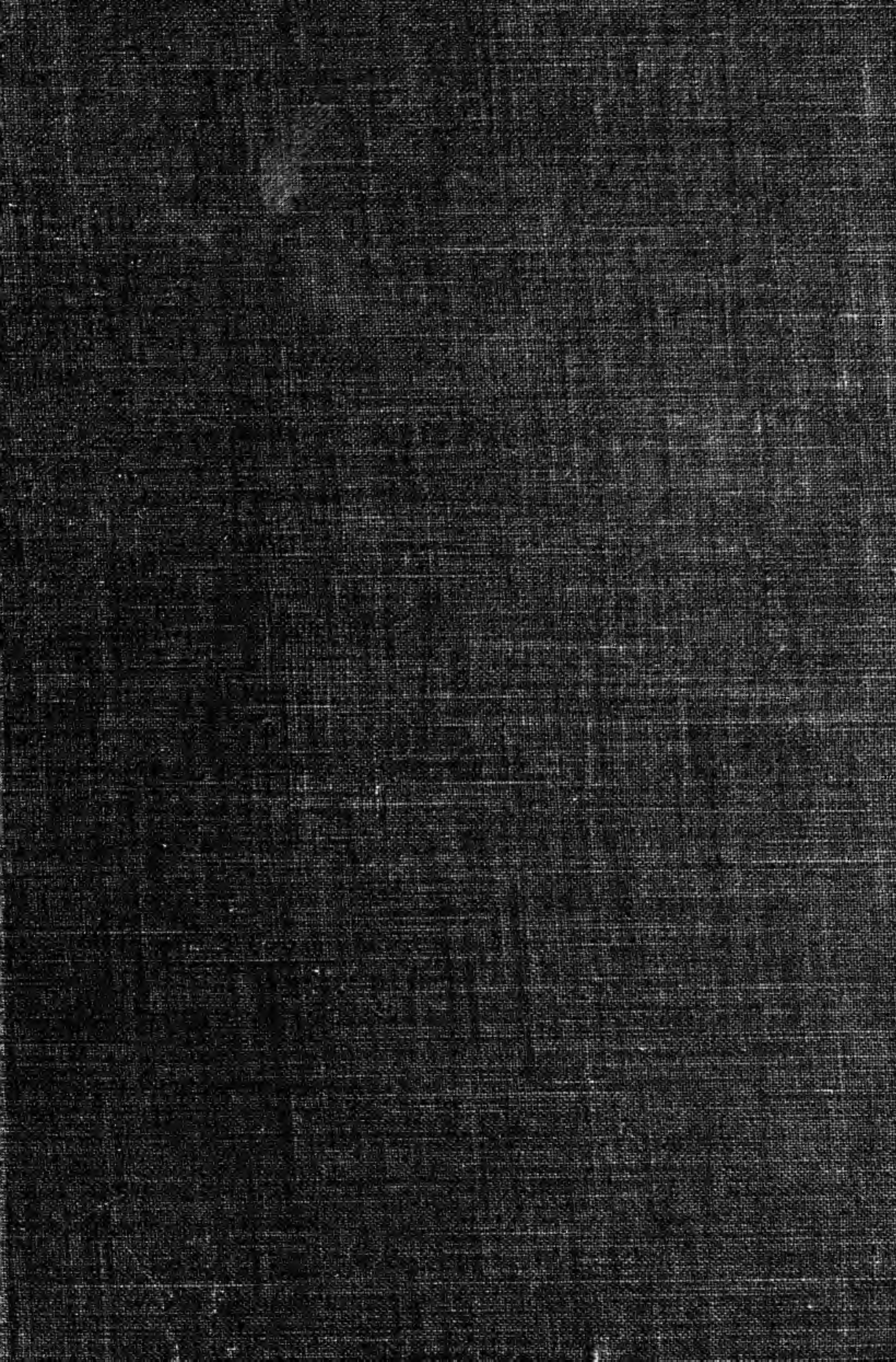

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COMMEMORATIVE ADDRESSES

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS; EDWIN BOOTH
LOUIS KOSSUTH; JOHN JAMES AUDUBON
WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

BY

PARKE GODWIN

NEW YORK
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GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS*

Gentlemen of the Century Association:

We are brought together to-night to do honor to the memory of a fellow-member who had long prized and adorned our association—whom many of you knew, and knew only to admire and love—George William Curtis. He died on the 31st of August last—the closing day of a brilliant summer—at his home near the shore of the sea whose moans are now his requiem.

It is a sorrowful task for me to utter the memorial words you require, because, although somewhat younger than myself, he was one of my earliest as well as latest friends, with whom I was for some time associated in earnest political and literary work, whom I never approached or even thought of without a glow of affection,

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* Originally delivered before the Century Association of New York, and subsequently repeated before the Brooklyn Historical Society and before the New York Civil Service Reform Association.

and whose loss has filled my eyes, as it has those of many others, with unavailing tears; and yet, so vivid a personality was he to me that, knowing him gone, I cannot, in the phrase of one of our older poets, "make him dead." It is almost impossible for me to think that the manly form so full of activity, and the attractive face always aglow with light and sweetness, are motionless forever; that the voice which music itself attuned to the expression of every noble and tender human sentiment is still, and so still; that the busy brain which forged for us the solid bolts of reason and built the beautiful fabrics of fancy has ceased to work; and that the large, honest, and loving heart will beat no more.

In complying with your request I shall offer you no biography of Mr. Curtis, for which the time allotted to my task would be inadequate, and I can only refer to those leading events of his life which will enable you to appreciate best his character and services as a writer, a speaker, a citizen, and a man.

Mr. Curtis, although a resident of New York since his fifteenth year, was a native of New England. He was born on the 24th of February, 1824—within that decade which saw the first gleams of a permanent American literature

in the writings of Dana, Irving, Bryant, Cooper, Halleck, and the yet unnoted Poe—at Providence, Rhode Island—a State where Roger Williams had early planted the seeds of a true spiritual liberty, and Bishop Berkeley, the friend of Addison, Pope, and Steele, and the founder of an ideal philosophy, had left the traditions of his presence.

His ancestors on both sides were of the Puritan stock—not particularly distinguished as I find, save that his mother's father, James Burrill, Jr., was a Chief Justice of the State and a Senator of the United States, whose last speech and vote were given, a few days before his death, against the territorial extension of slavery.

It was a good stock to spring from—for those grim religionists, who burned witches and Quakers, had in the old world smitten kings to preserve liberty, and in the new, laid the foundations of a democratic empire that now stretches over a continent. That imaginative temperament which peers into the unseen, and gives a mystical predominance to things of the spirit over things of the flesh, often blossoms into the loveliest flowers. Certainly to it we trace nearly all our foremost poets, from him who, as a boy still, sung our first immortal song amid the snowdrifts of the Hampshire hills, to him, our Quaker

Tyrtæus, who the other day put off his singing robes to take on a wreath of unfading laurel.

Mr. Curtis's schooling outside of the home, where he was a diligent reader of books, was brief and scanty:* two years at a public academy, and one of private tuition; but his education was none the less wide-ranging, nutritious, and fruitful. As with nearly all men of genius, it was a self-education and peculiar. After a year's trial of a mercantile pursuit, which proved repulsive, instead of going to college, he hurried, with a brother, to Brook Farm, a small agricultural and educational association, recently gathered near Roxbury, Mass.† It was an outcome of a socialistic wave rolling over Europe and America at the time, and, by its agitations,

* He attended an academy at Jamaica Plains, near Boston, for two years. His mother died while he was yet a child, and the father married again, and in 1839 removed to New York with his family. His father was cashier of one bank and afterwards president of another, and the lad could easily have gone to college if he had wished.

† The immediate founders were the Rev. George Ripley and his wife, Charles A. Dana, Wm. H. Channing, C. P. Cranch, John S. Dwight, and others; but Theodore Parker, Margaret Fuller, Bronson Alcott, Henry James the elder, Albert Brisbane, Parke Godwin, etc., took a deep interest in its success. All over the country, later, many citizens attentively studied socialism, among whom I may mention one who was afterwards distinguished as a soldier and statesman and as the second of our martyr-Presidents, James A. Garfield.

stirring up a good deal of foam, ooze, and amphibious drift-wood, with here and there a pearl of the sea like this. But it was nothing new on the face of the earth. In all ages generous minds, dissatisfied with the actual conditions of society, have endeavored to bring back a vanished golden age by a reconstruction of its methods; and the loftiest intellects have exerted their best faculties to discover the Alladin's Lamp which could transform hovels into palaces. A man who has not, at some time of his youth, been convinced that he could lift society at once to a state of universal prosperity and happiness, has more of the clod in him than of the angel.

These New England reformers were tinctured by that mode of thinking which was called Transcendentalism, but which was not so much a creed as an emotional protest against the hard, metallic cast given to Calvinism by the severe Puritan intellect. But their practical arrangements were largely influenced by the speculations of Fourier, which had already formed a school in France, and were widely accepted in the United States.*

Hawthorne, in his "Blithedale Romance"—a

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* Nearly fifty practical experiments under the impulse given by them were made, and failed in the end.

fanciful story suggested by his own experiences at Brook Farm—calls its inmates "a knot of dreamers," and dreamers they were indeed, but of a beautiful dream. They hoped, by means of wiser and juster industrial and social arrangements, "to simplify economics, to combine leisure for study with healthful and honest toil, to avert unjust collisions of caste, equalize refinements, awaken generous affections, diffuse courtesy, and sweeten and sanctify life as a whole."* More disinterested aims never animated a body of cultivated men and women. The experiment proved to most of them merely a romantic episode in their lives, but one never to be forgotten. Mr. Curtis for nearly two years shared in their labors of the house and field, and in their instructions and studies; but was chiefly remembered by his companions for his sprightly leadership of picnics and masquerades, and his pleasant singing, after nightfall, of *romanzas* from the operas. He must have been benefited by the influences of that select and gentle circle, which appealed to the better tendencies of his naturally fine nature, and strengthened his interest in social questions; but while, in accordance with Schiller's noble advice, he always "reverenced the dreams of his

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* Wm. H. Channing, in "Memoirs of Margaret Fuller."

youth," he never became a socialist. His experiences there convinced him, if we may judge by his after-conduct, that the best way to reform and elevate society is not by withdrawing from it to a small coterie in a corner; but by breasting its tides as they come, and by laying one's heart against the great heart of humanity—to get from it the best inspirations it has to give, and to return to it the noblest ideals we can impart. Sects, parties, and conclaves which shut themselves off from the broad currents of life are apt to dwindle into narrowness and inanity, or, sooner or later, return to the broad bosom they had abandoned.

A second period in Mr. Curtis's plan of self-culture began when he left the happy family at Brook Farm—not yet dispersed by the frost-winds of a financial winter—to settle on a farm at Concord. His aim was partly to become a practical agriculturist, and partly to obtain more leisure and solitude for study. He might have procured a more classical tuition in the neighboring halls of Harvard; but he preferred that open university whose dome is the overarching blue, whose floors are the enamelled meadows, and whose chambers are the sylvan cloisters of the groves—shut in at eve by crimson curtains, and lit up all night by the silver lamps of heaven.

His text-books lay before him in the locality itself, teeming with nutritious patriotic memories. Every house of the small cluster of houses was inhabited by the descendants of those who landed " on the stern and rock-bound coast, when breaking waves dashed high " ; the hills around had echoed the thunders of Adams and of Otis when they roused the colonists to arms; yonder highway was the road on which the hoofs of Paul Revere's horse clattered in his famous midnight ride; Lexington Green was but a few miles off, and daily before him stood the bridge where the " embattled farmers fired the shot heard round the world." It is to the study of this class-book I ascribe his rare familiarity with our Revolutionary annals, and his intense but high-toned Americanism—an Americanism which, not insensible to the grandeurs of Niagara, the Mississippi, the Rocky Mountains, and the sea-like lakes, where great ships sail out never to be heard of more, nor unmindful of that intelligence and brawny energy which converts the forests and the rocks into benignant human uses, yet finds its chief nutriment in those free democratic institutions which, emancipating the individual from the fetters of convention, give a larger scope than is to be found anywhere else to the development of the

noblest manhood and womanhood. He was particularly fortunate to find in this open-air college teachers not often to be met with in class-rooms—such as Emerson, the first philosopher of his time, who inwove with the insight and poetry of Plato an insight and poetry of his own, with a Rembrandt's power to paint, and ears that heard æolian harps in every whispering wind; as Hawthorne—our New England Prospero—who evolved out of the chill and desolate regions of Puritanism a whole new world of romance and fascination; as Thoreau, the woodland Diogenes — Plotinus-Orson, as Curtis called him—whose "quick ears and sharp eyes" had caught the deeper secrets of the forest; and as Margaret Fuller, among the most learned of women, who communed with Æschylus and Dante and Boccaccio and Beethoven, and aspired to ride in the flaming chariots of Goethe drawn by the coursers of the sun.

By two of these teachers our young scholar, just on the verge of manhood, must have been deeply impressed. Emerson had already put forth that thin little volume on "Nature," which bulges with suggestive thought as the branches in spring-time swell with the coming buds. A few of his strange poems had appeared, whose voices come down to us from the upper air,

like the rough music of Pan when he pipes to the winds and the stars. He was even then engaged with those "Essays"* which have imparted so bracing, stimulating, and strengthening a tonic to the intellect of the century, and whose one great virtue, whatever their defects and inconsistencies, is to set men thinking with a desire to think aright.

Hawthorne was also at that time gathering his "Mosses from an Old Manse"—mosses that in his hands bloomed into the strangest orchidian shapes, and an old manse that rose on pillars of cloud—in many-gabled towers, through whose casements shone a moonlight haunted by witches and ghosts, grim, ghastly, and terrible, and yet with faces as beautiful as any which look from the pictures of Stuart and Copley. As Emerson had a power to incite thought; so Hawthorne had to incite imagination, but our impressible scholar, while he admired the serene and lofty tone of the one, and the weird and impassioned fantasy of the other, was inspired, not enslaved, by them; we find some traces of each in his writings, but only traces; and no one has written with more discrimination of them than he has since written. He wandered freely through their

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* The first series was published in 1841, the second in 1844.

gardens of bloom; he inhaled with pleasure the perfume of their flowers, he sipped with ecstacy of "their lucent sirups, tinct with cinnamon," but he cherished his own ideals of truth and beauty, and turned away to find them by methods of his own. As he had not become a socialist at Brook Farm, so at the fountain-head of the sect he did not become a transcendentalist."*

Mr. Curtis's residence of four years in Europe and the East may be regarded as the third period of his self-culture. He sailed in 1846,† and was landed at Marseilles, whence he hastened to Italy, and then visited the greater part of western Europe, and of Egypt and Syria. Fruitful years they were indeed. As he travelled on foot when he could, or by diligence or market-boat, he saw much of the common people in their haunts and homes; he explored every quiet nook

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* The reader will find in Hawthorne ("Old Manse"), Lowell (article on "Thoreau"), and Curtis (Emerson, in "Homes of American Authors") most amusing accounts of the eccentrics that Emerson attracted to Concord—"Apostles of the Newness," and preachers of various kinds of bran-and-potato gospels.

† He was accompanied by our late fellow-member—preacher, poet, artist, and musician—Mr. C. P. Cranch and his family, and in the East by his friend, and, later, brother-in-law, Quincy Shaw. At Rome he fell in with Hicks and Kensett, also members of this club.

or sheltered valley or mountain-pass where beauty lingers, and every picturesque village or town or city which lives in history. Of course he loitered in the cathedrals where the twilight often breaks into organ peals or Gregorian chants, and the galleries where immortal genius had shattered the sunbeams upon canvas; he haunted the museums, the theatres, and the opera-houses; he attended courses of lectures at Leipsic and Berlin; and as one of his years was the famous revolutionary year of 1848, he saw at Paris the masses when they go down into the streets, and at Berlin he heard the angry students sing by torchlight

> "A mighty fortress is our God,
> A trusty shield and weapon."

In 1850 he came back, laden like a foraging bee with sweet burdens of language, art, literature, scenery, and society.

The flowers and fruits of this rich European harvest have left their fragrance and savor in all his subsequent work; but his Eastern gatherings he shared at once with the public, as a sort of first-proofs of his apprentice and wander-years. They were two remarkable volumes, purporting to be books of travel,* and which, as such, came

* "Nile Notes of a Howadji," 1851, and "The Howadji in Syria," 1852.

into comparison with several reigning favorites, such as the "Eothen" of Kinglake, "The Crescent and the Cross" of Eliot Warburton, and the "Eastern Letters" of Harriet Martineau. But a comparison was hardly possible, they were so different. Those books were books of travel strictly, full of useful information and the proper sentiments; but these books contained scarcely a description from cover to cover. They furnished very little erudition as to Thothmes, Ramses, or the interminable dynasties; they deciphered no hieroglyphics, unrolled no mummies, and penetrated into no tombs; but, plunging at once into the voluptuous sunshine of the East, they shouted with ancient Pistol,

> "A foutra for the world and worldlings base!
> I speak of Africa, and golden joys."

Their pages were all pictures and poetry—impressionist pictures, a little hazy in form, perhaps, but radiant with color—and poetry without rhyme, yet rhythmical as the song of birds or the dance of waves on the strand. Whatever was peculiar in Eastern climate, landscape, or life, you were made to feel with a vividness it never had before; and even generations mummied ere our civilizations began masqueraded like a new life in death.

Nor, in the tumult and rapture of sensuous impressions, were the sacred traditions of place forgotten, and especially of Him who hovers over human memory as the tranquil sweetness of a summer sky hovers over the landscape. How touching that passage which, after forty years, recurs to me as I write, where, stretched by night on the Syrian sands, the myriads of warlike hordes that once trod them rise again—Assyrians, Jews, Saracens, Persians, Arabs, Crusaders, and Frenchmen—but, through "the flash of cimeters, the cloud of hurtling arrows, and the glittering Roman axes," the author sees only, subduing emperors, kings and sultans, the figure of One who rode upon an ass, with no sceptre but a palm-branch, and no crown but a crown of thorns.

These first books gave Mr. Curtis position and even fame as an author; but they sadly puzzled some of the critics, who complained of their excesses of color and sentiment—not seeing under the pomp of the garb the keen artistic sensitiveness, the opulent imagination, and the subtle, swift-glancing fertility of thought which rendered that pomp both necessary and appropriate. But other critics felt with Keats, on his first reading Chapman,

> ". . . like some lone watchers of the skies,
> When a new planet swims into their ken."

They were new in the extreme novelty of their form and matter, and they were planetary in their effulgence. That overfulness complained of, like the buoyancy of youth, might be chastened, but not exhausted, by maturity and promised a rich future. His next book, letters from the watering-places to a newspaper, and called "Lotus-Eating," glows with a similar, yet subdued, exuberance, deluging our landscape with "purpureal gleams," and seeing in the hotels the same men and women that he had seen when floating on the canals of Venice, stepping out of the canvases of Titian and Giorgione.

It was at this time (1851-52) that I became more intimately acquainted with Mr. Curtis, so that henceforth I shall be able to speak of him from personal reminiscences. It came about in this wise: An enterprising publisher of New York, Mr. Putnam, had projected a magazine of the highest class, which should take rank beside the *Blackwoods* and *Frasers* of the old world. We possessed some ponderous quarterlies like the *North American Review* and others, mainly organs of religious denominations, but the magazine proper had scarcely risen beyond the second story back of the milliner shops. It was a hazardous undertaking, but the publisher was brave and the scheme was carried into effect.

Mr. Charles F. Briggs, better known as Harry Franco, from a forgotten novel of his, was asked to take the helm as manager, and Mr. Curtis and myself were given each a laboring oar. We gathered a goodly company of assistants around us, nearly all the known men of letters of the time,* and put forth a worthy pioneer of the more imposing ventures of to-day.

Mr. Curtis was at that time a great favorite in society—not of the fashionable sort he afterwards satirized, but of a higher grade, which had historical pretensions, and retained some of the old flowing colonial courtesy and culture. His

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* It may interest those who are curious as to our literary history to add, that among our promised contributors—the most of whom complied with their promises—were Irving, Byrant, Emerson, Longfellow, Lowell, Hawthorne, Thoreau, George Ripley, Miss Sedgwick, Mrs. Kirkland, author of "A New Home: Who'll Follow?" J. P. Kennedy, author of "Swallow Barn"; Fred S. Cozzens, of the "Sparrow-grass Papers"; Richard Grant White, "Shakespeare's Scholar"; Edmund Quincy, author of "Twice Married"; William Swinton, since the accomplished historian of "The Army of the Potomac"; Richard Kimball, Herman Melville, of "Typee" and "Omoo" fame, Richard Henry Stoddard, E. C. Stedman, Ellsworth, Thomas Buchanan Read, Maria Lowell, Jarvis McEntee, and others. We had a strong backing from the clergy—the Rev. Drs. Hawks, Vinton, Hanson, Bethune, Baird, also the occasional assistance of Arthur Hugh Clough, the friend of Tom Hughes, Matthew Arnold, and other pupils of Dr. Arnold, who was then in this country—William Henry Herbert, reputed

fine figure, his handsome face, his polished address, his humorous talk, and growing fame as an author, got him easy access anywhere, or as Lowell has since rhymed it,

> "all the chariest doors
> Swung wide on flattered hinges to admit
> Such high-bred manners, such good-natured wit."

A few feared lest the adulations heaped upon him should seduce him from the student's smoky lamp to Paphian bowers lit by gilded chandeliers and eyes more bright than jewels; but they knew little of his native good sense, his strong self-respect, and his broad sympathies, which would have saved him at any time from scorching his wings in any false glare, however flattering or seductive. He got out of society, as out of everything else, whatever he thought to be good, and the rest he let go to the ash-barrel.

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grandson of the Earl of Pembroke, sportsman and naturalist, known as Frank Forrester; William North, a frank and brilliant young Englishman; Fitz-James O'Brien, who died in our war for the Union, and Thomas Francis Meagher, a gallant soldier in the same war, and afterwards Governor of Montana. Miss Delia Bacon, whose unhappy history is told by Hawthorne in "Our Old Home," began her eccentric Shakespeare-Bacon controversy by a learned and brilliant article in the monthly. An article by Dr. Hanson, going to prove that the heir to the French throne, who was supposed to have been killed in the Tower, was still living as a St. Regis Indian (the Rev. Eleazer Williams), produced a great sensation both in the United States and France.

I mention this to introduce a little incident that had a great deal to do in directing his future course. Our first number of the monthly had been a success; at least those arbiters, not merely of all elegancies, but of destiny itself—the daily press—had patted us on the back, and we set sail on halcyon seas and under favorable winds. It was while providing entertainment for our readers in a second number that the vivacious Harry Franco exclaimed, "I have it! Let us, each of us, write an article on the state of parties. You, Howadji, who hang a little candle in the naughty world of fashion, will show it up in their light; you, Pathfinder, who consort with scurvy politicians, will say of it what they think; while I will discuss it in some way of my own"—which he never did.

But Mr. Curtis and the other person were moved by the hint, and the former at once wrote a paper on the state of parties, which he called "Our Best Society." It was a severe criticism of the follies, foibles, and affectations of those circles which got their guests, as they did their edibles and carriages, from Brown, sexton and caterer, and which thought unlimited supplies of terrapin and champagne the test and summit of hospitality. Trenchant as it was, it was yet received with applause. Some thought the name

of the leading lady more suggestive than facts warranted, and that in such phrases as "rampant vulgarity in Brussels lace," "the orgies of rotten Corinth," and "the frenzied festivals of Rome in her decadence," the brush was overloaded. None the less, the satire delighted the public, and was soon followed by other papers in the same vein—since collected as "The Potiphar Papers." The older folks acknowledged them to be the best things of the kind since Irving and his friends had taken the town with the whim-whams and conceits of Evergreen, Wizard, and the Cockloft family. They were to some extent exaggerations, in which occasional incidents were given as permanent features: but their high and earnest purpose, their genuine humor, their amusing details, their hits at characters, and their sarcasms, "deodorized of offensive personality" by constant drippings from the springs of fancy, won them great favor. If we behind the screen sometimes felt that we shook hands with the originals of Kurtz Pasha and the Reverend Cream-Cheese, they were, like sweet bully Bottom, marvellously translated.

All the while Mr. Curtis was flinging his squibs and crackers into Vanity Fair, he was wandering in a wholly different realm—a realm "of ampler ether and diviner air." He was writ-

ing for us, from time to time, papers of a much higher tone than any he had yet written, and which seemed to me, as I sometimes looked over the proof-sheets, to open an entirely new and rich vein in our literature. They were those exquisite reveries since published under the quaint title of "Prue and I." The main conception, the *Leit-Motif*, as Wagner would say, was as old as poetry and the arts—the steeping of the palpable and familiar in the glorious dyes of the ideal, which children's fables, folk-lore, Middle-Age legends, and great poets have done for us time out of mind; but Mr. Curtis's treatment of his theme was quite fresh and original and most captivating. His shabby old book-keeper, in a faded cravat, whose brain teems with visions

> "Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there
> In happier beauty,"

is one of the most delightful of dreamers. He roams not in the fabled world of ancient poets, peopled with oread or dryad fleet or naiad of the stream, nor in the world of more modern fancy, whose forest depths and fields and fountains teem with fairy shapes of peerless grace and cunning trickeries; but his caprices revel in a sphere of their own, whence all rude necessities are banished, and gentle passions and sweet

longings for the serene and joyous and perfect reign alone. These are the Ariels with which he rides on the winds and plays on the curled cloud. How quaint is that touch, worthy of Elia, where, going back to his boyhood, he tells how he visited the wharves where the foreign ships come in, and returning home with a smell on his clothes, was chided by the good mother. He says: "I retired from the maternal presence proud and happy. I was aromatic. I had about me the true foreign air. Whoever smelt me smelt distant countries." With what a royal hospitality he sallied forth from his cold beef and cabbage to the avenues and squares where prosperous citizens were going to dinner, and furnished their tables more amply than those of any emperor. How the ladies in the gilded chariots, superb and sweet, each one his own Aurelia, seemed "fairer than the evening air, clad in the beauty of a thousand stars," while he lent to them a tongue like Perdita's, and the music of St. Cecilia herself. Could anybody resist an invitation to his castles in Spain, which "stood lofty and fair in a luminous golden atmosphere, a little hazy and dreamy perhaps, like Indian summer, but where no gales blew and there were no tempests. All the sublime mountains and beautiful valleys and soft landscapes were to be found

in the grounds. From the windows looked the sweet women whom poets have painted, and bands of celestial music played all night to enchant the brilliant company into silence." Mr. Franco and his colleague of the triumvirate used to look forward to these delightful papers as one does to a romance "to be continued"; and when we received one of them, we chirruped over it, as if by some strange merit of our own we had entrapped a sunbeam. We followed the lines so intently, with such various exclamations of pleasure, that a stranger coming in might have suspected both of us to belong to that wonderful company of eccentrics which the old scrivener summoned from the misty realms of tradition—the Wandering Jew; the priests of Prester John; the alchemists who sought to turn base metals into gold; the hunters of El Dorado, of Enchanted Islands, of the Fountain of Perpetual Youth; the makers of Utopias ever looming up and ever vanishing; even our own Captain Symmes, who sails through his hole into the interior of the earth, where its jewels and precious metals are forged; and that famous friend of our childhood, the Baron Munchausen, whose signal claim to a place in a fictitious world was that he was the one most replenished liar out of all the thousand millions of humans—and brought

them all together on the deck of the *Flying Dutchman*, to sail forever through foggy seas, onward, onward to unknown shores.*

It was an evidence of the fecundity and versatility of Mr. Curtis's gifts, that while he was thus carrying forward two distinct lines of invention—the one full of broad comic effects, and the other of exquisite ideals, he was contributing to the entertainment of our public in a half-dozen other different modes—monthly criticisms of music and the drama that broadened the scope and raised the tone of that form of writing; rippling Venetian songs that had the swing of the gondola in them; crispy short stories of humor or pathos; reminiscences of the Alps taken from his Swiss diaries; elaborate reviews of books, like Dickens's "Bleak House," the Brontë novels, Dr. Veron's Mémoires, Hiawatha, and recent English poetry—including that of Kingsley, Matthew Arnold, Thackeray, the Brownings, and Tennyson—which, written forty years ago have not been surpassed since by more appreciative, discriminating, and sympa-

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* There is something similar to this in Hawthorne's "A Select Party," where Funnyman asks the Oldest Inhabitant, Monsieur On Dit—the Clerk of the Weather, Davy Jones, the Man of Straw, and others to a banquet in his palace—which is more diverting perhaps, but less imaginatively pathetic.

thetic criticism, even in that masterly and more elaborate book of our fellow-member, "The Victorian Poets." In addition to these, he gave us, from time to time, solid and thoughtful discussions of "Men of Character," of "Manners," of "Fashion," of the "Minuet and the Polka" as social tide-marks, and of "Rachel," which may still be read with instruction and pleasure for their keen observation, their nice critical discernment, their cheerful philosophy, and their entrancing charms of style.

