

SOME HAUNTED PLACES.

PASTOR FELIX ON THE ENGLISH BROTHER OF BURNS.

Sheffield's Fiery Poet—One Who Was a Lover of Nature and Mankind—Not Classed Among the Unread and Forgotten—Triumph After Long Delay.

The writer has a few books—pocket volumes, that cannot easily tire the hand that holds them, and dear by long association. It would be tedious, if he might enumerate all the places to which he has carried them, and the nooks by wild wood or river bank, or chimney corner, when he has stolen glances, or fixed upon their pages a loving gaze. There is his Gray who never fills a mammoth book; and when he looks upon it he sighs to think of that pigmy Goldsmith, which is lost. That was a precious old book! Then, there is the Ettrick Shepherd's "Forest Minstrel," and Bloomfield's "Farmer's Boy." The inspired shoemaker has not yet lost his charm, which runs on into his ballads of Suffolk country life. But among the whole collection not the least he prizes "The Village Patriarch," "Splendid Village," and other poems of Ebenezer Elliott, known far and wide as the "Corn-law Rhymers;" taught of God and nature to utter a vigorous protest against the infamy of taking the poor man's bread, till he and his children must go hungry. We own we love and revere the man, we own we admire his fiery, unfettered muse; for with Robert Burns he shares these, at least; the passion for nature, and the passion for humanity.

We have been complacently informed, by some self-satisfied authorities, that Elliott is now among the unread and forgotten authors, and that he has no permanence in literature; that from him, as from some others, much might have been hoped, but little is now realized. Doubtless all writers have enjoyed a vogue, which has been transferred to others as the restless wheel of time rolls on, and the still more restless multitudes turn to new favorites. Be that as it may—though his place as we believe, is still secure in hearts whose affection is better than the popular blaze of the hour which some count fame,—yet Elliott was once, (if he still is not), what some, who estimate him lightly, never were—a power in the world. He did clamor at the gate till public attention was given; he did stir the hearts of men, and shake their souls, with his "songs, sarcasms, curses, and battle-cries." There is a Pauline energy, a Lutheran ring in his rugged and homely, but often eloquent and beautiful verse in strong contrast with the dilettanteism and literary effeminacy in which so many of us revel today. He gave by precept and example a new sense of the dignity of labor; he upheld the downtrodden child of poverty, and pled his cause; he has advanced the standard of our common humanity to higher ground, by his simple influence, and has shown the worth in its lowliest developments. Therefore he deserves our thanks and praise, and he shall have them. We say to the invidious critic, with Whittier—"Hands off!"

"On these pale lips, the smothered thought which England's millions feel, A fierce and fearful splendor caught, As from his forge the steel, Strong-armed as Thor,—a shower of fire His smitten anvil flung; God's curse, Earth's wrong, dumb Hunger's ire,— He gave them all a tongue!"

Born in the home of a commercial clerk, in an iron foundry, at Masborough, near Rotham, in Yorkshire, England, one of a family of eight, he grew under circumstances that would not predict a poet. In his child-hood he has been described as "remarkable for good-nature, and a sensitiveness, exceeded only by his extreme inability to learn anything that required the least application or intellect." Yet that seemingly mopeish mind fed eagerly on all legendary matter; and, one Nanny Farr, who kept a public house, ministered to the faculty that held the poet in solution, by telling him all the ghost stories he wished to hear. At school "his unconquerable dullness was improved into absolute stupidity by the help he received from an uncommonly clever boy, called John Ross, who did his sums. He got into the rule of three without having learned numeration, addition, subtraction and division. Old Joseph Ramsbotham seemed quite convinced, gave him up in despair, and at rule of three the bard jumped all at once to decimals, where he stuck. At this time he was examined by his father, who discovered that the boy scarcely knew that two and one are three."

