RICHARD STEELE.

AN IMPERFECT BIOGRAPHY.

THE LIFE OF RICHARD STEELE. By George A. Aitken. In two volumes. 8vo., pp. xix, 419; 452. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

Mr. Aitken appears to have undertaken the biography of Steele with a special view to the vindication of his memory from the hard judgments of Macaulay and the depreciatory sympathy of Thackeray. It was his ambition also to exhaust the subject, to leave no room for subsequent inquiry, to bring together such a mass of facts as might serve for all time as a magazine of reference. The results of this intention have, however, been little less than disastrous, for the biographer, proceeding with a truly German patience and thoroughness, has heaped together so immense a quantity of dry archival bones as to obscure the life they are meant to illustrate, and to deaden the interest and delay the movement of the narrative, to the intolerable weariness and vexation of the reader. It may be confidently asserted that if enough of this useless and utterly uninteresting matter had been omitted to reduce the bulk of the work to a single volume, it would have been a very much better biography than it is. As the case stands, the reader must evade and skip perpetually in order to keep in touch with the action, and he is forever being checked by the cumbrous presentation of prolix and infinitely dreary law-papers and other documents, the printing of which "in extenso" serves no useful purpose whatever, but most seriously interferes with the unity and continuity of the recital.

Nor is this the only fault of Mr. Aitken's work, which, indeed, is marked by almost every defect a good biography should be free from. After struggling through these two large volumes one emerges finally without having obtained one clear and graphic impression of the man Steele as he lived and moved. Of his externalities there is abundant evidence, though it is far from being exhaustive, and even when fullest it lacks precisely the kind of information which is most needed. There is no excuse for this, inasmuch as there is plenty of contemporary evidence about Steele's intimate life. But Mr. Aitken has contrived, apparently with the instinct of a Dryasdust, to eliminate the interesting elements from his biography. He appears to think that if he dumps into his pages every record of every action for debt, every brief in every suit, every scrap of genealogical matter about Steele's uncles, cousins and aunts, it is unnecessary to supplement such matter with any attempt to show the man as he moved and breathed among his contemporaries, as he went about and talked and dined and caroused and joked and fell in debt and quarrelled with his friends and cursed and swore and tried to be a Christian, and kicked over party traces and pulled down with one hand what he had built up with the other, and submitted to be henpecked, and wore his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at, and revolted at the sycophancy exacted from all who courted the great through self-interest, and showed himself the frankest, cheerfullest, least sophisticated, least politic, most loyal, generous, improvident, brilliant and unstable of human beings. Steele, indeed, was very human, and his faults have been as influential as his virtues in endearing him to posterity. There is no man who needs to be exploited on the purely human and sociable side more than he, and here again Mr. Aitken has failed. He seems almost to shun anecdote and tradition. Half the time even when he speaks of some story he omits the particulars. In all his ponderous work he does not give an idea of Steele to be compared either for graphic force or probably for appreciative insight, with Thackeray's light-handed but picturesque and sympathetic sketch.

As to the contemporaries of Steele who figure in Mr. Aitken's volumes, they are shades as bloodless as ever floated through the Stygian Fields, Swift and Addison, Pope and Tonson, Johnson, Congreve, Cibber, Dennis, St. John, and all the rest of the celebrities of the period, drift about in an inanimate fashion, and even the enmities most of them served so briskly fail under this treatment to rouse them into lifelikeness. One tint of the age, indeed, is brought out distinctly enough, and it is a tint calculated to bring consolation to those who imagine that modern politics are dreadfully personal and unscrupulous and vituperative. In the pamphleteering era during which Steele lived, the ferocity of faction exceeded anything known to the present generation. The strongest minds at that time habitually subordinated argument to the most outrageous personal abuse. When Dick Steele undertook to counteract the treasonable machinations of Bolingbroke by defending the Hanover Succession, Dean Swift thought it not beneath him to twit the author of "The Crisis" with his alleged low birth, with his impecuniosity, with his personal frailities generally. Others of his political opponents deemed it a sufficient answer to his reasoning to aver that he was a "black-faced" fellow, that he was short of stature, that he was born in Ireland, and so forth. They were not ashamed to drag the name of his wife into the mud. In truth, it must be averred that not only Grub Street, but the Republic of Letters generally, in the England of Anne and the first George, were sadly deficient in both sweetness and light.

There is one other aspect of Steele's life which we owe it to Mr. Aitken to say he has given deserved emphasis to. It has been too much the custom to regard the principal writer of "The Tatler" as an amiable "ne'er-do-weel," who pursued no conscious or persistent aims, but lived from hand to mouth in a reckless way. This biography makes it clear that, on the contrary, Steele was guided by an intelligent and distinctly high ethical purpose in all his non-political literary work; that he did succeed in raising the moral tone of the society of his day; that he inculcated respect for higher ideals than had been held since the Restoration; that he purified and strengthened the stage; that he set the keynote for a vein of discussion, reflection and criticism much more rational, dignified and impersonal than had previously existed. His influence was great through the "Tatler," "Guardian," and the many other periodicals which he founded or to which he contributed, and that influence was always exerted for good. If, indeed, we chose to institute comparisons, no difficulty would be found in demonstrating that as an ethical and social force Richard Steele counts for more than many imposing personages of his time. Bolingbroke, for example, was held to be a master of style and a profound philosopher, but his literary and moral influence, even apart from his scepticism, was scarcely worthy to be named beside that of the man who half his life was sneered at and lampooned as a writer for bread.

