

advertise, not peace, but justice, for the dove of peace is a shy bird that is averse

to publicity and nests only where justice prevails.

## George Borrow

By LAWRENCE F. ABBOTT

Contributing Editor of The Outlook

**I** MADE the acquaintance of George Borrow thirty-one years ago last August—to be exact, on August 29, 1892, having been introduced to him on that memorable day by the Rt. Hon. Augustine Birrell, of the Inner Temple, London. The introduction was not made in person, of course, because Borrow died in 1881 and I never saw Augustine Birrell in the flesh, although he is one of the contemporary English men of letters whom I should most delight to have known. The introduction was made through the medium of Birrell's vivacious essay on George Borrow, which essay readers—a small tribe at any time and just now very much in eclipse—may find in the little volume entitled "Res Judicata," published by the Scribners in 1892. The date when I met Borrow is noted on the fly-leaf of this delightful little volume—delightful in format and in contents. This was the form of Mr. Birrell's introduction:

The author of "Lavengro," "The Romany Rye," "The Bible in Spain," and "Wild Wales" is one of those kings of literature who never need to number their tribe. His personality will always secure him an attendant company, who, when he pipes, must dance. A queer company it is too, even as was the company he kept himself, composed as it is of saints and sinners, gentle and simple, master and man, mistresses and maids; of those who, learned in the tongues, have read everything else, and of those who have read nothing else and do not want to. People there are for whom Borrow's books play the same part as did horses and dogs for the gentleman in the tall white hat whom David Copperfield met on the top of the Canterbury coach. "'Orses and dorgs," said that gentleman, "is some men's fancy. They are wittles and drink to me, lodging, wife and children, reading, writing and 'rithmatic, snuff, tobacker and sleep."

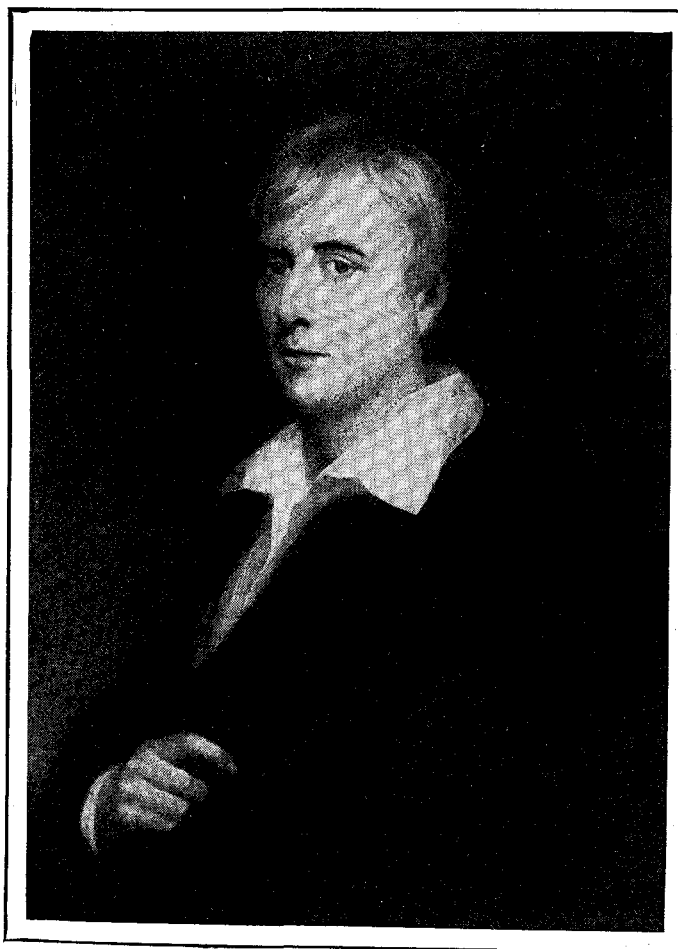
Is it any wonder that after such an encomium I was eager to know more of Borrow and find out for myself whether he deserved such praise from a man like Augustine Birrell, who numbered among his special friends in books such persons as Samuel Richardson, Edward Gibbon, William Cowper, Cardinal Newman,

Matthew Arnold, William Hazlitt, and Charles Lamb? I began by reading "The Bible in Spain," of which I now have two or three different editions. It was not the first book Borrow wrote, but it was the best one, although there are those who think that his Gypsy novels, "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye," alone entitle him to a high place in the list of English literary geniuses. At all events, "The Bible in Spain" was the book that made Borrow famous and is the one I should advise to be read first by those who are curious to know why there is a joyous company of lovers of literary adventure who call themselves Borrowians.

George Borrow's impresario, if I may use that term, in England is Clement Shorter, the editor of the very beautifully printed definitive edition of Borrow's works which is now being published in sixteen volumes under the imprint of Constable & Co. in London and Gabriel

Wells in New York. But the definitive biography is that written by the late Professor William I. Knapp, of Yale University. The edition of "The Bible in Spain" which I personally prefer is one in two volumes issued a little more than twenty years ago in New York by Messrs. G. P. Putnam's Sons, because it contains a map of Borrow's extraordinary journeys through Spain afoot and on horseback nearly a hundred years ago.

Entirely apart from his literary achievements, George Borrow was one of the oddest geniuses that England has ever produced. He was born in the County of Norfolk in 1803, his father being an enlisted private soldier who later obtained a commission, and his mother the daughter of a tenant farmer. His boyhood was a wandering one as his soldier-father moved from post to post and barracks to barracks. But he went to school, and as he had an inborn genius for language he studied Latin, perhaps some Greek, but especially the Romance languages, French, Spanish, and Italian. When he was sixteen years old he was articled as a clerk to a law firm in Norwich, but as he gave more time and attention to the study of languages—of which he fairly well mastered seven, besides becoming more or less familiar with seven more—than he did to the law, he



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soon abandoned his legal employment, or, rather, his legal employers soon abandoned him.

