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LITERARY CHAT.

AN INTERESTING INTERVIEW WITH MRS. FRANCES HODGSON BURNETT.

HER HOME LIFE AND PERSONAL APPEARANCE.

How a Poor Tennessee Girl Became a Famous Authoress—The Origin of "That Lass o' Lowrie's"—The Hero of "Lord Fauntleroy"—Her Methods of Writing, etc.

Special correspondence of the Gold Leaf.

NEW YORK, June 10, 1887.

The thousands of readers who have enjoyed the wonderfully clever tale of "That Lass o' Lowries," and more recently that beautiful child's story "Little Lord Fountleroy, have been destined to know but little regarding the personality of their author. Although one of the most popular of our women writers, her name is seldom encountered in the newspapers, save in a review of one of her books. She has persistently refused to give the public any idea of her methods of work or a history of her interesting literary career. Many staff correspondents and reporters of leading dailies have endeavored to see Mrs. Burnett, but in every instance have failed. I have heard of her, read many sketches about her person, have often severely criticised her works in my literary reviews, yet, had never had the good fortune of seeing her in person.

While in Washington recently, learning accidentally that Mrs. Burnett was at her home in K. street, I sent in my card. After waiting a brief time the rustling of a lady's garments were heard on the stairs, and soon Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett stood in the doorway. In appearance the famous author is about five feet two inches in height, fair complexion, wavy brown hair, with a most perceptible auburn tint which Tetian loved to picture; violet blue eyes, expressive and beautiful; a flexible, tender mouth, and a well formed counterance. She is intellectual and interesting, rather than beautiful. When excited, her face is strikingly handsome, because it is expressive of so much depth of feeling and receptivity.

Those who know her well say that in general conversation she is witty and bright, and shows the reverse of the earnest, pathetic being her writings lead one to imagine her. Her hair is worn in a coil low on her head, and the front is cut short and waved loosely. She is not thin, and her hands are noticeably plump and small. She was a striking figure, as she stood before me, in a light plush dress richly ornamented about the neck and sleeves with rare lace. She seems to exhibit as much artistic taste in her dress as she does in her literary work. According to her invitation I entered the parlor, a veritable art emporium. The paintings on the wall, the chaste statues which looked at me from every nook and corner; the harmonious blending of rich colors, all bespoke excellent taste and refinement. After a few moments of general conversation, I asked Mrs. Burnett if she would tell something about herself and her start in literature.

"Oh, I don't think that would interest any one, would it?" she laughingly asked.

"Very much, indeed," I responded.

She laughed pleasantly, and said she was born in Manchester, England, on November 24, 1853; where the first fifteen years of her life were passed, thus acquiring her knowledge of the Lancashire dialect and character. And thus she went on: "My father lived in a house in Islington square, the back yard of which extended to an alley on which were the homes of the working people. Through the bars of an iron gate, as a little girl, I used to watch the people go to and from their work.

"I was nine years old when I first saw the face of the young person I afterward idealized as 'That Lass o' Lowrie's,' working girls from the factory could at that time be known by a long, coarse apron, which they wore tied back to prevent their clothing from catching in machinery, and by a little shawl worn over the head. I looked from the window one day and saw a pale, handsome young girl knitting on a gray sock pinned to her waist. The children about her I noticed gave place to her and obeyed her as if she were their princess. Once afterward I saw her, when she was driven by a brutal man, with rough words and uplifted hand, into a cabin where she lived. The dignified air of the girl and her unusual self restraint I never forgot."

"Had you begun to write at this time?"

"Yes, I began to write at the age of 7, and my earliest recollections are of stories that I made out in my own mind. The dramatic parts of these stories I would go over and over to myself, feeling intensely every wave of sorrow or joy of the imaginary character. My dolls were grand ladies and gentlemen acting out a life drama, and the arms of an old sofa in my mother's room were the horses from which many of my doll ladies were thrown, to be gallantly rescued by the hero."

"When did you come to this country, Mrs. Burnett?"

