

GEORGE MEREDITH.

BY THOMAS HARDY.

Forty years back, when much had passed
That since has perished out of mind,
I heard that voice, and saw that face.

He spoke as one afoot will wind
A morning horn ere men awake;
His note was trenchant, smart, but kind.

He was of those whose words can shake
And riddle to the very core
The falsities that Time will break.

Of late, when we two met once more,
The luminous countenance and rare
Shone just as forty years before.

So that, when now all tongues declare
He is unseen by his green hill,
I scarce believe he sits not there.

No matter, further and further still
Through the world's vaporous vitiate air
His words wing on—as strong words will.

The New-York Tribune.

SUNDAY, JUNE 6, 1909.

The English press continues to resound with tributes to George Meredith. Among them we find, in the London "Times," the lines quoted above, lines by the only living novelist fairly comparable in any way with the master of "The Egoist." Meredith once wrote to a friend saying, "In this matter of letters, I treat my friends as I wish they should treat me, and reserve not one for the public maw. Horribly will I haunt the man who writes a memoir of me." No formal biography of him is yet promised, but we have no doubt that such a book will ultimately appear. Did not Thackeray's own daughter find a way of putting forth chapters on the great man for a "biographical" edition of his works? There is already announced a book by Mr. J. A. Hammerton on "George Meredith in Anecdote and Criticism." We are not, at any rate, to expect any belated work from the pen now laid aside. Mrs. Sturgis, the novelist's daughter, says that her father had not written anything for some years, and that she did not believe there were any unpublished manuscripts in the house. It is to be hoped that none will be discovered there or anywhere else. In view of Meredith's peculiar character as an artist it would probably be especially unfortunate for anything of his to be printed that he himself had not overhauled and definitely resolved to publish.

Did Meredith feel bitterness at the "inadequate recognition" of his genius by the British public? His daughter says that he did—that he was bitter at the lateness of the recognition. He forgave it, but never forgot it. He was always good humored, but he would at times call attention to the fact that America was first in according him his due reward. Public neglect left him, of course, only the more faithful to his aim. "There has always been something anti-pathetic," he once said, "between the English people and me. With book after book it was always the same outcry of censure and disapproval. The first time or two I minded it; then I determined to disregard what people said altogether, and since then I have written only to please myself." Sending a volume of his poems to a friend, he remarked that he did not send copies to the newspapers, adding, "Why should one present one's self needlessly to the bullet of the enemy?" "The Athenaeum" prints the following letter, which Meredith wrote to a young author perplexed by the attitude of reviewers:

My practice with regard to reviews is to look for none and to read all that may come in my way. It is like expecting a windy day in our climate when we go out of doors and face the air: an author must master sensitiveness when he publishes. He knows what he intended, and should be able to estimate the degree of his attainment. Criticism will then brace him. We have not much of it, and there will be indifference to wear through, and sometimes brutality to encounter. Tell yourself that such is our climate. I began sensitively, but soon got braced. Here and there a hostile review is instructive, if only that it throws us back on the consciousness of our latent strength.

Apropos of this matter of public neglect or critical injustice Mr. Andrew Lang has some interesting things to say. The plaints of Mr. William Watson and others on the poverty which drove Mr. John Davidson to his death find little sympathy in this writer. He recalls the observation of Mr. Frederick Myers, who studied the question of genius as a psychologist. Mr. Myers pointed out that men may have all of the peculiar emotions of genius and yet not possess the genuine article. Mr. Lang remarks that, "to judge by the letters with which they favor me, many young people have the feelings of genius, but the verses that they enclose prove that the emotions are misleading." That, as we have more than once observed, was the trouble with Mr. Davidson. Alluding to his melancholy case, Mr. Lang says:

He is praised for not employing his powers in some remunerative way, say in journalism. But it is long since I was informed, on what seemed good authority, that Mr. Davidson was as incapable of journalism as Mr. R. L. Stevenson certainly was, while he was equally incapable of fiction in prose. For that he is not to be blamed; it was the tragedy of his nature. Yet, perhaps, we may say that he persevered far too long. . . . It is not for me to condemn any individual, but it is perfectly plain that while genius cannot be recognized by the person who feels that he is possessed by it, and while public recognition is much of an accident, a man must make up his mind to be a man first of all, and to do ordinary if there be no market for what he thinks extraordinary work.

There is the key to the problem. A man must first of all be a man.

PEPYS THE OFFICIAL.

The Working Life of the Famous Diarist.

SAMUEL PEPYS: ADMINISTRATOR, OBSERVER, GOSSIP. By E. Hallam Moorhouse. Illustrated. Crown 8vo, pp. x, 327. E. P. Dutton & Co.

