

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From the London Working Man's Friend.
HOW CHARLEY BELL BECAME
AN M. P.

The whole matter is this.

The tea things had just been cleared away; the baby just got fast asleep, and laid in his crib, my wife just seated herself by the round table making a blue velvet cap for him, and I had just got comfortably settled in my arm chair on the other side of the table, when Tom returned from the office through the rain and mud and dark, bringing a letter. My wife smiled slightly when I told her it was not from her mother, but apologised immediately when I informed her that the letter—broad, thick, and with a vast deal of ink in the superscription—was from Charley. Giving the wick of the lamp another turn, she begged me to read it aloud.

Tearing off the envelope—drawing my chair a little nearer the fire, and clearing my throat, I read—

Rev. W.—

My dear W.—Elected! Apart from all nonsense and affectation, I am heartily glad of it. Of course I received the congratulations of everybody here quietly, as if it was all a matter of course that I should be elected, but with you I have no reserve. Know, then, my very dear W., that I am glad I am elected for three reasons. First, because I am elected while barely of the requisite age; secondly because I am elected by an overwhelming majority—twenty to one; thirdly, because it places me out in a free and higher field of usefulness and energy. Why, I feel as if I had just begun my life. I have not attained the *cul*—only the beginning—of my ambition.

I don't think that it ought to be branded as *ambition*—this feeling of mine either. I don't think it is ambition. It is a purer feeling—a wish, an eagerness, a *nature* to be doing, influencing, bettering as wide a sphere as I possibly can. I was elected without any art on my part whatever. I told the people exactly what I was, and what I intended to try to do if they elected me. I intended to be just exactly what I am. If I were to try to appear other than exactly that, I would look as well as feel mean—my arm would falter in every gesture, my tongue stammer, my knees shake—I would become weak—weak physically, mentally, utterly! A pure minded, single-intentioned, whole-souled manner, in thought, word, and deed, has borne me thus far like a straight arrow from a true bow. It is the shortest, best way to cleave the future, I know.

There is a fourth reason why I do rejoice in my election. It is because I know that you will rejoice in it. It is you, my friend, who have made me high-thoughted and far thoughted. Is it you who during the last twenty years have been my good genius—in your conversation when present with me—in your correspondence when absent from—

I read the rest of the letter to my wife, but it is altogether too flattering to me to be coolly written out here. Indeed, I remarked all along, through the three more pages that followed, to my wife, that his encomiums were only the warm expressions of a warm soul unusually excited, and which must be taken with all allowances.

Charley's letter flushed me through and through. That my old friend should be elected, I hoped, but hardly expected. Intimate companionship with a friend, you know, has a tendency to dwindle him in our eyes. Don't misunderstand! Intimacy with such a man as Charles Bell makes one love and prize him more and more—but does not make one think more and more that such a man is suited to be a grave and reserved senator. It is just as it is with the Swiss peasant whose cabin is on a side of Mount Blanc—the hoary mountain does not seem a sythe so sublime to him as it does to a traveller in the distance.

I say I felt thoroughly warm and rejoiced. I arose, put all my wife's spools and scraps off the table into her lap, laid my portfolio and inkstand upon it, begged my wife to absorb herself in her baby's velvet cap, dipped my pen in the ink, and now have written thus far.

All my past intercourse with Charley rushes to my lips now, as tears do sometimes to one's eyes. I want to tell, just as briefly and distinctly as possible, how he has risen from nothing to what he now is. I know much better than he—and if he reads this, it will do him good. Anyhow, I feel in the mood of writing, and before I go to bed, if my baby don't wake with the colic, and my wife don't interrupt me, I will tell you exactly how Charley Bell became a member of parliament.

The fact is, too, that I have half a hope that some youth may read this, and may get a word which may wake him to a higher and nobler life than he has ever yet dreamed of. If the eye of any such a one rest on these pages, just one word, my fine fellow. Forget for a little while that everlasting Julia whom you fell in love with last Tuesday a week ago, and read with all your soul.

I cannot exactly say when I did not know Charley. He is some three years older than myself, he being about eighteen, and I about fifteen years of age when our friendship became a thing to be remembered. He looked when I saw him a year ago exactly as he did when he used first to chat cosily beside his fireside about Bulwer, and Dora Anson,

He is of medium size, handsome earnest face forehead broad rather than high. There is a peculiar gentlemanly look about him, whatever he is, or whatever he is doing. He has such an enthusiastic sympathy for every man, woman, and child he meets with, that he is popular of course.

