MRS. GASKELL
D KNUTSFORD

By REV. GEORGE A. PAYNE

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Eleven Illustrations. Introduction by
EDNA LYALL

PRICE 2S. 6D. NET.

Manchester: Clarkson & Griffiths
London and Warrington: Mackie & Co., Ld.

PRESS OPINIONS

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ELIZABETH CLEGHORN GASKELL

Born 29th September 1810; Died 12th November 1865

MRS. GASKELL AND KNUTSFORD

BY

REV. GEORGE A. PAYNE

(Author of "Edna Lyall: an Appreciation," and "Knutsford," in Dent's Temple Topographies).

SECOND EDITION

MANCHESTER
CLARKSON & GRIFFITHS, LTD.
65, BRIDGE STREET

LONDON
MACKIE & CO. LD.
59, FLEET STREET, E.C.


MACKIE & Co LD
Printers
& Stationers
WARRINGTON

PREFACE

No complete biography of Mrs. Gaskell can be written, the Misses Gaskell feeling strongly that their mother's wish—that no biography should be written—ought to be respected.

The author of this little book has brought together from papers of his which have already appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, the *Sketch*, the *Manchester Herald*, and other magazines and newspapers, as a nucleus, a great deal of information about Knutsford, which he thinks may be of interest to all lovers of the writings of the gifted authoress, who spent much of her time here.

This is followed by a biography which has been compiled from sources named, with remarks on her stories long and short, bibliographical notes, and a sketch

of the Rev. William Gaskell, M.A., portions of which are culled from the able sketch written by the Rev. Alexander Gordon, M.A., for the "Dictionary of National Biography."

The author desires to express his grateful thanks to the last named for this valuable assistance, to "Edna Lyall" for her invaluable aid in writing an introduction, and for her great willingness in so readily consenting to do so, and to T. R. Wilkinson, Esq., for kindly reading the proof-sheets.

Should any source of information be unacknowledged, he would plead for consideration in this his first venture. His object has been to write a little book which shall give as much information as possible about Mrs. Gaskell.

KNUTSFORD, *October*, 1900.

PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

THE first edition of my little book having been so well received, I am emboldened to issue a second edition, with corrections and additions.

It was never my intention to write a "Life of Mrs. Gaskell," but I am glad, nevertheless, that this will be done by Mr. Clement K. Shorter.

There has been a notable revival of interest in Mrs. Gaskell and her stories.

The special Gaskell collection at Moss Side, Manchester, has grown apace, and now consists of 218 volumes, thanks to the indefatigable labours of Mr. W. E. A. Axon and Mr. J. A. Green, the Librarian. A most carefully prepared hand list has been compiled by Mr. Green, which all admirers of Mrs. Gaskell's work will be glad to have.

"Edna Lyall," who very kindly wrote an introduction to the first edition, has since passed away, but her influence for good will long remain.

With regard to Knutsford being the original of "Cranford," my friend, Mr. W. B. Tracy (who has also passed away), put the matter most aptly in a very kind review of my book, which appeared in "Lancashire Faces and Places," when he said, speaking of drawing from the life, "When a writer sits down to meditate and write, and the mental constituents he represents gather about him, the pleasures of memory and the tempering of genius are the chief factors in the subsequent work."

In the "Cranford Notes" which I have added to this edition, I have tried to show that Knutsford was the "old ancient place" which people smile about when they read "Cranford."

KNUTSFORD, 1905.

INTRODUCTION

All lovers of Mrs. Gaskell's books will welcome the very interesting sketch of Knutsford, and her connection with it, which Mr. Payne has compiled with so much care.

Among all our novelists there is scarcely, we think, one so lovable as the writer of "Wives and Daughters," and all that has been told of her beautiful character, and her simple, practical way of living, makes us wish very earnestly that she herself had not forbidden the writing of any formal biography.

However, since a complete life is out of the question, it is well to have such a faithful outline of facts as this little book gives; and Mr. Payne's work will no doubt send many of us back to

the novels themselves, to refresh our memories with those delicate character studies, and wholesome, humorous pictures of life.

"EDNA LYALL."

EASTBOURNE,
November 3, 1900.

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CHAPTER I

KNUTSFORD

MRS. GASKELL AND KNUTSFORD

KNUTSFORD

This old-fashioned Cheshire town of about five thousand inhabitants is situated between Manchester and Chester, about fifteen miles from the former and twenty-four from the latter place.

It is not only interesting on account of its association with Mrs. Gaskell and her writings, but also on account of its antiquity, the picturesque beauty of its rural scenery, and its proximity to several ancient mansions and historic churches.

There is a tradition to the effect that when Canute, or Knut, marched northwards against the King of Scotland, he forded a small stream (now covered up) which united the upper and lower morass, and thus gave his name to the town.

The Rev. Henry Green, M.A., who in 1859 wrote "Knutsford: its Traditions and History," one of the most interesting and complete histories of a small town that has ever been written, strongly believed that this was the correct derivation of the name. He points out that the very form of the word—for Cunetesford is the name given to the place in the Domesday Book—shows that it was derived from the name of a person, and also that as early as 1609, when William Smith wrote his "Treatise on Cheshire," he said, "Knutsford, I think, should be called in Latin, Vadum Canuti, that is, the ford of Canutus." The spelling of the name varies from Cunetesford to Knottesford, and from Knotsford to Knutsford.

There was no separate parish of Knutsford until the year 1741, the parish church having been built in 1744. There was a chapel of ease in the town, no trace of which can now be found; but a heap of bricks and stones in the midst of a very old and disused burying-ground, lying about a mile to the east of the town, marks the spot where the "Parochial Chappel of Nether Knotsford," in the

parish of Rostherne, formerly stood. This chapel had a peal of four bells, and it is a curious fact that when the new church was built they were melted down and recast into a peal of five bells, which, together with a sixth bell paid for by public subscription, were hung in the new tower.

The Saturday market, which to-day is very small and unimportant, lasting only for a few hours, was established so long ago as 1292, and at one time, when it was held in the market square, was very large and flourishing. Strangers are often at a loss to know what the people do for a living, for there are no industries except those which are carried on on a very small scale, such as basket-making, mat-making, brick-making, and the making of rustic summer-houses and garden-seats.

The town was much more flourishing when, as some of the old inhabitants well remember, silk-weaving was carried on in most of the cottages, and when as much as 30s. per week could be earned at the loom. The work was brought from Macclesfield and given out to the people, who sometimes had to carry the

finished product back a distance of twelve miles. But while silk was brought from Macclesfield, cotton was brought from Manchester, and on many fustian looms as much as from 25s. to 27s. per week was regularly earned. Going back again to an earlier period, about a hundred and fifty years ago, the making of linen thread was the staple industry.

The district is famous above all else for its fine trees. Within a radius of two miles from the parish church, delightful avenues of oak, beech, and lime may be found, the Lime Walk in Booth Park being especially lovely. There are a number of beautiful parks in the neighbourhood, among them being Tatton Park, the seat of Earl Egerton of Tatton; Tabley, the seat of Lady Leighton Warren, whose brother, the late Lord de Tabley, was the author of several charming volumes of poetry, two of the best known being "Poems: Dramatic and Lyrical," First and Second Series. Other parks are Toft, Booth, Peover, and Mere. Though there is no river, some of the largest meres in Cheshire are in the immediate vicinity. Of these, Tatton, Rostherne and Mere are each about

a mile in length, and Rostherne in some places is over one hundred feet in depth.

Knutsford is a grand field for the archæologist, many of the mansions dating back to very early times. One of the most interesting of these is Tabley Old Hall, situated about two and a half miles from Knutsford, on the road to Northwich.[1] The house, which is now kept as a show place—a modern residence having been built in the centre of the park in 1744—is built on an island in Tabley Mere, evidently with a view to its security from attack. It lies a little distance from the ancient Roman road—Watling Street—which runs from Manchester to Chester. The present building is a good specimen of Elizabethan architecture, with large stone windows having mullions and transoms. The original structure was built in the reign of Richard II. It was a "many-gabled and highly picturesque example of the half-timbered style of building, and was

[1]Reference may be made besides to "Knutsford: its Traditions and History," by Rev. Henry Green, M.A.; Ormerod's "Cheshire"; and "Old Halls in Lancashire and Cheshire," by Henry Taylor.

restored and enlarged by Sir Peter Leicester in 1671."

The old chapel, which is adjacent to the Hall, was built in 1675, and the high-backed oaken pews face north and south; the men, according to an ancient custom, sitting on the one side, and the women on the other. The father of the late Lord de Tabley is said to have remarked that the women ought to allow the men to rest at least one hour in the week. The park, which is large and well wooded, is closed to the public; but the Old Hall may be visited by procuring an order from Lady Leighton Warren, who is very kind to people who are really interested. "Sir Nicholas De Leycester, Knight, was Seneschall to the greate subject & favourite Henry Lacy, Earl of Lincoln & Constable of Cheshire, in the reigne of K. Edward I., about A.D. 1288." [1]

Tenth in descent from Sir Nicholas was Peter Leycester, who married Alice, daughter of Sir John Holford in 1529.

Holford Hall, a very pretty black and white building,is not far from Tabley Hall.

[1] "Travels in England," by Richard le Gallienne, p. 261.

Returning once again to the Old Hall, we find that the great hall is a spacious apartment, forty feet long by twenty-five feet wide, with a gallery on three sides, the roof being supported by huge timbers roughly hewn. The walls are festooned with old armour, spears, and pikes, and with instruments of war and other curios brought from foreign lands by different members of the family. Sir Peter Leicester who restored and enlarged Tabley Old Hall, was created a baronet in 1660. He it was who wrote an invaluable "History of the Bucklow Hundred of Cheshire."

Other halls in the neighbourhood date back to a period far remote, that at Over Tabley, now used as a farmhouse by Mr. John Dean, having been built about 1291, and the Hall at Toft, in the midst of a beautifully wooded park, dating from the reign of Richard I., while Higher Peover Hall, about three miles from Knutsford, has been "the homestead of the Mainwarings from times, perhaps, long anterior to the Conquest."

Knutsford is to this day an old-world sort of place. The cattle fair is still partly held in the public streets, and

until quite recently the bellman, or town-crier, prefaced any announcement he had to make with, "God save the Queen and the lord of this manor," in return for which he received a new suit of clothes each year. When the Queen ascended the throne we are told that the old bellman, Jeremy Low, who was a noted public character, found it difficult not to make his customary prelude, "God save the *King* and the lord of this manor," and frequently had to correct himself. On one occasion, being so exasperated with himself for having to say "God save the King—Queen," and forgetting for the moment the *loyalty* due to his sovereign, he turned round, and, in a growling undertone, said, "God d—— the Queen."

The old custom, which seems peculiar to Knutsford, of "sanding" for marriages and special occasions, is still most carefully observed. Designs, some of which are extremely artistic, are worked out in sand on the pavements and across the streets in front of the houses.

Another old custom, the crowning of the "May Queen," is carried out amid great pomp and splendour. Thousands

The Rose and Crown Inn, Knutsford

of people flock to Knutsford annually to see the procession which passes through the principal streets of the town to the heath, where the coronation ceremony is performed. The sedan chair, used in the old Cranford days, is regularly carried in the procession.

The principal street—King Street—is picturesque and quaint, owing to the irregularity of the buildings, some being oak-timbered, and many having thatched roofs. There is one old house, "The Rose and Crown," which bears the date 1041.[1] Strangers who do not know that the top of the 6 (1641) must have been taken off at some time, have been known to remark that it is really astonishing that such houses should have been built in 1041.

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[1] The top of the 6 has now been restored.—G.A.P

CHANGES IN KNUTSFORD

KNUTSFORD is still in many respects "the old ancient place," but great changes have been effected in its outward aspect since the time when Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson passed her girlhood here.

Among the most striking of these may be mentioned :—

(1.) The railway was constructed in 1862,[1] and a bridge in King Street built upon the site of a few ancient cottages and three magnificent elms, which the oldest inhabitants can very well remember.

In one of these cottages an old milk-vendor lived, and on a waste piece of ground opposite stood the pump which supplied the people in the immediate vicinity with water. At one time, we are told, a local wag—Georgie Barnwell (Potter)—knocked the old man up in the night and informed him that his favourite cow had got a turnip in her throat, and was "like to be choked;" and his anger, not to say his language, will be better

[1] The Railway was publicly opened on May 12th, 1862.

imagined than described when he was led across to the pump, the spout of which had been stopped up with a turnip.

(2.) Where the house now stands in which the governor of the gaol lives, the ancient White Hart Inn formerly stood, and the encouraging announcement, "Good Provision for Man and Beast," met the traveller's gaze. Adjoining this were the village smithy, a wheelwright's shop, and a few cottages, in one of which lived John Eden, for many years the sexton at the parish church.

(3.) A large number of detached and semi-detached villas have been built, thus bringing from Manchester a goodly number of men to the home of the "Amazons."

(4.) The stocks (long since removed) stood under the church wall in King Street. Here, we understand, the before-mentioned Georgie Barnwell, less than forty years ago, was spending a little time. When his brother Samuel, seeing him in this sad plight, said, "Tha looks well naa," George, pointing over to the churchyard, rejoined with, "And so will thee when tha gets over th' wall."

(5.) The office of the bellman is now

extinct, and the court-house, under which the bellman (who was also chief constable) lived, is now, though still standing in the market square, no longer used for its original purpose.

