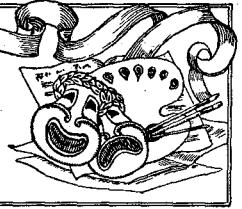


AS I LIKE IT

BY WILLIAM LYON PHELPS



LATELY I have been going back to Jules Verne, and reading him with the double pleasure that comes from good narrative and happy reminiscence. To read a youthful favorite after the lapse of many years is like revisiting some European scene first beheld in boyish rapture; the principal is intact, and the accumulated interest a notable addition. The delight I find to-day in the French magician is not caused by the fact that some of his dreams have come true; as a mere reader, I do not care whether his stories are possible or impossible; nor do I know whether or not I should rejoice in the practicability of the submarine, for from the human-welfare point of view it would thus far seem to be a liability rather than an asset. It is as an imaginative, not as a scientific, writer that Jules Verne appeals to me.

For this reason I find the old solemn accusations made against his scientific accuracy decidedly amusing; and once more, not because he occasionally happened to confound his adversaries by guessing right, like some charlatan who predicts the weather for the next winter, but because such attacks were and are just as valuable as solemn impeachments of the accuracy of Munchausen. I wonder how many remember "M. W. H." of the *New York Sun*, who used to write a full-page review every week of some new book, and write it with such detail that it became quite unnecessary to buy the book? His judgment in many fields of literature was sound and his criticisms penetrating; but this morning I have been reading again his portentous condemnation of Jules Verne, which he handed down from the solar chair more than forty years ago. The following paragraph gives a fair idea of the whole essay: "The astonishing vogue of these productions constitutes their chief claim to criticism, but they may also be said to challenge it by a special eminence in worthlessness. In

most works of the kind extravagant blunders are only occasional, or at worst sporadic, relieved by intervals of tolerable accuracy; but our French author's unvaracity must be accounted chronic, since he can rarely complete a dozen pages without some perversion of fact."

I remember how I resented this attack in my boyhood; the author denounced for "inaccuracy" was my friend, who by his magic had taken me to the centre of the earth, twenty thousand leagues under the seas, around the world in eighty days, to the moon, and given me a delightful round trip to the planets and back, on a luxurious comet. I then vaguely resented Mr. Hazeltine's animadversions; now they seem funny enough, a greater curiosity than anything to be found in the Frenchman's romances.

Nor was Jules Verne received with much favor by French critics, in spite of what Mr. Hazeltine said to the contrary; they did not take him seriously as an author until millions of foreign children learned to love France and Frenchmen through him. One winter day in 1903, being in Amiens to see the cathedral, I called at his house to tell him of the happiness he had added to my childhood; the housemaid said he was out walking near the great church, and as we drew near to the façade, we met him. He was a white-bearded old gentleman, with an expression of peculiar benevolence, as though he carried in his dear old face some reflection of the adoring gratitude of all the children in the world. We talked a few moments, and he went on his way. A few years later, when I revisited Amiens, he had departed on an adventure which I hope was more thrilling than anything he had imagined in his books; we found not him, but his statue. And it is pleasant to remember that the statue had been dedicated with tributes from members of the French Academy.

To-day his stories have lost none of

their thrill; and to those who have neither the time nor the money for extensive travel, I recommend a journey to the Mysterious Island.

The most important announcement of any new book this season is the news of a second volume of poems from Alfred E. Housman, the author of "A Shropshire Lad." That collection of original and beautiful lyrics was published in 1896; my wonder at their extraordinary perfection is equalled only by my wonder at the succeeding twenty-five years of silence. How could a man sing in so pure and clear a tone as to keep us all in hushed expectation of the next note, and leave us in that attitude? I should think it would be as difficult for a poet to maintain silence as for a bird; but nothing has come from him in all these years. To every lover of poetry the announcement of a second volume from Professor Housman is the real news of the world; I can hardly wait for it to appear.

Among American books of verse in 1922, I have seen nothing better than "The Black Panther," by John Hall Wheelock. This is not only notable in itself but marks a distinct advance on his previous work. He seems to be steadily progressing in his art. One fleck that I should like to see eliminated is the word "beseeched," which, although Mrs. Humphry Ward used it, is not now good English. It is clear that in this particular stanza the correct form of the verb would have been inharmonious; but better take a synonym than resort to "beseeched."

