

THE TWO SKULLS.

"HOW did you like my friend, Mr. Blazon?" said the Secretary to me.

"I was disappointed. I expected greater things of one of his reputation." I knew that the Secretary had only asked the question to introduce one of those philosophizing lectures with which, I being always a good listener, he so often favored me.

"Did you ever, sir, see a great man who did not disappoint you? ever one who did not lose something of his magnitude by near approach, or display some flaw dimming the splendor of his reputation!—except it might be to such exceptional toadies as Boswell?"

"Distance lends enchantment to the moral and mental, as well as to the physical view. Let the eye sweep over a broad and distant landscape; only its grand and imposing features are seen; draw near it—walk through it, and the littering rocks, the mud holes, putrefying carcasses, and other disgusting objects, offend the sight.

"Heroes, it is said, are never heroes to their valets. Why are they more so to the public? I will tell you. Because the public imagines a harmony of character not to be found in human nature. It takes a single prominent trait in an individual, and magnifies his every other quality to its dimensions. A man becomes distinguished in poetry—eloquence—science; those who hear of him endow him with every correspondent quality of greatness, and are very much disappointed if they find him manifesting any of the ordinary every-day traits of humanity; and yet, there are no men so great but they will do so.

"Those who like myself, sir, have mingled much with their fellows, in high and in low stations, learn that there is more difference in the external position of men than in their intrinsic qualities.

"Taking the extremes of humanity—the lowest idiotic intellect or moral character at one end, and the highest and most noble at the other, probably between one and the other, may be found every shade, variety, and combination of character—good and bad mingled in every degree, sometimes the one and sometimes the other predominating; and hence, too, we have the same persons exhibiting the most opposite and inconsistent qualities, and sometimes flying suddenly from the line of their established reputation, and startling the public by manifestations of character hitherto unsuspected.

"Did you never see that strange combination of men to whom religious observances, divine worship, and sacred ceremonies were a necessity, yet whose daily practices were entirely inconsistent with such habits? Such men are not hypocrites—another combination makes the hypocrite.

"If I was to tell you your neighbor was provident, wise, active, you would think only of a good citizen; and if I told you of another, who was jealous, malignant, dark, sullen, unsociable,

reserved, cruel, unrelenting, unforgiving, you would think of no combined useful quality; but Hume puts all these epithets together and makes up a Tiberius.

"*Common Sense*, the preservative quality, is that more generally diffused, and is often wanting in those of brilliant genius. Hence, our ordinary every-day acquaintance may exhibit more force and strength of character, than forms the general aggregate of some great men; they fall below our habitual association. Besides the properties which make greatness, there are other properties necessary to make greatness known—the show-window art of putting the goods in the public eye; and men may, most probably do, exist in every association, unknown to fame, but gifted with all upon which others base a public reputation. There may be men in their quiet farm-houses, in their village offices greater than greatness. Even in our schoolboy associations, have we not seen those calm, quiet, intellectual boys, satisfied with the joy of knowledge, and despising scholastic triumphs. May there not then be men who think the fame of the hustings, the fuss and feathers of the soldier, and the plodding calculations of the seeker for wealth, a poor exchange for heart-quiet, and that manly action which, working for others and not for self, shuns the noise and bustle of popularity? These are the truly great men who work in the steady view of the all-seeing God, and not before the world's blinking eye, and so long as this principle fails to be taught as the leading human impulse, education is defective.

"The parent tells his child, Such and such a one rose from poverty to wealth. Follow his example; wealth is the grand object.

"Mr. Magnum, who sits now in the high place of power, was once a poor mechanic—work you for power also; that is, work, plod for yourself; let self be the aim and object—the alpha and omega of your existence. Who tells his child to measure his sphere of usefulness; to begin by doing the little good he can; to widen his circle with his strength, until his usefulness reaches the utmost circumference of his power? Then if wealth, fame, power comes, they come to one fitted for their use, and if they do not come, a greater than all does—happiness."

"You have never been married, I believe, Mr. Secretary?" "No, sir; I'm a bachelor," and as if the question was an unpleasant one, he picked up his cane and gloves to leave me, but a new thought chased away the momentary annoyance, and quietly laying them down again, he resumed, "Often the world looks with admiring envy upon the greatness of a great man, identifies it with the whole existence of the individual, and considers him as reveling in the joy of high fortune, whereas the true man and his greatness are separate existences;—his greatness is a shadow or rather a brilliant light, it may be either, round about him, shutting out the views of the world from his true self. It may, indeed, be a strong spectre walking by his side, and hurrying along the true man despite himself.

