

WAS A POETIC REALIST.

LIGHTS AND SHADES IN THE LIFE OF THE POET CRABBE.

Pastor Felix Falks—An Old Doctrine Revamped—The Village Salmaster's Son—Experience in London—Palaces and Pleasures Not Always Together.

Mr. W. D. Howells has led a controversy, in which a number of authors have joined in support or opposition, concerning the species of literature wherein he has distinguished himself, and has been worthily successful. As for him, he will study nature carefully, and report her faithfully; he will see her as she is. He will endeavor to present human life and character in their actual phases, nor will he disdain the trivial and commonplace, or whatever will help him to indicate what under their conditions, people do actually become. By every touch of his pen the reader shall more clearly discern what they are. These are literal terms, which he will not array nor varnish. Fancifulness he will discard, and he will avoid painting people ideally, or as he might wish to see them. He will employ the imaginative faculty legitimately; not in a doubtful effort to restore a past, the essential features of which must escape the artist, nor in seeking to invest whosoever he meets with characteristics of his own mind, or of any higher mind than that which inhabits. To be a historian of social life,—the life of his time, and that which he sees,—that is his vocation, if not the proper vocation of any writer in the department of fiction. The writer of these remarks does not intend to enter the lists of this controversy, but to point out the fact, that these principles are not now enacted for the first time; that many years ago a prominent English poet proposed to himself the same task, and in his verse rigorously accomplished it. Indeed, it was a new thing when he attempted it, and provoked astonishment and critical resistance. One of the most generous of his readers said of his work: "It was a shock to everything of the ideal great and poetical in the young and sensitive mind, attuned to the harmonies of a thousand great lays of the by-gone times, that was never to be forgotten. Are we then coming to this? I asked. Is this the scale of topic, and is this the tone to which we are reduced in this generation? Turning over the heads of the different books did not much tend to remove this feeling. 'The Church,' 'Sects,' 'The Election,' 'Law,' 'Physic,' 'Trades,' 'Clubs and Social Meetings,' 'Players,' 'Alms-house and Trustees,' 'Peter Grimes and Prisons.' What, in heaven's name, were the whole line Muses to do with such a set of themes?" This poet—for he was truly a poet!—was George Byron described, in the vigorous line as

Nature's sternest painter, yet her best.

We trust we are not indisposed to admire this poet or admit mastery in his particular department. We have indeed read him with frequent enjoyment, and have not been without sympathy with his grand revolt against the false sublime and artificial in the literature prevalent when he wrote. With renewed appreciation we can see and feel "the deep and experienced knowledge of human life, the sound sense, the quiet satire, . . . the warm sympathy with poverty and suffering; the boldness to display them as they existed, and to suffer no longer poetry to wrap the golden haze round human life, and to conceal all that ought to be known, because it must be known before it could be removed; the tender pathos and the true feeling for nature." Yet we have not felt that he has showed the highest things that are in human life; beauty and the celestial light the highest poets bring, are rarely found in him. On the whole, his verse has too often depressed us. We are too apt to frame shadowy pictures for ourselves; and we turn especially to poetry for a relief, to gild the "sad realities of life. Our illusions, even, have their use and value. It is said that, as men outgrow the dreams and visions of their youth, and experience the world in its harsher facts of disillusion and disappointment, they come to a higher appreciation of Crabbe;—that Scott, in his late, mournful days, returned to the "worsted Pope" with a sad relish, and reckoned him of the faithful in his teaching. He is the late Ecclesiastical who cries, "Vanity." This world, after so many poets have amused, should have one to instruct it. Yes, this is doubtless so; yet, at our life's present stage, there are some who come nearer to us, and accomplish more for us, than Crabbe. The barer aspects of life, the common aims and ideas, the follies and frailties of humankind, are too frequent, and present wherever we go, to admit of the sincerest pleasure when they reappear in literature, without relieving light, and detailed with much uniformity of manner. We look particularly to poetry as a thing apart,—the mind's chapel of ease,—a sanctuary for the tired heart,—a little green islet, whose shore is peace,—a fountain in a grove, where the weary traveller may refresh himself. Yet, as it is a foolish theologian who would discredit Isaiah and The Apocalypse by the Proverbs or James' Epistle; so he is at fault who would make of Milton and Wordsworth canons of critical destruction to be aimed at Cooper or Crabbe,—each of whom served his generation well, and left to aftertimes a legacy of precious value. What Rembrandt, Teniers and Collins are to the pictorial art, Crabbe is to that of verse.