His peculiarity, however, always consisted in a hunger after personal excellence. From our first acquaintance we made a distinct arrangement to tell each other of our faults as plainly as words could convey meaning. If he did not faithfully do his part toward me in this arrangement, I am very, very much mistaken. He thought aloud about me—told me exactly what I was, and what I was not. I did the same in regard to him. We have acted thus for many years now. We have been of vast benefit to each other, and will continue to be so till we die.

I do verily believe that this arrangement had a good deal to do in making him the man he is.

Just in this way.

When we first became intimate, and had made our arrangement as above, I opened the war by talking to him as follows:—

Charley, my fine fellow, you are ambitious to be a good speaker. Now, you remember our little arrangement about correcting the faults of each other?—Yes.

Well, the plain fact is, you have got a most miserable, squeaking voice. Your chest is narrow, you stoop, and you have not that broad, strong, manly appearance which is most essential to a speaker.

I saw he winced under this. He felt eloquence deeply—he thought eloquently—and forgot that the thought must be expressed eloquently, or it is eloquence only to himself.

That afternoon he made a pair of dumb bells; and I do verily believe that he has not missed a day from that to this in which he has not exercised his chest and his voice in every possible way. No one would ever think now that he was not always the broad chested, powerful voiced orator he is.

It strikes me that even this little event had something to do with Charley in his becoming a senator. You never saw a narrow chested man who had any voice, energy, eloquence in your life. If you have got a stoop, my boy, you had better correct it, if you ever intend being anything.

I received from him one day a very, very plain exposition of one of my many faults. Never mind what it is. He pointed it out to me as you would point out a rattlesnake in a thicket to any companion you chanced to be walking with. I saw it—this vile fault of mine—and have been hunting it, and striking savagely at it, whenever I detect it stealing through my conduct with its accursed insidiousness ever since. Alas! it is only sketched, not killed yet. But that is another matter. I only mention it to say that his very plain remarks gave an edge to my remarks, as I observed—

You are right, Charley—perfectly so—and I war against that accursed fault for ever. But it reminds me of one of yours.—'Eh?'

Charley, you have a vile, offensive, disgusting habit of smoking tobacco. It is loathsome. If you would only keep the weed in your mouth, why it would only poison yourself; but you will be everlastingly spitting out its juice, and it poisons me—poisons me through sight, smell, hearing, and feeling. Don't use it any more.

True to his own true nature, he never took another cigar. Whether this is one cause, of his blooming health and firm nerve, I will not say. I will say that it is one cause of his astonishing popularity with the ladies—whether they know that it is or not—and thus one cause of this election.

These faults of ours! I said they are like snakes. So they are. Sometimes a man catches sight of one of them lying full length in its loathsomeness in his own conduct or conversation. Suppose the fault is self conceit—a disease of mentioning one's self at all times which you have contracted. Well, you see the same fault in some fool or other, or some Charley Bell tells you of it. The knowledge falls like a flash of daylight on the vice—you see it. If it would only perish—crawl out of you—it would be well. But the vile thing crawls into you, like a snake into its hole. It does not show its head, while you are watching for it. A day or two passes—you forget about it—and it is out—drawing its filthy train through all your conduct again.

This is not a digression. Because I wanted to say that Charley was a man of too strong a desire after personal excellence not to wage eternal war after such vermin.

A shrewd observer would have known the existence of his besetting faults only by the usual prominence of just the opposite virtue, just as you recognise the former drunkard in the man who has a special horror now of all that can intoxicate.

There were several minor defects in Charley's character, which I pointed out to him, but which he has so completely conquered, that I have altogether forgotten what they were.

I really must say a word or two about that Dora Anson affair. Dora was the brunette daughter of an established lawyer in our inland village. I see her as distinctly before me while I write as if she was before me. She was some sixteen years of age, had the usual amount of education and mind—was unaffected, warm hearted, black haired and eyed, rosy-lipped, woman rounded form. Charley fell in love with her—astonishingly in love with her—I was amazed. He was of an intellectual, though impulsive nature, and she had no conversational power—nothing

in the world but a lively natural sort of beauty to recommend her to him.