It is to be regretted that the material does not exist for a better understanding of Steele's wife. We have only his letters to her, and it must be admitted that they imply much which is on the whole more creditable to him than to her. Of course if her correspondence were accessible the "per contra" would appear: but there is quite enough of revelation in the unfailingly sweet-tempered letters of the man of letters to justify the conclusion that "Dear Prue" had a somewhat unfortunate temperament, and that she did not make the best of life or diffuse happiness around her to an appreciable extent. No doubt poor Steele—one cannot help calling him so, after the old fashion, though Mr. Aitken holds that the pitying phrase does him wrong—had a great many very exasperating faults. Of these by far the worst was his extravagance. Never surely was there such a borrower: nor did he "fritter away his money in paying his debts." There is something positively comical in the solemnity with which at the close of every year of his record his biographer recites all the actions for debt brought against him during the previous months. Presently this monotonous recapitulation begins to remind one of a Greek chorus, and thenceforward it recurs with regular iteration as it were a kind of response in the litany of Steele's life. He never defended these writs. Judgment always went by default. The presumption is that he paid his debts eventually, but it is at least as strong that he never paid one until he had been sued for it, and as litigation of course implied costs, his favorite weakness must have been expensive to him in the long run.

A more careful and thrifty man would have flourished upon his revenues, for he held many offices, and several of them were well salaried. As Commissioner of the Scotch Forfeited Estates he drew 1,000 pounds a year for a long time. His Barbadoes estate should have brought him a considerable income. As Patentee of Drury Lane Theatre his earnings exceeded 1,000 pounds a year for a long time. But money melted in his hands, and what became of it Mr. Aitken fails even to indicate dimly. He did not gamble. He drank occasionally, but not to excess. He lived in a handsome way for the time, but his household expenses would not account for his perpetual poverty and his incessant borrowings. He was not a bibliomaniac, or a collector of any kind. He does not appear to have lost much in speculation. His literary work paid him well. Nevertheless he was always in difficulties, and not seldom reduced to desperate straits, as when, his eldest daughter then lying ill of smallpox, he wrote to his wife that that morning there was not an inch of candle, a pound of coal nor a morsel of meat in the house. He had by the evening effected a loan, however, had replenished the household stores, and was as optimistic as ever. It might be said that he was the Micawber of his period; and who has not a kindly feeling for Mr. Micawber?

By piecing together the scattered fragments of true biographic material, sandwiched between the dead loads of rubbish which block Mr. Aitken's narrative, it is possible to form something like a connected idea of Steele's character and conduct. But there is nothing like a portraiture of him here, nor indeed are his contemporaries better served. Mr. Aitken has gathered matter which hereafter some better equipped writer may sift, select from, arrange, and give life to by informing it with genius. As it stands, it is not the biography of Steele which the literary world has been desiring and anticipating, however. Its merits are a prodigious industry and a tireless research. Of its faults enough has been said above. We may add in conclusion that Mr. Aitken gives copies of the three best portraits of Steele, and of those of his wife and children.

A BRILLIANT GIRL.

THE RECORD OF AN AMBITIOUS LIFE.

MARIE BASHKIRTSEFF. The Journal of a Young Artist. 1860-1884. Translated by Mary J. Serrano. Illustrated. 12mo, pp. viii, 434. Cassell & Co.

The idea of a journal undertaken deliberately for the purpose of posthumous publication must of necessity appear almost incompatible with that full and free introspection and self-record which speak for themselves as to the honesty and candor of such a chronicle. Nor is it credible that the young Russian girl who at the age of twelve conceived this strange purpose, and forthwith carried it out to the end of her short life, was uninfluenced in her journalizing by self-consciousness and an eye for effect. She indeed registered her intention to set down "everything," but it is quite evident that she did not fulfil this intention. Allowance must be made therefore for the intrusion of an artificial element into the journal; but when this has been done the impression made by the book will not be diminished appreciably. It must be acknowledged that this diary of Marie Bashkirtseff is a wonderful psychological study; a revelation of a character strangely blended of the most conflicting elements; a record filled with aspiration, frivolity, the wildest hope, the deepest despondency, the most undisciplined imagination, the frankest vanity—in short, the strangest mixture of tendencies, motives and thoughts ever brought together between the covers of a book.

At twelve years the child is at Florence, and fancies herself in love with a Duke of H——, with whom she has no acquaintance. The vehemence of her nature is at once shown in the extravagant things she writes about this fancy. The Duke must fall in love with her. She prays to God that it may be so; her whole future depends upon this. Then in a few days she wants to be a great singer or actress. Throughout the yearning for fame is the dominant note, is it was the inspiration of the journal itself. She cannot bear the thought of dying and being forgotten. "What," she writes, "if, seized without warning by a fatal illness, I should happen to die suddenly! I should not know, perhaps, of my danger; my family would hide it from me, and after my death they would rummage among my papers; they would find my journal and destroy it after having read it, and soon nothing would be left of me—nothing—nothing—nothing! This is the thought that has always terrified me. To live, to have so much ambition, to suffer, to weep, to struggle, and in the end to be forgotten—as if I had never existed." And to avoid this oblivion she wrote her journal, and left it as a faithful record of one woman's intellectual and emotional life.

Marie Bashkirtseff was the daughter of a Russian nobleman, born to high station and ample fortune. She was educated fairly well, but irregularly, and her mind was never put under any real discipline. Her mother she represents as affectionate but weak; of her father she saw little. From her twelfth year most of her time was spent at Nice, or travelling in Italy, or at Paris. After the illusion of the Duke of H—— had worn away it was succeeded by an episode somewhat more concrete. A young nephew of Cardinal Antonelli made her acquaintance at Rome, and fell in love with her. She must have been singularly beautiful, if we may judge from the fascinating portrait which forms the frontispiece to this volume, though she was only fifteen when that was taken. The young Antonelli did not touch her heart, though at the time she seems to have thought that he had. The marriage was an impossible one, and the lover was too much under parental and avuncular influence to make a serious struggle for freedom. Consequently Marie soon learned to despise him, and in after years looked back with wonder upon her partial infatuation. It may indeed be doubted whether it was given to this singular being to love any man. Toward the last, when it seemed to be a grim race between her and Bastien-Lepage as to which of them should die first, it almost looked as if she might develop an affection for the artist, but the end came for both of them too quickly. Years before this all her capacities seem to have centred in a passion for art which became the ruling motive of her life, and she exhibited a talent of which a few illustrations are left in testimony.

