

ders. "Don't. The young man will run straight; you can be sure of it. I tell you, you don't understand the temptation. There he was, needing money for useless luxuries to which he'd always been accustomed. He was conscious that he could write almost like his father, and yet that he couldn't stand comparison if he tried something independently in the same style. I blamed him at first, but I don't now. At least, I'm willing to forgive him for trying to play the game on us; and I'm exceedingly glad he caved in so easily. What I should have done if he hadn't, I don't quite know."

"I—I feel guilty about Van Pelt. I think we owe our escape partly to him, you know. If Grantham hadn't been afraid of losing this new position of his, I fear he'd have brazened it out and taken the risk. Very noble of Van Pelt, I call it. I'm sure he has arranged it simply

because he's a devotee of George Grant-ham."

Orrington rose lumberingly. "Then you needn't pity him, my friend. I've no doubt, in that case, he will be rather proud to have Grantham's son associated with him. That will be his reward. Besides, he may get the fellow to work. Everybody is satisfied, and we've upheld the integrity of the publishing business by——"

"By—by the skin of our teeth," suggested Speedwell, "as you wouldn't be likely to say in one of your essays, Orrington. You don't mix metaphors in them as you do in ordinary life, but—but you're less practical. In business you outdo me for hard-headedness—sometimes."

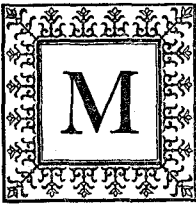
Orrington chuckled as he marched heavily down the corridor to his own office.

Masson of Kentucky

THE STORY OF AN "IRRECLAIMABLE VAGABOND" WHO BECAME A
POWER IN INDIA

BY FREDERICK PETERSON, M.D.

Formerly Professor of Mental Diseases at Columbia University; Author of
"Chinese Lyrics," etc.



MEDICAL men have a special interest in explorers, first because they are in a way explorers themselves in new fields of the human body and new regions of mind and faculty, and secondly because the famous explorers whose works one likes to read either have been physicians themselves or have found it almost imperative to practise medicine among the primitive peoples with whom they come in contact. Occasionally they take a doctor along with them, as did Sir Alexander Burnes in his travels in Bokhara. Winwood Reade, the African explorer, author of "The Martyrdom of Man," was a doctor. So was David Livingstone. On the other hand,

Doughty, whose two huge volumes on Arabia Deserta have of late become so popular, had no medical education whatever, but practised medicine nevertheless among the native Arabs, with a few simples and much caution, as one gathers in reading the formidable accounts of his adventures.

Here is the story so far as it is possible to uncover it of an American boy, born with that strange psychological make-up that leads to wandering and adventure, who, following his dream, achieved such great things as to place him among the foremost explorers of the world. But, by some curious fate, he has been lost sight of in the hurry and bluster of these modern days.

I make no apology, therefore, in venturing to present such brief facts as I have

been able to gather together in the history of Masson of Kentucky, that "irreclaimable vagabond," as Sir Thomas Holditch calls him in the two chapters he devotes to him in his fascinating book entitled "The Gates of India"—a history and description of the regions in and around the only passes between the vastnesses of Asia and the Indian peninsula. For, except in this northwest, there are no gates to the treasure-house through the cloud-covered mountain walls of snow and ice. Through these northwest passages have poured all the invaders from immemorial times—Aryans, Greeks, Mongols, or whatever hardened race among migrating and conquering peoples has sought the mild south and wealth and ease.

