

THE CORN LAW RHYMER.

PASTOR FELIX GIVES FURTHER GLIMPSES OF HIM.

Poet and Dealer in Bar Iron—Ideas and Irony—Unkind Criticism Not Justifiable—Scenes Around Sheffield—The Home on Hargate Hill.

It may not be needful, at this date, to discuss the office of criticism, and its relation to works that lay claim to merit, by their very publication,—or even to works of striking characteristics, and assured power; but we wish briefly to consider the subject in its connexion with the present instance. We do not meanly regard it; that may, indeed, we think, be one of the noblest and most necessary literary functions, rightly exercised. A subtle spirit of criticism underlies all the mightiest works of mind, and is a potent element, however unconsciously, in their growth and constitution. Next to the production of a poem—the creation of any original work of power—we can think of nothing worthier or more useful than to discover it, and properly to exhibit it to the less discerning. Thus the true critic multiplies its power, by extending its influence. It may also be seen how the critic will satisfy his sense of justice, while he serves the cause of letters, by aiding the extinction of mere pretension and incompetence, and, helping by wise discretion, the true writer to form and use his powers aright. But, unhappily, the critics chair in these respects, has rarely been ideally filled, men of real skill have used their places of influence for the promotion of their own cliques, or their personal premises and conceits, while the review has been made an instrument of torturing discouragement. A reviewer in his largest achievement after this kind is a poor compensation for a true heart hurt, or a prophet stoned to witness; Wordsworth; witness, Keats; witness, Coleridge, Shelley, Tennyson; but, above all, witness, Elliott,—yes, almost any great original writer who ever appeared in England! The determined, and sometimes cruel, dominance of the Saxon has been shown as sternly in criticism as in war.

We can but accept the argument and testimony of a genial writer, who knew well how to temper criticism with human kindness:—"If Elliott had chanced to die before Bowring had chanced to visit Sheffield—what then? Where would now be the fame of the Corn Law Rhymer? I know there is a very favorite doctrine in many mouths, that true genius is sure, sooner or later, to find its way—that it cannot be destroyed, and is never lost. This may be very consolatory doctrine for those who have wielded a merciless pen, and are visited by compunctions of remorse; but it is just as true that untimely frosts never cut down buds and flowers, or that swords and cannons will not kill honest men, or that a really beautiful scene may not be ravaged and laid waste by bears and swine. If there be one thing that murders early genius, it is the bludgeon of critical unkindness: if there be one thing that gives life and spirit, it is encouragement. Kindness! Encouragement! They are the sunshine of the mind, as necessary as the sunshine of heaven for the unfolding of earth's flowers and the ripening of earth's fruits. How many a bright soul has sunk in the frosty valleys of neglect; how many have shrunk hopelessly from the vile sneer of scorn; how many that have survived have reached only a partial development of their strength and beauty; being crippled in their youth by the blows of private malice, or enfeebled by the want of the cordial ailment of acknowledged merit. Honor then to the few sturdy souls that contempt has not been able to subdue! To those who have returned kick for kick to the insolent opposers of their progress; who have been able to keep alive self-respect in their souls, through a long dark career of frowns and jeers, and cuffs, as the due award of a spiritual pauperism. Honor to those brave souls—they are the few victorious survivors in the great battle of fame, where thousands have fallen by butcher hands. The endurance of harsh treatment is no proof of genius—it is only a proof of a certain amount of power of resistance; but it is a lucky thing for the world that genius and endurance sometimes lodge in the same bosom. Byron knocked down his deriders on the spot; Elliott, like Wellington at Waterloo, stood out a whole long day of pitiless contest, and triumphed at the last."

Sheffield to-day has two causes of congratulation,—James Montgomery, and Ebenezer Elliott. There his work was done, his fame acquired; and near by are his home and grave. His was a double triumph, having succeeded in trade, equally with literature. Poor enough when he commenced he was and his sympathy was always with poverty; but he who in his prime of power, and the hey-day of Sheffield's prosperity, could "sit in his chair and make his twenty pounds a day, without even seeing the goods that he sold," might be supposed to know a little on both sides. His business was that of a merchant in bar-iron; and his celebrated ware-house and office were on Gibraltar street. Shalesmoor. One who visited him, a short time before his decease, went first to his place of business, and had pointed out to him the desk in the office on which most of the literary productions were written, and in which they were stored before being sent to the publisher. He writes: "I soon