Perhaps some of the sadness of the sea crept into the soul of our poet; for he was born to its scenes and its traditions. A peasant people, struggling for subsistence in the midst of which he was; a landscape somewhat bleak, and a rather melancholy-looking shore; a stern parental presence, and discipline severe—these had to do with the tone and color of his thought and the moulding of his spirit. He was one of five children, born in an old house, near the waves, with its little dim diamond

panes, and projecting chamber, on Christmas eve, 1754. Aldborough, in Suffolk, which is so finely described in the poet's verse, is also put before us as vividly in the prose of his accomplished son, and biographer. It was in those days a poor and wretched place, with nothing of the elegance and gaiety which have since sprung up about it, in consequence of the resort of watering parties. The town lies between a low hill or cliff, on which only the old church and a few better houses were then situated, and the beach of the German ocean. It consisted of two parallel and unpaved streets, running between mean and scrambling houses, the abodes of sea-living men, pilots and fishers. The range of houses nearest to the sea had suffered so much from repeated invasions of waves that only a few scattered tenements appeared among the desolation. I have often heard my father describe a tremendous spring-tide of, I think, the 17th of January, 1779, when eleven houses were demolished and he saw the breakers dash over the roofs, and round the walls, and crush all to ruin. The beach consists of successive ridges—large rolled stones, then loose shingles, and, at the fall of the tide, a strip of fine hard sand. Vessels of all sorts, from the large heavy troll-boat, to the yawl and prame, drawn up along the shore—fishermen preparing their tackle, or sorting their spoil,—and, nearer, the gloomy old town-hall, the only indication of municipal dignity, a few groups of mariners, chiefly pilots, taking their quick short walks backwards and forwards, every eye watchful of the signal from the offing,—such was the squalid scene which first opened on the author of 'The Village.'

Nor was the landscape in the vicinity of a more engaging aspect: open commons and sterile farms, the soil poor and sandy, the herbage bare and rushy, the trees few and far between, and withered and stunted by the bleak breezes of the sea. The opening picture of 'The Village' was copied, in every touch, from the scene of the poet's nativity and boyish days:

Lo! where the heath with withering brake grown o'er
Lends the light turf that warms the neighboring
poor;
From thence a length of burning sand appears,
Where the thin harvest waves its withered ears;
Rank weeds, that every art and care defy,
Reign o'er the land, and rob the lighted rye;
There thistles spread their prickly arms afar,
And to the ragged infants threaten war.

"The broad river, called the Ald, approaches the sea close to Aldborough, within a few hundred yards, and then turning abruptly, continues to run for about ten miles parallel to the beach, from which a dreary strip of marsh and waste alone divides it, until it at length finds its embouchure at Oxford. The scenery of this river has been celebrated as lovely . . . an old Camden talks of the beautiful vale of Slaughtden. I confess, however, that though I have ever found an indescribable charm in the very weeds of the place, I could never perceive its claims to beauty. Such as it is, it has furnished Mr. Crabbe with many of his happiest and most graphic descriptions; and the same may be said of the whole line of coast from Oxford to Dunwich, every feature of which has somewhere or other, been reproduced in his writings. . . . For one destined to distinction as a portrayer of character few scenes could have been more favorable than that of his native rough shore. The sea, a daily witness of unbridled passions, and of manners remote from the sameness and artificial smoothness of polished society. At home he was subjected to the apices of a stern and imperious though not unkindly nature; and few probably whom he could familiarly approach but had passed through some of those dark tragedies in which his future strength was to be exhibited. The common people of Aldborough in those days are described as—

A wild amphibious race,
With sullen woe displayed in every face;
Who far from civil arts and social life,
And scornful at strangers with suspicious eye.