(6.) A number of houses and five cotton mills formerly stood at the "top of the bottom street," but they were pulled down by a gentleman who bought the property and improved the entrance to Tatton Park.

(7.) The river Lily, which Canute is supposed to have forded (for is it not Canute's ford?), then ran across Brook Street.

The two following sketches, "The Bellman" and "The Rhymster," are here introduced in order to give the reader a clear idea what kind of place Knutsford was, and showing types of the people to be met with, together with illustrations of the quaint customs which were strictly observed.

THE BELLMAN

In these days, when advertising is so general, with miles of hoarding, cheap and good printing, and apt illustration, there is no need for the services of the bellman or town crier, and consequently we find the office falling into disuse. In a few places, however, like Altrincham, for instance, the prefatory announcement, "Oyez! Oyez! Oyez!" may still be heard, though it is called "Oh yes! Oh yes! Oh yes!" and then follows "God bless the Queen and the lord of this manor."

Concerning some of these bellmen there were traits and peculiarities which it seems to us we do well to recall.

Manchester has had her interesting bellmen, but Knutsford has had one or two which are almost equally interesting, though it is a difficult matter to get any authentic information concerning them.

Fifty years ago the bellman was very much in evidence on bonfire night. The carrying of the effigy of Guy Faux

through the public streets of Knutsford at the head of a rabble of boys and youths was made one of the leading features of the festival. The boys for weeks beforehand were busy gathering together their piles of wood, and many a paling was stripped of a stake and many a tree was robbed of a bough.

The effigy was made by the leading tailor, and was a full-sized figure, which was carried by Bill Smith, the bellman, mounted on a mule. On such an occasion as this, of course, Bill Smith would wear his livery, for he was not only bellman but constable too.

He lived in the old market-place where, years before, the bonfire used to be kindled, at the lock-up, which to this day may be found beneath the now disused court-house. His under-garments the outside world knew little about, for they were covered by a huge overcoat reaching down nearly to his heels. He wore, if we may say so, a tall hat which was very short, broad-brimmed, and surrounded by a silver band, and he was a tall, burly man.

There must have been quite a stir in this quaint town in the good old time

when Bill mounted his charger, and at the head of a rowdy gang led the way through the principal streets to the Common, where Guy was raised high up on the pile, and eventually brought down amid the roaring of the flames and the shouting of the boys.

But this was not the end of the festival. There was a feast, "The Biff Stake Atin," at the "George," for Bill went round to the butchers with a big basket, into which they each put a steak or a chop as their contribution to the fun of the evening, and for a small charge the townspeople could join in eating and drinking, especially drinking, to the memory of the traitor Guy. Bill Smith was succeeded in his office by Moses Coppock, whom many will remember, but his predecessor was a much more interesting man.

He is the Jeremy Low of whom the Rev. Henry Green, M.A., speaks in his "History of Knutsford." A lady had kindly undertaken to knit some woollen hose for Jeremiah, but, bethinking himself of the spindle-like condition of his legs, with great consideration he went to the lady to beg she would not trouble herself

to make any *cawlves* to his stockings, "Because," said the old man, "because I have no *cawlves* to my legs." He was a very old man when the Queen ascended the throne, and made many a blunder, to the intense amusement of the bystanders, in repeating the familiar phrase, which was the preliminary to any announcement he had to make, "God bless the King, and the lord of this manor," to which the boys added, "And John Long, the tanner." Bill Smith, who was a tall, courtly man, used to take off his hat when he made this announcement. Not so Jeremy!

Jeremy Low was short and thin, a cripple with a short leg, and wore a boot with a high heel. He was a hunchback, the hump being made, it would appear, to carry his bell on. He had very thin legs and a wall eye, and was dressed in a drab coat with red collar, knee breeches, and a broad-brimmed silver-laced hat, and was assisted in his peregrinations with a stick and a crutch.

The fish sold in Knutsford used to be brought hither by coach, and Jeremy on the morning of its arrival used to do his rounds shouting out the kinds

of fish to be purchased at Frederick Moult's, while the boys added their portion—

"Frederick Moult has fish to sell,
And Jeremy Low goes round with his bell."

THE RHYMSTER

The number of those who remember Knutsford as it was before the railway was opened up from Altrincham to Northwich, and when Chelford verily was "Chelford for Knutsford," is rapidly diminishing, and we fear some of the "characters" of that distant time are gradually being forgotten.

The one we wish to revert to has claims upon our attention which we are unwilling to pass over. He was a silk weaver who had seen more prosperous times for the people of old Knutsford.

His father lived at that quaint cottage, which was afterwards occupied by old John Hough, at the junction of Adam's Hill and King Street, where now stands a huge station wall, and opposite to which, on the site of the parochial school (now disused) and the lecture hall, stood eleven cottages. These cottages were demolished in 1829, some of the old bricks being used in the building of the parochial school in 1830. An

ancient photograph which we are fortunate enough to possess shows the front of old Hough's house, next to which was an outhouse, used at one time as a cooper's workshop, and before that as a weaving shop, while, facing a row of seven (out of the eleven cottages), stood a cowshed.

It was in this weaving shop that Tommy Witter used to work at his loom, when he was sober. A small sliding door was the means of communication between the house and the shop, and many a time has old Betty Witter pushed aside the door to see if her ne'er-do-well son was at work or not. Her husband (old George) looked after the cattle and did odd jobs about the town, while she herself looked after the home—and Tommy; for, though he did not live at home for some reason, he *worked* at home, lodging in a cottage hard by. They were getting on in years, being born respectively in 1769 and 1765; and in 1842 old George, who had survived his wife three years, was laid to rest in the parish churchyard. It was in vain we looked for Tommy's tombstone. He who had written so many epitaphs for

pints of beer, and had composed verses and sung songs for a like remuneration, was laid to rest by the parish. But we do not wish to bring him to mind on account of his "toping" propensities, but because he was a clever rhymster, and because his verses, such as we have seen, will give to the younger generation a pretty good idea of the Knutsford of long ago, when (he tells us in a poem which was written about the time) it was thought that the railway would be laid down, and that it would be the means of opening up trade.

"Seventy years with me have passed away,
Great changes in that time I've seen
In this little town of Knutsford,
Where I was born and still remain."

["Remain," by the way, must be pronounced "*remeen*," just as the Cheshire native talks of "teeters" and "pleets."]

"I can remember well the day,
When in wages there was paid
Near three hundred pound per week,
Then in the town we had good trade.

Five cotton mills were running then,
A great deal of thread was made;
A poor man with his family
For his labour then was paid.

To make this an independent town
They would banish the cotton trade;
A great man pulled the factories down,
And a great mistake he made.

Now Knutsford men and men of Knutsford,
Let us hope the worst is past;
We shall have a trade when the railway's made,
And that time is approaching fast."

This, like four other poems we have, was printed on cards and circulated, and probably sold at a small charge. There is nothing very polished about his verse, but it is homely, and he tells his story in a straightforward way. When old John Eden, who had been the sexton at the parish church for many years, met Tommy, he was told right away what his epitaph should be :—

"Here lies the body of Eden John,
Who in his time had buried many a one;
Rejoice ye young men in his fall,
For, if he'd lived, he'd a-buried you all."

His facility in verse-making must have been hereditary, for we find that old Joseph Witter, of Toft, who was born in 1715, and died at the age of eighty in 1795, left as his epitaph :—

"Farewell, my wife and children dear,
Whilst here you do remain,
The Lord of Hosts be your defence
Till we shall meet again."

In 1845 he wrote a poem of six verses, which is as good as anything we have seen of his. It is entitled: "On the lamented death of Miss Egerton. Died November 10th, 1845, aged 21 years." Two verses will suffice to show its quality:—

"Death hath stepped on the hearth with so rapid a stride
That none thought his shadow was nigh;
He had sought out a victim, and found one prepar'd,
And has borne her in triumph on high.

But to sorrow is mortal in those left behind,
And who witness her premature flight;
To see one so young, and so gentle and good,
Pass away like a dream of the night."

Another "In Memoriam" was written in 1853. This was "In Memory of Mrs. Egerton, of Tatton Park, who died Feb. 28th, 1853, aged 74 years. Interred in Rostherne Church, March 7th." This also contains six verses, but we will give the first and last, which will indicate the type:—

"Death has been, and borne away
The widows' and orphans' friend;
With a generous heart her bounty
To the poor she did extend.

And, speaking of "Her aged partner left behind":—

"God be his shield and comforter;
His life's short journey through;
And may the good that she has done
Be always kept in view."

The next card we take up contains *seven* verses, but it is this time on the occasion of a marriage: "Lines on the Marriage of the Honourable Meriel Warren, to Allen A. Bathurst, Esq., M.P."

The railway has done a great deal in opening up the country to the influences of the town, but at the same time it has done a good deal also in breaking down many of the simple manners and customs, and has been the means of introducing a new element which has been a disturbing factor in the relations between the cottage and the Hall. We regret the little we have lost, but gladly accept the large balance of gain. But to the marriage!

The metre in this poetical effusion—we were going to say poem—is like Tommy Witter himself, unsteadier than

formerly; but here are a few of the verses, rugged as they are:—

"On the thirtieth day of January,
In eighteen hundred and sixty-two;
It was the joyful wedding-day—
The marriage ceremony was gone through.

In that ancient chapel in Tabley Park,
Some hundreds there were met,
For to witness a procession
That they will not soon forget.

It was the second daughter
Of that noble line, De Tabley;
We trust the bride and bridegroom
May for ever happy be.

Her virtue, wit, and charity meet—
All her merits we do admire;
To crown the whole, to be complete,
To relieve the poor it is her desire."

The last card is entitled "Free Trade and the Railway," and among ten verses are the following:—

"In Ashley, Mobberley, and Knutsford,
Stations there will be made;
We hope and trust from Manchester
We shall have commerce and trade.

The poor of Cheshire for many years,
They have greatly been distress'd;
For want of trade they are paupers made,
And ratepayers are much oppress'd.

When this line is made there will be trade,
As to coals you will have plenty—
For the starving poor brought to his door,
You will never find them scanty."

The next verse is singularly appropriate to our own time :—

"The town of Knutsford you soon will see
With water well supplied;
An advantage for both rich and poor,
Whate'er may be their wants beside."

In March 1862, Knutsford seems to have been thoroughly roused by what appears, at this distance of time, a very small matter. George Gallop, the then governor of the prison, had daughters who were said to be very haughty, and who it was alleged behaved in a very giddy way in church. One Sunday they were reproved by the curate from the pulpit by name, and immediately left the church.

Mr. Gallop protested in a poster headed 'PUBLIC NOTICE," a tattered copy of which we have seen, and in which he said he had reported the whole matter to the bishop of the diocese, who promised to investigate the unjustifiable and outrageous proceeding of the Rev. D. S.

Spedding. The curate, however, had the sympathies of the people, by whom he was much beloved; and Tommy wrote several counterblasts, from one of which we quote:—

"It had been rumoured for many a day
These young ladies were very unsteady and gay,
In church laughing, talking, reading, and sketching,
Which to the curate was very vexing.
So one Sunday morning he mounted the pulpit,
Gave out the text and then (he could not help it)
Said he, 'I'm sorry to see Miss Gallops doing wrong,
But this has been continued sadly too long.'"

Two lines from another declare:—

"For when the truth the bishop comes to know
He will not wish our minister to go."

Tommy was a curio we thought worth preserving. Drunken he was, no doubt, especially in his later years, but he possessed qualities which made people recognise him as the village poet, punster, and wag, and who can say that he had not a work to do in the world?

IS KNUTSFORD THE ORIGINAL OF "CRANFORD"?

Into such a place as we have described entered Mrs. Gaskell, brought hither as a baby. Knutsford was the home of her childhood and early youth, the place in which she was married, the place she regularly visited from her home in Manchester; and it contains the ancient chapel, in the graveyard of which her mortal remains were buried.

It is generally believed to be the original of "Cranford," and there is something to be said both for and against this view. It is just as likely to be the "Duncombe" of "Mr. Harrison's Confessions," the "Hollingford" of "Wives and Daughters," the "Eltham" of "Cousin Phillis," the "Hamley" of "A Dark Night's Work," and the "Barford"[1] of "The Squire's Story." In any case we think it is pretty certain that her Knutsford experiences were woven into the fine texture of these and other works.

[1] There is a Barford near Warwick. Mrs. Gaskell would hear this name while at school at Byerley.

The Rev. Henry Green, M.A., in his "Knutsford: Its Traditions and History," published in 1859, says:—

"There is one work of hers, 'Cranford,' which in my judgment, while depicting life in almost any country town, is especially descriptive of some of the past and present social characteristics of Knutsford. I know that the work was not intended to dilineate this place chiefly or specially, but a little incident within my own experience will show the accuracy of the pictures as applied to our town. A woman of advanced age, who was confined to her house through illness about three years ago, asked me to lend her an amusing or cheerful book. I lent her 'Cranford,' without telling her to what it was supposed to relate. She read the tale of 'Life in a Country Town,' and, when I called again, she was full of eagerness to say, 'Why, sir! that "Cranford" is all about Knutsford. My old mistress, Miss Harker, is mentioned in it; and our poor cow, she did go to the field in a large flannel waistcoat because she had burned herself in a limepit.' For myself I must say that I consider 'Cran-

ford' to be full of good-natured humour and kindliness of spirit."

