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SOME PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS OF
SWINBURNE, LORD ROBERTS
WATTS-DUNTON, OSCAR WILDE
EDWARD WHYMPER, S. J. STONE
STEPHEN PHILLIPS

BY COULSON KERNAHAN

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FOREWORD

ONE of the subjects of these studies said in my hearing, that "Recollections" are generally written by people who have either entirely lost their memory, or have never, themselves, done anything in life worth remembering.

To the second indictment I plead guilty, but my best excuse for the publication of this volume is that I write while the first indictment fails. My memory is still good, and the one thing which seems most worth remembering in my life is my undeservedly fortunate friendships.

In writing of my friends and of those with whom I was associated, I am, therefore, I believe, giving of my best. I ought to add that these papers were penned for inclusion in a volume of frankly personal and intimate "Recollections." A work of that sort is the one book of his life in which an author is allowed some freedom from convention. That is why I hope to be pardoned should any passage,

letter, or incident in these pages seem too intimate or too personal.

The reason why the studies are printed separately is that the ship in which I hope to carry the bulk of my threatened "Recollections" (if ever that ship come to port) will be so heavily weighted a vessel, that I am lightening it by unloading a portion of the cargo at the friendly harbour of The Bodley Head.

To drop figurative language and to speak plainly, I may add that, though there is some attempt at a more or less finished portrait in some of my pen-pictures, that of Lord Roberts is no portrait, but merely a chronicle. His personality, at least, is too well known and loved to need either analysis or description.

The paper *When Stephen Phillips Read*, mere snapshot as it is of one aspect of his personality, was not written for the present volume, with which, indeed, it is hardly in keeping. I include it by the wish of Mr. John Lane who, years hence, will be remembered as the faithful friend, as well as the generous and discriminating admirer, of the distinguished poet, of whose work it is his pride also to be the publisher.

Mr. Lane was anxious—knowing that my friendship

with the poet was long and close—that I should write of Stephen Phillips as fully as I have here written of some others; but it is only under impulse that I seek to picture the inner self and personality of my friends, and I cannot do so while the sense of loss is comparatively new. In the case of two of whom I have thus written, many years had elapsed before I put pen to paper.

At his best—as the three friends who made such unexampled and such self-sacrificing efforts on his behalf, Sir Sidney and Lady Colvin and Mr. Stephen Gwynn, will, I think, agree—there was something approaching the godlike in Stephen Phillips. Of what was weak, and worse, in him I need not here speak, since, because he so loathed hypocrisy, he hid it from none.

One day I hope to show Stephen Phillips as he really was, and as not many knew him. I have heard him described as a man of brooding and morbid aloofness. There is truth in the description, but it is equally true to say that, at times, he could be as healthily jovial and unconstrained, as high-spirited as a happy schoolboy. His exquisite and extraordinary sense of humour was—I had almost written his "salvation," and that not only under success which, coming early in life, might well have

turned the head of a smaller man, but also in adversity which, when it came, was as crushing as his success had been complete. When this adversity, when tragic unhappiness, overtook him, he bore them with courage, and reproached no one except himself.

If as a poet he was at first overpraised, it is equally true that, towards the end, and since his death, the splendour, beauty and power of his poetry have often been underestimated. Time will set that right, and will rank him, I believe, as a true and, within his limits, a great poet.

That Stephen Phillips, the man, gave no cause for sorrow and concern to those of us who loved him, I do not maintain, nor would he wish me to do so, for no one was more ready to acknowledge his weaknesses—deeply and almost despairingly as he deplored them—and none suffered intenser agony of remorse for ill-doing than he.

Knowing him as I did, I unhesitatingly aver that his ideals and his longings were noble, and that the soul of the man was good. That all is well with him, and that he is at rest, I have no doubt. Never have I seen such fulness of peace and such beauty on the face of the newly dead, as when I knelt—to commend his passing soul to his Maker

—by the bed on which lay what was mortal of Stephen Phillips. All that was weak and unworthy seemed to have fallen away as something which never was, which never could be, a part of his true self. In death, even his youth returned to him. As he lay there, white-robed, and with his hair tossed boyishly over his forehead, he looked so young that one might have thought him to be a happy and sleeping boy-chorister, dreaming of the poet-mother whom he so loved, and to join whom in Paradise may not his soul even then have been hastening ?

C. K.

SAVAGE CLUB, LONDON.

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A. C. SWINBURNE

Had some old Pagan slept a thousand years,
To wake to-day, and stretching to the stars
Gaunt arms of longing, called on Venus, Mars,
June and Jove, Apollo and his peers;
And heard, for answer, echoing from the spheres,
"Thy gods are gone: the gods of old are dead.
It is by Christ thou shalt be comforted,
The pitying God who wipes away all tears."

Such answer had there come, deaf ears, in scorn
Had turned the Pagan, and deaf ears turn we
To other voices, on this April morn,
Since he who sang the sunrise and the sea
Shall sing no more. Deaf are we and forlorn,
The gods are dead, and dead is Poetry.

April 10, 1909.

I

SWINBURNE was furious.

I had lunched with him and Watts-Dunton at The Pines, and after I had smoked a cigarette with the latter, the author of *Atalanta in Calydon* had invited me upstairs to his sanctum, that he might show me the latest acquisition to his library—a big parchment-bound book tied with ribbons—the Kelmscott reprint of one of Caxton's books. He waxed enthusiastic, I remember, over the Rape of Danae. Then he took up the proofs of

an article on John Day which he was contributing to the *Nineteenth Century* that he might read some passages from it. To verify a quotation, he walked to his shelves in search of a book, talking volubly meanwhile, and turning, as was his custom, to look directly at the person whom he was addressing. Unlike Watts-Dunton, whose library was a witness to the catholicity of the owner's interests and of his tastes, Swinburne's library was comparatively small and select, for he was as exclusive in regard to the books he admitted to his shelves as he was in regard to the men and women he admitted to his friendship. Knowing exactly, I suppose, where the required volume was to be found, his hand went as confidently towards it—even though his face was turned away from it, and towards me—as the fingers of a musician go towards the keys of a piano at which he does not look. For once Swinburne's instincts played him false. Taking down the book without glancing at it, and still pouring out a torrent of words, he opened it, his eyes on my face, and shaking the forefinger of his right hand at me, said:

"Here it is! Listen!" and dropped his eyes upon the page.

To my astonishment his face suddenly crimsoned, the eyes that might once have been bright blue, but were now faded, and, in fading, seemed to have caught and retained something of the colour of the great seas and of the grassy fields upon which they have so often and so lovingly lingered, glowed with green fire like that we see in the eyes of an angry cat, and he flung the book away from him in a tornado of wrath. He had taken down the wrong

volume, an anthology, and opened at a page on which was printed a poem by the particular writer who, like the wearer of a red coat intruding thoughtlessly upon the domain of an angry bull, happened at that particular moment to be the subject of a poet's capricious wrath—for on occasion I have heard Swinburne speak with kindly, if contemptuous toleration, of a writer whose damnation in this world and the next he seemed at another time ardently to desire.

"Of all my imitators," he shrilled, literally quivering with the tempestuousness of his passion, "this fellow (mentioning a poet whose name I suppress) is the most intolerable. I claim—and you, I know, will admit the justice of the claim—that perhaps the most distinctive characteristic of my work in poetry is that I have taken old and hackneyed metres, and have tried to transform them from a mere jingle, and a mere jig-jig, into music. This pestilent ape has vulgarised what I have done by servile imitations of my manner and of my methods; but, what I had transformed into music, he has transformed back into the vilest and most jigging of jingles."

When a poet of Swinburne's eminence thus turns the searchlight of criticism upon himself, and seeks to lay bare, in a few pregnant sentences, what he considers the secret of his art and of his success, one must necessarily be interested and even fascinated. On this occasion, however, I was more concerned about the singular state of nervous excitability into which my host had worked himself than curious to draw him out by further discussion.

Sir James Barrie says somewhere that "Temper is a weapon which we handle by the blade," a tragic instance of the truth of which I had in mind at that moment. A certain distinguished writer, now dead, who like Swinburne was a good hater, and scarcely less excitable than he, had made, or imagined that he had made (the vagaries of the artistic temperament are many), a deadly enemy of a fellow craftsman and critic. Every adverse review of his work, or unfriendly reference to himself, which appeared in the public Press, he insisted on attributing, directly or indirectly, to the malignity of this supposed enemy. A not ungenerous man at heart, in spite of—possibly because of—his blaze of a temper and quickness to take offence, the distinguished writer in question had shown much interest in a struggling young author of his own nationality, and had not only assisted him financially, but had been at great pains to find a publisher for the lad's first book, and had importuned his friends on the Press to review the work favourably and at length. The first notice to appear was adverse in the extreme, and the distinguished writer instantly declared that he saw in it the hand of his enemy, who had sought to stab at him by damning the work of a young fellow known to be his friend and protégé.

Flinging the paper containing the review upon the ground, he stamped upon it, and about the room, working himself up finally into so furious a passion that it brought on a seizure from which he never entirely recovered, and that practically ended his career.

"Temper is a weaponwhich we handle by the blade."

This story I had only recently heard, and had good reason for believing. Seeing my host literally trembling and quivering in every limb with the intensity of the excitement, and of the anger into which he had worked himself, my one anxiety was to distract the attention of this representative of the proverbially irritable race of geniuses from the disturbing subject, and to soothe him back to his normal calm. Unfortunately for me, his deafness made my task difficult, but I chanced to hit upon a topic in which he was keenly interested, and, little by little, he quieted down, until I could see that he had talked himself out and was ready for the afternoon nap in which it was his custom to indulge.

Remembering that incident, and others like it within my knowledge, I ask myself how it is possible to judge men and women of genius—men and women to whose great brains the live blood rushes at a thought or at a word; whose passions are like a laid fuse, ready to take fire and to explode the mine at a touch—by the same standard which we apply to the cold-blooded, sluggish-brained, lethargic and perhaps more fortunate mortals to whom impulse is unknown, upon whom passion has no sway, and who rarely commit themselves to any expression or to any action, noble or mean, wise or indiscreet, without first of all carefully weighing the results and counting up the costs.

"It is apparently too often a congenial task," says George Eliot in her *Essay on Heine*, "to write severe words about the transgressions of men of genius; especially when the censor has the advantage of being himself a man of no genius, so that those

transgressions seem to him quite gratuitous; he, forsooth, never lacerated anyone by his wit or gave irresistible piquancy to a coarse allusion; and his indignation is not mitigated by any knowledge of the temptation that lies in transcendent power."

II

Of all controversialists (and he dearly loved a verbal encounter) to whom I have ever listened, Swinburne was incomparably the most crushing. He fought with scrupulous and knightly fairness, never stooping to take a mean advantage of an adversary, and listening patiently, punctiliously even, while the other side was making its points. But, when his turn came, he carried everything before him. Vesuvius in eruption could not more effectually overwhelm or consume the rubble around its crater than Swinburne could scarify or sweep away, by a lava-torrent of burning words, the most weighty arguments of his opponents.

So, too, with his conversation. When he was moved by his subject, when he talked in dead earnest, he did nothing else. He forgot everything. In the middle, or even at the beginning of a meal, he would lay down knife and fork, and turn to face his listener, quite oblivious of, or indifferent to the fact that his dinner or lunch was spoiling.

On one occasion I happened, half-way through lunch, to mention that I had in my pocket a copy of Christina Rossetti's latest poem, written in memory of the Duke of Clarence, and entitled *The Death of a First-born.*

Down went knife and fork as he half rose from his chair to stretch a hand across the table for the manuscript.

"She is as a god to mortals when compared to most other living women poets," he exclaimed in a burst of Swinburnian hyperbole.

Then in his thin, high-pitched but exquisitely modulated and musical voice he half read, half chanted two verses of the poem in question:

One young life lost, two happy young lives blighted
With earthward eyes we see:
With eyes uplifted, keener, farther-sighted
We look, O Lord, to Thee.

Grief hears a funeral knell: Hope hears the ringing
Of birthday bells on high.
Faith, Hope and Love make answer with soft singing,
Half carol and half cry.

Then he stopped abruptly.

"I won't read the third and last verse," he said. "One glance at it is sufficient to show that it is unequal, and that the poem would be stronger and finer by its omission. But for the happy folk who are able to think as she thinks, who believe as she believes on religious matters, the poem is of its kind perfect. Let me read that second verse again," and with glowing eyes, with hand marking time to the music, he read once more:

Grief hears a funeral knell: Hope hears the ringing
Of birthday bells on high.
Faith, Hope and Love make answer with soft singing,
Half carol and half cry.

The last line, "Half carol and half cry," he repeated three times, lowering his voice with each

repetition, until at last it was little more than a whisper, and so died away, like the undistinguishable ceasing of far-off music.

Laying the manuscript reverently beside him, he sat perfectly still for a space and with brooding beautiful eyes. Then rising without a word he stole silently, softly, almost ghost-like, but with short, swift steps out of the room.

III.

Though it was my privilege to count among my friends several personal friends of Swinburne—notably the late Theodore Watts-Dunton, Philip Bourke Marston, and the dearest and closest of all my friends, Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton—it was not until the first weeks of 1892 that I met him personally.

I was invited to lunch at The Pines, and the first thing that struck me as I entered the dining-room and took the extended hand, which was soft and limp, and had no sturdiness in the grasp, was the singular charm and even courtliness of his bearing. Unmistakably an aristocrat, and with all the ease and polish which one associates with high breeding, there was, even in the cordiality with which he rose and came forward to welcome me, a suspicion of the shy nervousness of the introspective man and of the recluse on first facing a stranger. It had passed in a few minutes, and I saw no trace of it at any of our subsequent meetings, but to the last his courtliness remained. I have seen him angry, I have heard him furiously dissent from and even denounce the views

put forward by others, but never once was what, for want of a better word, I must call his personal deference to those others relaxed. With him the proverbial familiarity which is said to breed contempt, bred only more consistent and insistent courtesy. To no one would he defer quite so graciously and readily, to no one was he so scrupulously courtly in his bearing, as to those who constituted the household in which he lived. On the occasion of this first meeting with him he talked with extraordinary animation, sitting up erectly in his chair and moving his body or limbs stiffly and jerkily. He had not long returned from his forenoon walk, and, if I may be pardoned so far-fetched a comparison, he was like a newly-opened bottle of champagne, bubbling and brimming over with the buoyant, beady, joyous and joy-giving wine of morning. Watts-Dunton, always generously ready to interest himself, and to endeavour to interest others, in the work of a young writer of ability, was anxious to talk about my friend, Richard Le Gallienne. He might as well, by making a stopper of his open hand, have tried permanently to prevent the overflow of the champagne bottle which I have used for the purpose of a fanciful comparison. The moment he withdrew his hand, the instant he ceased to speak of Le Gallienne, Swinburne, as represented by the newly-opened bottle, was bubbling over again about his walk. The wine of it was in his veins and seemed to have intoxicated him.

"There is no time like the morning for a walk!" he declared, turning to me with enthusiasm. "The sparkle, the exhilaration of it! I walk every morn-

ing of my life, no matter what the weather, pelting along all the time as fast as I can go; and it is entirely to my daily walk that I attribute my perfect health."

On hearing that I, too, was a great, as well as a fast walker, Swinburne looked me up and down challengingly, and said with a smile that was almost like a merry boy's:

"Yes! but I think I could outwalk you, and get there first, for all your six feet!" Then, turning to Watts-Dunton, he apologised playfully for having monopolised the talk, and said, "Now tell me about your young poet. His is certainly the most beautiful poet-face since Shelley's."

Watts-Dunton replied by reading some extracts from a "Note on Swinburne" which Le Gallienne had contributed to *Literary Opinion*, Swinburne listening with downbent head meanwhile. When Watts-Dunton had made an end of it, and Swinburne had expressed his appreciation, the latter inquired how I first came to know Le Gallienne, and learning that when I was acting as the Editor of the English edition of *Lippincott's Magazine* I had, in that capacity or incapacity, accepted one of Le Gallienne's first published articles, *The Nature Poems of George Meredith*, he asked if I knew Sir J. M. Barrie, who he considered had been much influenced by the author of *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel*.

"Only slightly," I answered. "I suggested, in fact organised a dinner to dear old F. W. Robinson, in whose magazine *Home Chimes* much of the early work of Barrie, Jerome K. Jerome, Zangwill, Eden Phillpotts, G. B. Burgin, and many others,

who have since come into their own, appeared. Jerome took the chair and Barrie the vice-chair, and the dinner was something of a record in the list of distinguished men present, and was, I believe, one of the few functions of the sort of which an account appeared in the *Athenæum*. It was there I first met Barrie."

"Robinson of *Grandmother's Money*," cried Swinburne in an ecstasy of enthusiasm. "You have mentioned the name of one of the very salt of the earth, and one of the dearest friends of both of us here. We contributed to the first number of *Home Chimes*. Watts-Dunton wrote a noble Sonnet of Greeting, and I printed my Sonnet *Near Cromer* there. His novels, I grant, though eminently readable, as the reviewers say, are not great. Unlike Dr. Gilbert's, they do not dovetail. Finishing one chapter, you are not restless and uneasy till you have read the next, and that is a fatal defect in a novelist."

Speaking of Robinson and *Home Chimes* reminded Swinburne of the fact that it was in that unfortunately named and defunct magazine that he had seen some of the best work of Philip Bourke Marston, the blind poet, concerning whom I had contributed an article to the current number of the *Fortnightly Review*. This article Swinburne had read and wished to discuss, for, whereas my friendship with Philip Marston was not of long standing, he had known the blind poet since the latter was a lad of fourteen, and on the day after Philip's death had written a memorial sonnet which was subsequently printed in the *Athenæum*.

Swinburne's remarks upon the subject of my article—though I need hardly say I have forgotten no word of what he said—I pass over, but what I must not pass over is the witness these remarks bore to his extraordinary memory and to his equally extraordinary method of reading. Reading, in fact, is not the word. Had he parsed the article, schoolboy wise, sentence by sentence, he could not more effectually have mastered it; had he dissected it, part by part, surgeon-like, he could not more completely have torn the heart out of the matter.

Obviously Swinburne could only have read the thing once, yet had I, the writer, been called upon, even while it was fresh in my memory, to pass an examination on this very article, I doubt whether I should have known half as much of it as he. Hearing him thus deliver himself upon a casual contribution to a periodical, which, by reason of his love and friendship for the blind poet with whom the article dealt, had chanced to interest him, I could understand how his single brain had been able to deal illuminatingly with so vast a volume of literature as he had from time to time passed under review. His power of concentration, and of pouncing, hawk-like, upon what seemed to him to be memorable or salient, as well as his ability to recollect all he had read, must have been extraordinary.

A more exhaustive summing up—not, I admit, of the evidence on both sides, but of the evidence which appealed to his individual judgment, his individual imagination, and his individual taste—I

have never heard. Prejudiced as he was, however, in favour of Marston, he would not go so far as Rossetti, for his last word on the subject was:

"When Gabriel spoke of Philip's poem, *The Rose and the Wind*, as 'worthy of Shakespeare in his subtlest lyrical mood,' he let his personal affection run away with his critical judgment, and his verdict must always be discounted by the fact that Philip was the aptest pupil in the School of Poetry in which Rossetti was the acknowledged master. Watts-Dunton is a much surer guide, and when he said that 'So perfect a lyric as *The Rose and the Wind* should entitle Marston to a place of his own, and that no inconsiderable one,' he said the true word, the deserved word, and the word which I do not think anyone will have the hardihood to dispute."

IV

When next I met Swinburne, nearly twelve months had gone by, and, in spite of the eager way in which at our first meeting he had talked of the men and women and things within his own mental horizon, I should not have been in the least surprised to find that he had practically forgotten me. I do not say this in any spirit of mock modesty, but because I remembered that, at that first meeting, I had mentioned, in the course of conversation, a book by a certain author who to my knowledge had been a visitor to The Pines on several occasions, and so must personally have been well known to Swinburne.

"Oh, really!" he said. "Yes, now that you

mention it, I believe that someone of that name has been so good as to come and see us. I seem to recall him. And I seem to remember hearing someone say that he had written something, though I don't remember exactly what. So he has published a book upon the subject of which we are talking. Really ? I did not know."

This was said with perfect courtesy, and without the remotest intention of administering a snub either to me or to the literary reputation of the writer in question. It meant no more than that Swinburne lived so apart from the rest of the world, had such power of detachment, and kept so habitually the company only of his books and of his peers, that the personality of the rest of us left no impression on him.

On this occasion, only Watts-Dunton, Miss Teresa Watts, his sister, Swinburne, and myself were present, and the talk turned at first upon William Rossetti, with whom, in his home at St. Edmund's Terrace, Regent's Park, I had spent an hour or two on the previous afternoon. Both Swinburne and Watts-Dunton were interested to hear news of their old friend whom both regretted seeing so seldom. They plied me with innumerable questions in regard to his health, his plans, even in regard to trivial details about his home life, not omitting mention of his sister Christina's beloved cat "Muff," and the red plush sofa on which Shelley was supposed to have slept, the night before his death, and that now stands in the library. Both my hearers were touched when I spoke of Rossetti's affectionate words about

William Morris, for whom, though "Topsy" (as he called Morris) and he had not met five times in twenty years, Rossetti to the last entertained the old affection. Rossetti's vivid recollection of the day of the funeral of Watts-Dunton's mother, some fifteen years before, when there was so terrible a blizzard that he could get no conveyance to Endsleigh Gardens—where he was then living—and had to fight his way home on foot in a blinding snowstorm, was naturally of special interest to Watts-Dunton. Much more was said, and many other questions were asked, upon which I do not propose here to linger, passing on, instead, to speak of the sudden flaming up of Swinburne at the mention by Rossetti of William Bell Scott as having once been a drawing master.

