

Literature, &c.

THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Hogg's Edinburgh Instructor. MISTAKES FROM EXPERIENCE.

A SKETCH FROM LIFE, IN MRS KIRKLAND'S 'HOME CIRCLE.'

An old bachelor friend of ours—one of the few, in this steaming age, who can yet find time for a quiet chat—sometimes spends a good long evening without any particular object but talk—remembrances of days long past, or sage reflections on life and character—the fruit of varied experience and strong human sympathy. He has been a great traveller, and has seen specimens of nearly all the races of men; and one of the most amusing of his speculations is the comparison of character among them—coming invariably to the conclusion, that whatever the variety of physiognomy, stature, habits, climate, religion, they are all alike in the main. The worst of all this is, that Mr Stafford's conviction is decidedly adverse to the existence of any virtue in this great human family. He has a sad opinion of them all, though practically he has more personal attachments than anybody else. He believes nothing good of the race, though his confidence in individuals is boundless. In vain may one try to reason from the smaller to the greater, and prove that, where so many possess the virtues which he is in the habit of ascribing to them, a fair conclusion may be drawn as to the goodness of others. The truth is, his nature is as generous as his philosophy is erroneous; and personal intercourse and kind treatment make him overrate the virtues of those with whom he lives, as some unfortunate associates abroad have given a dark tinge to his impressions of human nature in general. We never can agree as to this matter; and evening after evening passes, in the vain attempt to reconcile views as far as the poles assunder. The last time the subject came up, Mr Stafford undertook to give me a single instance, which, he said, ought to go far towards justifying his opinion of mankind in general. I promised to listen, but not to be convinced; and he proceeded as follows with his recital:—

'In the village where I was born and bred—a quiet little place, nestled deep among the hills of Vermont—there was a clergyman, one of the most satiate-like in his life and conversation that I have ever known. His wife was a meek, quiet woman; amiable to a fault, yet not deficient in that power which affection supplies for the performance of duty. If she had been single, she would probably have appeared a weak woman; but with the ever-present aid of her husband's wisdom, and the strong stimulus of the domestic affections, she filled her place in life so well that no one found fault with her, even in a country village. This excellent couple had only two children, a son and daughter, and it is of the son that I am about to give you my recollections. He was a handsome boy, tall, and elegantly proportioned, and scarcely less delicate in his features and complexion than his sister, who was a year or two older. They were always together, and it seemed as if the benign influence of such a temper as Lucy's must have a power over him for good; yet, from their very schooldays, when they trudged along the road together, with their satchels, he was her torment; and at home, where an only son is so naturally an idol, even his mother learned to dread the sight of his returning face. His pranks were, in some respects, those which belong to boyhood, but there was ever a touch of malice, selfishness, or cruelty about them, and a more expert deceiver never lived. When he played a trick upon the schoolmaster, it was sure to be one that inflicted real injury, either in person or clothing; and the schoolfellow who offended him, or refused to join in any of his nefarious schemes, would always find reason to remember that he had made an enemy of Harry Gilmore. To conceal his misconduct, and to make the blame fall on others, required all his art; and his influence over his sister was so unbounded, that he not unfrequently forced her to aid him in subterfuges which her pure heart told her were unjustifiable. With all Harry's powers of deception, however, he was not able to blind the eyes of his parents, or indeed of anybody else, as to his real character. Though it seemed impossible to convict him in any particular instance of culpable misconduct, there was yet a general impression of his evil qualities which made him shunned by all but kindred spirits; and the grief of his father and mother, though silent, was extreme, even to the shortening of life, as I believe—certainly, to the destruction of happiness. His father, after using every means which affection and sound judgment could devise, ceased to attempt the direction of his course; and when, at length, Harry was expelled from his college, bore the close of the second year, the good clergyman was stricken with paralysis, and in a few days laid in the tomb of his fathers. Harry seemed for the moment sobered by this event, which followed too close upon his disgrace, not to seem at least connected with it. He treated his mother with what appeared real affection; and to Lucy, innocent and trusting as she was, the change wrought in Harry by her father's death seemed so mitigate the sense even of that calamity.