A genuine American poet who has been quiet too long is Anna Hempstead Branch. She has been giving her days and nights to promoting the cause of poetry through the interesting and effective method of the Unbound Anthology. But it is not necessary that such work, important as it is, should be done by a creative artist. She is one of the most distinguished of all living poets; and I begrudge any less valuable employment of her time. One of her richest sources of inspiration is the Bible; last year she read the whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, through in a few days, to discover for herself whether it was or was not a unique Book, with a Divine Revelation; her silent and steady

communion with its pages convinced her that it is in truth the Word of God.

It takes some courage to stand up for Alfred Noyes. But as I never allow mob opinion to influence my views on either politics or poetry, I wish to call attention to his latest and most ambitious undertaking, "The Torch-Bearers," of which the first volume, "The Watchers of the Sky," has already appeared. He was inspired to write this work by the largest telescope in the world, the one-hundred-inch reflector on the top of Mount Wilson in California. "The Watchers" is a biographical history of the progress of astronomy, written in a poetical style worthy of the subject. Alfred Noyes was the first of the remarkable group of English poets of the twentieth century to attract general attention; the almost universal praise with which his earlier poems were received gave way to detraction and abuse; so that the large number of reviewers who merely follow the prevailing literary stock quotations know perfectly well that just now it is not at all "the thing" to betray any admiration for his poems. In spite of his excess baggage, which all poets except Milton have carried, I think he will survive many writers whom it is in 1922 fashionable to salute.

Speaking of Milton, I have already received from a correspondent one candidate for the Ignoble Prize; the conditions for competition were given in the November issue. My friend, a man of wide reading and good taste, cannot apparently endure "Paradise Lost." For my part, I not only admire the majesty and sublimity of that epic, I find it steadily *interesting*. More people ought to read Milton for pleasure—the pleasure is in his consummate art. Stevenson, in his essay on Walt Whitman, which still remains the best I know, said that he would not disinherit a son who could not admire the Camden sage; but that he could not keep the peace with any one who failed to appreciate the choruses in "Samson Agonistes."

Can anything be done to prevent dramatic critics from printing in detail the plot of every new play? I "take in" five daily New York newspapers, partly in order to read first-night impressions from trained and honest observers. I am

interested to know whether they think the new piece is, or is not, worth seeing; whether or not it will, in their judgment, achieve popular success; whether or not it is original or thoughtful or important; but at the fateful paragraph beginning, "The story of the play is as follows," I skip, and often find that I have to skip the bulk of the so-called "criticism." The one thing about a new play that I emphatically do not want to know is the plot; to know that in advance is to be robbed of much of the pleasure in seeing it. So true is this, that every playbill of "The Bat" requested persons in the audience not to give away the *dénouement*. Why on earth do critics spell it all out for us? If their object is to lessen the number of spectators, I congratulate them on the success of their method. But I suspect that the real reason is, that not having enough ideas to fill the requisite space for criticism, they resort to retelling the story, which entails no mental effort, and makes the "criticism" look well to those who do not read it. I never like to see this space-filling process even in a book review; in an account of a new play it is unpardonable. I think, too, that every dramatic critic should tell us whether the piece is decent or not; for there are many who wish to go if it is, and others who wish to go if it is not, and both classes ought to know this fact in advance.

Bad manners in literary criticism have become quite common, and are as a rule resorted to by those reviewers and critics who cannot manage subtler methods of annihilation. The bludgeon and the brickbat have taken the place of the rapier. Not only is this true but many readers look forward with delight to these exhibitions of buffoonery and abuse, their idea of wit being horse-play and their notion of disapproval being on the level of a kick. This constantly growing method of "literary criticism" seems to have been borrowed from the political arena; it is analogous to what used to be called Tillmanism. Some of the more aged readers of these pages may remember the time when that aristocratic, courageous, and cultivated gentleman, Wade Hampton, represented South Carolina in the United States Senate; he really represented her, being typical of the finest

type of breeding and manners we associate with the Old South. He was succeeded by a man with a pitchfork, who at first shocked but ultimately delighted thousands of Americans by an exhibition of language and manners quite otherwise than traditional. At first he seemed out of place; but soon his picturesque habits of speech amused the groundlings to such an extent that Tillman became a decidedly popular man, not only in the Senate but throughout the country, and a whole school of imitators sprang up who had all of his grotesqueness with none of his sincerity. Coarseness was taken for virility.

