

and of their little brother Peterkin who has been taken from them. They are puzzled and pained, for their mother, who hopes some day to meet little Peterkin again, turns away in sadness from their father, who speaks of heaven and their mother's hopes as poor fairy-tales. Eventually, under the inspiration of their eldest brother, Dick, who, we are told, helps them afterwards—

"To tell this tale of fairy-land
In words we scarce can understand."

they determine to seek their little lost brother, believing that they will find him somewhere in fairy-land in the Smallest Flower:—

"Hush! if you remember how we sailed to old Japan,
Peterkin was with us then, our little brother Peterkin!
Now we've lost him, so they say; I think the tall thin man
Must have come and touched him with his curious twinkling
fan,
And taken him away again, our merry little Peterkin;
He'll be frightened all alone; we'll find him if we can;
Come and look for Peterkin, poor little Peterkin."

Come, my brother pirates, I am tired of play:
Come and look for Peterkin, little brother Peterkin,
Our merry little comrade that the fairies took away;
For people think we've lost him, and when we come to say
Our good-night prayers to mother, if we pray for little Peterkin
Her eyes are very sorrowful, she turns her head away.
Come and look for Peterkin, merry little Peterkin."

Away they go, then, on their happy quest, and in a moment the story resolves itself into the dream-fancy of a child, and the three pass through all the scenes of a fairy-land haunted by echoes of nursery-rhymes and inhabited by those of whom nursery-rhymes sing. They themselves become infinitesimally small; all the nursery-people and their dwelling-places grow to a gigantic size:—

"Yet around us as we went
Through the glades of rose and blue
Sweetness with the horror blent
Wonder-wild in scent and hue:
Here Aladdin's cavern yawned,
Jewelled thick with gorgeous dyes;
There a head of clover dawned
Like a cloud in eastern skies."

Cockchafers are seen as gryphons; lizards appear as crocodiles; a bed of wild thyme becomes a forest, but through it all there sounds a call leading them to Peterkin:—

"Yet again, oh, faint and far
Came the shadow of a cry,
Like the calling of a star
To his brother in the sky;
Like an echo in a cave,
Where young mermen sound their shells,
Like the wind across a grave
Bright with scent of lily-bells."

They walk into the parlour of the spider:—

"There were scarlet gleams and crimson
In the curious foggy grey,
Like the blood-red light that swims on
Old canals at close of day,

Where the smoke of some great city loops and droops in gorgeous
veils

Round the heavy purple barges' tawny sails."

After some terrible adventures they are rescued from this awful parlour by the armed array of the fairies:—

"The great grey roof was shattered by a shower of rosy light,
And the spider-house went floating torn and tattered through
the night
In a flight of prismatic streamers as a shout went up for Peterkin;
And lo! the glittering fairy-host stood there arrayed for fight,
In arms of rose and green and gold to lead us on to Peterkin."

Two fairies, Pease-Blossom and Mustard-Seed, now conduct them through wonderful scenes to the Dream Fair, where the air is aflame with revelry and nursery-rhymes:—

"And *See-Saw*; *Margery Daw*; we heard a rollicking shout,
As the swing-boats hurtled over our heads to the tune of the
roundabout;
And *Little Boy Blue*, come blow up your horn, we heard the
showmen cry,
And *Dickory Dock*, I'm as good as a clock, we heard the swings
reply.

"This way, this way to your Heart's Desire;
Come cast your burdens down;
And the pauper shall mount his throne in the skies,
And the king be rid of his crown;
And souls that were dead shall be fed with fire
From the fount of their ancient pain,
And your lost love come with the light in her eyes
Back to your heart again."

They still fare onward; their fairy guides have to leave them, and they come

"At last to that sweet House of Grace
Which wise men find in every place—
The Temple of the Smallest Flower,

But there in one great shrine apart
Within the Temple's holiest heart,
We came upon a blinding light
Suddenly, and a burning throne
Of pinnacled glory wild and white;
We could not see Who reigned thereon.
For, all at once, as a wood-bird sings,
The aisles were full of great white wings,
Row above mystic burning row;
And through the splendour and the glow
We saw four angels great and sweet,
With outspread wings and folded feet,
Come gliding down from a heaven within
The golden heart of Paradise;
And in their hands, with laughing eyes
Lay little brother Peterkin."

Then they awake (they had fallen asleep on Peterkin's grave) and find their parents bending over them; they tell the tale to their father before they go to bed:—

"Then he looked up, and mother knelt
Beside us. Oh! her eyes were bright;
Her arms were like a lovely belt
All round us as we said Good-night
To father: he was crying now,
But they were happy tears somehow;
For there we saw dear mother lay
Her cheek against his cheek and say—
'Hush, let me kiss those tears away.'"