I can imagine this boy born (perhaps in 1798) in Kentucky—born with the spirit of adventure among a pioneer people who, amidst hardships, the hostility of nature, the peril of Indians, were cutting farms out of the primeval woods and slowly beginning to build up a civilized commonwealth. These pioneers were adventurous too in going into the wilderness to make their new homes, to hew and plow and plant and build, but this was commonplace adventure, making little appeal to the intellect or imagination. What was it that spiritualized in Masson in Kentucky those homely ambitions that made him reach out into the oldest parts of the Old World? There were no newspapers or magazines or news from anywhere except what came by word of mouth or letters months old. There could have been few books, and yet possibly some well-thumbed copy of Marco Polo came into his hands; or among his teachers, for he must have had some inspiring ones, perhaps was some intellectual exile and wanderer who told him tales of Polo, Genghis Khan, and Tamerlane, Baber, the Arabian Nights, Egypt, Golconda. However it may have been, there is no trace of any Masson family in the historical annals of Kentucky, and we must imagine this American boy, about twenty years of age, making his way slowly, perhaps earning it, on horseback, by boat or lumbering stage from Kentucky wilds to New York, then by slow sail to England; and we know with certainty that he then had four years of wandering and study in

England, France, and Russia before he reached Tiflis.

There is no book that tells us about him, no note of him in any of the biographies or encyclopædias, except a tiny note in Allibone's Dictionary of Authors that mentions just Charles Masson, without date or place of birth or death, and the titles of his books: "Journeys in Balochistan, Afghanistan, the Panjab and Kalat" in four volumes, Bentley, London, 1844. "Legends of the Afghans," in verse, 1848. This is all that is mentioned in Allibone. I have, besides the above edition, another edition of the Journeys published earlier by Bentley, in 1842, in three volumes. Aside from what he himself reveals to us of his character, attainments, and doings in these books and in one letter written in September, 1830, by the Resident of the Persian Gulf to the Chief Secretary of the Government of India (preserved in the Documents of the Bombay Secretariat), which sets forth a few things in his life which Masson had told the Resident, we have no data with regard to him, and we have no account of what became of him subsequently to the publication of the last edition of his works, in 1844. I have not been able to find a copy of his "Legends of the Afghans," in verse, published in 1848.

The letter of the Resident of the Persian Gulf referred to says that "an American gentleman of the name of Masson arrived at Bushire from Basadore on the 13th of June last [1830] describing himself as from the State of Kentucky and saying that he had been absent from his country for ten years, which he must consequently have left when he was young, as he is now only about two-and-thirty years of age." From the same letter we learn that before 1826 he had gone in from Tiflis through Persia and Afghanistan to Sind, and his book begins after this in the autumn of 1826, when he journeys from India via Peshawer to Kabul and Kandahar, in Afghanistan, and back to India. We have no record of the earlier journey through Afghanistan.

During the next four years he seems to have been continually travelling in these regions, though we have no dates between till his appearance before the Res-

ident of the Persian Gulf at Bushire, in June, 1830. He had reached Bushire from Karachi in India, by sea in Arab craft, and he returned along the seacoast in the same way to India and began farther journeys into Kalat and Afghanistan. We hear of him again spending a long period of time in Kabul in 1832 and 1833 and 1835, and indeed he was in that country for years till 1838, and early in 1840, his fourth volume tells us, he had just dispatched various manuscripts to England for publication and started on another journey from Karachi to Kalat, which lasted into 1841. This is almost the last date we have of any personal news of him, except that the preface of the fourth volume of the second edition of his book is dated London, February 1, 1843.

We establish however that for fifteen years he was a wanderer in those strange lands, an "irreclaimable vagabond" truly, yet a nomad with more than the usual lure of food and self-protection and gain. Whatever may have been the opportunities in those full years of his, since early life he was essentially a student, full of a zeal for knowledge and experience, an educated man, wisely critical of the disturbed political conditions in that quarter of the world, humanly sympathetic with his fellowmen of whatever race, adaptable to all conditions of life, and with marvellous courage to undertake such arduous journeys among countless perils. He had no private means. He travelled in Mongol or Hindoo costume or in rags or practically naked, when robbed of his all by mountain or desert bandits. If he needed a little money he would practise medicine. Sometimes a chieftain or official would make him a present of a small amount of money, a few rupees, but he often refused it. He preferred to go like the natives with perhaps a few coppers sewed up in his clothes. Most of those countless miles which made a network as shown on his own map all over Balochistan, Afghanistan, and Sind he made on foot. He shared the meals and resting-places of the natives, the peasants, the pilgrims, the travelling merchants whom he met by the way.