At twenty-one years of age he went up to London and became a hack writer for various publishers, in this respect serving an apprenticeship like the great Dr. Johnson. During this apprentice period he wandered about England, sharing the life and studying the habits and customs of the Gypsies. Borrow's knowledge of out-of-the-way languages and dialects somehow or other attracted the attention of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and when he was about thirty years old that pious company sent him to Russia to prepare, print, and distribute an edition of the New Testament in the Manchu-Tartar dialect. In theology he was always a somewhat bigoted Protestant, but in practice, although perfectly sound and wholesome in his principles and conduct, he was a good deal of a man of the world, enjoying human life and human nature in all its aspects. There is a perfectly splendid and Homeric description of a prize fight in "Lavengro"—an apostrophe to the "bruisers of England," of which Augustine Birrell has this to say:

If one were in search of a single epithet most properly descriptive of Borrow's effect upon his reader, perhaps it would best be found in the word "contagious." . . . Mark his devastations. It is as bad as the pestilence. A gentle lady, bred among the Quakers, a hater of physical force,

with eyes brimful of mercy, was lately heard to say, in heightened tones, at a dinner table, where the subject of momentary conversation was a late prize fight: "Oh! pity was it that ever corruption should have crept in amongst them." "Amongst whom?" inquired her immediate neighbor. "Amongst the bruisers of England," was the terrific rejoinder. Deep were her blushes—and yet how easy to forgive her! The gentle lady spoke as one does in dreams; for you must know she was born a Borrowian, and only that afternoon had read for the first time the famous twenty-fifth chapter of "Lavengro."

It seems ungracious to call attention to a slight error in Mr. Birrell's relation of this captivating anecdote, for Borrow pays his tribute to the "bruisers of England" not in the twenty-fifth but in the twenty-sixth chapter of the Gypsy tale which is believed by many to be almost an autobiography. However, this is not important. The main thing is to remember the contagion of Borrow's stern but picturesque ethics. A great American moralist, Theodore Roosevelt, took the title for one of his most spiritual-minded books, "Fear God and Take Your Own Part," from a passage in the same Gypsy tale describing a fight which Borrow had with the "Flaming Tinman."

In spite of the vividness, vigor, and unprecedented originality of "Lavengro" and "The Romany Rye," I still think that "The Bible in Spain" is a finer piece of literature, taken as a whole, than any

other of Borrow's books. When he returned from Russia, the Bible Society sent him to Spain and Portugal for the purpose of printing and distributing the Bible in those countries. In them he spent the better part of five years, making four journeys throughout the peninsula, from north to south and from east to west. His book is not at all a religious treatise, as to the uninitiated the title might indicate, but is an absorbing story of his adventures. It might even be called a kind of glorified dime novel founded on fact. Moreover, it is one of the best books of travel printed in any language. No one can read it without wanting to visit Spain himself, and that is one of the best tests of the literary value of travelers' tales. It was published in 1842, and has grown steadily since then in both public and critical estimation.

Borrow was a "character." His genius was whimsical, untrained, and often erratic, but it was true genius nevertheless. If the publication of the complete edition of his works,<sup>1</sup> which is the occasion of this article, adds to the number of Borrowians, as it deserves to and doubtless will, it will perform a real service in the promotion of a love of what is fine and genuine, although too little known in English literature—like John Galt's "Annals of a Parish," for example.

<sup>1</sup>The Works of George Borrow. Edited, with much hitherto unpublished Manuscript, by Clement Shorter. Norwich Edition. Constable & Co., London; Gabriel Wells, New York.

## The British Navy Rediscovered

By MAJOR-GENERAL SIR GEORGE ASTON, K.C.B.

**T**HERE is a danger in headlines. Far be it from me to take any credit to myself for the rediscovery of their navy by the British press and public. It has been brought about by a welcome return to sanity, by what has been called the "strategic sense" of the people, and also by three events—the Premiers' Conference, the Naval Assembly at Spithead, and the start of the battle-cruisers and light cruisers on their trip around the world. The Premiers' Conference has attracted public attention ever since last August. It has been pointed out, in connection with the Singapore question, that, important as it is, naval bases in themselves can do nothing to protect sea communications. That task must be performed by seagoing forces, which, on their part, are powerless without bases for replenishment and re-

pair. I had an opportunity on board the Princess Margaret during the recent review at Spithead of discussing that matter with an eminent statesman from overseas. He summed up the matter thus: It stands to reason that if other nations have capital ships in the Pacific we must also be in a position to send ours there. Without a base at Singapore we could not do so. If other people agree to have no capital ships in those seas, we might dispense with the Singapore base. I ventured to point out in reply that it is not only a question of capital ships. It is true that for other vessels a much cheaper scheme would suffice, as the huge docks to take large battleships with the new "bulges," which add so much to their beam, could be dispensed with. He had, I suggested, missed the point that the conditions of our sea power had

changed completely. Ever since steam had been substituted for sails we have been in the fortunate position of possessing the best steam coal in the world. The change to oil fuel means that we are dependent upon foreign countries for the motive power of our sea forces. Call this "sea power on sufferance," or what you will, it means that unless we provide storage for vast quantities of oil fuel for the navy we might almost as well have no navy at all. If war came upon us, it would soon find our war-vessels of all classes lying helpless in harbor, leaving our vital sea communications at the mercy of an enemy better provided. If stored only at home, the oil fuel would be of little value to vessels destined to operate afar off—in the Pacific, for instance. They would use up most of it in getting there. Apart altogether from