caught sight of a lowish, humblish sort of building, with ELLIOTT and CO'S IRON AND STEEL WAREHOUSE, painted in large letters along the front door. On entering the front door which, however, you are prevented doing, till a little iron gate in the doorway is opened for you, you find yourself in a dingy place, full of bars of steel and iron, of all sorts and sizes, from slenderest rods to good masonry bars, reared on every inch of space, so that there is but room to get amongst them; and in the midst of all, stands aloft a large cast of Shakespeare, with the Sir Walter Raleigh ruff round his neck, and moustaches. Your eye, glancing forwards, penetrates a large warehouse behind of the like iron gloom and occupation. On the left hand is a smallish room, into which you directly look, for the door is open, if door there be, and which is, properly, the counting-house, but is nearly as crowded with iron bars as the rest." The poet's son, who was in charge, showed the visitor round,—saying, "Walk in, Sir, that is the Corn Law Rhymer's study; that is where my father wrote most of his poetry." Truly this is the most unique poet's study in England! "Imagine him," reflects the visitor, "in the midst of all this confusion of dusty materials, and the demands of customers, and the din and jar of iron rods and bars, as they were dragged out of their stations for examination and sale, and were flung into the scales to be weighed; imagine this, and that the man achieved a fortune and a fame at the same time—weighed out iron and ideas—took in gold and glory—cursed corn-laws and blessed God, and man, and nature; established a large family, two sons as clergymen of the church of England—three in trade—two of them his successors in steel, though not in stanzas, in iron, though not in irony; and then retired to his own purchased land, built his house on a hill-top, and looked down on the world in philosophical ease, at little more than sixty years of age; and you may look a good while for a similar man and history."

Thence the visitor explored the environs of Sheffield, endeared to the poet, and made memorable by his verse; Pittsmoor and Shirecliffe, sacred to the memory of his "Ranter" Miles Gordon,—a man who magnified evangelism, as his poet magnified him:

"Miles Gordon sleeps; his six day's labor done, He dreams of Sunday, verdant fields and prayer, Arise, blest morn' undimmed! Let thy sun Shine on the Arden, thy purest air Breathe on the broad-tongued laborer's deep despair! Poor sons of toil! I grieve them not the breeze That plays with Sababath flowers, the clouds that play With Sabbath winds, the hum of Sabbath bees. The Sabbath walk, the sky-lark's Sabbath lay, The silent sunshine of the Sabbath day."

A true poet will always have sorrow enough, if spared critical unkindness,—sorrow that is needful and nourishing, as the darkness and silence and drouth in which the rose-tree is sometimes made to sit, with the leaves blanching and falling pitifully around it; till, in the midst of fresher air, and a new sun-burst it burgeons to a rarer life, which shall enrich with color and sweetness a regarnished world. But darkness and drouth and silence may be a regimen, under which an exhausted soul recovers its force, while the hard frost, and the crushing heel, mean perpetual blight, maceration, and death.

The preacher, burning with his message, goes to Shirecliffe's lofty side, "from which the gathered people can look down on

"Misty lakes, that brighten and expand, And distant hills,"

He summons the worshippers to the feet of their true prophet:

"Up! trace God's footprints where they paint the mould With heavenly green; and hues that blush and glow Like angel's wings; while skies of blue and gold Sloop to Miles Gordon on the mountain's brow. Behold the Great Unpaid! the prophet, lo! Sublime he stands beneath the gospel-tree, And Edmund stands on Shirecliffe at his side."

The lofty eminence, so well described in the poem, and "the gospel-tree," were still there. The dusky town of Sheffield lay below, vomiting steam and smoke and coal dust from its innumerable chimneys, stretching along the valley of the Don; and there, in another direction, over far-off plains, and ridges, and broad masses of trees, were Wincobank, and Keppel's column, and the Wentworth woods, and the spires to blazon in the sun at morning and evening. And there was the valley of Lotley converging with the Don. And there runs the Rivelin, Elliott's favorite stream, "between high, wide-lying, and round hills, . . . one of five small rivers that come from the moorland heights and join near Sheffield. The scenery is very peculiar, from the singular features which art and trade have added to those of nature. The river is one of those streams that show their mountain origin by their rapid flow over their rugged beds, scattered with the masses of stone. It has a tinge of the peat-moss, and is overhung with woods and alternate steep banks of sandstone rock, clothed with the bilberry plant." Into this runs the streamlet, that the poet loved, and christened "Rib-bledin," and the beauty of which he appealed to the genius of Burns to describe:

"Wildest and loneliest streamlet,
Gray oaks, all lichen'd o'er;
Rush-bristled isles; ye ivied trunks,
That marry shore to shore;
And thou grayed dwarf of centuries,
Whose snaked roots twist above me;
O for the tongue or pen of Burns,
To tell you how I love ye;

"Would that I were a river,
To wander all alone
Through some sweet Eden of the wild,
To music of my own;
And bathed in bliss, and fed with dew,
Distilled o'er mountains hoary,
Return unto my home in heaven
On wings of joy and glory;"

"O that I were a skylark,
To soar and sing above,
Filling all hearts with joyful sounds,
And my own soul with love;
Then o'er the mourner and the dead,
And o'er the good man dying,
My song should come like birds and flowers,
When music warbles flying."