"Perfectly true! Perfectly true!" interpolated Swinburne angrily, "and a drawing master he remained to his life's end."

For the remainder of my stay he talked vivaciously, and here I should like to say that in all that has been written about his personality—his eccentricities, excitability and exclusiveness; his passionate love of the sea and of little children; the changes that his political views underwent; his chivalrous championship of his friends against all comers, and the savage onslaught upon Robert Buchanan; his sturdy patriotism, and his historic friendships—very little has been said of the lighter side of his nature. That he could wield in controversy the lash of satire and irony, and wield it mercilessly, more than one combatant has had cause to know, and there are alive to-day ancient

enemies of his whose backs must still tingle at memory of some of his onslaughts. But of his wit and humour in daily life and the sunny playfulness of his banter in conversation with his friends, one seldom hears. I have known him keep the table alive for an hour at a time by whimsical and deliciously humorous and caustic comments on the topics—political, literary, or artistic—of the day.

On this particular morning he was anxious to show me a review of *Kriegspiel*, that most remarkable novel by the late Francis Hinde Groome, son of the famous archdeacon, the intimate of Edward FitzGerald, with whom Frank Groome had himself been well acquainted as a boy.

With Groome—who, as my readers know, was, like Watts-Dunton and the late Charles Godfrey Leland, an accomplished student of Gipsy Life, Gipsy Language, and Gipsy Lore—I was myself on terms of friendship, and indeed had been of some small service to him in regard to the publication of *Kriegspiel*, knowing which, Swinburne was anxious to hear whether I thought the review could be used to assist the sale of the book, and so elected to go upstairs to his room to get it.

He returned with a face like that of a schoolboy intent upon mischief, and with a rolled up journal in his hand. After I had read the review of *Kriegspiel*, and proposed sending it on to the publisher, Watts-Dunton inquired, pointing to the roll which Swinburne was still holding:

"What have you got there?"

"To-day's *Graphic*," was the reply. "I noticed it sticking out of the pocket of your greatcoat,

hanging in the hall, and peeping inside saw that there was an illustrated supplement, *Poets of the Day*, so I wouldn't even look to see whether you and I are included, but brought it here that we might all go through it together. What heart-burning and hair-tearing there will be in the poetical dovecotes, in regard to who is in, and who is out! Why didn't you tell me of it before?"

"Because I didn't know anything about it," was the reply. "It was from Kernahan's coat, not mine, that you took it. We all pick each other's brains in Grub Street, but picking pockets is quite another matter."

Swinburne apologised, but held on to the *Graphic* tenaciously. Then he opened it, smoothed out the page, and ran through the pictured poets, cataloguing them, complimenting them or chaffing them upon their appearance or their poetry, even improvising suitable epitaphs for their obsequies in Westminster Abbey, or composing, on the spur of the moment, Nonsense Verses and Limericks that hit off with delicious humour or mordant irony the personal or poetical peculiarities of the different "bards," as he called them.

Now that he, and so many of these "bards" are, alas, gone, I hesitate to repeat in cold blood, and so long after, what was said on the spur of the moment, and among friends. But, tantalising as it may be to the reader, especially if that reader be a poet, and so possibly an interested party, to be told merely of witty sayings of which no specimen is forthcoming, I must hold my hand, as I have been compelled to hold it in other pages of these

Recollections. We have it on the authority of Mr. Clement Shorter that one must be indiscreet to be entertaining, and I agree with him so far as to admit that, in Recollections, the best must always be that which remains unwritten.

After Swinburne had exhausted the *Graphic*, I produced, from the pocket of the pirated greatcoat, yet another journal, to which a certain critic had contributed a somewhat feeble article upon the work and poetry of Swinburne himself. I read it aloud, to the accompaniment of ironic laughter on the part of Watts-Dunton, Miss Watts and myself, but Swinburne, though he had hugely enjoyed it, and had interpolated sly comments of exaggerated gratitude, said, when I had made an end and with a wave of dismissal :

" It is meant kindly, and when the intention is so obviously kind one must not be too ungenerously critical."

Thereafter we talked of Ireland, Swinburne having only recently learned or recently realised that I hailed from that land of poets turned politicians. I suspect that the fact of my nationality was responsible for much of his kindness to me, for, laugh at us as many Englishmen may and do, in their hearts they have a sneaking liking for men and women of Irish birth. I had said that I should be leaving soon after lunch, and after he had bidden me good-bye, and had retired for his afternoon sleep, he returned, not once, but two or three times, and with an impulsiveness which was almost Irish, to speak again and yet again of Ireland and especially of Irish poetry.

It had been my good fortune the night before to take in Mrs. Lynn Linton to dinner at the beautiful and hospitable home of Sir Bruce and Lady Seton at Chelsea, and Mrs. Lynn Linton and I had talked much of Ireland. Mentioning this to Swinburne, he said that he had once written to Mrs. Lynn Linton remonstrating violently with her about an article of hers on Ireland, and he had reason to believe that his words had not been without effect, as, since then, Mrs. Lynn Linton had come to think as he had on that question, and was of opinion that Gladstone, Morley and Harcourt ought to have been impeached for high treason. Reverting to books, he said that nothing so beautiful about Ireland had been written as the Hon. Emily Lawless's novel *Grania*, then fresh from the press. He had bought a number of copies to send to his own friends, as well as some to send to his aunt, Lady Mary Gordon, for distribution in her circle. He went on to say that his old friend, Dr. Whitley Stokes, had shown him some of the Irish songs which were sung to the tunes to which Tom Moore afterwards wrote his " mawkish and sentimental songs." One of these, Swinburne said, had since been reprinted in the *Academy*.

" And as poetry I can only compare it to the Book of Job—and what more superlatively splendid praise can I offer than that ? "

Here Watts-Dunton put in a word for Wales and incidentally for Scotland, which reminds me that I ought to say that Watts-Dunton's share in this, and in other conversations, was no less interesting, though less erratic and more considered than Swinburne's.

Switched off thus from Ireland to Scotland, Swinburne launched out into enthusiastic praise of the islands of Rum and Eig, the nomenclature of which, he said, was phonetically and fatally suggestive of a nourishing, if nauseous drink, not to be despised, he understood, after an early morning swim, and declared that the one thing which made him regret he was not a man of wealth was that he could not afford to yield to the desire of his heart, and spend half his time cruising in a yacht around the western islands of Scotland.

V

Perhaps the most treasured possession on my bookshelves is a volume in which Swinburne has inscribed my name and his own. The volume in question is his *Studies in Prose and Poetry*, and as, among the contents, there is an article devoted entirely to a consideration of the merits and defects of *Lyra Elegantiarum*, in the editorial work of the last edition of which it was my honour and privilege to collaborate with the original compiler, the late Mr. Frederick Locker-Lampson, I may perhaps be pardoned for referring to it here.

The fact that Swinburne was making *Lyra Elegantiarum* the subject of an important article (it appeared first in the *Forum*) was told to me when I was lunching one day at The Pines, and naturally I carried the news of the compliment which his book was to receive to Mr. Locker-Lampson.

"Compliment!" he exclaimed. "Yes, it will be a compliment. Any editors might well be proud

that the result of their labours should be the subject of an article by Swinburne. But pray heaven he be merciful, for I fear our expected compliment is like to turn out to be something of a castigation."

Mr. Locker-Lampson was not far wrong, for, when the article appeared, we found that Swinburne had as roundly rated the editors as he had generously praised.

I sent Swinburne a copy of the édition de luxe, a gift with which he was delighted, and indeed procured other copies to give to friends and relations, one in a binding of his own designing being, I think, for his mother. When next I was at The Pines, he inquired whether Mr. Locker-Lampson and I were pleased with his review.

"How could we be otherwise than pleased by any article upon the book by the author of *Atalanta in Calydon*?" I replied.

"But you were pleased with what I said?"

"Of course, but you must forgive me if I say that it was very much as if a schoolmaster had called up a boy out of the class, and, after lavishing undeserved praise upon him for good behaviour, had then taken him across his knee and thrashed him soundly for abominably bad conduct."

He dived among the litter of papers, reviews, letters and manuscripts upon the floor, for a copy of his article, and then read aloud:

"'There is no better or completer anthology in the language. I doubt indeed if there be any so good or so complete. No objection or suggestion that can reasonably be offered, can in any way diminish our

obligation, either to the original editor, or to his evidently able assistant Mr. Kernahan.'

"Doesn't that please you?" he enquired.

"Immeasurably," I said.

"And there is more of it," he went on, reading detached passages aloud. "'The editors to their lasting honour . . . the instinctive good sense, the manly and natural delicacy of the present editors . . . this radiant and harmonious gallery of song.' And so on and so on."

"Yes," I said, "it is those ons that I'm thinking of. Suppose we dip into them." Then I took the article from his hand and read as follows: "'If elegance is the aim or the condition of this anthology, how comes it to admit such an unsurpassably horrible example as the line—I refrain from quoting it—which refers to the "settling" of "Gibson's hash"? . . . The worst positive blemish—and a most fearful blemish it is . . . will unluckily be found, and cannot be overlooked, on the fourth page. Sixth on the list of selected poems, is a copy of verses attributed to Shakespeare—of all men on earth!—by the infamous pirate, liar, and thief, who published a worthless little volume of stolen and mutilated poetry, patched up and padded out with dreary and dirty doggrel, under the preposterous title of *The Passionate Pilgrim*. . . . Happily there is here no second instance—but naturally there could not have been a second—of such amazing depravity of taste.'

"In fact," I said, "your review of the book recalls to my mind the familiar lines by Bickerstaff, which are to be found in this very volume:

When late I attempted your pity to move
What made you so deaf to my prayers ?
Perhaps it was right to dissemble your love,
But why did you kick me downstairs ?

You remember Jeffery Prowse's lines about someone being ' problematically sober, but indubitably drunk ' ? " I went on. " The ' dissembling ' of ' your love ' in the opening sentences of your article may be ' problematical,' but the ' kicking ' of us ' downstairs,' and out of the door later on, is as ' indubitable ' as is the fact that the book is profoundly honoured by being reviewed by Algernon Charles Swinburne at all."

With that parting shot, at which he laughed heartily, I bade him good-bye and came away, to find on returning to my home, a letter from Mr. Locker-Lampson which, as it has no word that can be considered private, and deals with matters of general literary interest, as well as with some of the strictures by Swinburne that have been quoted above, I venture to append :

NEWHAVEN COURT, CROMER,
17th Oct.

DEAR KERNAHAN,

I have just been reading the *Forum* for October, and I think that altogether we may be satisfied with A. C. S.'s article.

I venture to think that he rather overrates Landor and underrates Calverley.

We should not have inserted ' Youth and Art ' [the lines by Browning referring to ' Gibson's hash ' to which Mr. Swinburne took such objection] or ' The Passionate Pilgrim ' or Croker's ' Miss Peel.'

We ought to have put in Pope's 'I know a thing.'

I remember talking to Tennyson about Dirce, and he said it was too classical for English taste. I do not think many people would care for it, but perhaps it might be added. Stygean *Set* is not a cultivated expression, not better than *lot*, and if Dirce was a shade it did not matter whether Charon forgot himself or not.

I really feel much obliged to Mr. Swinburne for whom I have sincere regard. Perhaps if you see him you will tell him of my obligation.

His article strengthens my decided opinion that the book is a *very* difficult one to edit. All the experts have different ideas about it. Lang, Swinburne, Gosse, Dobson, and Palgrave are all opposed.

I hope you are quite well.

Always truly,

F. L. L.

VI

In all my conversations with Swinburne, I cannot recall one instance of his interrupting a speaker. He would, it is true, go off at a conversational tangent, as when, talking of Francis Hinde Groome and Suffolk, he interpolated apparently irrelevant remarks upon the curious names of some Yorkshire villages, having presumably only discovered that morning that one of these villages bore the delightful name of "Beggar my Neighbour." But, though one could see by his flashing eye that the hounds of utterance were chafing and fretting to fling themselves upon the quarry, he invariably waited till the other speaker had made an end of it before letting

go the leash. To everything that Watts-Dunton said, then or at any time, he listened almost as a disciple might listen to a master, and again and again he urged me to use any influence I had with the author of *Aylwin* to induce him to give that then unpublished work to the world, and to allow his *Athenæum* essays to be collected and issued in book form.

"Only," said Swinburne at a white heat of enthusiastic admiration, "if every page, on which they were printed, represented a hundred pound bank-note; if the back and the sides of the cover were of the finest beaten gold—that would not be too costly a raiment for the noblest critical work, dealing with first principles, that has ever been given to the world."

That this was Swinburne's deliberate opinion of the value of his brother poet's and brother friend's work, and was not the expression of a moment's enthusiasm, I have reason to know, for he used similar expressions in my presence on many occasions. I observe, too, that Mr. James Douglas, in his book *Theodore Watts-Dunton, Poet, Novelist, and Critic,* quotes Swinburne as describing Watts-Dunton as "the first critic of his time, perhaps the largest minded and surest sighted of any age"—a judgment which, as Mr. Douglas reminds us, Rossetti endorsed.

Watts-Dunton, rumpling up his hair with one hand, tried to turn the conversation into other channels, but Swinburne was obdurate.

"You, who know Walter's magnificent, magician-like power of concentrating into the fourteen lines

of a sonnet what no other poet could have said with equal power and felicity in forty, will agree with me when I tell you what perhaps you do not know, for he never speaks of it himself. When he was a young man, he lost a manuscript book of poems of which he had no copy. By these lost poems the world is, I believe, as poor as if Gabriel Rossetti's early poems had never been recovered from his wife's coffin. It was an incomparable loss to literature, a loss which can never be replaced."

I did not know of these lost poems, for, intimate as I had been with Watts-Dunton for many years, he had never even hinted at their existence, or rather at their non-existence. But, except to admit the loss and to make light of it, he refused to be drawn either by Swinburne or by myself, and turned the conversation upon the former's *Ode to Music*, written, I think, for the opening of the Chicago Exhibition. But of this Swinburne, in his turn, refused to talk, averring that he had clean forgotten it —that a task like that, once completed, he never thought of again, and that his mind was full at the moment of his Tennyson Threnody.

On this occasion I saw yet another side of him. I had brought with me two bunches of exquisite flowers—arum lilies, lilies of the valley, snowdrops and some exotics—one for Miss Teresa Watts, one for Swinburne. A flower was to him as it had been to Philip Marston, the one unchanging and perfect thing in a changing and decaying world, as fair, as fresh and as immortal as in the days of our youth. In an ecstasy of delight, he took the flowers from my outstretched hand as reverently as the

communicant takes into his hands the consecrated bread of the sacrament, as tenderly as a young mother takes into her arms her new-born child. He bent his head over them in a rapture that was almost like a prayer, his eyes when he looked up to thank me for the gift alight and brimming over with thoughts that were not far from tears. For many minutes he sat holding them, turning them this way and that, too rapt in his worship to speak or to think of anything else.

Then he turned to Miss Watts with his courtly bow.

"As you have been as equally honoured as I, you will not think me robbing you if I carry my bunch away with me to put them in water and to place them in my own room. I want to find them there when I wake in the morning."

He rose in his quiet way, the flowers in his hand, bowed again to Miss Watts and myself and left the room. In a few minutes the door reopened, but only wide enough to let him slip through, and he stole, rather than walked, to the chair, where he seated himself among us again, almost as noiselessly as a card is shuffled back to its place in the pack.

VII

"Watts-Dunton writes poetry because he loves writing it," said Swinburne to me once. "I write poetry, I suppose, to escape from boredom."

There is truth in the statement, but there is more behind the statement than appears at the first glance.

New and incoming tides of poetry lapped at his feet each morning, and the incoming of each new tide of poetry was to him as fresh, pure, crystalline-sweet, and free, as is the tide that rolls in upon the shore each day from the vastnesses and the sweetnesses of the central sea.

Hence he gave himself up to it, plunged in it, sported in it, with the zeal and rapture of a boy. Had the call to think poetry, dream poetry, write poetry, plunge himself into poetry, come to him as part of a set task, had he been compelled, in the mood or out of the mood, to take up poetry as an occupation, he would have turned from it as the sea-loving swimmer turns from a stagnant pool. It would have been to him the " boredom " of which he had spoken, not the " escape from boredom."

I have said that the impression I formed of him after my first visit was that of a man who lived in a world of his own—a world which, so far as his body was concerned, was, with the exception of his experiences on and by the sea, bounded, for the greater part of his later life, by the four walls of his home, and by the limits of his daily walk, but which, in the imaginative and mental sense, was illimitable. Human and normal in passion, and in every other respect, as I believe him to have been (so far, that is to say, as genius, which by overbalancing one side of a man's nature, inevitably necessitates some underbalancing on the other, ever *can* be said to be normal), he had seemed to me, on the occasion of that first visit, a creature of other flesh and blood than ours, an elusive ethereal poetic essence, rather than a man of like passions to our own.

It had seemed to me as if the busy world, in which other men made love and married, begot children, bought and sold, laboured and schemed—though it lay outside his very door—was a million miles away from the monastic quiet of the book-lined room in which he lived and dreamed and wrote.

I do not say that it was so. All I say is that it had seemed so to me on that first meeting, but I am not sure that the impression I then formed was accurate.

I came away feeling as if I had been in the company of a creature living in an unreal world, whereas now I think that, to the man whom I had left behind in that book-lined room, life was infinitely more real than it is to us. I had left behind me, given over to ecstatic abandonment to the mood of the moment, and believing intensely in the reality and actuality of all which that mood called forth, or created, *a child at play with his toys*, for in spite of the magnificence and the maturity of his intellect (may I not say *because* of the magnificence and the maturity of his intellect ?) the child lived on and was alive to the last in Algernon Charles Swinburne as it lives in few others.

What he had meant when he spoke of writing poetry " to escape from boredom " was that he was a tired child turning for comfort, self-forgetfulness and consolation to his toys ; and to him (happy man !) even his life-work, even Poetry itself, was, in a sense, a toy. That was why to the last he turned to it—an old man in years, though I could never bring myself to think of him as old—with such eager and child-like anticipation. The child heart, which could exult and build up dreams around his

toys, remained; but his toys were changed—that was all. That was why he so loved and was so loved by children. They recognised him, bearded man as he was, as one of themselves. That was why he was so instantly at home with them, and they with him. That, too, was why he so revelled in Mr. Kenneth Grahame's *The Golden Age*—not with the mild reminiscent and ruminant interest and pleasure of a staid grown-up, chewing the cud of childhood, but with a boy of ten's actual and intense identification with, and abandonment of himself to the part he was acting, and with all a boy of ten's natural and innate love of fun and of mischief. I have seen him literally dance and caper and whistle (yes, whistle) with all an eager boy's rapture, over some new toy treasure-trove, in the shape of a poem, by himself or by a friend, a "find" in the shape of a picture, a print, or a coveted first edition, picked up, during his rambles, at a stall.

"Eccentricity of genius," you say?

Not at all. It meant merely that *his boyhood was as immortal as his genius, as ineradicable as his intellectual greatness.*

Warm as was my regard for Algernon Charles Swinburne the man, profound as is my admiration of him as a poet, I am not sure that to this child-side of him must not be attributed much that was noblest and most lovable in his noble and lovable personality, as well as much that was loftiest and most enduring in his work.

Of him we must say, as Mr. William Watson has so finely said of Tennyson, that he

> Is heard for ever, and is seen no more;

but in seeking, for the purpose of these Recollections, to conjure the living man before me, in striving to recall my conversations with him, and in remembering, as I always do and shall remember, his great-heartedness, I am reminded of what Watts-Dunton once said to me in a letter.

"You will recall," he wrote, "what Swinburne was remarking to you the other day, when we were discussing the envy, hatred and malice of a certain but very small section of the literary craft. 'Yes,' said Swinburne, 'but these are the intellectually-little writing fellows who do not matter and who do not count. The biggest men, intellectually, are always the biggest-natured. Great hearts go generally with great brains.'"

And I think—I am sure—that the saying is true.

LORD ROBERTS

"ORDERED OUT"

In Memoriam: Roberts, F.M., V.C.

DIED ON SERVICE, 1914

"When I was ordered out——"
Lord Roberts, in a letter to the writer.

Prouder to serve than to command was he :
" When I was ordered "—thus a soldier's soul
Answered, as from the ranks, the muster roll,
When came the call : " England hath need of thee."

At Duty's bidding, not by Glory lured,
For peace, not war, he strove ; and peace was his—
Not the base peace which more disastrous is
Than war, but peace abiding and assured.

Thereafter followed long, untroubled years,
Wherein some said : " See rise the star of peace,
The morn of Arbitration. Wars must cease.
Away with sword and shield—Millennium nears ! "

" *Keep shield to breast, keep bright your sword, and drawn !* "
Rang out his answer. " *On the horizon's rim*
I see great armies gather, and the dim,
Grey mists of Armageddon's bloody dawn ! "

Few heeded, many scoffed, some merry grew,
And " Dotard ! " cried, because, for England's sake
For whom his son lay dead, he bade her wake,
And a great soldier spoke of what he knew.

Yet spoke—distasteful task !—against his will ;
Death he had dared, but dared not silent be—
That were to England blackest treachery—
Wherefore he spoke : *his voice is sounding still !*

Even the while he spoke, the while they mocked
(With silent dignity their taunts were borne),
Europe, that laughing rose, as 'twere at morn,
At night, distraught, and in delirium rocked.