The fascination of her journal perhaps has its root in the melancholy contrast between her longings and the fate in store for her. The despair which breathes so often from her pages cannot, until the last, be regarded as other than morbid, and as evidence rather of weakness than strength. Very much of it must be put to the account of that vanity which was so large an element in her nature, and which, though no doubt encouraged by the really great capacities which she undoubtedly possessed, led her always to depreciate the reasonably attainable, and to fall into despondency because that which was unreasonable eluded her grasp. During her art education this is constantly apparent. Almost from the first she set up an instinctive rivalry with another girl student, whom she styles Breslau. The latter had been at work more years than Marie had devoted months to study; yet Marie considered herself as on an equal footing with Breslau, and is consumed with jealousy because her rival excels her. She considers that she ought to be as forward in one year as Breslau is after three or four, and she rages at every indication that this is not the case. Her own progress was abnormally rapid, and she had every reason for hope, for her masters applauded her work, and she quickly rose to be nearly the first in her class. But nothing would satisfy her but immediate fame, and the probability is that she really sacrificed her life to her insatiable ambition, keeping late hours long after she knew that her lungs were affected, disregarding medical advice, working day and night, and, in short, burning the candle at both ends.

It is affecting to note the persistence and energy of this hunger for celebrity, and then to turn to the chronicle of the desperate struggle against fatal disease. Sometimes it might be thought that the girl had no strong hold upon life, so frequently does she declare death preferable to failure, to neglect, to insignificance. But the whole tenor of the journal goes against that theory. Evidently she desired life passionately; only a larger, fuller life than had yet been afforded her. She clung to physical existence with tenacity. Whenever the realization that she was doomed came upon her clearly, as sometimes happened, she shrank from the prospect with measureless horror and disgust. It cannot be said that the spiritual side of her nature had been developed. On that side her thoughts were vague, confused and scarcely interested. Her bent was distinctively sceptical, and such philosophy as she had was cynical. At times her observations might pass for those of some world-wearied soul that had tried all things and found only vanity. Through art her physical capacity was being gradually educated, but she did not live long enough to unfold it, and her career was thus dominated by materialist ideas. Perhaps all human nature includes a gamut extending from the sublime to the absurd, but it is not often that the extremes are exhibited so plainly as in Marie Bashkirtseff's journal. From the merits of a great artist to the merits of a new dress, from art criticism to chopping, from literature to flirtation, she passes back and forth with bewildering swiftness.

It might be thought that an unhappier creature never existed, save for her own ingenuous statement that she really enjoyed being miserable. The obvious truth is that her temperament was essentially dramatic; that she was always posing, consciously or unconsciously, and that in many instances her despair and her rapture were equally fictitious. A child of emotion, half-educated and not trained at all, she gave vent to every passing whim, and realized it sensationally. Therefore, the journal is in a great measure a study, not alone in psychology, but in morbid psychology. But it is highly interesting, and truly unique in literature. What Marie's religious beliefs were, if indeed she had any, it is impossible to determine. A few weeks before her death she wrote: "One cannot say absolutely 'I do not believe in God.' That depends on what we understand by the word God. If the God we desire to believe in, the God who loves us, existed, the world would not be what it is." But immediately she adds: "Though there be no God to hear my evening prayer, yet I pray to Him every night in despite of my reason." Her mind was confused to the end on this question, and with such a nature this was perhaps inevitable, since she based her beliefs upon the answer or the failure to answer to her prayers, which, nevertheless, were with few exceptions addressed to purely material ends and objects. Her mind, in truth, was but partly opened. She was immature, and necessarily superficial in most things. But she strove hard to be candid and thorough-going in her journal, and the result, after making all deductions, is what is entitled to be considered one of the most detailed and genuine records of a human mind extant—so far as it goes. The proviso is not unimportant, for in Marie Bashkirtseff's journal there is no chronicle of great passions, of profound thoughts, of really powerful and agonizing spiritual struggles. It is simply a photographic picture of a young girl's soul; a young girl of exceptional ambition, self-appreciation, energy and emotional aptitude. As such it will be read with deep interest, and the pathos of its ending will emphasize the impression it is certain to make upon every feeling and sympathetic mind.

NEW NOVELS.

THE WORK OF AMERICANS.

A LITTLE JOURNEY IN THE WORLD. By Charles Dudley Warner. 12mo, pp. 396. Harper & Brothers.
STANDISH OF STANDISH. A STORY OF THE PILGRIMS. By Jane G. Austin. 12mo, pp. 422. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.
WOULD YOU KILL HIM? By George Parsons Lathrop. 12mo, pp. 384. Harper & Brothers.

Mr. Warner's novel is on the whole a decided success, though marked by defects of both plan and execution which practice in fiction will no doubt remove. In the beginning the action drags, the author giving too much space to reflections and discursive remarks, and depending too much upon the development of his plot through conversations, which, while sometimes clever, are keyed too high to be natural. The people who talk epigrams at one another, and who never speak without saying something profound, witty or significant, are an ideal folk, but sparsely represented in this humdrum and workaday world. As Mr. Warner proceeds, however, his work becomes more compact and artistic. Throughout he is given to comment, as from an external and dispassionate position, upon his characters, and some of these comments certainly have a flavor of Thackeray. There is plenty of strongly drawn individuality in the story, which is emphatically of the period. It is, in fact, the story of a soul's degradation. Margaret, the heroine, is a New-England girl, of strong spiritual tendencies, brought up in a refined country circle, who marries a Wall Street adventurer, railroad wrecker and money-grabber of attractive person and amiable disposition. The main motive of the tale is the exhibition of Margaret's slow but steady moral and spiritual decay, and this is developed with much art in a very impressive way.

