

## Literature, &amp;c.

## THE SPIRIT OF THE MAGAZINES.

From Dickens's Household Words.  
WHY MY UNCLE WAS A BACHELOR.

It had often occurred to me to speculate on the reason which could have induced my Uncle to remain unmarried. He was of such a kindly temper, so chivalrous towards women, so keenly alive to domestic enjoyments, and withal such an earnest promoter of marriage in all his relations and dependants, that it seemed to me perfectly inexplicable. But for his kind offices, I am sure I would have been impossible for me to have induced my father to consent to my marriage with Maria; the cottage in which we live, furnished as it is, with its well-stocked garden and coach-house was the wedding-present he made us; my sister Kate too—what unhappiness he saved her by his kindness to Charlie Evans, who every one knows was something of a scapegrace! But my uncle saw the good in him which nobody else but Kate could discover, and had him down at his parsonage, and by his sweet and pious wisdom won him over to a steady and earnest pursuit of his profession. And now people talk of his brilliant talents, and say how much good Kate has done him! But we all know who it was that gave him help and countenance just at the right moment, and we all love my uncle the more dearly for his good work.

When I was still a lad, and Maria's blue eyes had first turned my thoughts towards matrimony, it occurred to me to ask my mother, in the course of one of our pleasant evenings alone together, why my uncle had never been married.

A grave sadness came over my mother's face, and she softly shook her head, as she replied in a suppressed tone. 'Your uncle had a great sorrow in his youth my dear; we must respect it. What it was, I do not know; he has never told me, and I have never asked him.'

It was no matter of surprise to me to hear my mother speak thus; for, in spite of the gentleness of my Uncle's manners and his warm affection, there was a dignity about him which rendered it impossible to intrude upon a confidence he did not offer. I felt that his sorrows were sacred, and never again made any attempt to gain information respecting them; although I could not refrain from a tender speculation as to the character of that grief which had deprived him of a happiness he was evidently calculated to enjoy.

In the summer of 1848, my uncle, according to his custom, came to spend a week with us. He was in fine health and spirits, and we and our children enjoyed the festival even more than usual. On the Friday evening my uncle had been into town, and it was growing dusk when he returned. He came as usual into my study. I looked up on his entrance to welcome him; but was struck by the pallor of his countenance, and by the traces of emotion which disturbed the tranquil dignity of his ordinary bearing. I placed a chair for him, and he sat down in silence—a silence which for some moments I felt almost afraid to break. At length I said in a low voice, 'Has anything occurred to distress you, Sir?'

'No, Edward,' he replied, slowly and like one who has some difficulty in collecting his thoughts, 'nothing that ought to distress me; but I am very weak; my faith is very weak—and I heard it suddenly. I have heard to-night,' he continued, after a pause, and speaking more continuously, 'of the death of a lady whom I used to know many years ago. She was young and full of life when I knew her. I have always thought of her as so young, so full of life, that the great change to death seems almost impossible. Edward, you will not think me wearisome if I speak to you of what was, long and long ago, before you were born, when your mother was still a child?'

I assured him by my looks rather than by my words, of the interest with which I should listen. He sank again into silence; but, after a considerable interval, during which he seemed to be collecting his thoughts, he resumed:

'My father, as you know, was the head of the younger branch of the great Northumberland family of the Watsons; my mother was a daughter of Sir George Midway of Cobham Hall. I refer to these circumstances, not from any pride that I take in having what is termed good blood in my veins, but merely because they exercise an important influence over my life. When a child, I was very much spoiled for I was considered handsome and intelligent, and my mother was proud of me. She was a woman of few but strong affections, and of a very decided will. My father, who had been a Soldier, contented himself with maintaining almost military discipline in his household, but left to my mother the internal administration of affairs. Feeling unconsciously the superior activity of her mind, he allowed himself to depend, in all important matters, on her judgment. They were uni-

ted by a very strong attachment founded on a similarity of principles—prejudices perhaps in some cases—and favored not a little by the difference of their physical constitution. The fine proportions of my father's figure, and his great manly beauty, gave him such a maternal superiority to my mother—who was small and delicately made, and withal not handsome—that he with greater ease submitted to her moral supremacy, and, without knowing it, allowed his mind to be fed and guided by hers. For a long time I was an only child—your mother, as you know, is ten years younger than I—so that the absence of playfellows and companions of my own age fostered—perhaps created—in me a pensive and meditative disposition; an inclination to dwell upon small incidents, to keep my emotions secret, to repress the outward show of feeling—but to feel only the more deeply.