So this exquisite poem ends. To do justice to it by mere extracts is impossible, for though it changes from scene to scene with all the swiftness of a dream, it is made into a consistent whole by a gleaming thread of purpose that runs through it all. From beginning to end Mr. Noyes has charged it with magic. Through all its parts his imagination has made it sparkle with light and colour and echo with noble music. It has thought, and it has besides a tenderness so poignant in its restraint that it often touches the deep fount of tears. In future years Mr. Noyes may attack enterprises of great pith and moment in poetry, but we make bold to say that he will not easily or often surpass what he has now done in "The Forest of Wild Thyme."

R. C. LEHMANN.

"A SORT OF BENVENUTO CELLINI."*

Why Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter (in emphatic capitals), was not a genius, it would be somewhat difficult to determine. He possessed much of the equipment necessary to the character. A tremendous belief in himself, certainty as to his vocation, unwavering allegiance to an ideal, enthusiasm amounting to frenzy, pluck and perseverance—the infinite capacity for taking pains—rising to temerity and obstinacy! Nor, in these spiritual attributes, did he lack the talent for laying his foundations sound and deep. When in the first flush of youth he determined to teach his country how history should be painted, he did not begin, as others use, by daubing colours on a blank canvas, but found ecstasy in the study of anatomy. His heroes were always rich in muscle, well and accurately displayed. He was one of the first to appreciate the æsthetic and educational value of the Elgin Marbles. The fine thrill of genius was in him; the more pedestrian qualities were not absent. All he wanted was—genius.

The grotesquely tragic consequences may be read in the *Memoirs and Journals*—a book which two living statesmen have joined in appreciating and recommending—or in this excellent volume of "George Paston's." Haydon began well. From the beginning he wore the halo of the Man with a Mission. Under such head-gear, how could he settle down to his father's book-selling business at Plymouth? By sheer determination he wore down the opposition of family and friends and went to London to paint (literally) big things. His first great achievement was praised by Sir George Beaumont as "quite large enough for anything." Had the scale of it and its successors been less heroic, patrons with limited wall space might have been more eager to purchase. "I always filled my painting-room

* "B. R. Haydon and his Friends." By George Paston. 12s. 6d. (James Nisbet and Co.)

to its fullest extent," Haydon explains, "and had I possessed a room 400 feet long and 200 feet high and 400 feet wide, I would have ordered a canvas 399—6 long by 199—6 high." These massive conceptions, and a certain quality which was in them, impressed the age so much that Haydon was regarded as a coming man. Perhaps his highest material triumph was experienced when Piccadilly was blocked with carriages before the Egyptian Hall, where "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem" was exhibited, and when Mrs. Siddons led the applause by declaring that the chief figure was "completely successful." Long before this, however, the artist had robbed himself of the possibility of material gain by falling into the hands of money-lenders. Perpetually in debt, several times in a debtor's prison, he painted and wrote, covered his huge canvases with colour and muscle, and reams of paper with fulminations against the Royal Academy—all with unflinching zest and optimism which no catastrophe could cure. On an execution being put in for taxes, Haydon made the man in possession sit for Cassandra's hand, putting on him a Persian bracelet. "When the broker came for his money he burst out laughing. There was the fellow, an old soldier, pointing in the attitude of 'Cassandra'—upright and steady, as if on guard. 'Lazarus' head was painted just after an arrest; 'Eucles' finished from a man in possession; the beautiful face in 'Xenophon' after a morning spent in begging mercy of lawyers; and now 'Cassandra's' head was finished in an agony not to be described, and her hand completed from a broker's man." So it went on for long years, happy years for the painter, who lived exultingly on projects and grew plump in adversity, happy for him if not for the wife he adored and the children whose early deaths he was to agonise over. Nothing daunted him save the occasional dire necessity of laying aside historical painting and degenerating into a maker of portraits. Morally, if not artistically, it was a good and (considering the character of the man) not a dishonourable struggle. But a crushing blow was in store. His whole life he had been trying to persuade authority that the House of Lords, among other national buildings, should be decorated by native artists. At last, authority consented to be persuaded . . . and Haydon was denied any share in the work. A year or two longer he struggled on. Then he committed suicide with characteristic thoroughness.