But this gleam of comfort was short. It very soon became evident that Harry's good conduct was only the prelude to depredations upon Mrs Gilmore's slender means, and a subtle scheme to get Lucy more than ever in his power. He had professed an attachment to a very beautiful girl, belle of our village, whose brother had previously engaged Lucy's affections; and upon Harry's visits being discovered by the father of the young lady, on the score of his character, he so wrought upon his sister, that she discarded her lover, and made a solemn promise that she would never again listen to his addresses. I could not recollect to you the circumstances of the affair. They were the talk of the village, and they are deeply impressed upon my memory; but I will not tell you the tragical close. The young man who was thus disappointed where he had treasured up his heart, perhaps, discouraged the more by a knowledge of Harry's character, left the place, and sailed for the West Indies in a few weeks came the intelligence that the ship was lost, with every soul on board; and, from that time, poor Lucy Gilmore faded and faded like an autumn rose, gradually growing

paler and more melancholy, till she was laid beside her father. You may suppose, that even Harry was shocked by this dreadful result of his machinations. If he was, none ever knew it. He showed a decorous grief at his sister's death, and, perhaps, really felt her loss; but it had no effect upon his conduct. He continued to strip his mother of everything that could minister to his idleness, even until the neighbours became aware that Mrs Gilmore often suffered for the ordinary comforts. He undertook no business for his own support, but passed his time, while at home, in hunting and fishing, usually sending the produce of his sport to the young ladies of the village, with whom he was very desirous of being a favourite. All this time he had been carrying on a clandestine correspondence with the girl whose father had first refused his advances. It seemed as if he had the art of imbibing every one connected with him with the habit of dissimulation; for this unfortunate girl, blameless in all else, was so completely blinded to duty and prudence, and all that should restrain from evil, as to marry him privately, before even the suspicion of such a step had occurred to her family. The marriage was soon discovered, and the young wife was obliged to seek shelter with her mother-in-law. What was endured in that sad household, none can tell, for Harry's influence was too powerful to allow any thing to transpire. But that there was suffering of some sort (perhaps of various kinds), the faces of the mother and her young daughter-in-law too surely told. The father was a hard old man, justly indignant at the injury he had received, and unjustly determined to visit all upon his daughter who was only the easy dupe of a villain. So things went on, from bad to worse, until Harry suddenly disappeared, leaving his mother and his wife to all the horrors of poverty. They made the best of their wretched situation (perhaps rather relieved of a burden than deprived of a protector), and contrived, by the aid of a small school, and such needlework as could be had, to support life, and to maintain a decent appearance; while they tried to persuade the neighbours (and perhaps themselves too) that Harry had gone away, determined to find some business which should render their exertions unnecessary. The truth was, though I did not know it until long afterwards, that Harry had been soon tired of his too easy conquest, and had shown his wife the most outrageous neglect for some time before he left her.

