

jects of permanent interest,—these letters will henceforth be indispensable to the student of Wordsworth, and they supply much that will be invaluable to future biographies, not only of Wordsworth, but of his fellow poets.

JESSIE B. RITTENHOUSE.

DELANE, OF "THE TIMES." *

If there is any one department of English biography that is lean and weak it is the biography of newspaper editors. Not more than three or four of these biographies have appeared since the *Life of Baines*, of the "*Leeds Mercury*," was published in 1851; and those of Robinson, of the "*Daily News*," and Cowen, of the "*Newcastle Daily Chronicle*," to recall only the more recently published biographies, are proof of the difficulty that seems to be experienced in depicting the life and work of men in the front rank of English journalism—men who have built up great newspapers. Mr. Dasent had an unusual opportunity; for as the nephew of Delane he was in possession of more correspondence and other valuable data concerning the "*Times*" in the period when it was outdistancing all its London competitors, creating standards in newspaper work that were maintained all over England and unchallenged for half a century and firmly establishing its place as the world's greatest newspaper, than were ever in the possession of any man who was about to write the life of an editor, or deal with an epoch-making period in the history of British journalism. He has adequately grasped Delane's close relations with the statesmen and politicians of the period between 1840 and 1879, when he was editor of the "*Times*." Mr. Dasent realizes, and he makes the reader realize, that no other English editor was ever so long or so closely in touch with the men of both political parties who were governing England during Delane's reign at the "*Times*" office. He shows how anxious these statesmen were to stand well with Delane; how at times they deferred to him in larger as well as in minor affairs of state; and the extent to which Delane was taken into their counsels and confidence. Mr. Dasent claims all

* "*John Thaddeus Delane: Editor of 'The Times.' His Life and Correspondence.*" By Arthur Irwin Dasent. With Portraits and Other Illustrations. Two Volumes, pp. ix, 328; vii, 376. New York, Charles Scribner's Sons.

that it is possible to claim for Delane as a power in the state; so much so that he exalts him into what he describes as the Prime Minister of the Public. He has, moreover, been almost overawed by Delane's high position in society and his acceptance in the homes of the families of what it was wont to describe as the governing classes of England. In politics and in society Delane's unique position does not suffer in the least in Mr. Dasent's representation of it. Of eulogy also there is no lack, even if it is not always discriminating. Men like Bright and Cobden, for whom Delane had scant regard, Mr. Dasent treats at times with obvious injustice; and he fights all Delane's battles over again with the zeal of a feudal squire. In a word, Delane could not have desired a more intensely loyal and eulogistic biographer; but in depicting Delane as the greatest of newspaper-makers in the period between the reign of George III and the middle years of Queen Victoria's reign Mr. Dasent has fallen short of his opportunities.

Mr. Dasent is seemingly not a journalist. He is at any rate not familiar with the technique of journalism; and he has no appreciation of the news instinct which was so magnificently developed in Delane. Nor can Mr. Dasent be familiar with the history of English journalism; for if the history of journalism during the thirty-seven years that Delane was editor of the "Times"—the period of its new political power and of its greatest development—had any interest for him he would cheerfully have sacrificed the pages which he devotes to the appearance of the streets of London between Printing House Square and the West End when Delane was appointed editor in 1840, for a sketch of the history of the "Times" between 1785 and 1840; an outline of the position it then occupied in English public life and of its hold in the capitals of Continental Europe; and a brief survey of the position of the London and provincial press at the time when Delane, then only twenty-three years of age, succeeded Barnes as editor. Anything adequate of this nature is lacking; and, more remarkable still, nowhere in the two volumes is there from Dasent's pen a good description of Delane at work. But fortunately a large part of the volumes consists of the letters that Delane wrote to Sir George Webbe Dasent—father of the biographer—who from 1840 to 1870 was Delane's associate editor. These letters, like many of the other letters

contained in the two volumes are indifferently edited. There is a tantalizing lack of foot-notes to elucidate personal references and references to events; but from the letters that Delane wrote to Dasent while on his vacations it is easily possible to estimate Delane's position as a great newspaper-maker; and it is on his work in this respect that Delane's larger and more permanent fame must always rest.