Well, we will see, if he can do nothing as a scholar, what he can do at a trade; so into the foundry he goes. Hard work may teach him wisdom, and his father may bring him to enumerate something. What can be done in this mercantile world without figures? And there it is that bright brother, Giles, who sits at the desk in the counting house, and posts the ledger, oppressing poor Ebenezer with the sense of his own deficiencies. Happy release when he can get abroad out of the toundry with the birds; for he can fly a kite or float a mimic ship with the best of them. They tell us that his unconquerable sadness increased; we doubt it not,—this, too, is a part of his inheritance, and of the poet working in him. He goes a-hunting after the flowers, and pores over Sowerby's English Botany, and makes a Hortus Siccus. Then he gets

hold of Thomson's "Seasons," and describes a thunderstorm. Shenstone comes after, with his pretty Leasowes poetry, infecting him with a deeper passion for rural life; and then, upon what his hopeless kindred doubtless regarded as a mild fever, supervened the mighty delirium of Milton and Shakespeare! But if books helped to awaken the conscious poet, they did little in comparison with nature, to mould or make him. "He can trace all his literary propensities to physical causes. His mind, he says, is altogether the mind of his own eyes. A primrose is to him a primrose, and nothing more. There is not a good passage in his writing which he cannot trace to some real occurrence, or to some object actually before his eyes."

We cannot trace the progress of development, but he has come to assured power and determinate form; the tragic and heroic are in his nature; they are within him the granite cloud-crested mountain, around which streams run and flowers twine, and birds warble. He is the swarthy-faced yeoman, with the eyes of wintry fire-frosts,—beacons of a fiery heart—toiling to overcome the barriers of his lot, and the deficiencies of his education; he is the butt of laughter and scorn, and neglect, yet sensitive as a maiden, and brave to front and patient to abide disaster,—writing poems that men would not read; he is the man of sorrow, that is not all his own,—for he is the witness of "man's inhumanity to man," he dwells at the gates of cruelty, and with those who groan under the rod of the oppressor. What, then, of the poetic impulse of Elliott?—none need question its genuineness. For his lays, they are his own style, matter, subject, spirit, and of unacknowledged originality. He will mimic no one; he will be himself; he is too sincerely in earnest and too blood-warm to do otherwise. For him no Conrad or Laras or private passion or despair; he will sing the woe of his fellow man. No Rodricks or Marmions of the past are chosen Themes,—though he has drawn the dark character of Bothwell strongly, and he did admire the energy of Byron and the noble patriotism of Scott; but like Burns and Wordsworth, he looked about him, he seized the simple beauty at his feet and lifted it to song. He is more than a writer of rhymed philippics. "He possesses a singular power of landscape painting; and what he paints possesses all the beauty of Claude, and the wild magnificence of a Salvator Rosa, with the finest and most subtle touches of a Dutch artist. In his landscapes you are not the more amazed by the sublimity of the tempest on the dark crag-strewn moorland mountains of the Peak, then you gaze by the perfect accuracy of his most minute details. In the Woodland on the vernal bank, and in the cottage garden, you find nothing that should not be there; nothing out of place or out of season; and the simplest plant or flower is exactly what you would find; not nicknamed, as the poor children of nature so often are by our writers. There is one instance of his taste that meets you everywhere and marks most expressively the peculiar delicate, and poetic affection of his feelings. It is his preeminent love for spring, and its flowers and imagery. The primrose, the snow-drop, the woe-marked cow-slips, the blossom of the hawthorne and the elm, how constantly do they recur. In what favorite scene has he not introduced the wind-flower? In the admirable picture of a mechanic's garden.

"Still, nature, still he loves thy uplands brown— The rock that o'er his father's freehold towers; And strangers hurrying through the dingy town May know his workshop, by his sweet wild flowers, Cropped on the Sabbath from the hedge-row borders The hawthorn blossom in the window droops; Far from the heaving stream and lucid air, The mailed alpine rose, to meet him stoops, As if to soothe a brother in despair Exiled from nature and her pictures fair. Even winter sends a posy to his jail, Wreathed of the sunnycelandine; the brief Courageous windflower, loveliest of the frail; The hazel's crimson star, the woodbine's leaf, The daisy with its half-closed eye of grief; Prophets of fragrance, beauty, joy and song."

Or in this passage, as remarkable for the sweet music of its versification as for its suggestive power, winging the imagination into the far-off woodland with the plover's cry: "When daisies blush, and windflowers wet with dew When shady anes with hyacinths are blue; When the elm blossoms o'er the brooding bird And wild and wide the plover's wail is heard; When melts the mists on mountains far away; Till morn is kindled into brightest day, No more the shouting youngsters shall convene To play at leap-frog on the village green."