"My father died when I was nine, and soon afterward my mother met with reverses, and at the solicitation of my uncle, a wealthy manufacturer, she came to this country with her children. There were five of us, two brothers and three sisters. Uncle had agreed to take the two boys into his employ, but it was war times and he became embarrassed, and mother decided to go on a farm near Knoxville, Tenn., where the boys could work. We grew poorer, and my sisters often urged me to send my stories to a publisher. I had written many and they thought them good."

"And you did send them?"

"Not at once; the question of postage was a serious one, and that had to be settled. My brothers ridiculed my literary productions and on many occasions, to tease me, would pretend to have found my manuscripts, and would quote most ridiculous things which they said were extracts from a new book about to be published by Frances Hodgson.

"When it was settled between my sisters and myself that a story was to be sent off, I was determined that my brothers should not know of it. One of my sisters helped me to gather wild grapes, which a little colored girl sold for us in the town, and with the money thus earned I bought stamps."

I was astonished to hear such a confession from her own lips. I could but contrast in my mind the elegant looking woman in her picturesque gala costume, with the young English girl who gathered wild grapes in East Tennessee for means to buy a few postage stamps, but I only said: "Where did you send your first manuscript?"

"To *Ballou's Magazine*, the editor of which wrote me a most flattering note offering to publish, but saying that he thought it hardly good enough to pay for, but I thought differently and asked for the return of my story."

"And then?"

"It went to *Godey's*, let me see that was in 1867—and I received a letter in reply to mine asking if it were original? The question was asked, said the editor, because it was a story of English manufacturing life and came from East Tennessee. I answered that of course it was original, and then he asked me to send him another, probably to test the truth of my answer. They were both accepted and I received a check for $35 for the two. This sum was quite satisfactory and seemed very large to me, I assure you."

"How old were you then?"

"I was fourteen."

"Had you any difficulty after that in selling manuscripts?"

"No, and I have always received liberal remuneration for my stories."

"What is your method of writing?"

"I hardly know how to answer you. I think of my story, and then I am eager to write it out. When I begin, it is easy to tell it. I write rapidly and steadily. Usually I have written from 9 to 1 o'clock, but my ill health has caused me to be less methodical than formerly."

"And which of your books do you like the best?"

"Oh, I like special characters in each of them; perhaps I care more for 'Haworths,' but," she added, with a charming smile, "none of my books can ever be so dear as 'Lord Fauntleroy,'" saying which she rose and took a photograph from the table, which she handed me to see. It was little Lord Fauntleroy himself, her youngest son, a lovely child, whose face and dress are accurately copied in the pictures of Lord Fauntleroy, and whose character is said to much resemble the young hero.

Mrs. Burnett was married to Dr. Burnett, a young physician of Knoxville, Tenn., in 1873, and soon afterward they went abroad, where he studied his specialty. It is said that her writings supported them in those years. Dr. Burnett is now a successful oculist. They have two sons. Mrs. Burnett replied in the affirmative when I asked if she intended to write a sequel to "Lord Fauntleroy," and picture her boy in adult life. She is devotedly fond of her children, and seems to be a careful housewife, if one may judge by the outward signs of an orderly and charming home."

"And will you remain permanently in Washington?"

"This is my home" she replied simply, "I hope to need no further change except in summer."

Mrs. Burnett looks young and is now 34 years of age. She has naturally a strong constitution, but has suffered from nervous prostration until lately, and shows it in her delicate face, though she is not frail in physique; on the contrary, she has a well rounded form. She is a fascinating and distinguished looking woman; one whom one would say was fond of society and likely to be much admired in it. No literary woman of this country has won her way to fame and eminence so rapidly as Mrs. Burnett, and if her writing faculty is not injured by ill health her best work is yet to be done. Indeed, she says she feels that she is yet to do it, and looks forward to the time when she can give herself entirely up to her writing again.

And thus, my wishes were realized.

A. ROSCOWER.

ONE FACE.

[Hannah More Kohaus, in Inter-Ocean.]