As the hung avalanche is suddenly hurled
Down the abyss, though but a pebble stirred,
So a crowned monster's will, a Kaiser's word,
Plunged into Armageddon half a world,

And Chaos was again. Crashed the blue skies
Above, as if to splinters Was God dead ?
Or deaf ? or dumb ? or reigned there, in His stead,
Only a devil in a God's disguise ?

Staggered and stunned, our England backward reeled
A moment. Then, magnificent, erect,
Flashed forth her sword, her ally to protect,
And over prostrate Belgium cast her shield.

Above the babel of voices, mists of doubt,
Rang forth his stern " To arms ! " England to nerve ;
Too old to fight, but not too old to serve,
Again he hears the call—is " ordered out."

" Roberts ! " the voice was Duty's, arm'd and helm'd,
" To France ! where India, greatly loyal, lands
Her stalwarts, and the bestial horde withstands
That raped and ravaged, burned and overwhelmed

" Heroic Belgium. Roberts, 'gainst the foe
No voice like thine can the swart Indians fire
To valour, and to loyalty inspire ;
Roberts ! to France ! " Came answer calm : " I go."

Nor once reproached : " I warned. You gave no heed,"
Nor pleaded fourscore years—" Ah, that I could ! "
He who had England saved, an England would,
Only of England thought, in England's need.

Then, where, on high, God captains legions bright
(On earth is Armageddon, and in hell—
May it not be ?—Satan leads forth his fell
And fallen hosts, the heavens to storm and smite ?)

Yea, from on high, from heaven's supreme redoubt,
Came the last call of all, far-sounding, clear;
God spoke his name; he answered: "I am here."
Stood to salute; again was "ordered out."

From Camp to Camp he passed—beyond the sun's
Red track, to where the immortal armies are,
Honoured of God, Hero of peace and war,
Amid the thunder-requiem of the guns.

C. K.

I

IT was a score or more years ago, and at the Old Vagabond Club (now merged into the Playgoers) that I first met Lord Roberts. When he became the President of the Club, we celebrated the event by a dinner at which he was the guest of honour and Jerome K. Jerome was the Chairman. As one of the original members of the Club and as a member of the Executive Committee, I was introduced to the great soldier. All I expected was a bow, a handshake, and a "How-do-you-do," but Lord Roberts was as good as to be more gracious and cordial than any great soldier, even if an Irishman, ever was before—so at least it seemed to me—to a scribbler of sorts, whom he was meeting for the first time. He was, in fact, so very kind that I was emboldened to ask a favour. Among the guests was a young officer in what was then the Artillery Volunteers. I knew it would immensely gratify him to meet the Field-Marshal, so towards the close of the conversation I ventured to say:

"It has been a very great honour and pleasure

Lord Roberts, to me to meet you and to have this talk. I wonder whether you'll think me trespassing on your kindness if I ask to be allowed to present an acquaintance of mine? He is a Volunteer Officer, a junior subaltern in the Artillery, and to meet you would, I am sure, be a red-letter day in his life. Would you allow me to present him?"

"Why of course. I shall be delighted. Bring him along by all means," was the reply.

The young man was accordingly presented. The reader will hardly believe me when I say that this Volunteer Subaltern of Artillery thought well to instruct the Master Gunner in the science of gunnery, and in fact to tell the Field-Marshal what in his, the Volunteer Subaltern's, opinion was wrong with the British Army.

Had Lord Roberts replied civilly but curtly, as some in his place would have done: "You think so, do you? Oh indeed! Very interesting, I'm sure. Good evening," and walked away, one could hardly have wondered. But no, he heard the other out with perfect courtesy, if with resignation, and in his own mind, no doubt, with amusement.

I reminded Lord Roberts of the incident when I came to know him better, and he replied with a laugh:

"I recall the matter perfectly, for I like to think I have a retentive memory. Of course I was, as you say, amused at the young man's assurance and confidence in his own military knowledge. Many very young men are prone either to too great diffidence or to too great assurance. I think, on

the whole, I incline to envy the young man with plenty of assurance, especially as I was disposed to be diffident myself at his age, as many of us Irishmen, for all our seeming confidence, are. But in any case I owed it to you, who had introduced him, as well as to myself, to treat him outwardly at least with courtesy and consideration."

That was Lord Roberts' charming and kind way of putting it; but to me, a young man myself when the incident happened, it was a lesson in fine breeding and in fine manners on the part of a great soldier and great gentleman.

I heard afterwards that the Volunteer Subaltern of Artillery, in speaking at a Distribution of Prizes to members of his corps, the very evening following upon his one and only meeting with the Field-Marshal, made frequent use of such phrases as "When I was talking to Lord Roberts about the matter," "What I told Lord Roberts ought to be done," and so on, no doubt to his own satisfaction and possibly with the result that the members of the audience were for the first time made to realise what a very important figure he was in the military world. Later on, however, some one who knew the facts wrote to him suggesting that the book for which the world was literally panting was a work from his pen entitled *My Recollections of Lord Roberts*, and when the Boer War broke out, a telegram, purporting to come from Lord Roberts, urging the Volunteer Artilleryman to take supreme command in South Africa, was dispatched to him by a playful friend. I have no doubt the young man, who will now be getting elderly, would be the first to laugh

at his own youthful self-confidence, and that if this paper should by any chance meet his eye, he will pardon me for thus, and for the first time, telling the tale in print.

Here is an instance of Lord Roberts' kindness to and interest in younger men. A Territorial Captain —his brother, an officer in the Regular Army, told me the story—was taking part in a Field Day with his battalion in Berkshire. His instructions were that he was to hold a certain line of country at all costs. It so happened that the attack developed in a direction which made it necessary for him hurriedly to advance his men to a flank and away from his reserves, whom he had posted where they were under cover and out of sight of the enemy. The young officer (he was a junior subaltern recently joined) in command of the reserves evidently had very mistaken ideas in regard to discipline. His idea appeared to be that discipline consists in staying where you were originally told to stay, like the "boy on the burning deck" in the poem of *Casabianca*, until receiving orders to another effect. Needless to say, the very reverse is true. Soldiers to-day are taught clearly to observe events and to act on their own initiative should unexpected developments arise. Seeing that the tide of war was drifting the Firing Line and its supports away from the reserves, the duty of the officer commanding the reserves was, not to remain stodgily where he had originally been placed (to do that would be less obedience to discipline than a breach of discipline), but while keeping the reserves directly in signalling communication with the Firing Line, as well as

under cover and out of sight of the enemy, so to alter his own dispositions as to be ready to reinforce and to reinforce quickly when called upon to do so.

This, however, he failed to do, and when his superior officer, finding himself hard pressed, signalled for the reserves, there was no reply.

Unfortunately there was neither a galloper nor a cyclist at hand to carry a message. "If I don't get my reserves here in half an hour," he said, "I shall lose the position, and the loss of this position may mean, probably will mean, victory for the enemy all along the line. It shan't be so if I can help it. Now what can I do?"

Hurriedly but keenly he scanned the rolling Berkshire down around him. Towards the north, on the whity-brown high road that curved outward in a huge half-circle from the point where he was standing, he saw a cloud of dust. "A motor! and coming this way!" he exclaimed. "Follow me, Brown." (This to a non-commissioned officer.) Stooping low, so as not to offer a target to the enemy, he sprinted northwards in a line which intersected the high road, at the nearest point which the oncoming car must pass.

The motor was almost on him as he reached the road, and leaping into the centre held up his hand. "I beg your pardon, sir," he said to the occupant, "but I'm in command of troops holding this position. We're attacked in force, and my reserves are some distance away along the road in the direction you have come, near a copse. I've signalled for reinforcements, but they have not kept up their communications. I have neither a galloper nor a cyclist.

If I get my reinforcements here in half an hour, I can hold the position. If I don't, I lose it, and losing it means everything to the enemy. I wonder whether you'd be so very good as to lend me your car for a few minutes to carry a message!" "With the greatest pleasure," said the occupant. Turning to the chauffeur he said, "You are entirely at this officer's disposal. I shall walk on, and you can pick me up when he has done with you." As he spoke he got out of the car, and as he lifted his cap, in response to the young officer's salute and hasty word of thanks, the latter recognised Field-Marshal Lord Roberts.

A day or two later, the great soldier was celebrating his eightieth birthday, and received a letter from the officer in question. It was to remind Lord Roberts of the incident, to apologise for the liberty the young officer had taken in stopping the car, to thank him warmly for his kindness, and to mention that the reserves had been brought up at the double and in time to save the position. The officer concluded by asking to be allowed to congratulate the Field-Marshal on attaining his eightieth year and to express the hope that the great soldier might be spared to celebrate many similar anniversaries.

A reply came almost by return of post.

DEAR CAPTAIN ——,

Many thanks for your letter and kind congratulations on my 80th birthday. I was delighted to be of assistance, and am even more delighted to learn the successful result of that assistance. You did the right and only thing in

stopping my car. If ever you are this way and disengaged, I hope you will call and give me the pleasure of making the further acquaintance of so good and resourceful a soldier.

Yours truly,

ROBERTS.

After my first meeting with Lord Roberts at the Vagabond Club, I saw no more of him—except for a mere handshake and "How-do-you-do?" at a military function—for many years. Then I chanced, in April, 1910, to contribute to the *London Quarterly Review* an article on National Defence. It was addressed specially to Nonconformists, one of the opening paragraphs being as follows:

I do not for a moment believe that Nonconformists are one whit less patriotic than any other great religious body, but I fear there is some misconception on their part—due no doubt to the intolerance and the exaggeration of some of us who champion the cause of National Defence—in regard to our aims and our purposes. It is in the hope of removing some of these misconceptions that I pen the present paper.

The article I did *not* send to Lord Roberts, nor did I draw the attention of anyone connected with the National Service League of which he was President to it. I did nothing directly or indirectly to bring it under anyone's notice. Yet a few days after the *Review* appeared, I received the following letter from him. The Rev. R. Allen of whom he

speaks, I may say, was, and still is, an entire stranger to me, and I to him :

ENGLEMERE, ASCOT, BERKS,
April 4, 1910.

DEAR SIR,

The Rev. R. Allen, a friend of many years' standing, has been good enough to send me a copy of the *London Quarterly Review* for this month, and to draw my attention to the first article, written by you on " How to Defend England."

I am *delighted* with the article itself, and with the very clear and convincing way in which you have put forward the advantages of military training and discipline for all our able-bodied young men as affecting not only the position of Great Britain as a World Power, but the individual moral and physical improvement of the men of the nation.

But I am still more delighted that such an article should be allowed to appear in a Journal published from the Wesleyan Book Room. I am quite at one with you in believing that Nonconformists are not one whit less patriotic than any other great religious body, but that there is some misconception on their part in regard to the aim and purpose of those who advocate universal military training for Home Defence.

My hope is that such misconception may be removed and that every Briton, whatever his position and whatever his sect, will realise the necessity for taking the defence of his country seriously.

Such articles as yours will do much to effect this, and to open the eyes of those who are now blind to England's needs and England's dangers before it is too late.

Yours truly,

ROBERTS.

Other men as greatly concerned in great matters as Lord Roberts was cannot always spare time to acknowledge and to show appreciation of work for a good cause, which is brought directly to their notice. Lord Roberts could find time, or perhaps I should say made time to write graciously about work the doer or the author of which had done nothing to bring that work under the Field-Marshal's eye.

Thenceforward, no work of mine in the cause for National Defence was allowed to pass unrecognised, once it came under the notice of Lord Roberts—and not very much happened of which in some way or another he did not come to hear.

He followed the doings even of the rank and file under his command, and, like the great leader of men that he was, he thought none of them too humble to be honoured and heartened before going into battle, by a message from himself.

For instance, I was asked to give an address on National Defence to a great gathering of men—some 1500 or more as it turned out—at an Assault-at-Arms in the Kursaal at Worthing. Naturally I never trespassed upon such a busy man's time by writing to him, unless in answer to a letter from himself, or unless I had something important of which to speak. So as I had not heard from Lord Roberts for some time, and had had no cause to write to him, I did not suppose he as much as knew of the Worthing meeting. Yet in opening the proceedings, the Mayor announced that he had just received a telegram from Lord Roberts to the effect that he was delighted I was to be the speaker

that night, and warmly commending what I had to say to the attention of the audience.

Such a message and from such a quarter, did more to assure me—an entire stranger to my audience—a welcome and a friendly hearing than I could otherwise have hoped to receive.

One "Lost Chord" in the way of an unread message from Lord Roberts I often regret.

In the company of Mr. Neville P. Edwards, then an organising secretary of the National Service League, I went as an Honorary Helper of the League on three caravan tours in Kent and Sussex.

The last tour closed only a week or two before the outbreak of war, and Lord Roberts, who followed our progress with the keenest interest, sent us on several occasions by letter or by telegram a special message to deliver in his name to our audiences. These messages directly warned his fellow-countrymen of the imminence of war and of the necessity for preparation. Remembering that in the towns we often had an audience of one or two thousand, and even in the villages, of some hundreds, there must be many persons who now recall the weightiness and the gravity of the great soldier's words. And I venture to add that no one whose privilege it was to hear them is likely ever to forget the equally grave, eloquent, and memorable words which fell from the lips of Mr. Rudyard Kipling—who by his single pen has done more to awaken the young manhood of the nation to England's needs than any other writer living or dead—when he presided over one of our meetings. It seemed to me one of the ironies of fate that in the

very caravan from which Lord Roberts' message and Mr. Kipling's words—both urgent warnings of imminent war—had been delivered, I should a few weeks later set forth as an Honorary Recruiting Officer in search of men to fight in the very war which Lord Roberts and Mr. Kipling had so faithfully foretold.

Before taking the chair and introducing Mr. Edwards and myself to our audience, Mr. Kipling said to me:

"I have just had a telegram from the Chief. He sent his thanks to me for presiding at the meeting, and asks that I convey his thanks to Edwards and to you. It is a very interesting and characteristic message, and I will read it when making my closing remarks to the meeting at the end."

It so happened that the latter part of the meeting was a Lantern Slide Lecture by Mr. Edwards. His last slide was a portrait of the King, seeing which some one started "God Save the King," and the audience, taking this as ending the meeting, broke up, and so we lost not only Lord Roberts' telegram, but Mr. Kipling's equally coveted closing words.

In nothing that I attempted for the cause that was so near to his heart, was Lord Roberts more keenly interested than in a controversy in the spring and summer of 1914 between an opponent of National Service, a very distinguished divine and scholar, and myself. My opponent's article was headed, "Why we cannot accept conscription," and mine "Why we support Lord Roberts." To

a reprint of the controversy in booklet form, published immediately after the outbreak of war, the Rev. John Telford, B.A., contributed an Editorial Foreword, in which he said :

" This discussion of the question of national armaments aroused extraordinary interest among a very wide circle of readers, as it appeared in *The Magazine of the Wesleyan Methodist Church* in March, April, May and June of this year. It also led to much correspondence in other journals. No one then dreamed of the terrible significance which events were to attach to the subject. . . . Here are Mr. Kernahan's words, printed last March, before any shadow had fallen across the sun. He says : ' I have studied the question at home and abroad with as much closeness as was possible, and the more closely I study it the more convinced I am that we are well within the possibility of one of the most awful disasters that ever befell a great nation.' In the light of today that is a remarkably verified warning."

This controversy, on account of the importance attached to the issues involved, Lord Roberts followed with exceptional interest. One passage of arms between my opponent and myself I may be permitted to quote, since it centres around Lord Roberts himself.

" Mr. Kernahan proves," my critic wrote, " that his special hero, Lord Roberts, is a truly Christian man. I would not question it for a moment. And yet—so terrible a power has familiarity with war to blind men's eyes to its satanic wickedness—it was Lord Roberts who uttered in our Free Trade Hall at Manchester the cynical

sentence about Germany's right to strike when her hour came, which shocked even convinced conscriptionists on his platform. I wonder whether Lord Roberts approved of the way Germany struck when her hour came in 1870! Strange indeed to hear a Christian man echoing the very sentiments of Bismarck, who was so proud of the cunning lie by which he tricked France into a disastrous war!"

My reply I venture to quote, since Lord Roberts was so good as to say it exactly interpreted his views and his position.

"Lord Roberts," I wrote, "claimed no such 'right' for any nation wantonly and wickedly to force war upon another. He pointed out that when one nation has decided, for reasons of her own (possibly because she is ambitious and determined to play a great part in history), to force a war upon another nation, which possibly may decide to resist, if only because she is determined to hold to her own —the policy is that adopted by Germany. That policy—as a student of history as well as a soldier, Lord Roberts had to admit that it is often a winning policy—is to strike at what has been called the selected moment, or in other words, when she (Germany) is at her strongest, and the nation which she wishes to overthrow is weak. It was because Lord Roberts knew that this was and is Germany's policy, and because he wellnigh despairs sometimes at the criminal apathy of his fellow-countrymen, and because he knows the consequences which must almost inevitably follow, that he felt compelled, under a terrible sense of responsibility, to speak out thus plainly. Had he, knowing what he does of

Germany's ambitions, intentions, and strength, and of England's ignorance, weakness, and unpreparedness, elected to maintain a cowardly and traitorous silence—then, and not till then, would he be guilty of the 'cynical' and 'satanic' wickedness of which my opponent speaks. . . . For the latter cannot deny that Germany has not gone back in her ambition or in her strength since 1870. On the contrary, she has gone on, not only in piling up an army which, as Mr. Churchill warned the nation, is now four and a half millions in number, but also in the most strenuous effort to create a vast Navy, which she has said must be, shall be, greater than ours. With her huge army she needs no Navy for defence. It is, as has been said, a 'luxury' and is meant for attack, whereas to us a Navy is a matter of life and death. And my opponent knows that we have twice held out the hand of friendship to Germany with proposals to stay this insane race in armaments, and that her reply was more battleships, more soldiers, more guns."

I do not print this passage here to reopen an old controversy, but because—though the details of Lord Roberts' proposals will, in the light of recent events, require considerable modification—the main issues raised by him abide and must be reaffirmed. Here in England we have short memories. It is possible that in the bewildering happenings of the war and in the breathless interest with which, at its end, the shifting of frontiers and the striking of great balances will be watched, there is the danger, if only from reaction, that we slackly fall back into our previous national inertia and

national apathy, and that the little puddles of party politics (dirty puddles for the most part) once again matter more to us than to hold sacred and inviolate the great Empire and these world-trusts which God has seen well to commit to Britain's charge.

II

I have heard many noble tributes paid to Lord Roberts, but I remember none which touched him more than that of Sir William Robertson Nicoll at the Whitefriars' Club. Lord Roberts was the club guest, that brilliant author and journalist Mr. John Foster Fraser being Chairman. I had the honour of being in the Vice-Chair.

The toast of Lord Roberts' health was seconded by Sir William Robertson Nicoll, who was meeting the Field-Marshal for the first time. The Whitefriars' dinner to Lord Roberts was merely a compliment to a great soldier. Not all of those present would have shared the views he entertained upon the question of National Service, and controversial issues were carefully excluded. Speaking, therefore, of Lord Roberts as a soldier, as a writer, and as a man, Sir William Robertson Nicoll, in one of the most graceful and generous tributes to which I have ever listened, assured him that by no class was our guest held in greater honour and affection than by the Nonconformists of this country and of every denomination. Lord Roberts knew that many Nonconformists differed from him in politics and upon the question of National Service, of which he was the acknowledged champion, and Sir William's

tribute so gracefully phrased, so obviously sincere in its expression of personal reverence and affection, touched and gratified him deeply.

That he felt a little sore, in regard to the misunderstanding of his views by some Nonconformists, is clear, I think, from a letter to me which lies before me as I write.

I happen to be a Churchman myself, but for the last eight or nine years before the war I devoted no inconsiderable portion of my time in trying to put the case for National Defence, as advocated by the Field-Marshal, before my many friends in the Nonconformist Churches, and I am glad and grateful to remember that, while not sharing my views, the editors of the great Nonconformist and Free Church organs gave me for the most part—there were exceptions—full opportunity to "state a case." In April, 1913, a prominent Free Churchman of Hastings asked me to speak at the Brotherhood meeting in that town. I told him frankly that I dislike public speaking, but would do so if I were permitted to speak upon the subject of National Defence. My friend demurred, but it was finally arranged that I should first give a reading from a tiny booklet of my own, and after that I should speak for twenty minutes on the subject that lay so near my heart.

As this was the first occasion upon which an address upon National Defence was to be given at a Brotherhood meeting, Lord Roberts took deep interest in the matter. He was, indeed, so anxious to remove any misunderstanding which existed that he sent me a special message to deliver in his name to my audience. The message was in the form of a

letter to myself, and as it puts his views very plainly, I print it here in full.

ENGLEMERE, ASCOT,
BERKS, 12.4.13.

DEAR MR. KERNAHAN,

I am very glad to learn that when asked to speak at the Brotherhood Meeting which is to take place in your own town on Sunday the 20th instant, you refused to do so unless you were allowed to deal with the question of National Service.

I know that there are many very well-meaning people who think that all military training is an abomination, and who are convinced that the life of youth in barracks is a continued round of vice and immorality of all kinds. I am prepared to admit that this certainly was true 200 years ago, and possibly it was true even at the beginning of the last century. During Marlborough's wars we know from history that the ranks of the Regular Army were filled up by taking broken men of all kinds, and forcing them into the service.