He had lived upon his mother's small means until acre after acre was gone; and even the household furniture, piece by piece, had been sacrificed to his determined self-indulgence, finding his wife's father inexorable, and seeing that the penalty to which he had reduced his family admitted no further exaction, he set out to try the world at large, but without the smallest idea of making any exertion towards an honest livelihood, or the most remote intention of returning to the relief of those he had injured. They, poor souls! toiled on, meekly enduring their hard fate, and trying to excuse the scoundrel who had brought them to it; while the old father, almost as bad as he, hardened his heart against the poor girl and saw her and her baby suffering for the ordinary comforts of life, with a relishing feeling. Happily, the poor little one soon died, adding one more to the list of Harry's victims. Much of what I am now telling you I learnt long afterwards, for I was travelling abroad, and had not seen Harry Gilmore since we were boys together. I knew of his marriage, and the anger of his wife's father, and my friends had written me something of his misconduct, and, at last, of his sudden disappearance. After travelling on the continent for a year or two, I went to England, and there, at the house of an American friend, I was most disagreeably surprised to meet Harry Gilmore, handsome, well-dressed, and exceedingly well received, in a highly respectable circle. Nobody danced so well, and no one was in higher favour with the ladies. He seemed quite at home in England, while I was as much a stranger. You may be surprised that I did not at once unmask my unworthy townsman; but you must bear in mind what I have already mentioned that the particulars of Harry's career were then unknown to me. My general impression was unfavourable; and I had such an instinctive dislike to him, founded upon early recollections, that I did all in my power to avoid him. But fate, or perhaps his own manoeuvres, threw him constantly in my path; and so plausible was his address, and so elegant were his manners, that I was insensibly drawn into a closer companionship with him than I could have believed possible on our first meeting. He had an ostensible occupation, and I was at the time a complete idler, and in poor health, and so found his society too agreeable. We had been playing billiards at a new table in the Quadrant, Regent Street, when Harry proposed that we should go and dine at a restaurant, in Leicester Square, *a la Francais*, to which I did not object. Over our wine, he asked me whether I had ever seen one of the gaming houses at the West End. I said No, and he offered to try whether we could not get into one in St. James' Street. I assented, and after our coffee we set out. I had taken wine enough to exhilarate without confusing me; and my curiosity with regard to these 'hells' had often been excited before, so that I was much pleased with the idea of piercing the forbidden haunts. Yet, I confess, when Harry applied for admittance, when the door was partially and carefully opened, and when it was evident that, at the sight of my companion, the doorkeeper had no scruples as to taking down the chain, my heart began bumping most unusually, and I wished myself anywhere else. Harry was evidently well-known there, and, at a cooler moment, the duplicity he had practised upon me would have excited my indignation. But the scene was too intensely interesting at the time, to allow a thought for anything else. I passed under a close scrutiny from the Cerberus of the establishment, whose experienced eye detected the novice, and who wittingly allowed me to pass, as a fresh pigeon, from whose blast might come at least some down from this nest of vice. Harry led the way to an apartment, where they were playing hazard; he commenced playing at once, and endeavoured to induce me to join him. I declined. He played on, and had soon lost what money he had brought with him. I lent him a few sovereigns; they went aloft. I found my amusement in watching the ideas of the players, and so vividly were the various passions depicted in them, that, even at this distant day, I can recall every man's countenance, with its changes of expression. Finding me determined not to play, Harry gave over, after borrowing all the gold I had about me, and we found ourselves again in the

street. I cannot express to you my sensations on once more breathing the fresh, unpolluted air of evening. I fairly ran and leaped with the sense of relief, and, in the excitement of my spirits, gave my companion abundance of good counsel against ever trusting himself in such a place again. He heard me quietly, and no doubt laughed as quietly at my simplicity.

Two years elapsed before I saw Gilmore again. It was in Paris, and I was turning into the Palais Royal from Rue St. Honore when I met him with a very pretty girl hanging on his arm. He was dressed very fashionably, and looked handsomer than ever. He gave me his card in passing, and invited me to call on him. This I was not disposed to do; but it was only a day or two before we met again, and he insisted upon my dining with him at his lodgings. He was with an English lady, who lived in the Allee des Veuves Champs Elysees—a lady who, having but a small income, took two or three borders to eke it out. The pretty girl with whom he was walking was the daughter of this lady, and a sweeter or more innocent creature I never saw. She and her mother (who was a well-bred and amiable woman) evidently placed the greatest confidence in Harry; and I soon saw that he stood where he should not in the affections of the daughter. If this had been less clear to me, Gilmore would soon have given me all requisite information; for the first time he warmed with wine, he made me his confidant, telling me that this charming girl loved him to distraction, and that her mother looked favourably upon his suit. He added, that he had mentioned something to Mrs S., the mother, of my knowing his connections in America, and that he hoped I would not refuse to speak a good word for him, as I was pretty well known to several families then resident in Paris. I heard him out, although it was with difficulty. When he had done, I told him just what I thought of him, and what I meant to do in the premises. I threatened to make his villany so public, that he should not only be unable to attempt the like again, but even to show his face in society. Words ran high; he defied me, and laughed at my threats. We were in the street, and just at the shooting gallery, into which I turned. There was no one there. I walked to the front of the target, the *garcon* handed me a pistol, thinking we were about to practice. I looked at Harry; he was deadly pale, and his quivering lip betrayed his agitation. 'Take my advice,' said I. 'You know I have no wish to expose you. Leave Paris without delaying longer than to get your passports, and I will make the best excuse I can for your disappearance. But I declare to you that sooner than you should perpetrate the crime you meditate, I will serve you as I now serve that image—' and I pointed to a small plaster cast of Napoleon, placed as a mark in the centre of the target. I raised my arm—pulled—and shivered the figure to atoms. It was a lucky shot. Gilmore paused—he looked at me, and read my unalterable determination in my face. We left the gallery in silence, and that night I had him sleeping at my hotel, with his place booked for Havre on the next morning. His desertion cost Miss S. a fit of sickness, and I know not what of unhappiness beside. I revealed only so much of Harry's true character as might serve to put both her and her mother on their guard for the future. I did not wish to destroy him, and I was even at that time ignorant of all his guilt. I lost sight of him from that time; but, when I returned to my native place, after many years' absence, I learned the consistent close of his career. He heard that his wife's father had, on his death-bed, repented of his harshness, and fully believing that Gilmore would never return, had left the unhappy daughter her natural share of his property. Upon this, Harry lost no time in turning his face homeward, determined not to let this unexpected prosperity escape him. He wrote to his wife and mother one of those artful epistles so well adapted to make the worst appear the better reason; glowing over his misdeeds, and expressing such delight at being able once more to rejoice those from whom his heart had never been separated, that those good women were melted in tears, and longed to welcome the repentant wanderer. But most happily, Providence interposed in their behalf; for Gilmore, being in too great haste to wait for the regular conveyance, hired a horse at the nearest town, and riding at a dashing pace down hill, fell and broke his neck, just in time to prevent the second and hopeless ruin of his wife and mother. Now, what do you think of such a specimen of human nature?