These are beautiful; but Elliott can be strong as beautiful, and sublime as strong; and the great charm of all his poetry is that he makes his description subservient to the display of human life and passion, human joys, and sorrows, and struggles and wrongs. The luxury of pride, the misery of poverty, are side by side in his pictures, he dignifies with art and song what most have learned to despise; he takes the mean, the squalid, the barren,—or what seems such,—and sets it on high in our esteem, revealing unsuspected goodness; around all he casts a lustre, and breathes an aroma. With Burns, he shows the charm of the common, the unregarded;—the bramble-flower; the vicarage "smothered in its roses"; the lane, with its microcosmic wonders. How exquisite his touch, when the thrill is sorrow!

"The thrush proclaimed in accents sweet That winter's rain was o'er; The bluebells throng'd about my feet, But Mary came no more."

With Burns, he will write the annals of the poor. "The lowly train in life's sequestered scene; The native feelings strong, the guileless ways," and so we have Enoch, the village patriarch, blind and aged, but loving home and nature with a poet's loyal heart, like Elliott himself; and as we have poor old Hannah Wray, and "Broad Jim, the poacher," and Ezra White, the cruel hearted; and many more, who live to inflict or to suffer the woes of which this sad old world is so full. With Burns, he will love his own land, and greet his native soil and

"Gar his streams and burnies shine." till all the world shall love them for his sake; and so a lustre shines out of the empyrean on the top of Stannington, and down through the rushy vale of Don. A music sweet as that of dreams comes up from thrush-haunted Loxley, and from the cresses and pebbles and purling waters of Rivelin and Ribbledin." What joy breaks out ever, and anon, after some sombre or heart-breaking episode: "Flowers peep, trees bud, boughs tremble, rivers run: The redwing saith it is a glorious morn. Blue are thy heavens, thou Highest! And thy sun. Shines without cloud, all fire. How sweetly borne On wings of morning o'er the leafless thorn, The tiny wren's small twitter warbles near?" Or this, from his poem, "The Ranter:" "Up, sluggards, up! the mountains, one by one, Ascend in light, and slow the mists retire From vale and plain. The cloud on Stannington Behold a rocket—no! 'tis Morthen's spire! The sun is risen! cries Stanolde, tipped with fire: On Norwood's flowers the dew drops shine and shake; Up, sluggards, up! and drink the morning breeze. The buds on cloud-left Osgathorpe awake; And Windobank is waving all his trees O'er subject towns, and farms, and villages, And gleaming streams, and woods, and waterfalls, Up, climb the oak crowned summit."

Then, like Wordsworth, he has a message to his generation, yet a different one. The sword of truth is in his hand and the fire of truth in his heart, and he is bidden to be a lusty smiter. Indeed, such he must be, who would abolish Moloch and Dagon, or do away with an old wrong, by which the hardened and selfish seem to profit! Elliott was blamed for his denunciations; so was Christ for his; and as the God-man was all love, so no poet ever had a kinder, more gentle and generous heart, under all his frowns, than Ebenezer Elliott. But he had a stiff-necked possesser before him, to break or to be broken. He must go to the lordly Ninivites of his time, and assail their revels. The spoiler is on the field, and the people are eaten up, they are as dung-hill refuse. Here is strong and bitter crying; here is the agonizing voice of one in the wilderness of human sorrow:

"Lord! Call thy pallid angel— The tamer of the strong; And bid him whip with want and woe The champions of the wrong! O say not thou to Ruks flood, "Up, Sluggard! Why go slow?" But alone let them groan, The lonest of the low; And basely beg the bread they curse, Where millions curse them now! "No! Wake not thou the giant Who drinks hot blood for wine And shouts unto the east and west, In thunder-tones like thine; Till the slow to move rush all at once, An avalanche of men, While heaves o'er waves That need no whirlwind then; Though slow to move, mov'd all at once, A sea, a sea of men!"

This is the indignant voice of all industrial England, whose bread is taxed till toiling men are hungrier than paupers. Look! ye vampires,—ye locusts of God's harvest-fields,—what ye have done! Come down out of your brute stalls called palaces, and see the shame and wrong—the infamy on which ye are built! We are men whom ye have made serfs; ye have chosen to bruise us, and lo!—beware! our wrath and the wrath of heaven are close upon you! Ye will, in your turn, be crushed, except ye repent. Again and again was uttered this "John the Baptist" cry; this was his word, and to this, for long, no heed was paid, no answer given.

