of one's life.

In Ireland I twice received the kindest welcome from Captain and Mrs. Knox at Creagh, and, while there, had opportunities of becoming acquainted with Donegal and Achill Island, where I wrote the poem *Ireland*, and in it begged the Irish to forget and forgive ancient wrongs that had been amply atoned for since by the English Government and the Treasury. But, as was said in that poem, I fear Celtic rancour, like Celtic turf fires, burns long.

While staying once at Newtown-Anner I was driven over to Curraghmore in pelting rain, which

did not prevent Lady Waterford from taking me in an open trap through part of its primeval forest.

On more than one occasion, invitations to perform certain duties to which it seemed to me I ought to assent happened to offer at the same time visits to places of beauty and interest. One of these was the unveiling of the statue of Robert Burns at Irvine. On my arrival I spent the evening with the local authorities; and, at the supper or early dinner to which they treated me as a guest, I fear they must have thought me a poor creature, unless they were familiar with Southern ways — for I drank sparingly, according to my custom, while they, to my amazement, tossed off glass after glass of whisky neat, remaining just as sober as before we sate down. I hope that, the next morning, I made some amends for my sobriety by my open-air address at the unveiling.

I never have spoken insincerely, nor said anything I did not think, on such occasions; and while saying all I possibly could in praise of Burns's Poems in the Scotch dialect, and making what allowance I truthfully could for his faults, I did not conceal my regret at the glaring irregularities of his life in two directions. Apparently I gave no offence to the *praefervidum ingenium* of my Scottish hearers; and one woman brought up her little girl to be kissed by me when the ceremony was over. I was then driven out to Lord Eglinton's, where I spent twenty-four hours with him and Lady Eglinton, who is an accomplished gardener, and

their family. In the evening we had to drive into Irvine to attend a Dinner, at the end of which the Pipers of the district entered, and walked round playing their wild music. Then I had to "hold forth" again, as best I could, on the genius, the devious courses, and the popularity of the poet whom the Scottish people have singled out for their national representative and literary hero, rather than Sir Walter Scott, to whom, South of the Tweed, the chief place of honour would have been given.

In 1897 East Yorkshire enthusiasm and literary archaism having erected a monument to Cædmon at Whitby, I was invited to unveil it. It stands in the churchyard there, overlooking the sea; and the place, the scene, and the outlook on the German Ocean were very inspiriting. The chief moving spirit in its erection was Canon Rawnsley, so indefatigable and uniformly successful in any cause he espouses; and though my head-quarters were with Lord Normanby at Mulgrave Castle, I had the pleasure of spending a night with him at Crosthwaite Vicarage, looking down on Derwent-water. He wrote me the following letter after my visit, and consecrated the memory of it by one of his charming sonnets:

Crosthwaite Vicarage, Keswick,
August 18, 1897.

Dear Mr. Austin—It was, as you may be sure, a real pleasure to me to be with you as we visited the shrines of the mighty last week. So great is the charm of sympathy. But I am a little troubled that you did not visit the former

Laureate's resting-place, and I am wondering whether, when you come south, you would care to come in upon us for a day or two, to see Southeyland, and make the selection of your future holiday house. At the lakes you should not be bothered with folk more than you wished, and have a room for quiet and work. And if you wished it, and felt you could not choose your holiday house without Mrs. Austin, a welcome shall be given her also, if she will join you or has joined you.—Yours truly, H. D. RAWNSLEY.

I send you a little sonnet I wrote in memory of your visit to the "Dove and Olive Bough."

TO ALFRED AUSTIN AT DOVE COTTAGE

August 1897

You from the riverless weald and elms of Kent,
Who sought the sound of stream, the larchen grove,
Who left the tender garden that you love
To trace the way our Cumbrian poet went,
Did not your heart burn, seeing all it meant—
This lowly cot, whose olive branch and dove
Still hangs and broods, to proffer hearts that rove
The royal cheer of Life with calm content!

For in the rocky garden's sun and shade
Grow fruits immortal, everlasting flowers,
Imperishable thoughts do hither throng,
And every Laureate needs must find these bowers
To twine his wreath with leaves that cannot fade,
And feel the dew of consecrated song.