The foil to Margaret is Carmen Eschelle, a thoroughly worldly, frankly selfish and cold-hearted beauty, who mocks at the ingenuous Margaret, admires the perpetrators of legalized robberies who flourish through the ruin of others, and is generally as destitute of conscience and soul as a codfish. But Carmen, after all, is no worse than Margaret comes to be. The husband of the latter, Henderson, grows very rich, builds a palace, is one of the many-millioned, and though he naturally gets harder and less-scrupulous with continued success, is followed steadily in his debasement by his wife. The whole story is, of course, a study of the present overgrowth of Materialism and Mammon-worship. On the one side is the little country circle, devoted to plain living and high-thinking; on the other is the great business and fashionable world, devoted to the cult of wealth, and caring less all the time how that wealth is acquired. Mr. Warner's pictures are faithful, his satire is keen and but too well-deserved, and the implied conclusion that the standard of right and wrong is becoming obscured in the eyes of the people, seems to be justified by impartial observation of the facts. It is, indeed, becoming more and more difficult to determine what ethical principles are believed in at the present day, for while mere professions are necessarily without special significance, the general tendency toward the acceptance or condonation of the most flagrant dishonesty and iniquity, cannot but bewilder those who are trying to believe the optimist declaration that society is making better progress than ever before. This is the phase of modern civilization illustrated by Mr. Warner in his highly interesting and really powerful novel.

Jane G. Austin has done a very difficult thing; she has written an historical novel based on the settlement of Plymouth, and while following the chronicle with curious fidelity and minuteness, she has succeeded in composing a very interesting and natural story. Her Standish is a highly satisfactory portrait. If not the man himself, it is so nearly him that we accept the likeness. So also with the other historical characters; with Bradford and Winslow and John Alden and Brewster and Carver and Priscilla, and Barbara and Standish, and Hopkins and Billington and the rest. They are every one real people, not dummies, and the life of the time is reproduced, and the building of the colony represented, with a freshness, fulness, ease and verisimilitude altogether admirable. Perhaps, if anything, the author has rather underestimated the influence of the Puritan religion upon the spirits and the expression of the younger colonists, but after all we have but conjecture for this, and it is necessary to the interest of a story that it should have plenty of light and brightness.

Mr. Lathrop's novel—"Would You Kill Him?"—has not, as has been said, any special bearing upon the question of capital punishment. It is, in fact, simply the presentation of an elaborate problem arising out of a very peculiar state of things, and having no general or abstract implications. A young man is jilted by a girl to whom he is betrothed, she acting from a false sense of honor. She keeps his letters to her. Her brother, a silly youth, takes it into his head in perverse defiance of the plain facts, that his sister has been wronged, and getting possession of the discarded lover's letters to her in a dishonorable way, addresses himself to destroy the happiness of the latter, who meantime has married happily. The worst character in the book, however, and the one who most deserves killing, is Lily Britton, a detestable young woman who plays the part of a female vampire. She worms herself into the affections of the hero's wife, and is conspiring with the aforesaid addle-pated brother of the old sweetheart, when the hero, in a stormy meeting on board an ocean steamer with the letter-stealing brother, strikes the latter and kills him. Lily Britton has seen the occurrence, and of course "peaches" on the homicide, who is tried and acquitted, and then suffers so much from conscience that he is about to commit suicide when his wife saves him. The fact is, or should be, obvious that this man really committed no more than manslaughter. There was no murderous intent. The fatal blow was struck in passion and without premeditation. Had the evidence been strong enough to convict, no sane jury would have rendered a verdict of murder in the first degree. Therefore the question—"Would you kill him?"—must be answered in the negative here even by those who believe most in capital punishment. For the rest, Mr. Lathrop gives an elaborate account of a wheat "corner," and another, which is more graphic, of a race between ocean steamers. The story is rather overloaded, and would have gained by compression, but it is sufficiently interesting to be read without impatience in spite of its length.

LITERARY NOTES.

"John Ward, Preacher," is now in its fiftieth thousand. It is, moreover, being translated into the Dutch. Mrs. Deland's new serial story, "Sidney," which is promised by "The Atlantic," is looked for with a good deal of curiosity. Will her second novel surpass her first, or has "John Ward" monopolized the cream of her imagination?

Mr. Gosse says that Mr. Stevenson several years ago contemplated the writing of a novel of life among the Scottish clans in the middle of the last century. This book was to be called "The Murder of Red Colin."

Of Mr. Whittier as a poet "The London Athenaeum" says: "His boundaries have not been wide, but within them he has been master; he has been sure of his purpose, and what he purposed he could effect, and he has shown an understanding of his limits which is in itself a faculty of no mean order."

A "History of Civilization in Ancient India" by Romesh Chunder Dutt, is coming out in London. It is based on Sanskrit literature.

