

Notches on The Stick

Well, the Surry jail has a bit of history all its own. John, his brother, was not with him, but was shut in at Coldbath Fields, until Feb. 3rd 1815; while between them they were mulcted of £1000. But Leigh, who was married at the time, was permitted the society of his wife, and had not only the elegancies, but the substantial comforts of a home. Yet a wild bird would rather have the range of the woods than a cage of golden wire; and liberty sweet to man, is sweeter still to the poet. And it was an hour, glad as strange, when he came forth into the world of men, and drew a deeper breath for the satisfaction that he was not less in his manly soul for having dwelt in prison. He could carry on his Examiner; but he was not in his true relations as a journalist. Misunderstand not his nature so far as to think him at home in the strifes of party, with its rages and recriminations. The Examiner passes into other hands, and by the publication of "Rimini" and other poems and by his establishment of that essay-sheet "The Indicator" he comes to his true character of poet and literary man.

I have before me a picture of the birth-place of Leigh Hunt. It is the house his father occupied when he was in the curacy of Southgate. It looks the type of an old-fashioned, modest English home. Shut in by its pailing and partially, by board fence, from the public way, it is well shaded with shrubs and trees. "In this place," Hunt writes, "I first saw the light." The locality is associated with gentle Elia's memory. "Southgate," says S. C. Hall, "was then lying out of the way of innovation," with a sweet air of antiquity about it, on the border of Enfield Chase, and in the parish Edmonton. The house is yet standing. The neighborhood retains much of its peculiar character; it has still an air of antiquity: of old houses and ancient trees many yet remain; the forest is indeed, gone, but modern improvements have but little spoiled the locality.

But it is of Hunt's Italian life that we wish mainly to speak in the present paper. Hunt had endeared himself to Shelley, by his brave bold championship of him, when the dearest interest of that much misunderstood man were in the public balances. That friend, when he had gone to Italy, said to Hunt,—"Come hither, join hands with myself and Byron. Here is the vantage ground of opportunity for men who would speak liberal words. Here England may be safely and conveniently criticised. Being warm in Shelley's heart, and firm in Byron's esteem, Hunt took an unadvised step,—or, if not unadvised, then ill-advised. But what sanguine poet, in his life's heyday, would be apt to see it so? The bale-star that leads us looks sometimes like the planet of bliss. With his wife, Marianne Kent, to whom he had been some years married, he left England in a sailing vessel, in November, 1821, upon a voyage of stormy misadventure, and travels so greatly retarded by illness that he did not arrive till June 1822,—a rate of progress compared by Peacock to the navigation of Ulysses.

Byron had bidden him, and received him cordially enough; but with all his professed respect, the caustic Lord had no deep liking for the elegant Liberal. So different in character, and in the very elements of their minds, how could they have expected long agreement? If Byron might dominate, and others would knuckle, matters might perhaps go without serious obstruction; but Hunt was not the man to be handled as a creature. He may have to

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go hungry for lack of nuts, but he will not be a cat's paw, under command of lion or monkey, to rake them out of the ashes. But about this later. He landed, with his family, at Leghorn, and went with Shelly on to Pisa, where they were soon joined by Byron. Byron was then living at Monte Ners, and of his visit to that locality Hunt gives a striking account:

"In a day or two, I went to see Lord Byron, who was in what the Italians call *velleggiatura*, at Monte Ners; that is to say, enjoying a country house for a season. I there met with a singular adventure, which seemed to make me free of Italy and stilettoes, before I had well set foot in the country. The day was very hot; the road to Monte Ners was very hot, through dusty suburbs; and when I got there, I found the hottest looking house I ever saw. Not content with having red wash over it, the red was the most unreasonable of all reds, a salmon color. Think of this flaming over the country in a hot Italian sun!

"But the greatest of all heats was within. Upon seeing Lord Byron, I hardly knew him, he was grown so fat; and he was longer in recognizing me, I was grown so thin. He was dressed in a loose nankeen jacket and white trousers, his neck cloth open, and his hair was in thin ringlets about his throat; altogether presenting a very different aspect from the compact, energetic and curly-headed person whom I had known in England.

"He took me into an inner room, and introduced me to a young lady in a state of great agitation. Her face was flushed, her eyes lit up, and her hair, which she wore in that fashion, looked as if it streamed in disorder. This was the Countess Guiccioli. The Conte Pietro, her brother, came in presently, also in a state of agitation, and having his arm in a sling. I then learned, that a quarrel having taken place among the servants, the young count had interfered, and been stabbed. He was angry; Madame Guiccioli more so, and would not hear of the charitable comments of Byron, who was for making light of the matter. Indeed, there was a look in the business a little formidable; for though the stab was not much, the inflictor of it threatened more, and was at that minute keeping watch under the portico, with the avowed intention of assaulting the first person that issued forth. I looked out of the window, and met his eye glaring upwards like a tiger. The fellow had a red cap on like a sans culotte, and a most sinister aspect, dreary and meagre, a proper catiff. Thus, it appeared, the house was in a state of blockade; the nobility and gentry of the interior all kept in a state of impassability by a rascally footman.