It would appear that there is here some show of reason for holding the belief that Knutsford *is* the original of "Cranford."

Also the writer of a notice in the "Record of Unitarian Worthies" begins by quoting the words used by Mrs. Gaskell in her estimate of Charlotte Brontë as a novelist, viz.: "She went to the extreme of reality, depicting characters as they had shown themselves in actual life."

"These words," continues the writer, "are equally applicable to herself; for seldom have characters been more truly drawn, or scenes in common life more graphically described than by her pen."

There seems to be no doubt in this writer's mind as to Knutsford being the original of "Cranford." "In that quiet, old-fashioned little town, among the good, unsophisticated people to whom she introduces her readers in her story of 'Cranford,' she spent her early life. Her relations attended the quaint Presbyterian chapel which stands in the suburbs; with that chapel, which she describes

in 'Ruth,' her earliest recollections must have been connected."

Again in "Celebrities of the Century" (1887) Mr. T. Hall Caine says: "It is easy to see from whence came the incidents that chiefly brighten her pages; they came out of her own life. And what she gives of personal experience is always the best she has to offer."

Regarding originals we will here quote what Edna Lyall says in her "Sketch of Mrs. Gaskell," which we shall refer to later:—

"How far the characters in the novels were studied from life is a question which naturally suggests itself; and Mrs. Holland (a daughter of Mrs. Gaskell) replies to it as follows: 'I do not think my mother ever consciously took her characters from special individuals, but we who knew often thought we recognised people, and would tell her, "Oh, so and so is just like Mr. Blank," or something of that kind; and she would say, "So it is, but I never meant it for him." And really many of the characters are from originals, or rather are like originals, but they were not consciously meant to be like.'"

On the other hand, it is well to remind people like the Honourable Mrs. Tollemache, who said in an article entitled "Cranford Souvenirs" in *Temple Bar* for August 1895: "But though I never met Mrs. Gaskell I have known the original of at least one of her characters, and heard my mother speak of others," that Mrs. Gaskell was too great a writer to sit down and *deliberately copy* either people or places. But this has already been very nicely expressed by Mrs. Ritchie in the preface to the illustrated edition of 1891: "This power of living in the lives of others and calling others to share the emotion does not mean, as people sometimes imagine, that a writer copies textually from the world before her. I have heard my father say that no author worth anything deliberately and as a rule copies the subject before him. And so with Mrs. Gaskell. Her early impressions were vivid and dear to her, but her world, though coloured by remembrance and sympathy, was peopled by the fresh creations of her vivid imagination, not by stale copies of the people she had known." Mrs. Gaskell never consciously drew from life.

and repeatedly said so. It is only natural, however, to expect that many of the early scenes, and events, and places, should have been indelibly impressed on her memory, and that they should afterwards have appeared, though dressed in a different garb, in her many stories. Whether this be so or not, it is interesting to be able to point to many strange coincidences. For instance, the ancient Brook Street Chapel (built 1689, in which Matthew Henry has many times preached), with its graveyard, is probably the model from which the description of Mr. Benson's chapel in "Ruth" was drawn; or to put it in another way, the one which was present to her mind when she described Mr. Benson's chapel. Indeed, there is no other chapel which so nearly answers to the description, though Dean Row and Macclesfield, built about the same time, are somewhat like it.

"It was built when the Dissenters were afraid of attracting attention or observation, and hid their places of worship in obscure and out-of-the-way parts of the towns in which they were built. Accordingly it often happened, as in the

present case, that the buildings immediately surrounding, as well as the chapels themselves, looked as if they carried you back to a period a hundred and fifty years ago. The chapel had a picturesque and old-world look, for luckily the congregation had been too poor to rebuild it or new-face it in George the Third's time. The staircases which led to the galleries were outside, at each end of the building, and the irregular roof and worn stone steps looked grey and stained by time and weather. The grassy hillocks, each with a little upright headstone, were shaded by a grand old wych-elm (in reality a sycamore).[1] A lilac bush or two, a white rose tree, and a few laburnums, all old and gnarled enough, were planted round the chapel-yard; and the casement windows of the chapel were made of heavy-leaded, diamond-shaped panes, almost covered with ivy, producing a green gloom, not without its solemnity within. The interior of the building was plain and simple, as plain and simple could be. When it was fitted up oak

[1] This sycamore, which was one of the interesting features of the graveyard, being dead, was removed in August 1903.

timber was much cheaper than it is now, so the wood-work was all of that description, but roughly hewed, for the early builders had not much wealth to spare."

Standing a little distance from the chapel is Brook House, which tradition says was the home of the Hon. Mrs. Jamieson; and if it be kept in mind that what is now a garden at the front of the house was in the old day an open space, it will be found to exactly correspond with the description given of it in "Cranford." "That lady lived in a large house just outside the town. A road, which had known what it was to be a street, ran right before the house, which opened out upon it without any intervening garden or court. Whatever the sun was about, he never shone on the front of that house." This is where that wonderful story about puss swallowing the lace was so inimitably told by Mrs. Forrester.

In the parish church, built in 1744, Mrs. Gaskell was married in 1832, the Dissenters then being unable to marry in their own chapels. Church House, just outside the parish churchyard, was the

Church House, Knutsford

home of Mr. Peter Holland,[1] surgeon, the father of Sir Henry Holland, Bart., M.D., F.R.S. (1788 to 1873), and grandfather of the present Lord Knutsford. It is believed by many old inhabitants that the character of Mr. Gibson, in "Wives and Daughters," was suggested to Mrs. Gaskell by her acquaintance with Mr. Peter Holland, whom she used to accompany on his rounds. We can only add that Miss Gaskell says: "No two people could be more unlike than Dr. Gibson and Mr. Holland." The old Cann Office on the Heath, where weights and scales at one time were tested, is now covered with ivy. Here lived Edward Higgins, the highwayman, information concerning whom may be found in the Rev. Henry Green's book already referred to. (See also De Quincey's "Highwayman.") The story of Higgins is reproduced in Mrs. Gaskell's extremely well-written story, "The Squire's Tale."

Not far from this is the house in which Mrs. Lumb lived, with whom Mrs. Gaskell spent her childhood and early youth. This is a tall red-brick house (facing the

[1] Peter Holland, of Knutsford, surgeon, was born 3rd June, 1766, and died 19th January, 1855.

heath), and it has been considerably altered since that time. The old school, up to a very recent date used as a girls' school, just outside the entrance gates of Cumnor Towers (now the residence of Earl Egerton of Tatton), may be that described in "Wives and Daughters," in which Miss Cynthia took so great an interest.

"The countess and the ladies, her daughters, had set up a school, not a school after the manner of schools nowadays — where far better intellectual teaching is given to the boys and girls of labourers and workpeople than often falls to the lot of their betters in worldly estate—but a school of the kind we should call 'industrial,' where girls are taught to sew beautifully, to be capital housemaids, and pretty fair cooks, and, above all, to dress neatly in a kind of charity uniform devised by the ladies of Cumnor Towers—white caps, white tippets, check aprons, blue gowns, and ready curtseys, and 'please ma'ams' being *de rigueur*."

The Royal George Hotel, where the visitor is charmed by "the shining oak staircase and panelled wainscot, the old

Home of Higgins, the Highwayman

oak settles and cupboards, Chippendale cabinets, and old bits of china," and its County Assembly Room, mentioned in several novels, and the house at the top of the George Yard—a public thoroughfare leading from one street to the other—said to have been used by "Miss Matty" as the shop in which she sold her tea, and from the window of which (the said window now being built up) she threw "comfits" to the children—these are two of the oldest Cranford houses now recognisable.

CRANFORD NOTES.

1. "*The surgeon has his round of thirty miles and sleeps at Cranford.*"

The surgeon of Knutsford in "Cranford" times was Mr. Peter Holland, whose daughters were Miss Lucy and Miss Mary Holland.

Mr. Bernard Holland, in "Letters of Mary Sibylla Holland," says that "Aunt Lucy" and "Aunt Mary" were sometimes alleged to have served Mrs. Gaskell as the models of Miss Matty and her sister.

There were no doubt certain resemblances. Miss Lucy Holland certainly did wear a very large muff, which often used to contain more than her hands. On many occasions an old friend of ours remembers Miss Holland bringing potatoes, which were then very dear in price, as a gift which the poor appreciated, hidden away in her muff.

2. Mrs. Gaskell refers to the ladies of Cranford being quite sufficient "*for rushing out at the geese that occasionally venture into the gardens if the gates are left open ; for kindness (somewhat dictatorial) to the poor, etc.*"

At that time the Heath was quite open, the fences having been placed round and trees planted during recent years, and many of the old inhabitants kept geese which wandered about in flocks on the Common, the name by which the Heath is still generally known.

3. The story of the Alderney cow and the limepit is quite true. Miss Harker lived at what is now Mr. Pass's shop in Princess Street, where it is alleged Miss Matty kept her little tea shop, and the limepit was along the Northwich Road, and in front of what is now the Grammar School. There were a number of pits along that side of the Heath, one of them being known as the Colonel's pit. We heard of a man who once fell into this particular pit, which was about the largest. He was far from sober when he got in, but the cold douche seemed to bring him round rather rapidly, so that when he was asked by a person, who was attracted to the spot by the vigorous splashing, what he was doing there, he wittily replied that he

was on his way to Lower Peover Church to sing bass against so and so, and wanted to get a deep note.

The pit being beside the highway, and unfenced, it was an easy matter on a dark night to walk in.

In most of the Cheshire fields there are pits, which are much too useful for watering cattle to be filled up by the farmer. They were made before the days of chemical manures, when marl was dug out and spread upon the land together with natural farmyard manure and lime. Later again guano and bone manure took the place of marl, and the pits gradually filled with water, and in many cases were stocked with fish by the farmers.

4. Lord Mauleverer stayed at the Angel Hotel, which, not far from the Royal George Hotel (with County Assembly Room attached), still stands in King Street.

5. *The Shire Lane* spoken of in "Cranford" must be Minshull Street.

6. *The Benefit Society for the Poor*, which Deborah and her mother had started, is still in existence. It is known as the Female Benefit Society, the funds of which, through careful investment, have grown considerably. This society is still managed by the ladies of Knutsford. It was founded in 1806 by Mrs. Holland (mother of Miss Holland and Miss Lucy Holland), of Church House, and a few other of the influential ladies of the town and neighbourhood.

7. "*I counted seven brooches myself on* Miss Pole's dress."

We have seen a good number of these old Cranford brooches, some of which were quite large, and we fortunately possess a few silver shoe buckles.

8. "*Such a piece of gaiety was going to happen as had not been seen or known of since Wombwell's lions came.*" To this day the appearance of a menagerie or travelling show is the cause of great excitement, and crowds usually flock in.

9. "*We comforted ourselves with the assurance which we gave to each other, that the robberies could never have been committed by any Cranford person.*"

"*The Cranford people respected themselves too much and were too grateful to the aristocracy who were so kind as to live near the town, ever to disgrace their bringing up by being dishonest or immoral.*" These two passages might be written to-day with the same irony which we fancy Mrs. Gaskell put into them. The town has not changed much from that old time.

10. *Over Place*, we think, must be Cross Town.

11. "*The little wayside public-house, standing on the high road to London, about three miles from Cranford,*" must be the Mainwaring Arms or "Whipping Stocks." The large sign used to hang from a tree on the opposite side of the road to the public-house, which stands at the junction of the Holmes Chapel, Chelford and Knutsford roads.

12. With regard to the Bank *which stopped payment* we find that there was a Bank failure at Macclesfield in 1823, viz., The Royal and Dantery Bank.

13. "*The post-woman brought two letters to the house. I say the post-woman, but I should say the postman's wife.*"

Years ago a post-woman officiated in what was a very small office in Princess Street.

14. With regard to the "*Ladies' Seminary, to which all the tradespeople in Cranford sent their daughters,*" this was probably Heath House presided over by a Mrs. Stokes.

This house (the Highwayman's House) was once occupied by Jack Mytton, a famous sporting character, whose adventures were celebrated in song and in a series of sporting prints once exhibited at the Grosvenor Gallery. He rode a race in his shirt on one occasion, and performed various wild feats.

15. Before Miss Matty could think of selling tea she went down to consult Mr. Johnson, the grocer, to see if the project would injure his business.

The same feeling exists to-day, and no welcome is offered to a stranger who dares to set up in business.

16. "*And it was race-time, and all the post-horses at Cranford were gone to the races.*"

Knutsford Races were held on the Racecourse, or Heath, or Common, from 1729 to 1873.

17. "*The Spring evenings were getting bright and long when three or four ladies in calashes met at Miss Barker's door. Do you know what a calash is? It is a covering worn over caps, not unlike the heads fastened on old-fashioned gigs.*"

No illustrator of Cranford so far as we know has drawn a calash. (See p. 111.)

BROOK STREET CHAPEL

Interior

THE ancient chapel at Knutsford was erected in 1689, and was built by Protestant Dissenters "for the said congregation to assemble and meet in for praying, preaching, and other religious exercises." So says the first trust deed of 1694, which was in every way a free and open trust.

Dissent was strong in Cheshire, as will be noticed by the fact that sixty-two Cheshire ministers were ejected under the Act of 1662. Within seven miles of Knutsford there were ejected from their livings Mr. John Ravenshaw of Holmes Chapel, Mr. James Livesey of Great Budworth, Mr. John Buckley of Goostrey, Mr. Robert Norbury of Over Peover, and, above all, Mr. Adam Martindale of Rostherne.