'Black enough, indeed,' I replied, 'but not at all to your purpose.'

'Not to my purpose? What would you have?'

'Why, you have told me of one degraded wretch and half a dozen excellent people! How does your theory dispose of the good clergyman and his wife—poor Lucy and his faithful lover—the patient wife—the amiable Mrs S. and her too deserving daughter, and yourself, with all your benevolent indignation? Instead of ten righteous to save a multitude of sinners, here is but one sinner to a host of good people. You must acknowledge that even the extreme case you have selected tells against you.'

Mr Stafford looked at his watch, and declared in the same breath that it was eleven o'clock, and that I was incorrigible.

From Hogg's Edinburgh Instructor.

THE TWO NAPOLEONS.

FALL OF NAPOLEON I.

NAPOLEON'S fall had its origin in that spirit of self-reliance and self-exaggeration, of which we have seen so many proofs. It began in Spain. That country was a province in reality; he wanted to make it one in name; to place over it a Bonaparte; to make it a more striking manifestation of his power. For this purpose, he 'kidnaped' its royal family, stirred up the unconquerable spirit of its people, and, after shedding on its plains and mountains the best blood of France, lost it for ever. Next came his expedition against Russia: an expedition against which his wisest counsellors remonstrated, but which had every recommendation to a man who regarded himself as an exception to his race, and able to triumph over the laws of nature. So issue were his self-confidence and impatience of opposition, that he drove, by his outrages, Sweden, the old ally of France, into the arms of Russia, at the very moment that he was about to throw himself into the heart of that mighty empire. On his Russian campaign we have no desire to enlarge. Of all the mournful pages of history, none are more sad than that which records the retreat of the French army from Mos-

cow. We remember that, when the intelligence of Napoleon's discomfiture in Russia first reached the United States, we were among those who exulted in it, thinking only of the result. But when subsequent and minutely accounts brought distinctly before our eyes that unequalled army of France, broken, famished, slaughtered, seeking shelter under snowdrifts and perishing by intense cold, we looked back on our joy with almost a consciousness of guilt, and expiated by a sincere grief our insensibility to the suffering of our fellow-creatures. We understand that many interesting notices of Napoleon, as he appeared in this disastrous campaign, are given in the *Memoirs of Count Segur*—a book from which we have been repelled by the sorrows and miseries which it details. We can conceive few subjects more worthy of Shakspeare than the mind of Napoleon at the moment when his fate was sealed; when the tide of his victories was suddenly stopped and rolled backward; when his dreams of invincibility were broken, as by a peal of thunder; when the word which had awed nations died away on the bleak waste, a powerless sound, and when he, whose spirit Europe could not bound, fled in fear from a captive's doom. The shock must have been tremendous to a spirit so imperious, scornful, and unshocked to humiliation. The intense agony of that moment, when he gave the usual order to retreat; the desolation of his soul, when he saw his brave soldiers and his chosen guards sinking in the snow, and perishing in crowds around him; his unwillingness to receive the details of his losses, lest self-possession should fail him; the levity and badinage of his interview with the Abbe de Pradt, at Warsaw, discovering a mind labouring to throw off an insupportable weight, wrestling with itself, struggling against misery; and, though last, not least, his unconquerable purposes, still clinging to lost empire as the only good of life; these workings of such a spirit would have furnished to the great dramatist a theme worthy of his transcendent powers.