H. D. RAWNSLEY.

Among other interesting things he showed me at Keswick was a house of humble pretensions and architecture where Shelley brought Harriet shortly after their fugitive marriage, and of which I was given a photograph by its present occupant. She told me that the poet and his wife received notice to quit because he never went to church on a

Sunday, and was suspected, in consequence of his chemical experiments, of trying to "raise the devil," an experiment in which he was not altogether unsuccessful in other ways!

In the Spring of the present year, 1910, it was whispered that the state of the late King's health was such as to warrant considerable anxiety; but it was unknown to the country generally owing to the fortitude with which Edward VII. bore his physical pains, and the strain imposed on his powers, both physical and mental, by the campaign of a Party in the State against the traditional rights of the House of Lords. But shortly after his return from a curtailed visit to Biarritz, the fact became public, and the solicitude of his subjects was universal, but of brief duration, for, attending to his Kingly duties to the very last, he soon succumbed to his sufferings. According to the testimony not only of his own countrymen, but of foreign communities likewise, such universal sorrow and mourning was never before felt and exhibited, when Death finally relaxed his hold of the Sceptre of State. All the reigning monarchs of Europe in any degree connected by blood or marriage with our Dynasty, and able to leave their own kingdoms, came to our shores; as the sad but imposing spectacle presented by them in St. George's Chapel, Windsor, impressively testified. A certain amount of conventional language, inseparable from such occasions, was uttered and printed, but it was not less sincere on that

account; and I was prompted by my own share in the universal feeling to express it briefly in verse:

THE TRUCE OF GOD

A King's Bequest

I

What darkness deep as wintry gloom
O'ershadows joyous Spring?
In vain the vernal orchards bloom,
Vainly the woodlands sing.
A Royal shroud,
A mournful crowd,
Are all now left of One but yesterday a King.

II

Thrones have there been of hateful fame,
Reared upon wanton war:
He we have lost still linked his name
With peace, at home, afar.
For peace he wrought,
His constant thought
Being to shield his Realm against strife's baleful star.

III

So let us now all seek to wrest
From fateful feuds release,
And, mindful of his wise bequest,
From factious clamours cease:
Make, on the path he trod,
A sacred Truce of God,
The path that points and leads to patriotic Peace.

It was the first note struck, whether in verse or prose, in what happily soon became the concerted voice of the nation.

A very brief period has satisfied the people that it again has the supreme good fortune to possess in King George and his Consort every

quality that befits a serious, energetic, and duty-loving Monarch.

Far be it from me to insinuate in the remotest manner, as many have done, that the end was hastened by the importunity of the Party in power in its campaign against the House of Lords. But unquestionably it weighed heavily on the last days of the suffering King. The change in the political situation caused by his death was shortly perceived by the Government waiving its menaces against the Upper House, and inviting the Opposition to join in a peaceful Conference with the object of reconciling, if possible, conflicting views. Nor are those mistaken who believe that the resolute temper and strictly constitutional attitude of King George was not foreign to the altered disposition of the Government.

I do not feel as confident as most people seem to be that agreement will come of it. To me it has always seemed, and still seems, that the real practical dispute between the two Houses is whether the House of Lords should retain, or abandon, its traditional right to compel the Government of the day to appeal to the country in order to ascertain beyond doubt whether or not the latter approves the action of Ministers in the particular difference in question; the House of Lords being ready, as a matter of course, to bow to the decision, if adverse to its view and belief. To abandon or curtail such a right would be to establish the absolute mastership and tyranny of

the Lower House, and leave it in a position to disfranchise the constituencies and paralyse the electors.

The Bridling of Pegasus, the publication of which I briefly alluded to a few pages back, appeared while we were at Valescure, and perhaps demands a few words of explanation as to its contents and its purpose. In the dedication of it to my valued friend, Sir Alfred Lyall, I expressed the belief that all the essays in it written at various times during the last thirty years presented kindred opinions and reposed on certain fixed principles of criticism ; not principles propounded for the first time by myself, but underlying centuries of literary criticism, and never challenged nor even ignored till these anarchical days. I was gratified to find, for the sake of the principles it urged, that it has met with the assent and approval of writers of weight and authority.