Then, ever and anon, Mr. Curtis would be off for a week or two, delivering lectures on "Sir Philip Sidney," on "The Genius of Dickens," on "The Position of Women," and, in one case, a course of lectures in Boston and in New York on "Contemporary Fiction." In a galaxy of lecturers which included Emerson, Phillips, Beecher, Chapin, Henry Giles, and others, he was a bright particular star, and everywhere a favorite. A harder-working literary man I never knew; he was incessantly busy; a constant, careful, and wide reader; yet never missing a great meeting or a great address or a grand night at the theatre. From our little conclaves at No. 10 Park Place, where I fear we remorselessly slaughtered the hopes of many a bright spirit (chiefly female), he was seldom absent, and when he

came he took his full share of the routine—unless Irving, Bryant, Lowell, Thackeray, or Longfellow sauntered in, and "that day we worked no more."

We now approach a wholly different phase of our friend's activity—less agreeable than the others, but more important, and a phase which shows how brave, manly, and noble he could be in the face of the most alluring literary and social seductions. Up to the time of his joining us in *Putnam* he had taken no part in politics. Like his friends Lowell and Longfellow, who had written, the one "Biglow Papers," with a fervor that almost raised a slang into a classic, and the other "Hymns of Slavery," which brought tears to the eyes—though tears have never yet rusted away the chains of the captive—he was intensely anti-slavery in feeling. But his opinions had not yet crystallized into definite shape. So far as he had any politics at all, they were a general acquiescence with the Whig school as interpreted by Seward, who was still a watcher of times and seasons. Like all scholars, he felt what Milton has described as "an unwillingness to leave the quiet and still air of delightful studies to embark on a troubled sea of noises and harsh disputes." Yet he was one of those who thought that a man of letters had something else to do in this

world than to sing love-ditties to Amaryllis in the shade, or paint pretty pictures for the cultured classes.

Be that as it may, it was impossible for a man of genius and soul, at that day, to resist the great ground-swell of popular passion fast coming to the surface. Those years, from 1848 to 1860, were years of revival and resuscitation, when the American people began to breathe again the invigorating air of their early days. Let me recall—at least for those too young to remember—how tangled and terrible our political condition was, and how it had been brought about.

Our fathers had deliberately founded this nation on the great central, pervasive, and distinguishing idea of right as transcending interest, and of equal popular rights as the origin, the basis, and the aim of all good government. Yet they had allowed the nation to carry in its flanks a monstrous evil, in flat and disgraceful contradiction of its fundamental principles. Their excuse was the belief that free institutions would inevitably work out its speedy extinction. But that hope was a delusion. Slavery, instead of yielding to the influences of freedom, struck its roots deeper into the soil, and began to stretch forth its dead-man's fingers to

the heart-strings of the people. Claiming a constitutional guarantee, interwoven with vast commercial interests, fortified by inveterate prejudices of race, it grew so rapidly in power that it soon assumed to control conventions, dictate policies, elect congressmen and presidents, and prescribe opinions. The South was riding the nation as the Old Man of the Sea rode on the shoulders of Sindbad.

Then came those days, "never to be recalled without a blush," when the politicians bowed down to it as to an idol, and worshipped it; when the counting-houses fawned upon it, that thrift might follow fawning; when the Press decorated its hideous brows with wreaths of praise, and even the Pulpit wove around it the sanctions of Holy Writ. The panting fugitive, guided by the North Star, fled from bloodhounds and deadly morasses, and came to our homes to beg for refuge; we were told to return him to bondage—and we did it. Our virgin territories—the homes of a vast future civilization—whose soil was yet unwet by the blood of the bondman, and its dews unstained by his tears, were claimed as the rightful abodes of the curse—and we acquiesced.

Of course these atrocities provoked reaction. Side by side with the black stain in our his-

tory ran a line of white which brightened and broadened each day. Individuals protested, even when they were killed for it; small sects remembered that Christianity was a gospel of brotherhood, not of hatred; the Abolitionists made their frantic appeals to the moral sense; Liberty-men resorted to the ballot-box; Conscience-Whigs undermined the old Whig Party as Free-soil Democrats were undermining the old Democratic Party; but as yet they were all working apart and at loose ends. Traditional prejudices and mutual misunderstandings kept them asunder. Many of them even hoped that the dispute could be compromised and the conflict adjourned.

Our little world of the Monthly was profoundly stirred by these agitations of the outer world. For the first time in the history of our higher periodicals, its managers had stepped down from their snowy pedestals to take part in the brabble and scuffle of the streets; and it raised an almost universal outburst of vituperation and censure. As Lamb said of his play, "Great heavens, how they did hiss!" For a time it seemed as if the little bark was destined to go down amid the roaring and foaming rocks.*

* It happened while Mr. Curtis had been ministering to the delight of our readers in many ways and receiving showers of

The offence and the service of the Monthly, speaking the sentiments of large and increasing classes of literary and professional people, was, that while the old parties shilly-shallied, it had steadfastly and stubbornly insisted that no conciliation between the free and the slave States was possible or desirable. The conflict was an irrepressible conflict. Our political system, in bringing together under the same rule two incompatible forms of civilization, had yoked Pegasus, the winged horse of the gods, to a drudge ox, and they would not and could not pull together. There was but one thing to do,

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applause in return, that another one of the triumvirate, taken by Mr. Franco's suggestion, had written his version of the state of parties, and called it "Our New President." It was a criticism of Mr. Pierce, who had recently been elected, not for Democratic depravity in general, but for the reckless license he had shown in distributing the sacred trusts of office to a parcel of heelers and hoodlums, whose only desert was that they had voted the regular ticket, and stood ready to mangle and maul any one who did not join with them in that ceremony. This article raised a fierce outcry of opposition; but Commodore Putnam, though he had values on board, was a brave soul, and said, "Brace up, my lads! Put her head one point nearer to the wind and crowd on sail!"—which we did accordingly—but without appeasing the north-westers. A succession of papers on "Parties and Politics," perhaps more verjuicy than juicy; on "Our American Despotism," meaning slavery; on "Kansas—It Must be Free"; and "The Two Forms of Society, Which?" only aggravated the original scream of protest into a fierce howl of rage.

in the actual condition of things, and that was for the friends of freedom, of every name and description, to sink their party differences, to unite in a new party—to nail the glorious device of "Free soil, free speech, free men" to their banners, and march to victory. "But oh!" cried the timider souls, "that means civil war!" "And if it does," was the reply, "never strike sail to a fear! Come into port grandly, or sail with God the seas."

Events soon brought about the consummation so devoutly wished. Free-minded Whigs and free-minded Democrats and others joined hands in 1854–55, to form the new Republican Party, and in 1856 designated the young Pathfinder of the West, who had nailed the flag of freedom on the highest peaks of the Rocky Mountains, to carry it in triumph to the Capitol. That auspicious union filled older, perhaps wiser, certainly more conservative, minds with terror and dismay; they heard only "ancestral voices prophesying woe," and saw Spectres of the Brocken, that seemed to rise like demons from the pit. But to younger, perhaps more visionary, minds it seemed, to use De Quincey's phrases, "as if the morning had come of a mighty day full of awakening suspense and busy preparation, a day of crisis and of final hope," when infinite cavalcades went fil-

ing off and they heard the march of innumerable armies, and in the distance a din of "battle, and agony, and sudden death," followed by a grand burst of coronation hymns signalizing victory.

Mr. Curtis's great opportunity had now come, and it came almost without his knowing it. He had fully approved the wild dashes of the Monthly against the Gibraltar rocks of the old parties, but he had written nothing as yet; and while he was in the habit of reading beautiful lectures from the written page, he distrusted his ability to speak from the platform. By the merest accident, at a Republican meeting on Staten Island, he was suddenly and vociferously called upon for an address. He ascended the steps with trembling; he stammered a few commonplaces for a while, "his practised accents throttled by his fears," and then his good genius came to his aid, and he poured forth an invective against slavery which filled his hearers with an unquenchable fire.*

* His first discourse after that was at the Wesleyan University (Middletown, Conn., Aug., 1856), where he had been invited to speak on "The Duties of the American Scholar." "Gladly would I speak to you," he said, "of the charms of scholarship, of the dignity and worth of the scholar—of the abstract relation of the scholar to the State. . . . But would you have counted him a friend of Greece who quietly discussed the abstract nature of patriotism on that summer day through whose hopeless and immortal hours Leonidas and his three

From that hour his course was clear, and he entered into the Fremont campaign with an inexpressible fearlessness and ardor; he spoke from stump to stump; he spoke by night and by day, and he spoke with a force of eloquence that he has never since equalled. But oh, what a battle it was! You have had a presidential campaign recently, which was milk and honey compared to that of fire and hail, in which a vast social system, the continuance of the government, the integrity of the nation itself, were at stake.

Fortunately we failed in that attempt—fortunately, because the nation was not quite ready yet, and Fremont was not an adequate leader. But it prepared the way for the Lincoln campaign in 1860, which was scarcely less strenuous and violent. Mr. Curtis had shown his power on the stump; he now showed it in the convention, when at Chicago he put pandemonium to defeat, and bid the wild uproar be ruled.

All through the inevitable war he did what he could to urge on its vigorous prosecution. Nor was this service at a distance from the seat of war

hundred stood at Thermopylæ for liberty? . . . Freedom has always its Thermopylæ, and the American scholar should know that the American Thermopylæ is Kansas." That clarion voice echoed through all the colleges and among the hills, and had a great effect in arousing young men to the greatness of the existing contest.

a perfunctory service. It had its sorrows and its sufferings. From his own family a cherished brother, Joseph Curtis, in the prime of youth; from the noble family into which he had married, no less dear to him,* three of its inmates, in life's dawn of hope and promise—Shaw, Lowell, and Barlow—had gone to the front; and from his immediate circle others, like that brilliant genius, Theodore Winthrop, were gripping their sabres on the outposts. Any day's bulletins might bring—some days' bulletins did bring—irreparable heart-aches. Four of the five young heroes fell in the fierce joy of battle, to pass to an immortal youth. But through all vicissitude and anguish his voice still helped to ram the cannon home, to cheer the poor brother in the trenches, to push forward the shining tents of light into the frowning darkness.

It seems as if such excitements must have distracted him from literary pursuits, but these had now become only the more regular and exacting. Since 1853, Mr. Curtis, without severing his connection with *Putnam*, had written in a desultory way for *Harper's Magazine*, and he finally accepted an editorial department of it, called the Editor's Easy Chair. It was the name given to a form of literary work which, begun

* In 1857 Mr. Curtis was married to Annie, a daughter of Francis G. Shaw, of Staten Island.

by a Frenchman, Montaigne, who is still first in merit as he was first in time, has long been a favorite with English readers—the short essay on minor topics of social interest which takes up offences too light for the censorship of the pulpit and too harmless for the chastisements of the law. It is a form which Addison, Steele, Johnson, Goldsmith, Lamb, Irving, and Thackeray have made exceedingly attractive. The eighty or hundred volumes of the British Essayists which have stood the sand-blasts of time lie side by side, in every respectable library, with the eighty or hundred volumes of the British poets. Carlyle has somewhere compared the editor to the vagrant preacher who sets up his booth in any field, and utters his wisdom or unwisdom to all who choose to hear. But the editor of the Easy Chair preached no sermons, or nothing that had in it the stiffness and super-sanctity of the sermon. It was rather the flowing and genial talk of the well-informed scholar, who was also the well-bred gentleman, turned critic and commentator. It was talk in many styles—critical, historical, humorous, grave, fanciful ; in short, in every style except that which Voltaire declares the only bad one—the wearisome. Our friend was never dull, but always elastic, cheerful, enlivening ; with fewer

ways of being tedious, and more of being entertaining, than any of his predecessors. He had, it seems to me, all the elegance of Addison with less of his coldness and a heartier glow; all the sprightliness of Steele, with a richer humor and a keener sense of moral values; but to find his proper parallels we must come down to Goldsmith, Lamb, Irving, and Thackeray. How many thousands gladly recall what a privilege and delight it has been for many years to have this commentator visit them every month, to tell them what to admire and what to impugn, and to inspire them as they sat in their own easy-chairs with kindlier feelings towards their fellows, to dissipate the blues of business or public affairs, and to send them to bed with buoyant hopes for the morrow! What pleasant companionships he helped us to form with the forgotten poets, from whom he would furnish little-known but delicious verses; with misprized story-tellers like that fine fellow, Fielding, despite his bedraggled clothes; or with our childhood's friend, dear old John Bunyan! How we would visit with him at the Brownings in Florence, or get a chatty letter from them, or go out to supper with that grim old ogre and cynic, Titmarsh, and find him to be, after all, one of the most simple and kindly of men; or hear the

famous Boz read once more of Pickwick and Sam and Buzfuz and the widder! How he made the stately Everett come before us and speak over again one of his pieces, with all the attitudes and gestures rightly put in; or the fiery Phillips wield his keen, incisive, glittering rapier—but bloodless now! As for the mimic world of the stage, so entrancing to many of us, he would ring his little bell, and the curtain would rise, and the elder Booth or the elder Wallack would reappear, for this time only; or the younger Booth, with his matchless elocution, recite a bit of Hamlet; or Mrs. Kemble give to Shakespeare a new delight by her recitation; or the dear old John Gilbert revive Sir Peter or Sir Anthony till your sides ached; or Jefferson sidled on as poor Rip, to make the heart as well as the sides ache. Now and then he would take you aside and whisper slyly into your ear the gossip of the sylphs of the season at Newport, or turn the key into enchanted chambers where the echoes still lingered of voices long silent—of Pasta and Grisi and Sontag and Jenny Lind, and where Thalberg and Sivori and Ole Bull once played—in short, open a thousand sources of keen and noble enjoyment.

You may say, perhaps, that any editor of a periodical can play this showman's part. Oh,

yes; but not with the inexhaustible variety of matter, the inimitable grace of manner, of Curtis. His superiority was shown when, called away altogether, the whole literary world asked, "And who can take his place?" and the whole literary world answered, "No one." Well might that world feel kindly towards him, for in all those forty years he had made and left no rankling wound. If any one was to be reproved, he was reproved with a smile that took away the sting. Even

> "The stroke of death was like a lover's pinch,
> Which hurts and is desired."

When a cancer was to be cut out, it was cut out with the surgeon's delicate lancet, and never with the soldier's sword, much less with the butcher's cleaver. In fact, he taught us how to censure, and censure severely, but without bitterness, as he taught us how to jest without a grimace, and to instruct without pedantry or assumption.

It was observed of the Easy Chair that no allusion was ever made by it to passing politics, even when

> "The day was filled with slaughter,
> And the night-sky red with flames,"

excepting, perhaps, by a picturesque glance at departing troops, or a shadow of disaster moving

over the page like an ominous cloud. The pleasant, graceful talk went rippling on its way, as fresh as a mountain brook through daisied meadows; and you might have supposed the genial talker cosily seated in some rustic retreat amid cooling dews and odorous grasses, and listening to the songs of birds and the musical whispers of the winds. But all the while he was in the centre of strife.

Towards the close of the war (1863) he had accepted the exclusive political control of *Harper's Weekly*, and was thus brought in direct contact with public affairs. It was a stirring time, but a most trying time for statesmen and publicists. The war itself had been a spectacle of terrible grandeur; there were in the valor and self-sacrifice of the troops, and the calm confidence of the people in their cause, features of moral sublimity; and the magnificent result of the war—the emancipation of a continent justified its awful cost, and made us proud of a nation capable of such sacrifices in defence of a noble and heroic idea. But after the war, from the martyrdom of Lincoln to that of Garfield, came a period of almost universal dislocation—at the South, of all the usual machinery of civic and social life; and at the North, of all the usual political opinions. Questions arose as to how we

should weld the broken pieces again—questions of formidable magnitude and extreme difficulty. There a horde of freedmen, ignorant, illiterate, and who had never taken care of themselves, was endowed with the franchise, to become the prey of carpet-bag adventurers, to whom the ballot-box was but another name for the dice-box; here a whole new generation, who had never seen a gold coin, was asked to decide as to the disposition of an enormous debt and a deluge of paper money. For the first time in our history, a president was impeached and tried for swinging round the circle, as he called a whirligig of vagaries; for the first time in our history, a great historical party became so lost to self-respect, to consistency of principle, to sanity of mind, that it made its standard-bearer of a life-long and inveterate enemy, with whom it had no sentiment in common; and, for the first time in our history, the presidency itself was made, through fraud and violence, a foot-ball of factions which brought the ship of state again into the troughs of the sea, and summoned the clouds with their lightnings to the horizon.

In this uncertain and perilous condition of affairs it was almost a providential benefaction that a journal having thousands of exchanges and nearly half a million weekly readers should

have been put in the hands of a person so clear-sighted, so well-balanced, so honest, and so courageous as Mr. Curtis. With many of his conclusions at the time I did not agree. He was of the old Federalistic school, which put its confidence more in the mere forms of law than in the saving instincts and good sense of the people, and his distrust of the Democratic party, largely justified by recent events, amounted to prejudice; but I was glad, even while sometimes fighting him in the press, to recognize his high-mindedness, his impartiality, his conscientious adherence to his convictions, and his knightly courtesy and manly frankness. His influence was great, because his readers felt that every word he said was the truth as he understood it. His editorial articles were models of political discussion, always calm, serious, and earnest, with nothing of the hurried superficiality, the disingenuous perversions that often mark the newspaper style. They met every question face to face without disguising its difficulties or giving a partisan turn to any of its aspects. They taunted no one; they sneered at no one; they argued openly, fairly, generously with all. Their author seemed, indeed, to have but one ambition, which was to lift our politics to the highest level of dignity and honor.

As soon as Mr. Curtis was satisfied that the proper fruits of the war would be gathered and garnered, and

> "The sacred pillars of the commonwealth
> Stand readjusted on their ancient poise,"

his attention was turned to certain administrative reforms which seemed to require instant action. A chief, almost exclusive, object of his solicitude was the condition of the civil service, which was deplorable to the last degree. Methods of distributing public office had come into vogue utterly at war with any true theory of popular institutions, with any right constitution of political parties, and with the uniform practice of the Fathers of the Republic. They were the application to practical politics of the maxims of ancient and barbaric warfare, which proclaimed that to the victor belonged the spoils of the enemy. Forty years ago, in writing of the subject, the present speaker asked: "Need any one attempt to describe the disastrous effect of such a practice on all the functions of public life? Does it not attack political virtue at its source; corrupt the integrity of the political body; inflame controversies which should be the debate of great principles into intemperate and violent personal hatreds; convert popular suffrage into a farce, or, what is worse, into a false-

hood and a fraud; introduce the most unworthy agents into the most responsible trusts; bring a scandal upon government, and thereby weaken, if it does not wholly destroy, the sanctity of law?" This argument was illustrated by a reference to the metropolis, where "a nest of profligates and gamesters had baffled juries, baffled courts, baffled legislatures, and contemned public opinion in their shameless career of peculation."

Of course such results were deprecated by many of our more eminent statesmen, and as far back as 1835 Mr. Calhoun, in his famous report on "Executive Patronage," denounced the methods in which they originated with the utmost lucidity and vehemence. "Were a premium offered," he said, "for the best means of subverting liberty and establishing despotism, no scheme more perfect could be devised." In this view he was joined by Webster, Clay, and other eminent statesmen of all parties. In fact the best traditions of all parties were against the practice.

But the most pernicious tendency of the system they did not foresee, and that was the aggrandizement of the king-maker rather than of the king; or, in other words, the evolution of that most anomalous of all political creatures,

the party boss. It brought into existence an order of men who, without having performed any public services—who were neither soldiers, statesmen, great merchants, nor captains of industry—-who, without possessing any signal ability or virtue, except the ability to conspire and to intrigue, and the virtue of a shameless impudence, are able, by the promise of spoils, to combine their corps of janissaries in such a way as to empower them to dictate terms to assemblymen, congressmen, judges—nay, to presidents, the august embodiments of the majesty and the might of the people.

Mr. Curtis was an earnest observer of this last development, and he had no need to go abroad for proofs of its iniquity. Object-lessons—a sort of kindergarten of deviltry—were hourly before him. He lived through the career of one Tweed, a coarse, vulgar, ignorant, and reckless adventurer, who, scarcely able to make a living by an honest mechanical trade, had yet, by the use of a party organization and the doctrine of spoils, made himself the political dictator of the city and, to a considerable extent, of the State. He designated aldermen, assemblymen, judges, and all the lesser occupants of bureaus, i. e., he determined who should make, interpret, and execute the laws, turning all the great functions of

government into a means of enriching himself and his fellow-conspirators. This Panama scandal, which is to-day shaking France to the core, had its prototype in our city court-house, whose every stone was laid in a mortar of corruption, and every nail driven by purchased and infamous hands. So complete was the ascendency of one man that, when the better members of his party protested against his outrages, he replied with a sardonic leer, "And what are you going to do about it?"

It is true that Tweed and his harpies were ultimately dislodged, his legislators deposed and dogged by the curses of after-time, his judges impeached, his immediate friends imprisoned or exiled; but not until they were well gorged, and after years of effort on the part of one of our most astute and persistent statesmen. Even then, while the particular brood was killed, the cockatrice's egg remained uncrushed. Tweed had, and still has, his imitators in every State, city, and town in the nation, and their iron grip is fastened almost as firmly as ever upon parties—but not quite, thank Heaven and the untiring zeal of the Civil-Service reformers!

It was in vain to ask Congress or other legislative bodies to abolish the nuisance, because so many of their members were made by

the machine, and no one likes to kill his creator. Even when it was not so, the interest in the reform was abstract, indirect, impersonal, and a matter of general principle confined to a few, while the interest in the evil itself was immediate, personal, profitable, and shared by many. It took forty years of strenuous struggle before Mr. Thomas Allen Jencks, of Rhode Island, could secure the appointment of a Civil-Service Commission to inquire into the nature of the abuses under federal rule, and to suggest remedies. Mr. Curtis was at once indicated as a member of that commission, and, appointed to it by President Grant, was chosen its chairman. We have seen the determination and energy he applied to the uprooting of slavery; and here was another form of it—not so patent or repulsive, far more subtle, and scarcely less destructive of the moral fibre of the nation—to which he gave the same fearlessness and fervor of antagonism. His first report, in 1871, as an exposition of the evil, and of the proper mode of correcting it, was a sort of *magna charta* of reform. Its logic was never answered, and could not be; indeed, its argument of the constitutional points involved was in substance, and almost in terms, adopted by the Court of Appeals in this State, and afterwards by the

Supreme Court of the United States. But of what avail? General Grant was sincere in his approval of the change, but he found that his interference had stirred up a nest of hornets more formidable than the bullets of his fifty battles. His call for appropriations to carry on the struggle was flung in his teeth by Congress, his zeal abated, and Mr. Curtis was compelled to resign.

His zeal, however, did not abate. Too much had been done towards the introduction of the reform into the federal bureaus to warrant an abandonment of it; and for ten years, as president of the national league and of the local league, his efforts were incessant and effective. His annual addresses, in the former capacity, were models of appeal—crammed with pertinent facts, with impregnable proofs, with withering sarcasms, with irresistible eloquence. They so held all executive officers up to the line of duty that many of them, ashamed to do openly what party exigences required, resorted to shifts and subterfuges to hide their cowardice.

In assuming this position of censorship, Mr. Curtis came in conflict with the party of his predilection, and saw no alternative but to break away from it altogether; that, however, was no easy step. He admitted the necessity of parties;

but he held, too, that the basis of party itself must be reason and conscience. Allegiance to party, carried beyond that point, became infidelity to one's own soul, and treason to the best interests of the nation. Willingly had he given to his party the careful study, the patient toil, the persuasive eloquence, the burning enthusiasm of his best days; but one thing he would not sacrifice to any party—his sense of right and wrong as a moralist, his independence as a citizen, his self-respect as a man. Denounce him you might, ridicule him, ostracise him, fill his post-bag with the garbage of the gutter, and yet would he trust in that interior monitor which is the highest rule of duty we can know or even conceive. But for men of this high tone, whom the poor sticklers for use and wont are apt to decry,

> "The dust of antique time would lie unswept,
> And mountainous Error be too highly heaped
> For truth to overpeer."

Mr. Curtis's disappointment with the action of Republican leaders as to the civil service led his mind to serious distrust of the policy of the Republican party on other questions, which, as they are still pending, we cannot discuss at this time. Suffice it to say that he was compelled, in 1884, to announce that he could not support its candidate for the Presidency, and in 1888,

that he must support the candidate of the opposition. But in thus taking an attitude of complete superiority to all parties, he thenceforth stood before the public as the champion of Independence, to which he kept

> "constant as the northern star . . .
> That unassailable holds in his rank
> Unshaked of motion."

Indeed, his mind seemed to open more and more fully as he advanced to that most vital and salutary of all social truths—that while organizations are indispensable to the attainment of certain great human ends, the individual person is always higher than any organization, and for the simple reason that the man is the End, and the organization only the Means. Therefore it is, that when you put the means above the end, you reverse the true order of life, you raise power above right, and open and ease the way to innumerable and destructive tyrannies. The grandeur of his position, denounced by partisans, was, after his death, recognized by the newspapers of nearly every faction when they spoke of him—as Lowell had previously spoken of him in verse—as "the Great Citizen." He was the great citizen because he had dared to be the honest citizen, and a nobler epitaph "nor marble nor brass nor parchment" ever bore.

Mr. Curtis owed his successes to the voice no less than to the pen, and this address would be exceedingly imperfect if it did not dwell for a moment on his peculiar oratory. "Eloquence," he somewhere says, "is the supreme charm of speech," giving it precedence over song, "but where the charm lies is the most delusive of secrets. It is the spell of the magician, but it is not in his wand nor in his words. It is the tone of the picture, it is the rhythm of the poem. It is neither a statement nor an argument, nor a rhetorical, picturesque, or passionate appeal. It is all these penetrated and glowing with the power of living speech—a magnetism, a fascination, a nameless delight."

But however it is to be explained, I can bear witness to the fact in his case. It has been my good fortune to hear many of the foremost speakers of the age—from Kossuth, the prince of all, to Gladstone, Bright, Thiers, Channing, Everett, Webster, Choate, Sumner, Beecher, Phillips, Sergeant Prentiss, and last, though not least, Robert Ingersoll; and while I recognize in several of them qualities which Mr. Curtis did not attain—a majesty and massiveness of movement like that of a great ship of war bearing gallantly down into the battle, or the impetus energy which, like a deep and swollen river, sweeps all before it, or,

again, an intensity of pathos which renders every sentence tremulous with tears—it may be said of Mr. Curtis, without extravagance of praise, that for sustained elevation and dignity, for uniformity of grace and unruffled fulness and richness of charm, he had few peers. His greatest effort, as I recall it now, was the eulogy he delivered on your late venerable president, Mr. Bryant, at the Academy of Music. A more brilliant or distinguished assemblage was never gathered in that once famous temple of art—comprising the rival claimants for the presidency, governors, judges, and the picked representatives of the professional, literary, and artistic classes, and circling zones of whatever was beautiful in our female world. His subject was not one of those that are usually thought necessary to arouse the best energies of a speaker—no invasion of Philip, no conspiracy against the mistress of the world, no cruel tyrant hanging like a cloud on the declivities of the hills, no separation of mother country and daughter colonies, no calling of a nation to arms—only the character of a simple citizen whose victories were those of the pen. Yet for an hour and a half that vast and diversified audience was held in rapt attention; not a silvery word or a golden image was lost; and when he closed with an impressive passage there was a solemn hush as if all were

expectant of more, a pause that called to mind Milton's oft-quoted description of the effect of Raphael's discourse on our first parent, when he left his voice so charming in Adam's ear that for a while he

> "Thought him still speaking, still stood fixed to hear."

It was a suspense of nature preceding a thunder-break of applause.

Under the immediate influence of the spell, one was ever too full of the pleasure to undertake to analyze, or even to wish to analyze its sources, and only in cooler moments, when the effect had passed off, could he recall them. He would then, perhaps, remember the liquid and equable flow of the voice, pure and rich in tone, distinct in enunciation, and melodious in inflection and cadence; the limpid simplicity and purity of the language, at the same time sinewy and strong; the kindled eye and the rapid changes of feature answering to each emotion as it arose; the play and flash of imagery, like lightning in the summer cloud—never brought in as mere ornament, but arising spontaneously as the only possible vehicle of the thought; the thought itself, always natural, apposite, and impressive, but borne on some wave of feeling which pulsated through each sentence like rich blood in the cheeks of a sensitive

woman; the felicity of the allusions or quotations, each one of which was like turning on a new shade of color; and then the perfect symmetry and completeness of the whole—no part obtrusive, no part deficient—and all presented with such an absence of apparent effort, such consummate ease and grace of delivery, that no room was left in the mind of the hearer for any emotion but that of admiration and delight.