"Or like the rainbow, launching
O'er Rivelin and Don,
When misty morning catcheth up
Her mountains, one by one,
While glistening down the golden brown,
The gem-like dew-drop fall eth,
And round the little rocky isles,
The little wave complaineth."

"O that the truth of beauty
Were married to my rhyme;
That it might wear a mountain charm
Until the death of time;
Then, Rib-bledin, would all the best
Of sorrow's sons and daughters
See truth reflected in my song
Like beauty in thy waters."

The home of Elliott is near Darfield, and on the line of railway between Rotherham

and Wakefield, not far from the city of steel and iron. Pursuing his rambles, the visitor, whose account we are epitomising, took "his pleasant walk of three miles" from the Darfield station and "beyond the village of Great Houghton," to Horgate Hill, the poet's house and home. He came to the stone house, built by the poet, on an eminence overlooking a common, and with "a good garden lying around it." He remarks on the airiness of the place, and the extensive view of distant towns and villages, and bits of woodland scenery, to be had. "I found Ebenezer Elliott standing on his porch, with his huge Newfoundland dog beside him. I merely introduced myself as an admirer of his poetry, who had a desire to pay my respects to him. He gave me a very cordial welcome. We entered his room and were soon deep in conversation."

But best we like the account, by Samuel Smiles, of a visit to the place just before the owner had left it forever;—a visit made on "one of the last lovely days of autumn, when the faint breath of summer was still lingering among the woods and fields as if loth to depart from the earth she had gladdened: the blackbird was still piping his mellifluous song in the hedges and coppice, whose foliage was tinted in purple, russet and brown, with just enough of green to give that perfect autumnal tint, so beautifully pictorial, but impossible to paint in words. The beech-nuts were dropping from the trees and crackled underfoot, and a rich, damp smell rose from the decaying leaves by the roadside." He reached the house "in the dusk of the autumn evening. There was just light enough to enable us to perceive that it was situated on a pleasant height, near the hill-top, commanding an extensive prospect of the undulating and finely wooded country towards the south: on the north stretched away an extensive tract of moorland covered with gorse bushes. A nicely kept flower garden and grass plot lay before the door, with some of the last year's roses still in bloom. We had a cordial welcome from the poet, his wife, and two interesting daughters. Elliott looked the wan poet that he was, pale and thin; and his hair was nearly white. Age had deeply marked his features since last we had seen him and heard, in Palace Yard, London, some eleven years before; and instead of the iron-framed, firm voiced man, he now seemed a comparatively weak and feeble old man. An anxious expression of face indicated that he had suffered much acute pain,—which indeed was the case. After he got rid of that subject, and began to converse about more general topics, his countenance brightened up, and under the stimulus of delightful converse, he became as it were, a new man. With all his physical weakness, we found that his heart beat as warm and true as ever to the cause of human kind."

What a rare hour, on the verge of fate, was this when two kindred spirits met! What chats over old conquests and achievements; about politics and the rights of man; about poetry and literature. Can you not see the old man's eyes snap, as he exclaims against the Czar and calls him "that tremendous villain, Nicholas!" And how he dilated in his eulogy of the glorious scenery round him—"Wharfedale, Conisborough, the Dearne and the Don,"—and wished for some Scott to set their beauties in romance. How pleasant to hear him praise, with generous warmth, his brother poets; speaking of Monckton Milnes, who has lately published his "Life of Keats," and of Keats himself, whom he termed that great "resurrectionized Greek"; and of Southey, who had been his friend; of Carlyle, who, to him, was hard as well as prophet; and of Longfellow, who had a charm for him to whom "Evangeline" had not yet brought a beauty and pathos rare in modern literature.

The winter was coming; and, with the passing of the year, he must vanish away. He left the scenes of his love on the 1st of December, 1849, and was laid at rest beside the church in the lonely village of Darfield, which is visible from his home-hill. His last lines written when he had just strength enough left to do it, were these:

"Thy notes, sweet robin, soft as dew,
Heard soon or late, are dear to me;
To music I could lend a tune,
But not to thee.
When from my eyes this life's light throng
Has passed away, no more to be,
Then, autumn's prin rose, robin's song,
Return to me."

On the site of the old Corn Market in Sheffield, is placed the statue of him whom Sheffield's sons delight to honor. Draw near, and look on the imaged form of this fearless and gifted man, whose fiery pen was skilled in verse and prose. Look up into the Dante-like features, that in life were written with woe and pain,—for it was eminently true of him, that he learned in suffering what he taught in song;—that face which when living, (and the tongue uttered its short incisive arrowy sentences,) itself could speak; while every muscle was eloquent and when his cold blue eye fired with indignation, resembled a wintry sky flashing with lightning; his dark bushy brows writhing above it like the thunder-cloud torn by the tempest; and you look upon one who was no careless dreamer, or "singer of an idle day," but a prophet of humanity. When the record is made up, and men are known according to their true characters, he would hold the desire of Adam Ben Adhem:

"Write me as one who loves his fellow men."