Any man who was really on his last legs—broken debtors, tramps and vagabonds, condemned felons —these and such as these were forced into the ranks. Can it be wondered if the Army got a bad name? and, as we know, there is nothing so hard to live down as a really evil reputation. But all this is changed and has been changed for some years. Have we not heard that the Chief Constable of the county of Cambridge announced, after the Army manœuvres, that although 45,000 men had been turned loose in the area for which he was responsible, yet not a single accusation for wrong-doing had been brought against any of these soldiers? Have not the papers just recently told

us that 10,000 men taken at random from the garrison at Aldershot have been billeted upon the inhabitants in the Hartley district, that these men were willingly received by the people of the district in their houses, and that again, in this instance, there has not been one complaint of misconduct? I must confess that I am pained, as well as surprised, when I find that those who profess, and profess very loudly, that they are followers of Christ, should still look upon the defenders of their country with such unchristian suspicion and dislike.

I should like you to read out to the meeting the following extract which occurs in an article on "Germany and the Germans," by Mr. Price Collier. It can be found in the current issue of *Scribner's Magazine*: "Military training makes youths better and stronger citizens and produces that self-respect, self-control and cosmopolitan sympathy which more than aught else lessen the chances of conflict. I can vouch for it that there are fewer personal jealousies, bickerings, quarrels, in the mess room or below decks of a warship, or in a soldiers' camp, than in many Church and Sunday School assemblies, in many club smoking-rooms, in many ladies' sewing and reading circles. Nothing does away more surely with quarrelsomeness than the training of men to get on together comfortably. Each giving way a little in the narrow lanes of life, so that each may pass without moral shoving. There are no such successful schools for the teaching of this fundamental diplomacy as the sister-services: the Army and the Navy."

Here is another extract [Lord Roberts then goes on himself] from a New Zealand paper which was forwarded to me by a friend in that Dominion: "The Rev. W. Ready, the well-known Methodist

Minister, took up a strong stand on the subject of military training at a meeting of the Society of Friends held in Auckland last week. Mr. Ready, who was present by invitation, was taken to task for some remarks he had made on the subject at the recent Methodist Conference. He thereupon explained to the meeting his attitude at the Conference. There was a time, he had told the Conference, when he held the opinion that camps were very immoral, and not places to which youths should be sent; but since he had had his sons attending camp as Territorials, he had been converted into believing that these camps were moral and were well-regulated. Every instinct of his moral nature went against compulsory training, but he had his sons in the Territorials. At this point there were cries of 'Shame' from the assembled members of the Society of Friends, but Mr. Ready stuck to his guns and declared that he was not going to advise his boys to break the law, merely because he objected on principle to military training. The Defence Act was now the law of the land, and he would no more advocate his sons breaking the law than he would support the English Suffragettes in their militant tactics. This is both sound ethics and common sense, and Mr. Ready has done the community a service in emphasising the duty of every man to obey the law. The change in his opinions on the subject of camps is interesting and gratifying, and should be noted by those who profess to be so concerned about their evil influences."

I sincerely hope that your discourse at the Brotherhood Meeting will help to dissipate the suspicions against military life and all connected with it.

Yours very truly,

ROBERTS.

Lord Roberts made some appreciative remarks about my own work in the cause of National Defence. These I took the liberty of omitting when reading his letter at the Brotherhood Meeting, and I venture to follow a similar course in transcribing it here. Otherwise this very interesting letter is given exactly as he wrote it.

That the great soldier should, in his eighty-first year, have been at the pains to write so lengthy a letter for one of the rank and file, merely, of his supporters to read at a meeting held in a Nonconformist Church, bears witness not only to Lord Roberts' unwearying energies, but also to his earnest desire, one might even say his anxiety, that the case for National Defence should be fully and fairly put before his fellow Britons of the Free Churches. Had he lived to see the magnificent response made by every denomination of the Free Churches—not even excepting some members of the Society of Friends—in sending the flower of its young manhood to the heroic task of subduing the monster of Prussian militarism, it would have added gladness and thankfulness to his "Nunc Dimittis," when within sound of the guns the hero-soul of the great soldier, patriot and Christian, passed into the presence of his God.

Here I may perhaps be allowed to say a word about a prayer which has often been attributed to Lord Roberts, and was in fact, soon after his death, printed by a leading religious journal as "composed by the late Lord Roberts and presented by him to the soldiers serving under his command in the South African war." The same prayer has repeatedly

been attributed to Lord Roberts in magazines, books and newspapers; and, as the correspondence which I have permission to quote will show, I shall be following Lord Roberts' own wishes in doing what I can, once and for all, to set the matter right.

Here is the prayer as given in the religious journal of which I have spoken:

Almighty Father, I have often sinned against Thee. Oh, wash me in the precious blood of the Lamb of God. Fill me with Thy Holy Spirit, that I may lead a new life. Spare me to see again those whom I love at home, or fit me for Thy presence in peace. Strengthen us to quit ourselves like men in our right and just cause. Keep us faithful unto death, calm in danger, patient in suffering, merciful as well as brave; true to our Queen, our country, and colours. If it be Thy will, enable us to win victory for England; but, above all, grant us a better victory over temptation and sin, over life and death, that we may be more than conquerors, through Him who loved us and laid down His life for us, Jesus our Saviour, the Captain of the Army of God. Amen.

The first appearance of the prayer as by Lord Roberts was, I believe, in a volume published some years ago at Kansas City, U.S.A., and edited by Dr. Stephen Abbott Northrop. It was entitled *A Cloud of Witnesses,* and I had from the first my suspicions about the prayer's authenticity, for, though I never think or thought of Lord Roberts as other than a deeply religious man, I found it difficult to think of him as one who elected to write prayers for publication. Mentioning the

matter to Lord Roberts himself one day, I found him very much mystified by what he heard. "I have not the slightest recollection of ever writing a prayer," he protested, and, later on, when writing on another matter, he recurred to the subject, asking me if I could send him a copy of the prayer. I did so, and received the following letter:

ALMOND'S HOTEL, CLIFFORD STREET,
LONDON, W.

(The only undated letter I ever remember receiving from Lord Roberts.)

DEAR KERNAHAN,

I am afraid I cannot claim the honour of writing the beautiful prayer you found in the *Cloud of Witnesses*—at least I think that is the name of the book you mentioned—but I am away from home and have not got your letter by me.

I thought it might have been the prayer General Colley wrote before "Majuba," but it is not.

I should like to find out where the author of the book got the prayer, and why he gave me as the writer of it. Yours very truly,

ROBERTS.

My reply was to send Lord Roberts the book to see for himself. He returned it, carefully packed and addressed in his own handwriting, with the letter which I here transcribe:

ALMOND'S HOTEL, CLIFFORD STREET,
LONDON, W., 1.2.14.

DEAR KERNAHAN,

I return *A Cloud of Witnesses* with many thanks.

It is very curious about the prayer. I have no recollection of writing it, and I am wondering how Dr. Abbott Northrop got hold of it. What a fine collection of sentiments and opinions he has got together!

Yours sincerely,

ROBERTS.

There, so far as I was concerned, the matter dropped, but when next I saw Lord Roberts he again expressed his curiosity in regard to the mystery by which the prayer was attributed to him, and his desire to unravel it, asking me if I heard any more of it to let him know.

That I was of some service to him in the matter was due more to chance than to any mystery-unravelling merit of my own.

A friend who is interested in religious work among soldiers lent me a little book, with the request that I would look into it and return it at my leisure. I opened the volume somewhat indifferently, and the first thing to catch my eye was the very prayer which Lord Roberts and I had been discussing. The book stated that it had been written by the late Archbishop Alexander for the use of the troops in South Africa, and so exactly expressed the faith and feelings of Lord Roberts that he had it printed at his own cost and sent it to his various officers, asking them to distribute it to all ranks under their command.

That the prayer was ultimately attributed to the Field-Marshal instead of to the Archbishop I diagnose thus: Even though "Tommy" was

specifically informed that it was composed by Archbishop Alexander—to "Tommy" that information meant little or nothing. But to "Tommy" the fact that it had been specially sent to him by his beloved "Bobs" would mean everything; and so, no doubt, it became known as "Lord Roberts' prayer," and as "Lord Roberts' prayer" it came to the knowledge of the editor of *A Cloud of Witnesses*, and was printed in good faith by him over the Field-Marshal's signature in that book, whence it was reproduced, equally in good faith, in other prints.

But to recur to the little book in which I found the prayer attributed, and rightly, to the Archbishop. With the owner's permission I sent it to Lord Roberts to see for himself how, in my opinion—and he entirely agreed with me—the mistake originally arose. His reply has a characteristic touch, for though he went out to South Africa to take supreme command, his soldier-like way of putting it is "When I was ordered out." Nor is the reference to failing memory without pathos to those whose smallest service to the cause he had so at heart—National Defence—was never forgotten by one of the greatest-hearted and most generous of men and of chiefs.

ALMOND'S HOTEL, CLIFFORD STREET,
LONDON, W., 15*th Feb.*, 1914.

DEAR KERNAHAN,

I cannot think how I could have forgotten about the prayer, for I myself asked the Primate to write it. I knew him well, and I was greatly struck

by the few verses he wrote about "War" shortly after the trouble in South Africa had commenced.

When I was ordered out I wrote to the Primate and asked him to write out a short prayer. I had some thousand copies printed and distributed.

I am so glad you discovered who the author was, although your doing so proves and makes me sad to think that my memory is not so good as I thought it was.

I am returning your little book. I wish I could have kept it.

Yours sincerely,

ROBERTS.

My next meeting with Lord Roberts was twelve days later, and was at No. 10 Downing Street, Mr. Asquith's official residence. Lord Roberts said, among other things, in the talk we had together on that occasion that he was very much indebted to me for the promptness with which I had unravelled the mystery about himself and the Archbishop, and went on gravely:

"I very much dislike having attributed to me a prayer which I did not write. It is not, as you know, that I do not believe in prayer. I have humbly asked God's help and guidance in everything that I undertook all through my life, and never more so than now, when I am an old man, and His call may be very near. But——" he hesitated a moment, "offering up a brief prayer —it may only be the words 'God help me!'— before going into action, or in some time of difficulty, is one thing; and sitting down to write, to print and publish a prayer for others is quite another

thing—for a soldier, at least. That was why I asked my friend the Archbishop to compose the prayer. It was for him, God's minister, a clergyman, not for me, a soldier, to do it."

Lord Roberts then asked me to advise him how best to prevent a recurrence of the error by which the prayer was attributed to him. I replied that if he wished I would on his behalf write to the editor of *A Cloud of Witnesses* pointing out the mistake, and suggesting that an erratum slip, making the correction, be inserted in all copies of the book already printed, and that the Archbishop's name replace that of Lord Roberts in any future edition.

"I shall be so much obliged if you will," he said gratefully. "May I leave it to you, and will you let me know when you hear from him?"

I promised to do so, and carried the promise into effect, sending Lord Roberts, when I received it, the editor's reply, in which, after expressing regret for the error, he undertook to do what was proposed. That Lord Roberts felt strongly about the matter, and was most anxious that the correction should be made, will be seen by the following letter which I received the morning after I had seen him at Downing Street:

ENGLEMERE, ASCOT, BERKS,
28th Feb., 1914.

DEAR KERNAHAN,

Thanks for your letter of the 21st instant and for sending me the little book, which I wish I could have kept. Would it be possible to communicate with the author of the book you sent me in which

the prayer of the Primate of Ireland appeared under my name? I should like to have this corrected, as it is quite wrong that I should have the credit of being the author of such a beautiful prayer when I was only the indirect means of it being written.

(Thus far Lord Roberts' letter was typed. Then in his own strong, clear, firm hand the letter concluded as follows): This letter was dictated before I met you yesterday. I only send it as a reminder.

I may just add in conclusion that "the little book" which he twice, almost wistfully, said he wished he could have kept (if I remember rightly it told, among other things, of his son's death in South Africa) was by the courtesy of the friend from whom I had borrowed it, reforwarded to Lord Roberts, and was by him gratefully and gladly acknowledged.

III

Even as an old man—though none of us who knew and loved him could ever bring ourselves to think of Lord Roberts as old—his energy was amazing, and the amount of work he got through was stupendous. His mere correspondence alone would have kept any other man going all day and with no moment to spare for the many great issues with which his name was connected. He accomplished so much because he practised in his own life the organisation, if not indeed the National Service which he preached to the nation—the organisation which, as he foresaw, would be so tremendous a driving power behind Germany when the time came for her

to force a war upon this country, the war which he even more clearly foresaw.

As an instance of how Lord Roberts systematised his days, I may mention that a friend of mine and his, recently returned from Bulgaria, wished to see him to put certain military facts before him, and also, if I remember rightly, to present him with some interesting trophies of the war which he knew the Field-Marshal would prize. He wrote accordingly and asked for an appointment. Lord Roberts replied by return of post, from Almond's Hotel, Clifford Street, W., to say that he was then in town but was returning to Ascot the following day. "If it will be saving you a railway journey—and I know what a busy man you are," he wrote, "to see me here at the Hotel, instead of at Ascot, by all means let it be so. But I am afraid, if not too early for you, it must be at 8.30 in the morning, as the rest of my day is already mapped out."

My friend smiled sadly in telling me the story. "As a matter of fact," he said, "8.30, and even later, generally sees me tubbing, shaving, or at best breakfasting, but if 8.30 was not too early for a great soldier who had turned 80 to be up, and ready to receive visitors, I could hardly plead that 8.30 was too early for me," and the appointment was made.

IV

Like most Irishmen, Lord Roberts had a keen sense of humour. At a public dinner at which I was present he had for a near neighbour, at the high table, Lord Willoughby de Broke, who in his after-

dinner speech had occasion to refer to the Territorial Army.

"If I am asked," he said, "whether a young man should join the Territorial Army, my answer is invariably 'Yes,' and for three reasons. The first reason is that he will, perhaps for the first time in his life, be coming under the salutary influence of Discipline, and I say confidently and without fear of contradiction, that there is no finer influence for a young fellow than that of Discipline."

These were sentiments that appealed to a soldier, and of the many approving cries of "Hear! Hear!" which came from all parts of the room, none rang more whole-heartedly than those of Lord Roberts.

"My second reason," went on the speaker, "is that the young man will thereby be discharging a patriotic duty. To-day we are all thinking too much of our rights, rarely of our responsibilities, and in my opinion every able-bodied young fellow, whether he be a duke's son, a draper's son, or the son of a costermonger, should be trained to defend his country against an invader in her hour of need."

Once again Lord Willoughby de Broke was expressing the very sentiments with which Lord Roberts' name was so closely associated, and again it was the great soldier's "Hear! Hear!" which was most emphatic.

"And lastly," concluded the speaker, "my reason for advising every young fellow to join the Territorial Army is that it gives him a chance of—getting away from his wife for a night or a week or a fortnight without putting him to the trouble of

hashing up some silly excuse which she knows is as palpably a fake and a lie as he does himself."

Thus far Lord Willoughby de Broke had spoken with such grave earnestness that we were all prepared as heartily to endorse his third reason as his previous ones. Lord Roberts had, in fact, raised his right hand above his left to applaud when the speaker sprang this surprise upon us, and especially upon those of us who were married, for the dinner was graced by the presence of Lady Willoughby de Broke and Lady Roberts, as well as by other ladies, the wives, daughters, and sisters of those present.

For one second the company, if I may so phrase it, "gaped" open-mouthed at the trap into which they had been led, and then there was a great roar of laughter, in which no one more heartily joined than did Lady Willoughby de Broke, Lady Roberts, and Lord Roberts himself.

I recall another and grimmer instance of Lord Roberts' sense of humour. On February 27, 1914, he introduced to the Prime Minister a Deputation whose object was to plead the cause of National Service. When I say that it was a great occasion I am not expressing my own opinion, but that of a distinguished member of the Deputation who has since written and published in pamphlet form an official account of the proceedings.

"Those of us who look forward," he writes, "to an early fruition of the hopes which we have cherished and the aims for which we have worked for so many years past, will ever look back upon Friday, the 27th of February, 1914, as a milestone, a red-letter day in the History of National Service.

"All the circumstances conspired to stamp a great occasion with the greatness which belonged to it. The importance of the Cause needs no illustration from the present writer. In Lord Roberts' well-known words, 'National Service means not only national safety; it means national health, national strength, national honour, and national prosperity.'

"The Deputation included some of the greatest and most distinguished men of the day, and—a most significant and important factor—the greatness was in nearly every case not inherited but achieved by conspicuous service in the fields of national and imperial endeavour. Three Field-Marshals, including our veteran leader who has carried our flag to victory with honour in Asia and Africa and served King and country for fifty-five years; two Admirals of the Fleet, one of whom was in command of the International Forces at Crete, and the other commanded the International Naval Forces in China at the time of the Boxer Rebellion; an ex-Viceroy of India, prominent representatives of the Church and of Nonconformity; the editor of one of the most influential weeklies, and representatives of literature, science, and industry."

Of this Deputation I was, by Lord Roberts' personal invitation and wish, a member, and as I arrived in good time I had an opportunity of some conversation with him in the ante-room before we passed into the Library in which Mr. Asquith was to receive us.

Seeing that one of his hands was swathed in bandages, I inquired the reason.

"Oh, that's nothing," he said smilingly. "I've

often been accused of having too many irons in the fire, but this time it is a case of having a hand too much in the fire. Just before leaving my hotel this morning, my foot slipped on the marble paving of the hall, and in falling forward and trying to save myself, I thrust my hand between the bars of the fire, and so got a bit of a burn. But it's a mere nothing, and of no consequence."

So far from being, as Lord Roberts said, a mere nothing, I have since heard that the burn was, on the contrary, excessively painful, but all through the lengthy and trying ordeal of introducing the different members of the Deputation, listening to, and commenting upon what was said, as well as listening to and replying to the Prime Minister's very important and brilliantly able speech, Lord Roberts was the alertest, cheeriest, and most watchful of those present. A burn that would have distressed and possibly have distracted the attention of a much younger man, and that must necessarily have caused constant and severe pain, the gallant old soldier, then nearing his 82nd year, treated as of no consequence and dismissed with a lightly uttered jest. To the last it was of others, never of himself, that he thought. On this particular occasion he was pleading (to use his own words) "as plainly as an old man has the right to speak, in the face of emergencies which would be far less terrible to him personally than to generations of Britons yet unborn." That was not many months before his death, and though I saw and talked with Field-Marshal Earl Roberts, V.C., on other and later occasions, I shall to my life's end picture him as I

saw him then—his burned and bandaged hand throbbing with pain of which he showed no single sign, thrust behind him and out of sight, as eloquently, gravely, almost passionately, he warned his hearers of a possible national disaster, the consequences of which would be " far less terrible to him personally than to generations of Britons yet unborn."

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON
AS THE "OGRE OF THE 'ATHENÆUM'"

IT was, I believe, George Meredith who, when the author of *Aylwin* changed his name from Theodore Watts to Theodore Watts-Dunton, spoke of him as "Theodore What's-his-name," and added that he supposed his friend had made the change lest posterity might confound Watts the poet with Watts the hymn writer.

Posterity, unlike Popularity—who plays the wanton at times and cohabits with unlawful mates—keeps chaste her house from generation to generation and needs no hint from us to assist her choice. Her task is to rescue reputations from the dust, no less than to "pour forgetfulness upon the dead," and none of us alive to-day may predict what surprise of lost or rescued reputations Posterity may have in store.

Over one of these reputations it is surely possible to imagine Posterity—I will not disrespectfully say scratching a puzzled head, but at least wrinkling in perplexity her learned brows. She will discover when straightening out her dog's-eared literary annals that the name of one writer, who at the beginning of the last decade of the nineteenth century had a great if somewhat esoteric reputation among his brother authors, was not then to be found in any

publisher's list, and for the somewhat curious and incontinent reason that at that time he had published no book. It was not until the publication of *Aylwin* that the name of Theodore Watts, or as he afterwards elected to be called Watts-Dunton, became widely known outside what are sometimes not very felicitously described as " literary circles."

To-day the tremendous issues of the Great War have, as it were, at a besom stroke of the gods, brushed into one box, to set aside, upon a shelf, all the trappings, furniture and paraphernalia of non-industrial arts and the like. Authors, artists, actors, musicians, professors, as well as the mere politician, are, and rightly, relegated to the back of the stage of life, and it is the soldier and the sailor—not by their own seeking—who bulk biggest in the public eye. But in those days of little things—the last decade of the last century—and outside the so-called " literary circle " of which I have spoken, there were other and outer circles of men and women much more keenly interested in books and authors, especially in the personality of literary celebrities, than would be possible in these days of tragic and tremendous world-issues. In such circles many curious, interesting and even romantic associations were woven around the name of Theodore Watts.

He was known to be the personal friend of Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, James Russell Lowell, Browning, and William Morris. Dante Gabriel Rossetti and George Meredith had in the past made their home with him at Chelsea, and Swinburne had been his house mate for many years at Putney. Rossetti

and Swinburne had written and spoken of him in terms which to outsiders seem extravagant, and both had dedicated some of their best work to him. It was also known that he had lived for some time with gipsies, was one of the three greatest living authorities on gipsy lore and the gipsy language, and had been the friend of George Borrow. This curiosity was stimulated by the fact that Watts-Dunton was then very rarely seen at literary dinners or functions, and was supposed more studiously even to avoid publicity than some of his craft who might be named were supposed to seek it. Cryptic allusions in the literary journals, reviews, and magazines to a long-completed novel, deliberately and cruelly withheld from publication, and tributes to his encyclopædic knowledge, did not a little to increase this curiosity.