Much of the same change has taken place in what passes for literary criticism; readers demand that it be "snappy," highly spiced, and as brutal as possible. I cannot think that this new method is any more effective than the old, either in politics or in English composition. Let me illustrate. A United States Congressman, who has since gone to his ultimate reward, was making a speech on the tariff, in a campaigning tour, when he was interrupted by a question from the audience; looking contemptuously at the individual who had ventured to heckle him, he shouted, "Go wash your neck!" which was thought to be very funny by the crowd. Not long after that a man running for the highest office in our country was similarly interrupted by a questioner, and he roared: "You are the kind of man who works exclusively with his mouth." Leaving out entirely the question of good manners, let us see if either of these replies seems as effective as the one made by John Morley in an English general election. At the conclusion of his speech he asked for the support of his hearers, when one excited individual leaped up and screamed: "I would rather vote for the devil!" Mr. Morley, in a quiet and courteous voice, replied: "Quite so; but in case your friend declines to run, may I not then count on your support?"

Perhaps the best retort I have ever heard of occurred when Thackeray was a candidate for Parliament, and was opposed by Edward Cardwell. The two competitors happened to meet in the course of the campaign, and after a friendly discussion, Thackeray said it would be a good fight, "and may the best

man win." "Oh, I hope not!" said his rival.

The Gentleman ought not to become obsolete. John Galsworthy, in his fine drama "The Skin Game," has emphasized the real danger of fighting. The danger is that in a skin-for-skin contest, gentility will prove to be worth nothing; for it will be sacrificed in the desire for victory. Or, in other words, if the enemy cheats, we must cheat too. During the recent war the worst possible argument for reprisals always seemed to me to be one constantly urged; namely, that we must treat the enemy as they treat us. In other words, we must allow our foes to determine our own moral standards, and imitate them in the very things that gave us the reason for fighting them. Here is where we can take a lesson in manners from Julius Cæsar. In that interesting little volume "The Marginal Notes of Lord Macaulay," being extracts from the comments he jotted down on the margins of the books he read, Sir George Otto Trevelyan quotes the following. Cicero had written Cæsar a letter expressing his grateful appreciation for the clemency shown by the latter to his captured foes, and Cæsar replied to this epistle in words which contained, so Macaulay used to say, the finest sentence ever written: "I triumph and rejoice that my action should have obtained your approval. Nor am I disturbed when I hear it said that those, whom I have sent off alive and free, will again bear arms against me; for there is nothing which I so much covet as that I should be like myself and they like themselves." And on the margin of the book by that sentence, Macaulay wrote: "Noble fellow!"

Even if the literary glory of the American Augustans should fade, their personal characters ought to form an imperishable model for men of letters and for all sorts and conditions of men. I have been reading two excellent books: "Memories of a Hostess," compiled from the diaries of Mrs. Fields, by M. A. De Wolfe Howe, and "Glimpses of Authors," by Caroline Ticknor. I heartily recommend both these volumes to all who are interested in the literary history of our country, and to all who love to know more intimately those who are best worth knowing. En-

tirely apart from the question of creative genius, I do not believe there has ever been in any country a finer group of men than the leading American writers of 1840-1880. Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes, Lowell—every man a gentleman of the finest type, sincere, considerate, affectionate, loyal, truthful, and clean. When these intimate friends met one another at the house of Mrs. Fields, they met as peers; that any one of them could be guilty of treachery, disloyalty, meanness, or vulgarity simply never occurred to their minds. Their native wit in conversation was heightened by their personal charm. How strange it is that this is the group of men who are now accused of hypocrisy, and insincerity, and cowardice; when it is impossible to discover an occasion when any of them uttered what he did not in his heart believe to be the truth. Is there any single person in literary or public life to-day who can surpass Emerson in honesty and sincerity? Is there a man anywhere who is more truthful and courageous in the expression of political opinion than Hawthorne? His views at the time of the Civil War seemed to his most intimate friends to be not only false but sacrilegious; yet they had such respect for the nobility and integrity of his character that no blur disfigured the shining surface of their friendship. Mrs. Fields detested the political attitude of Hawthorne, and yet this is what she wrote in her diary: "He will dedicate the volume to Franklin Pierce, the Democrat—a most unpopular thing just now, but friendship of the purest stimulates him, and the ruin in prospect for his book because of this resolve does not move him from his purpose. Such adherence is indeed noble. Hawthorne requires all that popularity can give him in a pecuniary way for the support of his family."