The Cheshire Association was formed in 1691, and the first meeting held at Macclesfield. It continued until 1745, when the last meeting was held in Knuts-

ford, on September 3rd. During this time 122 meetings were held—one at Chelford, one at Chester, one at Dean Row, 104 at Knutsford, three at Macclesfield, eight at ministers' houses, two at Nantwich, one at Stockport, one at Warrington. At these meetings Matthew Henry preached eight times, and was seven times moderator. The second meeting of this classis was held in 1692 at Knutsford, when Matthew Henry was the preacher. An ordination service was then held, when six candidates were examined and admitted to the ministry.

From 1689 to the present time there have been, in 210 years, only fifteen ministers, giving an average pastorate of fourteen years. Several of these ministers are buried inside the chapel, and a few in the graveyard adjoining. The ministry of the Rev. Robert Lord extended to fifty years; that of the Rev. Henry Green, M.A., to forty-five years.

The building itself is oblong in shape, with a gallery on three sides and the pulpit on the fourth. The old three-decker pulpit and the square family pews were removed in 1859, but the gallery remains in its original state. On entering the

chapel from the vestry end a long cupboard will be noticed. Here the "bier" is kept. Many visitors, knowing of the close proximity of the village inn to many a parish church, have been interested to hear of the "bier" being kept *inside* the chapel.

From the inside, the diamond panes, with their background of ivy, stained as they are by green and brown hues, give a subdued light, which adds to the general solemnity of the building; and the quietness and peacefulness, together with the entire absence of decoration and ornamentation, make it an ideal place for the worship of Almighty God.

The choir sit in the gallery, where also the organ sits, as the Irish would have it. In the olden time the choir was led by a man who played upon a pitchpipe, and later again this gave place to a barrel organ, which was wound up for a certain number of verses. The old clock in the gallery, facing the pulpit, used to strike twelve towards the close of the morning service, but it was found necessary to call in the aid of the clockmaker, who arranged that it should strike one instead. In a recess opposite the pulpit an old

stove used to crackle away during service, but fourteen years ago this was changed by the introduction of a heating apparatus.

On the whitewashed walls there are two brasses and three other mural tablets. But the attention of the visitor is taken up with the stones which fill the aisles and entrance-hall. Two of these stones are of earlier date than the chapel, having been brought from the parochial chapel-yard in 1859. One of these records the following :—

"E. Long dyed
The 1 of April
1651
& John Long
her husband
1674."

Another stone is not without interest :—

"Here was interred ye
body of Mr. Samuel Low
Faithful minister of
Jesus Christ in this
place for the space
of 13 years & depated
this life the 19 day
of April An : Dom. 1709."

The "r" was omitted from departed, but a correction was afterwards made.

Another stone is to the memory of the

> "Rev. Mr. Turner,
> Sometime Minister of ye
> Gospel in this place.
> Died 1737, aged 48."

Of Mr. Turner, Mr. Green says: "During the Rebellion of 1715 Mr. Turner, then pastor of Preston, was publicly thanked in the presence of King George's army for his bravery and for the service he had rendered to the Hanoverian cause. It appears he had armed the young men in his congregation, and one night when on patrol he had taken prisoner a messenger from the rebels, who was the bearer of important dispatches and letters."

The date given for the gathered church at Allostock is 2nd March 1690, and the first chapel was built before 1705. In those early days it must have been an important congregation. In 1822 the chapel was restored and the galleries removed, and from that time there has been no separate ministry, the minister of Knutsford Chapel being also the

Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford

"preaching minister" of Allostock Chapel. It is said that both Lord Clive and General Wolfe received part of their education in the parsonage of one of the early ministers of Allostock Chapel, probably Dr. Samuel Eaton, 1728-1737.[1]

The Chapel-Yard

Sitting on a gravestone in the ancient burying-ground, we could not help reflecting on the changes which had been brought about since the first stone had been raised to mark a spot which ever afterwards was sacred ground, though no rites of consecration had ever been performed. We were undoubtedly on hallowed ground. A little distance away we could hear the whistle of the engine as it entered the station, and so near were we that we could hear the name of the station shouted by the porters, and the banging of the carriage doors, as the train was about to leave Knutsford and speed onward towards Plumbley. Far away we

[1] See "Knutsford: its Traditions and History." By Rev. H. Green, M.A., p. 109.

The Rev. George Eyre Evans, in "Antiquarian Notes," says it was during 1738-1739 that Lord Clive was a pupil of the Rev. William Turner (1737-1746).

could see the Tatton Mere, with the tall trees reflected on the deep water underneath. Within twenty yards ran the highway, and yet notwithstanding this we appeared to be miles away, so peaceful was the scene. The land on which we stood, and on which the chapel adjoining stood, had been given for the use of Protestant Dissenters in 1688 by Isaac Antrobus, who lies buried in the chapel aisle.

Long before Knutsford became a parish (church erected 1744) the minister of the chapel in the fields, which was in the parish of Rostherne, was a Mr. Turner, whose[1] "conversation was so eminently holy and discipline so strict, that few or none attempted to come to the Lord's table but who were persons of sober and blameless lives. Some of the inhabitants that were for a greater strictness in the rituals of religion, and a greater liberty in morals than Mr. Turner had approved of, were very industrious to have a minister of their own temper, and they were successful in securing the appointment of Mr. Holmes, who had been chaplain to

[1] "Knutsford: its Traditions and History." By Rev. H. Green, M.A.

Lord Delamere. Many of the inhabitants that had never been dissenters refused to own him as their minister, and joined with others that had been always dissenters in judgment to set up a meeting and invite a dissenting minister to come and preach to them."

The seats at each of the four entrances (above and below), while they may be used by late comers to the services, or by tired pilgrims, suggest that they in those stormy times may have been intended for other purposes, for it is significant that in the original trust deed provision is made for any possible contingency :—

"It is hereby mutually covenanted declared and agreed by and between all the parties to these presents for themselves severally and respectively and for their severall and respective heirs executors Administrators and Assignes that if the tolleration and liberty granted by a late Act of Parliament entituled an Act for exempting severall of theire Majtıes protestant subjects from the penalties of certaine laws should be at any time hereafter taken away or withdrawne that then and from thenceforth it shall and may be law-

full to and for the said Isaac Antrobus his heirs or Assignes peaceably and quietly to have hold occupy possess and enjoy the said chappell or meeting-house and the said parcell of land with the Appurtenancies for and during soe many of the before granted terme of one thousand yeares as the said toleration or liberty shall be soe taken away or withdrawne and to Imploy the same for a dwelling-house or outbuilding to his or theire owne use and behoofe at his or theire owne will and pleasure (keeping and maintaining the said buildings in sufficient repaire) and that in such case it shall and may be lawfull to and for the said Peter Coulthurst John Leadbeater John Bostocke John Beard Peter Wood and Robert Kell and the survivor of them and the executors and assignes of the survivor of them to take and carry away the Pulpitt and all the pewes within the said building and to dispose of them to such persons as haue been at the charge of them anything before herein to the contrary in any wise notwithstanding."

The chapel, which Mrs. Gaskell is believed to have faithfully described in

"Ruth," is one of three built about the same time, and probably by the same architect. Dean Row, Macclesfield, and Knutsford Chapels, all have their entrances to the gallery from the outside, and the grey stone steps are stained by time and weather.

One of the first stones we look upon bears an inscription written in that quaint style which at one time seemed quite fashionable :—

"Upon this Stone who fix their Eyes,
To learn whose Dust beneath it Lyes;
Her Name, her Age, her Family
May i' th' following Letters See,
ANNA COLTHURST, &c., &c."

And then follows a verse which shows that the aforesaid Anna must have been the compendium of all the virtues : —

"The Vertues of th' Exalted Mind
That Left its Partner Here behind
Nor mouldering Stone, nor Mournfull Verse
Are fitt or worthy to Rehearse."

In close proximity to this there are other stones erected to the memory of members of the same family. We will quote the epitaph from one of these,

in order to show their many sterling qualities:—

"This Stone over the Remains
of PETER COLTHURST of Sandlebridge,
who died June 16 1741 aged 72.
And of ELIZABETH his Wife
who died June 15 1740 aged 74.
In His Mind were assembled
all the Virtues which rendered Him
happy in Himself, usefull to the World
an Ornament to human Nature,
She was truly worthy of such an Husband
in all Goodness, a kind Assistant
and generous Rival.
Their lives were stained with no Dishonour
but Piety and universal Benevolence
recommended Them to the Friendship
of the Wise and Good.
And those valued Them most
who knew Them best
The Bad avoided Them
except they wanted Relief."

As we stood, paper and pencil in hand, a starling which had built under the chapel eaves came home to its hungry and noisy brood with a worm in its mouth, and its croaking, discordant notes startled the sparrows, busy among the ivy which almost covers the building. A thrush was singing near by, and now

and again a swallow would skim past, while the spotted flycatcher, tamer than most other birds, darted now and again from the boundary wall in search of his winged prey.

It was an ideal place for the birds. Seldom frequented save on the Sabbath and by an occasional visitor from afar, and being well sheltered by an ancient sycamore—older, perhaps, than the chapel itself—and by a few thorn bushes, a weeping ash, one or two rose trees and dark-leaved yews, it was the haunt of many birds which made music among the boughs.

Under one of the yew trees stands a headstone which attracts the attention of many visitors :—

"In
Memory
of
SAMUEL LEICESTER,
Of Cross Town, Knutsford."

[And then there is a space left for the date of death to be filled in.]

Old Samuel is still alive, at the ripe age of eighty-nine ; and before he became too

feeble to walk down, it was his custom to go and carefully weed his own grave, where his wife was laid to rest twenty-three years ago.[1]

A little distance away is a stone to the memory of the Rev. Henry Green, M.A.,

"Minister of this chapel 1827 to 1872."

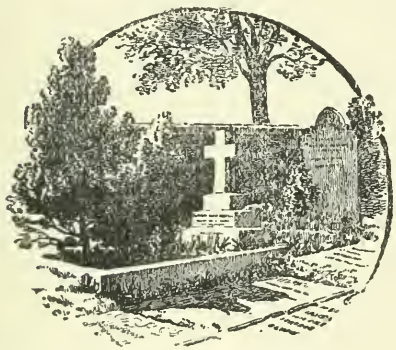
But there is one grave we have not mentioned, which is the most frequented of all. It is marked by a simple stone cross, under which lie the mortal remains of

"Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell,
Born September 29, 1810;
Died November 12, 1865.
And of William Gaskell,
Born July 24, 1805;
Died June 11, 1884."

Here the visitor to Cranford, the lovers and admirers of the works of the gifted authoress, the friends of the saintly man whose memory lives in many minds to-day, all unite in paying homage to the shrine of a noble pair of workers in God's vineyard.

[1] The old man passed away January 19, 1900.

This ancient graveyard, hallowed by sacred associations, still bears its silent testimony to the worth of many noble souls who have brought sunshine and gladness into the hearts of the living, and who "live again in minds made nobler by their presence."



Mrs Gaskell's Grave

CHAPTER II

MRS. GASKELL

BIOGRAPHY AND CRITICISM

It is to be regretted that no full and complete biography of Mrs. Gaskell has been or can be written. It is constantly stated by writers on this subject that the reason for this was that her experiences connected with "The Life of Charlotte Brontë" were so painful as to cause her to forbid it; but we understand that this is not so, and that the resolution was made prior to the publication of that "Life," which Mr. Clement Shorter says "ranks with Boswell's 'Life of Johnson' and Lockhart's 'Life of Scott.'" Thackeray had expressed a desire that no biography of himself should be written, and Mrs Gaskell was none the less earnest in making a similar request. The best that has been published is that written by Miss Hamilton in her "Women Writers" (second series), which is considered an accurate account. Another was written by the late George T. Bettany as an introduction to the

"Minerva" edition of "Mary Barton." Both writers received considerable help from Dr. Ward's article on Mrs. Gaskell in the "Dictionary of National Biography" and from the article by Miss Flora Masson in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," and we, in our turn, must express indebtedness to each of the above-named writers for many facts.

When Mrs. Gaskell started to write "The Life of Charlotte Brontë" she found it necessary to visit Haworth for local colour, and her first chapter very faithfully describes the journey from Keighley to Haworth. Its seems only a right and proper thing to do, in writing a biography, to visit the old haunts, but it is this freshness and interest which are wanting in the biographies of Mrs. Gaskell we have named. Neither Miss Hamilton nor Mr. Bettany appear to have visited Knutsford. Mrs. Ann Thackeray Ritchie, before she wrote the introduction to the 1891 edition of "Cranford," did visit Knutsford, and, though it was only a visit of two days, she managed to gain a great deal of information even in that short space of time. Hugh Thomson, the artist who

illustrated this edition, made a great mistake in not visiting Knutsford and taking a few original drawings. But he profited by experience, and when later he illustrated Miss Mitford's "Our Village," a companion volume to "Cranford" in the same series, he took care to include a number of drawings of the original places mentioned in the story.[1]

Proceeding now to the biography, it appears that Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson was born on September 29th, 1810, in a house in Lindsey Row, now a part of Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, where Thomas Carlyle lived. She was the daughter by a first marriage of William Stevenson. He was a native of Berwick-on-Tweed, who, after quitting the Unitarian ministry, had taken to agricultural pursuits (compare the minister farmer in "Cousin Phillis"), had written upon commerce, and finally settled as keeper of the Records to the Treasury of London, where he continued to write.