From such documents as we have,

especially his own books, we find that he wrote in an unusually good English style, that he spoke French fluently, that he spoke Persian and Hindi, that he made particular studies of the languages and dialects of the Balochs and Afghans, that he studied thoroughly the histories of these countries and peoples and the works of preceding travellers as far back as the Arab travellers and the routes of Alexander and Nearchus as described by Arrian. He made extensive studies of the political conditions, the military forces, the revenues, trades, agriculture and horticulture, religion, the manners and customs, ethnology, the natural history, including quadrupeds, birds, insects, amphibia, botany, geology and mineralogy, the data of which are brought together in his books. He made elaborate researches into the archæology and geography of these regions.

He was a careful collector and investigator of coins and sent some 30,000 coins to the East India Museum in London which he had found himself or come upon in his travels. Perhaps his chief interests might be considered to be archæology and numismatics. He could draw very well, and the first three volumes of his journeys are illustrated by some twenty drawings of cities, landscapes, ancient monuments, and the like. It is amazing what this young Kentuckian accomplished with the obstacles he must have had to overcome, and his books are far more interesting and romantic to read than those of Doughty. Perhaps the chief fascination in Doughty is his extraordinary style, Biblical in its character with much use of archaic words, parentheses, and involved sentences. It reads more like an epic poem than a record of observation and travel, even though its geographical and ethnic data afforded great help to the English in their Arabian campaigns.

Sometime in 1835 Masson accepted a proposal from the Indian Government to act as British agent and to keep them informed as to affairs in Kabul, but becoming dissatisfied with British governmental methods he resigned three years later a position which he called "disagreeable and dishonorable." He had nine years' intimate acquaintance with the Afghans and saw with consternation the way the

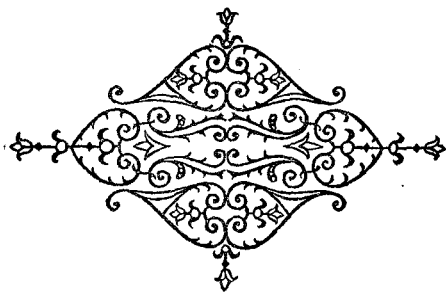
ignorant and foolish officials of the Indian Government were beginning to muddle up affairs between the two nations. Holditch says apropos of this that the Indian Government officials at that time were but amateurs in their knowledge of Afghan politics compared with Masson, and that much of the horrors of subsequent events might have been avoided could Masson have been admitted freely and fully to their counsels. Thus came the first Afghan war, with its complete destruction of the British army (1838-1841). The Oxford History of India tells the story and says of Lord Auckland, the Governor of India, that nobody would have "supposed it possible that he would drag the honor of England in the dirt and expose India to the most shameful humiliation she had ever suffered."

In the preface to "The Gates of India" Holditch says: "My excuse for giving so large a place to the American explorer Masson, for instance, is that he was first in the field at a critical period of Indian history. Apart from his extraordinary gifts and power of absorbing and collating information, history has proved that on the whole his judgment both as regards Afghan character and Indian political ineptitude was essentially sound."

