

BIOGRAPHY AS A STUDY.

SOME FEATURES OF IT WHICH ARE WORTHY OF THOUGHT.

Some Biographers Who Have Had a Special Fitness for the Tasks They Have Undertaken—Boswell and Others With Genius—Writers of the Present Day.

Biography is the most delightful reading and perhaps the most interesting study in all the world of literature. As we know it is simply the story of a man's life. Many, however, fancy that it is also the record of the history of the time in which the subject of the biography lived. In a sense this is true. Indeed it is well to link the subject to the history of his age and it is essentially necessary that we should have at least a glimpse of those movements of national importance in which he was directly or indirectly involved. Otherwise we should be obliged to gaze upon an unfinished picture. How could we judge it if the light and shade of public career were not mingled with those of private life? At the same time it must be admitted that modern biographers are by far too eager to go outside of their subject and to inflict the suffering public with wearisome chapters on the state of commerce; the development of art; the improvement of literature; the struggles of political parties and the past, present and future history of the nation. We have had enough of it. It is all very well in its own place. We stand aghast in its presence. We summon our courage and opening the prison doors of patience we cry out, "Give us all this in one or at least two chapters."

Biographers who deal mainly with the personal traits, characteristics, habits and surroundings of their subjects are after all the most popular. The nearer we come to a man in a book the better we like or the more we dislike him according as he inspires us with like or dislike. We want to look into his eyes; to see his mouth open and hear what he says; to measure him as he stands or to time him as he runs; to feel his flesh or to stand in his presence. It is his boy-life when his childhood scenes are around him and mothers face before him; it is his man-life when he starts out in the world at the time that ambition fires his blood and brings the first flush of enthusiasm to his cheek that draw, attract and captivate us.

We like to hear of his doings and what he is doing but we have no inclination whatever to forego our pleasure to listen to an essay read on political economy or an article on ancient institutions. We have a library and if we have not the city has and in either place we may find Prof. Irvons or Prof. Antique.

In fact it is a biography is purely and simply the story of a man's life why in the name of the god should it be anything else? A touch of human nature may convert a thousand; a little story may coin the greatest moral ever breathed by the lips or penned by the hand of man; a simple anecdote may illumine the gloom of the world and place a heavenly halo round all sublimity things.

The other side tells us that chapters on political economy may drive a man mad and that a book on Ancient Institutions may tire the mind; deaden the heart, paralyze the soul and even cause man to resign his hope of a blissful eternity.

Probably there is not much happiness to be found here below but we can hardly be blamed if we put aside everything that tends to lessen it. By this we do not mean that the world or for that matter a book should be all sunshine. The day is good enough but the day calls for the night and as a certain old schoolmaster, who was very fond of his hog-latin, used to say, "visus varus." As it is with time so it is with man. His life calls for shade as well as light. In a word we want the truth and we clamor like a child for a toy, for all things that interest us.

We wish the subject of a biography to be full of the blood of humanity and the spirit of God. We desire to watch the ceaseless struggle between the heart and the soul and the biography that mirrors the triumphs and defeats of that struggle, true to nature, is the only one deserving of the name. Rarely indeed do we come across such a one. We need not strive for the reason for it if it be true that "poets are born and not made" the truth applies with far greater force and effect to biographers. We have no cause then to marvel at the scarcity of really good biographies. Nevertheless it can hardly be said that a biographer must be a genius. That word is liable to be construed into many meanings. One may not be a genius and yet according to one phrase of the popular acception of the meaning of that word one may possess a certain genius for doing one or many things. In the true sense of the word Boswell was not a genius but he certainly had a genius for biography. In fact he was the genius of biography and has been deservedly called its prince. He was a greater biographer than Macaulay for the brilliant historian of England was only a portrait painter and not a very adept one at that. His periodic sentences prove him to be a master of style but the fitness of his literary analysis never brought out in strong relief the dominant traits of his subjects. His sketches of Chatham and the great prime-minister's son, Pitt, are merely echoes of their splendid oratory. We never see them; we never feel their pres-

ence; we never hear their voice nor see their movements.

Nor is Brougham to be compared to Boswell. The former was too much of a partisan; was too violent, fierce and denunciatory and a party man or an angry man can never do justice to his speeches or his writings.