"How long things had continued in this state I cannot say; but the hour was come when Byron and his friends took their evening ride, and the thing was to be put an end to somehow. Fletcher, the valet, had been dispatched for the police, and was not returned. At length, we set out, Madame Guiccioli earnestly entreating 'Bairon' to keep back, and all of us uniting to keep in advance of Conte Pietro, who was exasperated. It was a curious moment for a stranger from England. I fancied myself pitched into one of the scenes in the 'Mysteries of Udolpho,' with Montoni and his tumultuous companions. Everything was new, foreign, and violent. There was the lady, flushed and dishevelled, exclaiming against the 'scelerato'; the young count, wounded and threatening; the assassin waiting for us with his knife; and last, not least in the novelty, my English friend metamorphosed, round-looking, and jacketed, trying to damp all this fire with his cool tones, and an air of voluptuous indolence. He had now, however, put on his loose riding coat of Mazarine blue, and his velvet cap, looking more lordly than but not less foreign. It was an awkward moment for him, not knowing what might happen; but he put a good face on the matter; and as to myself, I was so occupied with the novelty of the scene, that I had not time to be frightened. Forth we issued at the door, all squeezing to have the honor of being the boldest, when a termination is put to the tragedy by the vagabond throwing himself on a bench, extending his arms, and bursting into tears. His cap was half over his eyes; his face gaunt, ugly, and unshaven; his appearance altogether more squalid and miserable than an Englishman

could conceive it possible to find in such an establishment. This blessed figure weeping and wailing, and asking pardon for his offence, and to crown all he requested Byron to kiss him."

Surely this is equal to any florid page of Castellar's account of Byron's Italian life. Here was what Hunt described as 'a polite Wapping, with a square and a theatre. The country around, though delightful to a first view, from its vines hanging from the trees and the sight of the Apennines, is uninteresting, when you become acquainted with it.'

Hunt took up his abode at Pisa. In the Lung Arno is a house, reputed to have been built by angels, and in a ground floor of this the poet sat such household stock as he had. The Casa Lanfranchi is described as in every way worthy its builder; with its rough marble exterior, and its 'bold and broad style throughout, with those harmonious graces of proportion which are sure to be found in an Italian mansion.' Here Shelley hovered like a passing brightness over his friend's Lares and Penates. This was a true and capacious friendship; would it might have continued! This world of Italy might have been a clime far more congenial to Hunt with one so generous and trustful. But little warning could he have had of that fate his footsteps hastened to meet, who had sung his own in the early passing of 'Adonais'; and small occasion had he to think on that day when, after seeing him settled, Shelley left him, that he should look on his living face no more.

Byron and Hunt are left together, or in near neighborhood. Moore's Life and Letters of the poet-peer will tell how they passed the time; the chat or reading through the afternoon, strollings and rides by wood and vineyard at the wane, with a call at some peasant's cottage. Some times they sat to eat ripe figs in the shade. Hunt says that in the evening he 'seldom saw Byron.' He recreated himself, or read in solitude on the balcony, and when Hunt was ready to go to bed, his noble associates brain was in a bubble, boiling over with another Canto of

The sacrifice of an innocent man, and the destruction of the happiness of his family, is something so revolting to the ordinary sense of justice and of humanity, that it is no strange thing to find it appeal in the strongest way to persons of poetic sensibility. We present a number of sonnets,—the first being from the pen of Dr. Benjamin F. Leggett, of Ward, Penn.

A Soldier of the Republic.

How base the State whose potency is crime!
Whose holiest justice is a hollow name,
Kindling a blush upon the brow of shame,
That burns away the glory of her prime:
Soldier unstained! Through all the coming time
Unshadowed eye, by undeserved blame
How bright will glow thy pure, untarnished fame
Washed free at last of passion's hated slime!
No craven's deed can soil thy innocence,
Though cruel hate with mockery of law,
And selfish greed and bigot zeal intense
Around thy name their tangled meshes draw;
While Passion reigns blind Justice lies in trance
And Wrong's red curse burns on the brow of France!

The Captive of the Ille Du Salut.