"'I am satiated with greatness,' cried the scarcely more than boy Napoleon. It became a *thing* outside of himself, but it pushed him along. 'I have a star—a destiny,' he said; so much did the man-Napoleon feel subjected to the world-Napoleon. A youth, and almost unknown, he had magically created armies, and conquered circumstances. Now, after Waterloo, with an army calling him to head it, with over 80,000 men immediately to commence operations and to take a bloody revenge on the Duke of Wellington,' with the French people adoring him, he exclaimed:

"'Putting the brute force of the mass of the people into action would doubtless save Paris, and insure me the crown, without incurring the horrors of civil war, but it would likewise be risking thousands of French lives; for what power could control so many various passions, so much hatred, and such vengeance. No, I like the regrets of France better than her crown.'*

"And he quietly walks out of his empire and his glory. People wonder. It is incomprehensible! Might not the man Napoleon have become tired of living so long the slave of the world-seen splendid Napoleon? 'I will henceforth live to educate my boy,' spoke the man. The spectre Greatness would not be shaken off, and chained him to St. Helena, without wife, child, or friend. Those who have lived above greatness, are greater than Napoleon, and—happier.

"Calm, quiet, blue-eyed, light-haired Doctor Morton, 'The Illustrious' he is called, measures in his study the capacity for greatness of individuals, and that of nations. He pours beans or shot into their skulls, when the brains are out, measures and weighs their power, and tells us that the Teutonic skull is the largest, and the negro nine cubic inches smaller. He measures one tremendous head, finds one hundred and fourteen cubic inches, puts it up on his shelf, and labels it '*Dutch Gentleman*.'

"Dutch Gentleman, with the big head, who shall tell of your true greatness corresponding with your brain-power? It may have been felt in acts of wisdom, judgment, and intellect, on your native Holland canals. Then what was this little Peruvian head, the smallest of heads, fifty-eight cubic inches? This may be the head of a great man—an Inca—a Child of the Sun, who on his golden throne at Cuzco, called upon all the world to bow the knee as it approached his capital; and believing it did so, believed his own greatness."

The Secretary, having delivered these sentiments, again took up his gloves and cane, rose from his chair, and prepared to go in earnest. In all courtesy I arose at the same time, and as we stood together he slowly drew on his gloves, remarking—

"I am sorry you did not like Blazon. You must not judge him by your disappointment. The most disappointing kind of men, if they are asked to come down, and divide their magnifi-

cence out for half an hour with a few friends, are your authors. For two reasons: they do not go out to work, but to relax. In the labors of authorship they are on the stretch, when they come to meet your few friends they let down, and are interested in the same every day common-place matters which interest us common people. Again, when you ask your merchant or banker friend to dine or sup with you, do you expect the one to bring his wares, and the other his money, to divide with you and your company? The author's good thoughts and good sayings are his wares, and if scattered at your table would lose their value in the market, and sometimes to save a bright idea, he condescends to discuss the merits of a beefsteak. By the way," he added, as he took up his hat, "it is just the time for mine, and if you will go with me we will talk this matter over more fully; as I find our views are so much alike, it will be pleasant."

I begged to be excused, and the Secretary took his leave. He was a great talker.

CAPTAIN BART AND THE SEA-FOX.

FROM THE GERMAN, BY E. ROBINSON.

IT was during the siege of Dunkirk, in the year 1658, that Captain Bart, a tall, vigorous man, with white hair and a gray beard, was sitting wrapped up in blankets in an arm-chair, and was leaning his pale, thin face on the shoulder of his wife, while his little son, a boy of ten years, with long golden hair, was kneeling at his feet.

The old hero, a few days ago, had been hit in the side by two musket-balls, one of which the surgeon had not been able to extract. With sadness did he turn his eyes to his wife, who looked at him with a tender and painful expression, and pressed the head of her son to her breast.

"God is just, my good Catherine," said the captain. "I hope he will reward your love and care by letting me live long enough to make a brave and good sailor of our John."

Catherine raised her eyes, filled with tears, to heaven, as if to add her prayer to that of her husband.

"Oh!" continued the old hero, "when will Dunkirk at length belong to France, and be forever rid of these English and Spaniards! I shall probably never see the day!"

"But, why not, my friend?" said Catherine. "You have told me yourself, that the city can not hold out much longer; and, besides, the inhabitants are very indifferent to the result of the siege, and wish for nothing more than for a favorable capitulation."

Catherine was silent; for she saw that the pains of her husband had again become severer. He lay a moment, with closed eyes; then, recovering himself, he called for his old servant, in order to receive news of the progress of the siege. After he had made his report, the captain asked him to sit down by him; for neither to him, nor to his little son, had he related a story for many weeks, and intended, now that

* Count Montholon.