

## Notches on The Stick

With the mention of Leigh Hunt, again returns to us a sunny summer afternoon in the Acadian land that overlooks the Basin of Minas. The school-house door and windows are open; the green leaves of orchard trees rustle; then outside in the teacher's small domain; and through on the slumberous air comes to the passer the monotonous concert-readers, rendering the following rhymes out of the new reading book recently put into the school:—

"A brook went singing on its way,  
From hill to valley leaping,  
And by its sunny margin lay  
A lovely infant sleeping:  
The music of the purling stream  
Broke not the spell that bound him.—  
Like gladness breathing thro' his dream  
A lullaby around him."

We may give this inaccurately, as [we are obliged to quote from memory;—but this was our first acquaintance with Leigh Hunt, who then began to have a charm, which, on wider acquaintance has continued, notwithstanding the ascendancy with us that other writers have gained. When we had added to our repertory the delightful "Rimini," "Abou Ben Ami," "To The Grasshopper and the Cricket," "Jaffar," and The Essays, we better understood the rare personality who left his impress on Keats and other gifted writers of his time, and who was for a season the literary associate of Byron.

William Howitt gives his early impressions of this graceful, agreeable poet in the following paragraphs:

"Some thirty years ago three youths went forth, one fine summer's day, from the quiet town of Mansfield to enjoy a long luxurious ramble in Sherwood forest. Their limbs were full of youth—their hearts of the ardor of life—their heads of dreams of beauty. The future lay before them full of brilliant but undefined achievements in the land of poetry and romance. The world lay around them, fair and musical as a new paradise. They traversed long dale's dark with heather—gazed from hilltops over still and immense landscapes—tracked the margins of the shining waters that hurry over the clear gravel of that ancient ground, and drank in the freshness of the air, the odors of the forest, the distant cry of the curlew, and the music of a whole choir of larks high above their heads. Beneath the hanging boughs of a wood-side they threw themselves down to lunch, and from their pockets came forth, with other good things, a book. It was a new book. A hasty peep into it had led them to believe that it would blend well in the perusal with the spirit of the region of Robin Hood and Maid Marian, and with the more tragical tale of the Scottish Queen, the grey and distant towers of one of whose prison-houses could be descried from their resting place, clad as with the solemn spirit of a sad antiquity. The book was 'The Story of Rimini.' The author's name was to them but little known; but they were not of a temperament that needed names—their souls were athirst for poetry, and there they found it. The reading of that day was an epoch in their lives. There was a life, a freshness, a buoyant charm of subject and style, that carried them away from the sombre heaths and wastes around them to the sunshine of Italy—to gay cavalades and sad palaces. Hours went on, the sun declined, the book and the story closed, and up rose the three friends, drunk with beauty, and with the sentiment of a great sorrow, and strode homewards with the proud and happy feeling that England was enriched with a new poet. Two of those three friends have for more than five and twenty years been in their graves; the third survives to write this article.

"For thirty years and more from that

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time the author of 'Rimini' has gone on adding to the wealth of English literature, and to the claims on his countrymen to gratitude and affection. The bold politician, when it required moral bravery to be honest; the charming essayist; the poet, seeming to grow with every new effort still more young in fancy and vigorous in style—he has enriched his country's fame, but his country has not enriched him."

Leigh Hunt was born at Southgate, Middlesex, England, Oct. 19, 1784, in the home of a clergyman, Rev. Isaac Hunt, at that time a tutor in the family of the Duke of Chandos. His mother, Mary Shewell, was the daughter of a Philadelphia merchant, and was by marriage nearly allied with the American painter, West. The praise of the mother is on the lips of the son: "If any one circumstance of my life he says, 'could give me cause for boasting, it would be that of having had such a mother. She was, indeed a mother in every exalted sense of the word—in piety, in sound teaching, in patient care, in spotless example. Married at an early age, and commencing from that time a life of sorrow, the world afflicted, but it could not change her: no rigid economy could hide the native generosity of her heart, no sophistical skulking injure her fine sense, or her contempt of worldly-mindedness; no unmerited sorrow convert her resignation into bitterness. But let me not hurt the noble simplicity of her character by a declamation, however involuntary. At the time when she died, the recollection of her sufferings and virtues tended to embitter her loss; but knowing what she was, and believing where she is, I now feel her memory as a serene and inspiring influence, that comes over my social moments only to temper cheerfulness, and over my reflecting ones to animate me in the love of truth."

