

THE SHOE ON THE RIGHT FOOT.

"I should like to know if I'm ever to get my breakfast? Here it is half-past 6 o'clock, and I've got to be at Fourth and Master by 7. What's the matter to-day?"

With these words Joseph Dobbs opened the door of the kitchen, where his wife was busy getting breakfast. He had shouted to her several times before to "hurry up," etc., but his impatience was waxing too great now for such mild expression.

"Yes, Joe, it's almost ready; I'm just taking it up now."

Joe fretted and fumed a few minutes longer before his wife called to him that breakfast was ready. After he sat down he began again.

"What under the sun kept you so long this morning? I shall be late, that's sure; and old Jenks will be at me for it, and may-be turn me off. He's ready enough to do that sometimes if a man don't please him."

"Well, Joe, I couldn't help it. I've been up since 5 o'clock—but I had the greatest time to get the fire to burn, because the coal was wet."

"And how in the world did the coal come to be wet?"

"Why, you know it only came last night. You were two or three days getting it after I told you it was nearly out; and then they sent it last evening too late to get it in. So it had to lie out all night, and it rained early this morning, and of course it got wet, and I hadn't any other."

"Well, I should just like to know why they could not send it home early enough to get it in before night. I ordered it the day before, I'll find out, too. I'll go down to the yard this very day and give them a piece of my mind. If I am only a working man, I pay for my coal, and they are not going to take their own time to send it any more than if I was a rich man. I'll let them know that before I'm a day older."

And Joe was off with a rush to his work, but came late, and got an angry word from the boss in consequence.

That afternoon, on his way home from work, he carried out his purpose of going to the coal yard. With the air of a man who is determined to have satisfaction, he accosted the clerk at the office—"I should like to know what's the reason that the coal I ordered here on Tuesday was not sent till after dark last evening. It had to lie out in the street all night, and got so wet with the rain that it was not fit to use. If I had lived in Spruce street, instead of Pratt street, I suppose you would have sent it in decent time. But I just wish to tell you—"

"What is the name, sir?"

"Dobbs—Joseph Dobbs."

"Yes—Bill! Bill Sykes! Look here a minute. Didn't you take Mr. Dobbs' coal to him yesterday, in Pratt street?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, you left here about 5 o'clock; I saw you myself. He says the coal didn't get there till after dark."

"And it's just the fact, sir. Up there in Vine street one wheel got in a big hole in the street, and I was better not half an hour getting it out. And then in another place—I forgot just where it was—the stones was out of the road lyin' round loose; and I came mighty near upsittin' the cart altogether. I split a lot of coal as it was, and had to stop to shovel it up. It wasn't my fault that he didn't get his coal sooner."

"You see, Mr. Dobbs, that we could not help it. If the city government won't keep the streets in better order, such things will happen."

Joe had nothing to do but to walk out of the office as the courteous clerk turned to some one else who came in. He had not got much satisfaction, that was certain; nor did he quite know whom to attack next, though he had a vague idea that there was somebody to blame.

Well, now, Joe, let us look at it a moment. Let us follow the links of this chain a little further back, and perhaps we shall find somebody upon whom to vent our indignation.

Whose duty is it to keep the streets in such order that the carts carrying your coal shall not be hindered in going to you by great holes and loose stones? The Department of Highways, of course. But they cannot do their work without the means to pay for it. They must have an appropriation from City Councils. A resolution making such an appropriation was offered in Common Council not long ago, but was opposed violently and voted against by several members. Among these members was one from your ward, friend Joe. He is much given to opposing every motion which looks towards the improvement of the city or the proper care of its condition; but he always and energetically supports an appropriation for showing hospitality or having an entertainment of any kind, especially if a good amount of eating and drinking is involved.

But of course, Joe, you don't vote for such a man to represent your ward in Council. You would not stand in your own light so much as that.

Why, yes; I did vote for him. You see he belonged to the right party, and those fellows who came down to that big meeting we had before election told us we ought to vote for him, so I did all I could to get him in.

Ah, Joe! now we've got the shoe on the right foot. If you will vote for a man—you are one of many who do this thing—because he happens to belong to your party and to want your vote, whether he is fit to have anything to do with the administration of city affairs or not, then you must expect that no means will be forthcoming to keep the streets in repair; that the wheel of the cart carrying your coal will be caught in a rut; that if it does not get your coal till after night-fall; that if it happens to rain your coal will get wet; that your poor wife will worry and weary herself trying to light wet coals; that your breakfast will be late; your temper spoiled, and you will not get to your work in time.