Complimenting him, after the delivery of his eulogy on Bryant, on the perfectness of the performance, he modestly replied, "Dear friend, it was the occasion of my life"—which was doubtless true as to circumstances; but the phrase conveyed to me the open secret of his life. He was so supremely, thoroughly, and unconsciously the artist, that every occasion was an occasion, if not the occasion, of his life. By the mere instinct of artistic fitness he made his preparations so carefully and completely; his respect for his audience, however composed, was so profound, his fidelity to his own ideals so exacting, that he was ever at his best. He could no more have offered an uncombed or slovenly speech than he could have come forward uncombed and slovenly in person; or than a great painter could hang a daub on the walls of an exhibition, or a true poet put forth a poem with rheumatism in its feet. I have

no doubt that those who afterwards heard his eulogies of Sumner, Phillips, and Lowell, or his oration at the Washington Monument or on the Saratoga battle-field, or his several addresses to the Civil Service League, thought as I did at the Bryant Commemoration—that they had got him in his happiest mood. Even on lesser occasions—a dinner of the Chamber of Commerce, of the Academy of Design, or of a college fraternity—he was sure to be up to expectation, if he did not surpass it; and when he mingled some touches of humor, some quips and quirks of merriment, in his discourse, they were certain to be set in an enchased framework of gold and silver. How often at a simple symposium of a few good fellows, when George, as we familiarly called him, was talking, it seemed as if we sat under a gorgeous summer sky, with murmurs of music in all the air.

Mr. Curtis was most happily endowed for the production of effects upon others, either as a writer or a speaker. His mind was both acute and vigorous, but it was planted in a soil richly sensitive, imaginative, and emotional. His turn of thought was not philosophical, i. e., metaphysical or speculative; he never dug down to what Schopenhauer called "the fourfold roots of the sufficient reason," and the very phrase would have

amused him; but none the less he had a philosophy of his own—that natural idealism or ideal naturalism which is the philosophy of all artists who see consciousness in nature and nature in consciousness; and for whom the smile, which is a pure delight of the mind, exists also in the sparkle of the eye and the curve of the lips. His intellectual life came to him from no mysterious pineal gland hidden away in the folds of the brain, but from the tremulous fibres of the senses, whose manifold, many-colored, many-toned messages were taken up by that imperial wizard and artificer, the fantasy—and, by some secret alchemy, dissolved and wrought over again into manifold, many-colored, many-toned words.

It is not to be inferred from this that Mr. Curtis's reasoning powers were inferior; he seized readily upon general principles, but not the profoundest nor the most abstract, only the middle sort, the *axiomata media*, which connect the more obvious aspects of things and lie open to common-sense. He could argue well, as many an adversary found to his cost, but not at long breath; he preferred figures of rhetoric to figures of logic, and he drew men by the lyre of Apollo rather than drove them by the club of Hercules. They were the more easily drawn because, through all the glow and glamour of his sensuous

and imaginative showings there pierced such a solid aspiration for what is permanently commanding in nature and permanently ennobling in conduct, and such a fixed, instinctive, unaffected love of truth, that he commanded at the same time that he won adherence and homage.*

The career I have roughly outlined—though full, well-rounded, and beautiful—gives but an imperfect image of the man as he was in himself, in his humble home, and in his private intercourse with friends. Nothing he ever wrote or spoke or did was so dear to those who knew him intimately as "the soft memory of his virtues," in which so many varied elements kindly mingled. Simple and guileless as a child, sweet, modest, and lovable as a woman, loyal and devoted to his friends, generous and without gall to his enemies, and uniformly courteous to all, he carried with him everywhere an atmosphere of cheerfulness

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* If one were disposed to criticise his intellectual constitution, one might say that he was, particularly in early life, overcharged with sentiment that came near to sentimentality. His personal emotions were then so strong that he was not able to master them completely or to be dramatic. His novel, called "Trumps," was a proof of this: although written with extreme grace, and abounding in exquisite scenes and descriptions, it was not a success with novel-readers, because the characters too strictly reflected the moods of the author. But this trait helped his oratory.

that was as invigorating as a mountain breeze. Punctual in the discharge of the lowliest as of the highest duties, working for thirteen years a poor man to pay off debts which were not legal debts nor debts of honor, but claims upon business associates for whom he was not strictly responsible, he was ever as ready to take part in local political meetings as he was to attend a State convention, and more ready to read a sermon of Channing or Martineau to a small flock of fellow-worshippers than he was to put on the robes of a Chancellor of the University or to parade as a minister in foreign courts. Enjoying every innocent pleasure to the full—indeed, in our old Century Saturday nights, remembering with Prince Hal, "the poor creature, small beer," he was jovial with the most jovial, knowing that pleasure builds up and fortifies the nerves for the severer strains of life; but he never went to excess, nor lost his self-respect nor dignity in any unseemly hilarity. His absolute sincerity inspired a confidence as absolute; and if circumstances compelled him to break with an old friend, the rupture awakened no resentments—only painful regrets that it must be so. He was only stern and unbending in the line of what he deemed his duty, and even then,

> "his wit, with fancy arm in arm,
> Masked half its muscles in its skill to charm."

In a word, Mr. Curtis touched life at nearly every point at which it is possible for the individual soul to put forth its tendrils into the universe. As much as any landscape artist or poet he loved external Nature in all her moods and forms, her glancing lights and deepening shadows; he had the scholar's fondness for books, and could have lived forever in that magic world of truth and fiction which lies like a storage-battery on the shelves of every library; he delighted in pictures, of which he judged with a rare mastery without losing enthusiasm; he was enraptured by music, whether of the oratorio or the opera—of Jenny Lind or Paderewski or some humble St. Cecilia singing alone the touching melodies of the fireside; and yet he communed betimes with the "spiritual creaures who walk the earth, or when we wake or when we sleep," and often heard from steeps of echoing hills and thickets "celestial voices on the midnight air, sole or responsive to each other's song." One silver chord, it seems to me, bound his whole being in harmony. It was that innate, instinctive, spontaneous ideality which inspired, shaped, and toned his every feeling and thought as well as his every act. An aspiration for excellence, in its various forms of justice, truth, goodness, and courtesy,

ever cast its light before his eyes and ever whispered in his ears, as the sea murmurs in the sea-shell of a vast Beyond which is its proper home.

It was this ideality which lured him as a boy to seek a golden age restored in the fraternity at Brook Farm; which led him to the neighborhood of Emerson and Hawthorne, and in after-life gathered around him so many noble friendships; which carried him to the sources of civilization in the mystic East, and to its splendid final achievements in Europe; which, with all his daintiness and reserve, made him so tolerant of uncouth and shambling reformers, in whose strident voices he heard the far-off preludes of coming harmonies; which opened a door from the severe labors of his every-day life into a dream-land of glorious hopes; which drew the sword of his eloquence against slavery and the unmanly degradations of our civic and political customs; which scattered so many jewels over his pages, and gave to his style at times the flavor of a luscious old wine, "with beaded bubbles winking at the brim," and

> "Tasting of Flora and the country green,
> Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burned mirth";

which accounts, too, for an occasional undertone of pensive sadness which escapes him, like the

sigh of a strong man, and which made him profoundly religious—but with a religion that, defecated of the more acrid creeds, finds in the imperative law of Reverence for Manhood the highest, nay, the only conceivable, realization of an Eternal Love and Wisdom.

As I look back on this rare, sweet, gentle, great personality, there comes before me, as an external emblem of it, the palm-tree he once saw in Capri—gently throned upon a slope of richest green, and crowned with brilliant and fragrant flowers, as it rose in separate and peculiar stateliness in the odorous garden air. Towering far above its selected society of shining fig-trees and lustrous oleanders, it looked through the dream-mists of Southern Italy down upon the bright bay of Naples, where all the civilizations of the ages have at some time passed—across to the islands of the sirens who sang to Ulysses; to the orange groves of Sorrento, where Tasso was born; and to the rocky shelves of Posilippo, where Virgil lies buried. As it looked, the birds came and lodged in its branches—tropic birds with their songs of love; birds of the far Norland, who chanted their mystic tunes; and vocalists without a name, whose magic accents carry the secrets of the elves and fairies—while the people gathered in

its shade for shelter, and ate its luscious fruit for strength, and listened to its melodies for cheer. But the palm, we are told, had a song of its own—a prophetic song, which told of a broad and ever-flowing river, ever flowing through greener grasses, under sunnier skies, to an eternal summer; typical of that grand stream of humanity which, though it sometimes breaks in cataracts, and bears the woes of earth on its bosom—funeral processions as well as festal processions—and reflects from its surface the storms no less than the smiles of heaven, is gliding ever on, ever on, to a future of larger liberty, surer justice, broader culture, and a universal love and peace. If that tree is now fallen, and its trunk lies prostrate on the mould that decays, and the birds sing no more in its branches, yet the echoes of its own song float on, and the thought of its beauty is to us who knew it, and will be to those who shall come to know it, "a joy forever"; yes, a joy forever—but

> "Oh for the touch of a vanished hand,
> And the sound of a voice that is still!"

EDWIN BOOTH

EDWIN BOOTH *

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE PLAYERS:

It was but a few months since I was asked to speak some commemorative words of a dear friend deceased, who was a most distinguished and charming ornament of our literature, Mr. George William Curtis; and it is to me a most affecting incident that the last time I saw another dear friend—no less distinguished and charming in another sphere—he was reading those words with sympathetic approval. But as I listened to his over-generous appreciations I little thought how soon I should be asked to perform the same melancholy duty in respect to himself. I refer, of course, to Edwin Booth.

The name, as I pronounce it, falters upon my

* "The Players," a club of which Mr. Edwin Booth was the Founder and First President, gave a memorial celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of his birth at the Madison Square Concert Hall on the 13th of November, 1893. Mr. Joseph Jefferson presided on the occasion and made a brief address; an elegy

lips, for it recalls many hours of joy, with few of sorrow, while it reminds me that he is gone from us forever. We shall no more see that fine intellectual face which interpreted with so much beauty and truth the grandest creations of the foremost human intellect; we shall hear no more that melodious voice which added a new music to the music of poetry, whether it came to us in the flute-like tones of the sweet south breathing upon a bank of violets, or like the deep organ-pipe of the ocean when it breaks in heavy cadences on the coast; he will lead us no more into that ideal realm, whose golden portals are flung wide by the magic of genius, to reveal to us the grand figures of history and grander figures than history has ever known, men of heroic mould and colossal passions and women as fair and lovely as the women of a lover's dreams, whom it is a rapture to see, as it would be an education to know; and we shall no more feel the grasp of the hand whose pulsations were ever fresh and warm from the heart. He is gone—gone into the silent land—and how im-

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was read by Mr. George E. Woodbury; music was furnished by Walter Damrosch, director of the New York Symphony Orchestra, and brief addresses were also made by Tommaso Salvini and Henry Irving. The eulogium which follows was spoken on that occasion.

penetrable and still it is. We peer into its darkness and the clouds only gather and thicken; we call to its people, and they answer us not again, and we are left to a faith that often wavers and a hope that often sinks; but as we walk in reverent ignorance backward let us indulge the hope and cherish the faith as better for us, perhaps, as a moral discipline than any clearer knowledge.

You will not expect me, in this brief hour of communion, to present you a detailed biography of Mr. Booth, or any elaborate estimate of his character and career: those are themes for a more deliberate occasion, and we can only glance at a few salient points which commend him to public remembrance. It would seem as if he had been dedicated to the theatre both by outward circumstances and inward vocation. If it cannot be said of him, as our venerable and genial President has said of himself, that he was almost born upon the stage, it may be said of him that he was cradled within sound of its plaudits, and nourished upon some of its noblest traditions. His father, Junius Brutus Booth, was one of that galaxy of actors who rose on the sunset of Garrick, and included among its bright particular stars the Kembles, Henderson, Cooke, Young, Cooper, Kean and Mrs. Siddons and Miss

O'Neill. He was, indeed, a formidable rival of Kean, to whose jealousy he owed the signal honor, as we do the signal advantage, of his transfer from the metropolis to this western wilderness. For many years he was the one cometary splendor of our theatrical skies, and showed the way to a host of luminaries who have since dazzled our eyes, without paling his effulgence. For if the younger sort in those early days were disposed to lose themselves in bursts of admiration over any of these, the older heads would simply remark, " Ah, yes! very well, very well; but have you ever seen Booth?" as if that were at once the climax and close of all possible criticism.

Well, it is among my earliest recollections to have seen that meteor, as he flashed across the boards of the old Park Theatre, as Richard or Sir Giles or Pescara, when I was too young to be critical, but not too young to receive an indelible impression of his power and brilliancy. Like Burbage, Garrick and Kean, he was small but of a compact figure, with a commanding presence, a most expressive face and great luminous eyes that seemed to be set on fire from some inner volcanic source. His voice was less liquid than that of his son, and his carriage less dignified and graceful, but his outbreaks of pas-

sion, whether of rage or pathos, were simply titanic. In hearing them one could readily believe the stories that were told of his fellow actors stopping in their parts to gaze upon him in mute amazement and awe.

Edwin Booth, the fourth son of this eccentric genius, inherited many of his best qualities, and added to them others that tempered their intensity of blaze and mellowed the excesses of their energy. He was born on a farm near Baltimore, in Maryland, which the father had procured as a retreat from the glare and the bustle of the footlights; and he might have said, with more truth, perhaps, than Owen Glendower, that,

> ——"At my birth
> The front of heaven was full of fiery shapes——"

for he came into the world in November of 1833, during that meteoric shower of the 13th, which passed as phenomenal into the annals of astronomy. I remember it distinctly, when we students of Princeton rushed out into the night to see the sky, from zenith to horizon, on every side, a sea of streaming flame, which recalled the most high and palmy state of Rome, "A little ere the mightiest Julius fell," when

> "Stars with trains of fire and dews of blood
> Disastered the sun,"

but they were deemed "the precursors of fierce events," while these in the milder superstition of the negroes augured a brilliant destiny.

More important to the new-comer than these exhalations was that grand drop of sunshine, the farm, where his limbs were nourished by the fresh juices of the earth, his lungs expanded by the winds, and his imagination kindled by the shapes and shadows of the darkling wood. His education there was elementary and limited —a little while at a lady's school, another little while under a foreign teacher, who taught him the violin, while the negroes around taught him the banjo, and a less while if any at a higher academy. Doubtless the father's presence was something of an education; for he was a scholar who read a great deal—an expert linguist—at least, he could present French parts to French audiences in their native tongue—and a gentleman of taste, who lined his walls with pictures and books. But any education there would have been irregular, considering the habit he had of carrying some of his children on his theatrical tours. Edwin told me that he remembered being taken, when he was but five or six years old, behind the scenes, to await the exit of his father, who would then catch him in his arms, caress him and toss him

in the air, repeating some nursery tale or song, as a mode of relieving the tension of his nerves.

Under these influences he naturally aspired to the stage, and a playfellow of his boyhood, who remembers him as a curly-haired, bright-eyed, handsome lad, recalls his enthusiasm in that direction; but he always insisted that he would only play the villains, who had much to do and to say for themselves, while he despised the parts of lovers, whom he regarded as milk-sops. In that the incipient tragedian spoke. But the father was opposed to his children going upon the stage, not because he under-estimated his profession, but because he doubted their capacity for it. And once in reply to a remonstrance, he petulantly exclaimed, "Well, let them play the banjo between the acts."

Edwin's first appearance, in 1849, when he was scarcely seventeen, was by accident—the failure of a friend whose part as Tressel, in Colley Cibber's mutilation of Richard III., he assumed, and the same companion, who was present, reports that while he carried himself with self-possession and dignity he was inaudible at the middle of the pit. The eminent Rufus Choate, a warm admirer of the father, was heard to remark on that occasion "that it was a great pity that eminent men should have

such mediocre children." Edwin, however, persevered, and got himself regularly enlisted in the stock company at the remunerative salary of six dollars a week, which he was glad to get whenever he could. The parental objection seems soon to have disappeared, for he was pushed into a first part by the father himself, who refused, in 1850, to appear in Richard, when he was announced for it, and insisted that Edwin should take his place. This was at the old National Theatre in this city, which became the Chatham Street Chapel, where in later years I saw an Abolition riot that was a good deal livelier than any play. One can easily fancy what an ordeal it must have been for a youth of eighteen to be substituted for the most famous actor of the day. At first he was received with some murmurs, but gradually won approval, and at the end was called before the curtain. He was a bit elated by his own success, but in after years said that it was a mere boyish imitation of his father, and execrable at that. It, however, settled his career, and he became a Thespian for the rest of his days.

But his novitiate, or apprenticeship, passed on the outskirts of civilization, was a rough one, beset with drudgery, doubt and disaster. California

in those days lay like a luminous golden haze on our western horizon, and thither many men turned in pursuit of fortune or fame. Among them the father and son crossed the pestilential isthmus in 1852 in high hopes of success, but destined to encounter a great deal of hardship and vicissitude. The father soon abandoned San Francisco for New Orleans, and died on his way north, leaving the son behind him to battle against the world for himself. In the larger cities on the coast Edwin did tolerably well, but his adventures among the mining camps of the foothills, as told by one of his companions, were full of grotesque yet painful incidents. They take us back to the very days of Shakespeare, when the licensed companies, driven from the metropolis by the plague, which often carried off more than one-fifth of the inhabitants, rambled through towns and villages, to exhibit their half-contraband wares, in the granges of farmers, in the back yards of inns or in booths on the open plain; but their experiences must have been luxurious compared to those which gave to Edwin Booth his earliest lessons. What with imprisonment in mountain burgs isolated by snow and threatened with starvation; with long tramps of thirty or fifty miles through slush and mud; with the cooking of their own food or

the mending of their own clothes; with performances on boards laid across the billiard tables of saloons or on the trunks of fallen trees; with a free discharge of pistols now and then in the midst of some grand scene of heroism or love; and with a final return to the coast so utterly penniless as to render a resort to negro farces or a local travesty a necessary alternative to hopeless want, his entrance upon his career cannot be said to have been either encouraging or cheerful.

Nor was the outcome much better of a voyage he made with a transient company to the islands of the South Seas, as far off then as the Antipodes now and almost quite as unknown. For what reason they went, unless it was to confirm a prophecy of Shakespeare that "eyes not yet created should o'er read his gentle verse," it is difficult to say; but they played in Australia, Samoa and Hawaii, sometimes before royal courts which probably did not understand a word of what they uttered, but more often to a frieze and background of dusky natives in full paradisaic costume and intermittent purses. This was in 1854. On the return to California, where an accomplished lady, Mrs. Forrest, had opened a successful theatre, the light began to dawn upon the youthful stroller, and he was enabled to

show the mettle that was in him, and by a few astonishing hits to gather the means of getting back to the East.

These six novitiate years on the frontiers of civilization, acting in companies picked from the roadside, and to audiences not at all exacting or refined in their demands, were years rather of drudgery, and of crude and careless work than of education or discipline. They were years of apprenticeship and required severe labor and endurance, but did not impart the nicer qualities of culture. Yet they were not wholly fruitless. He acquired by them the mere mechanical tricks of his trade. They familiarized him with the scene, developed his voice, infused self-confidence, and perhaps awakened a higher ambition. On his return to the East in 1856, arduous trials awaited him there, which proved, however, both educative and disciplinary. They opened his eyes to the defects of his old imitative and traditional methods, and threw him back upon native original methods, and his better judgment. Deficient in early cultivation, and misled by the accepted models of the times, he had to unlearn much that he had learned, and to learn much that he did not know. He did not leap to the top at once—nobody ever does—but had to climb to it, through thickets and thorns, with an occa-

sional tumble on the rocks. Even after he had ventured an appeal to the cultivated taste of Boston, and been approved, a foreign actress with whom he played refused to go on because of his ungainly and awkward ways. In contrast is the fact that when he played with Miss Cushman in Macbeth she differed so widely from his refined and intellectual conception of the character as to beg him to "remember that Macbeth was the great ancestor of all the Bowery villains." But Mr. Booth was not too conceited or too indifferent to learn; he read widely and carefully; he observed constantly and closely; and he was wise enough to put aside his faults when they were discovered to him, even when they were pointed out by unfriendly criticism. Perhaps the acquaintanceship that he formed at this time here in New York with a considerable number of young artists and literary men (now past masters in fame), who had been attracted to him by his rare modesty and unquestionable genius, may have helped to awaken his ambition for the highest places.

He began, however, at the bottom, with the study of details. He recalled that Garrick, who to a mind that attracted Burke, Johnson, Goldsmith, and Reynolds, added accomplishments that fascinated the multitude, was a most sedulous

student in courts, on the streets, in asylums, and booths, of features, gestures, walk, and tone; that Kean, apparently the most impulsive actor that had ever appeared, yet when preparing for Lear had practised before a glass, night after night, demanding repeated rehearsals, and even marking his positions, his recoils and his advances, on the stage in chalk, and he followed their examples. Anybody who will read his notes to Furness's Variorum Edition of Othello will remark the importance he attached to every movement, every expression of face, every tone of the voice. Even his own performances were constant objects of observation, with a view to their improvement. Once when I praised him highly on his Macbeth, of which I had formed conceptions, derived from the performance of Macready, with whom, next to Werner, it was his best, he replied: "It is only a study, but I think I can make something of it yet." At another time, happening into his room about noon, I found him prostrate on the sofa, half out of breath, and covered with perspiration, and exclaimed: "Not ill, I hope;" and he replied: "No; it is that abominable speech. I have been practising it all the morning. I have shouted it and screeched it. I have roared it and mumbled it, and whispered it, but it will not come right." None the less, I observed

afterward that this very speech was so far right as to bring down a triple bob major of applause.

This attention to detail seems, perhaps, mechanical, and it would be mechanical if regarded as an end alone, and not a means; but it is no more mechanical than the painter's study of his chalk drawing, from which he never deviates and yet fills out with all the glory of color and form. It is no more mechanical than the metres and rhythms the poet observes in order to reach the heights of poetic beauty and grandeur; it is no more mechanical than the inexorable laws of counterpoint which the musician obeys if he would delight the world with the loveliness of a chorus in Lohengrin, or with the sublime, cherubic, heavenly harmonies of a concerto in C minor. Genius is, of course, the main thing; its intuitions and sympathies are the prime movers, the breath of life, the source of all grand effects; but genius itself can only work by instruments, and when it mounts its winged Pegasus, or drives the courser of the sun, it must still guide its steed by snaffle and bit. Mr. Booth had the genius, but he had no less the judgment, the taste and the will to put an end to its mere curvetings and prancings, and to direct it toward its triumphal goals.

Mr. Booth's range of impersonation during

these later six years of journey work, when he began to be recognized as "the hope of the living drama" (to use Barrett's phrase)—but not yet its full realization—was quite broad, comprising both comic and tragic characters, some thirty in all. But he was more effective in tragedy than comedy, though not deficient in the latter. Those of you who saw his Benedick, his Petruchio and the lighter scenes of Ruy Blas and Don Cæsar de Bazan, will remember the extreme delicacy and grace of his comic delineations, which never degenerated into farce or buffoonery. If at times, in private life, among intimate friends, he was, like Yorick, "a fellow of infinite jest," the humor which opens fountains of tears seemed to be more suited to his habitual temperament and tone of thought than that which ripples the face with smiles. As he grew older and more experienced he gravitated by a sort of native affinity towards the grander and more severe creations of Shakespeare—Lear, Hamlet, Macbeth, the two Richards, Othello, Iago, Brutus, Cassius, Antony, and Wolsey—but not, if I remember rightly, Coriolanus or the Egyptian Antony. Now and then he strayed into other fields and gave us masterly representations of Richelieu, Pescara, Sir Giles and Bertuccio, and yet he seems to have avoided, purposely, Virginius,

Damon, Pizarro, and the Gladiator, as perhaps a little too sentimentally *ad captandum* for the true artist. It was to Shakespeare he mainly aspired, and through him won the place, which he held for thirty years, of the foremost American actor. He had many worthy rivals, few, if any, equals; certainly no superiors. His most formidable competitor, Mr. Edwin Forrest, for whom he was partly named, a superb and impressive performer, was, through age and infirmity, falling into "the sere and yellow leaf" when Booth was in the prime of vigor and bloom. It may be that Mr. Forrest's growing fondness for certain native tragedies, in which declamation took the place of poetry, or a cut-and-dried type of character that of real nature, may have separated him somewhat from the currents in which æsthetic judgment was beginning to run.

It is the highest eulogy one can pronounce upon an English actor to say that his masterpieces of performance were the masterpieces of Shakespeare's creation, for they imply more than the ordinary requirements of a good performer. These are manifold and of a high order, physical, intellectual, emotional and volitional, and these Mr. Booth possessed in a large measure, and he improved them by study and self-discipline. Small in stature, he was yet compact and well-

proportioned in build, and he carried himself with a rare dignity and grace, so that his poses were always statuesque and his motions like the wave of the bending corn. His mobile features, lighted by large lustrous eyes, made his face not merely handsome, but exceedingly expressive; while his voice, clear as a bell, and loud as a trumpet, ran through the whole gamut of vocal utterance, marrying sweetness to sonorousness of sound without a jar. But to these mere outer gifts he joined rapidity and ease of emotional excitement, and, more important than the rest, a depth and breadth of intelligence which together enabled him to apprehend the most subtle as well as far-reaching thought of his author, and to respond to his sentiment as the musical chord does to the pulsations of the air.

His eminence in the Shakespeare circle was due to his possession of the latter qualities. The great Master differs from all other dramatic writers in many respects, but in two respects particularly, which put to the final test the powers of the actor. The first of these is his marvelous insight into what Tennyson called "The abysmal deeps of personality." Other writers are apt to delineate their personages from the outside, as embodying solely some imperious passion, or as charged with some one transcendent mission,

which is to be presented, as the cannon ball flies, in an undeviating line. Among the ancients, for example, no one can mistake as to what Agamemnon, Antigone, or Orestes has to do, or how it is to be done; amid the pomp of the language the way is always clear. Even among the more romantic moderns, no one disputes as to what Karl Moor, Don Carlos, Egmont, Hernani, or Triboulet means; nearly all actors would present them in the same way. But Shakespeare's persons are not so easily grasped, not because they are purposely or bunglingly obscure, but because they are at once so very deep and so very broad. In other words, while most writers write from the surface Shakespeare writes from the inmost center outward to the periphery, where he touches life on every side. His characters, therefore, are so involved in the infinite intricacies of inward motive and caprice, and so bound up with the incessant complexities and cross-play of outward circumstances that they must be studied closely and time and again to learn what they are. Nobody gets them at a glance. They are too profound to be fathomed by the eye alone, and too many-sided to be taken in by any single sympathy. Besides, while they are such complete and consistent individualities, growing from youth to age, that one has told of the girlhood of

Shakespeare's heroines, and another of the after-wedded life of Benedick and Beatrice, of Imogen and Posthumus, of Isabella and the Duke, they are yet types of permanent and universal humanity, and to be interpreted, as the living man is, by a scale which widens and deepens as our own hearts and minds grow in experience and insight. Two hundred years of the astutest comment have not yet indicated their full significance.

The other trait of the great Master, an actor should always bear in mind, is the exuberance of his poetic nature, which exudes in words, diction, rhythm, scene, personage and story. Goethe was much reproached for having said once that Shakespeare was much more of a poet than he was of a dramatist, by which he merely meant that the poet was primary and predominant while the playwright was secondary. In other words, poetry is the very atmosphere in which he lives. He nowhere restricts himself, as Henry James accuses the great French authors of doing, to the multitudinous glaring outside life of the senses. He was as open as ever man was to every skyey and every earthy influence, but through all these he saw "the deeper, stronger, subtler inward life, the wonderful adventures of the soul." What-

ever theme he touches, though in itself commonplace and unpleasing, he steeps in the color of his fancy, and he scatters the color over all surrounding objects. Like a bird, he dips his wings in fetid pools only to disperse the water-drops in showers of pearls. Whatever story he tells or passion he betrays, though in themselves repellant or even hideous, he purges them of their grossness and lifts them into an air of ideal freshness. Like Niagara—which in its maddest plunge and loudest roar still waves the iridescent banner of its rainbow, and still sends up to the skies its mist-columns of diamonds—he raises his scenes, which in their literal nakedness might shock us with horror, up to the purer and serener heights of the ideal, where Æschylus not only heard the groans of the incestuous king and saw the wild-eyed furies in pursuit of Orestes, but heard, too, the thunder-tones of destiny and saw the dread forms of the immortals.