Concerning Mr. Stevenson, a note appeared in the *Athenæum* for September 12, 1891, by "E.V.T." who

[1] We are to have shortly a "Cranford" with original drawings by Mr. E. H. New.

quotes from the *Annual Obituary* for 1830 (Longmans).

This note we here reproduce, as it very conclusively proves that a great deal of Elizabeth's cleverness was inherited from her father.

"The literary and scientific world has sustained a great loss in the death of Mr. Stevenson, a man remarkable for the stores of knowledge which he possessed, and for the simplicity and modesty by which his rare attainments were concealed." The article then gives a long account of his career. His father was a captain in the Royal Navy, but his son seems from boyhood to have inclined only to intellectual activity. His earliest post was that of classical tutor in the Manchester Academy, so well known through the Aikins and Barbaulds. After preaching for a short time at a neighbouring Unitarian chapel, and making an unsuccessful attempt at farming in Scotland, he settled in Edinburgh, taking in students for the University to board with him, but at the same time editing the *Scots Magazine*, and "contributing largely to the *Edinburgh Review*." Here he was introduced

"to the Earl of Lauderdale, who had just been appointed Governor General of India, and was selected by him to accompany him as his private secretary. But upon repairing to London to make preparations for his voyage, the decided opposition of the East India Company rendered Lord Lauderdale's appointment nugatory. Through his interest, however, Mr. Stevenson obtained the office of Keeper of the Records to the Treasury." This appointment as Lord Lauderdale's secretary took him up to London, where he lived in Mayfair and then in Chelsea. "He laboured with unremitting diligence," contributing to the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Oxford Review*, the *Westminster Retrospective*, and *Foreign* reviews, and writing articles for Dr. Brewster's "Encyclopædia" and for the Society for the Diffusion of Knowledge. "He had," the *Annual Obituary* continues, "the true spirit of a faithful historian, and contrary to the practice too prevalent in those days, dived into original sources of information." It is interesting that Mr. Stevenson's nephew, Father Stevenson, S.J., of Farm Street, should have shown the same turn for historical research.

Mrs. Gaskell's mother was a daughter of Mr. Holland, of Sandlebridge, three miles from Knutsford (probably the Heathbridge of "Cousin Phillis"), Mr. Holland being the descendent of an ancient Lancashire family.

Early in 1899 the David Lewis trustees purchased the estate of Sandlebridge for the purposes of founding an epileptic colony. Writing to the *Manchester Guardian* of March 4, 1899, a correspondent described it as "sufficiently removed from any great highway to enjoy the privacy which is to be desired in a colony of the kind proposed, and yet it is very accessible by good roads, and is adjacent to the Chelford station on the main line of the London and North Western Railway from Manchester to London. The situation of the estate is healthy in the extreme. The land stands high, and the subsoil is of the kind best suited for human habitations. Its undulating character lends charm and variety to the landscape, which is well wooded, and has its beauty considerably enhanced by the clear brook which runs along the valley and ripples under the bridge at the forge."

Sandlebridge

Mrs. Ritchie charmingly describes Sandlebridge, where, until quite recently, a very fine old shuffleboard could be seen. The farmer was allowed the use of this pretty and useful piece of furniture, which contained many drawers and cupboards underneath, until it was required by the Holland family.

"The old house stands lonely in a beautiful and tranquil position, with a waving prospect of fields and shady trees and hedges, reaching to the hills which rise in the far distance. As we stood there we could see Alderley Edge clear painted against the stormy sky. Just before reaching the house the road dips into a green hollow, where stands a forge which has been there for over two hundred years, handed down from father to son. Just beyond the forge is an old mill, shaded by beautiful trees; we could hear the peaceful sounds of labour, the clanking blows of the anvil, the soft monotonous thud of the mill. Sandlebridge is now given up to a farmer; a pretty flagged stone path leads up to the front door."

Miss Alice Brown "By Oak and Thorn" must here be allowed to add her description:—

"Such far reaches of field and valley are here as to make a not unpleasant loneliness in the land, even under full sunlight; and when, approaching the farm, you come to a smithy and mill[1] dedicated to the uses of life, still the illusion is not dispelled. For in the smithy two or three leisurely men lean and look in the intervals of smiling talk, and the mill, sweet and dusty from the breath of grain, goes on working quite by itself. Great wooden beams, heavy wheels, and dusty hoppers seemed that day to be living a life of uncompanioned yet happy activity, and from without came the *plash, plash*, of willing water and the trickle of the feeding stream."

It is a place which is assuredly well worth visiting. There is no doubt in our mind that it was the Woodley referred to in "Cranford" where the old bachelor Mr. Holbrook lived. He it was who supplied the ladies at dinner with two-pronged, black-handled forks, and made it difficult for them to know how they were to manage with their peas, while *he* shovelled them up into his capa-

[1] Colter's Mill bears the following inscription and date: M.S.C. : 1659.

Sandlebridge Mill

cious mouth with his large round-ended knife. We have been there on several occasions, sometimes with American visitors who are always immensely interested. On one occasion we were able to point out a cuckoo flying near. As our friends had never heard a skylark's song we pulled up occasionally to give them an opportuuity of hearing one.

An aged couple who live a few miles from Boston (*the* Boston we mean, need we say, Mass., U.S.A. ?) called to see us and to inquire the way thither. They leisurely strolled out, taking a few sandwiches with them, and had returned to within a mile of Knutsford, when they were met by a cyclist who informed them that he had come all the way from Manchester to see Knutsford, and that it was his intention, if they could direct him, to go over to Sandlebridge. His daughter had been so charmed with "Cranford" that he must needs turn out on his bicycle so long a distance, poor martyr! He was somewhat surprised when our friends told him they had travelled across the Atlantic to see this same charming "Cranford."

Within a month after her birth the

child lost her mother, and after being entrusted for a week to the care of a shopkeeper's wife, was by a family friend (a Mrs. Whittington) brought over to her own mother's sister, Mrs. Lumb, of the Heathside, Knutsford.[1] Her aunt, but recently married, was obliged for painful reasons to live alone with her daughter, and Elizabeth was to be a companion to this child, who had become a cripple. She found a second mother in her aunt, more especially after the death of her cousin. When about fifteen years of age she was sent to a school kept by Miss Byerley at Stratford-on-Avon, where she was taught Latin as well as French and Italian. Her knowledge of the Midlands may be found in "Ruth." Here she remained two years. The disappearance of her only brother, John Stevenson, on his third or fourth voyage as a lieutenant in the merchant navy about 1827, suggested the "Poor Peter" episode in "Cranford" and probably the character

[1] We have a lantern slide of Hannah, relict of Samuel Lumb, of Wakefield, and daughter of Samuel and Anne Holland, who died May 1st, 1837, aged 69, taken from a picture in the possession of the Rev. S. A. Steinthal.

of "Poor Frederick" in "North and South." She occasionally visited London, and spent two winters at Newcastle-on-Tyne in the family of Mr. Turner, a public-spirited Unitarian minister (probably the Mr. Benson of "Ruth") and another at Edinburgh, the society of which afterwards suggested "Round the Sofa," the introduction to "My Lady Ludlow."

The Mr. Turner here spoken of was the Rev. William Turner, who ministered in Newcastle-on-Tyne at the Church of the Divine Unity, then in Hanover Square, from 1782 to 1841, and who in January 1793, at the age of thirty-one, founded the Literary and Philosophical Society in that town, which is, after Manchester, the oldest society of the kind in England. His portrait may be found in Mr. Welford's "Men of Mark," as well as in Dr. Spence Watson's interesting history of that society. For many years he gave lectures and contributed papers on the most abstruse scientific subjects. George Stephenson freely acknowledged that a great deal of his scientific knowledge was obtained from William Turner, who died in Manchester in 1859, at the age of ninety-seven.

"Mr. Turner," he said, "was always ready to assist me with books, with instruments, and with counsel, gratuitously and cheerfully. He gave me the most valuable assistance and instruction; and to my dying day I can never forget the obligations which I owe to my venerable friend." We make this extract from a funeral sermon on the Rev. William Turner by the Rev. William Gaskell, M.A., preached at Upper Brook Street Chapel, Manchester, on May 1, 1859.

Mr. Turner's successors in Newcastle have been the Revs. Joseph M'Allister, George Harris, William Newton, James Christopher Street, Alfred Payne, and Frank Walters. It is curious that the Rev. John Turner, the grandfather of William Turner, should have been the minister at Knutsford from 1735 to 1737, and that he lies buried only a few yards from the grave of Mrs. Gaskell in the ancient Brook Street Chapel at Knutsford. Also William Turner's father, William Turner, ministered at Allostock, only five miles from Knutsford, from 1737 to 1746.

In 1832 Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson was married in the Knutsford parish

church to the Rev. William Gaskell, the minister of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester. It was a happy marriage, and each was able to help the other very considerably. She was ready at all times to engage in works of charity and mercy, and, during the cotton famine in Manchester—for here they lived together, first in Dover Street, then in Rumford Street, and afterwards at Plymouth Grove—she showed a practical sympathy among the deserving poor, which won for her a place in their hearts. Her first known publication appeared in William Howitt's "Visits to Remarkable Places," in 1840, and was a description of Clopton Hall, near Stratford-on-Avon.[1] In 1844, while on a

[1] A correspondent in the *Manchester Guardian* of Nov. 20, 1897, gives the following: "What was probably Mrs. Gaskell's first appearance in print was a poem in *Blackwood's Magazine* of January 1837. There is some reason to think that this was written in collaboration by the Rev. William Gaskell and his accomplished wife. It is in what would now be regarded as old-fashioned verse, but contains a vivid and sympathetic sketch of a poor woman living in a great town, who is always hoping for a return to the home of her childhood in the pleasant country, and always putting off the realisation of that dream in order to help the poor and the sick. When she is too old to go back, she lives in memory."

visit to Festiniog, Mrs. Gaskell lost her only boy Willie, who died of scarlet fever. In order to turn her thoughts from this deep grief she, at her husband's advice, attempted to write, and her practical experience among the poor in one of the worst districts of Manchester (Ancoats) proved to be of great service in depicting in "Mary Barton" the hard conditions of life under which the poor lived. The work was written at this sad time and sent to a publisher in London, who returned it unread. Messrs. Chapman and Hall, after keeping it so long a time that Mrs. Gaskell says she had forgotten all about it, offered her £100 for the copyright, and it was published anonymously in 1848. It was exceedingly well received, and everybody asked who the writer could be, and some, we are told, discussed the question with Mrs. Gaskell

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"'No sense had she of change, or loss of thought,
With those around her no communion sought;
Scarce knew she of their being. Fancy wild
Had placed her in her father's house a child;
It was her mother sang her to her rest;
The lark awoke her springing from his nest;
The bees sang cheerily the livelong day,
Lurking 'mid flowers wherever they did play;
The Sabbath bells rang as in years gone by,
Swelling and falling on the soft winds' sigh.

herself. It has been translated into French, German, and several other languages.

A writer in *Macmillan's Magazine* for December 1865 says:—

"Seldom has any author attained celebrity so rapidly as Mrs. Gaskell. Like Byron, she might almost say that she awoke one morning and found herself famous. Of all recent literary successes 'Mary Barton,' with the exception perhaps of 'Jane Eyre,' was the most signal. During the period that its authorship remained a secret, there were few people, even among her own friends and neighbours, who suspected the quiet lady, whose home lay in Manchester, of having written a book of which the *world* was talking."

When it became known that the writer was Mrs. Gaskell she received many

Yes! angel voices called her childhood back,
Blotting out life with its dim sorrowy track;
Her secret wish was ever known in heaven,
And so in mystery was the answer given.
In sadness many mourned her later years,
But blessing shone behind that mist of tears;
And as the child she deemed herself, she lies
In gentle slumber till the dead shall rise."

letters of congratulation, including one from Thomas Carlyle. She believed in a higher classification of men than into rich and poor.

"You cannot read the lot of those who daily pass you by in the street. How do you know the wild romances of their lives, the trials, the temptations they are even now enduring, resisting, sinking under? You may be elbowed one instant by a girl desperate in her abandonment, laughing in mad merriment with her outward gesture, while her soul is longing for the rest of the dead, and bringing itself to think of the cold flowing river as the only mercy of God remaining to her here. You may pass the criminal meditating crimes at which you will to-morrow shudder with horror as you read them. You may push against one, humble and unnoticed, the last upon earth who in heaven will for ever be in the immediate light of God's countenance. Errands of mercy—errands of sin—did you ever think where all the thousands of people you daily meet are bound?"

It was the striking contrast between the lives of ease and luxury of the manufacturers, and the extreme poverty of the

men, which compelled her to write so strongly what she felt.

"Large houses are still occupied, while spinners' and weavers' cottages stand empty because the families that once filled them are obliged to live in rooms or cellars. Carriages still roll along the streets, concerts are still crowded by subscribers, the shops for expensive luxuries still find daily customers, while the workman loiters away his unemployed time in watching these things and thinking of the pale, uncomplaining wife at home, and the wailing children asking in vain for enough of food—of the sinking health, of the dying life of those near and dear to him. The contrast is too great. Why should he alone suffer from bad times?"