While it is not so with sweet Tom Moore yet we can recall the fact that his life of his friend Sheridan satisfied neither friend nor foe. Doubtful witticisms and questionable retorts are scattered over its pages but we look in vain for the brilliant but unfortunate "Brinsley."

Leslie Stephens' life Johnston; Minto's of DeFoe; Black's of Goldsmith; Hutton's of Scott; Trollope's of Thackeray; Pattison's of Milton; Dowden of Southey and our own Goldwin Smith's of Cowper and a great many others edited by John Morley are not at all up to the standard of Boswell's life of Johnson. To be candid, as some folks commonly say, all the biographies published before and after their time down to the very day come under the same charge. Reading them all one finds the reason why it is so and also discovers that they all look to Boswell and acknowledge him to be there prince. Everyone of them refer to Boswell and contain copious extracts on Johnson find his contemporaries from the "Scotch cur's" life of the great Cham. Would Boswell himself (or could he indeed) expect a high tribute? We think not. The thought naturally leads us to inquire into the causes of Boswell's marvelous success as a writer of biography. In the first place he was as keen as one of the terriers of his own native land. In the next place he had a memory for all things. What he saw and heard he never forgot. But capacious as was his memory he always hastened to his note-book. He knew how many bites—and they were mighty and voracious bites too—that Johnson put into his bread and steak—when the great literary dictator had passed through his hungry days and had bread and steak to eat—how often his chest heaved in a minute or an hour, how often his poor half-blind eyes winked and blinked at "Nolly" Goldsmith or at "Munk Burke;" how often his wig went awry or flew away from him in the heat of a great conversational battle; how many glasses of toddy he drank in a night; how many men he had crushed by a retort, or how many women he had offended by his reckless regard for the truth at all times and in all places. Boswell knew all this and more. Call him a "Scotch cur" if you will, and believe with Goldsmith who denied it, and said with some show of spirit and a dash of scorn, "he's not a cur, he's only a bur, Tom Davies flung him at Johnson in sport, and he has the faculty of sticking," but remember that it is well for biography as Leslie Stephens says that, "he stuck to Johnson to the end of his life." He followed the mighty and ponderous figure like a spaniel, but his fawning, his cringing and his licking at the feet of the literary autocrat of Grub St., did more to give to posterity the name and fame of his idol than Rasselas; the Rambler; the Dictionary; or the heavy fruit-cake poetry, or the awful but sonorous native sentences of their author.

Time and experience tested Boswell's work, and out of their crucible it came forth with its original power, lustre and genius undiminished and unimpaired.

It would be impossible for modern biographers to resort to his methods, but his style and his model still stand for their emulation. He has been made the jest of many writers and the butt of almost every biographer. When they shall have learned to write like him and make their characters speak as he did his, they may see the wisdom and the necessity of dropping the jest and worshipping the butt. Leaving Boswell, but not his environment we come to the "parting of the ways." One leads to genuine biography the other to an "aching void" called by that name. Our reflections at the cross roads suggest to us to explain the reason why the English writers are better biographers than those of any other country. To be brief it is because they have London, and there is but one London. One London with its curious old places; its cellars and garrets, its restless streets and thronged squares made famous twenty after century, by the presence of genius.

One London in whose nooks and crannies the genius of England, Ireland and Scotland struggled in early days with misery, poverty and absolute want.

One London where congenial spirits and kindred souls, with breasts filled with ambition and pockets filled with nothing, met at the foot of the mountain of fame and through the mist strained their eyes to catch even a passing glimpse of the surpassing brightness which circled its peak.

One London in which Johnson and Burke and Goldsmith and Sheridan and many others destined to attain world wide celebrity divided their crusts while they translated Latin literature or spoke alternately of hope or despair.

One London with its clubs and coffee-houses and their diversified life which is always and yet not quite the same but changed at will to suit the caprices of their aspiring inmates.

One London to which all the world turns as the needle to the pole, to look upon a life gilded in gold or clad in rags; to view all nationalities and all creeds; to measure education by the prevalence of ignorance and virtue by the existence of crime; to estimate the growth of democracy by the strength of aristocracy; to stand as the New Zealander of the future on an unbroken arch of St. Paul's and think of the millions of human beings in the thousands and thousands of houses before him, behind him and all around him and reflect upon their condition, their lives, their fortunes, their present position and their eternal destiny.