Emerson, like his other friends, cut out the dedication from his copy of the book, for even some of those who support the government in time of war may also be sincere.

In both of these volumes of literary reminiscences Dickens plays a large part; and much new light is thrown on his last visit to America and on his personality and character. Dickens hated a pencil,

and wrote even brief notes and memoranda in ink. He always used a quill, and had discovered a blue ink which needed no blotting-paper, a method of drying that he especially disliked. If Dickens were alive to-day, it would not be necessary for him to use blue ink; I could tell him of an ink that writes jet-black, and that dries instantly. I do not like colored inks, and I hate with intense fervor the kind of ink commonly used in fountain-pens. It writes a pale blue, and turns black some time after your death. A pale-blue ink always seems to me to indicate a spineless personality. And I hate with equal intensity the kind of ink that sticks up on the written page like shrimp's eyes, or letters for the blind; and dries after the lapse of hours. A blotter never absorbs it, and it resists every attack except time.

I suppose no month passes without the appearance of some new book on Dickens; one of the latest is that by Mr. Alexander Woolcott, the distinguished dramatic critic of the New York *Herald*, "Mr. Dickens Goes to the Play." Dickens, as every one knows, could have been a great actor. I recommend a pilgrimage to Sessler's bookshop, in Philadelphia, where the visitor will be shown a folio by Ben Jonson, containing on the fly-leaf the date of the memorable performance of "Every Man in his Humour," 21 September, 1845, with the autographs of every one of the actors; Dickens as *Bobadil*, Forster as *Kiely*, Jerrold as *Master Stephen*, Lemon as *Brainworm*, Leech as *Master Matthew*.

And as the novels and characters of Dickens are proof against time, so his final words on leaving America in 1868 would seem not impertinent to-day. "Points of difference there have been, points of difference there are, points of difference there probably always will be, between the two great peoples. . . . I do believe that from the great majority of honest minds on both sides, there cannot be absent the conviction that it would be better for this globe to be riven by an earthquake, fired by a comet, overrun by an iceberg, and abandoned to the Arctic fox or bear, than that it should present the spectacle of those two great nations, each one of whom has, in its own way and hour, striven so hard and so successfully

for freedom, ever again being arrayed the one against the other."

The year 1922 has been memorable for the number of excellent biographies and autobiographies. Mrs. Stirling's "William De Morgan and his Wife" is a permanent memorial to a man of genius and a brilliant woman, and is filled with thought-stirring anecdotes and irresistible stories; Burton Hendrick's "Life of Walter H. Page" is so important that I shall discuss it with some detail in a later number; I am also reserving for special comment the autobiographies of those admirable Americans, Augustus Thomas and John Drew, whose names are an honor both to the stage and to citizenship. Let me earnestly recommend again Maurice Baring's "The Puppet Show of Memory," a book to be shipwrecked with, for its characters and meditations would enliven the most complete physical solitude; and in addition to introspective autobiographies, like Mr. Lewisohn's "Up Stream," no one should overlook the more humble but thrilling personal history of Arthur Mason, called "Ocean Echoes." This is his second attempt as an author, and is fully equal to his delightful "Flying Bo'sun." Mason ran away from home, and his actual experiences make an ordinary romance seem tame.

It is my guess that H. G. Wells is the author of "Number 87," but the publishers refuse to tell me whether my conjecture is correct or not. Although Wells is a prophet, a theologian, and a social reformer, of all his works the one that I shall most gladly read again is "The Wheels of Chance." Some visitor borrowed my copy, and paid it the compliment of keeping it. I confidently recommend "The Wheels of Chance" to those who love a good story. It is one of the best I know, as "The Soul of a Bishop" is one of the worst.