Mr. Booth grew to be keenly apprehensive of the characteristics of the Master, and studied them closely and brought them out as he best could into more and more distinctness and vividness. His representations, as he advanced, while they showed a closer analysis of character, which is a mark of thought, conveyed at

the same time that higher ideal value which is the essence of poetry. He seems to penetrate more and more into the interior significance of his personages by discerning more fully what was universal in them and so of permanent interest to humanity. Thus his King Lear, which in the beginning was the traditional King Lear, an irascible old man liable to sudden and fearful explosions of wrath, and who did many foolish things, gradually became the type of imperious arbitrary will undermining its own force, dispersing families and disrupting kingdoms through sheer caprice, and an exponent, not of a particular history, but of a universal truth of human nature. Thus Hamlet, whom he once wrote of as an "unbalanced genius," was raised afterwards to the perfection of manhood, who, charged with an imperative duty it was impossible to execute, fell by the corrosive and destructive action of his own thoughts into distraction and madness, and brought down a whole beautiful world with his own ruin amidst a sound of wrangling bells. Thus Macbeth, on the surface a heartless and sanguinary tyrant who butchers his best friends and deluges his estates with blood, is shown to us in the end as infinitely more than that: as the victim of that irritable imaginativeness which,

dealing with the darker powers, whelms reason, nature, conscience and affection in a vortex of hell-born dreams.

In the last two impersonations, it may be perhaps well to observe, Mr. Booth was assisted by a peculiarity of his own constitution, which lent them singular truth and awesomeness. I refer to his openness to those darker and more mysterious aspects of life which have been called the night side of nature. He was peculiarly sensitive to the hidden, subtle, boding, unfamiliar influences of that unknown and unfathomable ocean which rolls on the outside of our habitual and fixed experiences. He was at one time deeply interested in certain abnormal phenomena which are called spiritualism, and, indeed, in the jargon of its adepts he was considered a medium. Certainly he could tell some strange tales now and then of his unconscious cerebral excitements. But the only practical effect they had upon his conduct, so far as I could observe, was to deepen the awfulness of his representations of personages who had walked on the border lands of the unseen. His Hamlet, whatever the passion or occupation of the moment, was always haunted by the dread vision that came to him on the ramparts of Elsinore, and Macbeth was ever accompanied by the fatal sisters whose super-

natural soliciting pushed him on while they consoled him in his immeasurable atrocities.

It was a consequence of Mr. Booth's careful study of his Shakespearian parts that he gradually refined his modes of rendering them out of the old boisterous, objurgatory and detonating style into one more gentle, and therefore, as I think, more artistic. He was at no period deficient in force and intensity of expression. His curses in Lear fell like avalanches from Alpen heights when a storm is on the hill; his alternations from joy to rage in Shylock throbbed and glowed with the red-heat of molten iron; the lament of Othello was like the moan of an archangel for a heaven betrayed and lost, ending in that remorseful cry, which "shivered to the tingling stars;" and I have heard him utter the simple phrase in the graveyard scene, "What! the poor Ophelia," with such heartbreaking pathos that whole rows of women, and of men too, took to their handkerchiefs. But he never found it necessary, at least in his later days, in order to get his feeling understood, to shriek like a maniac or to howl like a wounded wolf. He had taken to heart what the great Master, who could not be accused of tameness or frigidity, and who was doubtless as good a critic as he was a dramatist, had long since taught us in "the very torrent,

tempest, and whirlwind of passion, to beget a temperance that must give it smoothness."

He had learned in particular two phases of emotional expression, which I do not suppose were original with him, but which are very important and require the utmost skill and delicacy of management. The first may be called the ascending phase of emotion, in which every strong passion fosters and aggravates itself, so that, beginning on the low level of excitement, it rises by its own self-governed vehemence to a violent intensity. It was displayed by Mr. Booth in several passages of Hamlet, where, in spite of the strongest efforts of self-restraint, he is gradually carried away by the movements of his brain, and finally loses himself in a frenzy that passes for madness. The other phase of expression to which I have referred, and which may be called the descending phase, exhibits a towering passion in its subsidence. It is said to have been one of the master-strokes of Kean, who, though fond of abrupt transitions—that is, from transports of frenzy to calmness or even sportiveness—was yet artist enough to know that this was not always natural, and so at times came down from his extreme heights by gradations of fall, like the waves of the sea which still heave and swell when the tempest is wholly past away. This effect was

grandly given by Mr. Booth in Lear, whose tremendous discharges of anger are followed by sudden returns to patience and self-control, when his voice assumed to be calm, and his face appeared to be smooth, but the twitching muscles and the tremulous tones gave proof that the passion had not yet vanished.

It should always be borne in mind that it is not the aim of dramatic art, whether in authorship or representation, to bring forth monsters, either fiends, or freaks, or wild beasts. It presents us human beings, swayed even to madness in the intensity of their passions, but still human beings. Even in its most abnormal departures from the human type, as in Caliban, they have still many touches of human nature in them, which they show, if in no other way, by speaking its language, and at times uttering the most exquisite poetry. The drama, as Schiller says, "must unveil crime in its deformity, and place it before the eyes of men in all its colossal magnitude; it must diligently explore its dark snares and become familiar with sentiments at the wickedness of which the soul revolts;" but in doing so it does not cut itself loose from all semblance of manhood. Otherwise its personages would excite, not pity and terror, but horror. Richard, Iago, Shylock, Macbeth, do diabolical things,

but they are none the less men, perverted by evil, hardened by crime, wholly bent away from goodness and truth, and yet capable of both goodness and truth, and at their worst exhibiting, perhaps, masterly intellect, heroic courage, sublime defiance, strong affection—are like Milton's fallen angels, "the excess of glory obscured."

An open secret of Mr. Booth's success was the high conception he had formed and cherished of the dignity and usefulness of the theatrical function. Pained at times by the perversions of it in bad hands, he was yet not ashamed of his profession; nor did he suppose, as Macready appears to have done in later life, that he would have been better and happier in some other walk. On the contrary, he was proud of it, and rejoiced in his ability to serve it, and through it, the highest interests of the public. He was not insensible of its degradations, actual and possible, but he knew that it is precisely those things in our human nature which fall the lowest that are capable of the highest. He knew that dramatic literature is the highest form of intellectual achievement, and that the stage is the means by which it is most vividly interpreted and most widely diffused. In a general sense the principal aim of all art is to please, but we

should remember that that pleasure ranges from the merest trivial amusement of the moment to that which Dryden calls noble pleasure, which interests alike and at once the intellect, the conscience, the imagination, the passions, and the sensibilities in their finest and sweetest exercises, and leaves traces of exaltation that go sounding through the soul for ever. Even in its lightest forms, the pleasure produced by the histrionic art is not to be despised. The play—impulse, as Schiller calls it, in which it originates, and which gives rise to the delicious pranks of children and the merry sports and pastimes of the common people, is that instinct of human nature which lifts it out of the hard grind of necessity—whether physical or moral—and surrenders it to the joy of a disinterested freedom. Not only does it " ease the anguish of the torturing hour," but it is the main support—the generator and the regenerator—of whatever is most healthful and wholesome in the exercise of our faculties. In common parlance, we name it recreation, forgetting often that recreation is simply re-creation—or the making over of that which is worn, and not something fresh and new. Talleyrand used to say that the arrantest nonsense is very refreshing, and Shakespeare, in one of his eulogies of merriment, asserts that it both relieves the wear

and the woe of life, and cures some of its afflictions. In this he anticipated the doctrine of modern science, which teaches that pleasurable excitements build up the nervous system and maintain it in health and growth, while depression, despondency, or sorrow—any form of pain, in fact—wastes it away and ends in its total destruction. Assuredly we all of us know that a sound, hearty laugh clears the cobwebs from the brain and elevates the whole being into a more serene and invigorating air. But if that be true of our lower enjoyments, what shall be said of the recuperative power of the higher sort which appeals at once and in harmonious union to those lofty capacities which are the distinguishing marks of humanity—which, separating man from every other form of existence, make him what he is, the crown and consummation of creation—the paragon of animals—the beauty of the world—and infinitely grander than all "this brave o'erhanging firmament," with its "majestical roof fretted with golden fire."

Now, dramatic art, as I have said, appropriates to itself the excellences of all other forms of art, and supplements them with excellences of its own. It abounds in that prose which is "full of wise saws and modern instances"; its naïve and racy songs furnish the best specimens

of lyric enthusiasm; it rivals the solemn epic in the grandeur of its stories, and, not satisfied with speech, it calls in as its assistants and handmaids the imposing splendors of architecture to build its temples, of sculpture and painting to adorn them, of eloquence to add charm to its utterances, and of the delicious exhilarations of music, to bear the spirit on harmonious wings to elysian homes. Like other literature, it rummages the ages for its themes; it turns over the dusty leaves of chronicle and annalist for its persons, filling in their gaps of forgetfulness; but, more than this, by its marvellous power of characterization, it clothes the skeletons of the dead past in flesh and blood, and presents them to us in their very habits as they lived. A thousand buried majesties revisit the glimpses of the moon; the colossal demigods of old mythologies that helped to shape the primal choas—the noble masters of antiquity, whose words have given law to the arts and policies of all future time—the chivalric champions of the oppressed and of womanhood in the middle ages—even the unknown heroes and heroines of domestic life, to say nothing of the fantastic little tricksters of faëry, who win our loves, revive, and we are made acquainted with men grander than any in actual history, and with women fairer than our

visionary seraphs, and lovelier than our legendary saints, in that they are real women breathing thoughtful breath.

It is not merely the defence, it is the justification, nay, it is the pre-eminent glory of the theatre, that it is the great popular interpreter of this creative inspiration—the channel through which its rare and exquisite treasures are conveyed to the minds of the people. The lofty achievements of the human brain and heart, in nearly every other domain—its great poems, its great histories, its great systems of thought, its great pictures, and its great music, are a closed book to the masses. They are richly laden argosies that sail on the unseen ether of the skies, and not on the ordinary atmosphere. Few see them but those who have the opulence and the leisure to climb the golden step to the stars. They are an unknown realm—and how sad the thought!—to the vast majority of mankind even in most cultivated nations. But the theatre brings the gold and the jewels of its Ophir mines of genius home to the bosom of nearly every class—one might add, of nearly every individual. It is the one institution of society which may be said to be, in the strict sense of the word, popular. Other institutions touch the sensibilities, or tastes, or interests and rouse the

souls of selected circles, but this goes directly to the sensibilities and rouses the souls of all. Consider, too, how incessant and wide are its influences. Victor Hugo has compared it to the ancient Tribune whence the orators fulmined over Greece, and to the modern Pulpit, which drops its heavenly messages in "rills of oily eloquence," but it has an immense advantage over either of these in its almost unbroken activity through space as well as in time. Every night in the week, in nearly every town and city of civilization, it is telling its tales and teaching its lessons of good or ill, and the Press alone surpasses it in the immediate reach and constancy of its work.

And what is that work? Nothing less than the whole sphere of human relations, which is precisely the sphere of our ethical being. It deals directly, almost exclusively, with the conduct of man to man, and morality is the breath of its life. It is essentially a moral force, a tremendous agency for good or evil. Scientists tell us that while there are evidences of a vast physical order in the external world there are no evidences of a moral order there. The grand forces of nature, regardless of man or his desires, drive the wheels of their chariots over his universe axle-deep in blood. Historians tell us that the final adjust-

ments of events, the rewards of good, and the retributions of evils are far apart in space, remote in time, and seldom observed, or not observed in the end by men who saw the beginning, or, as Horace says, "the flying criminal is only limpingly followed by the retributive blow." But it is not so in the little world of the drama, where the consequences of conduct are near, open, and swift. Dramatic art controls the season of its own harvests, hangs its nemeses on the neck of its events, and freights the lightning-flashes of its auguries with the rattling thunder-peals of their fulfillment.

Such an agency is not to be neglected, much less derided, and especially by those who take the moral and religious interests of society into their special keeping; nor are the actual conductors of it to be held up to derision, and excluded from the mercies of the All-merciful, as they were but an age ago. They are to be prized, as others are prized, by the faithful discharge of their function. If their shortcomings in the past have been lamentable, which of the professions shall throw the first stone? None the less let us hold them to their responsibilities, and remind them constantly of what an almost omnipotent means of human elevation they wield; and, as in the early days of the beautiful Grecian culture, the dramatists re-

vived and perpetuated whatever was grand, awful, and sublime in their almost forgotten traditions; as in the middle age the Church, the mightiest of spiritual forces, still called to its aid the Mysteries which brought home to the common people whatever was lovely and holy in Hebrew or Christian legend; so, in this enlightened Nineteenth Century, shall we not demand of the drama that it shall take the lead in all the purifying, strengthening, broadening, and elevating tendencies which make a progressive civilization?

It was Mr. Booth's conviction of the real possibilities of the stage that induced him to work for its improvement, not only in the parts he played, but in all its adjuncts and accessories. As far back as 1860, when he was the manager of the Winter Garden Theatre, following the example of Macready and the younger Kean in England, he put many pieces upon the stage with a degree of historical accuracy and impressiveness that was an education to our playgoers, and led the way in which our later Wallacks, Dalys and Palmers have creditably followed.

His opulent equipment of the Winter Garden went up in flames, but, nothing daunted, he soon after projected a theatre which should be a model of its kind, both for the comfort and safety of the audience, and the convenience of

the players. It was made as complete as it could be in every respect, with the knowledge and resources at his command. Plays were produced with an accuracy and amplitude of artistic device that pleased both mind and eye. Not only the plays in which he took part, but those in which others appeared.

That enterprise, in spite of its artistic merits, went down in bankruptcy, as the former had gone up in flame; but the projector of it was not disheartened. Again he took to the road; again the streams of Pactolus flowed into his pockets; and again, having paid the last penny of former indebtedness, he bethought him, not of himself, but of his fellows. It was on a pleasant yachting voyage in the Summer time with chosen friends, loving and beloved, along the picturesque coast of Maine, where high hills peep over their forests of greenery, and the far glance of dancing waves shoot back the bright beams of the sky, that he communicated to them his plans for an institution which, let us pray, the greediness of fire will not consume nor the maelstrom of finance absorb. He told them of the society, now called "The Players," to whose gratitude and hospitality we owe the splendid assemblage which honors this hall to-day. He gave to it all his available funds; he

gave to it the companions of his long silent life—his books; and he gave to it the treasures of his secret heart—his pictures and his relics. His desire was to erect a home where the selected members of his profession might meet with one another, and with the representatives of other professions, in friendly intercourse and on terms of social equality and reciprocal esteem.

It is within the walls of its sumptuous edifice, as you walk its halls and corridors, that the pictures bring back to the eye the celebrities of the stage whom we all revere—and some of whom have found a place in England's proudest memorial of her honored dead. It is there that a letter, a sword, a lock of hair, or a tatter of dress restores Garrick, Kemble, Kean, Mrs. Siddons almost to the touch, and there the elder Booth, Cooke, Cooper, Elliston, Munden, Forrest, Wallack, Gilbert, Barnes, Placide, and others look down upon you in genial serenity. As one sits there, sometimes in a kind of revery, he hears the tinkling of a little bell and he sees the curtain rise, and then a whole entrancing world of grace and splendor exhales like a glorious vision. It is there now that the genius, the beauty, the distinction of the city is gathered annually to lay its tributes of affec-

tion and respect at the feet of the Founder, whose good remembrance

> "Lies richer in their thoughts than on his tomb."

It was there that he spent his last hours, in communion with friends who deemed it an honor to be admitted to his confidence, and there his gentle spirit took its way to the welcomes of the good and great made perfect.

Like a light in the skies he has now passed below the dews and damps of the horizon; but may we not say of him with our earliest of poets:

> "That the soft mem'ry of his virtues yet
> Lingers like twilight hues, when the bright sun is set."

May we not say of him, as of the good Duncan, that "after life's fitful fever he sleeps well," leaving behind him no rankling animosities, no unadjusted wrongs, no bitter remembrances, only sorrow and a grateful sense of his genius and goodness. In life, no doubt, he had his enemies—who has not?—but no one ever learned that fact from his own lips. There were those, perhaps, even of his own profession, who exaggerated his hereditary traits into personal faults, but it produced no bitter resentment in his heart. For the thirty years that I knew him with more or less intimacy I never

heard him speak an unkind word of any human being. Yet he was as unassuming as he was generous, and I may add that during that long interval I never heard him speak unduly of himself, or of himself at all save in connection with some project for the public good.

Affliction fell upon him,—the early death of his father—whom he loved and honored—the withering of that fair flower now "enskied and sainted," around whose being the tenderest fibres of his heart were strung—that great public calamity, which for a moment blotted his heaven of future hope and happiness; but these misfortunes, while they may have deepened the lines of thought on his forehead, never galled his heart with a drop of despair or pessimism. Recovering with elastic spirit from every blow, he kept the even tenor of his way in the discharge of his duty, as he conceived it. The other day, in taking up his copy of "Macready's Reminiscences," I found near the close, where the veteran actor expresses dissatisfaction with his life, that Mr. Booth had penciled on the margin: "What would this man have? Blessed with education, with a loving family, with fame and fortune and the friendship of the great, he ought to have been supremely happy." Mr. Booth was not supremely happy—few are; but he enjoyed life.

He enjoyed it because he had discovered the true secret of tranquillity and content—the use of his faculties and his fortune, not as a means of self-indulgence or ostentation, but for the furtherance of general ends. Scarcely one of his more intimate friends but could tell you of some dark home brightened, of some decayed gentleman or gentlewoman raised to comfort and cheerfulness by his unseen but timely intervention. He had learned the deep wisdom of that epigram of Martial, which perhaps he had never read, which says that "What we possess and try to keep flies away, but what we give away remains a joyful possession forever." It was for this his friends not only admired him, but loved him; and it was for this the greater public mingled with its admiration of the artist its attachment to the man. For, strange as it may seem, this man who had passed his life in the expression of simulated sentiments was in his own life the sincerest and truest of men. This man, who, like a nomad, had spent his days in wandering over the earth, prized above all things else the retirement and seclusion of the home; this conspicuous leader of a profession more than others exposed to temptation, preserved himself as pure as the wind-sifted snow of the mountains; and he, the popular idol, who had only to appear

upon the boards to awaken round upon round of rapturous applause, dreaded notoriety, shunned the crowd, and loved to be alone with his own thoughts. How gentle he was there I cannot tell you—as gentle as the breeze that will not detach the delicate blossom from the stem; nor how strong he was in his adherence to duty—as strong as the oak that no blasts from the hills can pull up by its roots.

Therefore it was that a strong personal feeling pervaded his popularity. Recall those final days, when he was laid upon the couch of pain, and remember how eagerly we followed the bulletins, rejoicing when they were favorable and sorrowing when they were not so. Tried skill and devoted affection were gathered about that couch—the affections of life-long friends, and of one, the image of her who had long since gone to prepare his way; but neither skill nor affection could delay the death-hour, and when, on that sweet, soft day of June, as light and warmth were broadening over the earth, and the trees had put on a fuller and richer green, it was announced that his eyes were finally closed on all this brightness and beauty—how instinctively we exclaimed with Horatio, bending over the prostrate form of Hamlet, "Now cracks a noble heart!" and as the big tears flushed our eyes,

how we added with him: "Good-night, sweet Prince! And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest." Indeed, may we not repeat it here, "Good-night, sweet Prince," and as we utter it may we not hear with our finer ears a responsive echo, floating with solemn softness, downward from the heights, "Good-night, dear friends, God bless you all; good-night!"

LOUIS KOSSUTH

LOUIS KOSSUTH*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE HUNGARIAN AND OTHER SOCIETIES:

The life and death of Louis Kossuth were events seemingly so far apart in time that it is difficult to bring them together in thought. His active career belonged to the first half and middle of the Nineteenth Century, and his death took place at the close of it, after an interval of more than forty years. The scenes in which he figured conspicuously had long since passed from the stage when he died, so that many of those who had seen him at the height of his glory had preceded him to the tomb. His departure, indeed, was to a large number of us, who were rather his successors than his contemporaries, somewhat of a surprise, and it became known to

* This address was delivered in part at a great commemorative meeting of Hungarian and other societies, held in the Cooper Institute of New York on the 4th of April, 1894. It was afterwards given in full at the Century Association on the 27th of April, and a week or two later repeated before the Phi Beta Kappa Society of Yale College, New Haven.

us, like the fall of a majestic and solitary oak which has survived its fellows, by the echoes it aroused in all the surrounding hills.

I am one of the few persons whose lives covering this gap are able to speak of him from immediate knowledge. With thousands of others, I saw him the day he landed upon our shores below the old quarantine ground on Staten Island, and we were struck at first sight by the picturesqueness of his appearance in a semi-military coat and a soft Hungarian hat whose plumes were waving in the breeze. I heard the marvellous address in which he poured forth his gratitude as an exile for liberty's sake from the despotisms of the Old World to the young Republic of the New World, which had been his rescue and his refuge. I witnessed the magnificent reception given him the next day as the guest of the nation by the City of New York (never before vouchsafed any individual, save Lafayette, who had been our revolutionary ally), when all the houses were aflame with color, and the shouts of the multitude in the streets "out-voiced the loud-mouthed seas." More lately, as one of the committee of the Press appointed to invite him to a banquet, I was brought into familiar contact with him, and in that way was enabled to hear day after day the almost innu-

merable addresses he made to different assemblies and delegations. I cannot say that I was more impressionable than other men of the time, but his presence affected me more deeply than that of any other man that I had ever met, not excepting the grand Daniel Webster, with his craggy brows and cavernous eyes that more often repelled than attracted by their solemnity.

Kossuth's fascination was due partly to the glamour of his recent exploits, partly to his deep, full, rich voice that had a strange music in it, partly to his sad, patient, pleading look, afterwards recalled to me by Mr. Lincoln when I saw him alone in the great White House—whence a little coffin had gone a few days before—partly to the gentleness of his manner, which added somewhat of female loveliness to its heroic dignity, but mostly to an indescribable magnetism, which emanated from him as the aroma from the rose—or seductiveness from a beautiful woman. The portraits painted of him at the time (some of which are still extant) representing him as an alert, eager, impulsive soldier ready to leap upon his war-steed and to wave his glittering falchion over his head (as David has painted Napoleon amid the narrow and rocky defiles of the Alps), were quite fantastic in their misconceptions. He was little of the soldier and very much of the

student with his thoughtful brows, or of the lawyer lost in complicated cases, or of the statesman whose shoulders bow beneath the weight of mightied monarchies. He moved me profoundly when I first saw him, and now that forty more winters have sifted their snows upon my head, I look back through the mist of years and still see him as an imposing figure, visionary and exaggerated perhaps, like the shadows which the setting sun casts upon the semi-luminous clouds of the mountain tops.

I shall not detain you with any elaborate details of Kossuth's historical career and services. Recent commemorations, sending their echoes from the Ural to the Rocky Mountains, have told his story to the overarching skies. Nothing more need be said except in the way of a personal contribution to that general estimate of his rank and worth, which posterity will ultimately form. That estimate, however, was not helped by one of our newspapers which said the other day that "Kossuth had gained great notoriety for a time by the eccentricity of his character and the romantic adventures of his life." He was eccentric in one respect, in that he devoted extraordinary abilities, which might have won him fame and wealth, in any of the liberal professions, to a single great public

end; and his life was adventurous, in that it was full of vicissitudes, changing from the palace to the prison, from the legislative hall, where his word was a command, to the narrow chamber where he wrote for his bread, or from the idolatry of populous cities to the loneliness of the desert. Indeed, phases of his adventures were as romantic as any that ever confronted a chivalric knight who, in defence of an ideal aim, courted the extremes of danger with a manly emprise, prowess and endurance; but adventure and romance were mere incidents in a career of far more substantial meaning. If you will read the youthful papers in which he began the struggle against the Hapsburg dynasty; the early speeches in the Hungarian Diet by which he gathered the national feelings of his countrymen into a unity of conviction; the official documents which called an army and a treasury into existence; the hundred addresses which aroused the sober and sedate inhabitants of England into transports of enthusiasm, and the two hundred others in this country, which rolled like thunder from the Alleghanies to the Rockies, you will everywhere discover the evidences of a serious, sober reason, looking before and after, of an affection grasping the broadest interests, and of a courage recoiling

before no difficulty. Kossuth was not a fanatic, but a careful student of principles, an intelligent publicist, a wise legislator, who stood front to front with the most eminent statesmen of his age, and brought to the encounter with them a knowledge, a prudence, a wisdom at least equal to their own. His schemes were elevated and generous in their aims, and rational and feasible in their means; or, if they were impracticable in any respect, they were so only, as all schemes are at first impracticable, which purpose to bring the conditions of society up to a higher standard of justice and truth, but which in the end demonstrate their rationality by becoming a part of the established order of the world. His real intellectual and moral affinities turned him to the Pericles, the Catos, and the Ciceros of antiquity; to the Vaninies and Brunos of the renaissance; to the L'Hopitals and Condés of France, the Sydneys, Hampdens, Vanes, and Chatams of England; to William of Orange, and, most of all, to the Adamses, the Henrys, the Jeffersons, the Washingtons of our own colonial history.

It must be remembered in estimating Kossuth that he was pre-eminently a child of the age in which he lived. He was born in 1802, or, as Victor Hugo, who came in the same year, says,

"when the Nineteenth Century was two years old." The continent of Europe was still feeling the shock of that great earthquake, the French Revolution, and a gigantic spirit of the storm, Napoleon Bonaparte, was playing with the tempest at the height of his power, but not at the end of his career. The siege of Toulon had directed attention to him; the battle of the Sections in Paris, showing the efficacy of real bullets, disclosed his terrible earnestness; while the campaign of Italy had astounded the martinets and enthused the masses. This young soldier of fortune had been already chosen first Consul for life in France, and was soon to be proclaimed the Emperor; but Ulm and Eylau and Wagram and Jena and Boradino were yet to come. Kossuth as a child might have heard the tramp of those legions which carried victory or death to nearly every capital of Europe, and a few years later seen the all-conquerors broken, famished and distressed, as they retreated before the frost-demons of Russia, while their great leader, the tide of his fortunes rolled back and his dream of invincibleness dissolved, found his word of command, that once awed the world, dying away in the bleak air as an impotent sound. Kossuth was thirteen years of age when Waterloo dispersed his power,

and nineteen when he finally sank into the pit. A youth of quick sensibility and earnest purposes, living in the whirl of such agitations, he was deeply absorbed in those great questions of international law, of the pretentions of dynasties, of the origin of governments, of the rights of the people, which cannon volleys may disturb, but which human reason in the end determines and decides.

Destined to the profession of the law, Kossuth devoted his faculties to the study of it with the ardor of one who sees in it the life or death of his fellow men. He studied it, however, under the influences of that Philosophy of the Eighteenth Century, slightly modified by that of the Nineteenth, which had broken away from nearly all the religious and political theories of the past. Those superstitious creeds and emasculating fears which had made man the abject and cowering slave of his environment, had given way to the nobler view, that it is his destiny as it will be his triumph to become the master of nature by the force of his own genius. The logic of his reason and the impulses of his heart compelled him to the acceptance of the new doctrine, to which he was already inclined by the traditions of his family, seventeen members of which had been executed within a generation or

two for their fidelity to liberal principles, while his father, who was a nobleman and a lawyer, was no less a democrat, and the university in which he was educated was distinguished for the broad spirit that directed its instructions. The contests of that day, you will remember, the outcome of centuries of controversy, were fundamental, going to the very roots of human belief, and of deadly earnestness in that they involved the convictions and interests of all classes of the people.

It was a dogma of nearly all the old religions, which originated in times of the cruelest barbarism and ignorance, that political power was derived from some superior, generally some unknown god or gods who had delegated it to certain classes, priests or kings and the families to which they belonged. Strange as it may seem, this notion was to a large extent engrafted upon the accepted Christianity in spite of its grand inspiration as to the universal brotherhood of man and the common fatherhood of God. And it was confirmed and perpetuated by the whole tenor of feudalism. It would be incredible to us now if traces of it did not linger in many of the most enlightened courts of Europe, that men should ever have delighted in a self-degradation which confessed that cer-

tain families were hereditarily noble and divine, while their own families were by birth base and ignoble; or that they should ever have consented to kiss the feet of certain assumed superiors in a spirit of servility, which was ill-disguised under the name of loyalty. But such was the case.

As late as 1821, the Congress of Laybach, the mouthpiece of the Holy Alliance, as it was called, proclaimed without a blush that God had endowed a few persons, meaning emperors, kings and princes, with "a part of his sovereignty and made them solely responsible for its use. All changes of legislation and administration must emanate from them; everything that deviates from their will necessarily leads to disorders and commotions and evils far more insufferable than those they pretend to remedy." In other words, absolute submission to the decrees of their consecrated potentates was the rule of duty, and the slightest departure from them an evidence of wickedness and treason that deserved rebuke and punishment.

A sturdy line of thinkers, whose pathway was illuminated by the fires of the stake, had steadily protested against this view of political right and duty. From the dawn of the Renaissance down through the Italian Republics, the Reformation, the Freethinkers of England,

the Encyclopedists of France, our patriots of '76, and the French Revolutionists of '89, that hoary old dogma of dread and degradation had lost one after another of its miserable features until at this day it is almost completely abandoned. Men are now inclined to look no more for the source and measure of political life to unknown gods of the clouds and winds, who have often more of demon than divinity in them; to obscure oracles from the smoke of cruel sacrifices; to conclaves of cowled priests, mumbling of mysteries, while they grasp for gold; to imperial anarks wreathed in curses dark; or to lines of stern, black-bearded kings with wolvish eyes; but they turn to humanity itself, endowed with more than godlike or king-like dignity by the possession of reason, affection, conscience, and free-will, and thereby rendered capable of an indefinite growth in truth, goodness, and justice. As creatures of an infinite life, we now hold that all men as men are subject to equal responsibilities and entitled to an equal participation in things that are common to all.