Hers was not a one-sided view, as some have maintained. She drew faithful characters, the types of both good and bad workmen—*and* manufacturers. The contrast between the proud, domineering, insolent young Mr. Carson, of "Mary Barton," and the thoughtful, consistent, and honest Mr. Thornton of "North and South" will be apparent to the reader. Great power is shown in this first novel, "Mary Barton." What a realistic picture

we have of the mill on fire! We can see the ghastly faces of the two men as the fire begins to surround them; we can hear the crackle, and almost unconsciously sit back in our chair as we read for very fear of being scorched. And again, towards the end of the book, we can almost hear the splash of the oars which carries the frail boat all too slowly out to sea; we can almost see the "gloomy, leaden sky, the cold, flat, yellow shore in the distance;" we can almost feel "the nipping, cutting wind;" but the lights of the *John Cropper* flash, the news of the trial is shouted out to the only witness, and Mary's lover is saved.

The *Prospective Review* of 1849 says of "Mary Barton":—

"It is a charming book; after every deduction, rich in wisdom and truth. It shows us what a deep poetry may be lying hid under the outward meanness and triviality of humble life; what strong and pure affections, what heroism and disinterestedness, what high faith in God and immortality under all the sorrow and trial of a hard world may be nursed in the homes of poor and unpolished men. We rise from its pages with a deeper

interest in all our fellow-beings ; with a firmer trust in their great and glorious destiny ; and with a strengthened desire to co-operate with its gifted authoress, and with all of kindred spirit, in every effort to ennoble and bless them."

From the "Reminiscences of Henry Crabb Robinson" we quote the following:—

"*Sunday night, Oct.* 14. 1849.

"Froude has been here this summer (at the Lakes). He was lodged, as I was informed—for I did not see him—at a farmhouse at or near Skelwith Bridge."

"Mrs. Gaskell, the author of 'Mary Barton,' was also for some weeks in that neighbourhood, and I got Mr. Wordsworth to meet her and her husband (a Unitarian minister at Manchester). She is a very pleasing, interesting person."

After the publication of "Mary Barton" she made many friends on her visits to London, amongst whom were Charles Dickens, Lord Houghton, Mrs. Beecher Stowe, Ruskin, and Florence Nightingale ; and at Oxford she became known to Professor Jowett and Mr. (afterwards Dean) Stanley. In 1850 she wrote "Lizzie Leigh" and "The Moorland Cottage,"

and in 1853 these were followed by "Ruth" and "Cranford." "Ruth" is an extremely well-written story. In this and in "Lizzie Leigh" we have every-day characters. Here we see two otherwise beautiful characters marred by an early blemish, which hung as a pall over their lives, truly more sinned against than sinning, yet always afterwards, as if in some measure to atone for a former sin, giving up their lives to works of love and service.

When "Mary Barton" came out it was remarked by some that the writer had no humour, but this idea was soon dispelled upon the publication of "Cranford." It abounds from beginning to end in droll, dry humour, and sparkles with wit. It has been described as "the purest piece of humoristic description which has been added to British literature since Charles Lamb." We will, just in passing, point to one or two of its quaintnesses.

"When Mrs. Forrester, for instance, gave a party in her baby-house of a dwelling, and the little maiden disturbed the ladies on the sofa by a request that she might get the tea-tray out from underneath, every one took this novel proceed-

ing as the most natural thing in the world, and talked on about household forms and ceremonies as if we all believed that our hostess had a regular servants' hall, second table, with housekeeper and steward, instead of the one little charity-school maiden, whose short ruddy arms could never have been strong enough to carry the tray upstairs if she had not been assisted in private by her mistress, who now sat in state, pretending not to know what cakes were sent up, though she knew, and we knew, and she knew that we knew, and we knew that she knew that we knew, she had been busy all morning making tea-bread and sponge-cakes." And again, "Miss Jessie sang 'Jock o' Hazledean' a little out of tune; but we were none of us musical, though Miss Jenkins beat time, out of time, by way of appearing to be so."

The petty deceptions, so well hit off, are extremely amusing. One more quotation must suffice, and this as showing how elegant economy was practised. "The greatest event was that the Miss Jenkinses had purchased a new carpet for the drawing-room. Oh, the busy work Miss Matty

and I had in chasing the sunbeams as they fell in an afternoon right down on this carpet through the blindless window! We spread newspapers over the places, and sat down to our book or our work; and lo! in a quarter of an hour the sun had moved and was blazing away on a fresh spot, and down again we went on our knees to alter the position of the newspapers."

Mr. Axon remarks: "There is a curious typographical error in various editions of "Cranford." That delightful story appeared piecemeal in *Household Words*, and in the number for May 7, 1853, occurs the description of a pudding originally "made in most wonderful representation of a lion *couchant* that ever was moulded," and served up a second day—"a little of the cold lion sliced and fried." But in the reprinted form *lion* has been turned into *loin*. Through how many editions this error has run is not known, but the circumstance was pointed out in the *Nation* (February 1892).

"North and South" was published in 1855, and all through 1856 Mrs. Gaskell was employed in collecting and working

up the scattered fragments of the "Life of Charlotte Brontë." When the first edition of the "Life of Charlotte Brontë" appeared in 1857, certain assertions which had been made on the faith of statements made by Branwell to his sister were challenged, and the result was a retraction and the withdrawal of the unsold copies from circulation. This has made the first edition a rare book. In this unpleasant experience Mrs. Gaskell's attitude was absolutely blameless.

In "North and South" her truth of portraiture as shown in the characters of Margaret, Nicholas Higgins, and Mr. Thornton is especially worthy of note. This story, almost as much as "Mary Barton," shows Mrs. Gaskell's knowledge of the conditions of the poor, and the way in which her ready sympathy was shown. Observe how well the contrast is pointed and maintained between the characters of Edith Shaw, afterwards Mrs. Lennox, and Margaret. Again, the pith of the whole question of the relations which should exist between employers and employed was spoken by Mr. Thornton in a few brief sentences. "I have arrived at the con-

viction that no mere institutions, however wise, and however much thought may have been required to organise and arrange them, can attach class to class as they should be attached, unless the working out of such institutions bring the individuals of the different classes into actual personal contact. Such intercourse is the very breath of life. We should understand each other better, and I'll venture to say we should like each other more." Mrs. Gaskell had made the acquaintance of Charlotte Brontë at the Lakes in 1850, and a great attachment had sprung up between the two writers. She spent a fortnight in Brussels in careful investigations into the early school-life of Miss Brontë in that city. In 1863 she wrote "A Dark Night's Work" and also "Sylvia's Lovers."

Dr. Ward says: "The plot of 'Sylvia's Lovers' turns on the doings of the press-gang towards the close of last century. She stayed at Whitby (here called Monkshaven) to study the character of the place, and personally consulted such authorities as Sir Charles Napier and General Perronet Thompson on the

history of impressment. In its earlier portions the story maintains itself at the writer's highest level; the local colouring is true and vivid, the pathetic charm of the innocent Sylvia is admirably contrasted by the free humour of the figures of her father and his man Kester, although the effect is rather marred by the coincidences introduced to insure a symmetrical conclusion."

"Cousin Phillis," too, was published in this same year. It is a story well worth reading, for it contains, as some one has expressed it, a combination of the sunniest humour with the tenderest pathos. Early in 1865 appeared the "Grey Woman," which we shall speak about later. Her last work, "Wives and Daughters," was an unfinished production. The story appeared in the *Cornhill Magazine*, and was finished by the editor of that magazine. He says: "Here the story is broken off, and it can never be finished. What promised to be the crowning work of a life is a memorial of death. A few days longer, and it would have been a triumphal column, crowned with a capital of festal leaves and flowers; now it is

another sort of column—one of those sad white pillars which stand broken in the churchyard." It is an extremely good story, and should be read by every one. Here, again, we get a great deal of the life of old Knutsford, though some no doubt will regard it as a faithful picture of life in *any* small country town.

"The Towers," we are convinced, is Tatton Hall; the park, the lake, the school just outside the gates, the gates themselves, all are exactly as we may see them now.

Out of the proceeds of one of her works she bought a house called "Holybourne," at Alton in Hampshire, thinking that it would be a very nice surprise-gift to her husband. She was staying there with her daughters engaged in writing "Wives and Daughters," when quite suddenly one evening she died of heart disease. She was carried away without a moment's warning (according to the epitaph) while conversing with her daughters, and was buried in the graveyard of Brook Street Chapel, Knutsford.

The funeral sermon was preached in Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, by the Rev. James Drummond, B.A. (now Dr. Drummond).

The School

On the front page the following words may be found :—

"This sermon is offered by his colleague and his congregation to the Rev. William Gaskell, M.A., and dedicated to the memory of Elizabeth Cleghorn his wife, whose genius as a writer has endeared her to the public, and whose constant affection and thoughtful kindness will be ever held in loving remembrance by those who shared her friendship, or needed her help."

It is much to be regretted that no satisfactory portrait of Mrs. Gaskell exists. The best, which is described as the least unpleasing picture, is that drawn by the late George Richmond, a copy of which appears in Miss Hamilton's "Women Writers." (See *Frontispiece*.)

Besides the works already mentioned, Mrs. Gaskell wrote a large number of short stories, some of which it will be necessary for us to speak about. One of them, written in that light, humorous vein which gained for her "Cranford" an immediate popularity, seems to us almost to excel "Cranford" itself. It is a little story of about seventy pages, and yet it contains so many well-defined

plots, its characters are so well drawn, that it seems to us to be equal at least to her best work. It is full of fun from beginning to end. We refer to "Mr. Harrison's Confessions." Edna Lyall, writing on May 20th, 1895, says of this: "I agree with you in thinking 'Mr. Harrison's Confessions' one of her very best short stories." Also Miss Frances H. Low, writing in the *Fortnightly Review* of October 1899 on "Mrs. Gaskell's Short Tales," says: "Some of the tales, notably 'Cousin Phillis' and 'The Crooked Branch,' the one for grace and perfection of workmanship, the other for powerful and dramatic presentation, have never been surpassed by any of the longer novels written by Mrs. Gaskell. And there is another story, 'Mr. Harrison's Confessions,' which, infinitely slighter and lighter, both in motive and execution, is of peculiar significance, inasmuch as it reveals the same spontaneity and freshness, the same abundance and flow of that humour, with its almost Lamb-like radiance and soft beneficence, that pervade 'Cranford,' and render it a unique achievement from a woman's pen."

A young doctor (Mr. Harrison) came

to Duncombe (*i.e.* Knutsford) to assist the aged Mr. Morgan, and to receive, in return for his services, a certain proportion of the profits. Acting on the advice of Mr. Morgan, he strove to acquire "an attentive, anxious politeness, combining ease and grace with a tender regard and interest," and, as a natural consequence, so ably was he helped by the gossip and exaggeration which at *that* time exisited in this ancient town, that in a few months he was supposed to be engaged to three different ladies at one and the same time. The delightful little mistakes are intensely amusing. Here is one of them :—

"One day Miss Caroline told me she thought she had a weakness about the heart, and would be glad if I would bring my stethoscope the next time, which I accordingly did ; and, while I was on my knees listening to the pulsations, one of the young ladies came in. She said, 'Oh, dear ! I never ! I beg your pardon, ma'am,' and scuttled out. When I went down I saw two or three of the girls peeping out of the half-closed schoolroom door ; but they shut it immediately, and I heard them laughing."

Among other characters we have the

bland Mr. Morgan; the gossipy, mischief-making Miss Horsman; Sophy, the vicar's daughter, a grand and noble character; Mrs. Munton, who did not get out much, but whose room was the centre of the gossip of Duncombe, rather deaf, but very fond of talking; Miss Tomkinson, severe, gaunt, tall, and masculine-looking; and the sentimental Miss Caroline, with her "Oh, sister, how can you?" when Miss Tomkinson came out with any of her startling speeches.

Again in "My Lady Ludlow" there are many humorous passages to be found which remind us of "Cranford." There is no doubt in our mind that Miss Galindo, that most interesting and amusing character, lived in Knutsford. There is no doubt also that she honoured her friend, Lady Ludlow.

"If Lady Ludlow," she said one day, "ever honours me by asking for my right hand, I'll cut it off, and wrap the stump up so tidily she shall never find out it bleeds."

Miss Galindo was nearly an authoress once, but she found when she sat down to write she had nothing to say.

Here is an instance of her hatred towards Dissenters:—

"'A Baptist baker!' I exclaimed. I had never seen a Dissenter to my knowledge; but, having always heard them spoken of with horror, I looked upon them almost as if they were rhinoceroses. I wanted to see a live Dissenter, I believe, and yet I wished it were over. I was almost suprised when I heard that any of them were engaged in such peaceful oocupations as baking."

There is a great similarity between the characters of Miss Galindo and Miss Jenkins, and the lemon-stain incident might have taken place in the case of Miss Jenkins just as well as in the case of Miss Galindo.

"Miss Galindo was dressed in her best gown, I am sure; but I had never seen anything like it except in a picture, it was so old-fashioned. She wore a white muslin apron, delicately embroidered, and put on a little crookedly, in order, as she told us, even Lady Ludlow, before the evening was over, to conceal a spot whence the colour had been discharged by a lemon stain."

"This crookedness had an odd effect, especially when I saw that it was intentional; indeed, she was so anxious about

her apron's right adjustment in the wrong place that she told us straight out why she wore it so, and asked her ladyship if the spot was properly hidden, at the same time lifting up her apron and showing her how large it was."