One mighty, irresistible London with its splendid churches; its blessings and blasphemies; its wealth and poverty; its vast possibilities and its unbounded and transcendent power for the advancement or the retardment of the progress of the human race.

In such a London then it is a very easy task to find material for a biography. Why the very air of London is surcharged with history. All an author need do is to go out, breathe, and return to his "den" filled

with the germs of a great number of historical thoughts.

The American writer is not nearly so well off. His surroundings and his characters are entirely different. Transplant him to London and in nine cases out of ten it he essays biography he will make a lamentable failure. It was so with charming Washington Irving. As a writer on American subjects or those closely or remotely connected with the history of his native land he has no rival. But he has many rivals and as many superiors as a writer on English scenes or characters.

The English biographer has the coffee-house; the club; the garret and the cellar and from each he may draw an abundance of coloring, movement and life.

In the glorious days of these institutions conversation was an art, and a social gathering, a meeting of its professors. There was more talking then than writing. A bright sally; a witty reply; a happy flash of humor; a keen and sometimes crushing retort to emboldened ignorance; a brilliant story; a lively tune on any available instrument, such as Goldsmith's flute; a rollicking song; a smile like a ray of sunshine; a roar of laughter were always to be found on the night's programme and even Johnson's profound melancholy and Boswell's senseless aping of it were alike burnished up by the brightness and joyousness of the unrivalled scene.

These days are no more. Like the dead they are gone from us and forever. In the very sadness of this thought we may understand why the biography of to-day is neither as interesting nor as true to life as that of about a century ago.

Nowadays "pink pie" parties or so-called socials hold high sway. At them women fancy that it is their bounden duty to "giggle" or to be quite prim while the men believe that they are sworn to appear as wise as Solomon or to act as foolishly as a court jester.

The literary clubs named after their poet or that artist are but little better. The author-patron is studied; a "great intellect" reads a "cut and dried" paper on said patron's life and works, and lo! it goes forth to the world that the club is an evidence of the spread and cultivation of standard literature and of the almost divine enlightenment of the nineteenth century.

What are our poor biographers to do? Like the "little ones" they must sit contentedly sucking their thumbs and moralizing over the degeneracy of the age.

The biographer of to-day dreams of writing a biography he knows that the material he wants can only come after the death of his subject and if he should then succeed in getting it he almost invariably discovers that the very papers he wants have been carefully placed beyond his reach or utterly destroyed. He has learned from experience that this has been done in order to shield certain names; some certain reputations or to keep inviolate certain secrets of state. He faces his work with much the same feeling with which a traveler already spent after a long journey turns his camels head to the parched and illimitable sands of the Sahara. He is well aware of the fact that he is entering a barren waste devoid of running water, waving trees or beautiful skies and as he looks in vain for a familiar scene—a well known vale—a retired shade—a dearly loved lover—a bright patch of sky seen through the o'ping—he may be pardoned if he grinds his teeth; huris out a "cuss" word and whirls back to town determined to court the company of a wit and praise the society of a fool for the purpose of drawing out the one and burying the other. Their anecdotes will at any rate enliven his pages and circulate his book.

The critics may try to decide its fate. But their day is rapidly waning. The great public have the measure of popularity in their own hands. No critic may now hope to prevent them from reading either a good or a bad book. By and by as the standard of education among all classes becomes higher and higher they will make no mistakes in the books they read. Of all books we venture to predict that well written biographies will be the most popular. We are certain that the people want to become acquainted with the great figures of history. But they want to look upon men of flesh and blood and not of wood. They do not want to read about the aspect of the pork market nor the complexion of the house of commons. Such subjects when treated under such headings as "A Treatise on Pork" or "An Essay on the House of Commons" are no doubt of great interest, but when we are brought face to face with the ordinary pig and the average M. P., in twenty chapters out of twenty we are tempted to remonstrate and with "pride in (our) eye, defiance in (our) port" we rise up in rebellion to vigorously resent the unpardonable intrusion.