Kossuth, in consecrating his youthful energy to the furtherance of the modern movement, began his work at home. As Hungary had ever been an independent nation with her own

traditions, language, genius, and government, his first aim was to recover the autocrasy which had been taken from her by the wiles of diplomacy and the force of the sword. As she was covered over with those fetters of restraint which a foolish self-interest inspires in the vain hope that the vast movements of industry and trade can be regulated by a petty legislation, his second aim was to substitute voluntary for servile labor, and to guarantee to every one the right to use his muscular strength and intellectual skill in the determination of his own destiny, according to his own desires, and not at the dictation of others, who were often strangers and always enemies. Then again, as she was still subjected to those religious exactions, which defrauded Protestants of the government of their own churches and schools, and oppressed Catholics with exorbitant and iniquitous taxes, he desired to bring about the emancipation and the equality of all religious confessions. National independence, industrial liberty, religious emancipation!

But how was he to achieve such changes? Sent to the Diet as the proxy of a landed proprietor, who had a voice but not a vote in the Lower House, his voice soon became more potential than a hundred votes. Yet the proceedings of the

Diet were secret and never reached the people, nor was there anywhere a public press to supply the deficiency. In this strait he and a few friends resorted to the strange contrivance of a written newspaper, which was circulated by hand from door to door; but even this feeble agency excited the suspicion of authority, and was forbidden. None the less, it was continued in secret, and Kossuth, the principal manager, was seized in his bed by night, tried for treason, and condemned to four years of solitary imprisonment. Of course, an outrage so arbitrary aroused a tremendous popular resentment; his release was demanded; the Diet took up his cause and made it its own. Austria relucted, but at the end of two years, as the Diet refused to pay its subsidies, it was compelled to yield. Kossuth was released, but, alas, for the purposes of the despots he who had gone to the dungeon an almost unknown agitator, came forth as the honored champion of freedom of the press, freedom of trade, and freedom of conscience, and a hero of the people.

Indeed, the work of propagation then became more active than ever; the written newspaper was supplanted by the lithographic newspaper; and the simple disquisition of

individuals gave way to a report of the discussions of the Diet, where the tone of a majority of the speakers had risen to an altitude of almost open defiance. It was resolved by the Diet that all the oppressive burdens of feudality should be lifted; that the peasants, no longer mere adscripts of the glebe, should be free proprietors of their lands; that equality of rights and duties should be the fundamental law; that political, civic, and religious liberty should be the common property of citizens, no matter what race they belonged to, or what tongue they speak, or what religion they professed; and as guarantee they demanded a national ministry to see to the defence of their rights and the execution of their local laws. Austria with reluctance was at length compelled to yield, a native ministry was appointed and Kossuth became the Minister of Finance. It was simply putting a weapon in his hands to beat down all past and proposed encroachments of a domination which had now become not only oppressive but loathsome.

It was in the midst of these perturbations that the year 1848, christened and consecrated in history as "the year of Revolution," arrived. The first outbreak took place in France in the month of February, but the fires of it had been long

smouldering under the surface and were everywhere seeking a vent. The great scientific discoveries of the previous age, enlarged and quickened by the spirit of inquiry they had inspired into philosophy and research, had given to man a wider mastery of the forces of nature. Increased facilities of intercourse, an easier and broader interchange of the products of skill and enterprise, had in a thousand ways promoted a vast intellectual, social and material activity. Literature was not only stimulated into fresh exertions, but broadened in its sympathies, and, aided by mechanical inventions, more universally distributed. The social conditions of mankind were changing and presented questions for discussion as to the welfare of the masses which could not be put aside. As wealth and capital increased, and were followed by a growing prosperity, these questions forced themselves upon attention. The industrial classes began to demand larger opportunities and a fairer share of the results to which their labor so effectively contributed. A few of the wiser governments, like those of England and Belgium, bought their peace by timely concessions to popular needs in the form of juster methods of taxation and a more expanded suffrage; but the blear-eyed bigots of use and wont persisted in their selfish and foolish old modes.

They were awakened to their real dangers only by the actual uprising of the people and the discharge of guns. Greece broke away from the inhuman tyranny of the Turks; Italy revolted against the exactions of her hosts of petty dukes and princes and the overbearing preponderance of Austria; the castles of the Rhine, erewhile the haunts of the robber-barons, began to glare on the midnight skies. Once more the students of the universities thundered forth Luther's grand old hymn, "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott;" peasants turned their scythes to the reaping of redder harvests than those of the field; and tumultuary upheavals soon shook the pavements of capital cities with earthquake rumbles. The rulers, offering reforms when it was too late, had no recourse but to armies of suppression. In a little while the whole surface of Europe exhibited the wild aspect which Byron saw upon the hills, where

> "———from peak to peak, the rattling crags among
> Leaped the live thunder; not from one lone cloud,—
> But every mountain then had found a tongue,
> And Jura answered through her misty shroud
> Back to the joyous Alps, who called to her aloud."

Hungary, quick to feel the generous impulse, was the first to proclaim her independence, and Kossuth was lifted on the top wave of the rising

flood by an almost unanimous vote of both houses of the National Diet, sustained by the adherence of every municipality and every village, and charged with the conduct of the tempest. Rejoicing in his intelligence and confident of his honor and patriotism, the power conferred upon him was almost dictatorial. But never was a heavier burden imposed upon the shoulders of a man. The people, in convention assembled, repeating the accents of Jefferson's immortal paper, claimed to be a nation; yet, composed as they were of several different, even hostile races, they were utterly unorganized and without means. It fell upon Kossuth to do what our Hamilton had done at the close of the Revolutionary war, that is, to create a Treasury; and it may be said of him, as Webster said of Hamilton, that "he struck the rock of the national resources, and copious streams gushed forth; he touched the dead corpse of public credit, and it sprang upon its feet." It fell upon him besides to raise an army, and he sent forth his appeal, which, like Lincoln's first proclamation, was answered by a similar song, "We are coming, Father Lajos, three hundred thousand strong;" and that improvised army, which sprang almost spontaneously from the soil, like the first volunteers of our Civil War, had to be armed, provisioned, and disciplined.

Thus raw and inchoate, it was compelled to meet the train-bands of Croats, Slavs, and Germans, which Austria had treacherously suborned, as well as the veteran troops of the Empire itself, in a sort of double war, externally against the Empire, and internally against tumultuous hordes of semi-savages. Kossuth, although not educated as a soldier, put himself at the head of his troops and shared in all the vicissitudes of their desperate campaigns. In the starving bivouacs on the mountain sides, when the rocks were their beds and the drifting snow their coverlids; in the furious forays of a barbarous frontier; in the conflagration of villages, when their homes went up in flames; in the deadly conflicts of the ranged battle, where thousands on both sides went down to sudden death,—he took his part, rallying the hopeless and cheering the brave to more vigorous onsets. They fought, like brave men, long and well. For weeks together, every day saw its bloody conflict; and every night the skies were red with the reflected light of burning towns and villages. Thus, for two years they protracted the struggle. The internal enemies were three times dispersed, the external invaders were driven beyond the frontiers, once to the gates of Vienna (nay, to the very halls of the Hapsburgs), where the victors might have dictated their own

terms but for the cruel intervention of Russia, never to be forgotten nor forgiven.

Alas! what could those poor peasants do, though the legendary descendants of fathers who had conquered Cyrus, and Alexander, and the Persian Kings; what, though the sons of that Attila, who had once swept over Europe as the Scourge of God, could they do against so formidable a foe? They could only fight, and fight they did; they fought in the spirit of the lad of eighteen who, when surrounded by a hostile troop, was asked in pure pity to call for quarter, and replied, "Hungarians will not cry for quarter till the fatherland is free," and so let his noble soul exale through the hundred bullet-holes that pierced his body. At last, overwhelmed by numbers and betrayed by some that he had trusted, Kossuth was compelled to resign his military command; many of his companions were executed on the spot, many were carried to dungeons, and he himself only escaped with extreme difficulty to the shores of the Danube. Ah! what a desolate hour must that have been? Looking across the stream he saw his country "a solemn wilderness, where all the brave lay dead;" in the roar of the waters through the Iron Gates he heard the sobs and sighs of his comrades in prison, while the tumult of the cur-

rent scarcely equaled the tumult of grief in his heart. He yielded his sword to the Turks, who, more Christian than Christians, refused to surrender him to the allied sovereigns, though often summoned to do so. Nominally, they confined him to a fortress, yet allowed him to go free and to wander along the bleak coasts of Asia, where every hillock was the tomb of a buried civilization, and the winds of the desert whistled among the weeds that grew over the sites of once populous cities.

In this dark hour it was that our Republic stretched out its sheltering arms to the expatriated hero, and invited him as a guest to our shores. Austria, of course, protested against us, but our defence was in the hands of Daniel Webster, whose arguments were apt to be woven of chain-mail and riveted on both sides with flawless bolts. Perhaps the timely appearance in the Mediterranean of a stately frigate, flying the Stars and Stripes and exhibiting a double row of grinning battle teeth, gave an added force to the small shot of diplomacy. Be that as it may, Kossuth was taken on board of our man-of-war amid the cheers of gallant tars, who ached only for a more serious conflict, and after landing for a while in England, where he excited by his speech the usually slow and phlegmatic blood

of John Bull into ecstacies of approval, he was brought to our embraces. Never before in the annals of nations had a single, unfriended man been received by more earnest acclamations of welcome than Kossuth was received by our people. Even now, after an interval of so many years, I still feel their shouts tingling in my veins. He did not come to us with the halos of success around him; but, what was no less appealing, he came with the prestige of one who had deserved success and lost it through no demerits of his own.

His welcome, indeed, was all the more heartfelt in that he was not a victor, but a martyr, representing in his failure all the downtrodden nationalities of Europe which, by the swift reactions that followed the spasms of 1848, had succumbed to the despots. Hungary lay panting and breathless at the feet of the Czar; France through distracted counsels was tottering toward the verge of an abyss, where the sword of an usurper gleamed in the distance; even Prussia looked up to a lowering heaven, not yet wholly without stars; and Italy, like a captive nightingale, could sing no more in her rosy bower, but only shiver and be silent in the rasping breezes of the north. Kossuth was received by us as our Washington would have

been received by the lovers of liberty abroad, if he had failed at Trenton or Monmouth and been sent by the British authorities to eat the bitter bread of exile in foreign lands. We simply saw in him a son of the people, who, almost alone and unfriended, had bearded the two most powerful dynasties of the world, and though stricken down in the attempt, still a terror to their eyes. How could our souls fail to go forth to him in love and admiration? With a few of us, perhaps, the excitement was only contagious, a sort of fox fire which glows but does not burn, or an auroral flush reflected from a cliff of ice; but with the most of us it was sincere and outgushing and mighty as the flow of the Mississippi.

Had our feelings been dead at the outset, that magical voice of his, when it had once got to telling his story, would, like the bugle call of a Highland chief, have rallied every man to his side. Great Heavens! what oratory it was. I have heard many of the masters of speech, but I have heard none that had a completer mastery than he. In intellectual force and penetration he was the equal of any of them; his voice was as melliferous, his manner as charming and persuasive, but his imagination was warmed and colored by an oriental blood that

was not theirs, and he surpassed them all in a depth and intensity of feeling which I cannot describe. It was a sort of perpetual white heat, which did not blaze or flame out, and yet was always hot to the core. For the most part his manner was easy and coloquial as if he were talking to a friend on a point that concerned him; but when he was suddenly excited, as some great thought or image swam into his ken, his tones rose in the air like the chords of an æolian when the wind plays over its strings, or like the roar of a torrent that falls from the crest of a mountain and wakens the echoes of far-off summits. His invective and his pathos were alike fearfully intense. No one who heard it could ever forget the awful bitterness with which, referring to the young Emperor of Austria, he spoke of the "Beardless Nero, the murderer of my country;" and how spontaneously the tears gushed to the eyes when he referred to his dead comrades of the battlefield as "the nameless demi-gods, each with a smile on his face as if he rejoiced to make so poor a sacrifice as his life for so great a cause as his country." Yet he was never boisterous, vehement or gesticulative; he was equable like the flow of his own lordly Danube, or our own more lordly Hudson. He never put himself in

any tempest or whirlwind of emotion; but he controlled his emotions, and by that self-control he controlled his hearers. In listening to him you soon lost all sense of the speaker, i. e., of his form, his voice, his imagery, his action, and become simply absorbed in his theme.

It was owing to this intensity of interest in his theme that Kossuth's eloquence was often as manifest in private as it was in public. In the solitude of his chamber, while walking the floor, or musing after dinner, he would pour out his thoughts with the lyrical enthusiasm or the epic grandeur of a poet, when "his muse of fire ascends the highest heaven of invention." I can recall one time when I was almost alone with him (perhaps Count Pulszki and others of his staff may have been present) and he began as if communing with himself: "Oh that the poor people of Europe were as free as this good people of the United States! Oh that they could brush away that rubbish of Kings and Princes who sit like incubi upon their energies, and stifle the sources of their happiness! Oh that their standing armies, which are a wasting pestilence, might become industrial armies! Behold! Europe's history is reckoned by centuries, and yet the countless millions there stand almost where they stood

when America emerged from the unexplorable darkness that had covered her as the twilight of the sea hides its gems. A few pilgrims, driven out for liberty sake, land on the wild coast of Plymouth, and within a generation or two the unknown wilderness blooms into an empire—' whole as the marble, founded as the rock, as broad and general as the casing air.' On the scarcely out-rotted roots of the primitive forest proud cities arise, teeming with boundless life, growing like the grass of the prairies in spring, advancing like the steam-engine, baffling time and distance like the telegraph, and spreading the pulsations of their own hearts to the remotest parts of the world; free as the circling air, independent as the soaring eagle, active as the forces of nature, and more powerful than the giants of fable." He then went on with a prophetic description of what Europe would be if once set free, which I can only compare to the sublime visions of St. John at Patmos, recorded in the apocalypse: "And I, John, saw the kings of the earth with their armies, and they were cast into a lake of burning fire; I saw the thrones and they that sat upon them, and they were judged; I saw the dragon, the old serpent, which is Satan, and he was bound for a thousand years; and after that I saw a

new heaven and a new earth, and the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband ; and I heard a great voice, which said: 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor pain: for the former things are passed away.'"

If Kossuth had spoken only in his own language, he would have ranked among the most eminent of orators, but it adds greatly to his eminence that he was able to speak in several languages with equal force and facility. Once, in the course of a single week in New York, he was called upon to address audiences composed respectively of Germans, Italians, Frenchmen, and Americans, and in each case the applause which followed nearly every sentence proved that he spoke to their hearts. His English, for which I can vouch, was most remarkable. It was not so much our modern every-day English as the English of the Elizabethan age. He had learned it, you know, while he was in prison, from Shakespeare and the Bible, and it had in it at times the sinewy strength, the rounded fulness, the majestic roll of Hooker or Jeremy Taylor. Indeed, it was

curious to listen to idioms that were like the idioms which the master poet of mankind has put in the mouth of Brutus when he pleaded for the liberties of Rome, or in the mouth of the banished Lear when he discoursed with the elements and made the oak-cleaving thunder-bolts the vehicles and companions of his passion.

Kossuth's diversity of tongue was not more notable than his versatility of topic. Having but one theme, the liberation of his country, it might be supposed that his handling of it would soon become monotonous; but it was not so; for, as a skillful musician varies the leading motive of his inspiration into innumerable minor harmonies, so he varied his great theme into a thousand accessories. In speaking to the several nationalities, as I have said, he spoke to each one in its own tongue, but he also spoke to each one of the peculiarities of its position, quoting often passages from its popular poets, and citing the thrilling moments of its history. When he spoke to the Bar, the Press, the Municipality, the Militia, Tammany Hall, the Clergy, or Women, he spoke with a special appropriateness of subject and time which each one liked to hear. His first address, at Staten Island, I remember, was a declaration of the

legitimacy of the Hungarian movement, and the next day he followed it up at Castle Garden with an outline of his principles and aims as a reformer. Before the Corporation, as a metropolitan representative of the people of the United States, he discussed our hereditary policy as a Free State. Before the editors he laid bare the true idea of nationality; before the lawyers, Russia's piratical invasion of international law; before the militia, the relations of a citizen soldiery to the State; before Tammany Hall, which was then an honest political association, the essential characteristics of a true democracy; before the clergy, the superiority of life to faith; and before the women, the claims of liberty to their undying devotion.

From New York Kossuth went to Philadelphia, and there, in Independence Hall, his voice rang the original proclamation of the old bell, of "liberty to all the land," while he compared a spurious French republicanism to that nobler form of it which had been cradled in the sacred chamber in which he was heard. At Baltimore, the city of monuments, he showed that the struggles which they commemorated were the same in aspiration and aim as the struggles in which he had been engaged. Soon after, at Washington, in the presence of the Supreme Court, the Senate,

and the House of Representatives, he dwelt upon the rightful relations of America to the Old World; but his great triumph in Washington was at a banquet, at which, discoursing of the reciprocal duties of nations, he carried with him many distinguished leaders, among them Stephen A. Douglas, a candidate for the Presidency, and won from his righthand neighbor, Daniel Webster, himself the author of orations not surpassed in the Greek pages of Demosthenes or in the Latin pages of Cicero, an outburst of irrepressible applause.

From Washington Kossuth journeyed to Columbus, to Cincinnati, to Jackson, to New Orleans, to Mobile, to Charleston, to Richmond, back to Albany, to Salem, to Worcester, to Boston; touching, as he passed, on the weakness of Despotism, on the Balance of Power, on a Sound and Honest Commerce, and on Democracy as the Spirit of the Age, in strains of commanding eloquence. Arrived in New England, he seemed to know the minutest events of her history as well as he knew those of his own country, so that at Lexington and Concord the embattled farmers rose from their graves "to fire the shot heard round the world," and in Faneuil Hall the spirits of the Adamses, the Otises and the Hancocks laid over again the foundations of that constitu-

tional government, which is now the strength and glory of sixty millions of freemen. His last speech was given here at New York on the Future of Nations, when he traced the history of the old civilizations, ascribing their ruin to the weakness of their people, and proclaiming with prophetic earnestness that our duration would depend, not upon the exuberant gifts of soil and climate, not upon material prosperity, however rich and glowing, not upon the inscrutable decrees of Providence, but upon the manliness, the integrity, the conscience, and the love of justice of our individual men.

Kossuth's mission to the United States was not, in all respects, a success such as he desired, but neither was it a failure. The principal points that he presented were: First, that Russia, by her interference in the domestic struggle of Hungary, had committed a gross breach of the laws of nations, which could not be regarded with indifference by other nations, and especially by the United States, whose existence was due to such a struggle; second, that the people of the United States ought to insist upon the rights of an open commerce with all the people of Europe, whether they were in a state of revolt or not against their own governments; and third, that the people of Hungary

were and ought to remain a free and independent nation, exercising the right of self-government without intervention on the part of Austria and other monarchies. To these points, as sentiments, no one could object; on the contrary, they were accepted with tumultuary plaudits; many of our prominent statesmen gave a nominal adherence to them, at least; and Kossuth was encouraged to raise money on his own conditional notes to help the propagation of them abroad. As sentiments, forms of speech with no gunpowder behind them, they were scarcely more than a *brutum fulmen*, a flash of heat lightning, which does not strike, or a mutter of Salmonean thunder that carries no bolt. They were wholly harmless, yet, put the gunpowder behind them and you are launched at once into a career of active armed intervention in the quarrels of foreign nations. But is that advisable? Unless a nation chooses to make itself a Don Quixote, bound to rescue from wrong all the Dulcineas of the globe, including the swarthy queens of the South Seas, or an Anarcharsis Cloots, a spokesman for the universe, its foreign policy must not be a matter of mere sentiment but of fixed principle.

It was objected to Kossuth's demands, and particularly by Henry Clay, who was then on

his deathbed, that they contravened our traditional attitude of neutrality, as it had been prescribed by Washington in his Farewell Address, which ought to be regarded as the final testament of the Father of his Country to his children. Mr. Clay and other objectors, however, had forgotten that our policy of neutrality was by no means fixed and absolute. We had ourselves announced, in a message of President Monroe, that no foreign despotism should ever put a foot on this continent, either north or south. Mr. Clay himself, in one of the most persuasive speeches he ever made, had pleaded the cause of the South American republics against the domination of Spain, and proposed our taking part in the Congress of Panama. Daniel Webster, animated by a remembrance of the grand old Greeks, who were our teachers in politics as in all the finer arts, and had left their bones on the ever-memorable fields of Thermopylæ and Marathon in defence of national independence, never spoke with a more Doric solidity or a more classic beauty than when he defended modern Greece in its revolt against the Turks. He demonstrated that the claims of the allied powers of Europe were contrary to reason, destructive of progress, and wholly incompatible with the independence of

nations. "There are but two forms of government," he said, "the absolute and the regulated, or constitutional; and our sympathies, our assistance, our power must ever be on the side of that form of which we are the most illustrious exponents. As Greece, in the olden times, had been the triumphant conqueror of tyranny and ignorance, it was but an act of gratitude, for us in the new times, to help her to maintain her glory." Even in his later correspondence with Baron Hulseman, the Austrian Chargé d'Affairs, in vindication of our hospitality to Kossuth himself, he went quite as far in his expressions as anything that Kossuth had said.

But he went no further, nor could any one of us go any further for a very good reason. We happened to be living in an enormous glass-house and could not approve of an indiscriminate throwing of stones. In other words, we were keeping three millions of human beings in a remorseless bondage, against the pity and sense of justice of the world, and could not allow of foreign interposition. A few slight tentatives at interference on the part of England had aroused our sensibilities to frenzy. Kossuth was aware of this weak spot, and did not touch it directly, yet his constant reiteration of the doctrine of human freedom revived and kindled our

earlier feelings. As a monk of the Middle Ages, taking up a palimpsest all blurred with mould, would rub the scrawlings upon it (some dusty chronicle of a convent, perhaps), until he revealed a treatise by Cicero, or a poem of Virgil, so he brought back to us our original inspirations. How was it possible for him to refer so warmly to his own poor Hungarians, and to prove their right to a part in the making of their laws, without recalling our own fundamental principle as proclaimed in the Declaration? Why should we sympathize with the oppressed people of Europe, and be indifferent to the oppressed Africans within our threshold? Though wearing the burnished livery of the sun, were they not men and brothers like all the rest? Should we open our hearts and our purses to the far-off sufferers, and close them to the sufferers at home?

One coincidence, which perhaps you have never observed, is remarkable. In 1850 it was by common consent of our two great political parties agreed that slavery was forever settled; it was settled by a compromise that was never again to be touched, and thenceforth a thing taboo. Miss Martineau, when she was here, said that American politicians who disagreed on every other topic agreed on this, that slavery was too sacred a

theme even to be discussed. They who dared to discuss it were proper objects for the vengeance of the mob. Well, Kossuth talked in 1851–1852, and in less than four years from that time the anti-slavery agitation had shattered the old parties to pieces, called into being a new party, put the young Pathfinder of the West at its head as a candidate for the Presidency, and given him more than a million and a quarter of votes. A sentiment born of heart-beats had run like the current of an electric battery from soul to soul, till it had fused them into one, as it has since fused sixty millions of people into a republic where only free men breathe.

Kossuth's plans, however, were nullified, not so much by our timidity as by the *Coup d'Etat* of Napoleon the Third in France. I was with him at dinner, with a few others, when the report came that the President of the French Republic had betrayed his trust and proclaimed himself an Emperor. At first he was greatly dejected by the news, but rallying his spirits in a moment, he exclaimed, "Oh that your Congress would vote me one of your frigates, or that your rich merchants would buy me one, that I might proceed to Hungary, fill it with the brave sons of the Magyar, and, landing in Italy or France, put a stopper upon this outburst of hell!" This was not boast-

ing, but a simple, honest expression of his confidence in his power to rally the masses to his flag. None the less, it was scarcely more than dreaming; the Empire was sustained by the plebiscite, and it took twenty years, with the genius of Bismarck and the sword of Von Moltke to the fore, to prick the tremendous wind-bag which seemed like a real thunder cloud in the air.

Kossuth returned to Europe in 1852, going into retirement at Turin, Italy, and few things in history are more pathetic than those later days of exile and obscurity. The world seemed to have suddenly receded from him, leaving him alone with his memories. He, the idol of his country and the welcome guest of the foremost civilized nations, sunk as by some hostile enchantment into a cave of abandonment and forgetfulness. So great was the contrast between his early and later days that it still brings tears to the eyes, and what renders it the more touching is that it was nobly self-imposed. He might have returned to Hungary, as many of his companions did, and resumed a high place in her councils, but that implied that he should ask forgiveness for deeds that he considered his special title to an immortal glory. It implied that he should recognize as King of his native land an Emperor to whom he had sworn an eternal hostility, as he had sworn

it to the very principle of monarchy. No, better for him it was to be an outcast than an apostate. Willingly his grateful friends would have heaped him with the favors of fortune, but his self-respect would not allow him to accept of charity when he was entitled to justice. At the worst, he might, without loss of honor, like the blind old Belisarius, have gone upon the highways and begged for an obole from those whose cause he had defended at the cost of all he held dear, but he preferred to work for his living, to write, to lecture, to teach the languages, and so honestly earn the crust that nourished him and the rude roof that sheltered his head. One grand feature of his character was that, in his destitution and advancing age he did not repine or fret under his reverses, or, like the imperial captive of St. Helena, break his beak on the bars of his cage while he screamed with impotent resentment against his fate. At most a plaintive word escaped him now and then, as when he said, "I am like a wandering bird; nay, worse than a wandering bird, for he may find a summer home among his fellows, while I am an outcast on the face of the earth, having no citizenship anywhere." Yet he never despaired of himself or his cause. "When I was formerly an exile as now," he wrote, "and arrogant tyrants debated about my

blood; when my infant children were in prison, and my wife, the faithful companion of my sorrows, was hunted like a deer by the sleuth hounds of power; when the heart of my old mother was breaking under the shattered fortunes of her house, all of us cast to the winds like the yellow leaves of a fallen tree; when my fatherland, my sweet fatherland, was one half murdered and the other half in chains; when the sky of freedom was dark down to the horizon, and still darkening, nowhere a ray of hope, nowhere a spark of consolation, I did not despair, nor shall I ever despair, until man sinks back into his primitive bruteism and the God of Heaven has forgotten His attributes of Justice and Truth." What a sublime patience, and what a sublime hope!

Kossuth was not, however, wholly inactive in these last years of seclusion and adversity. When in 1865 Italy strove again to rid herself of the Austrian domination, he joined with Mazzini and Garibaldi, he consulted with Cavour and Napoleon III., whom he detested, to help in her deliverance. He organized a Hungarian corps, which did good service till the false-hearted peace at Villa Franca darkened the general hope. Again, when France and England combined against Russia, that "rock on which the world's

sighs for freedom are always breaking," he sent his Hungarian friends to join the allies, and again he failed to reap the reward which his soul desired. It was after these disappointments Kossuth repeated, in a book written a few years before he died, that he and his few adherents were mere wanderers of the deserts, without a country or a home. And such, indeed, was the outward fact, but his death itself disclosed a silver lining to the cloud. Death, which we are apt to picture as a grim skeleton, with a sweeping scythe in his hand, carries also in another hand the wand of a magician, which transforms the ugliest realities into realms of splendor and beauty. The same touch that laid this self-styled homeless and friendless man in the tomb, aroused a country that had been silently regenerated by means of him, and five thousand compatriots followed his coffin with garlands wet with the dew of tears. Five hundred thousand others, scattered over the entire globe, uttered their speeches and songs of admiration. The obloquies that had pursued him in life were changed into hosannas, and the mud once flung upon him, like the mystic weeds and thorns in the lap of St. Elizabeth, bloomed into wreaths of lilies and roses. Nay, is there not reason to hope, as his spirit passed into another world, that all "The

inheritors of unfilled renown" rose from their thrones to honor him?

Kossuth refused to return to Hungary, yet he was there all the time, for his thoughts pervaded her counsels and shaped her destinies. Hungary, no longer a dependent, is an integral and equal half of the empire; the old barbaric laws are repealed or modified, and his principles are inscribed on the banners of her statesmen and embalmed in the hearts of her people. As in that old legend of the Huns, his ancestors, which Kaulbach has transferred to the canvas, and which tells how in a battle with the Romans, when every man was stricken dead to the earth, he yet rose to renew the battle in the air, so in the battle for the rights of humanity the fight goes on even when the combatants have perished. In the viewless aspirations of the human heart, in the silent forges of human thought, it still goes on, and it will go on till truth and justice have triumphed, and man, every man, shall stand in the full dignity of his manhood, which is the highest realization of Godhead that we can know or even conceive.