In the two chapters devoted to Masson he gives him much praise. He says: "There was at least one active European agent in the field who was in direct touch

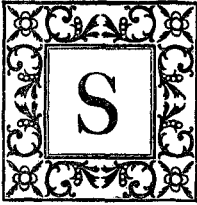
with the chief political actors in that strange land of everlasting unrest, and who has left behind him a record which is unsurpassed on the Indian frontier for the width of its scope of inquiry into matters political, social, economic, and scientific, and the general accuracy of his conclusions. This was the American, Masson." Elsewhere he says there is a peculiar value in the records of this traveller, that they are as valuable now as they were eighty years ago, and that no narrative of adventure that has ever appeared before or since in connection with Afghan exploration can rival his for interest. "Nothing seems to have come amiss to his inquiring mind. Archæology, numismatics, botany, geology, history—it was all new to him, and an inexhaustible opportunity lay before him. He certainly made good use of it." "He was a wide observer and must have been the possessor of a most remarkable memory. He was indeed a whole intelligence department in himself." "As an explorer in Afghanistan he stands alone. His work has never been equalled."

It was a long way in those days from Kentucky to Afghanistan, and one wonders what burning fires of imagination led this mysterious and unknown youth from the crude and rough borders along the Ohio River to the magic banks of the Indus and Oxus to achieve there fame and a great name, even if for a moment, in the century he has been forgotten.



Boys and Poetry

BY MATTHEW WILSON BLACK



SOME weeks ago there came to my theme-littered desk a letter bearing the superscription of a "cozy" little "art bookshop" located down on quaint Camac Street, a romantic byway which does for our city what "The Village" might, but does not, do for New York. I knew the charming proprietress, and I knew what the letter contained: an invitation to "give a little talk" to the "patrons of my little shop" ("your message about such and such a book or so-and-so, the new novelist, would fit in so nicely"). My reflections, as I slit the envelope and read its contents, were mildly cynical. Public lectures—giving them and going to them—are a literary weakness of present-day America. They have been the intellectual ruin of wiser men than I; and besides, I was too busy to sally forth to fill in the hour before tea, unless I found an opportunity to be really helpful on some subject that was near to my heart.

"If," was my answer, "you are interested in either of the things I care about most in all the world—boys or poetry—I shall be glad to talk."

Her reply was prompt and also stimulating. "Why not talk about both together? I shall invite a hundred poetry-lovers, teachers, older brothers and sisters, parents who are continually asking, 'Can't you give me something that will get my William or my Ethel interested in poetry?' I do hope you can tell us something encouraging and make some helpful, practical suggestions."

Well, after six happy though hectic years spent teaching literature at a large university, I could and did. The hundred devotees, or a percentage of them large enough to assure me that the subject was to them a live one, assembled. I talked earnestly, but cheerfully, for I have a deep and abiding faith in poetry and what

it can do. It is my way of saving souls. But, as so often happens, I received from the subsequent discussion more than I gave. I came away with impressions which have kept me thinking about this significant and fruitful puzzle ever since. Incidentally I have been wondering whether my audience, in interest and in point of view, were not typical of a hundred similar groups in other cities.

Above all else, they seemed to me to exaggerate the hopelessness of the situation. "The weak point in your armor, if I may say so," challenged one man, a dramatic critic on one of the papers, "is that you talk as though boys read poetry. As a matter of fact, scarcely any one reads poetry, or even buys it. The poetry alcove in a bookstore is about the one spot in our whole civilization of stone and wheels and collective mediocrity, where a man can be sure of being quiet and alone." "I don't know what America's coming to," said a woman. "We have ceased to dream dreams. When I think of what 'Pippa Passes' meant to us! And my son and daughter *will* not even read it." And there was general agreement. Some one quoted solemnly, "Without vision the people perish." And, "Frankly, none of my friends, either boys or girls, ever read a word of poetry," cried a girl, to cap the climax.

Of course, it is undeniably true that poetry is less widely read to-day than it was, say, a hundred years ago. Times have changed when one is asked to appear before a group of reading people, cultivated people, and talk to them *optimistically* about literature in its rarest, its quintessential form. Suppose for a moment the little bookshop had been in one of the byways off Fleet Street in London just a century since. Suppose my audience had been ladies in poke bonnets, in elbow gloves, and little heel-less slippers tied on with narrow ribbons; and gentlemen in pantaloons, swallow-tails and double-breasted waistcoats, bea-