Lady Ludlow, whose invitations were like royal commands, did not believe in the established order of society being disturbed. The children in the elementary schools, she feared, would gain too much knowledge. Her position may be summed up in a sentence: "Making religion and education common—vulgarising them, as it were—is a bad thing for a nation." After making this speech we are not surprised, though we cannot help feeling amused, to hear her say, when she had been told that Harry Gregson had fallen from a tree and broken his thigh-bone, and is like to be a cripple for life: "Harry Gregson! that black-eyed lad who read my letter? It all comes from over-education."

"The Grey Woman" and "A Dark Night's Work" are among the best of her short stories. Their weirdness and their rapid and telling descriptive power, while they are the chief, are not the only

striking characteristics, for they contain well-drawn characters, whom but to know is to love. We refer more particularly to the faithful Amante of the former, and to the equally faithful Dixon and the noble Ellinor of the latter work.

Mrs. Gaskell's reputation as a writer of fiction was made upon the publication of her first work, "Mary Barton"; but she was not only successful in her longer stories, "North and South," "Wives and Daughters," "Cranford," and "Ruth," but also in her shorter ones. She was a successful short-story writer. "The Doom of the Griffiths," "Half a Life-time Ago," "Lois the Witch" (much on the lines of Whittier's "The Witch's Daughter"), "Right at Last," "The Manchester Marriage" (which closely resembles the plot of Tennyson's "Enoch Arden"), and "The Well of Pen Morfa," are each and all worthy of mention. In "Lizzie Leigh" and "Libbie Marsh's Three Eras" we catch glimpses of the intimate acquaintance which Mrs. Gaskell must have had with the poor and outcast and down-trodden. She knew their difficulties, and sympathised with them in all their troubles. Here we see the

beautiful, tender, loving sympathy shown by the poor towards each other. She found heroes and heroines in daily life, and it is because of this fact that such stories as these are treasured in the minds of the poor more especially, among whom they are destined to produce a great and lasting good.

None of her works, whether great or small, were written without a purpose, and that purpose was always educative. She was a keen observer of manners and customs, and a profound student of human nature. Nothing escaped her eye. She not only pointed to the faults and follies of man and womankind. She did more than this. She found the good qualities inherent in every individual. She saw character and love beneath unamiable outward appearances. She had a thorough hatred of cant and hypocrisy, and gossip and slander were alike under her ban. There is a good and high moral tone in all her writings. She did not believe in perpetual condemnation, but thought, and rightly too, that those who were stricken or had fallen should receive the help and sympathy which would assist them to regain their position as useful and honourable members of society.

Remorse for past misconduct shown in strict devotion to some difficult task may be traced in "The Well of Pen Morfa," where Nest's unloving demeanour towards her mother is in some way atoned for, after she feels her mother's great loss, by befriending a poor half-witted woman. Also in "Ruth," where the heroine devotes herself to nursing the sick; and in "The Poor Clare," where the aged Bridget, after having uttered a curse upon Mr. Gisborne, which fell upon the head of her own daughter, joined the Convent of the Poor Clares, and attended to the wants of the sick and needy. Mrs. Gaskell was very observant. She remembered everything she had seen or heard, and turned it to advantage. If there is one thing more apparent than any other in her writings, it is her tender, loving sympathy with the poor. She understood their ways, and listened feelingly to their wants.

Dr. Ward says: "Mrs. Gaskell had at one time been very beautiful; her head is a remarkably fine one in the portraits preserved of her, and her hand was always thought perfect. She had great conversational gifts, and the letters

in her 'Life of Charlotte Brontë' show her to have been a charming correspondent. The singular refinement of her manners was noticed by all who became acquainted with her."

Mrs. H. Beecher Stowe said of her in "Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands," "She has a very lovely, gentle face, and looks capable of all the pathos that her writings show."

To readers of "The Moorland Cottage" it will be unnecessary to remark that she loved the children. Her honesty of purpose, her love of justice, her truthfulness offended the tender susceptibilities of some of her readers. The *Athenæum*, for instance, of November 18, 1865, called "Ruth" a powerful tale, though based upon a mistake; and said that in "North and South" the author's intense but prejudiced desire to right what is wrong found utterance. But we have testimony which we believe is far more just and much more weighty. The *Pall Mall Gazette* of about the same date says: "Her books will be studied in years to come both for their merits of style and incident, and as a faithful picture of good English life and sound

English manners, beyond the incidents of class or fashion. She will be herself remembered with affectionate regret by all who knew her as a most genial and delightful lady, who gave light and comfort to her home, and pleasure to every society she entered." The *Cornhill Magazine* said of her: "It is unnecessary to demonstrate to those who know what is and what is not true literature that Mrs. Gaskell was gifted with some of the choicest faculties bestowed upon mankind; that these grew into greater strength and ripened into greater beauty in the decline of her days, and that she has enriched us with some of the truest, purest works of fiction in the language. And she was herself what her works show her to have been—a wise, good woman."

She wrote for *Household Words*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, and *All the Year Round*, and was also a contributor to the columns of the *Daily News*. Edna Lyall declares Mrs. Gaskell to be her favourite novelist. "She is quite my favourite author, and I can read her books over and over again." In "Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign,"

Edna Lyall further says of the works of Mrs. Gaskell: "They are not only consummate works of art, full of literary charm, perfect in style, and rich with the most delightful humour and pathos —they are books from which that morbid lingering over the loathsome details of vice, those sensuous descriptions of sin too rife in the novels of the present day, are altogether excluded. Not that the stories are namby-pamby or unreal in any sense; they are wholly free from the horrid prudery, the Pharisaical temper, which makes a merit of walking through life in blinkers, and refuses to know of anything that can shock the respectable. Mrs. Gaskell was too genuine an artist to fall either into this error or into the error of bad taste and want of reserve. She drew life with utter reverence; she held the highest of all ideals, and she dared to be true." Also in a letter which we received in July 1898 from Edna Lyall, she says: "You will be amused to hear that six weeks ago, on the evening after I had undergone an operation for abscess in the ear, the only book I cared for them to read to me was 'Cranford.' One never wearies of its

quiet humour."[1] George Eliot wrote in 1859 thanking her for her "sweet, encouraging words," and adding, "While the question of my powers was still undecided for me, I was conscious that my feeling towards life and art had some affinity with the feelings which had inspired 'Cranford' and the earlier chapters of 'Mary Barton.'" Charles Dickens, when he thought of starting *Household Words*, wrote to the effect that there was no living English writer whose aid he would desire to enlist so much as the authoress of "Mary Barton." Charlotte Brontë postponed the publication of "Villette" so that it might not interfere with the welcome which she hoped would be accorded to "Ruth."[2] Thomas Arnold, in his "Manual of

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1 Speaking of a visit to Ruskin, Blanche Atkinson in "Ruskin's Social Experiment at Barmouth" says: "He was smiling happily over the book he was reading when we went in to see him. It was 'Cranford,' the ever fresh, and he spoke of it with warm admiration."

2 Madame Mohl, writing to Madame Scherer, said: "If you had known what a heart *she* had. But no one did. She was a singularly happy person, and her happiness expressed itself in an inexhaustible flow of high spirits."

English Literature," says: "Mrs. Gaskell is one of the most distinguished female novelists of this century, and this, in an age which has produced Jane Austen and George Eliot, is no slight praise." George Sand observed to Lord Houghton: "Mrs. Gaskell has done what neither I nor any other female author can accomplish—she has written novels which excite the deepest interest in men of the world, and yet which every girl will be the better for reading." Mr. Herbert Paul in an article in the *Nineteenth Century* of May 1897, entitled "The Apotheosis of the Novel," says: "If in creative power and imaginative range she hardly ranks with Dickens or Thackeray, with George Eliot or Charlotte Brontë, she is one of the most charming and exquisite writers of English fiction that have ever lived. In the grace of her style and the quaintness of her humour she reminds one of Charles Lamb. But Mrs. Gaskell's admirers, including the whole educated portion of the English-speaking world, usually prefer her still life to her scenes of action. 'Cranford' is in their eyes pure and perfect gem. Mrs. Gaskell's popularity, never of quite

the widest sort, has not waned. With the numerous novel readers whose single desire is to kill time she does not rank high. For these she does not paint in sufficiently glaring colours. To appreciate Mrs. Gaskell one must have a real love of literature. To care about her at all one must have some liking for it. But that is almost the only limit upon the circle of her readers. The art is never obtruded, though it is always there."

With all this testimony, this weight of evidence, what have we to say of her place in literature? It is sufficient for us that her works have done a vast amount of good in the past, and we doubt not are destined to do even more in the future.

MEMORIALS OF MRS. GASKELL

THERE are a few memorials to Mrs. Gaskell which the admirer of her writings may like to see.

In Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, there is a tablet to the memory of the gifted writer, which was erected by a number of friends.

It runs thus:—

"In memory of

✠

ELIZABETH CLEGHORN GASKELL,
wife of the Rev. William Gaskell, M.A.,
one of the ministers of this chapel,
widely honoured for her genius and the spirit
in which it was exercised.
Endeared by her rare graces of mind and heart
to all by whom she was known,
she fulfilled the duties of a wife and mother
with a tenderness and fidelity which secured for
her undying love,
and so lived in Christian faith and hope that
death, which came without a moment's warning,
had for her no sting.
Born Sept. 29, 1810. Died Nov. 12, 1865.

✠

Erected by the congregation in token of their
respect and regard."

Bas-Relief

At the Moss Side Public Library, Manchester, Mr. W. E. A. Axon is making a collection of books and pamphlets written by or relating to Mrs. Gaskell.

In February 1898 a beautiful bas-relief was erected on the front of the Knutsford Post Office, at the Tatton Gates end of King Street, by Mr. R. H. Watt.

The work was admirably carried out by an Italian artist, Cavaliere Achille D'Orsi, Professor of the Fine Arts in the Royal Academy of Naples. The portrait is a bust of Mrs. Gaskell from the photograph which was taken in Edinburgh a year or two before her death, and is worked in bronze. Sufficient indication is given of the name in the fact that a copy of "Cranford" lies at the base of the figure, together with a quill pen and a laurel wreath. A lifelike expression is given to the beautiful face, and the sculptor has been highly successful in his rendering of the whole. The likeness is usually considered by those who are competent to judge to be a good one, though a copy of the Richmond picture would have been far more pleasing.

The Christie Library at Owens College, Manchester, contains a bust of Mrs.

Gaskell, being a replica by Mr. Hamo Thorneycroft of the Edinburgh bust by Dundas.

The original stands in the drawing-room of 84 Plymouth Grove, the home of the Misses Gaskell, who in 1886 gave £500 to this library for the purchase of books on the subjects of English Language and Literature, and Greek Testament.

In 1900 they also gave £500, this time towards the purchase by the Manchester Corporation of a piece of land in Plymouth Grove, to be used as an open space.

They are ladies who possess a great deal of the charm which made their mother so attractive.

They are well known in the public life of Manchester.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

A COMPLETE bibliography (up to September 1895) has been complied by Mr. W. E. A. Axon, of Manchester, showing the separate editions of her various works, including eighteen different editions of "Mary Barton," twelve of "Cranford," nine of "The Life of Charlotte Brontë," seven of "Wives and Daughters," seven of "North and South," and six of "Sylvia's Lovers," while there is a French version of "Mary Barton" which passed through two editions and a Spanish version.

"Cranford" was translated into French and Hungarian, and "Sylvia's Lovers" was the only story translated into German.

BOOKS BY MRS. GASKELL

The following list of works by Mrs. Gaskell comprises forty stories, long and short:—

Mary Barton.
Cranford.

MRS. GASKELL

North and South.
Wives and Daughters.
Life of Charlotte Brontë.
Sylvia's Lovers.
Ruth.
A Dark Night's Work.
My Lady Ludlow.
My French Master.
The Old Nurse's Story.
Bessy's Troubles at Home.
Christmas Storms and Sunshine.
The Squire's Story.
Curious if True.
The Moorland Cottage.
Disappearances.
Right at Last.
The Manchester Marriage.
Lois the Witch.
Cousin Phillis.
The Grey Woman.
The Heart of John Middleton.
Traits and Stories of the Huguenots.
Six Weeks at Heppenheim.
Lizzie Leigh.
The Crooked Branch.
The Sexton's Hero.
Round the Sofa.
The Accursed Race.
The Doom of the Griffiths.
Half a Lifetime Ago.
The Poor Clare.
The Half-Brothers.
The Well of Pen Morfa.

Mr. Harrison's Confessions.
Libbie Marsh's Three Eras.
Morton Hall.
Hand and Heart.
Company Manners.

Mr. Axon, in his "Bibliography," says: "There is, indeed, enough of excellent material for a supplementary volume of her works, if we include the graphic account of 'Clopton Hall' (1840), the 'Review of Fauriel's Modern Greek Songs' (1854), 'The Cage at Cranford' (1863), 'An Italian Institution' (1863), and three articles on 'French Life' (1864). That other contributions of hers remain buried in magazines is not unlikely. Thus, 'One of our Legal Fictions' (April 29, 1854), is possibly the article mentioned in Dickens' 'Letters,' under date April 21. It is evidently a statement of the unhappy experiences of the Hon. Mrs. Norton."