How will you vote in future, Joe? Hicks.

THE JUNE MAGAZINES.

"THE GALAXY."

The June number of *The Galaxy* has the following table of contents:—

"Put Yourself in His Place," by Charles Reade; chapters viii and ix (with an illustration). "George Eliot and George Lewes," by Justin McCarthy. "The Throne of Louis Philippe: Its Erection and its Overthrow," No. 1, Its Erection, by John S. C. Abbott. "The Duchesse Estate," by J. W. De Forest (with an illustration). "To J. R. L. on His Fiftieth Birthday," by C. P. Cranch. "Animal Food: Its Preparation for the Table," by John C. Draper. M. D. "Susan Fielding," by Mrs. Edwards; chapters xviii, xix, and xx. "New York Journalists—E. L. Godkin, of the *Nation*," by Eugene Benson. "General Jomini," by G. B. McClellan. "To Be Being, or Not to Be Being: That is the Question," by Richard Grant White. "The *Galaxy* Miscellany," "Drift Wood," "Literature and Art," and "Nebulae." Mr. Justin McCarthy has the following appreciative criticism of the author of "Adam Bede" in his paper, entitled "George Eliot and George Lewes":—

Literary reputations are, in every respect, like voyages, while others lose all zest and strength in the process of crossing the ocean. There ought to be hardly any difference, one would think, between the literary taste of the public of London and that of the public of New York; and yet it is certain that an author or a book may be positively celebrated in one city and only barely known and coldly recognized in the other. Every one, of course, has noticed the fact that certain English authors are better known and appreciated in New York than in London; certain American writers more talked of in London than in New York. The general public of England do not seem to me to appreciate the true position of Whittier and Lowell among American poets. The average Englishman knows hardly anything of any American poet but Longfellow, who receives, I venture to think, a far more wholesome and enthusiastic admiration in England than in his own country. Robert Buchanan, the Scottish poet, lately, I have read, described "Evangeline" as a far finer poem than either the "Hermann and Dorothea," a judgment which I presume and hope it would be impossible to get any American scholar and critic to endorse or even to consider seriously. On the other hand, it is well known that both the Brownings—certainly Mrs. Browning—found quicker and more cordial appreciation in America than in England. Lately, we in London have taken to discussing and debating over Walt Whitman with a warmth and interest which people in New York do not seem to manifest in regard to the author of "Leaves of Grass." Charles Dickens appears to me to have more devoted admirers among the best class of readers here than he has in his own country. Of course, it would be hardly possible for any man to be more popular and more successful than Dickens in England; but New York journals quote him and draw illustrations from his works more frequently than London papers do—I do not think any day has passed since first I came to this country, six or seven months ago, that I have not seen at least two or three allusions to Dickens in the leading articles of the daily papers—and I question whether, in any country, there is a higher London as George William Curtis does here. Dickens could find the enthusiastic, the almost lyrical devotion of Curtis' admiration. Charles Reade, again, is more generally and warmly admired here than in England. Am I wrong in my surmise that the reverse is the case with regard to the authoress of "Romola" and "The Mill on the Floss"? All American critics and all American readers of taste have doubtless testified practically their recognition of the genius of this extraordinary woman; but there seems to me to be relatively less admiration for her in New York than in London. The general verdict of English criticism would, I feel no doubt, place George Eliot on a higher pedestal than Charles Dickens. We regard her as belonging to a higher school of art, as more nearly allied to the great immortals, as transcending the fashion of the age and defying the caprice of public taste. So far as I have been able to observe, I do not think this is the opinion of American criticism. In any case the more question will excuse my writing a few pages about a woman whom I regard, as the greatest living novelist of England; and the whole of the greatest woman now engaged in European literature. Only George Sand and Harriet Martineau could fairly be compared with her; and while Miss Martineau, of course, is far inferior in all the higher gifts of imagination and higher faculties of art, George Sand, with all her faults, is not so rich in fancy, and in the analysis of certain natures, has never exhibited the serene, symmetrical power displayed in "Romola" and