

romantic fable, no heroic epic; adventures, passions, fame, made up none of its incidents; it was simply the history of a boy's manful struggling against fate—of the quiet heroism of endurance, compensated by inward satisfaction, if not by actual happiness.

True, his career was in the low-lying paths of humanity; but it was none the less beautiful and pure, for it is not deeds, it is their spirit, which makes men noble, or leaves them stained. Had Herbert Lawson been a warrior, statesman, hero, philosopher, he would have shown no other nature than that which gladdened the heart of his widowed mother, and proved a life's instruction to Jessie Hamilton, in his small deeds of love and untaught words of faith in the solitude of that lodging-house. Brave, pure, noble then, his sphere only would have been enlarged, and with his sphere the weight and power of his character; but the spirit would have been the same, and in the dying child it was as beautiful as it would have been in the renowned philosopher.

We have given this simple story—simple in all its bearings—as an instance of how much real heroism is daily enacted, how much true morality daily cherished, under the most unfavorable conditions. A widow and her young son cast on the world without sufficient means of living—a brave boy battling against poverty and sickness combined, and doing his small endeavor with manful constancy—a dying youth, whose whole soul is penetrated with love, as with a divine song; all these are elements of true human interest, and these are circumstances to be found in every street of a crowded city. And to such as these is the divine mission of brotherly charity required; for though poverty may not be relieved by reason of our inability, suffering may always be lightened by our sympathy. It takes but a word of love, a glance of pity, a gentle kiss of affection—it takes but an hour of our day, a prayer at night, and we may walk through the sick world and the sorrowful as angels dropping balm and comfort on the wounded. The cup of such human love as this poured freely out will prove in truth “twice blessed,” returning back to our hearts the peace we have shed on others. Alas! alas! how thick the harvest and how few the reapers!

GOSSIP ABOUT GREAT MEN.

ONE can not help taking an interest in great men. Even their pettiest foibles—their most ordinary actions—their by-play—their jokes—are eagerly commemorated. Their haunts—their homes—the apartments in which they have studied—their style of dress—and, above all, their familiar conversation, are treasured up in books, and fascinate all readers. Trifles help to decipher the character of a man, often more than his greatest actions. What is a man's daily life—his private conversations—his familiar deportment? These, though they make but a small figure in his history, are often the most characteristic and genuine things in a man's life.

With what interest do we think of blind, glorious John Milton, when writing *Paradise Lost*, sitting at “the old organ behind the faded green hangings,” his dimmed eyes rolling in vain to find the day; of Richardson, in his back-shop, writing *Pamela*; of Cowper and his tame hares; of Byron and Newstead Abbey; of Burns, in his humble cottage home; of Voltaire, in his retreat of Ferney, by the shores of Lake Lemman; of Sir Walter Scott, in his study at Abbotsford; of Dr. Johnson, in his retreat in Bolt Court; of Shakespeare, and the woods of Charlecote; of Pope, and his house at Twickenham; of Swift, and his living at Laracor. We are never tired of reading of such things, identified as they are with genius, and consecrated by their association with the names of great men.

We take an interest in even smaller things. Everybody remembers Goldsmith's bloom-colored coat; George Fox's “leathern hull;” Milton's garb of coarse gray; Magliabecchi's great brown vest down to his knees, his broad-brimmed hat, and patched black mantle, and his cravat full of snuff-droppings; Pope's velvet cap, tye-wig, and sword; and Buffon, with his hair in curl-papers while sitting at his desk. We curiously remember Oliver Cromwell's warts; Wilks's squint; Scott's limp; Byron's club-foot; Pope's little crooked figure, like a note of interrogation; Johnson's rotundity and rheum; Charles Lamb's spindle-shanks in gaiters; and all manner of personal peculiarities of distinguished men.

The appetites, tastes, idiosyncracies, prejudices, foibles, and follies of great men, are well known. Perhaps we think too much of them; but we take interest in all that concerns them, even the pettiest details. It is often these that give an interest to their written life. What were Boswell's *Johnson*, that best of biographies, were it wanting in its gossip and small talk?

An interesting chapter might be written about the weaknesses of great men. For instance, they have been very notorious for their strange fits of abstraction. The anecdote of Archimedes will be remembered, who rushed through the streets of Syracuse *al fresco*, crying *Eureka!* and at the taking of the city was killed by a soldier, while tracing geometrical lines on sand. Socrates, when filled with some idea, would stand for hours fixed like a statue. It is recorded of him that he stood amidst the soldiers in the camp at Potidea, in rooted abstraction, listening to his “prophetic or supernatural voice.” Democritus shut himself up for days together in a little apartment in his garden. Dante was subject to fits of abstraction, in which he often quite forgot himself. One day, he found an interesting book, which he had long sought for, in a druggist's shop at Sienna, and sat reading there till night came on.