Amid the gleam and glare of footlights bright
One face alone beamed on my searchful sight;
One sweet, rare, beauteous face whose bloom
Filled to repletion that vast, crowded room,

I know 'tis truth that there were gathered there
Much youth and grace and beauty, passing fair,
But 'mid the glittering jet, pale plumes and costly lace,
I saw but one, to me, exquisite face,

'Twas said, so well I played the actor's part!
Ah, me! those words were burning in my heart,
And leaped through quivering lips, with soul replete;
I laid them, full of meaning, at her feet.

What though applause rang out both long and loud,
My only true reward, as low I bowed,
Was her glad face with proud, approving smile;
That did indeed my reeling sense beguile.

The flowers they showered upon me prostrate lay,
Till I bethought me that another day,
I'd bring them all to her whose presence fair
The inspiration gave to call them there.

Oh, lovely face! where soul all beauty lends,
What wonder that my heart none else commends;
In all this wide, wide world, where'er I'll go,
There is for me but one such face, I know.

And if I were in heaven, and she were there
Among that multitude of beings fair,
In all that radiant, heaven-perfected race,
There'd be for me but one angelic face.

Home.

[Edna (Kan.) Enterprise.]

Home! what a hallowed name! How full of enchantment is that word and oh! how dear to the heart! Home! It is the magic circle within which the spirit finds rest and refuge and love. It is the sacred asylum to which the care-worn heart retreats to find rest from the toils and inquietudes of life. Ask the lone wanderer as he plods his tedious way, bent with the weight of age, and white with the frosts of years, ask him what is home. He will tell you that it is a green spot in memory, an oasis in the desert, a centre about which the fondest recollections of his grief-oppressed heart cling with all the tenacity of youth's first love. It was once a glorious and happy reality, but now it rests only as an image on the mind.

Home! the name touches the soul and strikes every chord of the human heart, as it were, with angelic fingers. Nothing but death can break its spell. What tender associations are linked with this fond name of home. What pleasing images and deep emotions it awakens! It calls up the fondest memories of life and opens in our nature the purest, deepest, richest flow of happy thoughts and feelings. Next to religion the most ineradicable and deepest sentiment of the human heart and soul is the love of home. Every heart vibrates at the sound of the name. It binds up with a golden chain, a spell, which neither time nor change can break. The darkest villians which have disgraced humanity cannot neutralize it. Gray-haired and demon guilt will make its dismal cell the sacred urn of tears, wept over the memories of home, and these will sometime soften and melt into tears of penitence even hearts of adamant. Ask the little child what is home. You will find that it is all the world to him. He knows no other. The father's love, the mother's kiss, the sister's embrace, the brother's welcome, cast around home a halo of heavenly joy and peace and happiness, which makes it as attractive as the home of angels. Home is the spot where the child pours out all his complaints and is the grave of all his sorrows. Childhood has its sorrows and its griefs, but home is the place where these are soothed and banished by the soft lullaby of a fond mother's voice. Was Paradise an abode of purity and peace? or will the New Eden above be one of unmingled beautitude? Does not the love of home even touch our religious belief? Do we not call God our father, Jesus Christ our brother, and when we want to sum up our full conceptions of felicity do we not speak of our "Heavenly home?"

NORTHERN DEMIGODS UNDER REVIEW.

A Book That Makes the Fur Fly—What Donn Piatt Says of the "Saviors of the Country."

[Wilmington (N. C.) Star.]

Donn Piatt has a book just out that will be widely read and will be much talked about. In the North it will be savagely criticised, as it knocks down some of the popular idols and leaves them lying amid the rubbish. It is as bold, saucy, candid sort of a book, judging from some extracts we have seen, and it will make the idolaters of Grant and Sherman grind their teeth and spit their venom. He calls his book "Memories of the Men Who Saved the Union." It will be noticed that the author does not say "Who Put Down the Rebellion." Piatt has too much sense for that. Besides, as "Don Miff" says, none but the "underbred" speak of Southern rebels.