JOHN JAMES AUDUBON

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LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

Mr. Carlyle, in his famous book on "Heroes and Hero Worship," has told us of the hero in the several aspects of Divinity, Prophet, Priest, Poet, King, and Man of Letters, but he overlooked one phase of the character, which human history knows: the Hero as Man of Science. A little before he was writing his volume there roamed in the primeval forests of America a simple naturalist, whose life had exhibited every quality of prowess and endurance, every trait of

* As long ago as 1842, I made the acquaintance of Mr. Audubon, and wrote about him in the *Democratic Review* of that year. Again, eleven years later, in 1853, I prepared a sketch of him for a volume published by Messrs. G. P. Putnam & Co., called "The Homes of American Authors." These papers, a short time after his death, were condensed into an address, which was read to a small literary circle at Roslyn, Long Island. The recent erection of a monument to his memory, in Trinity Cemetery, by the New York Academy of Sciences, has induced me to revise this address, in order to present his extraordinary career to the minds of a later generation.

manly and heroic endeavor, that is to be found in the most illustrious of his Great Men. If we may believe what his fast friend Emerson has said of heroism, that it was "a contempt for safety and ease," "a self-trust which slights the restraints of prudence in the plentitude of its energy and power," "a mind of such a balance that no disturbance can shake its will, which pleasantly, and as it were merrily, advances to its own music," the "extreme of individual nature," "obedience to the impulses of individual character," "undaunted boldness and a fortitude not to be wearied out," then was John James Audubon one of the truest of the world's heroes, worthy to be ranked and recorded on the same page with the most distinguished of human celebrities.

For more than half a century he followed with almost religious devotion a beautiful and elevated pursuit, enlarging its boundaries by his discoveries, and illustrating its objects by his art. In all climates and in all weathers, scorched by tropic suns and frozen by arctic colds; now diving fearlessly into the densest forests and now wandering alone over desolate prairies, far beyond the haunts of civilization, and frequented only by savage beasts or more savage men; in perils, in difficulties and in

doubt; listening only to the music of the birds and the lofty inspirations of his own thoughts, he kept for a lifetime on an original path, which to some seemed chimerical and to others utterly useless, until in the later years and fading twilight of his days his efforts were crowned with success. The records of man's endeavor contain few nobler examples of strength of purpose and indefatigable zeal.

John James Audubon was born on the 4th of May, 1780, in Louisiana, a French province still, on a plantation near the city of New Orleans. Both the time and place of his birth were significant. It was in the spring of the year, when the flowers and birds had just awakened from their winter's sleep, and among the orange groves which were giving forth their richest perfumes. Cradled in the open air, under grand secular trees, he may be said to have been lulled to his slumbers by that prince of melodious polyglots, the mocking-bird.

By parentage Audubon was of mingled French and Spanish blood. His father, a naval officer under Napoleon, was one of those restless spirits which the titanic genius of the great commander had called forth in France, and to whom the whole surface of the earth was an inheritance and a scene for exploits. It must

have been a pretty vigorous stock, as the grandfather, a poor fisherman of La Vendée, had a family "of which twenty-one grew to years of maturity." His father was the twentieth born, and was sent into the world when he was but twelve years old, "with a shirt, a warm dress, a cane, and the old man's blessing," to seek his fortune as he could. He set out as a boy before the mast, and at seventeen was rated an able-bodied seaman; at twenty commanded a vessel; in a few years accumulated a small fortune in the trade with St. Domingo; made purchases in Louisiana, Virginia, and Pennsylvania; joined the French forces under Lafayette, who helped us in our Revolution; and afterward was a captain or commodore in the imperial navy, living to the age of ninety.

From him the naturalist inherited his fine form, his enterprise, his vigor, his simplicity, and his honesty. The mother, of Spanish derivation, named Anne Moynette, whom the father had married in Louisiana, was taken after the birth of three sons and a daughter to the estate of Aux Cayes, in St. Domingo, where she was put to death during a terrible insurrection of the blacks. The children, with some plate and money, were saved by a few of the more faith-

ful servants, and subsequently carried to France, where, on a beautiful estate on the Loire and under the care of an indulgent stepmother, John James began his more formal education. His father destined him to the navy, and he was taught mathematics, geography, navigation, music, drawing, and dancing. He took to the music, and soon became somewhat proficient in the violin, the flute, the flageolet, and the guitar. His drawing master was the afterwards celebrated painter David, but, as he says, "the eyes and noses of giants, and the heads of horses represented in ancient sculpture, were not the themes I would be at"; so he stole away from the schools to the woods, where he tried to sketch more living objects. Alas, in his ignorance, "his pencil gave birth to a family of cripples. So maimed were most of them that they resembled the mangled corpses on a field of battle." Yet he persevered, and he produced hundreds of these rude sketches in the course of the year, to be regularly made a bonfire of on the anniversary of his birthday.

In his sixteenth year John James was sent back to America to occupy and superintend a farm called Mill Grove, which the father possessed on the banks of Perkioming Creek, a branch of the Schuylkill near Philadelphia. This

was just what he wished, as he could hunt, fish, draw and raise all sorts of fowls to his heart's content. "One of my fancies then," he writes, "was to be ridiculously fond of dress, to hunt in black satin breeches, wear pumps while shooting, and display the finest ruffled shirts." But he had no vices, ate no butcher's meat, lived chiefly on fruits and vegetables, and never drank spirits or even wine. He was, however, excessively fond of dancing, attended all the balls given in the neighborhood, and by his fine looks became an object of admiration to the fair sex. A young cotemporary, Mr. William Bakewell, afterwards his brother-in-law, describes his house, however, as not by any means that of a dandy. It was already an attractive museum. "The walls were festooned with all sorts of birds' eggs, blown out and strung on a thread. The chimney-piece was covered with stuffed squirrels, raccoons and opossums, the shelves were covered with fishes, frogs, snakes and other reptiles, and his rough paintings of birds were arrayed along the walls. He was an admirable marksman, an expert swimmer and skater, a clever and graceful rider, and noted for his great strength as well as for the elegance of his figure and carriage—altogether a country Crichton.

His next door neighbor, an Englishman by

birth (though of French descent, the English having changed his name of Bayquille into Bakewell), was duly despised by the son of the Gaul, until he discovered, by a chance visit, that the house contained a fair daughter, with whom the son of the Gaul soon struck up a friendship. It was agreed that he should teach the lass the art of drawing, while the lass taught the lad a more perfect pronunciation of English; and, as it might have been expected in the case, this Lucy Bakewell became to the young man, like Wordsworth's Lucy, "fair as a star, when only one is shining in the sky." In due time they were betrothed, but before marriage paternal prudence suggested that as the collecting and drawing of birds was not likely to prove a stable or affluent source of income, the youth should go to the city to be trained in some lucrative commercial pursuit. He tried the experiment in New York, but did not turn out an apt pupil of tare and tret; and then, after a visit of a year or two to France, where he was enlisted in the French navy as midshipman, but never served, he returned to marry his dear Lucy and be very happy (1808). No man ever made a better choice of a wife. This woman became the veriest companion of his life, sharing throughout in his pursuits, his sacrifices, his adventures, and contributing to his suc-

cess not only by her sympathy, but by her active exertions. She was willing at all times to endure any hardships that her husband might follow the bent of his genius, and show to the world what her unerring instinct had at once discerned —the genuine stuff of manhood and ability that was in him. It was determined, soon after their marriage, that they should begin under the most favorable circumstances, and for that purpose he sold the property at Mill Grove, and, with the proceeds, departed for the great West, that already loomed before the eyes of aspiring mortals as the proper place to achieve a prodigious fortune with very little effort.

Accordingly, passing over to Pittsburg, and providing himself with a mattress, guns and ammunition, a skiff, and two stout negroes to help in the rowing—he got afloat with his young wife on the bosom of the Ohio, "the queen of rivers," and, like Ulysses, "sailed toward the sunset and the baths of all the western stars." The modes of travel at that day were strongly in contrast with the more easy and expeditious modes of the present time. It was in the month of October that the little convoy set off, and his description of the voyage, in the midst of the rich display of the season, is full of poetry. "Every tree," he says, "was hung with long and flowing festoons

of vines, or loaded with clustered fruits of varied brilliancy, their rich carmine mingling beautifully with the yellow foliage which yet predominated over the green leaves, with reflections of livelier tints from the clear stream than ever painter portrayed or poet imagined; for the sun was giving forth those glowing hues which proclaim the Indian summer. They glided down the stream, meeting no other ripple than that formed by the propulsion of their own boat. Now and then a large catfish rose to the surface in pursuit of a shoal of fry, which, starting simultaneously from the water, like so many silvery arrows, scattered a shower of light, while the pursuer, with open jaws, seized the stragglers, and with a splash of his tail disappeared. At night, a tinkling of bells along the shore told them that cattle were gently roving from valley to valley in search of food or returning to their distant homes. The hooting of a great owl, or the muffled noise of its wings, as it sailed smoothly over the stream, arrested the ear, with the sound of the boatman's horn as it came winding more and more softly from afar. When daylight returned many songsters burst forth with echoing notes, which grew mellower with the distance. Here and there the lonely cabin of a squatter struck the eye, giving note of a commencing

civilization. Sluggish flatboats were overtaken and passed, some laden with products from the headwaters of streams that flow into the Ohio, and others crowded with emigrants in search of a new home in the boundless solitudes of the far west." "When I think of that time," Audubon writes at the close of his narrative, "and call back to mind the beauty and the grandeur of those almost uninhabited shores; when I picture to myself the dense forests, with their lofty summits, that everywhere spread along the hills and overhung the margin of the stream, unmolested by the axe of the settler; when I know how dearly purchased the safe navigation of that river has been by the blood of many worthy Virginians; when I see that no longer any aborigines are to be found there, and that the vast herds of elks, deer, and buffaloes which once pastured on those hills and in those valleys, making to themselves great roads to the several salt springs, no longer exist; when I reflect that all this portion of our Union, instead of being in a state of nature, is now covered with villages, farms, and towns, where the din of hammers and machinery is constantly heard; that the woods are fast disappearing under the axe by day and fire by night; that hundreds of steamboats are gliding to and fro over the whole length of

the majestic river, forcing commerce to take root and prosper at every spot; when I see the surplus population of Europe coming to assist in the destruction of the forests and transplanting civilization into its darkest recesses; when I remember that these extraordinary changes have all taken place within the short period of twenty years, I pause with wonder and can scarcely believe the reality."

But these twenty years were scarcely less eventful for him than they were for the nation. After a journey of twelve days, he arrived at Louisville, in Kentucky, where he settled, with a promising prospect of business, but which had an unprosperous outcome in the end. The truth is that he was soon so absorbed in his studies of nature, that he was apt to leave the management of his affairs to others, who failed to give to them the care which the precarious nature of all frontier trading requires. His enterprises at Louisville failed disastrously, but enough means were left him to enable him to remove to Henderson, Ky., where he put up a mill and engaged in other ventures, but with equal want of success (1810). He became in fact, wherever he went, so addicted to excursions in the canebrakes and forests that little time or thought was left him for more prosaic

occupations. Provided with a rough leathern dress, a knapsack that contained his pencils and colors, and with a good trusty gun at his side, he wandered for days, and even months, in search of animals to describe and paint. At one time we find him watching for hours in the tangled canebrakes, where some shy songster is busily rearing her brood ; at another, he is seen scaling the almost inaccessible height where the eagle hovers over its rocky nest ; now he is floating in a frail skiff down the rushing tide of the Mississippi, and is carried on he knows not whither by the flood ; then the jealous Indian prowls about his lonely path, or lurks beneath the tree on which he sleeps, waiting for an opportunity to put an end to his life and his uncomprehended labors together ; here he begs shelter and food in some lonely log cabin of the frontiers ; and there he wanders hopelessly through interminable pine-barrens, while hunger, heat and thirst, and insects and wild beasts beleaguer his steps like so many persecuting spirits. But wherever he is, whatever lot betides, the same high genial enthusiasm warms him, the same unfaltering purpose sustains and fortifies his soul.

In the course of his excursions, Audubon was among the first to explore those rich West-

ern Territories, which have since become populous States, and the homes of an enterprising civilization. It was only a little while before his visit that Lewis and Clarke, under the auspices and at the expense of the Federal Government, had succeeded in penetrating the forests and wastes of the great Northwest (1805–7). With some of the members of their party he made acquaintance, and from them he doubtless learned a great deal as to the various trails of the wilds, the methods of reaching them and of overcoming their difficulties. He was, indeed, only a few steps behind the famous Daniel Boone, the greatest of Indian fighters, at a time when Kentucky was called "the dark and bloody ground," and a pioneer of the advancing settlers, seemingly against his will, as he is reported to have complained that a county was always too thickly settled when there was a neighbor within twenty miles. Audubon met with Boone many times, when they had long and serious talks of their respective adventures in the woods (1812).

Some of these Audubon tells us with great vivacity in his books. At one time, when he was returning home across the barrens of Kentucky, he remarked a sudden and strange darkness in the western horizon. He supposed

at first it might be a coming storm of thunder and rain, as he heard the rumbling of what seemed a violent tornado. He spurred his horse, with the view of galloping to some place of shelter, when the animal, more sagacious than his rider, refused to go on, or rather put his feet slowly one before the other, as if he were feeling his way upon a smooth bit of ice. He dismounted, when his steed fell to groaning, piteously; all the shrubs and trees began to move from their very roots, and the ground rose and sank in successive furrows. It was an earthquake; one, as he afterwards ascertained, that spread over the whole State of Kentucky, and lasted, at intervals, for nearly two weeks. "Who can describe," he says, "the sensation I experienced, when rocking on my horse and moved to and fro like a child in the cradle, and expecting the ground every moment to open into an abyss that would engulf me and all around?" Again, after fording a creek and about entering upon some bottom lands, he discovered a heavy thickness in the atmosphere and apprehended another earthquake; but his horse did not stop as before, or exhibit any particular degree of trepidation. In a moment a light breeze began to agitate the taller trees, which gradually increased till

branches and twigs were whirled away, and the entire forest was in fearful commotion. The noblest trunks, unable to stand before the blast, were torn up by the roots and rent in pieces. "Never can I forget the scene presented to me at that moment, when everything seemed to be writhing in the wind, and masses of branches, twigs, trunks, foliage, and dust moved through the air with extreme velocity and left nothing behind but broken stumps and heaps of shapeless ruins." It was one of those cyclones—the first to be described, I think—which have so frequently since produced havoc and death in our Western States. It is strange to say that in the midst of all the dangers he encountered, he was but once exposed to direct assassination. It was on a prairie, in a log cabin where he had stopped for the night, occupied by a hideous-looking old hag of a woman, who took a fancy to his watch, and wanted two stalwart sons, who came in later, to butcher him as he slept. They were willing enough to do the deed, but catching sight of his whisky-flask, delayed it long enough to get themselves pretty drunk, when opportunely two belated travelers came in and saved the victim. As only "regulator law" was acknowledged on the prairies in those days, it is remarked that miscreants arrested for crimes

were not always hung or killed on the spot, but taken entirely naked to some nettle-swamp, where they were tied and allowed to make their escape as they could.

But neither hurricanes, earthquakes, nor Indian massacre ever gave him as much pain as a couple of Norway rats, who had made their home in his papers once. Before one of his departures, he had carefully placed his drawings in a wooden box, and handed it over to a friend for safe-keeping. His absence lasted for several months, and when he returned he naturally inquired for the box, which contained what "he was pleased to call his treasures." The box was produced and opened, but, "Oh, reader!" he exclaims, "feel for me; a pair of hungry rats had taken possession of the whole and reared a young family among the gnawed bits of paper, which a few months before had represented more than a thousand inhabitants of the air." "The burning heat," says the noble-hearted sufferer, "which instantly rushed through my brain was too great to be endured, without affecting the whole of my nervous system. I slept not for several nights, and the days passed like days of oblivion, until the animal powers were recalled into action through the strength of my constitution. I took up my

gun, my note-book and my pencils, and went forth to the woods as gayly as if nothing had happened."

Audubon's main object at the outset seems to have been simply to gratify his taste in the capture and drawing of birds; but once, while in Louisville (1810), he had the good fortune to encounter Alexander Wilson, the Paisley weaver, as he was called, but who was no less an ornithologist and a poet,—and his predecessor in what was destined to become the great work of his life. Wilson came into his room by chance to solicit a subscription for an illustrated book on the birds of America, and the sight of those illustrations seems to have awakened his ambition to realize his early dreams. It is not known precisely when he conceived his design of a work which should surpass Wilson's, but the comparison of his own drawings with those of the Scotch genius set him seriously to thinking, and his labors thereafter had a higher purpose than the gratification of the dilettant. At any rate, from this time his excursions into the woods were definitely aimed at the gathering of materials for a great book, such as he afterwards achieved. But he encountered one most formidable embarrassment: the want of means for the support of his family. As, with characteristic generosity,

he had surrendered the estate in France bequeathed to him by his father to his sisters; while his other property was rendered entirely unproductive by the Continental wars of Napoleon, and, after 1812, by our war with England; he was left to begin his great life work without a penny in his pockets. His only recourse was to utilize his accomplishments, by teaching languages, music, drawing, and even dancing to the young men and maidens of the river towns along the banks of the Mississippi. In this strait his wife was a great help to him, as the head of a school which she established at Bayou Sara. As most of the towns on the frontier were nests of gamblers and horse thieves, neither of them found their occupations very remunerative, and it was not until he added to his repertoire the talent of portrait painting, that he was able to put aside something toward the expenses of his journeys in the wilderness. During one of his visits to New Orleans he encountered the artists Jarvis and Vanderlyn, who gave him hints as to the use of oils, but not much assistance otherwise. He was indebted for greater services to a German painter named Stein, who instructed him in the composition of colors and the handling of the brush. His crude chalks and charcoals were then discarded for paint, and it was not long before he

was in considerable demand as a portrayer of physiognomy. Even with this assistance he was often reduced to such a tenuity in purse that he was compelled, when he wanted a new pair of shoes, or a suit of Society clothing, or a belt and ammunition, to acquire it by rendering the handsome features of the dealer, or of his wife and daughters, on canvas. He was once offered a job at scene painting at the theatre at New Orleans, which he declined; but at another time he did not decline to decorate the panels of a steamboat with scenes from the shores of the Mississippi. His hardest trial in these efforts was, perhaps, the teaching of a dancing school near Natchez, when he both played the violin and set the steps, but not being familiar with "figures," got into some deplorable entanglements of the sexes. For a short time he was the superintendent of a museum in Cincinnati, where he gained little or nothing, although he incurred liabilities for debts for which he was afterwards prosecuted and compelled to borrow money to escape arrest.

It was about this time (1824) that he visited Philadelphia, where Sully, the artist, approved his work, and he met with the Prince of Musignano, son of Lucien and nephew of Napoleon Buonaparte,—himself a naturalist, engaged on a book of American birds,—who highly commended what he

had done, and advised him to take it to Europe. But Lawson, the engraver of Wilson's plates, said that it was almost impossible to engrave his, which doused him, not merely with cold water, as he remarks, but with a whole pailful of the iciest ice. Rembrandt Peale, an artist of some distinction, and the father of artist sons, to whom he gave successively the names of Titian, Raphael, and others of the Italian school, encouraged him in his despondency, and he recovered confidence to go back to the West to resume his wanderings in the wilds.

Audubon's first visit to England was, under the circumstances, as audacious and hopeless an enterprise as ever entered into the head of any sanguine speculator. His friends, with the exception of his wife and children, to their credit be it spoken, regarded the whole scheme as crack-brained and hopeless. What he proposed to himself in thus going to a foreign land, where he knew not a soul and was utterly unknown, with scarcely a penny in his pocket and no patrons to fall back upon, was the publication of a work which would require the services of the most eminent engravers and colorists, and of a courageous publisher when publishers were few. It was estimated that the book would cost at the least no less than one hun-

dred thousand dollars, to be raised by subscription of a thousand dollars each. This work was to be executed, both as to the figures and the letter-press, on a scale of magnificence scarcely before attempted by any individual, and only by governments having unlimited means at command. What his enthusiasm for his project must have been, and his confidence in the merits of his drawings and in his own energies, it is hard for an indifferent spectator to conceive.

He set sail from New Orleans on the 26th of April, 1826, and after a voyage of three months landed at Liverpool July 20th. But as the vessel in which he sailed approached the shores of Albion, his ardor seems to have deserted him for a moment, and he fell into a despondency which almost turned him homeward. All that he had to rely upon in the way of assistance was a letter from one Vincent Nolte to a Mr. Rathbone, of Liverpool, and letters from Sully to Gilbert Stuart and Washington Allston, American artists, then in London. Even with these helps his prospects seemed to him so precarious that he often wished himself back in the woods or in the arms of his faithful Lucy. He was, however, at once cordially received by Mr. Rathbone, who was delighted

with his ways, and introduced him to Mr. Roscoe—a merchant of literary tastes, whom Irving has celebrated—and to Lord Stanley, "a tall, raw-boned Scotchman, with frank and agreeable manners," who took a great interest in his schemes. By these gentlemen he was also furnished with letters to Sir Walter Scott, Sir Humphrey Davy, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Hannah More, Miss Edgeworth, and many other notable persons who were afterwards of use to him. An exhibition of his birds at Liverpool netted him some five hundred dollars, with which he went to Manchester, where he failed, and then to Edinburgh where he was far more successful. At Edinburgh he was taken in hand by Professors Jamieson, Selby and Swainson, Dr. Knox, Dr. Waitt; McCullough, Professor of Political Economy; Francis Jeffrey, Andrew Combe, Sir Walter Scott, Sir William Jardine, and, most effective of all, Christopher North of the famous *Noctes Ambrosiana.* His pictures were not only exhibited but he was made a member of several of the learned associations, invited to the dinners and receptions of the most prominent circles, and by his appearance—for he still adhered to his long hair and backwoodsman dress—he attracted the stare of the streets. Titled ladies solicited his presence at their

houses as an oddity, which he did not much like. Their manners he thought haughty and pretentious, and by no means as gracious as he had expected. He was much more pleased with those of Miss O'Neil, the actress, and of the company she had brought together for his entertainment, consisting mainly of actors and musicians. He visited Mrs. Grant, of Laggun; talked with Lady Mary Clark, aged eighty-two, who had known Wolfe and Montgomery; heard Sydney Smith preach, whose "deep seriousness and fervor" he praises, and saw Sir Edwin Landseer's pictures of animals, which he criticises with severity "as animals of the cabinet and not of the woods." Captain Basil Hall, who afterwards dissected "American manners" with a pitchfork, became his especial friend; but no one adopted him more heartily than Christopher North, who wrote about him in the newpapers and in *Blackwood*, and commended his exhibition in the highest terms. "The hearts of all who are capable of conceiving the dangers, difficulties and sacrifices he must have encountered and overcome before his genius could embody these innumerable triumphs 'warm towards him.'" "The man himself," Wilson added, "is full of intelligence and fine enthusiasm, and most interesting in

his looks and manners—a perfect gentleman, and esteemed by all who know him for the simplicity and frankness of his nature. In his own walk he is the greatest artist that ever lived."

His exhibition in Edinburgh, consisting of some four hundred drawings, painted in water colors, and including no less than two thousand figures, covered the walls of Institution Hall in the Royal Society Building (1827), "and the effect," wrote John Wilson, in a later number of *Blackwood*, "was like magic. The spectator imagined himself in the forest. All were of the size of life, from the wren and the humming-bird to the wild turkey and the Bird of Washington. But what signified the mere size? The colors were all of life, too—bright as when borne in beaming beauty through the woods. There, too, were their attitudes and postures, infinite as they are assumed by the restless creatures, in motion or rest, in their glees and their gambols, their loves and their wars, singing or caressing, or brooding or preying, or tearing one another to pieces. The trees, too, in which they sat or sported, all true to nature, in body, branch, spray and leaf; the flowering shrubs and the ground-flowers, the weeds and the very grass—all American—so, too, the atmosphere and the skies—all transatlantic.

It was a wild and poetical vision of the heart of the New World, inhabited as yet almost wholly by the lovely or noble creatures that 'own not man's dominion.' There many a fantastic tumbler played his strange vagaries in the air; there many a cloud-cleaver swept the skies; there living gleams glanced through the forest glades; there meteor-like plumage shone in the wood-gloom; there strange shapes stalked stately along the shell-bright shore; and there, halcyons all, fair floaters hung in the sunshine on waveless seas. That all this wonderful creation should have been the unassisted work of one man in his own country, wholly unbefriended, was a thought that woke towards the American woodsman feelings of more than admiration, of the deepest personal interest."*

As a consequence of this favorable appreciation, Audubon succeeded in getting a publisher for his "Birds of America," a Mr. Lizard. On the 19th of November he wrote in his journal, "Saw to-day the firstproof of the first engraving of my 'American Birds,' and was much pleased with my appearance;" and, again, December 10th, he wrote, "My success in Edinburgh borders on the miraculous. My book is to be published

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* *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, 1831.

in numbers, containing four birds in each, the size of life, in a style surpassing any now existing, at two guineas a number. The engravings are truly beautiful." How many subscriptions he obtained in Scotland is not noted, but he was sufficiently encouraged by them to turn his attention to the larger and more opulent field of London (1827).

In London, fortified by the approvals of Sir Walter Scott, Sir David Brewster and others, he was cordially received by Albert Gallatin, the American Minister; by Sir Thomas Lawrence, the idolized portrait painter of Great Britain; by Charles Bonaparte; by J. P. Children, of the British Museum, and many others. He thinks it worth while to mention that his book was "presented to his Majesty, the King, who was pleased to call it fine, and permitted its publication under his particular patronage, approbation and protection." He adds, "The Duchess of Clarence put down her name as a subscriber, and all my friends speak as if a mountain of sovereigns had dropped in an ample purse—and for *me*." By November, 1828, eleven numbers of the book had appeared, containing more than one hundred plates.

The truth is that Audubon led two lives while in England: a public life, in which he shook hands with princes, lords and ladies, and hobnobbed

with men of science and celebrity; and a private life, in which, after working from sunrise to sunset in painting what are called pot-boilers, he spent the evening in threading the slums and alleys to find buyers for them among the Jews and other dealers. "What came in from subscriptions and shows was religiously reserved for the great work," and only what he picked up in the shops was used for his support. He alludes to these contrasted experiences in his journal thus: "I am fêted, feasted and elected to societies; it is Mr. Audubon here and Mr. Audubon there, and I only hope Mr. Audubon will not be made a conceited fool at last." Then, again, "Snowing and blowing as if the devil had cut the strings of the bags of Eolus; what crowds of poverty-stricken idlers, whose sallow faces and ragged garments tell of hunger and hardship—all worse off than the slaves of Louisiana—and in their homes I find artists, men of talent, who get but a scanty meal a day and send their children forth to beg. Oh!" he exclaims, after describing a painful case of this kind, "oh, that I were in my dear backwoods again!"

From London Audubon proceeded to Paris, where other trials as well as other honors awaited him. Paris, in 1828, was still the old Paris of half-paved dirty streets, without side-

walks, but with filthy gutters in the centre, where carriages, carts, goats, and pedestrians splashed their way, while by night they were lighted by sputtering oil-lamps hanging on ropes. He complains bitterly of the trouble he had in getting about in his visits to patrons. The famous Cuvier and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, though rivals in other respects, were harmonious in the attentions they paid him. Cuvier said that his paintings "were the most magnificent monument that art had ever raised to ornithology," and read a paper on them to the Institute—of which Audubon was made a member,—while St. Hilaire helped him, in many ways, with his subscriptions. Among others to whom Audubon was sent, a year or two later, was the great world-known banker, Rothschild, who was supposed to be rich enough to pave his walks with gold, and not miss it from his strong-box. The poor artist presented his letter, and was met by the question, "Sir, is this a letter of business, or a letter of introduction?" Audubon, as he had not read it, could not say; then the baron opened it, read and remarked, "This is a letter of introduction, and seems to call for my subscription to some book or other. I never sign my name to any subscription list, but you may send in your work and I will pay for a copy

of it." Audubon retired, boiling with rage, but he sent in the book, with an account, when the baron exclaimed to the messenger, "What, a hundred pounds for birds! I will give you five pounds and not a farthing more." And so the book went back to the publisher's shop. France was at that time poor, in consequence of the exhaustions of war, but still had men of less wealth, but finer taste and larger heart than the money-god, who liberally furthered a work, to which Audubon had given such unparalleled diligence and ability.