The October "Fortnightly Review" contains an article by Mr. George Moore on "Some of Balzac's Minor Pieces," which, while marked by enthusiastic appreciation of the great author, has some curious mistakes in it. For example, the writer attributes to "La Lys dans la Vallee" a chapter which belongs to "Les Paysans"; in fact the whole motive and groundwork of the latter story is credited to the former. Again, Mr. Moore informs his reader that Balzac "died in harness, killed by the Herculean task of improvising 'La Cousine Bette' in six weeks." This is news indeed! "La Cousine Bette" was written in 1846, and Balzac did not die until August, 1850, so that if writing that book killed him it must be admitted that his death was a lingering one. In one point, however, Mr. Moore is quite right; namely in saying that in "Les Paysans" the author of the "Comedie Humaine" seems to have anticipated the Irish land war which was to spring up so long after his death. As he says: "In this book will be found every incident of the land war in Ireland; indeed, the murder of the bailiff differs not at all from the many such murders we have read of in Ireland in these last ten years, and the boycotting of the general might be included with very little alteration in Captain Boycott's memoirs; while the schemes for land reform propounded in that wonderful chapter 'Comme quoi le cabaret est le parlement du peuple,' wonderful from the title to the closing word, might pass without exciting suspicion for extracts from one of Michael Davitt's speeches." This is the more interesting inasmuch as "Les Paysans" is to be the next Balzac story translated by Miss Wormeley.

Balzac's "Chouans" has been turned for the first time into English by George Saintsbury, and has been published by Nimmo as the first volume of a beautifully illustrated historical series, specially intended for connoisseurs. The second volume—illustrated, like the first, by a French artist—contains Prosper Merimee's "Chronicle of the Reign of Charles IX."

Mr. F. H. Groome, writing of the late Edward FitzGerald, tells various odd stories of his eccentric thoughts and ways.

A former rector of Woodbridge, now many years dead, once called on FitzGerald to express his regret that he never saw him at church. "Sir," said FitzGerald, "you might have conceived that a man has not come to my years of life without thinking much of these things. I believe I may say that I have reflected on them fully as much as yourself. You need not repeat this visit." FitzGerald's simplicity dated from very early times. For when he was at Trinity, his mother called on him in her coach-and-four, and sent a gyp to ask him to step down to the college-gate, but he could not come—his only pair of shoes was at the cobbler's. Once with Mr. Groome's father he called at the house of a friend. The drawing-room there had been newly refurnished, and FitzGerald sat himself down on an amber satin couch. Presently a black stream was seen trickling over it. It came from a penny bottle of ink, which FitzGerald had bought in Woodbridge, and put in a tail-pocket.

Dedications which are what they profess to be and are besides as gracefully conceived as they are expressed are not so plentiful that the lines which Mr. W. J. Henderson has put on the dedicatory page of his "Story of Music" can be passed unnoticed. Here they are:

TO H. C. BUNNER.

Warm hand, strong brain, and open heart
Of him who is, and hath been, friend,
Of all my work, from first to end,
Unceasingly I give thee part.

For thine hath been the honest tongue
To urge, to praise, to criticise—
Plain words made fair by kindly eyes—
If tales were told or songs were sung.

So clasping here this new-writ scroll;
As one who comes from sea to land,
I lean to meet thy outstretched hand,
And say, "Of this work take the whole."

November, 1889. W. J. H.

A biography of John Bright will not appear for some years, as it is felt that many things could not be published now without giving offence to living politicians.

An autograph lately sold in London was a letter addressed by Landor to Rosina, Lady Lytton, and indorsed by her: "Old Landor's Twaddle." Another was a note from Tennyson, reading thus: "I have many thousands of these applications, and rather make a point of neglecting them; for why should I flatter the madness of the people? Nevertheless, as the request comes from an old friend, behold an autograph!" Somebody made merchandise of this—was it the old friend?

A translation into German of a large part of Walt Whitman's works has been made by Mr. T. W. Rolleston, an Irishman, and the publication has been favorably received in Germany.

COMPOSED FOR THE DEPOSED.

(A plaintive little sea-song sung by the ex-King of Brazil to beguile the hours while on his way to Portugal.)

As o'er the fretted brine I go
And from Brazilian pebbles stray,
I tell my heart that well I know
What 'tis to me the wild waves say:
As Neptune marks my tumbled hair
Where now a crown no longer clings,
He whispers to his mermaids fair,
"The time is rather late for Kings!"

Chorus.
O, Fate, the hard-fisted,
Cannot be resisted,
So I'm an assisted,
emigrant!

Ah, where is that divinity
Which, so tradition does allege,
Encompasses the like of me
As with a holy, bomb-proof hedge;
Alas, my hedge I couldn't find,
When late the masses called on me,
And so I—well, I just resigned,
And here I am at sea, at sea!

Chorus.
No more my native land shall ring
With that fine, famous feudal cry,
"The King is dead—long live the King—
God save the King, for aye and aye!"
Hark, o'er the sea what voices thrill
From those who're painting Rio red:
"Long live—the people of Brazil,
The King is dead, or good as dead!"

Chorus.
Where is my sceptre, where my throne?—
Sent to the auction-rooms, alack,
They'll be knocked down—it makes me groan—
As "something nice in bric-a-brac";
And shrewd old clo'smen—what a sight!
Shall buy my stunning robes and things,
And rent them out, so much a night,
To amateur theatric Kings.

Chorus.
So, Neptune, gazing at my hair
Where now a crown no longer clings,
And whispering to your mermaids fair
"The time is rather late for Kings,"
I felt myself 'twas getting late,
And so I gladly stepped me down,
To lag superfluous I'd hate—
God speed the ship to Lisbon town!

Chorus.
O, Fate, the hard-fisted,
Cannot be resisted,
So I'm an assisted,
emigrant!

HOW WOMEN RIDE IN THE FAR WEST.

From The Boston Advertiser.