in "Silas Marner." Mrs. Lewes (it would be affectation to try to assume that there is still mystery about the identity of George Eliot) is what George Sand is not—a great writer, merely as a writer. Few, indeed, are the beings who have ever combined so many high qualities in one person as Mrs. Lewes does. Her literary career began as a translator, and she has since her tastes seemed to lead her wholly into the somewhat barren fields where German metaphysics endeavor to come to the relief of the confusion of German theology. She became a contributor to the *Westminster Review*; then she became its assistant editor, and was afterwards only for it under the direction of Dr. John Chapman, the editor, with whose family she lived for a time, and in whose house she first met George Henry Lewes. She is an accomplished linguist, a brilliant talker, a musician of superior skill. She has withal such a delicate and exquisite taste that there are tender, simple ballad melodies which fill her with a pathetic pain almost too keen to bear; and yet she has the firm, strong command of tone and touch without which a really scientific musician cannot be made. I do not think that the extraordinary sensibility of nature is to be found in combination with a genuine mastery of the practical science of music. But Mrs. Lewes has mastered many sciences as well as literatures. Probably no other novel writer, since novel writing became a business, ever began to learn the scientific knowledge. Indeed, hardly anything is rarer than the union of the scientific and the literary or artistic temperaments. So rare is it, that the exceptional, the almost solitary instance of Goethe comes up at once, distinct and striking to the mind. English novelists are even less likely to have anything of a scientific taste than French or German. Dickens knows nothing of science, and has, indeed, as little knowledge of any kind, save that which is derived from observation, as any respectable Englishman could well have. Thackeray was a man of varied reading, versed in the lighter literature of several languages, and strongly imbued with artistic tastes; but he had no care for science, and knew nothing of it but just what every one has to learn at school. Lord Lytton was a science man, Charles Bronte was all genius and ignorance. Mrs. Lewes is all genius and culture. Had she never written a page of fiction, nay, had she never written a line of poetry or prose, she must have been regarded with wonder and admiration by all who knew her as a woman of vast and varied knowledge; a woman who could think deep and talk brilliantly, who could play high and severe classical music like a professional performer, and could bring forth the most delicate and tender aroma of nature and poetry lying deep in the heart of some simple, old-fashioned Scotch or English ballad. Nature, indeed, seemed to have given to this extraordinary woman all the gifts a woman could ask or have—save one. It will not, I hope, be considered a piece of gossiping personality if I allude to a fact which might, conceivably, be of use to her literary history. Mrs. Lewes is not beautiful. In her appearance there is nothing whatever to attract admiration. Hers is not even a face like that of Charlotte Cushman, which, at least, must make a deep impression, and seize at once the attention of the gazer. Nor does she seem, like that of Madame de Staël or Elizabeth Barrett Browning, informed and illuminated by the light of genius. Mrs. Lewes is what we in England call decidedly plain—what people in New York call homely; and what persons who did not care to soften the force of an unpleasant truth would describe probably by a still harder and more emphatic adjective. This woman, thus rarely gifted with poetry and music and imagination—thus disciplined in the highest studies, and accustomed to the most laborious man's literary drudgery—does not seem to have found out, until she had published "Adam Bede" and "Lady Arabella's Secret" were. She has, of course, nothing like the number of readers who follow Charles Dickens; nor even, I should say, nearly as many as Anthony Trollope. When "Romola," which the *Saturday Review* justly pronounced "the greatest novel since the days of the best romance of modern days," was published as a serial in the *Cornhill Magazine*, it was comparatively a failure, in a circulating library sense; and even when it appeared in its complete form, and the public could better appreciate its artistic perfection, it was anything but a splendid success, as regarded from the publisher's point of view. Perhaps this may be partly accounted for by the nature of the subject, the scene, and the time; but even the warmest admirer of George Eliot may freely admit that "Romola" will have as few admirers as a novel like "Consuelo" or "Vivette."