Audubon returned to New York in 1830, where he renewed his intimacy with his old friends, Mitchell, McKay, Irving, and others, and then set off for the great pine swamps and forests of New Jersey and Pennsylvania, spending several weeks in them; then skirted the coasts of Virginia and the Carolinas, and finally pitched his headquarters among the everglades of Florida. There he made himself at home among the alligators and turtles of the rivers, while he lived with the "Live-Oakers," wood-cutters, or the tortoise-catchers, or joined in the sports of the deer-hunters; made acquaintance with the coral seekers, whom he found to be a better sort of folks than they are reputed to be; and caught glimpses of the pirates of the

Gulf. Having satisfied his curiosity, and finished his drawings, he next set his face towards a different region entirely—the far North. For nearly two years he was traversing the vast pine woods of Maine and New Brunswick, a part of Canada, and the bays and river-mouths of ice-bound Labrador. He became as familiar with the lumbermen, the eggers, and the bear-hunters of these far, far regions, and with the salmon, cod, and seal-fishers of the Bay of Fundy and the Gut of Canso as he had been with the squatters of the prairies or the turtlers of the Tortugas, and he painted and described them all with the same graphic pencil and pen.

The object of these new wanderings was to gather matter for a new book, which he had begun in 1828, and which he called the "Ornithological Biography; or, An Account of the Birds of the United States of America, accompanied by a description of the objects represented in a work entitled 'The Birds of America.'" The earlier book, in folio, had been extended to five volumes, containing some 448 plates and more than a thousand figures, life-size, in lithographic colors (Edinburgh, 1831-1839),* but he was not yet satisfied with what he

* A cheaper edition in imperial quarto was issued more lately in 1844.

had done. A faithful portrayal or transcript of the form and plumage of his aërial friends was not all that he desired to accomplish—as if they had no lives of their own and no relation to the rest of Nature, sitting forever alone and melancholy, like the stock-dove of the poet, and brooding over their own sweet notes. He wished to describe them in their natural localities and habitudes, as he had seen them for years in their sequestered homes. Knowing how they made love, mated, and reared their young; how each one had its individualities of character and custom; how its postures and motions and migrations were as much a part of its history as its structure and hue; and how the food it fed upon, as well as the trees on which it built, were important elements in the knowledge of it—he now strove to write of them in their peculiar characteristics and ways. He helped out his pictures by his letterpress, and his letterpress by his pictures, and by the combination of the two made us entirely familiar with the intimate being of his favorites. The work was accomplished in six volumes, three of plates and three of descriptions, and formed a whole that has not been surpassed as a source of mingled instruction and interest.

Audubon made no less than six voyages to

Europe in the prosecution of his many designs, while he employed the intervals in gathering new resources from the woods. He was enabled, however, to find a sort of permanent home in New York about the year 1838, and shortly after his settlement there,—in 1842, I think,—he was in the habit of dropping into the office of the *Evening Post*, to have a chat with Mr. Bryant, the poet, whose congenial love of nature had attracted the naturalist, so that they soon became warm friends. Audubon's narratives of his exciting adventures in the woods, and of the eminent persons that he had seen, were exceedingly pleasant. He was fond of talk, and the enthusiasm with which he regarded anything that pertained to his life-long pursuit gave an unusual animation to what he said. He spoke, of course, a great deal of himself, but never in the way of egotism or boasting. If he had occasion to tell of any extraordinary, or seemingly miraculous, exploit, it was in the most modest terms and as if anybody might have accomplished it with ease.

During one of these interviews he kindly invited me to his house, and I accepted the invitation with eagerness. Accordingly, one beautiful Sunday morning, I directed my steps through the outskirts of the city to an unfrequented road which led me past suburban houses, pleasantly

rising amid their green groves, and along the banks of the Hudson. A sacred silence was brooding everywhere, as if nature, sympathizing with the solemn offices of the day, had consecrated an hour to meditation and rest. Behind me lay the town, with its masses of perpetual unquiet life; before me, the sloops, with their white wings floating lazily on the surface of the stream; while all around were the green fields and the cheering sunshine. Those squads of boisterous strollers who usually select Sunday for the invasion of the sylvan solitudes, were not yet abroad; and only the insects, with their small hum, or the birds, with their sweet morning hymns, seemed to be alive in the midst of the infinite repose.

After wandering for some hours, I turned into a rustic road which led directly down towards the river. A noble forest was planted on one side of it, and on the other vast grain-fields lay laughing in the sun, or listening to the complacent murmur of a brook that stole along in the midst of clumps of bushes and wild briars. About the half-worn path groups of cattle loitered, some cropping the young grass and others looking contemplatively towards the distant shine of the stream, which flashed through the vista of trees in molten bands of silver. It

was such a scene as Cuyp or Paul Potter would have loved to paint, if the native country of those artists had ever furnished them with so lovely and glorious a subject.

But my walk soon brought a secluded country-house into view, a house not entirely adapted to the nature of the scenery, yet simple and unpretending in its architecture, and beautifully embowered amid elms and oaks. Several graceful fawns, and a noble elk, were stalking in the shade of the trees, apparently unconscious of the presence of a few dogs, and not caring for the numerous turkeys, geese, and other domestic animals that gobbled and screamed around them. Nor did my own approach startle the wild, beautiful creatures that seemed as docile as any of their tame companions.

"Is the master at home?" I asked of a pretty maid-servant who answered my tap at the door, and who after informing me that he was, led me into a room on the left side of the broad hall. It was not, however, a parlor, or an ordinary reception-room that I entered, but evidently a room for work. In one corner stood a painter's easel, with a half-finished sketch of a beaver on the paper; in the other lay the skin of an American panther. The

antlers of elks hung upon the walls; stuffed birds of every description of gay plumage ornamented the mantelpiece; and exquisite drawings of field-mice, orioles, and woodpeckers were scattered promiscuously in other parts of the room, across one end of which a long rude table was stretched to hold artist materials, scraps of drawing-paper, and immense folio volumes, filled with delicious paintings of birds taken in their native haunts.

This, said I to myself, is the studio of the naturalist, but hardly had the thought escaped me when the master himself made his appearance. He was a tall, thin man, with a high, arched and serene forehead, and a bright penetrating gray eye; his white locks fell in clusters upon his shoulders, but were the only signs of age, for his form was erect, and his step as light as that of a deer. The expression of his face was sharp, but noble and commanding, and there was something in it, partly derived from the aquiline nose and partly from the shutting of the mouth, which made you think of the imperial eagle.

His greeting, as he entered, was at once frank and cordial, and showed you the sincere, true man. "How kind it is," he said, with a slight French accent, and in a pensive tone, "to come

to see me; and how wise, too, to leave that crazy city!" He then shook me warmly by the hand. "Do you know," he continued, "how I wonder that men can consent to swelter and fret their lives away amid those hot bricks and pestilent vapors, when the woods and fields are all so near? It would kill me soon to be confined in such a prison-house; and when I am forced to make an occasional visit there, it fills me with loathing and sadness. Ah! how often, when I have been abroad on the mountains, has my heart risen in grateful praise to God that it was not my destiny to waste and pine among these noisome congregations of the city."

It was curious to observe the influence which his life had exerted upon the mind and character of Audubon. Withdrawing him from the conventionalities and cares of a more social condition, he always retained the fresh, spontaneous, elastic manner of a child, yet his constant and deep converse with the thoughtful mysteries of nature had imparted to him also the reflective wisdom of the sage. Whatever came into his mind he uttered with delightful unreserve and naiveté; but those utterances at the same time bore marks of keen, original insight and of the deepest knowledge. Thus, he knew nothing of the theology of the schools, and cared as little for it, because the

untaught theology of the woods had filled his mind with a nobler sense of God than the schoolmen had ever dreamed; he knew, too, nothing of our politics, and cared nothing for them, because to his simple integrity they seemed only frivolous and vain debates about rights that none disputed and duties that all fulfilled; and his reading, confined, I suspect, mainly to the necessary literature of his profession, was neither extensive nor choice, because he found in his own activity, earnestness and invention a fountain-head of literature abundantly able to supply all his intellectual and spiritual wants. The heroism and poetry of his own life gave him no occasion to learn the heroism and poetry of others; yet his apparent neglect of the "humanities" had wrought no hardening or vulgarizing effect upon his nature, for his sympathies were always the most delicate, and his manners soft, gentle and refined.

It was impossible, in turning over the leaves of his large book, or in looking at the collection which he exhibited at the Lyceum Hall, not to imbibe some of his own enthusiasm for birds. One was made to feel that they were in some way nearer to our affections than any of the other animal tribes. Other animals are either indifferent or inimical to us, or else mere "servile

ministers," while birds are, for the most part, objects of admiration. Nobody but a born specialist ever likes insects or reptiles; fishes have always an unutterably stupid or unsentimental look, and deserve to be caught out of the dull element in which they live, to die in ecstacies in the oxygen of air; wild beasts, though sometimes savagely grand and majestic, excite terror, while tame beasts, which we subjugate, we are apt to despise; but birds win their way to our hearts and imaginations by a thousand charms. They are mostly lovely in form, brilliant in color, and seductively pleasing in their motions. They have such canny and knowing eyes, and they lead such free, joyous, melodious lives of love. Their swift and graceful evolutions, whether alone or in flocks; now darting like arrows to the very gates of heaven, or outspeeding the wind as it curls the white caps of the sea, or anon gathering for their far-off flights to unknown lands—awaken our aspirations as well as our thoughts, and beget a profound interest in their mysterious destinies; while their varied songs, profuse, sparkling, sympathetic, and glorious, are the richest and tenderest of nature's voices. Among the recollections of our childhood, those of the birds we have fed and cherished are often the dearest; and in maturer years the memory of the country

home in which we were reared, the woods in which we wandered, the fields and forests where we weekly worshiped, is the greener and sweeter for the birds. Thus they are associated with the most charming features of the external world, and breathe a spell over the interior world of thought. They are the poetry of nature, and a pervading presence in poetry; and it is no wonder that since the time Aristophanes made them the vehicle for his immortal pen, the poets-laureate—Shakespeare, Burns, Keats, Shelley, Bryant, and Wordsworth—have found in them the sources of their liveliest inspirations.

In spite of the happiness of his home and of his surroundings in New York, Audubon was hankering secretly to be off in the woods again. His main hope was that he might be called to join some governmental scientific expedition to the extreme West, and so renew his intercourse with the denizens of the wilds. In this view he had been to Washington several times, where he made the acquaintance of General Jackson, whom he was said to resemble, Martin Van Buren, Lewis Cass, Levi Woodbury, Benjamin F. Butler, and of other officers connected with the Federal Administration, and of Daniel Webster, J. C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, and others of the Senate and House of Representatives. He was successful in

his aims so far that he was permitted to sail on the cutter which was engaged in the exploration of the Gulf of Mexico, and on which he visited the islands and bays about Galveston, Baratraria, and, in fact, the greater part of the Mexican and Texan coast. Texas was at that time a separate Republic, under the Presidency of Sam Houston, having just declared her independence of Mexico, but in a rather rude and chaotic condition as yet. The abode of Houston was a small log cabin, consisting of two rooms, with a great wood fire in one of them and a table heaped with papers, while the floor was not only muddy but filthy, and strewn about with trunks, camp-beds and military accoutrements. Houston himself, a tall, strong-proportioned man, with a rather scowling face, and dressed in a large gray felt hat, a fancy velvet coat, trousers trimmed with broad gold lace, and a huge cravat. He was hospitable enough to ask his visitors "to take a drink of grog," and to promise whatever assistance he could give. Around the headquarters was a melee of Indians and blackguards of all kinds and aspects. Audubon was delighted with his acquisition of pelicans, cormorants, and several new animals, and, after another trip to England to prepare the fourth volume of his "Ornithologic Biography," returned to New York, where he

settled his family for the rest of his life. But he had long cherished the desire for himself to visit the great plains of the extreme Northwest and the Rocky Mountains, which he accomplished a few years later (1843).

When Audubon had completed his ornithological labors, he projected, in connection with his friend, Dr. Bachman, the geologist, a work of similar character, on "The Quadrupeds of America." Indeed, he had already, in his previous wanderings, accumulated a large mass of materials which would have helped him in his design. But, after one or two visits to some of his old haunts, the approach of age—he was then near seventy—induced his friends to persuade him to relinquish the more toilsome and hazardous expeditions. A large part of the work was consequently given over to Dr. Bachman and his own two sons, who had inherited much of his talent, both as observers and colorists. Before the work was completed his over-wrought constitution began to fail. His powers of execution and of endurance showed signs of exhaustion; the brilliant eye could no longer inspect the minute and delicate organs of the smaller animals, and the once firm hand trembled as it traced its lines. He was at length confined to his house, and we are told that a last bright gleam stole over his

features when, a few hours before his death, sitting in his chair, he was shown one of his earliest drawings. He died on the 27th of January, 1851, sinking gently to rest as a child who composes himself to a beautiful sleep.

In writing of his decease, in 1853, I said "that his countrymen had made too little of his death. It is not, perhaps, to be expected that the multitude, who knew little or nothing of his services, should pay him their tributes of gratitude and respect, but it was to be expected that our scientific societies and artistic associations should at least propose a monument to one who was so rare an ornament of both. Yet if they have been neglectful, there are those who will not be, and who will long cause his name to be remembered. In the failure of human memorials, the little wren will whisper his name about our homesteads, the robin and reedbird pipe it from the meadows, the ring-dove coo it from the dewey depths of the woods, and the imperial eagle, on the mountain-top, scream it to the stars." It has since turned out, however, that his fellow-men have not wholly forgotten him. Thirty-six years after his death, in August, 1887, at a meeting of the New York Academy of Sciences, a movement was begun for the proper honoring of his memory, which,

under the auspices and active efforts of Professors Martin, Eggleston, Britton, and others, culminated in the placing of a runic cross over his grave, bearing the name of Audubon, April 26, A. D. 1893, with figures of his favorite birds and animals sculptured on its sides. It was properly assigned to Trinity Cemetery, which adjoined the home of his later years, and at the foot of what is now called Audubon Avenue. Nor was it unfitting that the care of it was given to that great religious corporation, Trinity Church, which had already in its keeping the ashes of Alexander Hamilton, of Albert Gallatin, of Commodore James Lawrence, of William Bradford, of Robert Emmet and Dr. McNeven, of General Montgomery, of George Frederick Cooke and of the Martyrs of the Jersey Prison Ships; a mingled assembly, all alike worthy, though not equally distinguished for services rendered humanity. This recognition of Audubon was late, but all the more honorable in that it bears witness of the fact that Time, which rapidly obliterates the highest and the fairest fames, has yet a corner on its tablets which it does not always touch with its winnowing wings, or touches only to waft away the gathered dust, and render the record more bright and clear.

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT*

MR. CHAIRMAN, AND LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

It is only a few weeks since I visited the mountainous part of Massachusetts which is included in Hampshire county, and in a hollow of whose hills lies the little town of Cummington. It is a region of varied grandeur and beauty. From the high places, elevated some two thousand feet above the turbulence of the seas, and basking in the brightest of skies, the sight wanders away far off to Mounts Tom and Holyoke on one side, and to Mounts Graylock and Monadnock on the other, while the valleys teem with the brown tilth of meadows and orchards, and the gay bloom of flowers. A solitude almost as to human habitations, it is yet rich everywhere

* Delivered before the Brooklyn Institute of Science and Art, on the 3d of November, 1894, the centennial of Mr. Bryant's birthday.

in its appeals to human sensibility, fancy, imagination and thought. All the year round Nature there puts on a most sumptuous apparel — in the springtime, a flushing fullness of greenery and blossom; in the summer, sunrises and sunsets as luminous as those of Italy; in the autumn, that gorgeous array of color, when the trees seem "groups of giant kings in purple and gold, who guard enchanted ground"; and in winter even, when the bleak winds strip the forests, and oceans of snow obliterate the incidents of the landscape, the mossy trunks are cased in purest crystal, and the delicate fingers of the frost weave the trembling waterdrops into gems, till the groves seem like "the caverns of some virgin mine," where jewels grow, and "diamonds put forth radiant rods and bud in amethyst and topaz"; or, like the portals of some fairy palace,

> "Where crystal columns send forth slender shafts
> And crossing arches, and fantastic aisles
> Wind from the sight in brightness."

In the bosom of this magnificent scenery, William Cullen Bryant, the earliest of our poets, whose name is indelibly connected with the rise and progress of our literature from its beginnings, as well as with the redemption of our

nation from a most degrading thraldom, was born one hundred years ago. One hundred years ago! How the words go back, not only to his birth, but to the very infancy of the Republic! It was the first year of the second administration of George Washington as President. The central government, representing fifteen States, was organized and installed, but not secure. Emerging from a severe seven years' war, laden with debts, and distracted by fierce colonial antagonisms, the people, if not chaotic in their opinions, were fluctuating and unsettled. The red savages of the frontier, which was then in Ohio, were not more menacing to our stability than the white savages of the interior, unused to the restraints of salutary law. Party feeling rose to a red heat of virulence. It did not spare even the good and great chief, who wrote to a friend that he would rather be dead than the holder of a public office. The members of his own cabinet were at swords' drawn as to their convictions and tendencies. One vast faction, with Hamilton at its head, inclined to the monarchical forms of Great Britain, our late oppressor and enemy; another faction, under the lead of Jefferson, admired republican France, our late friend and ally. But alas! poor France had rushed from liberty to licence. The "black

terror" of Robespierre and his accomplices, who had gone to the scaffold, had been succeeded by the Directory, no less bloody. French popular armies menaced nearly all the States of Europe; Burke, Fox and Pitt thundered in the British House of Commons; and in the distance gloomed, like a spectre, the Man of Destiny.

It was a time of general turbulence, uneasiness and doubt. Indeed, we seem to return to the "Dark Ages," when we think that no steamer had yet rippled the surface of our rivers, much less beat down the angry surges of the sea; that no locomotive had yet screamed its triumphs to the echoes of the hills; that no telegraphic or telephonic messages outran the winds; that no gas or electric lights galaxied our cities; that no spectrum revealed the internal constitution of the sun and the stars; and no slender wire, running through the dark chambers of the sea, where perpetual solitude and silence brood over tangled weeds and the bones of broken ships, "whose gold will never be coined and vintages never drunk"—carried the heartbeats of nations from shore to shore.

The child, whose birth took place in these stormy times, and amid those beautiful scenes, like all good New Englanders, had the Pilgrims of the Mayflower for progenitors. He could

trace his blood, by a double current, back to the fair Priscilla Mullins, who said to Mr. John Alden, when he came with a love-errand from the stout captain, Miles Standish, "Speak for yourself, John," so that John did speak for himself, and because he spoke for himself, there came of their union, only three or four generations later, our two foremost poets, Bryant and Longfellow, the latter of whom has told of his ancestor's wooing in such honeymoon verses.

It was a stalwart stock, indeed, strong-limbed and strong-willed. Some of its members had fought in the Indian massacres at Hadley and Deerfield; some had taken part in the old French wars, at Port Royal and Louisburg; one, at least, used his spade and his musket at Bunker Hill, and afterwards at Bennington, Saratoga and Yorktown; while another was on board the Chesapeake in her grapple with the Shannon; and all had their legends to tell to the younger generations by the winter fireside. Fight was in the blood, but poetry, too; for several, both males and females, read and wrote verses; and a Reverend Alexander Keith, a disciple of John Knox, brought in a Scotch strain which was ever proverbial for its double "love of saintliness and song."

Of the immediate parents the father, Peter

Bryant, was a country physician, who shortened his own life by travelling the rough mountain roads through wind and sleet to prolong the life of others, or to bring new life into being. He was fond of science and rhymes, had taught himself Greek and Latin, had travelled in the footsteps of St. Pierre, whose Paul and Virginia has filled little eyes all over the globe, and been a legislator at Boston, whence he brought back new books and that new aspect of Christianity which Buckminster and Channing proclaimed with fervid lips. The mother was a stately matron, who to an advanced age could leap upon her horse from the ground, and who, in addition to the usual household duties, spun, wove and fashioned all the clothing of the family, while she taught the children their elements and to read the Bible. In the absence of higher amusements than barn-raisings, corn-husking, and the maple sugar camp, that lonely household found its amusements in books. It had a small but well-selected library, nearly every volume of which was read over and over again. By night, the boys of the family might be seen stretched on the floor, with their heads toward the birch-bark fire, absorbed in Pope's Homer, or Spenser, or Milton, and even Shakespeare, disliked of all Puritans. In the

daytime, fantastically accoutered in meal-sacks, and armed with cornstalks, they fought over the battles of Greeks and Trojans, shouting the speeches of Ulysses, or Hector, or Ajax; or at other times roar to each other from the bushes the strophes and anti-strophes of a terrible chorus of Sophocles.

One of these boys, the second in age, named William Cullen after an eminent Scotch physician, evinced an early liking for rhyme. When a child of five or six years he added to the usual prayers at his mother's knee a request that God would enable him to write verses that might endure. At seven years of age he began to make verses; at ten, wrote a poetical school address which found its way into other schools as a recitation; he versified, also, passages from the Psalms and Job; and at thirteen his father got published some four or five hundred lines, which were called "The Embargo." It was a furious onslaught upon Jefferson, whose religious opinions and commercial policy ranked him, in the estimation of New England zealots, alongside of Tom Paine and the devil. A little later he wrote odes for Fourth of July celebrations, and an ode to a strange god or goddess called the Genius of Columbia, who was in the habit of squaring her fists at Napoleon and other

despots, and telling them to come on if they wanted a thrashing. All these effusions were but the pipings of a callow bird who had not yet found the secret of his throat.

It was not until after he had been sent to Williams College (where he remained but seven months owing to the father's poverty), that he learned a better strain. He then became enamoured of the Greek poets, their simplicity of diction, their harmonious rhythms and vivid imaginativeness, and their severe austerity of judgment, and he made many translations from them, from Anacreon, Mimnermus, Bion and the choruses of Sophocles. Happily for him, English poetic literature was just then undergoing an important change of form and spirit. He had been trained by his father in a love for the writers that shone and sparkled in the reign of Queen Anne. He admired them for their light, easy, graceful touches; for their pretty, affected sentiments, their slashing wit, to say nothing of their sweet, flute-like melodies; but he learned to see something much better in the Greeks,—in Grey, Cowper, Thomson, Burns, and more lately in Coleridge, Southey and Wordsworth. Those older men were artificial and conventional in style; they were men of the town, of the coffee-house and the drawing-room—

who walked in satin slippers and dressed in silken gowns, and simpered with the court beauties; while the newer men were children of Nature, men of the woods and fields and open skies, who studied her moods, her frowns as well as her smiles, and sunk their plummets deep in the common emotions of the universal human heart.

One of the first fruits of this new awakening was a poem that came to him as he roamed in the dim shadows of the everlasting woods. The blue of the summer sky had faded into autumnal gray, and the brown earth was heaped with decaying leaves. As he trod the ground it gave forth a hollow sound as if from graves. All through the vast solitudes, which stretched interminably over the continent, one grand process of death was ever going on. What indeed, he asked, is the earth but a great sepulchre of once living things, and what its skies and stars but the solemn decorations of a tomb? His thoughts took shape in a poem to which he gave the Greek name of Thanatopsis, or a View of Death. It was extremely sombre in tone, but he had been reading the Greeks, through whose lightest music moans an ineffable sadness, and Kirke White's "Ode to the Rosemary," and Blair's "Contemplation of

the Grave," and perhaps he remembered some of Job's lamentations. But the poem was no less original, and for its depth and breadth of thought, its wealth of imagery, and its organ-like roll of rhythm, a wonderful production.

The distinction of "Thanatopsis" was not its individual merit, great as it was, nor the proof it gave of the breaking away of a youthful poet from all his former idols, but in the historic fact that it was the morning star of our poetic dawn. Nothing like it had preceded it, nothing led up to it. Our tastes before it had run to doggerel, sermons, and psalmody of a nasal twang. Fisher Ames declared in 1801 that America had produced no man of poetic genius, intimating that the muses, like nightingales, were too delicate to cross salt-water, or if they did, soon moulted and lost their feathers. Some years later Mr. Bryant himself wrote a review of "American Poetry," in which he found that our Homers, Virgils, and Miltons were named Joel Barlow, Timothy Dwight, and Jonathan Trumbull, whom he dismissed with a pat and a dismal smile. Well! who now wipes the merciful dust from the "Columbiad," the "Conquest of Canaan," the "Battle of the Kegs," or "Hasty Pudding"? We hardly know the names. Yet

"Thanatopsis," amid the effulgence of the broader day it ushered in, still

> "Flames on the forehead of our morning sky."

Cullen Bryant was destined to the bar, and studied law with all diligence, save that his teachers now and then reminded him that in courts of justice Blackstone's "Commentaries" were a higher authority than Wordsworth's "Lyrical Ballads." But once equipped, it became necessary for him to engage in the turmoil and struggle of the great world. His departure from home had a pathos in it which is worthy of note. He was going to settle at Plainfield, a town on a neighboring hill, and he set out for his new domicile on a bright December afternoon, near sunset. As he climbed the steep ascent, the big world grew bigger, and he became exceedingly depressed. Without means, without prospects, and almost without friends, he hardly knew what was going to become of him. At the moment a solitary waterfowl passed across the crimson folds of cloud, and he followed it with his eyes. As he gazed he said to it:

> "All day thy wings have fanned
> At that far height, the cold, thin atmosphere
> Yet stoop not weary to the welcome land,
> Though the dark night is near."

Then his simple piety induced him to add:

> "There is a Power whose care
> Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,
> The desert and illimitable air
> Lone wandering, but not lost."

It was a natural inference, which cheered him when, applying the thought to himself, he said:

> "He that from zone to zone
> Guides through the boundless sky thy certain flight,
> In the long way that I must tread alone
> Will lead my steps aright."

A sublime trust, which he carried through life and was never deceived.

For ten years Mr. Bryant practiced law at Great Barrington, holding a respectable if not distinguished place at the bar. It was not a calling, however, suited to his temperament or the deeper yearnings of his mind. He worked hard in the discharge of its duties, and even went so far as to "swear off" from all his poetic intoxications:

> "I broke the spell that held me long,
> The dear, dear witchery of song,
> And said, the poet's idle lore
> Shall waste my prime of years no more."

But in vain; the influences that awaken the sensibilities of the poet were around him still:

> " And whereso'er he looked the while
> Was Nature's everlasting smile."

Pleasanter for him than the heat and jargon of a small country court were the cool shades about the river which the farmers had named from its color of green, even though they tempted him to loiter and dream. Pleasanter than the drone of a judge was the pipe of the wood-thrush, when insect wings were glittering in the beams of the low sun. Clearer than all the cloudy mysteries of jurisprudence were the white clouds sailing over the blue deep, on whose wings his fancy wandered to teeming cities; across great oceans breaking on the coasts; to lands of bloom far off; to the olive groves and vines of Andalusia; to the sunny vales of Italy, and to the battlefields and tombs of Greece, then lifting her sword against the Otto-man. Brighter than all the luminaries of the gown were the new moon, or the star of the Pole, " beneath whose eye all deeds of darkness and of light are done," or those other " orbs of beauty and spheres of flame," which dance away, away through the widening voids of space while their silver voices in chorus sing. How could he walk the streets, and look upon that precipice, which is called Monument Mountain —"shaggy and wild, with pinnacles of flint and

many a hanging crag"—and not prefer to the most learned decisions of the Bench the tale of the lovelorn Indian maiden, who, climbing the heights, decked herself with the sacrificial garlands of her tribe, and, singing old songs of love and death, leaped to her doom.

The outcome of this struggle between Themis and the Muses was that the Muses got the best of it; his father having sent a dozen or more of his poetic offspring to a little quarterly, called "The North American Review," printed at Cambridge, they procured him from the Phi Beta Kappa of Harvard an invitation to deliver the annual poem. That was the Olympic laurel of the times,—and he read to them "The Ages." It pleased the learned dons, and it pleased the students,—of whom Ralph Waldo Emerson was one—and he was invited to put it in print. He did so along with seven other poems, and they made a small, thin volume of forty pages. But small as it was, it was yet the biggest book of its kind that had been put forth on this side of the Atlantic.

The poems it contained can not be said to have been of a popular kind. They were not of the impassioned sort which Byron had made seductive, and which carried the feelings away on turbid surges of emotion; they were

not chivalric tales like those in which Scott had poured a glamour of romance over his Scottish heaths and highlands; and they were not outbursts of spiritual aspiration like those in which Shelley lifts us to "an ampler ether, a diviner air." They were very grave poems—very calm—profoundly meditative and thoughtful; and if affined to any school, to that of the much condemned Lakers. But they were essentially American—transcripts of the Hampshire hills and the Berkshire valleys—and breathing the fresh life of a new continent. The qualities they chiefly displayed were these: An extremely nice, sensitive, loving observation of nature—the observation of delighted eyes and enraptured ears; a penetrative yet comprehensive imagination which fuses and welds the sights and shows of things into new and delicate combinations of beauty; and a moralization of them all into human meanings and human sympathies. Popular they could scarcely be, but discerning minds said of them, here are jewels to be added to the treasure-store of English literature, and here is an author who is going to add new lustre to English genius. Those poems lifted Mr. Bryant at once to the foremost rank in our poetical heavens; and followed as they were, from time to time, by others of equal, if not greater, excellence, he

maintained that rank undisputed to the end, not without rivals, but assuredly without equals, and much more, without a superior.