The truth of the war is gradually coming to light. The fair men in the North are beginning to tell the facts as they were. Piatt, Wilkinson, and Swinton to a considerable extent, tell the truth. The books heretofore written to glorify the North have teemed with falsehoods and perversions. Grant's book, the sale of which is so extraordinary, is a romance—a tissue of misrepresentation, truth suppressed, and exaggeration. Sherman's work is as fabulous as Baron Munchausen. These two men had an axe to grind. They had doubtful reputations to bolster and to do this they twisted the facts, suppressed the truth, manufactured numbers and invented occurrences.

Donn Piatt is a writer of striking qualities. He has the very style required in a dashing, slashing, eloquent book. He knows how to go through the Pantheon of Northern gods and distinguish between the false and the true.

Whom do you suppose he regards as the real saviors of the Union? The John Brown crowd with one voice believe Grant and Sherman of course. But Mr. Piatt knows better. He says:

"The monument to Lincoln has not yet been built. When it is, the column that holds aloft the form of our greatest man of that trying period, should have surpporting the base four bronze figures of Chase, Seward, Stanton and Thomas. And so will history in the hearts of the people group those to whom we owe our existence as a nation."

Our readers would doubtless like to see what the brilliant writer in the North has to say of Southern soldiers and their immortal leader. Here it is:

"For two years they kept an army in the field that girt their borders with a fire that shrivelled our forces as they marched in like tissue paper in a flame. How these men fought the world will never know, for it cannot be told. * * The North poured in its noble soldiery and they fought well, but their broken columns and thinned lines drifted back upon our capital with nothing but disaster to tell of the dead and dying, the lost colors, and captured artillery. * * But this violence spent its fury on the North. * * The Confederacy reached the zenith of its fortunes at the battle of Gettysburg. It went down as rapidly as it had risen, but it went down fighting."

Of Gen. Lee he writes:

"It is strange what magic lingers about the mouldering remains of Virginia's rebel leader. His very name confers renown upon his enemies. The pure white hands are folded over a heart that was so grand in its emotions that his life seemed that of a saint, and his deeds made so sacred a bad cause that a revolt rose to the dignity of a great war."

Piatt knows what a tremendous sham and counterfeit of greatness are the two soldiers Sidney Johnston whipped under the gunboats at Shiloh. We copy a portion of an interesting editorial we clip from an exchange on Piatt's book. It is from the pen of Mr. J. R. Randall, author of "My Maryland" and other well known poems. Mr. Randall says in his paper, the Anniston (Ala.) *Hot Blast:*

Thomas helped save the Union because, on two memorable occasions, at Chickamauga and before Nashvilie, he saved the army and the cause. "The Confederacy," says Col. Piatt, "was never so near success as at the time when Sherman's army took Atlanta and Grant was driving in the enemy at Richmond. It was to the Confederates the darkest hour that precedes the morn, only owing to George H. Thomas that morn never dawned."

It is a curious fact that the Southern cause was lost principally because of Lincoln, the Kentuckian, Stanton, the North Carolinian, and Thomas, the Virginian. Out of the South's own loins sprang the men who laid her low. It may be that, with perfect propriety, Col. Piatt might have added the name of Farragut, the Tennesseean, to his list of men who saved the Union.

Windell Phillips described Abraham Lincoln as "the son of poor people the white trash of the South spawned on Illinois." Who knows but in the South to-day, in some humble hut, the greatest man of the future sits a ragged little boy? Nothing could have been more unpromising than Lincoln's beginning.

Donn Piatt describes Lincoln as one of the homeliest and ugliest of mankind. His face was ordinarily dull, but, when roused, sparkled with fun and character. He hated abolitionists, especially Seward, and had no sympathy with the negro slaves, and yet policy compelled him to make Seward his prime minister and sign an emancipation proclamation. He had all of the "poor white's" hatred of the negro. He was coarse, tough, uncultivated, but full of wit and sense. No vicissitudes of war ever spoiled his meals or abbreviated his sleep. He was at first blind to the coming storm.

He read Artemus Ward's jokes at Cabinet meetings, called for a comic song when men lay dead or dying around him on the battlefield, and told the nastiest stories of his time; but he guided the ship of State serenely and delivered at least one short speech that cannot be excelled in eloquence.