A pretty little edition of "Cranford" has recently been issued by Messrs. Methuen & Co., with a memoir of the author, and introduction and notes by E. V. Lucas. Mr. Lucas unfortunately follows the Hon. Beatrice L. Tollemache in the mistaken notion that Mrs. Gaskell

drew from the life. Speaking of Captain Hill, he says, "Although he may have sat to Mrs. Gaskell," &c. No one ever sat to Mrs. Gaskell.

Also, speaking of Miss Alice Brown, the author of "By Oak and Thorn," he says, "She walked along Darkness Lane." He might have said more correctly, "She walked along a lane which may have been Darkness Lane."

Magazine Articles Concerning Mrs. Gaskell

The June number, 1894, of *Atalanta* contained an article entitled "The Human Novel as Exemplified by Mrs. Gaskell." This was followed in 1895 by an article in the August *Gentleman's Magazine* on "Mrs. Gaskell," by Miss Hompes, which was chiefly biographical, and did not add much to existing biographies, though it summarised them. In the same year, and in the same magazine, appeared an article on "Knutsford in Fiction," by the author, which, besides giving a description of the town and neighbourhood, proceeded to identify several houses and other buildings as being those which were not only well known to the writer of

"Cranford," but which were probably the models from which she (perhaps unconsciously) drew. To the September number of *Good Words*, 1895, Miss Margaret Howitt contributed a paper entitled "Stray Notes from Mrs. Gaskell," with illustrations of Knutsford and the neighbourhood, among them being pictures of the parish church, in which Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson was married to the Rev. William Gaskell, M.A., of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, in 1832; of the house on the Heathside in which she lived for several years; and of Brook Street Chapel, in the graveyard of which she was laid to rest in 1865. In *Temple Bar* for August 1895, the Hon. Mrs. Tollemache claimed to have known the original of at least one of Mrs. Gaskell's characters. (See p. 33.)

Possibly characteristics of people whom Mrs. Tollemache knew were noted by Mrs. Gaskell, who allowed nothing to pass unobserved; but to believe that she consciously drew from life is to vastly underrate her true artistic taste, and her marvellous imaginative faculty. In the April 1896 *Atlantic Monthly*, Miss Alice Brown (who, with Miss L. I. Guiney,

author of "A Roadside Harp," "A Little English Gallery," &c., visited Cranford in 1895) contributes a charming paper on "Latter-day Cranford." This essay, together with a number of others, was published by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. in a neat little volume entitled "By Oak and Thorn."

In the *Woman at Home* for May 1896, a writer, under the heading "Mrs. Gaskell and Charlotte Brontë," says that "in the whole of English literature there is no book that can compare in widespread interest with the 'Life of Charlotte Brontë,' by Mrs. Gaskell," while the same magazine for June 1897 published an illustrated article by Marion Leslie on "Mrs. Gaskell's House and its Memories"; but the truest and best appreciation of our author was written by Edna Lyall, and is contained in "Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign," published in June 1897.

In the *Fortnightly Review* for October 1899, Miss Frances H. Low contributed an article on "Mrs. Gaskell's Short Tales." An illustrated article, entitled "A Cranford Evening," by Luise M. Torrance, appeared in the August 1900

number of *Munsey's Magazine*. A wrong impression may be formed of the shape of the calash from the illustration given on page 632. Mr. Hugh Thomson does not give any picture of this ancient head-dress which was worn over the cap, but we have seen two in Knutsford which were worn about the time Mrs. Gaskell lived here, and they are very large, and struck us as being very similar to perambulator hoods, except that they were somewhat smaller in size.

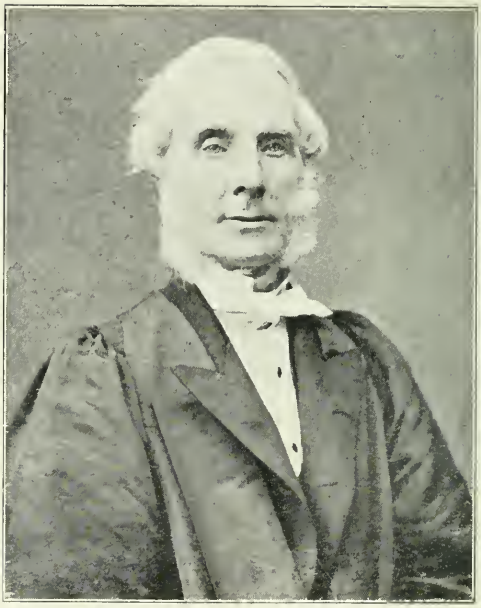
Two very able articles by Mr. Basil Champneys appeared in the *Pilot* of June 28 and July 5, 1902, in which he claimed that "Wives and Daughters" was the best purely domestic novel in the English language. "Mrs. Gaskell," said Mr. Champneys, "had the admirable faculty of seeing life generally and her individual characters with tolerant and loving eyes."

In the *Manchester Quarterly* for July 1902, Mr. John Mortimer had a most admirable paper on "Mrs. Gaskell."

A writer under the "Contributor's Club" in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December 1900, says: "No American woman (except possibly Miss Jewett) has written with the playfulness and tenderness that one so loves in Mrs. Gaskell."

CHAPTER III

THE REV. WILLIAM GASKELL, M.A.



Rev. William Gaskell, M.A.

THE REV. WILLIAM GASKELL, M.A.

A LITTLE book about Mrs. Gaskell would be incomplete without some notice, however brief, of her accomplished husband. Among the thousands who know the works of Mrs. Gaskell, and have enjoyed reading "Cranford," there are few who know that her husband was in many ways a remarkable man. It may be said that the *world* knew Mrs. Gaskell, and that Lancashire knew Mr. Gaskell. In the Manchester district he was well known and deeply respected, and if there be any who would cast a shadow of a doubt upon this statement, we would strongly recommend them to read the little volume that was published in commemoration of the jubilee of his Manchester ministry. On that occasion addresses were presented not only by students, associations, and churches, but by representatives of learned societies and institutions in which he had taken a deep interest. He received some tangible proof of affection and regard, but by his own

express wish the chief portion of the gift was utilised in the foundation of a scholarship at Owens College bearing his name.

"William Gaskell, eldest son of William Gaskell, sail-canvas manufacturer, was born at Latchford, near Warrington, on July 24, 1805.[1] Of an old Nonconformist family, he was early destined for the ministry, and after studying at Glasgow, where he graduated M.A. in 1824, was admitted in 1825 to Manchester College, then at York, being nominated by Thomas Belsham as a divinity student on the Hackney Fund. Leaving York in 1828, he became colleague with John Gooch Robberds at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, and this proved to be his lifelong charge. Becoming senior minister in 1854, he had successively as colleagues James Panton Ham, 1855-59; James Drummond, LL.D., 1860-69; and Samuel Alfred Steinthal. In his own denomination Gaskell held the highest positions. At Manchester New College (then in Manchester) he was Professor of English History and Literature from 1846 to 1853, and Chairman of Com-

[1] See Article in "Dictionary of National Biography," by Rev. A. Gordon, M.A.

mittee from 1854, having previously been Secretary from 1840 to 1846. Of the Unitarian Home Missionary Board he was one of the tutors from 1854, and principal from 1876, succeeding John Relly Beard."

"Gaskell exercised great influence in Manchester, especially in the promotion of education and learning. Though an effective and polished speaker, he rarely appeared on platforms."

"At Owens College he conducted the classes of Logic and English Literature during the illness of Principal Scott. On the formation of a Working Man's College in 1858 he was appointed lecturer on English Literature, and retained that office on the amalgamation in 1861 of this scheme with the evening classes of Owens College. His prelections were remarkable for their literary finish, and for the aptness and taste with which he drew upon an unusually wide compass of reading."[1]

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[1] Mr. W. E. Adams, in his "Memoirs of a Social Atom," says: "There was a Working Men's College in Manchester too. The classes I attended were conducted, the one by a Unitarian Minister, the other by a curate of the Church of England The

"Gaskell died at his residence, Plymouth Grove, Manchester, on June 11, 1884, and was buried at Knutsford. His portrait, painted in 1872 by W. Percy, is in the Memorial Hall, Manchester; another, painted in 1878 by Annie Robinson, is in the possession of the family. A marble bust, by J. W. Swinnerton, was placed in 1878 in the reading-room of the Portico Library, Manchester, of which for thirty years he had been Chairman. In 1832 he married Elizabeth Cleghorn Stevenson, by whom he had a son (died in infancy), a daughter, Florence (died 1881), married to Charles Crompton, Q.C., and three daughters who survived him."[1]

Mrs. Ritchie, has said of him, "Mr. Gaskell was one of those ministers whose

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Unitarian minister was the Rev. William Gaskell, husband of the famous novelist; the curate of the Church of England was the Rev. W. J. Marriott. Mr. Gaskell was a master of literature. I thought at the time that he was the most beautiful reader I had ever heard. Prose or poetry seemed to acquire new lustre and elegance when he read it. Our literary evenings under Mr. Gaskell were ambrosial evenings indeed. Mr. Marriott's class was devoted to the History of England."

[1] See Article in "Dictionary of National Biography," by Rev. A. Gordon, M.A.

congregations are outside as well as inside chapel walls, for I have heard his name mentioned again and again by different people, and always with affection and respect."

He published a considerable number of sermons and "controversial tracts" (Mr. Ernest Axon gives a list of thirty-one), including funeral sermons on Sir Thomas Potter, 1845; the Rev. John Gooch Robberds, 1854; Sir John Potter, 1858 ("The Duties of the Individual to Society. A sermon on occasion of the death of Sir John Potter, M.P., preached at Cross Street Chapel, Manchester, October 31, 1858, with the address at the interment on the day preceding"); and on the Rev. William Turner, 1859.

Among his other publications may be noted "Temperance Rhymes," 1839, and "Two Lectures on the Lancashire Dialect." He wrote a large number of hymns. Mr. Ernest Axon in the "Gaskell Bibliography" has given an index of first lines of eighty-five, including such well-known hymns as "Forth went the heralds of the cross" and "Not on this day, O God, alone," most of which were contributed to a collection edited by the

Rev. John Relly Beard, D.D., 1837. The best of these may be found in "Hymns of Prayer and Praise," by the late Dr. James Martineau, compiled in 1874. But many more could be added to this collection, including "To Thee, O God, we raise," "O God, by whose kind care we live," "Do with thy might that which is right," "Day after day, life fleets away," and that most beautiful of all—

"Though lowly here our lot may be,
High work have we to do—
In faith and trust to follow Him
Whose lot was lowly too.

Our lives enriched with gentle thoughts
And loving deeds may be,
A stream that still the nobler grows
The nearer to the sea.

To duty firm, to conscience true,
However tried and pressed,
In God's clear sight high work to do,
If we but do our best.

Thus we may make the lowliest lot
With rays of glory bright;
Thus we may turn a crown of thorns
Into a crown of light."

Concerning Mr. Gaskell as a hymn writer, Mr. W. E. A. Axon makes the following remarks: "Those who knew William Gaskell will feel that the fugitive tracts which were printed in his lifetime, excellent as they are in their way, do not adequately represent the intellectual power and refinement of his nature. His hymns, which offer a singular combination of devotional fire and lucidity of expression, have not, unfortunately, been collected. These sacred lyrics are the fitting expression of a noble spirit."

The Rev. J. J. Wright thus describes Mr. Gaskell: "In appearance Mr. Gaskell was somewhat tall, rather slender, and he walked and stood with stately graciousness. There was something clean and sweet and refined and pure in his very presence. It used to be said that his appearance in the pulpit was a sermon in itself, as certainly it was a benediction."

Yet, though he was a saintly man, it must not be imagined that he was as dull and uninteresting as many saintly men are. He had, we are told, a wonderful fund of anecdote, and could not only

tell a good story himself, but could appreciate to the fullest extent a good story told by another.

We will let Mr. Wright ("Young Days," November 1899), a student under Mr. Gaskell, tell two college stories. "One morning, before Mr. Gaskell came into the lecture-room, the students became somewhat lively. Perhaps it was cold and they wanted exercise! However it was, a few leathern cushions from the chairs got flying about. The bell rang, signal for the incoming of Mr. Gaskell. There was hurry and scurry to get all the cushions on the chairs again. The door from his room into the lecture-room opened a few inches—he was coming—when a flying cushion hit it and slammed the door *to* again. There was silence, and every student was gravely seated when Mr. Gaskell with quiet dignity appeared, and significantly said, 'Gentlemen! Gentlemen! If I may say *gentlemen*!'"

Not another word was said or needed.

But the best story of all—and well known among his old students—is one which shows the *readiness* of Mr. Gaskell's mind. One day Mr. Gaskell happened to seat himself in a chair

whose joints were very loose. He crossed his legs as usual, opened his book, and called upon Mr. So-and-So to begin reading. Before this young gentleman had read very far he made a regular "howler" of a mistake. Mr. Gaskell sprang from his seat (whether in real or partly affected amazement, I do not know), but as he sprang up, the chair fell to pieces on the floor, and Mr. Gaskell, looking first behind him in surprise as he stood there, now looked at the blundering student, and exclaimed, "Mr. So-and-So, *the very chair can't stand it!*"

The funeral service at Knutsford was conducted by the Rev. S. A. Steinthal, of Manchester, and the little chapel was crowded, among those present being a large number of men representing various Manchester institutions in which Mr. Gaskell took an interest.

INDEX TO NAMES

Printed by MACKIE & Co., Ld.
London and Warrington.