So much for Benjamin Robert Haydon, Historical Painter, fascinating subject for the psychologist, melancholy warning to all men of over-weening self-confidence. There remain his friends, the brilliant circle with which we renew acquaintance in "George Paston's" well-selected pages. Shelley greets us, hectic, spare, weakly, yet intellectual-looking, carving a bit of broccoli as if it had been the substantial wing of a chicken, and opening the conversation by saying in the most feminine and gentle voice, "As for that detestable religion, the Christian"—a prelude which persuades Haydon, who never began a piece of work without asking Divine help and blessing, to "gore without mercy." Sir Walter Scott mightily applauds the artist's description of Edinburgh as "the dream of a great genius," and pleases him in turn by speaking of the new President of the Academy, Sir Martin Archer Shee, as "an accomplished gentleman whom naeboddy even haird on." Hazlitt tells the story of his love—that squalid love of the *Liber Amoris*—his old, hard, weather-beaten, saturnine, metaphysical face twitching all sorts of ways. Keats appears frequently, "the only man I ever met who seemed and looked conscious of a high calling, except Wordsworth." Wordsworth declines to be convinced that a bag-wig and a sword, ruffles and buckles, and attendance at Court, are inconsistent with his character of Nature's high priest. Lord Melbourne chats good-humouredly; the Duke of Wellington hides himself behind a newspaper to escape Haydon's theories of art; Miss Elizabeth Barrett protects Haydon's most cherished possessions from the brokers, in ignorance that she is trespassing on the majesty of the law; Mrs. Siddons awes tea-parties and condescends majestically.

There remains also Haydon the man and autobiographer. Miss Mitford said he was a sort of Benvenuto Cellini. A shrewder comment could hardly be made. The great Italian and the mediocre Englishman had much in common, but chiefly this: that both were born fighters. Had Haydon enjoyed Cellini's advantage in respect of time and place, he

would have ruffled it with the best, used a handy dagger on enemies, perhaps on rivals, and discovered more consolation in a steel poniard than in a quill pen. If we can imagine Cellini landed in the middle of the arid artistic desert of the early nineteenth century, we can believe he would have proved as vigorous a verbal opponent of shams and sophistries as was poor Haydon. But Cellini might have conquered where Haydon succumbed. For he had qualities which the other lacked: a rough common-sense and—genius.

Haydon's expansive paintings, which he fondly hoped would keep his memory green with posterity, are as good as lost. One is kept in a lumber-room at the Victoria and Albert Museum. Another adorns the billiard-room of a popular restaurant. The *Memoirs and Journal* deserve a fuller life. Meantime, "George Paston's" book forms an admirable substitute, vastly entertaining.

THOMAS LLOYD.

THE CALEDONIAN CHATTERTON.*

Was "Ossian" really great, or even good, poetry? It is involuntarily that one puts the question in the past tense, and thereby appears to provide one's own answer, since great poetry has been said to be, not for an age, but for all time, and good poetry should surely live in the world's affections for more than a century. Many contemporaries of James Macpherson vastly esteemed his "Poems of Ossian." They were proclaimed by Byron and Klopstock in most respects greater than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*; Lamartine placed them on a level with the best of Dante; Goethe did not hesitate—before his better judgment came to his rescue—to suggest that in them were Shakespearean qualities. The melancholy of the pseudo-Celtic bard accorded at the moment with the mood of Werther, and in a rain of tears he recited Ossian to Charlotte on the day before his suicide. It was in later years that Goethe said he must have been mad when he praised a genius so morbid. Lessing, Schiller, Novalis, and Burger, among the professionals of literature, the umpires of taste, from whom we should naturally expect good judgment, all rhapsodised over the tenebrous epics that came like a mist swirling down on the Anglo-Saxon world from the mountains of Badenoch, and Napoleon, with his well-thumbed copy carried with him on his great campaigns and to his final exile, was representative of the lay world at large, that in every civilised country sighed in unison with the winds of Selma, and indulged a delicious "frisson" over the magic pages that from winter fires in comfortable towns could bring readers in a moment to some distant glen of ghosts. Before the poems had been many years published they were translated into a dozen European languages, and not even Shakespeare, Milton, Addison, or Pope had found such a host of foreign admirers. To this day the belief that Ossian is one of the glories of English literature, a burning planet in our sky, lingers over the Continent. Yet Ossian in his own land is unread, and even *The Address to the Sun* (which is all that remains in the public memory) is wholly overlooked by the anthologists. Strange, disconcerting facts! They send us back to ask ourselves anew what is poetry? What is beauty? Who are the judges?

If time is the arbiter, Ossian was poor poetry, but though we say time has that office, and so shift the responsibility of judgment on what has neither a body to be kicked nor a soul to be damned, we all have a mental reservation, and tell ourselves that the effect of great poetry may possibly be secured for a generation by work that will not outlast that generation. The body dies, but the soul goes marching along, and that, doubtless, has been the case with the English poems of James Macpherson. They came forth at the psychological moment, when classic convention was dying, and Rousseau had sent the world back to Nature, and people were beginning to see that beauty and art were not the monopoly of any race or age. They held in a weltering solution of mist and tears one or two emotions long latent in the common breast—the pity that comes from the contemplation of life's brevity, the "pathetic fallacy" (which is nothing of the kind), that all Nature is animate, and has in its very rocks and vapours the same vexed spirit as our own. To the end of the eighteenth century Macpherson's work—so

* "James Macpherson: An Episode in Literature." By J. S. Smart. (David Nutt.)