The recent death of a Wellesley graduate from an accident while out riding prompts a spirited young writer in a contemporary to comment on the occasion, and to draw the moral that such events will continue to be recorded till both sexes come "to grasp the equine situation alike, as they do in the far West." It is unfortunate for the information of the readers that they were not told in what section of the far West it was customary for both sexes to sit astride of their horses—for it is to be supposed that is what is meant by "grasping the equine situation alike." It is unfortunate for the readers, but perhaps fortunate for the writer of the paragraph, for it is to be doubted whether a ride along the entire stretch of the Rockies would disclose such a proceeding. In point of fact the women and girls of the West are more proficient than those of the East in sitting on the three-horned saddle, and by far a greater proportion of them know how to ride gracefully than do their sisters of the East. It is no uncommon thing to ride with little more equipment than a bridle and a pad.

BURNING BRICKS WITH OIL.

From The Catskill Recorder.

The burning of brick by the new process, to wit, oil, has been tried at Ferrier & Goldin's West Catskill yard this week. The fires were lighted on Tuesday morning. The piping and other apparatus used were brought up from P. J. Gurnee's yard at Port Ewen, Mr. Gurnee having successfully employed oil in burning brick this year and last; indeed, by an invention of his for distributing the heat, making a success of what threatened to be a failure.

THE HEN-MAN.

NOT MOGGIDGED.

It is weary work watching for a hen man. If any one has never experienced this weariness, words of description will have but little effect. Perhaps I should explain that in New-England a man rides through the country once in three or four weeks, buying at a discouragingly low price whatever fowls the farmers may have to sell. The enterprising farmers market their own chickens, but a great many farmers are not enterprising, or they are women, and possibly women who would not do anything so unladylike as to take their own feathered crops to market. Hence the hen men. These latter have coops made of laths, two or three stories high, on their carts. They are not usually members of the highest class in society; they chew tobacco; they smoke old pipes, and they tell lies. That is to say, a great many of them tell lies. One will assert he is coming along on such a day, and you must have all your "roosters" shut up and he will buy them. You shut up your roosters; the day passes and the hen man does not come. You begin to look for him, putting only half your mind on your usual work. He does not come the second day. Those things confined in that shed have by this time let you know that there is not apparently corn enough in the universe to satisfy their appetites; they are visibly growing poorer, though they have not eaten as much before in all their lives. It is getting toward Thanksgiving, and every hour fowl are becoming cheaper. It is in such a combination of circumstances that one becomes very weary watching for a hen man.

Mehitable Green had shut up the fowl she intended to sell. They had been shut up for four days and were reducing themselves to skeletons in the most mysterious manner at the same time that they were devouring unheard of quantities of corn and scalded meal. Mehitable scalded the meal because long experience had taught her that it "went farther." It did not seem to her that it went far now. Mrs. Green had been out to the shed and looked at the birds. I think she had a kind of belief that the Farnsworth look, of which she was complete mistress, would awe the fowl into a different state of mind or body. But it didn't. They stretched out their heads, blinked their eyes, and evidently did not care a rap for the Farnsworth look. So Mrs. Green went back to the house and told her daughter they'd both have to go to the poor-house if they had to keep them roosters much longer.

Mehitable looked up over her glasses, with which she was reading a "libr'y book." She appeared so helpless and so anxious that her mother turned and slammed the door as a relief to her own over-wrought mind.

Mehitable rose and followed the old woman.

"I'd know what I c'n do more 'n to watch every minute for the hen man," she said apologetically. "He's the tryingest man I ever knew."

Even as she spoke there was the sound of wheels. Both women ran and stumbled to the front door. Yes, there he was, dashing by at a great rate, with two horses, and he had solemnly promised to stop at the Green place.

Mrs. Green gazed after him in silence a moment. Then she turned and said fiercely:

"Cut off their heads!" Did she refer to the heads of hen men, or to the heads of fowl? No one knew; her meaning could only be guessed.

Mehitable was thrown immediately into a violent tremor. She tried to explain that he always came back the next day; he had "gone up," a phrase used to signify that a person had gone up to the "next village"; and when a hen man had gone up it always, in the past, had followed that he came down. Mehitable asserted with fervor that she would spend the entire day on the morrow in watching, and she said again and again that she would "ketch him." Indeed it was necessary to "ketch him," or the alternative appeared to be a long life spent with the knowledge and the expense of twenty-seven roosters shut up in the shed, and eating their owners to the almshouse.

That night at supper Mrs. Green ordered hasty pudding and milk for their repast, although neither had any liking for that kind of food. She said that she didn't see how they could afford anything else to eat, considering what they'd got in the shed. She assumed that what they had in the shed was entirely her daughter's fault, and that "the gal" ought to bear the consequences.

This was very hard on Mehitable, and she felt its injustice sorely. She made one ineffectual struggle to right herself. She dropped her spoon with a clatter into her bowl.

"Why, now, mother, you know you wanted me to try 'n' raise a lot of chickens this year; you know you did; 'n' you know I can't cut their heads off; 'taint ladylike; 'n' I——"

"M'hitable!" said Mrs. Green, with Farnsworth severity. "Not another word! Let your victuals stop your mouth."

Mehitable subsided, and let her victuals perform the office mentioned by her companion. But though she was silent, she felt her eyes smart and her throat swell. She was conscious of a wild feeling of rebellion. Was she not grown up? Was she not an individual as much as her mother? She had never had the control of herself for a half-hour since she was born, and here she was fifty-three years old. In five minutes, however, she was deeply ashamed of this unknown, fruitless protest, and so repentant for it that she was more humble than ever during the rest of the day.

Once, as she was pouring hot water into a pail of Indian meal for the roosters, the thought came to her, "What if she had married?—what if somebody had wanted her?"

The color sprang to her faded, pathetic face at the mere idea, and she almost poured the hot water on her "arctic"-covered foot in her confusion.

The next day the hen man came down the hills from the west village. When he was within sight of the old Green house he saw a figure in the yard. A nearer view showed him that this figure was tall and thin, and that it had a gray blanket pinned on its head. It ran into the road and stood close to the track, waving its hands at him.