'I was brought up at Rugby, and the independent citizens of our rough school republic were the only associates of my boyhood. During the holidays, indeed, my mother used to take me to Cobham Hall, the seat of my Uncle Midway, where I used to see my cousin Grace, a girl of somewhat about my own age. But she was never away from her governess, and was so demure and lady-like that I was afraid to speak to her. My mother always expressed a great affection for Grace, and when she wrote to me at school, especially as I began to grow older, there was invariably some mention of her in her letters, as, 'Your cousin Grace, whom I saw yesterday, sends her love;' or, 'I went to Cobham a few days since; they are all well; your cousin Grace is growing fast; her figure promises to be very fine; she hopes to see you soon, and sends her love.' And so matters went on till the time came for me to leave Rugby, when my mother informed me that, as there was a good living in the family, she and my father and my uncle wished me to go into the church.

'I am sorry to say Edward, that although I was then nineteen, I had never seriously thought of my future calling; my wants had always been carefully provided for; and, in the security of a contemplative temperament, I had glided down the stream of time with very little perception of the nobler portions of my nature, of my higher capacity for enjoyment and for suffering. My mother's proposal I acceded to without difficulty, and without any serious reflection. So I went to Oxford, met many of my old Rugby associates there and lived very much as I had lived before; only spending a little more money. But this was not to continue—I was to be roused from this spiritual torpor; I was to learn what was in me. If the lesson was bitter, it was wholesome; and I can recollect that deep and wise saying of one of your modern poets, Edward, which is the fruit of suffering.

'Better to have loved and lost  
Than never to have loved at all.'

I went to spend part of the summer vacation of the year 1810—I have good reason to remember the year—with a friend at his father's house, a pleasant place in the neighbourhood of Warwick. There was no field-sports to beguile the time; and Topham and I were neither of us fond of study, so that we had some difficulty in disposing of our leisure. Colonel Topham, my friend's father, was little better off in this respect than ourselves—he could hardly find occupation for himself during more than three or four hours in the morning; so it was with great exultation that one afternoon, on his return from Warwick, he brought us the intelligence that the theatre was to be opened on the following Monday, and that it was announced that Mrs Siddons would be passing through the town, and would play Catherine in Henry the Eighth for one night; of course, he had secured places for all our party. Theatres were hardly then what they have become since: either the audience possessed less intellectual culture, and were satisfied with less or the actor understood his art better; at all events, the amusements were very popular, and the announcement of the opening of a country theatre was a signal for a pleasurable excitement in the neighbourhood. You may imagine, then, how much the excitement was increased by the prospect of seeing the greatest actress of her own, perhaps of any time, of whose retirement people already began to talk.

'I shall not attempt to describe to you what I should want words to convey—the suffering majesty of the wronged Catherine, almost divine as she appeared by the side of the ranting Henry. She bore herself as if she knew that she was every inch a Queen, her dignity giving a most moving pathos to her womanly tenderness; while he uncomfortable with padding vainly endeavoring to speak in a voice suitable to his artificial proportions rendered absurd the violent but princely tyrant of the poet. Such inequalities, painful as they are, are looked upon as matters of course in a country theatre. We had come to see Mrs Siddons, and expected nothing but amusement from the blunders and misapprehensions of the rest of the company. My friends were familiar with most of the actors—several were native to the

place—but the name of the actress who was to play Anne Boleyn had already given rise to some speculation in our party. No one was acquainted with it, no one had seen the lady who bore it. When she entered in her graceful and modest costume, there was an involuntary start of admiration through the house. Any thing more lovely was never seen; and when she spoke, her words were delivered with propriety and intelligence, but in a subdued and rather timid tone, which added greatly to her charm. We held our breath, lest we should lose one tremor of her girlish voice. Catherine herself was almost forgotten in sympathy and pity for Anne Boleyn.