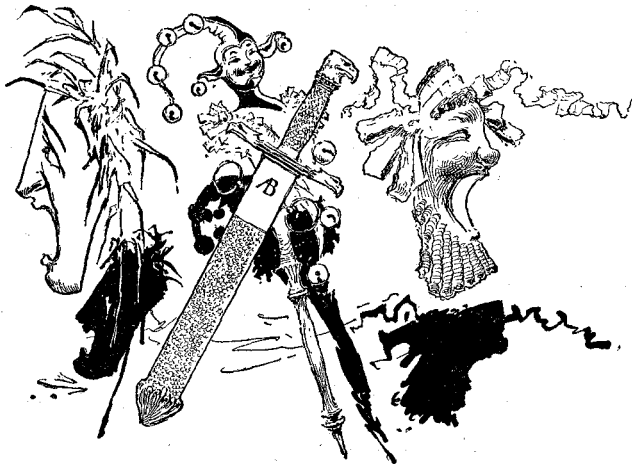
I never neglect a new book by Ben Ames Williams, a born narrator. The latest, "Black Pawl," is filled with stirring fights and perilous adventures, and the hero is original. What is perhaps even more original is that the finest person in his novel is a Christian missionary. (I used to wonder whether all novels ridiculed missionaries, or only those I happened to read; just as I wonder whether

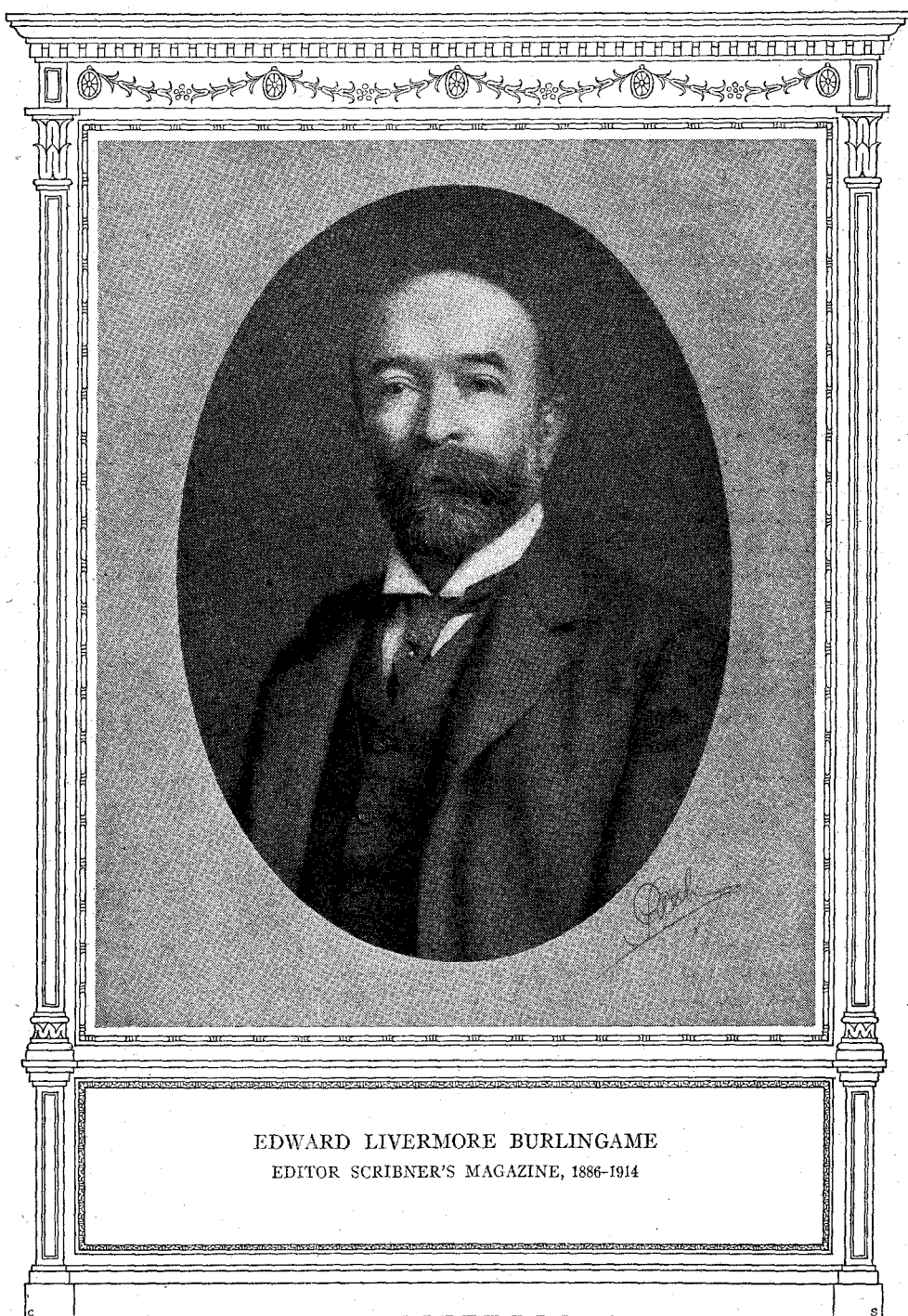
all trains are late, or only those I take.) It is rather curious that foreign missionaries, those bold soldiers of God, who give up home, congenial society, intimate friends, and the luxuries of civilization, should be so often presented by comfort-hunting novelists as weak, namby-pamby, insincere, and absurd. They fight not only with the prince of the powers of the air, they fight against poverty, disease, and sickness; it would be interesting if the brown, yellow, and black people whom they save from pain and death could know that these men and women are receiving in their own countries a continual backfire of abuse and ridicule. But the soldiers of science and the soldiers of religion, who sacrifice themselves in the effort to save human life, have never seemed to the stay-at-homes particularly heroic. Ben Williams's missionary is the best one I have met with in fiction since the wonderful old man in Lavedan's play, "Le Duel."