Since our return from abroad in the Spring (1910), I was elected President of the Dante Society, in succession to my dear and universally admired friend, Sir Theodore Martin, a three days' visit to whom at his beautiful home in the valley of Llangollen, and the conversation we had one morning during a walk through his hills, I can never forget. His devotion to his wife, soon to be taken from him, was beautiful to witness ; and his attachment to Queen Victoria, and reverent recollections in the course of that conversation, impressed me greatly. He paid us more than

one visit at Swinford, and my wife, like myself, was struck by his attitude of reverence and chivalry to all women. And now I see that his lovely Welsh home, Bryntysilio, is to be sold, with, I suppose, all its mementoes, including gifts to him from the Sovereign he loved so devotedly. "I hope I shall die before she does," he once said to me. But that was not to be.

The Holiday Recess of the year is close on us, and Parliament will rise in a few days (1910). The Prime Minister has announced that the Conference will be continued during the Autumn, till either agreement or disagreement is reached. I still rather anticipate the second result. I have been much struck by what seem to me the unsatisfactory character of the debates in the House of Commons on the proposed omission of offensive words in the King's Declaration; Lord Hugh Cecil, I cannot but think, being the only member who went to the root of the matter, when he briefly pointed out that, though no one could say what "Protestant" exactly means, any one can say that it does not mean "Roman Catholic," and that no Roman Catholic would accept the designation for himself, and, therefore, for practical purpose the vague phrase will suffice. For the rest, the House of Lords, which passed the Bill without hesitation, and almost without debate, nearly always displays capacity for clear thinking.

Just as I was pondering over these final words,

Veronica and Lamia burst into the room, and happily diverting me from such irrelevant thoughts, exclaimed in their most tender tones, "Let us call the Poet, and ask *him* to repeat to us, once more, our favourite lines." As usual, he did their bidding.

IF TIME WOULD HALT!

I

If Time would halt, if Time would halt,
When wintry winds no more assault
The hearth's lone citadel, and Spring
Hastens with Love upon its wing,
And, irresistible as fair,
Brings the long-sighed-for succour there;
When vernal smile and April song
Make palpitating breasts to long
For something beyond earthly bliss,
For world more fair than even this,
If bane in rapture lurk we care not,
And sorrow is as though it *were* not,
And only patience makes default,—
If Time would halt, if Time would halt!

II

If Time would halt when hawthorns blow
And Joy no longer loitereth slow,
But, hastening onward, joins the train
Led captive by June's flowery chain,
And woodbine nooks, and elder bowers,
And wildrose rambles, all are ours;
When freshly-consecrated Love,
Like time-and-space-forgetting dove,
Hour after hour to one fixed bough
Clings, still repeating self-same vow
Till sunset's fading streaks decay,
And twilight seems more sweet than day,
And the moon moves through Heaven's clear vault
With soundless keel,—if Time would halt!

III

If Time would halt, when, though the days
Dwindle, yet nowise Love decays,
But, like ripe fruit in garden croft,
Grows yet more mellow, sweet, and soft,
From those actinic rays that bring
October peace to everything,
And we would rather, grown more wise,
See restful, than resplendent, eyes,
Feeling that Autumn's gaze serene,
When nought is left to reap or glean,
More touching is to look upon
Than wavering Spring and Summer gone,
And neither finds nor hints a fault,—
Then, even then, if Time would halt!

IV

Alas! Time never seems to halt,
Till sighs grow deep, and tears grow salt,
Till fails the light in living eyes,
And faltering words bring half replies.
Then hours that used to fleet so fast,
Appear to flag and limp at last,
And, lone, we yearn the day would come
When, ear grown deaf, and voice grown dumb,
We know not, in death's silent vault,
Whether Time hurry by, or halt.

Was it fancy that made me think I saw tears, like to falling stars, gleam an instant, then trickle and disappear down more cheeks than one? Perhaps the poet likewise saw them, for his voice seemed suddenly to fail him.

"O, go on! go on!" said Veronica.

"Yes, yes!" said Lamia, "*you* must not halt there."

Thus besought, in trembling tones he continued :

> But when nor wintry days, nor nights
> Shorn of young dreams and old delights,
> Nor hopes attained, nor dead desires,
> Can quench the glow of household fires,
> But Love's unfailing lamp burns on,
> As in the sacred seasons gone,
> And peace and prayer still keep divine
> Love's uncontaminated shrine,
> Heavenward at even pace we wend,
> Nor ask that Time would halt, or end !

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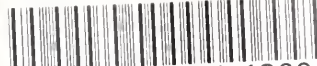
Printed by R. & R. Clark, Limited, *Edinburgh*.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