He drew up his horses. He looked down at her, and Mehitable looked up at him, perceiving with a kind of shock that this was not the young fellow who had gone by the day before, but a man of sixty, a man who had been a widower, and she knew she had been then recommended to him as a "good, likely woman, who would make a savin' wife."

Whatever happened, Mehitable must not forget her business. She knew her mother was looking from the window at her.

"I s'pose you ain't goin' to buy no roosters, be ye?" she asked, blushing painfully.

The man slowly climbed down from his wagon. He went and pulled at a strap on the harness of the nigh horse before he replied.

"Be they pooty fair roosters?" be asked.

"They was," said she.

"But how be they now?" said he.

"They've been shet up some," was the reply, "but they've eat oceans, 'n' they orter be fat."

"I'll look at 'um," said he; and the two walked toward the shed. As they went he remarked that shet up roosters never brought such a good price as ones that run. He didn't know why 'twas, but they didn't.

He gazed round at the farm with a critical and inquiring gaze.

"Ruther good land I sh'd say, if 'twas only worked," he said; then added with emphasis: "What you need is a man. Women can't work a farm in no kinder shape. You need a man, that's what you need."

Poor Mehitable was overwhelmed with tremors and blushes.

To be told openly that you need a man is very confusing. To feel an inward assent to such a statement is still more embarrassing.

Miss Green tried to think what one of Ouida's heroines would do under these circumstances; but she found it utterly impossible to imagine one of Ouida's heroines walking out to a shed with a hen man to show him some roosters she had imprisoned for sale.

She stole one brief look at her companion. She was obliged to acknowledge that he did not present a romantic appearance. He was rather stout, with a puffy red face, and an upper lip that set out so decidedly over the under one as to give a marked resemblance to a parrot. This likeness was indeed so very decided that he was always spoken of as "Parrot Smith," although his parents had named him Alphonso.

Mehitable suddenly had a flashing thought that she was glad that he had such a name, for she should like to call him "Alphonso"; it would be a kind of compensation for his red face and his mouth.

Then she was horrified that she had such a fancy, for was he not a married man? She had no right to think such things. For a reader of Louise de la Ramer it must be confessed that Miss Green was rather rigid in her morality.

She knew that, when Mr. Smith had, about a year ago, been looking for a wife, he had found one over toward Woonsocket, somebody who had worked in a mill and had laid up $600, which she had dutifully placed in her husband's hands. Since then she had heard nothing.

Mr. Smith seemed in no hurry. He leaned on the fence which led into the yard where the cow was standing chewing her cud. Mehitable stood shyly a short distance away.

"Good cow?" he said interrogatively.

"We think she's just splendid."

Mehitable spoke with some enthusiasm, for she loved the gentle creature which was now regarding her with calm, benignant gaze.

"Grain her?"

"We can't afford to grain her a great deal."

"Much of a milker?"

"Tollable milker."

"How old?"

"Rising eight."

"What do you call her wuth?"

"She's wuth forty dollars if she's worth a cent."

Miss Green was surprised at her own decision of utterance. But her cow was something she prized. She had sewed straw and picked huckleberries until she had earned the money to buy her of Sim Sparks, who found that the care of a cow "tied him up too much," although it was well known that Mr. Sparks had nothing in the world to do. But Sim always spoke of his time as of a valuable commodity.

Besides Mehitable thought she detected in Mr. Smith's manner something disparaging, as if he were going to make an offer for the cow.

The gentleman after a pause put his leg over the fence and went and punched the animal's ribs. Then he stood with his hands in his pockets as if in deep thought, his legs wide apart, his eyes roving over the farm. One would have said he was making an estimate of the worth of the place. The woman watching him had another opportunity to assure herself that there was nothing romantic in this man.

"Keep no pigs?"

This question broke the silence. Mehitable explained that, as they couldn't raise their own corn, her mother had concluded it wouldn't pay to keep pigs.

"That's just it, you need a man."

Mr. Smith suddenly walked back to the fence, and for the first time appeared to look at Mehitable.

"If you hed a man," he went on, "he could work the land and git something out of it. I s'pose you ain't moggidged, be ye?"

Miss Green was in doubt as to whether he referred in this question to the farm or to herself. She stammered the reply that there never'd ben no moggidge on anything belongin' to the Greens.

Mr. Smith thoughtfully took off his hat, rubbed his head, and said he'd always understood so, but there wa'n't nothin' like going to headquarters to find out anything.

During this entire interview Mrs. Green's face, framed in an old gingham handkerchief, had been seen at a window, first in front of the house, and now at the back. That lady was getting very impatient. What did that Parrot Smith mean by staying so long? What was he talking about? Why didn't he take the roosters and be off? Was Mehitable "a shilly-shallyin' 'bout anything?"

Now, as always, the mother's eye was on the daughter.

There was a silence for some minutes. Mehitable began to be conscious that her gray blanket was hardly a sufficient protection against the chill autumn wind, even though her mind were occupied with the excitement arising from a gentleman's society. She was dimly conscious also that it was not very much excitement, after all, to stand and answer Mr. Smith's questions.

She had opened her mouth to ask "How about them roosters?" when she heard the quick click of a latch, and then her mother's strident, domineering voice called out:

"Does that man want them fowls or not? If you're goin' to stay there much longer, M'hitable, you'd better come 'n' git somethin' more over ye."

The man and the woman at the fence started uncomfortably and walked quickly to the shed, where Mr. Smith weighed the fowl, hooking a bunch of them onto his steelyards, while their heads hung down and they uttered dreadful cries. He said they wa'n't what he expected fowl to be, and he shouldn't buy 'em of anybody else under the canopy; "but of you, Miss Green"—here he gave such an unmistakable grin and glance that Mehitable almost wished her mother were present.