Crabbe imbibed the spirit of sea and shore, and entered with a poet's sympathy into the lives of the people, but he had aims and hopes above the career of fisher or mariner. Perhaps the vision of a brother perishing on ship-board a victim of the slave trade,—for who can blame the crushed negro when the fetter is off and the means of vengeance is in his hand?—or a brother wandering on that Honduras coast, showing himself to a townsman momentarily, and then vanishing forever,—might deter him from following the sea. Beside his determination was towards books and scholarship; while, happily, his father was quick to discover the unusual quality of his mind, and to favor his bent in the literary direction. An apprenticeship, therefore, at once to pestle and plough—for the surgeon was also a farmer—was not the most unfavorable position possible, since he could cultivate poetry a-field, where poets have most successfully done it. Then, when removed to Woodbridge, and the pestle of another worthy leech, a literary society gave stimulus to his budding genius. At eighteen years of age, and while still an apprentice, he gave other appropriate signs of his vocation by publishing a volume of poems, and by getting in love. It illustrates the constancy of his character, that his first vows were fully redeemed, and the lady of his first love became the one of his subsequent devotion, and ultimately his wife.

The term of his service ended, he hastened to London, and secured lodging in a mean quarter of Whitechapel. There he would have profited by hospital lectures and practice, but that want of funds deterred him. He soon returned to Aldborough, and after serving for a short term as assistant practitioner, set up in business for himself. But his professional career at home was entirely profitless; the rude villagers were, or deemed themselves too well acquainted with the salt-master's son to suppose he could physic them to their advantage. Instead of visiting patients, he visited the fields and flowers on botanizing excursions, till it was vulgarly rumored he obtained his medicine in the ditches. Literally starved out, he resolved to try London again, as a literary adventurer; and with five pounds sterling in his pocket, a loan from Dudley North, the candidate of his native borough, he took passage in a sloop for the great city.

Could any one, with the slightest inkling of Crabbe's street sorrows, doubt the hardness of his present road! London was a hard and gloomy mother to Johnson, to Otway, and to many more, whose lodging was sometimes on her stony streets. So did Crabbe prove it, who reached the lowest depth of his misery in the one year of huckstering in the city. Without funds,

patron or connection, he subsisted precariously. No publisher would print his poems, no minister of state would respond to his appeals; all who might help ignored him. His was a deepening woe of obscurity and want. His lodging-master, patient at first, at last became exasperated, and threatened him with a prison. Here, in such straits, Chatterton had perished; and so might Crabbe, had he been like that haughty soul, rushing down as a falling star from fiery hope to wintry despair. But Crabbe had patience and trust, as appears from a prayer written in his diary at about the time we speak of,—a cry, like that of the Psalmist, out of the depths to the great All-Father:

"My God, my God, I put my trust in Thee; my troubles increase, my soul is dismayed; I am heavy and in distress; all day long I call upon Thee; O be Thou my helper in the needful time of trouble. Why art Thou so far from me, O my Lord? Why hidest Thou Thy face? I am cast down; I am in poverty, in affliction; be Thou with me, O my God; let me not be wholly forsaken, O my Redeemer! Behold I trust in Thee blessed Lord. Guide me, and govern me unto the end. O Lord, my salvation, be thou ever with me. Amen."

But the shadows were relieved by compensating lights; and an energetic buoyant youth, of cultured mind and christian spirit, may well support some early disadvantages. He formed pleasant and profitable associations, and took his frequent walks with Bonycastle—in later years a head-master at Woolwich—Isaac Dalby, afterward mathematical professor at Marlboro college, and other young men, who, like himself, were then breasting the waves of ill-fortune. He could recur to pleasant evenings spent at the coffee-house near the exchange, and to bracing healthy walks by day, or strolls to Hornsey wood, the haunt of plants and insects, accompanied by the little pocket-volumes of Ovid, Horace, and Catullus;—books treasured long after as memorials of a time not so bitter in the memory as in the experience. At Hornsey Wood he tarried, on one occasion, till it was too late to return on that day, and took up his lodging in a barn, where, on the morrow, as long as the light lasted, he beguiled himself by reading Tibullus.