PASTOR FELIX.

Was a "He" that Time.

"Yonder she comes!" said a tall, lank man who was sitting on a trunk in the shade of the station office.

"Yonder comes who?" asked a fat, good-natured man who sat near him.

"The train we've been waiting for nearly half an hour," said the first speaker.

"Why do you say 'yonder she comes'?" asked the other.

"Well, that's the customary way of speaking of a train, isn't it? And custom is what fixes things. Everybody says, 'yonder she comes,' in speaking of a train's approach."

"Well, I insist you should have said, 'yonder he comes,'" said the fat man.

"Well, I'll agree to leave it to the station master and see if it wouldn't have been better for you to have said 'yonder he comes,'" added the fat man.

Both agreed to it, and when they had found the station agent the fat man asked:

"What is the sex of the train just drawing near the station?"

"It's a mail train," answered he.

And the lean man went out and bought a good cigar for the fat man.

DIAMONDS BY THE PECK.

The Big Collection of Precious Stones Owned by the Sultan.

The diamonds, set and unset, in the Sultan's collection, would fill a peck measure, while there are pearls by the thousand, and precious stones of every kind by the hundred. One of the emeralds is as big as your fist, and there are bowls full of uncut stones of all shapes and sizes.

There is fully a cart-load of gold plate, and some of the gold basins are large enough for a baby's bath-tub. These are surrounded by plates, cups and saucers, tureens and pitchers of solid gold. Here, also, is the cradle in which a half-dozen Sultans have been rocked in their infancy. It is of solid gold, with its outside set in pearls, diamonds and rubies, and it stands rather low on its curiously shaped rockers.

In the palace of the King of Siam the throne-room is lined with gold trees and gold bushes; the leaves of these are of pure gold, while their trunks are heavily plated. The ceiling of this room is at least thirty feet high, and there are, perhaps, a score of these trees on each side of the room, ranging in height from that of a Christmas-tree down to a currant-bush.

There is in one of the Buddhist temples of this Siamese king an idol of solid gold. This gold image is the famed emerald idol. Its head and neck are covered with precious stones. It is twelve inches high, and eight inches wide, and the pure gold of which it is made is mixed with jewels.

It is the most costly idol in the world, in proportion to its size, and all the ladies of the King's harem bend their knees before it at certain times every year. The King never sits in the presence of this idol, and his nobles drink allegiance to him under its shadow.

The imperial treasure chamber of Austria, where the bridal jewels of Marie Antoinette are kept, contains, among other curiosities, pearls set in all shapes and forms. There are little images of men, the bodies of which are formed of pearls; one large pearl of regular shape making the trunk, two long, slim pearls forming the legs, other slim pearls serving as arms, and a round solitaire on the top as the head.

The formation of the pearl is so varied, that by the use of a little gold almost anything can be made of it, and the objects are wonderfully life-like. Here are turtles made of pearls, which are as natural as though they had been sculptured out of marble and trimmed with gold. Here is a hippopotamus, the body of which is made of pearl, and the other parts of gold and enamel. The eyes of all these curiosities are of diamonds, and they are, perhaps, the costliest little animals ever known.

How to Mend China.

A man who is in the china-mending business says:—"Over a dozen kinds of cement are made which will unite the broken edges of glass and china, and one is about as good as the other. The easiest and cheapest to prepare is by taking two ounces of pulverized white gum shellac and half an ounce of gum mastic. Soak them together in a couple of ounces of ether, and add half a pint of alcohol. After the whole is dissolved heat the edges of the article to be mended, put on the cement with a brush, hold firmly till the cement has set, lay the article away for a week, and it will break anywhere else than in the mended place."

Only the Scars Remain.

"Among the many testimonials which I see in regard to certain medicines performing cures, cleansing the blood, etc.," writes HENRY HEDSON, of the James Smith

Woolen Machinery Co., Philadelphia, Pa., "none impress me more than my own case. Twenty years ago, at the age of 18 years, I had swellings come on my legs, which broke and became running sores. Our family physician could do me no good, and it was feared that the bones would be affected. At last, my good old mother urged me to try Ayer's Sarsaparilla. I took three bottles, the sores healed, and I have not been troubled since. Only the scars remain, and the memory of the past, to remind me of the good Ayer's Sarsaparilla has done me. I now weigh two hundred and twenty pounds, and am in the best of health. I have been on the road for the past twelve years, have noticed Ayer's Sarsaparilla advertised in all parts of the United States, and always take pleasure in telling what good it did for me."

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