They came, too, it is worthy of remark, in the year 1821, which must ever be printed in red in our literary calendars. It was in that year that Washington Irving, Cooper, Halleck, Dana, Sands, Hillhouse, Percival, Miss Sedgwick, Channing, Daniel Webster and Edward Livingston, broke like stars out of the darkness. "Early voices," as Bayard Taylor said, which many others have followed—voices, perhaps, sweeter, louder and more varied; but we must never forget the forerunners who, in advance of their generation, create their own audiences and the after audiences by which they were to be judged.

It was in 1825 that Mr. Bryant finally abandoned the law and came to New York as "a literary adventurer," as he says. He had been enticed by offers of a share in the editorship of a new periodical, the *New York Review*, that had been projected. It was a great and trying change for the child of the woods and fields. New York City was not then the metropolis that she is now. Boston was her literary and Philadelphia her commercial equal. She had but one hundred and fifty thousand people in all—a

twentieth of what she has now. Canal Street was the northern boundary of the city proper, and all beyond was forest and orchards, with a few scattered farm-houses. I remember how we children dreaded to go beyond the little stream that gutted Canal Street, lest we should be taken by the Indians or a far more formidable bugaboo, the press gangs, which carried children off to sea. Greenwich village, now Amos Street, was a place of retreat for the richer families during the visitations of the yellow fever, which were frequent and desolating; and where Barclay Street ferry is were shaded shore walks, in which Jonathan Edwards, a preacher in Wall Street, still a place of fashionable residences, is said to have walked while he meditated those questions of "fate, foreknowledge, foreknowledge absolute," which Milton made a favorable diversion of his dusky demons. Society was restricted both in its numbers and culture; its leaders and lovely women dwelt about the Battery. Everybody knew everybody, and everybody walked in the park for recreation in the afternoons; for business closed early, and they had no concerts or operas till later, and only one theatre.

It was easy to get acquainted then, and Mr. Bryant, a whisper of whose rare qualities had preceded him, was introduced gradually into the

small coteries, first among the literary men and artists—Cooper, Verplanck, Halleck, Sands, Professor Anderson, Dunlop, Morse, Jarves, Vanderlyn, Lorenzo de Ponte, the writer of the libretto for Mozart's "Don Giovanni"—and then among the higher dignitaries—President Duer of Columbia, Chancellor Kent, Thomas Addison Emmett. But he was very poor and very much alone, with seeds of consumption in his physical system, and prospects that rather darkened than brightened as he went on. They were for him almost the old Grub Street days over again. In a little poem called "The Journey of Life" he said:

> "The trampled earth returns a sound of fear—
> A hollow sound as if I walked on tombs;
> And lights, that tell of cheerful homes, appear
> Far off, and die like hope amid the glooms."

But that darkness was near the dawn. The *Evening Post*, a prosperous evening journal, which had been founded in the first year of the century by Alexander Hamilton and his friends, was in need of an assistant editor, and the position was secured for him, and his destiny for the rest of his life, or nearly sixty years, was thus determined.

Journalism, as to its prodigious enterprise

and activity in gathering news, was not known then. It was, none the less, to some extent, an exponent and moulder of public opinion, and particularly of political or party opinion. With a high view of its character, Mr. Bryant began from his novitiate days to prepare himself for the discharge of its functions. His political convictions, since those student years when he wanted to enlist as a soldier in the army of Massachusetts in order to defend the State against the encroachments of the Federal Government, or else set up an independent empire, had undergone a radical change. After the peace of 1815 the old parties had disintegrated, and a period of quietude followed under the administration of Monroe, who had been elected almost unanimously, which was called the "era of good feeling." It was a brooding season when opinions began to take a new shape, according to the new circumstances. More active industries and interchanges had been stimulated by the peace, and schemes for the promotion of them were fostered. New England, which had become manufacturing, wanted tariffs to shut out foreign competition; the agricultural West wanted highways and canals to put it in easier communication with the East; and the South clamored for such internal improvements as might expedite its one

great staple of cotton to the sea-coasts. All of them looked to the central government as the Hercules who must pull their wagons out of the ruts.

But other views were taking possession of inquiring minds. Even before his abandonment of the law, Mr. Bryant's attention had been directed to economical doctrines, which, wearing a gloss of newness on this side of the Atlantic, were much in favor with impartial and independent thinkers in Europe. He had studied carefully the treatises of Adam Smith, Say, Thornton, and Ricardo, and especially the great debates in the British Parliament in the time of that champion of open commerce, Huskisson. What he had learned from these sources was that the economic movements of society, or the activities by which its wants are supplied, like the physical movements of nature, are cases of uniform and invariable law which produce of themselves beneficent results, if not artificially resisted. A deeper question, however, was involved than that of freedom of industry and exchange, and that was as to the rightful function, the extent and the limits, of governmental action in its relation to social phenomena. How far shall it interfere, or how far not interfere, in the regulation of individual conduct? Mr. Bryant was not long in arriving

at the answers commonly given by the disciples of *Laissez-Faire*—yet with a difference. "Government," he said, "is the organ and representative of the whole community to which it pertains, and not of any class or fraction of that community. Its primary, predominant, almost exclusive, duty is to maintain the conditions of universal liberty and justice, or the equilibrium and harmony of all social forces, and to maintain them in such a way that the energies of the individual shall be left to act and expand according to his own capacities and his own judgment. It must not undertake enterprises of its own, either religious, intellectual, or economical, but satisfy itself with securing a perfectly safe and open field for such enterprises as the voluntary work of individuals. In other words, government is not a fraternal or eleemosynary institution erected to perform deeds of charity, nor a commercial company erected to look after, to foster, nurse and coddle, particular lines of business; it is a strictly juridical institution, whose supreme purpose is to uphold liberty, justice, and order, and nothing more."

On this theory of the State, Mr. Bryant contended, our polity as a nation was distinctively founded, and we must either give up our pretensions to democracy or carry them

out to their logical and practicable results with manly and consistent courage. He was the more convinced of the soundness of this political philosophy, because it was at one with his moral instincts and his religious aspirations. As the supreme and imperative law of morality is the free recognition of the manhood of man, or of that rationality, conscience and freedom which are distinguishing characteristics of the human being, so he made the injunction of the Apostle "to honor all men," asking for yourself nothing as to rights which you cannot willingly concede to all others, the sum and substance of ethics. This was again in complete unity of spirit with the religion of Christ, which represents the Most High as assuming the form of the human, in order to its glorification in every partaker of it, down to the least and lowest, on earth as in heaven.

It would be impossible, within the time allotted me, to enter into any detail of Mr. Bryant's editorial career during the more than fifty years it covered. That would be nothing less than a history of political parties from the administration of Jackson to that of Hayes. It is enough, however, in order to convey a fair general conception of his political course, to say that his dominant, unrelenting, invariable aim,

in all the changes of circumstances, and all the selfish shiftings of factions, was to rescue the nation from its two fearful abuses of the fundamental principles of personal freedom.

The first of these, the first to which I shall advert—not the first in the order of time—was its gradual adoption of what were called "the principles of protection," which, however, are not principles but temporary expedients and devices. Mr. Bryant was an out and out advocate of unlimited commercial intercourse between the nations of the earth. Not only his theoretical views as to the proper functions of governments, but his studies of actual experience, had convinced him that every artificial interference with the free choice of men in the direction of their labor, and of the exchange of its proceeds, was highly deleterious. It was like clapping a tourniquet on the circulation of the blood, which could only produce paralysis and disease. It debased legislation from its true aims into a scramble for favors, and so perverted and degraded the struggles of parties; it fostered special interests and built up monopolies, and so introduced a socialism which, in its assumptions, justified those larger socialisms which would make the State the manager of railroads, telegraphs, factories; in short, a complete social

despotism, annihilating the individual and all individual responsibility, discipline, and growth. Indeed, Mr. Bryant was disposed to trace the terrible corruptions which underlie and waste our politics to this substitution of selfish interests for general principles in the policy of government, and he warred upon it without stop, and with consuming zeal.

But a second abuse of freedom—more flagrant, more repulsive and more portentous—was that which converted the laborer himself into a subject of ownership, and confiscated not merely the proceeds of his labor, but his muscles and brains to the owner. Our Fathers had endeavored to bring together under the same form of government two antagonistical and hostile forms of society—slave States, which were semi-barbaric in their very structure, and free States, which were an outgrowth of an almost extreme free civilization. Their excuse was that, at the outset, they held this antagonism to be merely temporary and transient. They supposed that freedom, in the exuberance and elasticity of its energy, would soon trample slavery into the dust. But in that they were mistaken. By consenting to the prolongation of the slave trade—a hellish traffic—they confused and paralyzed the popular moral sense; by allowing representation to slave

numbers, they imparted to the system a strong political vitality; and by enjoining the return of fugitive slaves, they made everybody a *particeps criminis;* while a timely mechanical invention rendered the slave form of industry one of the most immediately profitable to be conceived. It was slavery, then, rather than freedom that first advanced. In the beginning, like the curl of smoke that issued from the bottle of the Afrite, it expanded into a black cloud which veiled the heavens. It controlled politics, chose Presidents, legislators and judges, and finally dictated public opinions. Politicians bent to it, trade worshiped it, newspapers defended it, and even the pulpit found Scriptural sanction for its most cruel atrocities.

Mr. Bryant did not join with those sappers and miners, the brave Abolitionists, when they began to blow their ram's horns around the walls of the evil. In his view the question was not one merely of individual right and wrong, but of two conflicting civilizations—the roots of both of which were deeply planted in the soil, whose fibres had been historically woven into our organic structure, and whose tendrils stretched far and wide to a thousand social props. The one practical and practicable thing to be done, he thought, was to rescue the Democratic

party, the predominating party of the nation, from its complicity in the wrong. In all the agitations that related to the right of petition, to the Missouri compromise, to the Mexican War, to the admission of Texas, to the Wilmot Proviso, etc., he took a part, and devoted to them his best and most earnest abilities.

Out of those agitations arose the Democratic Free Soil Party, pledged to a regeneration of public opinion. At the same time the old Silver Gray Whigs, steeped in asphaltic pools of conservatism, were transformed into Anti-Slavery Whigs, whose aims coinciding with those of the Free Soilists, the two were ultimately fused into one—the great Republican Party. The platform for New York, proclaiming the creed which won for it thirty years of triumph, was written by one of Mr. Bryant's staff. Its first standard-bearer, the young Pathfinder, was defeated; its second, the immortal Lincoln, bore off the victory; and that victory was the signal of an armed revolt against "the gentlest sway that Time in all its course had seen." They who rejected it had known its touches only, as one of their own statesmen said, by the benefits it conferred. No, the pinch was not there; it was given by the irrepressible anti-slavery sentiment.

The collision, impending for half a century, had come; and then the patriotic instincts of the northern masses awoke, and the world saw the sublimest social spectacle it had ever seen, in what a distinguished foreign writer, the Count Agenor de Gasparin, called "The Uprising of a Great People." It saw, to use the words of "Our Country's Call," the men of the glade and forest, sturdy as the oaks they cleaved, leave their green woodlands for the red fields of strife; it saw the men who had breasted the mountain-storms stand like their own gray cliffs and mock the whirlwind of hostile onset; it saw the men who dwell by our rapid rivers, rush to the rescue as terrible and mighty as their streams when the rain has swollen them to torrents; it saw the men who throng our ports, which open to the great deep, in force and numbers like the waves of the sea, pour their overwhelming floods along the plains and drown out cities; and it saw even the clerk, the student, the scholar, turn his pen into a sword, and wield the flashing blade and drive the swift courser to a swifter charge. For four long years we looked into the face of slaughter with its frowns of death. For four long years the air was filled with the clamor of fife and drum, with the tramp of gathering hosts, with the

filing off of infinite cavalcades to unknown encounters, with the awful roar and earthquake shock of battle, with the shout of victory, with the anguished shriek of defeat, with the wail of mothers and sisters and wives refusing to be comforted, because their dear ones were no more.

All through this fearful conflict Mr. Bryant was keenly alive to its duties, its terrors, and its sorrows. He did not, like Pindar, in the perilous hours of Salamis and Plateæ, devote himself to the improvement of his odes; or, like Michael Angelo, hew and mould the marble while Rome was falling; or, like the modern Goethe, dress his Venetian elegies to the entering tramp of the French invader of his country. He gave his most active aid in every way to the furtherance of the national cause: he helped to raise and equip troops; he cheered the soldiers on as they plunged into the black smoke from which there might be no return; he sustained the hopes of the people when sudden reverses painted a pallor upon their cheeks; twice he visited Washington to remonstrate against delays. But as he watched the lightning flash of Sherman's sword from the heights of Georgia, and heard the thunder roar of Grant's cannon from the Wilderness, it was not without many a heartache and a thought of the hideousness

of war, in the midst of its glory. He wrote to a friend: "When I think of this great conflict and its great issues, my mind reverts to the grand imagery of the Apocalypse—to that vision, when the messengers of God came down to do his bidding, to reap the earth, ripe for the harvest, and to gather the spoils of the vineyards; to tread the winepress till it flows over with blood, to pour out the phials of God's judgments upon the earth, and turn its rivers into blood, until the great dragon shall be bound and cast into the bottomless pit."

Mr. Bryant's muse was not entirely silent or sterile in those terrible times of trial, but its inspiration had taken a curious turn. The sun shone as brightly as before, the stars still glittered in the skies, seed-time and harvest came in their seasons; but he could no longer indulge in communion with the sweet and gentle ministries of nature, and he no longer stopped to hear the soft voices of the grass, or the tiny music that swells from "every moss-cup of the rock and every nameless blossom's bell." Every wind that blew from the southwest trembled with the concussions of deadly battle; the red flowers of the field recalled another red that stained more distant fields; and the dropping leaves of autumn symboled the dropping of noble corpses into

nameless graves. Yet the poet still lived in the patriot, and his imagination, flying from the painful pressure of the actual, took refuge in the ideal realms of faery.

It was then he wrote the charming fable of the rustic maiden who followed the brooks about her dwelling, down to the middle chambers of the deep, where amid

> "Strange growths, the pretty coralline,
> The dulse with crimson leaves, and streaming far
> Sea thong and sea lace——"

she trod the pearly sands, spotted with silver shells, and beheld the many-peopled world of waters, bewildering in its vastness. It was then he told us of "the Little People of the Snow," who float on its tiny flakes, yet build the huge white walls and pinnacles that rise like some cathedral dome, such as he, the Florentine who bore the name of heaven's most potent angel, reared at Rome, or such as the unknown builder reared, the wondrous fane, the glory of Burgos. It was then he wrote of the dreamy youth who visited the mystic land of clouds and its castles of the air:

> "Vast halls with golden floors, and bright alcoves,
> And walls of pearl, and sapphire vaults
> Besprent with golden stars——"

but whose magnificent galleries and gardens and terraces are swept into nothingness by the first rude blasts of the wind.

In these plays of fancy even, as in nearly all of Mr. Bryant's poems, there is a strong tinge of sadness; but it is a sadness mollified by an ideal philosophy, which runs through his life as well as his poetry. His view of the course and outcome of that

> "—— great movement of the universe,
> Which bears so silently this visible scene
> Into Night's shadow, and the streaming rays
> Of starlight——"

is decidedly optimistic. When he looks into "the Ages," full of crime, guilt, folly, and suffering, he finds in them also a "promise of happier days, whose dawn is nigh," that

> "He who tames the elements shall not live
> The slave of his own passions: he whose eye
> Unwinds the eternal mazes of the sky"

shall yet unwind the mysteries of his own destiny. That awful "Flood of Years," which carries all men, rustic, soldier, artist, lover, young and old, for a moment on its foaming crest, and then drops them into its black waters,—

which sweeps away all the works of man's hands—battlemented walls and stately palaces, the thrones of kings, the shrines of gods; yea, memorial stones overgrown with undecipherable legends,—shall yet flow in peace around green islands where the flowers never wither, sorrows are forgotten, and

> "—— the eternal change
> That waits on growth and action, shall proceed
> With everlasting concord, hand in hand."

It is indeed a cheerful philosophy in the face of that Nature which another poet, Tennyson, tells us "red in tooth and claw with ravine shrieks against our creeds,"—and never was it more beautifully applied than in 1860, when the world was deploring the nearly simultaneous loss of a large number of its prominent benefactors and celebrities—Humboldt, Macaulay, De Quincy, Ritter, Arndt, Mrs. Browning, and Mrs. Jameson abroad, and Irving, Prescott, Leslie, Parker, and others at home. Our poet sees them as "the constellations of the early night, that made the darkness glorious;" but soon he marks their rays grow dim upon the horizon's verge and sink beyond the mountains.

"The great Orion, with his jeweled belt,
That large-limbed warrior of the skies, goes down
Into the gloom. He looks in vain to find
The group of sister stars, which mothers love
To show their wondering babes, the gentle Seven."

In vain he seeks "the resplendent cressets which the Twins uplifted in their youthful hands."

"The streaming tresses of the Egyptian Queen
Spangle the heavens no more; the Virgin trails
No more her glittering garments through the blue!
Gone! all are gone; and the forsaken Night
With all her winds, in all her dreary wastes,
Sighs that they shine upon her face no more."

He repines at the disappearance and asks if the Night must then grow starless in her later hours; if no new sources of light will succeed to those that have disappeared? Ah, no! Nature has not failed; his eyes are dim. At that very hour a fiery host is there above.

"Hercules, with flaming mace,
The Lyre with silver chords, the Swan uppoised
On gleaming wings, the Dolphin gliding on
With glistening scales, and that poetic Steed
With beaming mane, whose feet struck out from earth
The fount of Hippocrene, and many more
Fair-clustered splendors, with whose rays the night
Shall close her march in glory."

This was perhaps his highest teaching, familiar now, but novel then: as the good and great go, so the good and great come again. Evil in itself is superficial and evanescent. The tempests sweep the surface of the seas, piling the wrecks of navies on its shores, but only a little way below lies the vast and moveless deep, nourishing an inexhaustible life; the cyclones tear up the forests and prostrate cities, but the calm, clear sunshine glows untouched above; and so "the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing," but inside of their riots sits the supernal Goodness and Wisdom, making the earth silent before Him.

At the close of the war, when the problem of reconstruction presented difficulties to our statesmen, even greater than those which had arisen in its course, Mr. Bryant still gave his best wisdom to a large-minded, unresentful solution. He was particularly zealous in retrieving the errors which had swamped our finances in a Malgebolian bog of paper-money. His correspondence with Mr. Chase, the Secretary of the Treasury, and his editorial comments, contributed greatly to our return to a sound, stable, and enduring condition.

In all the great controversies that ensued the dislocations of the war, the *Evening Post* was

an immense power for good. Everybody that knew it at all, knew that it stood inflexibly for honesty, justice and progress. It did not keep on hand a poor little bundle of ragged opinions, to be given out at the nod of a party leader—much less, if that party leader happened to be a Boss dressed in diamonds and dirty clothes. Its trumpets never blew an uncertain sound. Yet in critical moments, when the Republic seemed to be rushing towards the billows again, it was moderate and conciliatory, while it was firm, as at the time of the impeachment of Johnson, and of the decision against the election of Tilden. No mere question of party ascendency was worth the awful cost of a civil war. The terrors of the late arbitrament by arms rang in its ears too dolefully to allow it to entertain the thought of a renewal of them. Besides, its confidence in the methods of true democracy was so strong that any proposal to resort to bullets when ballots would ultimately suffice, seemed to it no less than treason to the first principles of our mode of government.

But he had learned, in the course of time, another mode of influencing public opinion, and that was by speech. He was never an orator in the sense that Clay, Choate, Prentiss, Phillips, and Curtis were orators. The power

to wield the passions of a multitude, as a minstrel wields the strings of his harp, or the wind brings music from the trees, was not an original gift. I recall an occasion when toasted at a public dinner, wishing to acknowledge the compliment, he rose with trepidation, and after stammering a few incoherent words, sat down in utter confusion. As the art of speaking well, however, was a most useful one, he resolved to overcome his nervousness and timidity, and in the end made himself an attractive speaker, so much so that he got to be in demand. "Few occasions," says Mr. George Ripley, "were complete without his presence. He was always the honored guest of the evening, and the moment in which he was to be called upon to speak was awaited with eager expectation. He was singularly happy in seizing the tone of the company, and his remarks were not only pertinent, but eminently felicitous. Making no pretensions to impassioned eloquence, he was always impressive, often pathetic, and sometimes quietly humorous, with a zest and pungency that touched the feelings of his hearers to the quick. On more important occasions, when the principal speech was assigned to him, he discharged the trust with a tranquil dignity of manner, a severe self-posses-

sion, an amplitude of knowledge and illust tion that invariably won the admiration of his audience. His last address (that on Mazzini) was a masterpiece of descriptive oratory." Apart from his more elaborate eulogies upon departed friends—Irving, Cooper, Verplanck, Halleck, and Thomas Cole, alike remarkable for graceful narrative, and discriminating yet sympathetic analyses, Mr. Bryant produced some thirty or forty minor discourses, in which the originality of thought is no less striking than the variety of subject. He aided by his advocacy the foundation of many of our most important institutions—the Academy of Design, Central Park, the Mercantile Library, and the Metropolitan Art Museum ; he sketched the characters and services of the most illustrious men of genius, such as Shakespeare, Goethe, Schiller, Scott, Burns, Franklin, Mazzini, and Kossuth ; he discussed important principles of public and private policy, such as Italian Unity, Negotiation vs. War, Municipal Reform, Freedom of Exchange, Foreign Intervention, the Newspaper Press, National Honesty, Music in Schools, and even the Cultivation of Native Fruits and Flowers. In each of these efforts the reader will find some profound or suggestive thought, great affluence of imagery, pertness of anecdote, and an exquisite

grace and elegance of diction. Mr. Bryant's prose style, indeed, was always a model of simplicity, purity, correctness, animation, and ease. Even his daily editorials often exhibited the dignity of the essay, were rich in literary allusion or citation and at times flashed with wit.

Mr. Bryant's real distinction, whatever his political services may have been, still lay in the sphere of poetry. His earlier contemporaries had assigned him the highest rank, and never afterwards changed their verdict. Dana, a man of profound thought and clear poetic insight, was his lifelong friend, correspondent, and admirer. Irving had caused his poems to be republished in England, and rejoiced that they had won for him the approval of Wilson, Rogers, Campbell, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. Cooper said to me once, "They may talk of us, and praise us as they please, but Bryant is our great literary glory." Halleck knew nearly all his poems by heart. So, the younger generation of writers, who had grown up in the wake of his ascendant, some of whom had risen in certain lines to a greater height, readily confirmed the older judgments. At a reception tendered him by the Century Club on his seventieth birthday, Emerson said that "he first and he only made known to mankind our northern landscape—its summer

splendor, its autumn russet, its winter lights and glories." "He has continued to levy on all American nature; has subsidized every grove and monumental mountain, every gleaming water, those gardens of the desert—the prairies, every waterfowl and wood-bird, the evening wind, the stormy March, the songs of the stars—he has suborned every one of these to speak for him, so that there is no feature of day or night which does not recall the name of Bryant." His friend Longfellow, adopting the words of Dante to Virgil, wrote to him:

> "Tu es lo mio maestro, e el, mio autore."

Lowell, who had once flung a jest at his apparent coldness, still praised his verse for its "strength, its grace, its sweetness, and its dignity," and proclaimed that his words, when the Ship of State was threatened, "had rammed the cannon home and edged our swords, and sent our boarders shouting." Whittier remarked that more than as master of our song, more than as the unflinching patriot, was the spotless, dauntless man to be honored. The dear, genial Dr. Holmes, for whose loss our eyes are still moistened, said to me once, "He has given immortality to a simple word, without prefix or suffix—and that is Bryant." Even the spleeny Poe, who had few good

words for anybody, had some good words for him; and I have seen the younger poet gaze at the elder with those dark, luminous eyes of his full of speechless reverence. But a greater cause of Mr. Bryant's continued preëminence than even the kindly regards of his colleagues, was the fact that his poems had been adopted as class-books in our public schools, and so become the daily food of youthful generations. As a distinguished lady of New England said to me lately: "Bryant we breathed in as unconsciously as we breathed the air; he was assimilated into our intellectual being; and whatever a later criticism may say of his limitations, with us he will remain the best forever." Thus it was that he who had been at first the Forerunner, then the Leader, became in his old age the Patriarch of our native literature.

You will scarcely find in history the record of an old age more honored, or more full of usefulness, like his own October, "journeying in long serenity away." Possessed of ample means, the reward of his own toils, the owner of a country home and a city home, where the music of kind voices was ever heard, visited by eminent men from abroad and the friend of many eminent men at home, he alternated his days between the planting of trees, his professional work and

the discharge of kind offices. As the shadows lengthened he grew perhaps more serious, but he never desponded. A great domestic calamity fell upon him in the later days: The loss of her whose lifelong attachment had been "a poem of the tenderest rhythm," but he tempered the gloom of his grief by a recurrence to strenuous literary occupations. As he had lessened the horrors of the Civil War by a flight into the gentle realms of faery, so he softened this personal depression among the majestic shades of a prehistoric age. He was over seventy-two years old when he began a translation of that immortal Greek epic which has survived all time. It was a task from which any scholar, in the prime of his vigor, might have shrunk; but this veteran finished it in six years, and finished it with a mastery of execution, a simplicity, an elegance, a force and a fire that makes it, in my opinion, the monumental version of the English tongue. It has, at least, added to a brow, already wreathed with laurels, a crown that shines like a silver moon new risen on a golden eve.

Mr. Bryant lived into his eighty-fourth year, when the nation had grown from fifteen to thirty-nine States, and his death, in 1878, by accident and not infirmity, was deplored over this vast expanse as a general affliction. The

journals, public societies, many churches, and thousands of individuals united in their expressions of reverence for his character and of sorrow for his loss. This universality of interest was the more to be remarked in that Mr. Bryant, apart from his professional function, was in no sense of the word a public man. He had never held a public office, entered little into general society, and was personally known only to a small circle of friends. His private life had always been unusually recluse an re-tired. He had fame, but not notoriety; modest, gentle, reserved, shrinking from all kinds of miscellaneous recognition, and courting no honors or plaudits, he was yet widely known, and respected wherever he was known. He was a presence where he was not seen—an influence that radiated far beyond his immediate person. May we not compare it to that of a stream which runs through the thick grasses and dead foliage of a forest, itself unseen, yet watering the roots of mighty oaks, whose fibres shall furnish "the armaments that thunder-strike the walls of rock-built cities." Or, to the soft rain of the night, whose patter on the roof is scarcely heard, but which revives the drooping meads, fills the dried springs, whence birds and cattle slake their thirst, replenishes the pools, where the queen lilies and their courtly

circles of green leaves ride,—and rising again to the clouds, drop down spring violets and summer columbines and autumn's glorious glow, and the rich, clustering harvests that reward the waiting husbandman.

Was there ever a career at once more humble and noble than that of whose interacting influences you have just heard an imperfect outline? From his childhood when he first whispered his rude numbers to the brooks of the mountain side, to the last conscious hour of a venerable age, when he uttered a sublime apostrophe to the genius of civil and religious liberty, which he wished a possession of all the members of the human race, Mr. Bryant's intellect had been active in its communion with the spirit and in its expression of the forms of beauty, seeing in outward nature the living semblances of human life, and in human life the seed-corn of an indefinitely higher development. All through the long interval, which covered three-fourths of this loud and impious Nineteenth Century, dashing its mighty way through the rocky depths of old abuse, he labored quietly in the furtherance of its greatest ends, but in his own unostentatious manner. The poet always, yet always the citizen, the good American, he aspired to produce in himself and in others, by the inner choice of

the soul, and not by external constraint, whatever was brave, noble, disinterested, tender and true in character; as the true source of whatever is just, rightful, humane, and permanent in institutions. Those aspirations were never remitted; they had their effects while he lived, and they are working now that he is dead. It is sixteen years since they laid him under the grass, in "flowery June," according to a wish that he had poetically expressed some fifty years before, and there, for we know not how long,

> "There through the long, long summer day,
> The golden light shall lie,
> And thick young herbs, and groups of flowers
> Stand in their beauty by.
> The oriole shall build and tell
> Her love tale close beside his cell;
> The idle butterfly
> Shall rest him there, and there be heard
> The housewife bee and humming bird."

And though, as he beautifully expressed it, he sees no more the seasons' glorious show; though he hears no more the carols of the birds, the shouts of the village children, or the songs of maidens with fairy laughter blent; though "his part in all the pomp that fills the circuit of the summer hills, is that his grave

is green;" there is a grander part beyond; for his memory, too, is green, and will grow greener with the rising suns and the falling dews. As we have come together to-day, as others elsewhere have come together, to pour out our tributes of gratitude and admiration, so in future years others will come together to cherish his genius and his good deeds as a priceless national inheritance.

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