Delane had a genius for newspaper-making; for realizing of what the ever-widening constituency of readers of the "Times" would like to be informed, and for placing his men at home and abroad where they could do the best work for the great newspaper they were serving. He had a keen and alert perception of good newspaper writing, whether for the editorial or the special correspondence columns or for the news pages; and an eye for the niceties of typography and make-up that would have made him a great printer had fortune not destined him for a great editor. Delane as a newspaper editor is seen at his best in his letters to his associate editor when he was on his travels. He wrote usually after he had gone over the latest issues of the "Times" that had caught up with him, and commented on the literary work and the typographical make-up of the pages, and also offered suggestions as to how this or that subject could best be handled on the editorial page, or who was the best man in the corps of correspondents to be sent specially to cover some coming event of national or international importance. Not even for a week, no matter where he was or how far away from London, did he cease to be editor of the "Times." He never seems to have allowed himself a vacation; for he carried his oversight of the "Times" with him wherever he went. Delane's London house was in Sergeant's Inn, a precinct of the law just off the south side of Fleet Street, and within half a mile of Printing House Square. One of the saddest domestic calamities that can befall a man practically ended his married life. He had, consequently, few of the home ties of the ordinary professional man in middle life; no children of his own to make any calls on his time and care, and for nearly forty years he lived wholly for the "Times."

In the period that lies between the French Revolution and the second Reform Act of 1867, James Perry, who from 1789 to 1817 edited the famous Whig "Morning Chronicle,"

and who among his other newspaper achievements was the organizer of the present corps system of reporting the debates in Parliament, is the only English newspaper editor who can be compared with Delane. Perry's opportunities, in spite of the success of the old "Morning Chronicle" under his editorship, were not nearly so great nor so varied as those of Delane. Enterprise such as Delane developed was not physically possible in the days when there were no railways, no steamships, no telegraph and cable lines, and no presses printing from the roll. Delane belongs to the second era of daily newspaper development in England. He is of the era that preceded the new journalism that has been developed in connection with the present-day half-penny daily newspapers of London—and in this second era, of which he was the pioneer, he must always hold the premier position among great newspaper-makers as a man who not only found opportunity awaiting him, but who was constantly creating new opportunities.

Delane was not a publicist who worked for great causes. He was a free-trader; but he had a contempt for the other movements in which Cobden and Bright were engaged. Political convictions concerning the domestic policy of England lay as lightly on Delane as they did on Melbourne or Palmerston, whose stereotyped reply to political reformers who got near enough to them to urge their causes was, "Can't you leave things alone?" In 1865, when Palmerston died, Delane's prayer was, "May God in His mercy defend the country, for now will begin a real revolution, political, religious and social." In the struggle of 1861-65 all Delane's sympathies were with the Southern States; and he was evidently misled by W. H. Russell's estimate of the position—the estimate that Russell wrote in his first American letter to the "Times," and reprinted in his "Diary, North and South," which was published in book form in December, 1862. "Although," wrote Russell, in the preface to this book, "I have never for one moment seen reason to change the opinion I expressed in the first letter I wrote from the States, that the Union as it was could never be restored, I am satisfied that the Free States of the North will retain and gain great advantages by the struggle if they will only set themselves at work to accomplish their destiny, nor lose time in sighing over vanished empire or indulging in abortive dreams

of conquest and schemes of vengeance." Delane must have accepted this off-hand and ill-informed judgment of his special correspondent with all seriousness; for on December 25th, 1864, he wrote to Dasent, "The American news is a heavy blow to us as well as to the South. It has changed at once the whole face of things." On December 12th Delane wrote Dasent, "I am still sore vexed about Sherman,"—about Sherman's march through Georgia; "but," he added in this letter to his associate editor, "Chenery did his best to attenuate the mischief," which was Delane's way of commending Chenery's editorial article which broke the news gently to the sympathizers with the South in England that Sherman was soon to be in possession of Savannah and that the Rebellion was at an end.

The value of the political letters in these two volumes is great and distinctive; for they supplement nearly every really important volume of political memoirs and letters which was published in England between the issue of Ashley's "Life of Palmerston" and Theodore Martin's "Life of the Prince Consort" in 1879 and 1880 and Lord Edmund Fitzmaurice's "Life of Earl Granville" and the "Letters of Queen Victoria," which appeared in 1905 and 1907.

EDWARD PORRITT.

"THE STANDARD OF USAGE IN ENGLISH."*

UNDER the ramparts of those who were ignorantly yet valiantly defending our noble English tongue against "corruptions" of all sorts Professor Lounsbury has now exploded a bomb which will bring their bastions tumbling about their ears. Many there be who have entrenched themselves behind a mound of grammars and of other manuals setting forth the secret of "correct" English, and who will now find themselves blown up into the windy spaces of the sky with no haven of refuge in sight. And scores of those rigid reformers who have been hard at work "school-mastering" the language, marking out metes and bounds beyond which it might not stray, will now discover that their occupation is gone, and also the sole reason for their existence. The battle

* "The Standard of Usage in English." By Thomas R. Lounsbury, Emeritus Professor of English in Yale University. New York and London: Harper & Brothers. 1908. 8vo, pp. 310.