Astonishingly in love. He made love to her by flowers, and was accepted in the same way, before going to College. He was absent a year. The very night of his return he went to a party at her father's which happened that night. He got a seat near her towards the close of the evening—in a low voice made a passionate appeal to her, altho' surrounded by company—went home—wrote her a still more passionate letter. He was too impulsive, and he frightened her—had his letter returned—and came to me; and, as we sat on a log in the moonlight, he told me the whole.

He was about twenty years old then, and the affection had quickened, expanded, strengthened his heart even more than that chest exercise had his lungs. There was a breadth and depth and force about his affection for Dora which stirred up his whole being. It rolled through him like a sea, deepening and washing out the sands of his heart till that heart became deep and broad. For months that love lived, and worked in him; at last it died out like steam from the engine of a steamship.

When I see his hearty affection for his friends, his warm sympathy for all among whom he mingles, which gave him his wonderful popularity. I can trace it back to that development of his heart under the hot summer of his love for his Dora Anson. I do believe that the genial smile, the cordial manner, the melting persuasiveness of his tones, all owe their development if not their origin, to that culture of the heart. The sun may have set which shone on his soul, but it left that soul all ruddy and ripe with its warm rays. If Dora had jilted him it would have left him a soured man; if she had married him, it would have left him a satiated man; in either case it would have injured him. But she did not jilt him, nor did she marry him; he outgrew so sensuous a love as that, and somehow or other they drifted apart.

I believe, however, and my wife to whom I have just mentioned it, agrees with me, that his connection with Mr Nelson had very much to do in making him the man he now is.

You see, when Charley had finished his law-studies, his father and mother were dead. He never had any brothers or sisters. One or two thousand pounds were his fortune. Being a young man, now somewhat five, of fine appearance and talents and manners, he attracted the attention of Mr Nelson, a keen and rich lawyer in the village, and in a few weeks he was settled in his office as a junior partner.

For some six months Nelson seemed wonderfully attached to Charley. He continually spoke of him in the loudest praise, overrated him in fact. At the close of this period, however, he suddenly took just as violent a set against Bell as he had before for him. Nobody ever knew the reason of this. I don't think Nelson himself did. The truth is, the elder partner was a singular man. He always dressed neatly in black—was rather thin, with a stooping shoulder, a retreating forehead, a quick way of walking, and a rapid step. He was excessively hospitable and generous, more for the sake of being a protector and superior of the guest than anything else. Self-will was the trait of his character.

But I am writing about Charley, and have got no time to paint this Nelson. Enough to say that he took as vehement a dislike to Bell as he before had a liking. He ridiculed and thwarted and opposed him with an astonishing bitterness.

Bell at first was staggered with astonishment—then cut to the soul with such unkindness from the last man on earth from whom he expected it. But it did him great good. It corrected his blind confidence in every man completely, and gave him a quiet watchfulness of men in all his dealings with them, which was of immense benefit to him.

It destroyed in an instant all his false and coloured ideas of things. The faults of his character which Nelson pointed out and ridiculed, and made the ostensible cause of alienation, were for ever corrected, just as a wart is burned off with lunar caustic. Nelson's extravagant depreciation of him, after such extravagant praise of him, gave him, in one word, an impulse to prove himself unworthy that depreciation, and more than worthy the former praise, which did more for him than if his senior partner had given him years of the most careful instruction and countenance. Besides, it threw him suddenly on himself—made an independent man of him for ever. Just what that chest exercise did for his lungs, that Dora affair did for his heart, this Nelson matter did for his will—it deepened and broadened and strengthened it to an unusual degree—it did very much towards making him a senator.

My wife agrees with me that the little love affair of his with Marie M'Corcle had not much if any effect on our friend. Falling a little in love with her when he was some twenty six years old, for a remark she made in a speech when May Queen, he proposed in a note—was rejected in a note. Mounting his horse, he took a ride of some eleven days on business somewhere. On his return he was over with it, except of course the feeling of pique. The first day of his ride, he chanted, as he told me, the words of her rejection to an old tune, all day long, over and over, and over. The next day it was a faster tune. He trotted his horse rapidly back, making his hoofs keep time to the swift jig of his recollections as he rode into

town with the words of her rejection still on his lips.