Alas, my mother! Ere my sands are run,
Harken—deal justly with me, ere I die!
Out of my love, my pain, to thee I cry;
Why hast thou borne so hardly on thy son?
To thee, to thee, what evil have I done?
Yet, torn from home, to hope and honor lost,
Captive I languish on this dreadful coast,
Blameless, beneath my Country's malison.
FRANCE.
Silence, thou wretch forlorn! It is too late
It man would lift a pleading voice for thee!
Do dead or damned return who vanish through
The adamant doors of bolted fate?
Have I not sealed and published the decree!
Beside, O wretch! Wast thou not born a Jew?

III.

Zola.
Whate'er thy faults,—and faults we deemed were thine,
Thou scribe of human misery and despair!—

If you cannot get beef,
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milk, water, coffee or tea.
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Nor stoop of all thy backs to blot a line.
With courage and with constancy divine,
We see thee standing single to defend
The name of thy dishonor'd, ruined friend,
While power and passion 'gainst thy will combine.
O strange reverse! when a head half-abor'd,
Takes sacred lustre, Bitter was thy word;
But O the sweetness of thy deed unpriced!
While round thy form the wild mob pressed and roared,
And our just judges near thee trembling stood,
Unmoved thou saw'st the calm face of the Christ.

IV.

Madam Dreyfus.

O woman, of the deathless love I to thee
Our eyes admiring turn, rejoiced to find
Watching and weeping have not made thee blind,
Nor marred thy constant soul's sublimity!
Thy trusting gentleness grows firm to be
The prop on which thy fallen mate may lean,
Condemned to huddle with the foul and mean
On that low island of the torrid sea.
Fair pilgrim,—who pursuest a knightly quest,
Knocking at kindly gates, with tearful plea,
For thy loved consort let thy suit prevail!
Nor by the harsh and sordid world unblessed
By thy divine example,—seeing thee,
With Love triumphant for thy Holy Grail.

The Dramatist, Ibsen, like some of the great poets of the world who have displayed marked individual characteristics, does not spend much time even with the masters of his art. Little does he read of English or French it is said, and Shakespeare is known to him only through Danish translation. But Ibsen has a treasury in himself, and smacks of nobody but Ibsen.

Many a reader, reverting to the books of his youth, will recall the name of Samuel Smiles, and his books, "Character" and "Self Help," as among the most suggestive and stimulating. The author still survives, at the age of eighty-six, and is remarkable still for his energy and activity. At his home, Pembroke Gardens, Kensington, Eng., he is now employed on a new book soon to be made public.

"Slab-Sides" is scarcely an Arcadian name, but it is that with which John Burroughs has designated his hermitage or retreat, in a wild domain known as Escopus, a few miles back of the Hudson. The name however is appropriate, as indicating the rude and primitive construction which is in part at least, the work of his own hands. The four or five acres surrounding "Slab-Sides" are by the owner devoted to the culture of celery; and in this place of retirement he frequently spends several weeks at a time, superintending the horticultural work, and cooking his own food.

A memorial to the early British poet Caedmon may soon be erected in the churchyard of St. Mary's, Whitby. It is to be in the form of a cross of Anglican design, placed "in what is probably part of the actual burial ground where the dust of Caedmon lies."

Julian Hawthorne will now probably be returning from Cuba, whither he had gone in the interests of Collier's Weekly. A Biography of Coventry Patmore is to be prepared by the wife of that poet—"The Burning of the Sarah Sands," is the title of a new and stirring tale of maritime adventure from Rudyard Kipling's pen.—James Lane Allen's "A Kentucky Cardinal" is

being translated into Japanese.—Mrs. Muellock Craik's "John Halifax, Gentleman," the copyright on which expires this year, abates nothing of its popularity.—Mr. Alfred Austin, the Laureate, it is understood, will soon sever his connection with The Standard, in order to devote himself more entirely to pure literature.

PASTOR FELIX.

Muzzled.

How some rubber bands enabled a man to sleep is a strange story related by the Kansas City Star. The hero of the tale is a baggageman on the Santa Fe line. He had been accustomed to doze on his passage from Hutchinson to Kansas City, but then it happened—just how is a point not explained—that night after night his car contained two or three coops of live ducks. The baggeman's dozing was at an end. The almost constant quacking of the ducks, who could not understand their strange environment, would not permit of sleep. For many nights as he lay awake, he planned relief. He thought of strangling the ducks or chloroforming them, but neither expedient seemed good. Then a bright idea came to him. The next night he had two coops of unusually vociferous ducks. As soon as it came time for sleep he wrenched a slat from one of the coops, reached in, and pulled out a duck. From his pocket he took a small rubber band, which he slipped over the duck's bill just back of the nostrils. The duck tried to quack, but the rubber band, while it stretched a little, would not permit the duck to open its bill far enough to use its tongue. Only a murmur came from it. One by one the ducks were muzzled, and the baggeman rested comfortably.

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