Prejudice plays far too large a part in our opinions and in our conversation. I

think it would be well if every one, on rising in the morning, made a silent but determined declaration of individual independence, the only independence worth anything. Let us talk less about democracy, and become more democratic; let us talk less about truth, and speak it more frequently; let us talk less about freedom, and become free. One of the great moments in "Les Misérables" is that following the impassioned harangue by Marius, the idolater of Napoleon. Marius has worked himself up to a grand climax. "To make the French Empire the successor of the Roman Empire, to be the Grand Nation and bring forth the Grand Army, to send your legions flying over the whole earth as a mountain sends its eagles on all sides, to vanquish, to rule, to strike with thunder, to be in Europe a kind of golden people through constant glory, to sound through history a Titan trumpet-call, to conquer the world twice, by conquest and by splendor, this is sublime, and what could be more grand?"

"To be free," said Combeferre.





Edward Livermore Burlingame

1848-1922

EDWARD LIVERMORE BURLINGAME, who died on November 15, had been connected with this publishing house since 1879. When the plan for SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE was formulated in 1886 he became its first editor, and he held that position for twenty-eight years; and those volumes of the MAGAZINE show the taste, the personality, and the wide interests that adapted him so well for his position.

The contacts of his formative years gave him an unusual equipment for editorial work. His early surroundings were Boston and Cambridge, and he naturally went to Harvard. His father was Anson Burlingame, the congressman from Massachusetts distinguished as an orator and for his vigorous resentment of the assault on Charles Sumner by Preston Brooks. Lincoln made Anson Burlingame minister to China in 1861. His son left Harvard College early in his course to become his father's secretary there, and followed him when Anson Burlingame was made ambassador extraordinary of China to negotiate treaties with the United States and the European powers. This gave him the abundant opportunity of studying in Paris, Heidelberg (where he took the degree of Ph.D. in 1869), Berlin, and St. Petersburg. Not only did he become acquainted with the language and literature of France and Germany, but his father's position brought him in contact with important personages. His natural aptitude and taste for letters thus had just the right nourishment for youth and ambition. His view of literature was thoroughly cosmopolitan.

In the prospectus of SCRIBNER'S MAGAZINE the founders expressed the belief that there was a distinct field for "a magazine of good literature in the widest sense—a magazine for the intelligent and entertaining reading of those things which they believe most interest a very large part of the American people."

Looking back at the end of twenty-five years Mr. Burlingame wrote that the endeavor of the management had been to make it "a mine of reminiscences and autobiography of important and interesting men and women; to print in it thoughtful and serious, but practical and not academic, discussion of public and social questions by men whose opinions were real contributions to their subjects; to make it interpret the great working life and practical achievement of the country by the articles of actual experts; to maintain on its artistic side a really artistic standard, with the aid of the foremost artists and the best modern means of interpreting their work."