Thus far the reputation which Theodore Watts had attained did not altogether belie him, but there was yet another "Theodore Watts"—"Watts of the *Athenæum*" he was sometimes called—who had no existence except in the imagination of certain small literary fry by whom he was popularly supposed to be something of a "Hun" of the pen, a shark of the literary seas, who preyed upon suckling poets. I remember a morning in the early nineties, when I was to lunch at Putney with Watts-Dunton and Swinburne. Being in the neighbourhood of Temple Bar about eleven, I turned in for a cup of coffee and a cigarette at a famous Coffee House, then much frequented by editors, journalists, poets, rising authors and members of the literary staff of the publishing houses and newspaper offices in or

around Fleet Street, as well as by members of the legal profession from the Temple and the New Law Courts.

At the next table sat a young man with long hair, a velveteen jacket and a flowing tie. He was talking so loudly to a friend, that unless one stopped one's ears there was no choice but to overhear the conversation.

"Seen this week's *Athenæum?*" he asked his friend.

"Not yet. Anything particular in it?" was the reply.

"Only a review of my poems."

"Good?"

"Bad as it can be—bad, that is, as four contemptuous lines of small print can make it. A book, which as you know represents the thought, the passion and soul-travail of years; a book written in my heart's blood—and dismissed by the *Athenæum* in four contemptuous lines!"

There was a pause too brief, if not too deep for tears. Then: "Theodore Watts, of course!" he added between set teeth. "I expected it. Everyone knows he is so insanely jealous of us younger men that he watches the publishers' lists for every book by a young poet of ability to pounce upon it, and to cut it up. What has he done, I should like to know, to give him the right to pronounce death sentences? Why, the fellow's never even published a book of his own.

"Shall I tell you why? He *daren't.* There is a novel called *Aylwin* written and ready to publish many years ago. Murray has offered

him a small fortune in advance royalties, I hear."

Again the young man paused dramatically and looked darkly around the room, not apparently from fear of his being overheard, but because he wished to invite attention to the inner and exclusive knowledge which he possessed. Then, in an ecstasy of anger that had a fine disregard for so trivial a matter as a confusion of metaphors, he thundered:

"Because that viper Theodore Watts has stabbed so many of us in the back anonymously in the *Athenæum*, he daren't bring out his novel. He can never say anything bad enough about a 'minor poet,' as he scornfully calls us, but he knows that some of us do a little reviewing, and that we are waiting for him to publish his book that we may get a bit of our own back."

It so happened that I had in my pocket that morning a letter from Watts-Dunton deprecating the slating in the *Athenæum* of a book of minor poetry by a friend of mine, and I remembered a sentence in the letter. "By minor poet, meaning apparently a new and unknown poet," which prefaced a generous if discriminating and critical appreciation of my friend's poems.

To intrude into a conversation between strangers was, of course, as much out of the question as to make known to others, without first obtaining the writer's permission, the contents of a letter written to myself. Otherwise I could easily have convinced the aggrieved young poet, not only that it was not Theodore Watts who had cut up his book, but that so far from being a literary Herod and a slayer of the

poetic innocent, he was, as a matter of fact, Herod's literary antithesis. As the writer of the letter and those mentioned in it are no longer with us, no harm can be done by printing part of it here:

"Like the rest of us, our Philip was mortal, and, like all of us, he could be harsh. I got Maccoll to let him review the minor bards. He was so terribly severe upon most of them that I was miserable; and I fear that I had to ask Maccoll to be chary in sending them to him, or at least I got M. to remonstrate with him for his extreme and unaccountable harshness. My sympathies, as you know, are all with the younger men. I love to see a young poet, or for the matter of that *any* young writer, get recognition.

"Robinson is the only fogey-brother I boom. Please tell him when you see him that if I do not write to him much, it is not because of any cooling of love. Thirty years ago he knew me for the worst correspondent in the world. The first letter he ever wrote to me (in sending me his novel *No Church*) I answered at the end of six months. I wish I could help it, but I can't. My friends have to take me with all my infirmities on my head."

"Our Philip," I may say, was Philip Bourke Marston, the blind poet; "Robinson" was F. W. Robinson, the novelist—both friends of Watts-Dunton and mine—"Maccoll" was the then editor of the *Athenæum*.

Had I known Watts-Dunton better (it was in the early days of our long friendship that this Coffee House incident happened), I should studiously have refrained from mentioning the matter to him. But thinking it would do no more than amuse him, I

was so unwise as to tell the story over the luncheon table. Swinburne was vastly amused, and rallied his friend gleefully for being what he described as "the ogre of suckling bardlings," but Watts-Dunton was visibly distressed, and took it so much to heart that I had cause to regret my indiscretion. He brooded over it and rumbled menacingly over it, recurring to the matter again and again, until lunch was over, vowing that it mattered nothing to him what this or that "writing fellow" thought of him as a fellow writer, but that to be credited with cruelty, and with willingness to give pain, to the younger generation, with whom he was so entirely in sympathy, was monstrous, was unthinkable, and was cause for cursing the day he had ever consented to review for the *Athenæum*.

Here are some extracts from another letter in which he reverts to the matter, and also incidentally gives an interesting peep of Swinburne and himself on holiday:

"The crowning mistake of my life, a life that has been full of mistakes, I fear, was in drifting into the position of literary reviewer to a journal, and not drifting out for a quarter of a century. I not only squandered my efforts, but made unconsciously a thousand enemies in the literary world whom I can never hope now to appease until death comes to my aid. Swinburne sends you his kind regards. He and I are here staying at one of the lovely places in the Isle of Wight, belonging to his aunt, Lady Mary Gordon. It is a fairy place. Her late husband's father took one of the most romantic spots of the Undercliff and turned the shelves of debris

into the loveliest Italian garden reaching down to the sea. It is so shut in from the land that it can be seen only from the sea. It puts, as I always say, Edgar Poe's *Domain of Arnheim* into the shade. I know of nothing in the world so lovely. I have been writing a few sonnets, but Swinburne does nothing but bathe."

This reference to Swinburne idling reminds me of another letter I received from Watts-Dunton, in which he pictures yet another great poet, Tennyson, hard at work and at eighty-two. The letter has no bearing on the matter immediately under discussion, but by way of contrast I venture to include it here:

ALDWORTH, HASLEMERE, SURREY,
26th Sept., '91.

MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

My best thanks for your most kind letter which has been forwarded to me here where I am staying with Tennyson. When I get home I will write to suggest a day for us to meet at Putney. Tennyson, with whom I took a long walk of three miles this morning, is in marvellous health, every faculty (at 82) is as bright as it was when his years were 40. He is busy writing poetry as fine as anything he has ever written. He read out to me last night three poems which of themselves would suffice to make a poet's fame. Really he is a miracle. This is a lovely place—I don't know how many miles above the level of the sea—bracing to a wonderful degree.

Ever yours,

THEODORE WATTS.

The accepted tradition of Watts-Dunton as what Swinburne had called the ogre of the *Athenæum* goaded him, was a bugbear and a purgatory to him to his very life's end.

"I see that you mention Mr. William Watson as a friend of yours," he wrote to me. "—— who was here the other day, greatly vexed and even distressed me by telling me that Mr. Watson is under the impression that I have written disparagingly of his work. Why, it was I who at a moment, when Rossetti refused to look at any book sent to him, persuaded him to read *The Prince's Quest* years ago, and got him to write to the author (for though a bad correspondent myself, I am exemplary in persuading my friends to be good ones). It was I who wrote to Fisher Unwin when he sent me *Wordsworth's Grave*, urging him to reprint *The Prince's Quest*."

Not once but a score of times he spoke to me of his high admiration of some of Mr. Watson's poems, as well as of poems by Stephen Phillips, John Davidson, Mrs. Clement Shorter, and many others of the younger poets. His championship of a certain other writer of verse who shall be nameless, involved him in a controversy which was like to end in a personal severance between himself and his correspondent.

"What you said about —— is specially amusing," he wrote, "because on the very morning after you were here I got a letter from an acquaintance abusing me to such a degree that I am by no means sure it will not end in a personal severance. And all because I was backing up one whom he describes as the most impudent self-advertising man that has ever claimed

to be a poet. According to the irate one, he has nobbled not only New Grub Street complete, but also sub-edits the —— and writes himself up there, and devotes his time to paragraphing himself in the ——! I pointed out in my answer that to me, who do not read these organs, save slightly, that the question of physical power and time presented itself and made me sceptical as to the possibility of a man who has produced many verses of late, and good ones to boot, being such a prolific rival of Mr. Pears and Mr. Colman, and as I said so in rather a chaffy way, my correspondent has taken umbrage. But oh, 'these writing fellows!' as Wellington used to call the knights of the ink-horn."

I suspect that it was what Watts-Dunton calls his "chaffy way" more than his championship of the verse-maker which gave offence to his correspondent. His humour was of the old-fashioned Dickensian sort, but heavier of foot, more cumbrous of movement, occasionally somewhat grim, and rumbling, like distant thunder, over a drollery. It is possible that what he meant for playful raillery at his correspondent's exasperation that a verse-maker should enter into a competition with Mr. Colman and Mr. Pears, by advertising his wares in the same way that they advertise mustard or soap, was taken as a seriously meant reproof. Be that as it may, for I did not hear the sequel of the controversy, Watts-Dunton, so far from being the ogre he was painted, was, on the contrary, something of a fairy godmother to many a young and struggling poet of parts. But even so he found that poets not of the first rank are hard to please.

Acknowledging the receipt of a presentation copy of verses from an acquaintance of his and mine, I chanced to inquire whether Theodore Watts was likely to review the book in the *Athenæum*. "God forbid!" wrote the poet in reply. "If so, he would simply make my unfortunate book the peg upon which to hang a wonderful literary robe of spun silk and fine gold. He would begin—omitting all mention of me or my book—with some generalisation, some great first principle, whether of life, literature, science or art, no one, other than himself or the God who made him, could ever be sure beforehand. In his hands it would be absorbingly fresh, learned, illuminative and fascinating. Thence he would launch out into an essay, incomparable in knowledge and in scholarship, that would deal with everything in heaven or on earth, in this world or the next, other than my unhappy little book. He would, in fact, open up so many worlds of wonder and romance, in which to lose himself, that I should think myself fortunate if, at the end of his review, I found my name as much as mentioned, and should count myself favoured were there as much as one whole line in the whole four page essay in the *Athenæum* about my little book."

I am free to admit that there is much that is true in the analysis of Watts-Dunton's method of reviewing, and that he was aware of this himself will be seen by my next quotation. It so happened that he did, much pressed though he was at the time, put his own work aside, and review the book in question in the *Athenæum*. He did so from the single desire to forward the interests of a young poet.

Here is part of a letter which he afterwards sent to me upon the subject. The review itself I did not see, but that it was upon the lines anticipated and failed to satisfy the poet in question is very clear.

"My method of reviewing, though it is well understood by the more famous men, does not seem to please and to satisfy the less distinguished ones; and this makes me really timid about reviewing any of them. But I believe, indeed I am sure, that my methods of using a book as an illustration of some first principle in criticism gives it more importance, attracts to it more attention than any more business-like review article of the ordinary kind would, because my speciality is known to be that of dealing with first principles.

"I am just off again to Dursley in Gloucestershire to visit, with Swinburne, his mother and sister, who are staying there.

"I think I have satisfied myself that Shakespeare's evident familiarity with Gloucestershire is owing to his having stayed at Dursley with one of the Shakespeares who was living there during his lifetime. The Gloucestershire names of people mentioned by him are still largely represented at Dursley and the neighbourhood, and the description of the outlook toward Berkeley is amazingly accurate."

But Watts-Dunton had cause to regret his kindly action in departing from his almost invariable rule to review only poets of the first standing, nor was he allowed, free from irritating distractions, peacefully to pursue his researches into Shakespeare's

associations with Gloucestershire. The poet wrote again—this time to complain that the review was not sufficiently eulogistic. Watts-Dunton sent me the letter with the following comment :

" What the devil would these men have ? I suppose we are all to fall at their feet as soon as they have written a few good verses and discuss them as we discuss Sophocles, Æschylus, and Sappho. Does this not corroborate what Swinburne was saying to you the other day about the modesty of the first-rate poet and the something else of the others ? "

After Watts-Dunton's return from Gloucester, I was lunching with Swinburne and himself at The Pines, and the aggrieved poet called in person while I was there. Swinburne, who hated to make a new acquaintance, and not only resolutely refused himself to every one, but, when Watts-Dunton had visitors with whom he was unacquainted, frequently betook himself to his own sanctum upstairs until they were gone, happened that morning to be in an impish mood. At any other time he would have stormed at the bare suggestion of admitting the man to the house. But on this particular morning he took a Puck-like delight in the hornets' nest which Watts-Dunton had brought about his ears by what Swinburne held to be an undeserved honour and kindness to an undeserving and ungrateful scribbler, and he wished, or pretended to wish, that the poet be admitted. He vowed, and before heaven, that a windy encounter between the " grave and great-browed critic of the *Athenæum* " and the " browsing and long-eared bardling with a grievance "

would be as droll as a comedy scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream.*

Watts-Dunton—outwardly smiling indulgently at his friend's whimsical and freakish mood, but inwardly by no means regarding the matter in the light of a jest, and not a little chafed and sore—declined to see the caller then or at any other time.

"Reviewing poets other than those of the first rank," he protested, "is the most thankless task on God's earth. The smaller the man is intellectually, the harder, the more impossible he is to please, and the greedier he is of unstinted adulation. Strain your critical sense and your generosity to the point of comparing him to Marlowe or Marvell, and he will give you to understand that his work has more of the manner of Shelley. Compare him to Shelley, and the odds are he will grumble that it wasn't Shakespeare, and I'm not sure that some of them would rest contented with that. I have tried to do a kindness, and I have succeeded only in making an enemy. That fellow is implacable. He will pursue me with hatred to the end of my life."

Yet in this particular instance, as in many others, Watts-Dunton's error had been only on the side of excessive generosity, for which Swinburne had taken him to task. Swinburne himself, it is idle to say, was a Jupiter in his judgments. He was ready to vacate his own throne and hail one poet as a god, or utterly to overwhelm another with a hurled avalanche of scorn. But at least he reserved his laudation and his worship, or else his "volcanic wrath" and thunderbolts, for his masters and his peers. He delivered judgment uninfluenced by the

personal element or by kindly sentiment and easy good nature. Watts-Dunton's good-hearted efforts to find something to praise in the work even of little men occasionally annoyed Swinburne, and drew the fire of his withering criticism upon the target of their work. It was the one and only thing upon which I knew them to differ, and in this connection I should like to add a word upon the relationship which existed between these two brothers in friendship and in song. Ideal as was that relationship, it had this drawback—that it tended to "standardize," if I may so phrase it, their prejudices upon purely personal, as apart from critical or intellectual issues.

Oliver Wendell Holmes speaks in *The Professor at the Breakfast Table* of "that slight inclination of two persons with a strong affinity towards each other, throwing them a little out of plumb when they sit side by side together."

This saying has a mental as well as a physical application. It is surprising, as I have elsewhere said, how entirely Watts-Dunton's individuality remained uninfluenced by his close association with two men of such strongly-marked and extraordinary individuality as Rossetti and Swinburne. One reservation must, however, be made. On certain personal matters the plumb of Watts-Dunton's judgment was apt slightly to be deflected out of line by Swinburne's denunciation. If Swinburne thundered an anathema against some one who had provoked his wrath, Watts-Dunton, even if putting in a characteristically indulgent word for the offender, was inclined—if unconsciously and against

his better judgment—to view the matter in the same light.

Similarly, if Watts-Dunton had some small cause of complaint—it might even be a fancied cause of complaint—and Swinburne heard of it, the latter's attachment to his friend caused him so to trumpet his anger as to magnify the matter to undue importance in Watts-Dunton's eyes as well as in his own.

In this way and in this way only the association between Watts-Dunton and Swinburne was to the advantage of neither, as the mind of the one reacted sometimes upon the mind of the other to produce prejudice and to impair judgment. I have no thought or intention of belittling either in saying this. It is no service to the memory of a friend to picture him as a superman and superior to all human weakness. But if Watts-Dunton was not without his prejudices and literary dislike, he was as a critic the soul of honour, and would not write a line in review of the work of the man or woman concerning whom he had justly or unjustly already formed an unfavourable opinion. As a reviewer he set a standard which we should do well to maintain. He was no Puritan. To him everything in life was spiritually symbolic, and nothing was of itself common or unclean. The article in which he dealt with Sterne's indecencies shirks nothing that needed to be said upon the subject, but says it in such a way as to recall Le Gallienne's happy definition of purity—as the power to touch pitch while remaining undefiled—for in all Watts-Dunton's spoken no less than in his written

word, there was no single passage, no single line, which one could on that score regret. In his poems the red flambeau of passion and the white taper of purity burn side by side on one altar. His innate love of purity, his uncompromising attitude towards everything suggestive or unclean, were among his most marked characteristics as writer and as man. It is well for literature that one of the greatest critics of our day should have thus jealously guarded the honour of the mistress whom he served. As a poet, he was of the company of those who, in his own words:

> Have for muse a maiden free from scar,
> Who knows how beauty dies at touch of sin.

He kept unsullied the white shield of English Literature, and his influence for good is none the less lasting and real because it can never be estimated.

WHY THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON PUBLISHED ONLY TWO BOOKS

WITH the exception of a few articles and poems reprinted in brochure form from encyclopædias and periodicals, Watts-Dunton in his lifetime published two books only—*Aylwin* and *The Coming of Love*. A successor to the former is in existence, and will shortly be issued by Mr. John Lane. Were Watts-Dunton still alive, the book would, I am convinced, even now be in manuscript. Part definitely with a book, that it might go to press, he would not, so long as a chance remained of holding on to it, to dovetail in a poem or a prose passage, perhaps from something penned many years ago, or to rewrite, amend, or omit whole chapters. I have seen proofs of his as bewildering in the matter of what printers call "pulling copy about" as a jigsaw puzzle. *Aylwin* itself represents no one period of the author's lifetime, but all his literary life, up to the actual final passing for press. This is true also of the new book *Carniola*, commenced, under the title of *Balmoral*, as far back as the days before Watts-Dunton left St. Ives to come to London, and, upon it, he was more or less at work up to the last. It takes its new title from the hero, who, the son of an English father and an Hungarian mother, was christened Carniola, after

the Hungarian town of that name where he was born.

The story I have not read in its entirety, but I know that Watts-Dunton considered the love interest stronger even than in *Aylwin*, and his pictures of life more varied and painted in upon a wider canvas.

The portions I have seen strike me—remembering, as has already been said, how little Watts-Dunton's personality and literary manner were influenced by any of the great contemporaries with whom he was intimately associated—as more Borrovian than anything else he has written.

This applies particularly to the conversations. Unlike some later novelists, who aim at crispness in conversational passages, by so "editing" what is said as to "cut" the inevitable and necessary commonplaces of conversation, and record only what is witty, epigrammatic and to the point, Watts-Dunton, like Borrow, sets all down exhaustively—the "give and take" of small talk, with all the "I saids" and "he saids" in full, and with illuminating little descriptions of the gestures and feelings of the speaker.

This gives a reality and naturalness to the dialogue, which we miss, for all their smartness, crispness, and epigram, in the work of certain more modern novelists, reading whom, one is inclined to wonder whether two ordinary mortals ever did, in real life, rattle off, impromptu, quite so many brilliant repartees, and clever epigrams, in so short a time.

Very Borrovian too are the open-air and nature-loving passages of *Carniola*, and the gypsy scenes of

which there are many. Readers of *Aylwin* will be interested to meet with a gypsy girl, Klari, drawn from real life, who, in Watts-Dunton's opinion, is more beautiful and more attractive than Sinfi Lovell of *Aylwin* and *The Coming of Love*. Those who had any personal knowledge, or have read the books, of one of the most fascinating and romantic figures and fine scholars of his time, the late Francis Hinde Groome, will find him drawn—Watts-Dunton believed faithfully—in the character of Stormont.

Another striking piece of characterisation is the wheelwright, Martin, whose "religiosity"—not to be confounded with the sincerity and unselfishness of a truly religious man or woman—is narrow, self-seeking, cruel, and Calvinistic.

"Make a success—and run away from it!" said a great and experienced publisher to me one day. Watts-Dunton made a great success with *Aylwin*. It will be interesting to see whether by following *Aylwin* with a second novel of Bohemian life—the character on which he has lavished most care is that of an Hungarian gypsy, a Punch and Judy showman, and the scene is laid partly in England and partly in Hungary—Watts-Dunton will prove the publisher to be, in this case at least, wrong.

The rest of Watts-Dunton's contributions to literature must be sought for in back numbers of the reviews, magazines and critical journals, and as Introductory Studies and Essays prefixed to reprints. That a man of his enormous and many-sided knowledge should apply himself to the craft of letters practically from early manhood to extreme old age, and leave only two

published volumes behind him, establishes surely a record in these days of over-publication. One cannot wonder that his readers and admirers should ask that he be more adequately represented on their bookshelves by the collection, into permanent volume form, of his many incomparable articles and essays. Until that is done, I may perhaps be permitted to point out that in a sense such a work already exists. The literary harvest of Watts-Dunton's life has been reaped, winnowed, and garnered into one volume which, indeed, is not only a volume but a Watts-Dunton library in itself.

I refer of course to Mr. James Douglas's *Theodore Watts-Dunton, Poet, Novelist and Critic*, a work which with all its faults, and it has many, is of remarkable interest. I do not say this because Mr. Douglas has told us everything that can be told, and much that it was unnecessary to tell about the life and work, the memorable friendships and the literary methods of the author of *Aylwin*, but because Mr. Douglas has with infinite care and pains harvested, sifted, winnowed, and gleaned the whole field of Watts-Dunton's literary labours. The portion of the book in which the fine gold of his writings upon Wonder as the primal Element in all religion; upon the first awakenings in the soul of man of a sense of Wonder, or perhaps I should say upon the awakening, the birth, of a soul in man by means of Wonder; the noble exposition of the Psalms, the Prayer Book, and of the Bible in its relation to the soul and to the Universe; the analysis of Humour; the portions that deal with Nature and Nature-Worship; with the methods

and Art of great writers in poetry and prose, and with First Principles generally—these in themselves and by themselves make Mr. Douglas's book unique.