By the irretrievable disasters of the Russian campaign, the empire of the world was effectually placed beyond the grasp of Napoleon. The tide of conquest had ebbed, never to return. The spell which had bound the nations was dissolved. He was no longer the invincible. The weight of military power which has kept down the spirit of nations was removed, and and their long smothered sense of wrong and insult broke forth like the fires of a volcano. Bonaparte might still, perhaps, have secured the throne of France; but that of Europe was gone. Thus, however, he did not—could not—would not understand. He had connected with himself too obstinately the character of the world's master, to be able to relinquish it. Amidst the dark omens which gathered around him, he still saw in his past wonderful escapes, and in his own exaggerated energies, the means of rebuilding his falling power. Accordingly, the thought of abandoning his pretensions does not seem to have crossed his mind, and his irreparable descent was only a summons to new exertions. We doubt, indeed, whether Napoleon, if he could have understood fully his condition, would have adopted a different course. Though departing, he would probably have raised new armies, and fought to the last. To a mind which has placed its whole happiness in having no equal, the thought of descending to the level, even of kings is intolerable. Napoleon's mind had been stretched by such ideas of universal empire, that France though reaching from the Rhine to the Pyrenees seemed narrow to him. He could not be shut up in it. Accordingly, as his fortunes darkened we see no signs of relenting. He could not wear, he said, 'a tarnished crown,' that is, a crown no brighter than those of Austria and Russia. He continued to use a master's tone. He showed no change, but such as opposition works in the obstinate; he lost his temper, and grew sour. He heaped reproaches on his marshals and the legislative body. He insulted Metternich, the statesman, on whom, above all others, his fate depended. He irritated Maret by sarcasms, which rankled within him, and accelerated, if they did not determine, the desertion of his master. It is a striking example of retribution, that the very vehemence and sternness of his will, which has borne him onward to dominion, now drove him to the rejection of terms which might have left him a formidable power, and thus made his ruin entire. Refusing to take a counsel of events, he persevered in fighting, with a stubbornness which reminds us of a spoiled child, who sullenly grasps what he knows he must relinquish, struggles without hope, and does not give over resistance, until his little fingers are, one by one, unclenched from the object on which he has set his heart. Thus fell Napoleon. We shall follow the history no further. His retreat to Elba, his irruption into France, his signal overthrow, and his banishment to St. Helena, though they add to the romance of his history, throw no new light on his character, and would, of course, contribute nothing to our present object. There are, indeed, incidents in this portion of his life, which are somewhat inconsistent with the firmness and conscious superiority which belonged to him. But a man in whose character so much impulse and so little principle entered, must not be expected to preserve unblemished, in such hard reverses, the dignity and self-respect of an emperor and a hero.

CHARACTER OF NAPOLEON III.

As an accompaniment to the foregoing, we present our reader with the following masterly summary of the character of the present ruler of France, from an able contemporary 'North British Review,' confident that it will interest from its graphic power, and instruct from its self-evident, unquestionable truth:—

In the first place, it is quite certain, and is now beginning to be admitted, even by his bitterest enemies, that Napoleon is not the foolish imbecile it was so long the fashion to consider him. Those who aided in recalling him to France, and elevating him to the Presidency, under the impression that one so silly and *borné*, would be rendered a pliant tool in their hands, soon found that they reckoned without their host. His *mind*, it is true, is neither capacious, powerful, nor well stored; but his moral qualities are of a most rare and serviceable kind. His talents are ordinary, but his perseverance, tenacity, power of dissimulation, and inflexibility of will, are extraordinary. He is a memorable and most instructive example that great achievements are within the reach of a very moderate intellect, when that intellect is concentrated upon a single object, and linked with unbending and undaunted resolution. Moreover, his men-