The things that he sought in carrying out this broad programme brought him many warm and lasting literary friendships; notable among them were: Stevenson, Meredith, Barrie, Page, Hopkinson Smith, Brander Matthews, Edith Wharton, Robert Grant, F. J. Stimson, Bunner, E. S. Martin, Henry van Dyke, and many others whose names have become familiar to our readers. Many, in the newer generation of the early years of the MAGAZINE, owe their first recognition to the keen discernment of Mr. Burlingame. For him the discovery of a real poet or the writer of short stories in a new and unusual field was a great delight. His judgment in these matters was severe, and, to use one of his favorite expressions, his "geese were not all swans." To his patient suggestion and encouragement young writers have often paid tribute. His discernment was amply justified by the enduring fame of the authors whose work first appeared in these pages.

His own taste in short stories was revealed in two standard collections which he edited—one, "Stories by American Authors," made before the founding of the MAGAZINE; the other, "Stories from Scribner's," compiled after many years.

Mr. Burlingame continued until his death to be a literary adviser of this house and a member of its board of directors. For forty-three years he was intimately concerned in its publishing projects. His taste, wide knowledge of men and affairs, and the severity of his standards are stamped on many important volumes and collections. His colleagues, old and young, consulted him with assurance of receiving well-balanced and well-informed opinions. He stood for what was fine and permanent in literature. In this house, where that right feeling expressed itself, his daily presence and counsel will be long missed and his friendship long remembered.



NOT long ago there appeared in an American magazine a noteworthy article which carried the title "The Deserted Temple." Its theme was a lament over the fact that the mighty cathedral of literature now has few worshippers.

Gambols in the Temple

This prose elegy was a noble one, and it merited solitary eminence; yet I, having a similar lament, intend not to permit this voice crying in the wilderness to be a lone voice. My song of grief has for its theme the extraordinary approach of modern youth to the great shrine in question, and the unseemliness of its behavior before it. To me it appears that the temple is less deserted than it is desecrated.

Let us say that one gorgeous oriel in the dim cathedral is the shrine of Milton; and before it now is grouped a class of American schoolboys or college boys—half a hundred gay, attractive, ruddy-faced, obvious-minded young moderns. They should come here to worship, or at least to show some spirit of reverence for the Great Tradition; but they seem unaware of the fact that they are in the presence of austerest majesty. And their ideas about Milton's work and about the meaning of his poems are—. But they are speaking for themselves.

"L'Allegro loved jollies," one youth exudes with solemn finality; and, "This character hated droll nights," another assures his comrades with great earnestness. It must, in passing, be admitted that the phrase "droll nights" has its possibilities. "Cassiopea was a colored lady" is Young America's conception of "that starred Ethiop queen." Commentators on the genius of Milton should hereafter not fail to give him credit for the dexterity which this description makes so clear: "The poet introduces Vesta by bringing her in by her golden hair." For those to whom the true meaning of *masque* may remain a little obscure, this definition will prove quite satisfactory: "'Comus' is a masque; that is, a paretorical play." We also learn this:

"'Goshen,' to which the poet refers in 'Paradise Lost,' is a strong exclamation—the antique plural of *gosh*. It is most emphatic." Finally we have this grand summary of the whole business: "Milton was a very great poet; nevertheless, he had his good points."

Leaving this interesting group, we approach a second, gathered before the shrine of Shakespeare. Here, perhaps, the talk is not a whit less startling. "Shakespeare was born to his father and mother" is the first daring bit of iconoclasm to reach us and to move us. "Ann Hathaway was eight years his superior" is a method of description which will delight the heart of every feminist—and possibly every wife. Jealous lovers of Shakespeare's fame will be somewhat dismayed to learn this: "The man who, probably more than any other, collaborated with Shakespeare in the writing of these great plays was Homer." It is likewise interesting to know that "Shakespeare used Robinson Caruso in one of his epics." As we turn away we overhear: "None of these plays, of course, ought to be called poetry; they are too sensible for that."

The Temple, therefore, is not really deserted; but there are in it many profaners. Some of these are unconscious of any sacrilege; others show no reverence here because they have never sensed it anywhere. Here and there in the noble edifice will be seen a genuine pilgrim. But most of "those present" are hasty tourists into literature; and, now that they see it, they understand of it only those meagre phases which they understand of life. They are sometimes honestly curious to fathom the mystery; but, as Johnson said of Garrick and Goldsmith, who had been discussing foreordination: "They could make nothing of it. O noble pair!"

Gambols, especially of the mental variety, are permissible, I suppose, especially in private. But in public and in a temple they are dangerous; for such capers tempt those who really come to pray to remain to scoff—at the caperers.