I am not sure, indeed, that it will not eventually do more for Watts-Dunton's reputation as a thinker than the publication of a whole library of his collected writings. For in his contributions to the periodical Press, Watts-Dunton is apt sometimes to be diffuse. He becomes befogged, as it were, with the multitudinousness of his own learning. His "cogitations"—the word is more applicable to most of his work than "essays"—were so prodigious, branched out into such innumerable but always fascinating and pregnant side issues, as to bewilder the ordinary reader. In Mr. Douglas's book with such judgment are the passages selected, that we get the best of Watts-Dunton in a comparatively small compass, clarified, condensed, and presented with cameo clearness. It contains, I admit, not a little with which I would willingly away. I tire sometimes of gypsies and gorgios and Sinfi Lovell, as I tire of the recurrence of the double-syllabled feminine rhyming of "glory" and "story," "hoary" and "promontory," in some of the sonnets.

Mr. Douglas quotes Rossetti as affirming of Watts-Dunton that he was the one man of his time who with immense literary equipment was without literary ambition. This may be true of the Theodore Watts of Rossetti's time. It is not altogether true of the Watts-Dunton whom I knew during the last quarter of a century.

The extraordinary success of *Aylwin*, published,

be it remembered—though some of us had been privileged to see it long before—in 1898, when the author was 66, bewildered and staggered Watts-Dunton, but the literary ambitions which that success aroused came too late in life to be realised. Though a prodigious and untiring worker, he was unsystematic and a dreamer. The books that he intended to write would have outnumbered the unwritten volumes of Robert Louis Stevenson. Had Stevenson lived longer, his dream-books would one day have materialised into manuscript and finally into paper and print. He was one of those whom Jean Paul Richter had in mind when he said: "There shall come a time when man shall awaken from his lofty dreams and find—his dreams still there, and that nothing has gone save his sleep." Stevenson worked by impulse. His talk and his letters—like too plenteously-charged goblets, which brim over and run to waste—were full of stories he was set upon writing, but from which on the morrow he turned aside to follow some literary Lorelei whose lurings more accorded with the mood of the moment.

"I shall have another portfolio paper so soon as I am done with this story that has played me out," he wrote to Sir Sidney Colvin in January, 1875. "The story is to be called *When the Devil was Well.* Scene, Italy, Renaissance; colour, purely imaginary of course, my own unregenerate idea of what Italy then was. O, when shall I find the story of my dreams, that shall never halt nor wander one step aside, but go ever before its face and ever swifter and louder until the pit receives its roaring?"

But Stevenson worked of set purpose, and, for the most part, sooner or later in another mood, went rainbow-chasing again, hoping to find—like the pot of gold which children believe lies hidden where the rainbow ends—his broken fragments of a dream that he might recover and weave them into story form.

Sometimes he succeeded; sometimes he found that the vision had wholly faded, or that the mood to interpret it had gone, and so more often he failed. But Watts-Dunton was content only to dream and, alas, to procrastinate, at least in the matter of screwing himself up to the preparation of a book. In that respect he was the despair even of his dearest friends.

Francis Hinde Groome wrote to me as far back as January, 1896:

"Watts, I hope, has *not* definitely abandoned the idea of a Life of Rossetti, or he might, he suggests, weave his reminiscences of him into his own reminiscences. But I doubt. The only way, I believe, would be for some one regularly day after day to engage him in talk for a couple of hours and for a shorthand writer to be present to take it down. If I had the leisure I would try and incite him thereto myself."

I agree with Groome that that was the only way out of the difficulty. Left to himself, I doubt whether Watts-Dunton would ever have permitted even *Aylwin*, ready for publication as it was, to see the light. Of the influences which were brought to bear to persuade him ultimately to take the plunge, and by whom exerted, no less than of the reasons

why the book was so long withheld, I shall not here write. Mr. Douglas says nothing of either matter in his book, and the presumption is that he was silent by Watts-Dunton's own wish. This, however, I may add, that were the reasons for withholding the book so long fully known, they would afford yet another striking proof of the chivalrous loyalty of Watts-Dunton's friendship. One reason—it is possible that even Mr. Douglas is not aware of it, for it dates back to a time when he did not know Watts-Dunton, and I have reason to believe that the author of *Aylwin* spoke of it only at the time, and then only to a few intimates, nearly all of whom are now dead—I very much regret I do not feel free to make known. It would afford an unexampled instance of Watts-Dunton's readiness to sacrifice his own interests and inclinations, in order to assist a friend—in this case not a famous, but a poor and struggling one.

If his unwillingness to see his own name on the back of a book was a despair to his friends, it must have been even more so to some half-dozen publishers who might be mentioned. The enterprising publisher who went to him with some literary project, Watts-Dunton "received," in the words of the late Mr. Harry Fragson's amusing song, "most politely." At first he hummed and haw'd and rumpled his hair protesting that he had not the time at his disposal to warrant him in accepting a commission to write a book. But if the proposed book were one that he could write, that he ought to write, he became sympathetically responsive and finally glowed, like fanned tinder, touched by a

match, under the kindling of the publisher's pleading. "Yes," he would say. "I cannot deny that I could write such a book. Such a book, I do not mind saying in confidence, has long been in my mind, and in the mind of friends who have repeatedly urged me to such work." The fact is that Watts-Dunton was gratified by the request and did not disguise his pleasure, for with all his vast learning and acute intellect there was a singular and child-like simplicity about him that was very lovable. Actually accept a commission to write the book in question he would not, but he was not unwilling to hear the proposed terms, and in fact seemed so attracted by, and so interested in, the project that the pleased publisher would leave, conscious of having done a good morning's work, and of having been the first to propose, and so practically to bespeak, a book that was already almost as good as written, already almost as good as published, already almost as good as an assured success. Perhaps he chuckled at the thought of the march he had stolen on his fellow publishers, who would envy him the inclusion of such a book in his list. Possibly, even, he turned in somewhere to lunch, and, as the slang phrase goes, "did himself well" on the strength of it.

But whatever the publisher's subsequent doings, the chances were that Watts-Dunton went back to his library, to brood over the idea, very likely to write to some of us whose advice he valued, or more likely still to telegraph, proposing a meeting to discuss the project (I had not a few such letters and telegrams from him myself); perhaps in imagin-

ation to see the book written and published; but ultimately and inevitably—to procrastinate and in the end to let the proposal lapse. Like the good intentions with which, according to the proverb, the road to perdition is paved, Watts-Dunton's book-writing intentions, if intentions counted, would in themselves go far to furnish a fat corner of the British Museum Library. That he never carried these intentions into effect is due to other reasons than procrastination.

It is only fair to him to remember that his life-work, his *magnum opus*, must be looked for not in literature but in friendship. Stevenson's life-work was his art. "I sleep upon my art for a pillow," he wrote to W. E. Henley. "I waken in my art; I am unready for death because I hate to leave it. I love my wife, I do not know how much, nor can, nor shall, unless I lost her; but while I can conceive of being widowed, I refuse the offering of life without my art; I *am* not but in my art; it is me; I am the body of it merely."

Watts-Dunton's life-work, I repeat, was not literature nor poetry, but friendship. Stevenson sacrificed himself in nothing for his friends. On the contrary, he looked to them to sacrifice something of time and interest and energy on his behalf. Watts-Dunton's whole life was one long self-sacrifice—I had almost written one fatal self-sacrifice—of his own interests, his own fame, in the cause of his friends. His best books stand upon our shelves in every part of the English-speaking world, but the name that appears upon the cover is not that of Theodore Watts-Dunton, but of Dante Gabriel

Rossetti and Algernon Charles Swinburne. He wrote no Life of either, but how much of their life and of their life's best work we owe to Watts-Dunton we shall never know. Their death was a cruel blow to him; but, had he died first, the loss to Rossetti and to Swinburne would have been terrible and irreparable. Just as, to Stevenson, life seemed almost unimaginable without his art, so I find it hard, almost impossible, to picture Swinburne's life at The Pines, failing the sustaining and brotherly presence of Watts-Dunton. Often, when Watts-Dunton was ailing, I have come away from there with a sinking at my heart lest it should be Watts-Dunton who died first, and I can well believe that, long ago, a like dread sometimes possessed those who loved Rossetti. Cheerfully and uncomplainingly, Watts-Dunton gave his own life and his own life's work for them, and his best book is the volume of his devotion to his friends.

The sum of that devotion will never fully be known, but it was as much at the service of the unknown, or those who were only little known among us, as of the famous. He had his enemies—"the hated of New Grub Street" was his playful description of himself—and some of them have not hesitated to hint that he attached himself barnacle-wise or parasite-wise to greater men than himself for self-seeking reasons. Borne thither on their backs—it was sometimes said—he was able to sun himself upon Parnassian heights, otherwise unattainable; and being in their company, and of their company, he hoped thus to attract to himself a little of their reflected glory. The truth is that it was not their

abilities nor their fame which drew Watts-Dunton to Rossetti and to Swinburne, but his love of the men themselves, and his own genius for friendship. Being the men they were, he would first have been drawn to them, and thereafter have come to love them just as wholly and devotedly had they to the end of their lives remained obscure.

So far from seeking the company or the friendship of the great, he delighted in making friends in humble ranks of life.

Anyone who has accompanied Watts-Dunton on a morning walk will remember a call here at a cottage, a shop, or it may be an inn where lived some enthusiastic but poor lover of books, birds or children, and the glad and friendly greetings that were exchanged. If, as occasionally happened, some great person—great in a social sense, I mean—happened to be a caller at The Pines, when perhaps a struggling young author, painter, or musician, in whom Watts-Dunton was interested or was trying to help, happened to be there, one might be sure that, of the two, it would not be the great man who would be accorded the warmer greeting by Watts-Dunton and—after his marriage—by his gracious, beautiful and accomplished young wife. What he once said of Tennyson is equally true of Watts-Dunton himself. "When I first knew Tennyson," he said, "I was, if possible, a more obscure literary man than I now am, and he treated me with exactly the same manly respect that he treated the most illustrious people." Watts-Dunton who, in his poems and in his conversation, could condense into a sentence what many of us could not

as felicitously convey in a page, puts the whole matter into two words, "manly respect." Unless he had good cause to do otherwise, he, no less than Tennyson, was prepared to treat others with "manly respect," irrespective of fame, riches, or rank. That is the attitude neither entirely of the aristocrat nor of the democrat, but of the gentleman to whom what we call "snobbishness" is impossible.

One more reason why Watts-Dunton's contribution to "Letters" in the publishers' lists runs to no greater extent than two volumes, is that so many of his contributions to "Letters" took the form of epistles to his friends. The writing of original, characteristic and charming letters—brilliant by reason of vivid descriptive passages, valuable because used as a means of expressing criticism or conveying knowledge—is an art now so little practised as likely soon to be lost.

Watts-Dunton's letter writing was possibly the outcome of his habit of procrastination. To put off the settling down in dead earnest to some work which he felt ought to be done, but at which he "shied," he would suddenly remember a letter which he thought should be penned. "I must write So-and-so a line first," he would say, which line, when it came to be written, proved to be an essay in miniature, in which he had—carelessly, and free from the irking consciousness that he was writing for publication and so must mind his words—thrown off some of his weightiest and wisest thoughts. He protested throughout his life that he was a wickedly bad correspondent. None the less he wrote so

many charming and characteristic letters that, could they—and why not ?—be collected, they would add yet another to the other reputations he attained.

Swinburne, in recent years at least, did not share his friend's predilection for letter writing. The author of *Atalanta in Calydon* once said to me, almost bitterly, that had he in early and middle life refrained from writing and from answering unnecessary letters—unnecessary in the sense that there was no direct call or claim upon him to write or to answer them—there would be at least twelve more volumes by him, and of his best, in the publishers' lists. One letter which arrived when I was a guest at The Pines led Swinburne to expound his theory of letter answering. It was from a young woman personally unknown to him, and began by saying that a great kindness he had once done to her father emboldened her to ask a favour to herself—what it was I now forget, but it necessitated a somewhat lengthy reply.

"The fact that I have been at some pains to serve the father, so far from excusing a further claim by the daughter, is the very reason why, by any decent member of that family, I should not again be assailed," Swinburne expostulated.

"She says," he went on, "that she trusts I won't think she is asking too much, in hoping that I will answer her letter—a letter which does not interest me, nor concern me in the least. She could have got the information, for which she asks, elsewhere with very little trouble to herself and none to me. The exasperating thing about such letters," he continued, getting more and more angry, "is this. I

feel that the letter is an unwarrantable intrusion. Out of consideration to her father I can't very well say so, as one does not wish to seem churlish. But, in any sense, to answer her letter, necessitates writing at length, thus wasting much precious time, to say nothing of the chance of being dragged into further correspondence. It is one's impotency to make such folk see things reasonably which irritates. I have to suppress that irritation, and that results in further irritation. I am irritated with myself for being irritated, for not taking things philosophically as Watts-Dunton does, as well as irritated with her, and the result is the spoiling of a morning's work. She will say perhaps, and you may even say, 'It is only one letter you are asked to write.' Quite so. Not much, perhaps, to make a fuss about. But" (he pounded the table with clenched fist angrily) "multiply that one person by the many who so write, and the net total works out to an appalling waste of time."

My reply was to remind him of N. P. Willis's protest that to ask a busy author to write an unnecessary letter was like asking a postman to go for a ten miles' walk—to which I added, "when he has taken his boots off." Swinburne had never heard the saying, and, with characteristic veering of the weather-vane of his mood, forgot alike his letter-writing lady and his own irritation, in his delight at a fellow sufferer's happy hit.

"Capital!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands together gleefully. "Capital! The worm has turned, and shows that, worm as he is, he is not without a sting in his tail!"

In his later years Swinburne wrote few letters except to a relative, a very intimate friend, or upon some pressing business. The uninvited correspondent he rarely answered at all. For every letter that Swinburne received, Watts-Dunton probably received six, and sooner or later he answered all. The amount of time that went in letters, which in no way concerned his own work, or his own interests, and were penned only out of kindness of heart, was appalling. Had he refrained from writing letters intended to hearten or to help some friend or some young writer, or to soften a disappointment, the books that are lost to us—a Life of Rossetti, for instance—might well be to the good. If a book by a friend happened to be badly slated in a critical journal—and no calamity to a friend is borne with more resignation and even cheerfulness by some of us who "write" than a bad review of a friend's book—Watts-Dunton, if he chanced to see the slating, would put work aside, and sit down then and there to indite to that friend a letter which helped and heartened him or her much more than the slating had depressed. I have myself had letters from fellow authors who told me they were moved to express sympathy or indignation about this or that bad review of one of my little books—the only effect of their letter being to rub salt into the wound, and to make one feel how widely one's literary nakedness or even literary sinning had been proclaimed in the market place. Watts-Dunton's letters not only made one feel that the review in question mattered nothing, but he would at the same time find something to say about the merits of the work

under review, which not only took the gall out of the unfriendly critic's ink, but had the effect of setting one newly at work, cheered, relieved, and nerved to fresh effort.

I do not quote here any of these letters, as they are concerned only with my own small writings, and so would be of no interest to the reader. Instead, let me quote one I received from him on another subject. A sister of mine sent me a sonnet in memory of a dead poet, a friend of Watts-Dunton's and mine, and, having occasion to write to him on another matter, I enclosed it without comment. Almost by return of post came the following note, in which he was at the pains, unasked, to give a young writer the benefit of his weighty criticism and encouragement:

"My thanks for sending me your sister's lovely sonnet. I had no idea that she was a genuine poet. It is only in the seventh line where I see an opening for improvement.

To *a* great/darkness and/in a/great light.

It is an error to suppose that when the old scansion by quantity gave place to scansion by accent, the quantitative demands upon a verse became abrogated. A great deal of attention to quantity is apparent in every first-rate line—

The sleepless soul that perished in its prime,

where by making the accent and the quantity meet (and quantity, I need not remind you, is a matter of consonants quite as much as of vowels) all the strength that can be got into an iambic English verse is fixed there. Although, of course, it would make a passage monotonous if in every instance

quantity and accent were made to meet, those who aim at the best versification give great attention to it."

This is one instance only out of many of his interest in a young writer who was then personally unknown to him; but in turning over for the purpose of this article those letters of his, which I have preserved, I have found so many similar reminders of his great-heartedness that I am moved once again to apply to Theodore Watts-Dunton the words in which many years ago I dedicated a book to him. They are from James Payn's *Literary Recollections*. "My experience of men of letters is that for kindness of heart they have no equal. I contrast their behaviour to the young and struggling, with the harshness of the Lawyer, the hardness of the Man of Business, the contempt of the Man of the World, and am proud to belong to their calling."

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

AS AN AMATEUR IN AUTHORSHIP AND AS A GOOD FELLOW

TWO SIDES OF HIS MANY-SIDEDNESS

THE one thing of all others upon which Watts-Dunton set store was good-fellowship, which he counted as of greater worth even than genius. If ever he went critically astray, if ever intellectually he overrated his man, it was because he allowed his heart to outride his head. Once convince him that this or that young writer was a good fellow, and, born critic though he was, even criticism went by the board in Watts-Dunton's intellectual estimate. If I illustrate this by a personal experience it is not to speak of myself, but because, though I have personal knowledge of many similar instances, in this instance I have the "documents" in the case before me. It concerns the circumstances by which I first came to know Watts-Dunton.

In the New Year of 1885 there appeared the first number of a weekly (afterwards a monthly) magazine with the somewhat infelicitous if not feeble title of *Home Chimes*. It was edited and owned by F. W. Robinson, then a popular novelist. To the first number Swinburne and Theodore Watts

contributed poems, and in that now dead and forgotten venture the early work of many men and women who thereafter became famous is to be found. For instance, Jerome K. Jerome's *Idle Thoughts of an Idle Fellow* as well as his *Three Men in a Boat* first saw the light there. There, much of Sir James Barrie's early work appeared, for I once heard the author of *A Window in Thrums* say, though I do not suppose he meant to be taken too seriously, that there was a time when to him "London" meant the place where *Home Chimes* was published. There, early work by Eden Phillpotts, Israel Zangwill, G. B. Burgin, and a host of others who have since "come into their own" was printed, and there, I may say incidentally, part of my own first little book appeared.

"Yes," Robinson once said to me reminiscently, "it is true that Jerome, Barrie, Phillpotts, Zangwill, Burgin and yourself all more or less 'came out' in *Home Chimes*, but I have my doubts sometimes whether the whole of you ever raised the sale of the magazine by so much as a number."

"On the contrary," I replied, "my own opinion is that, between us, we killed it."

Be that as it may, Robinson lost heavily upon *Home Chimes* and was hit even harder by the death of the "three-decker"—I mean by the ousting of novels in three volumes at thirty shillings in favour of novels in one volume at six shillings. The change, indeed, caused such a drop in his income that he decided to look about him for another means of livelihood outside literature, and when, soon after, an Inspectorship of H.M. Prisons became vacant,

he decided to apply for the appointment. For this he had special qualifications, as he had for years closely and critically studied our Prison System and had, in fact, written and published much upon the subject. Knowing how eager he was, for pecuniary reasons, to secure the appointment, and being anxious to do what I could to assist his candidature (I plead guilty to "log-rolling" in this most justifiable instance), I asked the late Mr. Passmore Edwards, proprietor and editor of the *Echo*, the only halfpenny evening paper in those days, to let me write a sketch of Robinson in the "Echo Portrait Gallery" to which I was a contributor. In this sketch—it was signed "C. K." merely—I touched, purposely, upon Robinson's close study and special knowledge of the workings and defects of our Prison System. My article was seen by Theodore Watts, who wrote Robinson a letter which the latter sent on to me. It was as follows:

MY DEAR ROBINSON,

I have been delighted by a notice of you in the *Echo*, which I am told is by Coulson Kernahan. That must be a charming fellow who wrote it. Why don't you collect your loyal supporters around you (there are only two of us, Kernahan and Watts) over a little dinner at your Club?

Yours ever,
THEODORE WATTS.

"Robinson, if you had not been the most modest and delicate-minded man in contemporary literature, you would have trebled your fame and trebled your income. That is what C. K. says of you, but I have said it for a quarter of a century."

This was the beginning of my long friendship with Watts-Dunton, and I enter thus fully into a merely trivial and personal matter for the reason that the letter I have quoted is very characteristic of the writer. "Good fellowship" was, I repeat, the first article in Watts-Dunton's creed. His very religion was based upon it. He once said to me that were it not that some good men and women would see irreverence where he meant none, and of which he was by temperament and by his very sense of wonder incapable, he should like to write an article "The Good-fellowship of God," taking as his text the lines of Omar Khayyám, in which the old tent-maker speaks of those who picture a "surly" God:

> "And daub His Visage with the Smoke of Hell;
> They talk of some strict testing of us—Pish!
> He's a Good Fellow and 'twill all be well.

"To word it thus may sound profanely to some ears," commented Watts-Dunton, "but old Khayyám was only trying to express in his pagan way—though I suspect there is as much of FitzGerald as of Omar in the rendering—his belief in the loving Fatherhood of God which is held by every Christian. In fact 'good-fellowship' stands to Shakespeare's 'cakes-and-ale'-loving, and jolly fraternity, for the 'Human Brotherhood' of which the stricter church and chapel going folk speak, and I suspect that there is sometimes less acrimony and a broader human outlook over cakes and ale in an inn than there is over urn-stewed tea, bread and butter and buns in some of the Church or Chapel Tea-meetings that went on when I was a boy."