His nature was not a charitable or forgiving one, and had "a cunning that was genius." His occasional acts of clemency, as Gen. Daniel Tyler showed, were dictated by crafty motives. Such was, by some freak, "the giant born to the poor whites of Kentucky." Although Col. Piatt leaves out not a wart or wrinkle or distortion in painting Lincoln, he accords him the highest place in the bloody drama of 1860-95. And yet, but for Wilkes Booth's bullet, as Guiteau's in the case of Garfield, Abraham Lincoln might have been dwarfed in meretricious history alongside Grant and Sherman.

Stanton was originally of a joyous disposition, the possessor of a hearty laugh and given to light literature. His imagination was his strong attribute. He startlingly changed when at the head of the War Department. He grew gloomy, saturnine, brutal. Col. Piatt dates this metamorphosis from the death of his first wife. Of all Democrats, in 1860, he was the most extreme, and Lincoln filled the measure of his contempt. His descriptions of the rail-splitting lawyer of Illinois would have done credit to the keeper of a chimpanzee. He put upon Lincoln the grossest professional affront, and yet Lincoln, for policy's sake, overlooked it. He could not be insulted. * * Upon ill health Col. Piatt saddles nearly all of Stanton's lapses from the true point of honor, and then covers his body with the excusing flag of his country, which, next to Lincoln, he is presumed to have maintained supremely, with a master mind and idomitable will. Of the case of Mrs. Surratt Col. Piatt is discreetly silent.

Chase was the ideal New Englander, the man of passion without sentiment. He was highly cultivated intellectually. He long debated whether the greatest criminals were in the churches or the penitentiaries. And yet he believed in revelation, seeing, however, only Christ crucified, and not the horrible crowd that did the deed. It was he who added the closing invocation to the Supreme Being that is found in the Emancipation Proclamation. The atheist Lincoln never thought of it. He was the godfather of the Republican party.

William H. Seward had no faith in the Constitution he swore to support. He regarded it as a weak superstition. Without pity for the poor slave and great liking for the master, he was an intense abolitionist from policy. He was the cynical tool of Thurlow Weed, upon whom Col. Piatt pours the seven vials of his wrath. Though a partisan of Weed he knew how to rise upon seeming servility. His connection with Weed was a sublime continuation of the coalition between Blifil and Black George. In some sense he was a moral monster. He believed in clever badness and the ability that came of worldly wickedness, but he was neither a lecher, a drunkard, a gambler or a thief. His wickedness was affected to keep Weed in countenance. He ridiculed Emancipation as "a puff of wind over an accomplished fact." He knew there would be a long war, but dissembled to disarm foreign intervention. He rejoiced when the South committed its cardinal blunder of not seizing the Capital and preventing Lincoln's inauguration, since the only defence was "Gen. Scott and the Marine Band." * *

Gen. George H. Thomas, the Virginia, is Col. Donn Piatt's ideal hero of the war. He was an unconquered man and over and over again saved the Union cause from disaster. Pure, powerful, modest, truthful, sagacious, valiant, devoid of false ambition, just, magnanimous, charitable, unresentful of slights—this is the real hero of the war and will be so disclosed as time proceeds. There was nothing mean about him. All was heroic and sublime, in shining contrast to Grant and Sherman, with their selfish greed and grasping natures.

And yet he died a neglected soldier, stung to the quick by printed lies. Seizing the pen to remonstrate, he died without making a stroke. "Death," says Col. Piatt, "put its hand upon his great heart, and friends found him at his table, his head resting upon his arms, all unconscious and the remonstrance unfinished."

The Kentuckian, who saved the Union, was assassinated and the North Carolinian, who saved the Union, died mysteriously while the phantom of Mrs. Surratt stood at his bedside. The Virginian, who saved the Union, was killed by newspaper slander, shot by some creatures who never saw a field of battle.

The Southern cynic might call this Retribution. We are content to let it remain in the phenomenal course of Fate.