We are patient and forgiving, however, and if our present biographers are not what they should be we may turn with loving eyes and tender hearts to the dear old Bohemian days. Yes, to Bohemia and the old fancies, the old dreams and the old thoughts which we cherished as life itself in the days "when we were boys together" and earth and sea and sky seemed so wondrous fair; when we read, with flushed cheeks, sparkling eyes and heaving breasts, of the great men of the battlefield and the forum, and nursed as lovingly as ever mother day her babe the fond delusion that one day we should be greater soldiers than the Napoleons or greater orators than the Gladstones. But the transient glories are departed for evermore and in the sober light of mature years we see clearly that to few is given even in the most brilliant biography the opportunity of reaching the star-worshippers.

Al Bohemia! The delusive splendor of youth has vanished forever and ever. In the sober life of manhood we come to know the world as it is and to abandon the generous enthusiasm and noble aspiration of the dawn of our dreamland. Rendered cold, hard and cynical by the ingratitude of friends; by the whisper of slander; by the cry of envy and the malice of mankind we find ourselves forced to become a part of the great machine of society and to take our station among its polished hypocrites. Oh Bohemia! Blessed indeed are we when we may welcome the privilege of turning away from the glare of folly and the blackness of shame to the solitude of our chamber or the hollow distance of the moonlit highway and recall—to at once cheer and sadden us—the splendid triumphs or decisive defeats of those children of genius whose imperishable monuments stand in the sacred graveyard of history.

JOHN MAHONEY.

HONOR TO DARTMOUTH. Prof. Edward E. Phelps, M. D., LL. D., Whose Giant Intellect Discovered Paine's Celery Compound.



Two giants among men—the greatest statesman and the greatest physician that America has produced—Daniel Webster and Edward E. Phelps—have both done honor to Dartmouth college, one as a student, the other as an instructor.

To Prof. Edward E. Phelps, M. D., LL. D., the world to-day owes longer life and more freedom from sickness than to any other physician.

Every Dartmouth alumnus of more than a dozen years' standing remembers the awe in which he held the keen observer whose name appeared in the college catalogue next to that of the president as professor of materia medica; and every younger graduate has admired the complete museum of medical botany which Dr. Phelps gave to the college.

But it was the world-famed discovery of Prof. Phelps of an infallible cure for those fearful ills that result from an impaired nervous system and impure blood which has endeared the great doctor to the world, and made his life an era in the practice of medicine.

Prof. Phelps was born in Connecticut and graduated from the military school at

Norwich, Vt. He studied medicine with Prof. Nathan Smith, of New Haven, Conn., and graduated in medicine at Yale.

His unusual talent soon brought him reputation and prominence among his professional brethren. In 1835 he was elected to the professorship of anatomy and surgery in the Vermont university. In 1841 he was appointed lecturer on materia medica and medical botany in Dartmouth college. The next year he was chosen professor of the chair then vacated by Prof. Robby, and occupied the chair, the most important one in the country, until a few years before his death in 1880.

He had for years foreseen the dangers of the American way of living. He went about to find a scientific, common sense remedy to cure the common evils that, under one name and another, result from an unhealthy state of the nervous system, and within a score of years have seemed to be sweeping over the country like an epidemic. He succeeded.

He gave to the medical profession a celebrated remedy, which has since come to be known the world over as Paine's Celery Compound.

It was Dr. Phelps' prescription which ever since has been freely used and prescribed by the most eminent of the profes-

sion. The formula was furnished to all reputable physicians. They found the wonderful remedy to be exactly what was claimed for it, a great nerve and brain strengthener and restorer. It was demonstrated beyond doubt that Paine's Celery Compound would cure nervous debility and exhaustion, neuralgia, sleeplessness, dyspepsia, and all blood diseases.

It was as harmless as it was good, and it was the universal advice of the medical profession that the compound be placed where the general public could secure it, and thousands of people have every year proven the wisdom of this good advice.

Paine's Celery Compound has given the people of Canada the best and strongest testimonials ever published. No other medicine before the public has ever been favored with such a mass of home evidence. All classes, from the laborer to men and women of national reputation, have declared that Paine's Celery Compound is worthy of all that has been said in its favor.

As a well known physician in this city says:

"Paine's Celery Compound is not a patent medicine; it is not a sarsaparilla; it is not a mere tonic; it is not an ordinary nerve— it is as far beyond them all as the diamond is superior to cheap glass."