derable attention and were much admired; but I do not think many people saw in them the capacity which produced "Adam Bede" and "Romola." With the publication of "Adam Bede" came a complete triumph. The author was elevated at once, and with acclamation, to the highest rank among living novelists. I think it was in the very first number of the *Cornhill Magazine* that Thackeray, in a gossiping paragraph about novelists of the day, whom he mentioned alphabetically and by their initials, spoke of "E." as "star of the horizon, just risen on the horizon." Thackeray, it will be remembered, was one of the first, if not indeed, the very first, to recognize the genius manifested in "Jane Eyre." The publishers sent him some of the proof sheets for his advice, and Thackeray saw in them the work of a great novelist. The place which Mrs. Lewes thus so suddenly won, she has, of course, always maintained. Her position of absolute supremacy over all other women writers in England is something peculiar and curious. She is first—and there is no second. No living authoress in Britain is ever now compared with her. I read in a paper in a New York paper, a sentence which spoke of George Eliot and Miss Mulock as being the greatest English authoresses in the field of fiction. It seems very odd and funny to me. Certainly, an English critic would never have thought of bracketing together such a pair. Miss Mulock is a graceful, true-hearted, good writer; but Miss Mulock and George Eliot, Robert Lytton and Robert Browning!—O. K. H. B. (I think these are the initials) and John Stuart Mill! Mrs. Lewes has made people read novels who, perhaps, never read fiction from any other pen. She has made the novel the companion and friend of scholars and thinkers and statesmen. Her books are discussed by the best and the ablest of our intellectual school of art. Men and journals which have always regarded, or affected to regard, Thackeray as a mere cynic, and Dickens a little better than a professional buffoon, have discussed "The Mill on the Floss" and "Romola" as if those were the greatest works of our time. It would be a very doubtful kind of merit which commanded the admiration of literary prizes or medals; but that is not the merit of George Eliot. Her books find their way to all hearts and intelligences, but it is their peculiarly that they extend their influence to the lowly, who would despise all novels, if they could, as frivolous and worthless, but who are forced, even by their own canons and principles, to recognize the deep clear thought, the noble culture, the penetrating, analytical power, which are evident in the best of every class of these stories. In most of our novelists write in a slipshod, careless style. Dickens is worthless, if regarded merely as a prose writer; Trollope hardly cares about grammar; Charles Reade, with all his masculine force and clearness of thought, is a careless and careless writer; his novels are seldom any style at all. George Eliot's prose might be the study of a scholar anxious to acquire and appreciate a noble English style. It is as luminous as the language of Mill; far more truly picturesque than the great immortals of the past; memorable expression as the robust Saxon of Bracton; and not going into a criticism of George Eliot, which has been, no doubt, fully criticized in America already. I am merely engaged in pointing out the special reason why she has won in England a certain kind of admiration which, it is hard to me to think she has not had before. I think she has infused into the novel some elements it never had before, and so thoroughly infused them that they blend with all the other materials, and do not form anywhere a solid lump or mass distinguishable from the rest. Her style, indeed, is not so rich in fancy, and in the analysis of certain natures, has never exhibited the serene, symmetrical power displayed in "Romola" and in "Silas Marner." Mrs. Lewes (it would be affectation to try to assume that there is still mystery about the identity of George Eliot) is what George Sand is not—a great writer, merely as a writer. Few, indeed, are the beings who have ever combined so many high qualities in one person as Mrs. Lewes does. Her literary career began as a translator, and she has since her tastes seemed to lead her wholly into the somewhat barren fields where German metaphysics endeavor to come to the relief of the confusion of German theology. 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I am not one of the admirers of George Eliot who regret that she ventured on the production of a long poem. I think "The Spanish Gypsy" a true and a fine poem, although I do not place it so high in artistic rank as the best of the author's prose writings. But I believe it to be the greatest story in verse ever produced by an Englishwoman. This is not, perhaps, very high praise, for Englishwomen have seldom done much in the higher fields of poetry; but we have "Aurora Leigh" and I think "The Spanish Gypsy" of the whole, a finer piece of work. The question whether "The Spanish Gypsy" was to be regarded as poetry at all, or only as a story put into verse; and in this futile and vexatious controversy the artistic value of the work itself almost escapes analysis. The only real critic who shows to little advantage when it occupies itself in considering whether a work of art is to be called by this name or that, and I am rather impatient of the critic who comes with his canons of art, his Thirty-Nine articles of literary dogma, and his critical standards, not by what it is in itself, but by the answer it gives to his self-invented catechism. I do not believe that the art of man ever can invent—I know it never has invented—any set of rules or formulas by which you can decide, off-hand and with certainty, that a great work in verse, which you admit to have power and beauty and pathos and melody, does not belong to true poetry. One great school of critics discovered, by the application of such high rules and canons, that Shakespeare, though a great genius, was not a great poet; that a great poet, who was not a great genius, was not a great poet; and that a great poet, who was not a great genius, was not a great poet. Admitting, this much, and the most depreciating critics did admit it, I think it hardly worth considering what name we are to apply to the book. Such, however, was the sort of controversy in which all deep and true consideration of the artistic value of "The Spanish Gypsy" evaporated. I am not sorry Mrs. Lewes published the poem; but I am sorry she put her literary name to it in the first instance. Had it appeared anonymously it would have astonished and delighted the world. But people compared "The Spanish Gypsy" with the author's prose works, and were disappointed because the woman who surpassed Tennyson and Browning in poetry, and in no other sense, was "The Spanish Gypsy" a failure. No woman had written anything of the same kind to surpass it; but some of our day has written novels which excel those of George Eliot. Mrs. Lewes will probably not write any more long poems; but I think English poetry has gained something by her one venture.

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