While he was gathering up another bunch to weigh and they were screaming, Mr. Smith raised his voice to ask if his companion had ever thought of changing her condition.

To this question Mehitable was in no frame of mind to even attempt an answer. As he was getting the exact notch on the bar he said again that they needed a man; this time he added that he thought he was about the man they wanted, and what did she think?

She had to raise her voice to reply in a horrified tone that she wondered what his wife would say to such talk, whereupon Mr. Smith immediately became extremely solemn and announced, above the crying of the roosters, that he hadn't no wife; she'd ben dead more'n six months.

"What, your second?" screamed Mehitable.

"Yes, my second," he shouted. "Died of gallopin' consumption. I s'pose she wa'n't well when I married her. This lot weighs fifteen pound. These seem better. I'll give you 12 cents a pound for these. What do you say to my hitchin' up 'n' drivin' over here next Sunday night?"

In recalling every detail of this interview with the hen man Mehitable could not remember that she gave him the least encouragement to hitch up next Sunday night. Nevertheless, when at last he drove away, she knew he was coming as he had mentioned.

She wanted to stay out in the barn until she was more collected in her mind, but at the same time she felt sure she should never be collected in her mind again.

She must go in immediately; she must face her mother. She had the money for the roosters in her hand; she feebly hoped this money might occupy Mrs. Green's mind to the exclusion of curiosity. That hope was very small, however.

Just as she was issuing from the barn the outside kitchen-door opened again, but the elder lady, seeing her gal, simply waited.

"I was comin' out to see what that Parrot Smith was so long-winded 'bout." Here she looked at Mehitable and then reached forth to take hold of the back of a chair, that she might lean on something as she examined the face before her.

"Ain't you well?" she asked in a softer tone than usual. "There ain't nothin' the matter with the cow, is there?"

"No," was the faint reply, "there ain't nothin' the matter with the cow."

THE ANCIENT NEW-ZEALAND MOAS.

WERE THEY "TAPU?"—A NOTE FROM MR. EDWARD WAKEFIELD.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: I have to thank you for the very able and kindly review of my book, "New-Zealand After Fifty Years," which appeared in The Tribune of the 11th inst. I should be glad, however, if you would allow me to make a remark on what appears to me to be a misconception in your article. Referring to the controversy as to the antiquity of the Moa, the gigantic wingless bird of New-Zealand, and to the absence of any reference to it in the historical records of the priests, which go back for 900 years—a circumstance which I took to be conclusive, or nearly so, against the Moa having existed alive during that period—your reviewer says: "Supposing that the Moa had been (as would have been very natural from its imposing appearance) put under 'tapu' at a very early period. In that case, the priests would have been prohibited from mentioning it; it would have been still more rigidly forbidden to the laity to employ its name for any purpose; and it might thus have been omitted from the genealogies without warranting the inference drawn by Mr. Wakefield."

This is a very ingenious theory, which I never met with before. But there are two things against it, which, I think, are fatal to it. One is that even the very strictest forms of "tapu," such as the terrible "tapu" of the dead, did not prevent the "tapu'd" object being mentioned, either by the priests or by the common people. On the contrary, the very fact of its being "tapu'd' an inch thick," as profane pakehas say, created a special interest in it, and made it a constant topic of conversation. In the priestly records and genealogies there are innumerable allusions to "tapu'd" objects. Secondly, and finally, nothing that was "tapu" might be touched, except by the priests or by chiefs specially privileged in that respect, while for any one to eat any part of a "tapu'd" article of food meant sudden death. Yet the whole argument in favor of the recent existence of the Moa rests on the statement of a centenarian chief that he himself had seen the Moa hunted and eaten, and on the fact that great quantities of Moa bones are found in old stone ovens with cooking utensils, weapons of the chase, and all the signs of a tribal feast. Doubtless, if the Moas had been "tapu" they would have been alive to-day. EDWARD WAKEFIELD.

New-York, Nov. 13, 1889.

HITTING THE BULLSEYE AT RANDOM.

From The Danbury News.

Three years ago a prominent citizen of this city, and an owner of a block of buildings on Main-st., lost a crowbar, and up to this morning never had any trace of it. He accidentally stepped into a business place and overhearing a conversation about a crowbar, it reminded him of his lost treasure, and for fun he suddenly said to the proprietor, "Uncle ——, I wish you would send home my crowbar!" Isn't three years about long enough?" "Upon my word and honor," said the proprietor, "I have put out that crowbar no less than twenty times to bring home and have forgotten it each time. Here, John, you go up to my house and bring Mr. F.'s crowbar home, and don't let the grass grow under your feet." No one has a sufficiently vivid imagination to picture to himself the surprise of the owner of the bar. He thinks it was the biggest hit he ever made in his life.

AN ASTONISHED SETTER.

From The Providence Journal's Boston letter.

I do not vouch for the truth of the tale, but a man whose reputation for veracity is at least reasonably good declares that he saw on the street in Boston the other day an electric wire accident which was certainly singular. His attention was attracted by the barking of a red Irish setter to an English sparrow which was perched upon the electric light wire, high above the beast's head. The animal had evidently been amusing himself in the fruitless sport of chasing the bird, and when it had taken refuge on high had endeavored to get some consolation out of yelping lustily. The day was windy, and the wire swayed to and fro, the sparrow apparently enjoying its swing, until in a fatal moment the tail of the bird came in contact with another wire near by. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, the unlucky sparrow came tumbling down stone-dead at the feet of the noisy dog, who was so astonished at this sudden turn of affairs that he did not offer to pick the creature up, but simply stopped barking and stood staring at his prey in astonishment.