The rest of my task is a pleasant one. I like to think about Annie Rennaugh—I love even to write her name. She was a cousin of Dora's, and resided in the same town. I cannot say that she was pretty, but I can say that she was beautiful. Just in this way. She was of a small, modest, quiet appearance. You would hardly look at her twice if you saw her in a promiscuous company. Only become acquainted with her, however, and an irresolute charm is upon you. There is such a delicious ease in all she says and does—such a deep mirth and artless confidence in her that conquers without observation.

She was a special friend of Charley's. He confided to her from the very first all his affairs with Dora. I saw him one evening at a party with her. She was seated in a chair by the door, with a saucer of strawberries and cream in her lap. He was seated by her side in the doorway—enjoying the summer air—conversing in a low, earnest tone with her. They were talking about Dora—Charley's ideal Dora—as earnestly as they were talking love on their own account.

Well, the full moon of Dora's influence waxed into the full orb of its influence upon her lover, and then waned and waned. His friendship for Annie, however, increased slowly—but most surely. When he was whirled away for those four weeks by Marie M'Corcle, he told her all about it, and had, as usual, all her sympathy. Then he was off for college, and corresponded with her regularly. I was with him in college. Many a time has he torn up, at my advice the long letter he had written her, because it was entirely too warm, even though it was directed in the most fraternal manner possible to 'My dear Sister Annie,' and signed, 'Your affectionate brother, Charles.'

You can see immediately how it is all ended. A friendship begun in mere indifference had ripened through six years into deep genuine affection. He never dreamed that he loved Annie until he found that she was essential to his existence. For the first time he knew what true love was. He found that it was not the flush of passion, such as warmed him under the hot beauty of Dora—that it was not the fever of the imagination which diseased him under the moonlight of Marie. He found that love was not a passion but a feeling; not a fit, but a condition; not a hot flush of blood, but the quick, even, everlasting flow of the heart's tide, giving health and life to the whole man.

I am writing nothing but actual fact, and so I cannot say how he told Anne his love, and how she accepted him. He has talked to me—I do believe, in all, it amounts to several hundred hours—about Dora and Marie. He has quoted to me at least a dozen times every word that ever passed between him and them, but he never told me anything about his love conversation with Annie. They are married. They seem perfectly happy in the quiet possession of each other, and of the blue-eyed baby boy that laughs in their arms.

This was the making of Charles Bell. A remark of mine has led to the development of his noble form, and the establishment of that full health so essential to successful labour. His love for Dora has expanded his heart, and warmed and flushed him all through and through with an affection and persuasion and love that shows itself in his very tone, and smile and clasp of the hand and word. His painful experience with Mr Nelson has corrected all false ideas of men—has given him caution, self-possession, self-reliance, and energy. He is full of impulse, and she, by a silent, irresistible influence, controls and directs it. He is full of noble aspiration, but inclined to be fickle—she is ever pouring oil on the fire of his soul, as with an unseen angel hand—is silent and unobtrusive when he wanders from his better self, and thus draws him quietly but irresistibly back.

Of course there were many circumstances in politics and situation which conspired to elevate him to his present position. I have written what I have written only because I felt pleasure in doing so. I am heartily sick of all romance and romantic ideas and description of men and women; but I do look upon the 'Hon. Charles Bell and his amiable lady,' as the papers will call them, as two of the finest persons in all my knowledge. Both are most sincere Christians, and, singular as it may seem to some, I regard their companionship and mutual influence as one which is to last not only through this poor world, but through all eternity.

PROGRESS OF THE ANGLO-SAXON RACE.

By a fortunate coincidence, the general total of the American census taken last year has just received, and we are enabled, in conjunction with the returns made on the 31st of March for this country, to measure the absolute progress of the Anglo-Saxon race in its two grand divisions, and to compare the laws of their respective growths in relation to each other and to the rest of the world. It is estimated, including Ireland and the colonies, that there is a grand total of men speaking the same language and manifesting the same general tendencies of civilisation of 56,000,000, from which is to be deducted the three million of negro slaves in the United States, leaving a remainder of fifty-three millions, chiefly of Anglo-Saxon descent, and deeply impregnated with its sturdy qualities of heart and brain, as the representative of this advancing stock.