This is such an eulogium as might make any mother's heart beat proudly. There is a happy road to power open to many an obscure life. A woman's life seems often bounded by four walls; but she reaches out her hands and an unconscious influence radiates across a continent, and moulds a commonwealth. How can womanhood sigh over her withheld rights and her bounded sphere? Character and maternity can defy all. Who asks an influence superior to that of Mary Washington? How may the mother of Edmund Burke better live than in her son? So the mother of this man gave life and color and vivacity to writings which have charmed the English speaking world; though she herself may never have written a line for publication. And, in disguise—as many a writer is content to remain—she operates an unspent force upon our minds, who delight in the page of the essayist or poet.

The roots of Hunt's life were untransferrably in Britain; the soul of the man was English with a sort of French flowering. Honestly he came by that outspaking independence, as well as the buoyancy and grace of his temperaments. He was a lithe, tough evergreen shoot, out of a stiff and vigorous stalk. A High Church man and a Tory he was not; but such had been his father's ancestry, who when they counted the rough and ready Cromwell not so smooth a tyrant as they had been used to, left their own for sunnier shores. For several generations they flourished in the West Indies, mostly as clergyman; the grandfather of the poet having been a rector of St. Michael's, in Bridgetown, Barbadoes. It was quite fit for that this father of a poet should be a priest also, if the traditions of a line already well established were to be fulfilled. He is destined therefore to this profession. It seems evident however that it is not his accepted vocation; no motion then impels him; for when he is at the college in Philadelphia he determines for the law, and also upon that costly business, matrimony,—cost what it will. The poet was not excessively prudent, neither the father of the poet. The commencement of heart burning and hostilities preceding the Revolutionary struggle in the colonies sent Hunt's father to England and, we may suppose made a minister of him; for when his wife, who followed him shortly, arrived in the old land, "she found him who had left America a lawyer, now a clergyman preaching from his pulpit, in tranquility. But he was not one with the energy and the art to succeed. It availed him not

that he had suffered for his loyalty to the Crown, while yet in America; that he had been whirled by a mob, infuriated by his plainness of speech, along the streets of Philadelphia, and would have been taken from the cart to the tar barrel in waiting, had not some friendly hand overturned it. Little it availed that he had escaped perilously to the land of his forefathers out of a prison, from which by night a bribe released him; that he preached with ability, and commanded attention; no preferment waited on him from lords spiritual, and he was left to subside into corners, and subsist on the stipend of a starveling. One can but sympathize with the kindly patient Mrs. Hunt, who covers her mortification as best she can. The "tall, lady-like . . . brunette, with fine eyes, and hair blacker than is seen of English growth" whom her sons resembled, knew many a secret pang that the poor, who are not driven to the show of respectability, may never feel. We, who have seen the proud lips of sensitive maiden quiver at the thought that no housewifery could disguise the fact of penury, know the emotion which often arose in the matronly heart to whom a poet was given, in the house at Southgate, known as Eagle Hall.

The poet's name entire is James Henry Leigh Hunt. Leigh is from the nephew of the Duke of Chandos, to whom his father was tutor, at the time of his birth. His school-days were at Christ's Hospital, where he stuttered with the quaint, lovable Lamb,—an infirmity he outgrew,—and might have drawn mysticism with the "inspired charity boy," had he been so minded. But Hunt abounded in animal exuberance, and had rather leap like a wild creature at liberty, than confine himself in cloister or class. A passionate friendliness and an absorbing love of poetry were his distinguishing boyish characteristics. Imagine the afterward exquisite essayist writing prose so bad as to make him the butt of the master's sarcasms! Imagining, too, a preceptor so free and indignant in manner, who would crumple his manuscript into a wad and fling it to some of the brighter boys (?) for their amusement! That "tropical blood in his veins," of which Hazlitt speaks, might well have boiled, as it had occasion to boil more than once in after days.