"One would think it impossible," as William Howitt well says, "that this noble poetry should not have been immediately discovered, and made universal in its acceptance. But what was the fact? For twenty years the poet went on writing and publishing, but in vain. Volume after volume, his productions fell dead from the press, or were treated with a passing sneer, or were 'damned with faint praise.' But living consciousness of genius was not to be extinguished, the undaunted spirit of Elliott was not to be frozen out by neglect. He wrote, he appealed to sense and justice—it was in vain. He became furious, and hurled a flaming satire at Lord Byron in the height of his popularity, in the hope that the noble poet would give him a returning blow, and thus draw attention upon him. It was in vain—neither lord nor public would deign him a look, and the case seemed desperate. But it was not so. Chance led Dr. Bowring to Sheffield, and there some one put into his hands "The Corn Law Rhymes" and "The Ranter." At once Bowring, a poet himself, recognized the singular merit of the compositions, printed as they were in four pamphlet sheets, on very ordinary paper. With his usual zeal, he began to talk everywhere of the wonderful poet of Sheffield." So his vogue began: from Bowring it went to Howitt, from him to Wordsworth, Southey and the Quarterly. Bowring carried the new light to London, and Bulmer and Miss Tewsbury lifted it on high in the New Monthly Magazine, and Athenæum. "At such decided and generous verdicts in such quarters, the scales fell from the eyes of the whole critic tribe—all cuckoo-land was loud with one note; and the poet, who had been thunder-

ing at every critical door in the kingdom in vain, now saw the gates of the land of glory at once expand, and was led in by a hundred officious hands, as if he were a new-born bard, and not of twenty years growth." So may genius and an earnest purpose ever triumph; but Oh, the weary waiting and the heart wasting neglect that have tired and extinguished some! But this man's hour came; and when it did there was not merely applause on the lips of England, but blushes on her cheek, and her house of wrong began to tremble at its foundation and shake at its centre. PASTOR FELIX.

SOME OF THEM HAD VISIONS.

White Others, Like Byron Had a Jim Jams.

Goethe states that he one day saw the exact counterpart of himself coming towards him.

Pope saw an arm apparently come through the wall, and made inquiries after its owner.

Byron often received visits from a spectre, but he knew it to be a creation of imagination.

Dr. Johnson heard his mother call his name in a clear voice, though she was at the time in another city.

Count Emanuel Swedenburg believed that he had the privilege of interviewing persons in the spirit world.

Loyola lying wounded during the siege of Pampeluna saw the Virgin, who encouraged him to prosecute his mission.

Sir Joshua Reynolds, leaving his house, thought the lamps were trees, and the men and women bushes agitated by the breeze.

Oliver Cromwell, lying sleepless on his couch, saw the curtains open and a gigantic woman appear, who told him he would become the greatest man in England.

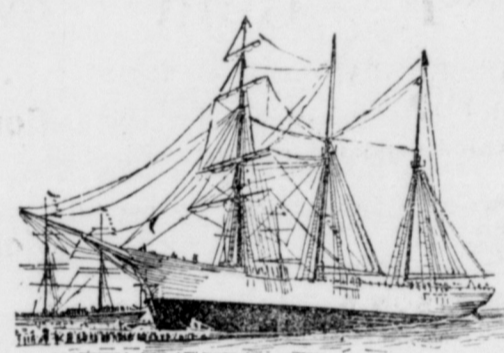
Ben Johnson spent the watches of the night an interested spectator of a crowd of Tartars, Turks and Roman Catholics, who rose up and fought round his armchair till sunrise.

Benvenuto Cellino, imprisoned at Rome, resolved to free himself by self destruction, but was deterred by the apparition of a woman of wondrous beauty, whose reproaches turned him from his purpose.

Napoleon once called to a bright star, he believed he saw shining in his room, and said: "It has never deserted me. I see it on the occasion of every great event, urging me onward. It is my untailing omen of success."

Professor Garner, who went to Africa to learn the monkey language, has returned. He claims to have discovered that monkeys have a language which can be learned by man. He brings home two monkeys who by their sounds make known to him their wants. He spent 100 days in a steel cage in the jungle to observe the wild animals in their native haunts.

The new Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Gotha is tattooed much in the same way as his brother-in-law, the Grand Duke Alexis; while his nephew, the Duke of York and future King of England, has a couple of crossed flags on his forearm.



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