Here is a useful and attractive biography of S. Pepys, Esq., Clerk of the Acts and Secretary of the Admiralty, the shrewd, judicious man of affairs, the hard worker and practical, sensible, tactful manager of men. The amazingly frank diarist is not, of course, lost sight of by the author, but it is his serious official labors which she makes most prominent. It is the side of Pepys which is not often sufficiently emphasized by or for the general reader to whom his name suggests only those famous volumes of gossip. It is a side worth detailed treatment, and Miss Moorhouse has executed her task with enthusiasm and with good taste. She has made excellent use of Pepys's "Memoires of the Royal Navy," and she has ransacked all other available records. Studying her subjects from several

his post. It is recorded that he even had to learn his multiplication table again.

The self-indulgent, pleasure-loving man whom we see in the "Diary" was in the Navy Office an absorbed and unrelenting toiler. "In later years," says his biographer, "his accuracy and industry were so noteworthy, and left so marked a tradition behind, that more than a hundred years after his death an official report spoke of him as 'a man of extraordinary knowledge in all that related to the business' of the navy, 'of great talents and the most indefatigable industry.'" Even in the early days of his service he reformed abuses in the dockyards, incurring much dislike from the thieving and the inefficient. The fate of the ordinary seamen in the navy of his day was, at its best, hard. They too often could not get the money due to them and "starved in the streets." Pepys, for one, did not rob them, though many an official did; he was not a taker of dirty bribes from poor men, though there is a suspicion that a little graft from a rich contractor went his way. He had a genuine sympathy for the seaman—an unusual sentiment in his office. In all directions he turned his ready energy and did what might be done with the material at his hand. The

colleagues from dismissal. This was succeeded by a picturesque episode, Pepys himself quietly instigating the Duke of York to make charges against the ineffective Navy Board in the hope of making needed reforms.

By 1673 all the first set of officers of the board at the period of the Restoration had disappeared, Pepys being the only survivor. The King reorganized the office and appointed Pepys Secretary of the Admiralty. His record in this position is a splendid one. He worked with a truly astonishing earnestness, persistence and vigilance—and worked still under that straining misery of lack of money for ships and seamen. He fought desperately to restore failing discipline in both officers and men. He knew all the needs and all the mistakes of the navy; he had, says the biographer, "a personal passion and feeling for his official work that is rare and as valuable as it is rare." He pushed many reforms, among them that providing for the instruction and examination of lieutenants, an eminently desirable thing in that particular navy at that particular time. He made enemies, of course, and there came a day when he was committed to the Tower under an absurd accusation of "betraying naval secrets to the French King, and also of a design to dethrone Charles II and destroy the Protestant religion." He was a prisoner for many months before the ridiculous nature of these charges was conceded and he was released. During the five years which followed, the navy affairs were confided to men who were not only ignorant and incompetent but in many cases dishonest. The cost of the navy to the country remained enormous, though the number of effective ships in sea-pay was dangerously lowered. Where did the money go? The Admiralty kept no account. The outrageous "unconcernment" of the King at last ended, and he called Pepys back to his post as Secretary of the Admiralty. "The spectacle of Pepys at this time," says the author, "is worthy of no little admiration. . . . He had seen a large part of his good and arduous work undone, from something that must have appeared to him like wicked capriciousness, and then he was suddenly called upon to pick up the pieces and make them into a sound whole again. And he did it—though it cost millions of money and all the best remaining years of his life to make good the damage and restore the navy of England from a few rotting hulks to a fleet in being." He went about his task with no dependence on the reports of subordinates; he studied conditions on the spot; and, gradually, with the backing of Charles's successor, the service was brought to a high point of efficiency. Such was the serious value to England of Master Samuel Pepys, the writer of the most amusing diary in the world. When at the coming of William of Orange his post was given to another man and he retired into studious obscurity it was justly said of him by a contemporary:

It may be affirmed of this Gentleman, that he was, without exception, the greatest and most useful Minister that ever filled the same situation in England; the Acts and Registers of the Admiralty proving this fact beyond contradiction. The principal rules and establishments in present use in those offices are well known to have been of his introducing and most of the officers serving therein, since the Restoration, of his bringing up. He was a most studious promoter and strenuous asserter of order and discipline through all their dependencies. Sobriety, diligence, capacity, loyalty, and subjection to command were essentials required in all whom he advanced. When any of these were found wanting no interest or authority were capable of moving him in favor of the highest pretender; the royal command only excepted, of which he was also very watchful, to prevent any undue procurements. Discharging his duty to his prince and country with a religious application and perfect integrity, he feared no one, courted no one, neglected his own fortune.

QUEER ENGLISH EPITAPHS.

From Notes and Queries.
On the floor of Yalding Church, Kent, there is a memorial slab bearing this motto:

Ambrose Ward, son of
George Ward, Gent.
died March (15) 1673
aged 44.