In the after-piece, the young actress played again. This time she had a part which entirely suited her: she had to play a spoiled child sent to school to be taught manners. The character was exactly suited to her years and to her taste. She acted without effort and with perfect success. It was evident that for the time she was living in the scene. It was impossible to express delight while she was speaking and moving—we feared to lose one glance of the mischievous-looking eyes, one toss of the beautiful head; but, when at last we burst out into loud applause, she looked round in amazement to see for whom the demonstration was meant; and when our renewed cries and the whispers of some one who stood near her convinced her that she was the object of our admiration, a look of bewilderment which had much more of displeasure than of triumph in it, broke over her countenance; she made a hasty salutation, and ran off the stage.

(To be continued.)

## CAPTAIN M'CLURE,

## THE DISCOVERER OF THE NORTH-WEST PASSAGE.

LET us now track the course of the Enterprise and the Investigator, the small and unpretending expedition ordered to reach Melville Island from Behring's Straits, an achievement no ship had ever yet accomplished.

These seas had been known to Europe but a century. Vitus Behring, in the Russian service, was the first, about a hundred years ago, to discover the straits that separate the two great continents of Asia and America, by a distance of one hundred and fifty miles; and, like Hudson, he died in the very scene of his discovery, a victim to the 'cold, want, nakedness, sickness, impatience, and despair' that were their daily guests.

Nothing can be finer than this portal from the Pacific into the polar sea: Asia and America visible at once; the coast castellated by mountains from eight thousand to fifteen thousand feet high; the bold promontories and the deep bays on the opposite sides so exactly corresponding, that one can see how the two continents were torn asunder at some remote period of geological history. Here the climate is far milder than on the eastern coast of America. Their brief summer glows with a rich though pale and dwarfed vegetation, and earth and air swarm with life. The tribes are amiable and friendly. The animals are not ferocious; there are no reptiles and no poisonous plants: cold seems to purify all things. Here, too, is a great ice-cemetery of the antediluvian world, where the gigantic extinct animal races are still lying in their snow-shrouds, such as they lived before man was created, and when a different temperature must have existed from the present.

Fifty silent years pass after Behring's death; then a second ship steers through the strait, led by Cook, in hopes of reaching home by the north-east passage, as Drake had desired to do, and failed. The achievement was left for one whose name is now equally memorable as theirs. But Cook reached no farther than Icy Cape, which he discovered and named. Thick fogs prevented further progress, and he returned to the Sandwich Islands, where he soon lay a murdered man. Another fifty years elapse, and the straits are passed a third time by Captain Beechey, but his ship could not even reach Icy Cape. Then twenty-five years passed over, and we come to the Behring Straits expeditions of Captains Kellett and Moore, in the Herald and Plover. Twice Captain Kellett tried to push eastward past Icy Cape, but could not: the space between it and Melville Island was still the mare ignota of navigators; but he made a brilliant survey of the Asiatic side, and effected many important discoveries. Then it was the Admiralty determined on sending out the Enterprise and Investigator to cooperate with the Herald and Plover, and to effect, if possible, this passage past the Icy Cape through the Polar Sea to Melville Island; and it is this expedition which claims our special notice.

The two vessels sailed from Plymouth January the 20th, 1850, provisioned for three years, and each with a complement of sixty six men. The Enterprise was commanded by Captain Collinson, the senior officer of the expedition; the Investigator by Captain M'Clure, who was accompanied by Lieutenant Gurney Cresswell and Lieutenant Haswell, Dr. Armstrong, Surgeon Pierce, and Mr. Mierschling, a Moravian missionary, who perfectly understood all the Esquimaux dialects.

The Admiralty's instructions ordered the two vessels to press forward to the Sandwich Islands, refit there, and then use every exertion to pass Behring's Straits, and reach the ice by the first of August.