At last his sun of success arose. Help came, as answer to an appeal to one of the noblest spirits of his own, or any time,—Edmund Burke. The kindly patron sent for the poet, perceived the merit of his work, detained him as a guest, and introduced him to Johnson, Reynolds and others, foremost in artistic and literary circles; and by the very benevolence of his face assured him that the winter of discontent was past. Chancellor Thurlow, who had treated several of his letters with silent neglect, now came forward. When the great recognize you, then expect recognition; the surly Chancellor became a liberal patron, putting a bank note for one hundred pounds in the wondering poet's hand.

Then promotion was hastened. Inclined to the church, by the advice and assistance of Burke, he obtained orders at the hands of the Bishop of Norwich, and was at once sent as a curate back to his native town. The good people were perhaps surprised to receive as a clergyman him whom they had continued at Aldborough; but they were not to a chaplaincy under the Duke of Rutland, and took up his residence at Belvoir castle. This splendid establishment, with its beautiful surroundings, was not the ideal home of a man like Crabbe. Treated with the utmost consideration by the patron himself, and with comfortable quarters and the freedom of the park, he was still subject to menial insolence on the part of those who knew of no distinction but that of social rank, and no medium between scornfulness and obsequiousness of manner. Crabbe would here appreciate the like experience of Dante:

How salt the passion to descend and climb,
By others' stairs, but that shall gild thee most
Will be the worst of woes and vile company,
With whom thou must be thrown into these straits.

Truly, nothing could be more repugnant to a mind at once noble, sensitive and ingenuous. We are not surprised to read, when we have learned that "the situation he filled at Belvoir was attended with many painful circumstances, and productive in his mind of some of the acutest sensations of wounded pride that have ever been traced by any pen,"—that he was glad to be away from this rigid stateliness, to Chevely, or Croxton, or wherever he could find the home-life and spiritual freedom the poet above all other men requires.

PASTOR FELIX.

There is a certain kind of charity that will give a man a crust, and then a thump on the mouth to knock it down his throat.



A Bright Lad,

Few years of age, but who declines to give his name to the public, makes this authorized, confidential statement to us:

"When I was one year old, my mamma died of consumption. The doctor said that I, too, would soon die, and all our family thought that even if I did not die, I would never be able to walk, because I was so weak and puny. A gathering formed and broke under my arm. I hurt my finger and it gathered and threw out pieces of bone. If I hurt myself so as to break the skin, it was sure to become a running sore. I had to take lots of medicine, but nothing has come me so much good as Ayer's Sarsaparilla. It has made me well and strong."

T. D. M., Norcutt, Kans.

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Cures others, will cure you

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One Faithful Guard Who Watches in the Interests of the Czar.

One of the most striking figures in the Russian palace at Gatchina is the great Danish hound that stretches its powerful frame in the hall leading to the private apartments of the Czar.

This great dog, said to be the largest of its species in the world, was presented to the Czarina some few years ago by her father, the King of Denmark.

It is stated that the Czar took a great liking to the animal from the moment of its arrival, and that he never goes on any prolonged journey without its company. Having but little confidence in those about him, he seems to concentrate his whole faith in the dog as a guardian of untailing fidelity, and the dog, apparently, reciprocates the attachment.

When Nihilist rumours were rife, and documents of a threatening nature found their way to the very table of the Czar's private cabinet, the autocrat of all the Russias permitted the hound to sleep in the hall adjoining his bedroom. For some unexplained reason the dog became very suspicious of one of the Guardsmen, and growled continually when this man was put on duty as a sentinel in the palace.

Nothing was suspected of the man, nevertheless an investigation was ordered; but nothing could be found against him, yet, in order to pacify the dog, he was withdrawn from sentry duty.

In the case of another sentinel it is said that the hound leaped upon him, and nearly tore him to pieces the first time he saw him.