Bude, whom Erasmus called the wonder of France, was a thoroughly absent man. One day his domestics broke into his study with the intelligence that his house was on fire. “Go inform my wife,” said he; “you know I do not interfere in household affairs!” Scaliger only slept

for a few hours at a time, and passed whole days without thinking of food. Sully, when his mind was occupied with plans of reform, displayed extraordinary fits of forgetfulness. One day, in winter, when on his way to church, he observed, "How very cold it is to-day!" "Not more cold than usual," said one of his attendants. "Then I must have the ague," said Sully. "Is it not more probable that you are too scantily dressed?" he was asked. On lifting his tunic the secret was at once discovered. He had forgotten all his under clothing but his breeches!

Mrs. Bray tells a somewhat familiar story of the painter Stothard. When invited on one occasion to dine with the poet Rogers, on reaching the house in St. James's Place, he complained of cold, and, chancing to place his hand on his neck, he found he had forgotten to put on his cravat, when he hastily returned home to complete his attire.

Buffon was very fond of dress. He assumed the air of the grand signeur; sported jewels and finery; wore rich lace and velvets; and was curled and scented to excess—wearing his hair *en papillotte* while at his studies. Pope, too, was a little dandy in a bag-wig and a sword; and his crooked figure enveloped in fashionable garments, gave him the look of an over-dressed monkey. Voltaire, also, was fond of magnificent attire, and usually dressed in an absurd manner. Diderot once traveled from St. Petersburg to Paris in his morning-gown and nightcap; and in this guise promenaded the streets and public places of the towns on his route. He was often taken for a madman. While composing his works, he used to walk about at a rapid pace, making huge strides, and sometimes throwing his wig in the air when he had struck out a happy idea. One day, a friend found him in tears—"Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "what is the matter?" "I am weeping," answered Diderot, "at a story that I have just composed!"

Young, the poet, composed his *Night Thoughts* with a skull before him, in which he would sometimes place a lighted candle; and he occasionally sought his sepulchral inspiration by wandering among the tombs at midnight. Mrs. Radcliffe courted the horrors with which she filled her gloomy romances, by supping on half-raw beef-steaks, plentifully garnished with onions. Dryden used to take physic before setting himself to compose a new piece. Kant, the German philosopher, while lecturing, had the habit of fixing his attention upon one of his auditors who wore a garment without a button in a particular place. One day, the student had the button sewed on. Kant, on commencing his lecture, fixed his eyes on the usual place. The button was there! Fancy the consternation of the philosopher, whose ideas had become associated with that buttonless garment. His lecture that day was detestable: he was quite unhinged by the circumstance.

Too many authors have been fond of the bottle. Rabelais said, "Eating and drinking are my true sources of inspiration. See this bottle! It

is my true and only Helicon, my cabalistic fountain, my sole enthusiasm. Drinking, I deliberate; and deliberating, I drink." Ennius, Eschylus, and Cato, all got their inspiration while drinking. Mezerai had always a large bottle of wine beside him, among his books. He drank of it at each page that he wrote. He turned the night into day; and never composed except by lamplight, even in the day time. All his windows were darkened; and it was no unusual thing for him to show a friend to the door with a lamp, though outside it was broad daylight! On the contrary, Varillas, the historian, never wrote except at full mid-day. His ideas, he imagined, grew and declined with the sun's light.

Sir William Blackstone is said to have composed his *Commentaries* with a bottle of wine on the table, from which he drank largely at intervals: and Addison, while composing, used to pace to and fro the long drawing-room of Holland House, with a glass of sherry at each end, and rewarded himself by drinking one in case of a felicitous inspiration.

While Goldsmith wrote his *Vicar of Wakefield*, he kept drinking at Madeira, "to drown care," for the duns were upon him. When Johnson called to relieve him, he sent away the bottle, and took the manuscript to the bookseller, bringing back some money to the author. Goldsmith's first use of the money was, to call in the landlady to have a glass of punch with him. Goldie was guilty of very strange tricks. He once broke his shin by exhibiting to the company how much better he could jump over a stick than puppets.

The intemperance of poets is but too painfully illustrated in the lives of Parnell, Otway, Sheffield, Savage, Churchill, Prior, Dryden, Cowley, Burns, Coleridge, Lamb, and others. There is nothing more painful in Burns's letters, than those in which he confesses his contrition after his drunken bouts, and vows amendment for the future. His letter to Mrs. Dunlop on this subject will be remembered. Lamb, too, in a letter to Mr. Carey, painted *next morning* in vivid terrors. Byron says—

Get very drunk; and when

You wake with headache, you shall see what then.