NOW THVS. NOW THVS. NOW THVS.

The following is on the tomb of one named Hawarde (1655) in the church of Kingston-on-Thames:

Earth to Earth.
Ashes in Ashes lye, on Ashes tread,
Ashes engrav'd these Words, which Ashes read.
Then what poore Thing is Man, when any Gust
Can blow his Ashes to their elder Dust?
More was intended, but a Wynd did rise,
And fill'd with Ashes both my Mouth and Eyes.

In the Warrington parish churchyard is the following epitaph on one Margaret Robinson, who died in December, 1816, aged thirty-eight:

This Maid no Elegance of Form possess'd
No earthly Love dell'd her sacred Breast:
Hence free she liv'd from the Deceiver Man;
Heav'n meant it as a Blessing she was plain.

Much of the gravestone has fallen and crumbled away. The Christian name and parts of the surname and date have gone. The parish clerk, who has been connected with the church for many years, is certain of the name (Margaret Robinson) and of the date. He has shown me the register of Margaret Robinson of Penketh, buried December 29, 1816.

In the Workop churchyard I read the following curious bits of pietistic doggerel. They may deserve to be recorded in "Notes and Queries":

1. A sudden change I in a moment fell,
I had not time to bid my friends farewell.
Think this not strange; death happens unto all;
This day was mine; to-morrow you may fall.
2. How mortal fond of life us poor sinners be!
How few who sees my grave would change with me!
But, sinner reader, tell me which is best—
A tiresome journey, or a traveller's rest?

We note Italian testimony to Meredith's genius. A Roman critic declares that his portrait of Mazzini, in "Vittoria," is one of the most powerful historical studies ever attempted.



SAMUEL PEPYS.
(From the portrait by Sir Peter Lely.)

points of view, she evidently finds it likable, but she does not idealize it. "Pepys had not a great brain," she says, "any more than he had a great heart. His was the triumph, the apotheosis, as it were, of common sense—ability, indefatigable industry, ardent interest, all welded into a whole by the shrewdest, the most unflinching common sense."

Poverty-stricken youngster as Pepys was, he did not make his way unaided. His distant kinsman, Sir Edward Montagu, afterward Lord Sandwich, started him in life. His biographer thinks that it was possibly to this patron that Pepys owed his chance as a student at Cambridge. When as a boy of twenty-two he married pretty fifteen-year-old Elizabeth St. Michel the pair lived in a small room in Montagu's house, where, as Pepys recalled in later years, the little Huguenot bride "used to make coal fires and wash my foul clothes with her own hands for me, poor wretch! . . . for which I ought for ever to love and admire her, and do; and persuade myself she would do the same thing again if God should reduce us to it." Their hard times did not last very long. Kind Montagu took the young husband to sea with him as his secretary when he sailed to meet and to escort back to England the wandering King, Charles II. Pepys has set down his remembrance of the talk on shipboard of the returning royal exile, especially his story of his escape from Worcester, whereat the young man was "ready to weep." James, Duke of York, was most amiable to Montagu's relative, promising him his favor;—and not long after Pepys was made Clerk of the Acts, additional little offices furnishing some pretty pickings. He was not of the stuff that hunts for sinecures, however; he set his whole mind to learning the duties of

navy suffered constantly from lack of funds, for the King was careless and courtiers greedy, and there was a continual struggle to maintain the fleet in working order. Pepys tells us of his complaints to the King and his advisers in 1666 that the navy was in an "ill state"; that the debt was great and equally great the needed work; and that there was no money whatever for that work. He spoke frankly of the bad condition in which the fleet had returned from sea,—whereupon its commander, the King's cousin, Prince Rupert, arose in anger and flatly contradicted him. Pepys was polite in his answer but he stood by his guns; the prince muttered and growled, and then there was a long silence in the room ere the troublesome official bowed himself out. The sum of £100,000 was "absolutely necessary" for navy purposes then; the King would give only £5,000 or £6,000—and the next year the Dutch fleet came "burning and destroying" up the Thames and the Medway, where for lack of money most of the English ships "were partially dismantled, none were fully manned, and some were even laid up in ordinary." The money required had been spent on the pleasures of King Charles and of the harpies who surrounded him. Pepys was in agony and he heartily favored the subsequent Parliamentary inquiry into the unfortunate business of the fleet. He got together all his papers and office books and answered vigorously and openly every question put to him by the commission. Whoever was at fault, it was evidently not the hard-working and patriotic Clerk of the Acts. All men spoke well of him until the following year, when again a Parliamentary inquiry into the conduct of the Navy Board was held and again Pepys spoke in its defence—spoke for three hours and saved himself and his