My article about Robinson was merely an attempt to set out his qualifications for the post of Inspector of Prisons. Those qualifications were many and my space was limited. Hence the article was as dull and stodgy a recital of facts as ever was written. There was as much in it from which to infer that the writer was a "charming fellow" as there is in a rice pudding by which to prove that the cook can sing divinely. But Robinson was a "good fellow." My article, among other things, made that at least clear. According to the gospel of good-fellowship as held by Watts-Dunton, a good fellow could be appreciated only by a good fellow, just as he once wrote to me, "My theory always is that a winsome style in prose comes from a man whose heart is good." I had shown appreciation of his friend, and, partisan and hero of friendship that he was, he was willing to take the rest on trust. Rightly to appreciate his friend was to win Watts-Dunton's heart at the start.

One sometimes hears or sees it stated that Watts-Dunton was indifferent alike to literary fame and to criticism, adverse or favourable. No one who knew him other than very slightly could think thus. Watts-Dunton was, in scriptural phrase, "a man in whom was no guile." He was transparently ingenuous of thought and purpose and did not attempt to conceal his gratification at the success of *Aylwin* or the pleasure which a discriminating and sympathetic appreciation afforded him. This only added to the respect and affection of his friends. It would have wounded us to think that the man we bore intellectually in such profound reverence,

personally in such deep affection, could play the *poseur* and affect to despise the deserved success and recognition which his work had won. W. E. Henley is said to have thanked God that he had "never suffered the indignity of a popular success." Henley deserved success, popular or otherwise, if ever writer did, for he never stooped to do less than his best, nor sought to achieve by shoddy means the success which thus attained is indeed to be despised. But a success deservedly won, even if a so-called popular success, every writer in his heart desires. To pretend otherwise is mere insincerity. It is not "playing the game," for even the pursuit of Letters is none the worse for a touch of the English sporting spirit. It is indeed the chief reproach of those of us who follow the craft of Letters that we are "artists" rather than sportsmen. Englishmen fight the better and write the better for seeing alike in writing and in fighting something of a "game." * Literature is a race in which every competitor hopes, and rightly, to come in first. If he be fairly beaten on his merits, he will admit and ungrudgingly, if a sportsman as well as a writer, that the better man has won. This does not mean he is content tamely to sit down under defeat. It means, on the contrary, harder work and severer training, so that on other occasions, by redoubling his exertions, he himself may be the man who wins on his merits. And if he fail again and yet again, instead of sneering at the prize as worthless, he will, if he ever heard it, recall the story of the two artists. A very young painter, who afterwards

* This was penned before the war.

became great, stood in his obscure and struggling days, when no one had heard his name or would look at his pictures, before the greatest canvas of the greatest painter of the time. The grandeur of the work, alike in conception and in execution, staggered him. Possibly there was despair at his heart as he asked himself how could he, too poor for proper opportunity of study, too poor even to afford a model, or to buy oils, ever hope to emulate such a masterpiece as this. But at least there was at his heart no meanness, no envy, no disposition to belittle or to grudge the other his high place. Throwing back his head, with flashing eyes and a throb in his voice he exclaimed proudly, radiantly, "And I, too, am an artist!"

But when Henley, who strained and strained splendidly to carry off the first prize—and missed—belittles its value, and would have us to believe that he is better pleased to carry off "the last event"—the "Consolation Prize"—of "never having suffered the indignity of a popular success," we distrust his sportsmanship and his sincerity. Watts-Dunton never posed after that manner. He was glad of his success and proud of it. It was because success, instead of increasing his literary stature in his own eyes as not infrequently happens, only made him increasingly modest and diffident, that he was sometimes supposed to care nothing for his literary laurels. In one respect his success was something of a disappointment to him, not so much because it illustrated the truth of Goethe's saying—nearer seventy than sixty as Watts-Dunton was when he achieved that success—"the wished-

for comes too late," but because it was not the success he expected and to which he believed himself most to be entitled.

Mr. Douglas calls his book on Watts-Dunton *Theodore Watts-Dunton, Poet, Novelist, and Critic*, and the description and the order in which those descriptions appear were of Watts-Dunton's own choosing. It was first as a poet, secondly as a novelist, and only thirdly, if at all, as a critic, that he wished and hoped to be remembered, whereas those who held the balance of values in letters were inclined to reverse that order and to place the critic first and the poet last.

Watts-Dunton was—I would emphasise this point strongly—an amateur in letters to the last, never the professional "literary man." It is because he was by temperament the amateur, not the professional, that he took his success so seriously and did not conceal a certain almost childlike gratification (which was not vanity) that it afforded him. Your shrewd professional writer would have spent less time in contemplation of his success, and more in seeking how best to exploit and advertise that success to his professional advantage.

Watts-Dunton, on the contrary, took the success of *Aylwin* very much as a young mother takes her firstling. He dandled it, toyed with it, hugged it, not altogether without something of the wonder and the awe with which a fond mother regards her firstborn. An amateur, as I say, and to the last he could hardly believe his own ears, his own eyes, at finding that his work had a high "market" value, and that one publisher was ready to bid against

another for his next book. Truth to tell he was not a little flustered by it all. " Hostages to posterity " of his sort carried responsibilities with them, not the least of which was the expectation that he would follow up *Aylwin* with other books. I remember the portentous, almost troubled knitting of his brows when perhaps a little maliciously I hinted that it was no use his bringing out new editions of *Aylwin*, or brooding over new prefaces for new editions of the same novel. " What your public and your publishers demand from you," I said, "is *Aylwin's* successor, not new editions, but a new book."

"Ah!" he said with deep meaning—no one could put so much into an " ah " as he—and, figuratively, collapsed.

ONE ASPECT OF THE MANY-SIDEDNESS OF THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

I HAVE often been asked by those who did not know Theodore Watts-Dunton what was the secret of the singular power he appeared to exercise over others and the equally singular affection in which he was held by his friends.

My answer was that Watts-Dunton's hold upon his friends, partly personal as it was and partly intellectual, was chiefly due to his extraordinary loyalty. Of old, certain men and women were supposed to be possessed of the "evil eye." Upon whom they looked with intent—be it man, woman, or beast—hurt was sooner or later sure to fall.

If there be anything in the superstition, one might almost believe that its opposite was true of Watts-Dunton. He looked upon others merely to befriend, and if he did not put upon them the spell, not of an evil but of a good eye, he exercised a marvellous personal power, not, as is generally the case, upon weaker intellects and less marked personalities than his own, but upon his peers; and even upon those whom in the world's eye would be accounted greater than he. That any one man should so completely control, and even dominate, two such intellects as Swinburne and Rossetti seemed almost uncanny. I never saw Rossetti and Watts-Dunton together,

for the former had been dead some years when I first met Watts-Dunton, but my early literary friendships were with members of the little circle of which Rossetti was the centre, and all agree in their testimony to the extraordinary personal power which Watts-Dunton exercised over the poet-painter. But Swinburne—and here I speak with knowledge—Watts-Dunton absolutely dominated. It was, "What does Walter say about it?" "Walter thinks, and I agree with him, that I ought to do so and so," or, "Let us submit the matter to Watts-Dunton's unfailing judgment."

Here, for fear of a possible misunderstanding, let me say that, if any reader assume from what I have just written that Swinburne was something of a weakling, that reader is very much mistaken. It is true that the author of *Atalanta in Calydon* was a greater force in intellect and in imagination than in will power and character, but he was not in the habit of deferring to others as he deferred to Watts-Dunton, and when he chose to stand out upon some point, or in some opinion, he was very difficult to move. It was only, in fact, by Watts-Dunton that he was entirely manageable, yet there was never any effort, never even any intention on Watts-Dunton's part to impose his own will upon his friend. I have heard his influence upon Swinburne described as hypnotic. From that point of view I entirely dissent. Watts-Dunton held his friends by virtue of his genius for friendship—"Watts is a hero of friendship," Mr. William Michael Rossetti once said of him—and by the passionate personal loyalty of which I have never known the equal. By nature

the kindest of men, shrinking from giving pain to any living creature, he could be fierce, even ferocious, to those who assailed his friends. It was, indeed, always in defence of his friends, rarely if ever in defence of himself—though he was abnormally sensitive to adverse criticism—that he entered into a quarrel and, since dead friends could not defend themselves, he constituted himself the champion of their memory or of their reputation, and even steeled himself on more than one occasion to a break with a living friend rather than endure a slight to one who was gone. "To my sorrow," he writes in a letter, "I was driven to quarrel with a man I loved and who loved me, William Minto, because he, with no ill intentions, printed certain injurious comments upon Rossetti which he found in Bell Scott's papers."

It was my own misfortune, deservedly or undeservedly, to have a somewhat similar experience to that of Professor Minto; but in my case the estrangement, temporary only as it was, included Swinburne as well as Watts-Dunton. In telling the story, and for the first time here, I must not be supposed for one moment to imagine that any importance attaches or could attach to a misunderstanding between such men as Swinburne and Watts-Dunton and a scribbler of sorts like myself, but because a third great name, that of Robert Buchanan, comes into it.

It is concerned with Buchanan's attack upon Rossetti in the famous article *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, which appeared anonymously (worse—pseudonymously) in the *Contemporary Review*. Not

long after Buchanan's death I was asked to review Mr. Henry Murray's *Robert Buchanan and other Essays* in a critical journal, which I did, and Swinburne and Watts-Dunton chanced to see the article. To say that they took exception to what I said about Buchanan, would be no description of their attitude, for Swinburne not only took exception but took offence and of the direst—so much so as to make it necessary that for a season I should discontinue my visits to The Pines.

And here let me interpolate that I entirely agree with Mr. James Douglas when he says in his volume, *Theodore Watts, Poet, Novelist and Critic*, " It would be worse than idle to enter at this time of the day upon the painful subject of the Buchanan affair. Indeed I have often thought it is a great pity that it is not allowed to die out." But when in the next sentence Mr. Douglas goes on to say, " The only reason why it is still kept alive seems to be that, without discussing it, it is impossible fully to understand Rossetti's nervous illness about which so much has been said," I am entirely out of agreement with him, as the quotation which I make from my article will show. Since Mr. Douglas *has* reopened the matter—he could hardly do otherwise in telling the story of Watts-Dunton's literary life—I have the less hesitation in reprinting part of the article in which I endeavoured to clear Buchanan of what I held, and still hold, to be a preposterous charge. I may add that I quite agree with Mr. Douglas when he says that we must remember " the extremely close intimacy which existed between these two poet friends (Rossetti and Watts-Dunton)

in order to be able to forgive entirely the unexampled scourging of Buchanan in the following sonnet, if, as some writers think, Buchanan was meant."

Mr. Douglas then quotes the sonnet *The Octopus of the Golden Isles*, which I do not propose here to reprint. That Buchanan was meant is now well known, and in fact Mr. Douglas himself says in the same chapter that Watts-Dunton's definition of envy as the "literary leprosy" has often been quoted in reference to the case of Buchanan. My article on Buchanan is too long to give in its entirety, and, even omitting the passages with no direct bearing upon the misunderstanding which it caused, is lengthier than I could wish. My apology is, first, that in justice to Watts-Dunton and to Swinburne I must present their case against me ungarbled. Moreover, as the foolish bogey-story—like an unquiet ghost which still walks the world unlaid—that Buchanan was the cause of Rossetti taking to drugs, the cause even of Rossetti's death, is still repeated, and sometimes believed, I am not sorry of another and last attempt to give the bogey its *quietus*. Here are the extracts from my article:

"Mr. Murray quotes evidently with appreciation Buchanan's tribute to his ancient enemy Rossetti, I do not share Mr. Murray's appreciation, for Buchanan's tribute has always seemed to me more creditable to his generosity than to his judgment. He speaks of Rossetti as 'in many respects the least carnal and most religious of modern poets.'

"Here he goes to as great an extreme as when he so

savagely attacked Rossetti as 'fleshly.' About this attack much nonsense has been written. We have been told that it was the cause of Rossetti's taking to chloral; and I have heard even Rossetti's death laid at Buchanan's door. To my thinking talk of that sort is sheer nonsense. If Rossetti took to chloral because Buchanan called his poetry 'fleshly,' Rossetti would sooner or later have taken to chloral, had Buchanan's article never been written. But when Buchanan in the fulness of his remorse calls Rossetti 'the most religious of modern poets' he is talking equally foolishly.

"Rossetti 'the most religious of modern poets'! Why, Rossetti's religion was his art. To him art was in and of herself pure, sacred, and inviolate. By him the usual order of things was reversed. It was religion which was the handmaid, art the mistress, and in fact it was only in so far as religion appealed to his artistic instincts that Rossetti can be said to have had any religion at all.

"And when Buchanan sought to exalt Rossetti to a pinnacle of purity he was guilty of a like extravagance. That Rossetti's work is always healthy not even his most enthusiastic admirers could contend. Super-sensuous and southern in the warmth of colouring nearly all his poems are. Some of them are heavy with the overpowering sweetness as of many hyacinths. The atmosphere is like that of a hothouse in which, amid all the odorous deliciousness, we gasp for a breath of the outer air again. There are passages in his work which remind us far more of the pagan temple than of the Christian cloister, passages describing sacred rites which pertain not to the worship of the Virgin, but to the worship of Venus.

"Buchanan was a man who lived heart and soul in

the mood of the moment. He had a big brain which was quick to take fire, and at such times, both in his controversies and in his criticism, he was apt to express himself with an exaggeration at which in his cooler hours he would have been the first to hurl his Titanic ridicule.

"It may seem ungenerous to say so, but even his beautiful dedicatory poem to Rossetti strikes me as a lapse into false sentiment.

To An Old Enemy

I would have snatched a bay-leaf from thy brow,
Wronging the chaplet on an honoured head;
In peace and tenderness I bring thee now
A lily-flower instead.

Pure as thy purpose, blameless as thy song,
Sweet as thy spirit may this offering be;
Forget the bitter blame that did thee wrong,
And take the gift from me.

"After Rossetti's death, ten months later, Buchanan added the following lines:

Calmly, thy royal robe of Death around thee,
Thou sleepest, and weeping brethren round thee stand;
Gently they placed, ere yet God's angel crowned thee,
My lily in thy hand.

I never saw thee living, oh, my brother,
But on thy breast my lily of love now lies,
And by that token we shall know each other,
When God's voice saith 'Arise!'

"That this is very beautiful every one will admit, but is it true to picture those who most loved Rossetti as placing Buchanan's lily of song in his dead hand? I think not. Nor can those who know anything of the last days of Rossetti reconcile the facts

with Buchanan's imaginary picture of a sort of celestial assignation in which, by means of a lily, Rossetti and his ancient enemy and brother poet shall identify each other on the Last Day ?

" I am well aware that I shall be accused of bad taste, even of brutality, in saying this ; but, as Mr. Murray himself alludes to this ancient quarrel, I must protest that false sentiment is equally abhorrent—as Buchanan would have been the first to admit. Now that Buchanan has followed Rossetti where all enmities are at an end, it is right that the truth about the matter be spoken, and this unhappy assault and its not altogether happy sequel be alike forgotten.

" Robert Buchanan's last resting-place is within sight of the sea. And rightly so. It is his own heart that Old Ocean seems most to wear away in his fretting and chafing, and the wearing away of their own heart is the most appreciable result of the warfare which such men as Buchanan wage against the world.

" That he did not fulfil his early promise, that he frittered away great gifts to little purpose, is pitifully true, but if he flung into the face of the men whom he counted hypocrites and charlatans, words which scorched like vitriol, he had, for the wounded in life's battle, for the sinning, the suffering, and the defeated, words of helpful sympathy and an outstretched hand of practical help.

" Mr. Murray has shown Buchanan to us as he was ; no hero perhaps, certainly not a saint, but a man of great heart and great brain, quick to quarrel, but as quick to own himself in the wrong ; a man intensely, passionately human, with more than one man's share of humanity's weaknesses and of humanity's strength, a sturdy soldier in the cause

of freedom, a fierce foe, a generous friend, and a poet who, in regard to that rarest of all gifts, 'vision,' had scarcely an equal among his contemporaries.

"I must conclude by a serious word with Mr. Murray. Disagree with him as one may and must, one cannot but admire his fearless honesty. None the less I am of opinion that in the following passage Mr. Murray's own pessimism has led him to do his dead friend's memory a grievous injustice.

" 'From the broken arc we may divine the perfect round, and it is my fixed belief that, had the subtle and cruel malady which struck him down but spared him for a little longer time, he would logically have completed the evolution of so many years, and have definitely proclaimed himself as an agnostic, perhaps even as an atheist.'

"Mr. Murray's personal knowledge of Buchanan was intimate, even brotherly; mine, though dating many years back, was comparatively slight. But I have read Buchanan's books, and I know something of the spirit in which he lived and worked, and I am convinced that Mr. Murray is wrong. It is not always those who have come nearest to the details of a man's daily life, who have come nearest to him in spirit, as Amy Levy knew well when she wrote those lines, *To a Dead Poet*, which I shall be pardoned for bringing to my readers' remembrance:

I knew not if to laugh or weep:
They sat and talked of you—
'Twas here he sat: 'twas this he said,
'Twas that he used to do.

'Here is the book wherein he read,
The room wherein he dwelt;
And he' (they said) 'was such a man,
Such things he thought and felt.'

I sat and sat, I did not stir ;
They talked and talked away.
I was as mute as any stone,
I had no word to say.

They talked and talked ; like to a stone
My heart grew in my breast—
I, who had never seen your face,
Perhaps I knew you best.

"Buchanan was, as every poet is, a creature of mood, and in certain black moods he expressed himself in language that was open to an atheistic interpretation. There were times when he was confronted by the fact that, to human seeming, iniquity prospered, righteousness went to the wall, and injustice, vast and cruel, seemed to rule the world. To the Christian belief that the Cross of Christ is the only key to the terrible problem of human suffering, Buchanan was unable to subscribe, and at times he was tempted to think that the Power at the head of things must be evil, not good. It seems to me that at such times he would cry out in soul-travail, 'No! no! anything but that! If there be a God at all He must be good. Before I would do God the injustice of believing in an evil God, I would a thousand times sooner believe in no God at all!' Then the mood passed ; the man's hope and belief in an unseen beneficent Power returned, but the sonnet in which he had given expression to that mood remained. And because the expression of that mood was permanent, Mr. Murray forgets that it was no more than the expression of a mood, and tells us that he believes, had Buchanan lived longer, he would have become an atheist.

"Again I say that I believe Mr. Murray to be wrong. Buchanan, like his own Wandering Jew,

trod many dark highways and byways of death, but he never remained—he never could have remained —in that Mortuary of the Soul, that cul-de-sac of Despair which we call Atheism.

. . . . . .

"This is not the place in which to say it, but perhaps my editor will allow me to add how keenly I felt, as I stood by the graveside of Robert Buchanan in that little God's acre by the sea, the inadequacy of our Burial Service, beautiful as it is, in the case of one who did not profess the Christian faith. To me it seemed little less than a mockery to him who has gone, as well as a torture to those who remain, that words should be said over his dead body which, living, he would have repudiated.

"Over the body of one whose voice is silenced by death, we assert the truth of doctrines which living he had unhesitatingly rejected. It is as if we would, coward-like, claim in death what was denied us in life.

"In the case of a man whose beliefs were those of Robert Buchanan, how much more seemly it would be to lay him to rest with some such words as these :

"'To the God from Whom he came, we commend this our friend and brother in humanity, trusting that what in life he has done amiss, may in death be forgotten and forgiven ; that what in life he has done well, may in death be borne in remembrance. And so from out our human love, into the peace of the Divine love, we commend him, leaving him with the God from Whom, when we in our turn come to depart whither he has gone, we hope to receive like pardon, forgiveness and peace. In God's hands, to God's love and mercy, we leave him.'"

Re-reading this article many years after it was

written, I see nothing in it to which friendship or even affection for either Rossetti or Buchanan could reasonably object.

This was not the view taken by Swinburne and Watts-Dunton. It so happened that I encountered the latter in the Strand a morning or two later, and more in sadness than in anger he reproached me with "disloyalty to Gabriel, disloyalty to Algernon, and disloyalty to myself."

I replied that touching Rossetti, as he did not happen to be the King, had never so much as heard of my small existence, nor had I ever set eyes upon him, to accuse me of disloyalty to him, to whom I owed no loyalty, struck me as a work of supererogation. And, as touching Swinburne and Watts-Dunton himself, honoured as I was by the high privilege of their friendship, I could not admit that that friendship committed me to a blind partisanship and to the identification of myself with their literary likings or dislikings or their personal quarrels.

My rejection of the penitential rôle, to say nothing of my refusing to take the matter seriously, seemed to surprise and to trouble Watts-Dunton. While protesting the regard of everyone at The Pines for me personally, he gave me to understand that Swinburne in particular was so wounded by my championship as he called it of Buchanan, that he would have some trouble in making my peace in that quarter, and even hinted that an arrangement, by which I was either to lunch or to dine at The Pines within the next few days, had better stand over.