Here is Lamb's graphic picture: "I protest," said he, to Mr. Carey, the translator of Dante; "I know not in what words to invest my sense of the shameful violation of hospitality which I was guilty of on that fatal Wednesday. Let it be blotted from the calendar. Had it been committed at a layman's house—say a merchant's, or a manufacturer's, or a cheesemonger's, or a greengrocer's—or, to go higher, a barrister's, a member of parliament's, a rich banker's, I should have felt alleviation—a drop of self-pity. But to be seen deliberately to go out of the house of a clergyman, drunk! With feverish eyes on the succeeding dawn, I opened upon the faint light, enough to distinguish, in a strange chamber, not immediately to be recognized, garters, hose, waistcoat, neckerchief, arranged in dreadful order and proportion, which I knew

was not mine own! 'Tis the common symptom, on awaking, I judge my last night's condition from. A tolerable scattering on the floor I hail as being too probably my own, and if the candlestick be not removed, I assail myself. But this finical arrangement—this finding every thing in the morning in exact diametrical rectitude, torments me. By whom was I divested! burning blushes! not by the fair hand of nymphs—the Buffian graces! Remote whispers suggested that I *coached* it home in triumph. Far be that from waking pride in me, for I was unconscious of the locomotion. That a young Newton accompanied a reprobate old Telemachus; that, Trojan-like, he bore his charge upon his shoulders, while the wretched incubus, in glimmering sense, hiccoughed drunken snatches of flying on the bat's wings after sunset. Occasion led me through Great Russell-street, yesterday: I gazed at the great knocker. My feeble hands in vain essayed to lift it. I dreaded that Argus Portitor, who doubtless lanterned me out on that prodigious night. I called the Elginian marbles; they were cold to my suit. I shall never again, I said, on the wide gates unfolding, say, without fear of thrusting back, in a light but a peremptory air, 'I am going to Mr. Cary's.'

Lamb was also a great smoker at one period of his life. But he determined to give it up, as he found it led to drinking—to "drinking egg-flip hot, at the Salutation"—so he wrote his "Farewell to Tobacco," and gave it up—returning to it again, but finally abandoning it. In a letter to Wordsworth, he said: "Tobacco has been my evening comfort and my morning curse for these five years; and you know how difficult it is from refraining to pick one's lips even, when it has become a habit. I have had it in my head to write this poem [Farewell to Tobacco] these two years; but tobacco stood in its own light, when it gave me headaches that prevented my singing its praises."

Once, in the height of Lamb's smoking fever, he was puffing the smoke of strong, coarse tobacco from a clay pipe, in the company of Dr. Parr, who whiffed only the finest weed, when the latter, addressing Lamb, asked: "Dear me, sir, how is it that you have acquired so prodigious a smoking power!" "I have acquired it," answered Lamb, "by toiling after it, as some men toil after virtue."

It was from frequenting the society of Dr. Parr, that Robert Hall, the famous preacher, when at Cambridge, acquired the habit of smoking. He smoked in self-defense. Some one asked him why he had commenced such an odious habit. "Oh," said Hall, "I am qualifying myself for the society of a Doctor of Divinity; and this (holding up the pipe) is the test of my admission." A friend found him busy with his pipe one day, blowing huge clouds of smoke. "Ah," said the new comer, "I find you again at your old idol." "Yes," said Hall, "burning it!" But his friends were anxious that he should give up the practice, and one of

them presented him with Adam Clarke's pamphlet on *The Use and Abuse of Tobacco*, to read. He read the pamphlet, and returned it to the lender saying, as if to preclude discussion—"Thank you, sir, for Adam Clarke's pamphlet. I can't refute his arguments, and I can't give up smoking."

Among other smokers of distinction, may be named the poet Milton, whose night-cap was a pipe of tobacco and a glass of pure water. But he was exceedingly moderate in the indulgence of this "vice." Sir Walter Raleigh, who introduced the use of this weed into England; smoked frequently; and the anecdote of his servant, who emptied a bucket of water on him, thinking he was on fire, because he saw the smoke issuing from his mouth, is very well known. Many other poets and literary men have smoked. Carlyle, at this day, blows a tremendous cloud.

Southey's indulgence at bed-time, was a glass of hot rum punch, enriched with a little black current jelly. Byron wrote under the influence of gin and water. Coleridge took immoderate quantities of opium. Gluck, the musical composer, wrote with a bottle of Champagne beside him—Sacchini, when his wife was by his side, and his numerous cats gamboling about him.

Other authors have found relaxation in other ways. Thus Daguesseau, when he wanted relaxation from the study of jurisprudence and history, betook himself to a pair of compasses and a book of mathematics. Richelieu amused himself by playing with cats, and studying their tricks. Cowper had his tame hares. Sir Walter Scott was always attended by his favorite dogs. Professor Wilson, at this day, is famous for his terriers.

Alfieri, like Luther and Milton, found the greatest solace and inspiration in music. "Nothing," said he, "so moves my heart, and soul, and intellect, and rouses my very faculties, like music—and especially the music of woman's voice. Almost all my tragedies have been conceived under the immediate emotion caused by music." Voltaire took pleasure in the Opera, (not so Thomas Carlyle, as you may have seen), and there dictated some of his most brilliant letters.

But the foibles of men of genius are endless; and would be a curious subject for some Disraeli, in a future volume of the *Curiosities of Literature*, to depict at length, if the subject be indeed worth the required amount of pains and labor.

MY NOVEL; OR, VARIETIES IN ENGLISH LIFE.*

BOOK XII.—INITIAL CHAPTER.

"AGAIN," quoth my father—"Again behold us! We who greeted the commencement of your narrative, who absented ourselves in the mid course, when we could but obstruct the current of events, and jostle personages more important—we now gather round the close. Still, as the chorus to the drama, we circle round the

* Continued from the September Number.