Equity Sale. THE AMERICAN \$800 Typewriter.

There will be sold at Public Auction at Chubb's Corner (so called), in the City of Saint John, in the County of Saint John, in the Province of New Brunswick, on SATURDAY THE TWENTY-EIGHTH DAY OF APRIL, NEXT, at the hour of twelve o'clock noon, pursuant to the directions of a Decreeal Order of the Supreme Court in Equity, made on Saturday the seventeenth day of February, A. D., 1894, in a cause therein pending, wherein Elizabeth Butt, Administratrix of the Estate and Effects of William F. Butt, deceased, is Plaintiff, and George J. Williams and Margaret his wife, George W. Kilnap and Annie his wife, Harry A. Black and Matilda R. his wife, Frances Williams, Ansley Johnson and Ethel L. his wife, and Helen M. Williams, are Defendants, and by Amendment wherein Elizabeth Butt, administratrix of the estate and effects of William F. Butt, deceased, Arthur E. Butt, and Ethel M. Butt, are Plaintiffs, and George J. Williams and Margaret his wife, George W. Kilnap and Annie his wife, Harry A. Black and Matilda R. his wife, Frances Williams, Ansley Johnson and Ethel L. his wife are Defendants, with the approval of the undersigned Referee in Equity the Mortgage premises described in the said Decreeal Order are:

A lot that lot, piece or parcel of land situate on the Eastern side of Spring Street in the City of Portland, in the County of Saint John, and known and distinguished on the plan of building lots near William Wright's Cottage Northward of the City Road, being numbered Ten (10) bounded as follows: Commencing on the Easterly side of Spring Street at a point distant forty feet from the Northwestern corner of lot number eight (8) thence from last mentioned point running Northwesterly on Spring Street forty feet, thence at right angles Easterly one hundred and forty-one feet, thence at right angles Southerly forty feet, and thence at right angles Westerly one hundred and forty-one feet to the place of beginning."

For terms of sale and other particulars apply to the Plaintiff's Solicitors.

Dated this 20th day of February, A. D., 1894. CARLETON & FERGUSON, Plaintiff's Solicitors. E. H. McALPINE, Referee in Equity. W. A. LOCKHART, Auctioneer.

TURKEYS, CHICKENS, GESE AND DUCKS.

Annapolis Co., N. S. Beef. Kings Co., N. B., Lamb, Mutton and Veal. Ontario Fresh Pork.

DEAN'S SAUSAGES. THOS. DEAN, 13 and 14 City Market



This is a well-made, practical machine, writing capitals, small letters, figures, and punctuation marks (71 in all) on full width paper, just like a \$100 instrument. It is the first of its kind ever offered at a popular price for which the above claim can be truthfully made. It is not a toy, but a typewriter built for and capable of REAL WORK. While not as rapid as the large machines sometimes become in expert hands, it is still at least as rapid as the pen and has the advantage of such simplicity that it can be understood and mastered almost at a glance. We cordially commend it to helpful parents and teachers everywhere.

- Writes capitals, small letters, figures and marks—71 in all. Easy to understand—learned in 5 minutes. Writes just like a \$100 machine. No shift keys. No Ribbon. Prints from the type direct. Prints on flat surface. Writing always in sight. Corrections and insertions easily made. Takes any width of paper or envelope up to 8 1/2 inches. Takes good letter-press copies

Packed securely in handsome case and expressed to any address on receipt of price—\$8.00, in registered letter, money order or certified check. We guarantee every machine and are glad to answer all inquiries for further information.

IRA CORNWALL, Gen. Agent for Maritime Provinces, Board of Trade Bldg., St. John, N. B., or from the following agents: R. Ward Thorne, St. John, N. B.; A. S. Murray, Fredericton, N. B.; W. B. Morris, St. Andrews, N. B.; T. Carleton Ketchum, Woodstock, N. B.; VanMeter, Butcher & Co., Moncton, N. B.; J. Fred. Benson, Chatham, N. B.; H. A. White, Sussex, N. B.; A. M. Hoare, Knowles' Book Store, Halifax, N. S.; J. Bryenton, Amherst, N. S.; W. F. Kempton, Yarmouth, N. S.; D. I. Stewart, Charlottetown, P. E. I. AGENTS WANTED.