The Czar, hearing the cries for help, went to the door of his apartment, and hastily called the dog, which obeyed the summons.

The sentinel was found sadly lacerated, and the Czar directed that the injured man should be cared for and compensated, but also ordered that he never be permitted to enter the palace again.

The autocrat apparently has faith in the judgment of the dog, whom he has named Peter, after the founder of Russia's greatness.

How the English Pronounce Names.

The absurd and sometimes extraordinary difference between the spelling and pronunciation of English names has been often commented upon. Several lists have been published, but they are by no means complete. The following, it is believed, are for the most part, new: Woodman, Winstrop; Woodman, Windum; Woodmuck, Wymondham; Gainsborough, Gainsborpe; Yaldhrup; Lenkerrin; Grassington; Girstun; Haddiscoe, Hadscoe; Gunthwaite; Gunfir; Eskdale, Ashdale; Brampton; Brian; Brawn; Brightelmstone, Bryton; Hallahon, Horn; Meddlethorp, Threlthorp; Marylebone, Marrowbone; Ulrome, Oorram; Uttotter, Tuxiter; Rampisham, Ransom; Prevsey, Pinsky; Coxwold, Cookwood; Crostewick, Corsit; Holdsworth, Holder; Skiddaw is Skiddy; Kirkcubright, Kircoobry; Ilkley, Ethla; Hawarden, Hardin; Alford, Artford.

Colquhoun is Kookoon, the accent being on the last syllable; Beauchamp is Beacham; Duchesne should be pronounced Dukarn; Bethune should be Beeton, and in Abergavenny the 'av' is not sounded. Menzies is pronounced Mynges, Knollys as Knowls, Sandys as Sands, Gower as Gorr, and Milnes as Mills. Dalziel should be pronounced 'Dee-al,' with accent on the first syllable; Glamis is Clams; Geoghegan should be pronounced Gaygan, and Ruthven is Riven.

Somebody Got a Compliment.

Little Johnny—Mrs. Talkemdown paid a big compliment to me today.
Mother—Did she really? Well, there's no denying that woman has sense. What did she say?
Little Johnny—She said she didn't see how you came to have such a nice little boy as I am.

A TERRIBLE STORY OF SUFFERING

Farmer Smye Could Only Rest on Elbows and Knees.

PAINE'S CELERY COMPOUND ACHIEVES ANOTHER CROWNING SUCCESS.



GEORGE J. SMYE.

Mr. George J. Smye, of Sheffield, Ont., says: "I am a living witness to the worth of Paine's Celery Compound."

Mr. Smye is a man of such character, honesty and reputation, that one of Ontario's most estimable druggists, R. Ferrah, of Galt, says: "I certify that I am acquainted with Mr. George J. Smye, and know his statements to be true."

Mr. Smye's story of his terrible sufferings, his crowning success with Paine's Celery Compound, and his delivery from the torments of disease, is forcibly and briefly told in the following letter which he has given for publication for the benefit of others:—

"It is with great pleasure that I testify to the value of your great medicine, Paine's Celery Compound. For nearly two years I suffered from indigestion, kidney and liver troubles. After trying several medicines that did not effect a cure, I decided to try your Compound. Before using it I

was so low in health that I could not eat or sleep. I could not lie in bed owing to pain in my back; it was only by resting on my elbows and knees I was enabled to obtain a slight degree of ease. Before I had fully taken one bottle of your medicine I began to improve with grand results. I am a farmer and am now working every day. Anyone may refer to me in regard to these statements, or to any of my neighbors around Sheffield, where I am well known. I am a living witness to the worth of Paine's Celery Compound."

Are any of our readers suffering as Mr. Smye once suffered? Is life trying, weary and miserable to them owing to dyspepsia, indigestion, rheumatism, kidney and liver troubles, nervousness and sleeplessness? If any suffer, the path of wisdom has been clearly defined. In addition to Mr. Smye's unassailable testimony, thousands of others have testified to the truth that Paine's Celery Compound is the true path to health, the all in all to the diseased and suffering.

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