The Enterprise and Investigator were parted by a gale in Magellan's Straits, and never met afterwards. The Investigator proceeded on alone to the Sandwich Islands, and arrived there the 20th of June, but found neither the Enterprise nor the Herald. Captain Kellett had gone on to Behring's Strait, having given up all hope of meeting the Enterprise and her consort at the Sandwich Islands. Again M'Clure went on alone. The Herald had proceeded as far as Cape Lisburne, to bury information for Captain Collinson, and was returning south when they met a lone vessel steering up from the Straits—it was the Investigator.

She had made a surprising passage of twenty-six days from Oahce, left it the 4th of July, cleared the Sandwich Islands on the 5th, Behring's Straits on the 17th, and saw the Herald on the 31st. She steered a straight course, and carried a fair wind all the way. Captain Kellett wished the Investigator to take some provisions from us; but she was full, and the men were in excellent health and spirits. 'I went over the ship,' says Captain Kellett 'and was highly pleased with the comfort and cleanliness: every thing in its right place.' Commander M'Clure did not much extol her sailing qualities, but spoke in high praise of her capabilities for taking the ice. He parted from me at midnight, with a strong north-east wind, and under every stitch of canvas he could carry.

Then it was that Captain Kellett, startled at the idea of this lone ship pressing on into the ice, made the signal for recall, to which the heroic commander of the Investigator telegraphed in reply, 'Can't stay—important duty—own responsibility,' and dashed on with energetic determination to accomplish what he had vowed before leaving England—win his post-rank, find Franklin, or make the passage.

That midnight parting, August 1st, 1850, was M'Clure's farewell to all life but that within his own ship, for three years. The next time that his hand was grasped in friendship, it was by the same Captain Kellett on the other side of the world, after M'Clure had discovered the passage and stood on Melville Island, the first man who had ever reached it from the Pacific, having literally fulfilled the instructions of the Admiralty. Once again he was seen, four days later, by the Plover, under a press of canvas, steering to the north into the pack of Cape Barrow. From that date, till all the world, rang with his achievement, silence and mystery hung over his fate. Three years, and no tidings of that lone ship gone forth into the eternal ice! That he should ever return seemed scarcely expected—scarcely possible, except by a miracle.

'Heaven shield the gallant crew,' writes the brave and generous Sherard Osborn.—'May they be rewarded by accomplishing the fact of voyaging from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Aut ferri aut mori was, assuredly, the gallant M'Clure's motto, when he announced his purpose in the last despatches sent by him to the Admiralty.'

The 6th of August, at midnight, the Investigator rounded Cape Barrow. In a month they had reached Cape Bathurst and Cape Parry, groping and grappling their way close along the shore; then struck up northward into the ocean, and saw high land about fifty miles off. All that day and night they worked to windward, and by morning touched the south headland, rising up perpendicularly a thousand feet. They landed: named the new discovery Earing's Island, and found an extensive country, with fine rivers, lakes, ranges of hills two or three thousand feet high, valleys verdant with moss, and thronged with herds of deer and musk-oxen.

Divided from them by a strait, was another land, with ranges of volcanic hills and verdant valleys between. They named it Prince Albert's land, and the strait after the Prince of Wales. Up this strait they sailed till but twenty-five miles divided them from Barrow's Straits—from, in fact, the waters of the Atlantic. All they had toiled for seemed just accomplished, when a north-west wind set the whole mass of ice drifting to the east, and the entrance to Barrow's Strait was barred. A floe, six miles long, came rushing past them and grazed the ship, but left them safe. That night, the 17th of September, they secured the ship, with cables and lawers, to a floe eight fathoms deep, from which they never afterwards parted for ten months. Fixed to this, they were drifted down the strait some miles, and finally frozen in on the 30th of September, just two months after they had entered the ice, having accomplished, according to the nobly-given testimony of Sir Edward Parry, 'the most magnificent piece of navigation ever performed in a single season, and which the whole course of Arctic discovery can show nothing to equal.' For we must remember, this vast space from Behring's Straits to Melville Island, between nine hundred and one thousand miles, had never yet been navigated. On the Pacific