But for this little tit of stuttering, Hunt might have gone to the University, and followed his father into the church, but we may thank the impediment. At fifteen, well grounded in Greek and Latin he left the school, and as it would appear, enjoyed some coveted liberty. The dry bones and arbitrary conditions of knowledge are necessary affliction to such natures as his.

One of the most picturesque and poetically beautiful of all descriptions of a fountain may be found in "Rimini." "And in the midst, fresh whistling through the scene,

A lightsome fountain starts from out the green,  
Clear and compact; till, at its height o'er run,  
It skak-s its loosening silver in the sun."

A sonnet of Keats or Hunt would seem to have been a birth of solitude and sylvan meditation; but the dedicatory one beginning, "Glory and loveliness have passed away," was written by Keats, in the midst of a noisy circle of friends and while the printer's messenger waited. So, on another occasion, the two poets being together, it was proposed that they should try their hand on a sonnet, taking the same subject, to see how well, and in how short a time, it could be accomplished. The fruits of this friendly rivalry were the two well-known sonnets—"To the Grasshopper and the Cricket." Hunt's, in this case is rather the best.

Green little vaulter in the sunny grass,  
Catching your heart up at the feel of June,  
Solo voice that's heard amid the lazy noon,  
When even the bees lag at the summoning brass;  
And you, warm little housekeeper, who class  
With those who think the candles come too soon,  
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune  
Nick the glad silent moments as they pass;  
O sweet and tiny cousins, that belong,  
One to the fields, the other to the hearth,  
Both have your sunshine; both, though small, are strong

At your clear hearts; and both seem given to earth

To ring in thoughtful ears this natural song—  
Indoor's and out, summer and winter, Mirth.

A lily light hallows his legend of "Abou Ben Adhem and the Angel,"—but everybody should know it. An inimitable grace possesses the rondeau,—"Jenny Kissed Me,"—which, it is alleged, owes its origin to a magic kiss from the grateful lips of Carlyle's Jeanie, when the poet came to announce a peculiar bit of good fortune that had fallen to the philosopher:

Jenny kissed me when we met,  
Jumping from the chair she sat in:  
Time, you thief! who love to get  
Sweets into your list, put that in!

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Say I'm weary, say I'm sad,  
Say that health and wealth have missed me,  
Say I'm growing old; but add,—  
Jenny kissed me!

Hunt, when a prisoner of state in Surrey jail,—deprived of that liberty which most poets love,—allowed his fancies to run where once his feet had unrestrained liberty to wander, and so, on the 27th August, 1813, wrote this sonnet—

To Hampstead.

Sweet upland, to whose walks with fond repair,  
Out of thy western slope I took my rise  
Day after day, and on these feverish eyes  
Met the moist fingers of the bathing air,—  
If health, unearned of thee I may not share,  
Keep it, I pray thee, where my memory lies,  
In thy green lanes, brown dells, and breezy skies,  
Till I return and find thee doubly fair.  
Wait then my coming on that lightsome land,  
Health, and the joy that out of nature springs,  
And Freedom's air-blown locks; but stay with me  
Friendship, frank entering with the cordial hand,  
And Honor, and the Muse with glowing wings,  
And Love Domestic, smiling equably.

The literary activity of Prof. Charles G. D. Roberts is in itself encouraging, when we consider the quality of what has already come from his pen since he gave himself to authorship, pure and simple. The Bookman announces a second book in the projected trilogy, of which "The Forge in the Forest" was the first. It will be entitled "A Sister to Evangeline," and will deal with aspects of life and historical events occurring in Nova Scotia during the regime of New France; several of the main characters figuring throughout the series. The Messrs. Lamson, Wolfe & Co. will be the publishers of this tale, as also of the volume of poems, entitled "New York Nocturnes."

Mr. Edward McQueen Gray, an Englishman, and member of the Author's club, London, now domesticated on a ranch in New Mexico, has issued a volume entitled, "The Alamo, and Other Verse," which is well spoken of. "Here is something," one critic declares, "that is worthy of Watson himself."

"Thou art the sister of the Blood,  
Thou art the daughter of the House;  
Great offspring of a giant brood,  
Thy heart arouse."

"Upon the shore thy brother stands,  
Thy mother looks across the sea;  
Sister, step forth and take the hand  
She offers thee."

"Forgotten be the former feud,  
Remembered not the bitter score;  
Be mutual love and faith renewed  
Forever more."

Verily, no mistiness is in this meaning, to which we give, also, our Amen! Why may not all the Anglo-Saxon people be on?

Ian MacLaren speaks in terms of the highest approbation of his brother-romancer and fellow-countryman, George MacDonald, to whom he has paid a recent visit at his home at Bordighera, Italy. To him belongs the double praise of living and of writing nobly. The world may not agree with him in preferring, as MacLaren declares he does, his poetry to his prose, but he has written not a little that a pure and cultivated taste may admire.

Mr. Everard Appleton, writer of critical notices in The Commercial Tribune, Cincinnati, speaks highly of Dr. S. Weir Mitchell's "Hugh Wynne," which, he says has been averaging 300 copies a day since publication. This, he thinks "is about 100 less than the book deserves;" and he advises that when we have tired of foreign sensationalism, we "try reading a thoroughly good American novel by a thoroughly talented American."

Alfred Austin, the Laureate has issued a volume of selections from his works entitled "Songs of England," and dedicated to Lord Wolseley. The Macmillans are to be the publishers. PASTOR FELIX.

Conquering an Audience.

A writer in the New York times narrates an incident which shows that Artemus Ward's unique and kindly humor was not dependent upon adventitious circumstances. He was to lecture at a town in central Pennsylvania. On the morning of his lecture a fierce snow-storm broke over that section, and raged so long and so furiously that few people braved the tempest. When Artemus Ward appeared on the platform, he faced an audience of three men, each in the seat his coupon called for; all three far in the rear of the hall. Artemus kept his solemn face at its solemnest, as he advanced to the footlights, and beckoning to the men, said:

"Come up closer, gentlemen. I want to speak to you."

He had to repeat the invitation before his auditors understood that he meant what he said. When they had taken seats together in the front row, Artemus said, "There, now, that is more sociable." He paused a moment and went on:

"Gentlemen, you are entitled to see my show and hear my lecture, if you are so disposed. But I understand that beneath this hall there is an excellent cafe, and I suggest that we spend the evening there, you as my guests."

Though reluctant to forego the show and lecture, as they saw Artemus had no mind for them the three agreed to his proposition, the lights were turned out, and the little party descended to the cafe, where for hours they made merry, and whence they were reluctant to start for home. If Artemus Ward was not at his best, then his best must have been past all telling; for the stories he told and the way he told them made his audience forget time and circumstances, and completely banished any lingering regret for what they had not received upstairs.

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Suspected Because he was Sober.

This is how he came to swear:

It was 4 A. M. when he got home.

He didn't fumble around the latch for an hour, stutter in his talk or awaken everyone in the house with unseemly noise. He was sober hadn't drunk a drop.

Instead, he struck the keyhole at the first attempt and entered. All was quiet. He put his hat and coat on the hall rack and was about to take off his shoes before going upstairs when an old familiar voice sounded gratingly on his ear:

"Is that you, Jack?"

"Yee, Nell."

Then he began: "It's three minutes after 4. I did not let the cat follow me in. I've just returned from one of our caudices. The gas is turned down low. The doors are all locked; the windows fastened. I paid the taxes this afternoon. Mary's baby's got the measles. That isn't our dog a-barking."

And when he tumbled into bed Nell looked at him out of sleepy eyes and said: Jack you've been drinking."