Naturally I replied—I could hardly do otherwise, as I did not see my way without insincerity to express regret for what I had written about Buchanan, though I did express regret that it had given offence to Swinburne and himself—that that must be as he chose, and so we parted, sadly on my side if not on his ; and I neither saw nor heard from anyone at The Pines for some little time after. Then one morning came the following letter :

MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

Don't think any more of that unpleasant little affair. Of course neither Swinburne nor I expect our friends, however loyal, to take part in the literary quarrels that may be forced upon us. But this man had the character *among men who knew him well* of being the most thorough sweep, and to us it did seem queer to see your honoured name associated with such a man. But, after all, even he may not have been as black as his acquaintances painted him. Your loyalty to us I do not doubt.

Yours affectionately,

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON.

This was followed by a wire—from Swinburne—asking me to lunch, which I need hardly say I was glad to accept, and so my relationship to the inmates of The Pines returned to its old footing.

Since it was Swinburne much more than Watts-Dunton who so bitterly resented what I had written of Buchanan, I am glad to have upon my shelves a volume of *Selections from Swinburne,* published

after his death, and edited by Watts-Dunton. The book was sent to me by the Editor, and was inscribed :

"To Coulson Kernahan,

whom Swinburne dearly loved, and who as dearly loved him.

From Theodore Watts-Dunton."

My unhappy connection with the "Buchanan affair" had, it will be seen, passed entirely from Swinburne's memory, and indeed the name of Robert Buchanan, who was something of a disturbing element even in death, as he had been in life, was never mentioned among us again. How entirely the, to me, distressing if brief rift in my friendship with Watts-Dunton—a friendship which I shall always count one of the dearest privileges of my life—was closed and forgotten, is clear from the following letter. It was written in reply to a telegram I sent, congratulating him on celebrating his 81st birthday—the last birthday on earth, alas, of one of the most generous and great-hearted of men :

THE PINES, PUTNEY, S.W.
Oct. 20th, 1913.

MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

Your telegram congratulating me upon having reached my 81st birthday affected me deeply. Ever since the beginning of our long intimacy I have had from you nothing but generosity and affection, almost unexampled, I think, between two literary

men. My one chagrin is that I can get only glimpses of you of the briefest kind. Your last visit here was indeed a red-letter day. Don't forget when occasion offers to come and see us. Your welcome will be of the most heartfelt kind.

Most affectionately yours,

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

THE LAST DAYS OF THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

THE pathetic side of the last two or three years of Watts-Dunton's life was that he had outlived nearly every friend of youth and middle age, and, with the one or two old friends of his own generation who survived, he had lost touch. Tennyson, Rossetti, Swinburne, William Morris, Browning, Matthew Arnold, Borrow, William Black, Dr. Gordon Hake, Westland and Philip Marston, Jowett, Louise Chandler Moulton, William Sharp, James Russell Lowell, George Meredith, were gone. Mr. William Rossetti, the only one of the old fraternity left, now rarely, he tells me, leaves his own home. In any case he and Watts-Dunton had not met for years. Mr. Edmund Gosse, once a frequent and always an honoured visitor to The Pines, was rarely if ever there during the years that I came and went.

It was between Swinburne and Mr. Gosse that the intimacy existed, though by both the inmates he was to the last held in high regard. Mr. Gosse would have the world to believe that he grows old, but no one who knows him either personally or by his writings can detect any sign of advancing years. On the contrary, both in the brilliance of his personality and of his later intellectual achievements, he appears

to possess the secret of eternal youth. It was neither oncoming years nor any lessening of friendship between him and Swinburne which was responsible for Mr. Gosse's defection, but the fact that he had added to his other duties that of Librarian to the House of Lords. This, and his many and increasing official and literary activities, kept, and keep him closely occupied, and so it was that his name gradually, insensibly, dropped out of the list of visitors at The Pines.

Mr. Thomas Hake was with Watts-Dunton to the end, and indeed it was not a little due to the help of "The Colonel" (the name by which from his boyhood Mr. Hake was known at The Pines on account of his cousinship with and his likeness to Colonel, afterwards General Charles Gordon) that Watts-Dunton accomplished so much literary work in his last decade. Some of the younger men, Mr. Clement Shorter, accompanied now and then by his poet-wife, Mr. James Douglas, Mr. Henniker-Heaton, Dr. Arthur Compton-Rickett, and Mr. F. G. Bettany, remained in touch with The Pines until Watts-Dunton's death. I met none of them there myself, as after I went to live a long way from London my own visits were less frequent, and being a friend of older standing, with memories in common which none of the newer friends whom I have mentioned shared, it was generally arranged that I was the only guest. That there was no forgetfulness or lessening of friendship on Watts-Dunton's part towards the friends whom he now rarely met, is evident by the following extract from a letter in reply to a question on my part

whether it would be possible for him to be my guest at one of the Whitefriars' Club weekly gatherings.

"I should look forward," he said, "to seeing some of the truest and best friends I have in the world, including yourself, Robertson Nicoll, Richard Whiteing, and Clement Shorter. And when you tell me that F. C. Gould is a Friar (the greatest artistic humorist now living in England) I am tempted indeed to run counter to my doctor's injunctions against dining out this winter.

"The other day I had the extreme good luck to find and buy the famous lost water-colour drawing of the dining-room at 16 Cheyne Walk, with Rossetti reading out to me the proofs of *Ballads and Sonnets*. I am sending photographs of it to one or two intimate friends, and I enclose you one. The portrait of Rossetti is the best that has ever been taken of him."

Of all the friendships which Watts-Dunton formed late in life none was so prized by him as that with Sir William Robertson Nicoll. As it was I who made the two known to each other, and in doing so, removed an unfortunate and what might have been permanent misunderstanding, I may perhaps be pardoned for referring to the matter here.

The name of Sir William coming up one day in a conversation, I discovered to my surprise that Watts-Dunton was feeling sore about some disparaging remark which Sir William was supposed to have made about him. I happened to know how the misunderstanding came about, and I told Watts-Dunton the following true story, illustrating how easily such misunderstandings arise, and illustrating

too the petty and "small beer" side of "literary shop" gossip. It concerned an editor and an author. The author employed a literary agent, who offered the editor one of the author's stories. "I have set my face against the middleman in literature," the editor replied. "If Mr. —— likes to offer me his story direct, I'll gladly take it, and pay his usual price per thousand words, but buy it through an agent I won't."

This came to the ears of the author, who remarked: "That's rather unreasonable on ——'s part. I buy, through an agent, the periodical he edits. I don't expect him to stand in the gutter, like a newsboy, selling me his paper himself at a street corner, and I don't see why he should object to my offering him my wares by means of an agent."

This not unfriendly remark was overheard by some one, who told it to some one else, who repeated it to another person, that person in his turn passing it on, and so it went the round of Fleet Street and certain literary clubs. The copper coinage of petty personal gossip, unlike the pound sterling coin of the realm, becomes magnitudinally greater, instead of microscopically less, by much circulation. Instead of infinitesimal attritions, as in the case of the coin, there are multitudinous accretions, until the story as it ultimately started life, and the story as it afterwards came to be told, would hardly recognise each other, at sight, as blood relatives. By the time the innocent remark of the author came to the ears of the editor concerned, it had so grown and become so garbled, that its own father would never have

known it. "Have you heard what So-and-so the author said about you?" the editor was asked. "He said that he hoped to live to see you in the gutter, selling at the street corner the very paper you now edit." Not unnaturally the editor's retort was uncomplimentary to the author, who, when the retort came to his ears, expressed an opinion about the editor which was concerned with other matters than the editorial objection to the middleman in literature, and so a misunderstanding (fortunately long since removed) arose in good earnest.

I should not put this chronicle of journalistic small beer—a version as it is of the famous Three Black Crows story—on record, were it not that it was exactly in the same way that an innocent remark of Sir William Robertson Nicoll's had been misrepresented to Watts-Dunton. This I did my best to explain to the latter, but not feeling as sure as I wished to be that all soreness was removed, I asked him to lunch with me at the Savage Club, and then invited Dr. Nicoll, as he then was, to meet him. There was at first just a suspicion of an armed truce about Watts-Dunton, in whose memory the supposed attack upon himself was still smouldering, but his interest and pleasure in the conversation of a student and scholar of like attainments to his own soon dispelled the stiffness. A chance but warmly affectionate reference to Robertson Smith by Dr. Nicoll drew from Watts-Dunton that long-drawn "Ah!" which those who knew him well remember as meaning that he was following with profound attention and agreement what was being said.

"Why, I knew that man—one of the salt of the earth," he interpolated. Then he added gravely, more reminiscently than as if addressing anyone, "I had affection for him!" Leaning over the table, his singularly brilliant and penetrating eyes full upon the other, he said almost brusquely, "Tell me what you knew of Robertson Smith!"

Dr. Nicoll responded, and within five minutes' time the two of them were talking together, comparing notes and exchanging experiences and confidences like old friends. As we were parting, Watts-Dunton said to me:

"You are coming to lunch on Monday. I wish I could persuade our friend Nicoll here to accompany you, so that Swinburne could share the pleasure of such another meeting as we have had here to-day."

The invitation was accepted by Dr. Nicoll with the cordiality with which it was offered, and I may add with the usual result, for the intervener. "Patch up a quarrel between two other persons—and find yourself left out in the cold," Oscar Wilde once said to me. I had merely removed a misunderstanding, not patched up a quarrel, but the result of my bringing Watts-Dunton, Nicoll, and Swinburne together was that, on the occasion of the first meeting of all three, they had so much to talk about, and talked about it so furiously, that I had cause to ask myself whether the "two" in the proverb should not be amended to "three," so as to read "Three's company; four's none." Thereafter, and to his life's end, Watts-Dunton could never speak too gratefully or too appreciatively of Sir William

Robertson Nicoll. He came indeed to hold the latter's judgment alike in literature and scholarship, as in other matters, in the same admiration with which Swinburne held the judgment of Watts-Dunton himself.

Thus far it is only of Watts-Dunton's friends that I have written, reserving the last place in my list, which in this case is the first in precedence, for the only name with which it is fitting that, in my final word, his name should be coupled. I have said that the pathetic side of his later years was that he had outlived so many of the men and women he loved. To outlive one's nearest and dearest friends must always be poignant and pathetic, but in other respects Watts-Dunton's life was a full and a happy one, and never more so than in these later years, for it was then that the one who was more than friend, the woman he so truly loved, who as truly loved him, became his wife. In his marriage, as in his friendships, Watts-Dunton was singularly fortunate. Husband and wife entertained each for the other, and to the last, love, reverence and devotion. If to this Mrs. Watts-Dunton added exultant, even jealous pride in her husband's intellect, his great reputation and attainments, he was even more proud of her beauty and accomplishments, and his one anxiety was that she should never know a care. When last I saw them together—married as they had then been for many years—it was evident that Watts-Dunton had lost nothing of the wonder, the awe, perhaps even the perplexity, with which from his boyhood and youth he had regarded that mystery of mysteries—womanhood. His love for her

was deep, tender, worshipping and abiding, albeit it had something of the fear with which one might regard some exquisite wild bird which, of its own choice, comes to the cage, and, for love's sake, is content to forgo its native woodland, content even to rest with closed wings within the cage, while without comes continually the call to the green field, the great hills and the glad spaces between sea and sky. Be that as it may, this marriage between a young and beautiful woman—young enough and beautiful enough to have stood for a picture of his adored Sinfi Lovell of *Aylwin*, whom, in her own rich gypsy type of beauty, Mrs. Watts-Dunton strangely resembled—and a poet, novelist, critic and scholar who was no longer young, no longer even middle-aged, was from first to last a happy one. It is with no little hesitation that I touch even thus briefly and reverently upon a relationship too sacred and too beautiful for further words. Even this much I should not have said were it not that, in marriages where some disparity of age exists, the union is not always as fortunate, and were it not also that I know my friend would wish that his love and gratitude to the devoted wife, who made his married years so supremely glad and beautiful, should not go unrecorded.

The last time I saw Watts-Dunton alive was shortly before his death. I had spent a long afternoon with Mrs. Watts-Dunton and himself, and at night he and I dined alone, as his wife had an engagement. In my honour he produced a bottle of his old " Tennyson " port, lamenting that he could not join me as the doctor had limited him

to soda-water or barley-water. When I told him that I had recently been dining in the company of Sir Francis Carruthers Gould, and that "F. C. G." had described soda-water as "a drink without a soul," Watts-Dunton was much amused. But, his soulless drink notwithstanding, I have never known him talk more brilliantly. He rambled from one subject to another, not from any lack of power to concentrate or lack of memory, but because his memory was so retentive and so co-ordinating that the mention of a name touched, as it were, an electric button in his memory, which called up other associations.

And by rambling I do not mean that he was discursive or vague. No matter how wide his choice of subject, one was conscious of a sense of unity in all that Watts-Dunton said. Religion might by others, and for the sake of convenience, be divided into creeds, Philosophy into schools of thought, Science into separate headings under the names of Astronomy, Geology, Zoology, Botany, Physics, Chemistry and the like, but by him all these were considered as component parts—the one dovetailing into the other—of a perfect whole. One was conscious of no disconnection when the conversation slid from this science, that philosophy, or religion, to another, for as carried on by him, it was as if he were presenting to the observer's eye merely different facets of the precious and single stone of truth. His was not the rambling talk of old age, for more or less rambling his talk had been ever since I had known him.

It was due partly also to his almost infinite knowledge of every subject under the sun. The mere

mention of a science, of a language, of a system of philosophy, of a bird, a flower, a star, was, as it were, a text upon which he would base one of his wonderful and illuminating disquisitions. His grasp of first principles was so comprehensive that he was able in a few words to present them boldly and clearly for the hearer's apprehension, whence he would pass on to develop some new line of thought. His interests were to the last so eager and youthful, that even comparatively unessential side-issues—as he spoke of them—suddenly opened up into new and fascinating vistas, down which the searchlight of his imagination would flash and linger, before passing on, from point to point, to the final goal of his thought.

Rossetti often said that no man that ever he met could talk with the brilliancy, beauty, knowledge, and truth of Watts-Dunton, whose very "improvisation" in conversation Rossetti described as "perfect" as a "fitted jewel." Rossetti deplored, too, on many occasions his "lost" conversations with the author of *Aylwin*—lost because only by taking them down in shorthand, as spoken, could one remember the half of what was said, its incisive phrasing, its flashing metaphors and similes, and the "fundamental brain work" which lay at the back of all.

I am always glad to remember that on this, my last meeting with Watts-Dunton, he was—though evidently weakening and ailing in body—intellectually at his best. He revived old memories of Tennyson, Rossetti, Browning, Lowell, Morris, Matthew Arnold, and many another. He dwelt

lovingly once again but with new insight upon the first awakening of the wonder-sense in man, and how this wonder-sense—the beginning whether in savage or in highly civilised races of every form of religion—passed on into worship. Our intercourse that evening was in fact more of a monologue, on his part, than of the usual conversation between two old friends, with interests and intimates in common. I was indeed glad that it should be so, first because Watts-Dunton, like George Meredith (whose talk, though I only heard it once, struck me if more scintillating also as more self-conscious), was a compelling and fascinating conversationalist, and secondly because his slight deafness made the usual give-and-take of conversation difficult.

Not a little of his talk that night was of his wife, his own devotion to her, and the unselfishnesss of her devotion to him. He spoke of Louise Chandler Moulton, " that adorable woman," as he called her, whom Swinburne held to be the truest woman-poet that America has given us. He charged me to carry his affectionate greetings to Robertson Nicoll. " Only I wish I could see more of him," he added. " It's hard to see so seldom the faces one longs to see."

And then, more faithful in memory to the dead friends of long ago than any other man or woman I have known, he spoke movingly of " our Philip," his friend and mine, Philip Marston. Then he took down a book from a little bookshelf which hung to the right of the sofa on which he sat, and, turning the pages, asked me to read aloud Marston's Sonnet to his dead love :

It must have been for one of us, my own,
To drink this cup and eat this bitter bread.
Had not my tears upon thy face been shed,
Thy tears had dropped on mine ; if I alone
Did not walk now, thy spirit would have known
My loneliness ; and did my feet not tread
This weary path and steep, thy feet had bled
For mine, and thy mouth had for mine made moan.

And so it comforts me, yea, not in vain
To think of thine eternity of sleep ;
To know thine eyes are tearless though mine weep.
And when this cup's last bitterness I drain,
One thought shall still its primal sweetness keep—
Thou hadst the peace, and I the undying pain

His only comment on the poem was that long and deeply-breathed " Ah ! " which meant that he had been profoundly interested, perhaps even profoundly stirred. Often it was his only comment when Swinburne, head erect, eyes ashine, and voice athrill, had in the past stolen into the same room—noiseless in his movements, even when excited—to chaunt to us some new and noble poem, carried like an uncooled bar of glowing iron direct from the smithy of his brain, and still intoning and vibrating with the deep bass of the hammer on the anvil, still singing the red fire-song of the furnace whence it came.

We sat in silence for a space, and then Watts-Dunton said :

" Our Philip was not a great, but at least he was a true poet, as well as a loyal friend and a right good fellow. He is almost forgotten now by the newer school, and among the many new voices, but Louise Chandler Moulton and Will Sharp, and others of us, have done what we could to keep his

memory green. We loved him, as Gabriel and Algernon loved him, our beautiful blind poet-boy."

When soon after I rose reluctantly to go, a change seemed to come over Watts-Dunton. The animation faded out of voice and face, and was replaced by something like anxiety, almost like pain.

"Must you go, dear fellow, must you go?" he asked sorrowfully. "There is a bed all ready prepared, for we'd hoped you'd stay the night."

I explained that I was compelled to return to Hastings that evening, as I had to start on a journey early next morning. Perhaps I had let him overexert himself too much in conversation. Perhaps he had more to say and was disappointed not to be able to say it, for he seemed suddenly tired and sad. The brilliant talker was gone.

"Come again soon, dear fellow. Come again soon," he said, as he held my hand in a long clasp. And when I had passed out of his sight and he out of mine, his voice followed me pathetically, almost brokenly into the night, "Come again soon, Kernahan. Come again soon, dear boy. Don't let it be long before we meet again."

It was not long before we met again, but it was, alas, when I followed to his long home one who, great as was his fame in the eyes of the world as poet, critic, novelist and thinker, is, in the hearts of some of us, who grow old, more dearly remembered as the most unselfish, most steadfast, and most loving of friends.

WHEN STEPHEN PHILLIPS READ

I

ONE afternoon in the nineties, I called upon my friend Mrs. Chandler Moulton, the American poet. She had taken a first-floor suite of rooms in a large house in the west of London, in which other paying guests were also just then staying. I was shown into the reception room attached to Mrs. Moulton's suite, and was told that she would be with me in a few minutes. Almost immediately after, another of Mrs. Moulton's friends, Madame Antoinette Sterling, called, and was shown into the room where I was waiting. We had met before, and fell to chatting. Madame Sterling happened to mention the piece in her repertoire, which was not only her own favourite, but was also that which, in her opinion, best suited her voice. When I said that by some chance I had been so unfortunate as to miss hearing her sing it, she replied quickly:

"If that is so, I will sing it for you now."

Then she rose, and drew herself up statuesquely—as it were to "attention"—and to her full height, a striking figure. Grant Allen once said to me that he suspected she had a strain of Red Indian blood in her veins. If that be so—I do not know—it showed itself in a certain proud imperturbability of

bearing, and by the fact that she stood, if not exactly stock-still, at least almost motionless and gestureless. It showed itself, too, in the high cheek-bones; in the swarthiness of her complexion, and the snaky smooth coils of black hair that, parted low and loosely over the brow, toned down, and softened into womanliness, the almost masculine massiveness of the strong purposeful features. Throwing back her head, like a full-throated thrush, and with her hands clasped simply in front of her, she began to sing, low and flute-like at first, but as she went on letting her glorious voice swell out in an organ-burst of song.

The effect was singular. The London season was at its height, and the house was full of visitors, chiefly, I believe, Americans. When Madame Sterling began to sing, we could distinctly hear the buzz of conversation coming up from the floor below. Overhead, one could hear the restless movement of feet, and sounds like those which come from a kitchen—the chink of china and the clashing together of knives, forks, and spoons, as it in preparation for a meal—were also audible.

But as the first few notes of the rich, full, noble, and far-carrying contralto rang out, the chatter of voices below, the shuffle of feet, or of furniture overhead, even the necessary commonplace, vulgar sounds that came from the basement and the kitchen, were suddenly checked, shamed, and silenced; and, as the singer's voice deepened into full diapason, one almost fancied that not only the men and women gathered together in different rooms under that one roof, but the very house itself,

even the dead and inanimate pieces of furniture, were strained and stilled in listening silence.

I am reminded of this old-time and almost forgotten incident by an "Impression of Stephen Phillips," contributed under the initials "H.W.B." to the *Outlook* of December 18, 1915, by Mr. Horace Bleackley, the distinguished novelist. Just as that noisy boarding-house was at first surprised, and then, as it were, frozen into a strange, almost uncanny silence by Madame Sterling's marvellous notes, so, by the majesty of spoken words, Stephen Phillips compelled an unwilling company to a like hushed and awed reverence.

"It was an evening party in an undergraduate's rooms at Christ Church, Oxford, about twenty-seven years ago," writes Mr. Bleackley. "It was a decorous gathering—not a 'wine'—but there had been music and mirth, and none of us were at all inclined towards serious things. Suddenly the host announced that a member of the Benson Company—several of whom were our guests on this occasion—would give a recitation. A grave and thoughtful young man rose before us, with the features of a Greek god, whom most of us recognised at a glance (for we all had been at the theatre that week) as the Ghost in *Hamlet*. Somewhat resentfully we relapsed into silence, few showing any signs of enthusiasm, for scarcely any of us had the slightest doubt that we were going to be bored.

"For twenty minutes the actor held us spell-bound. His voice was musical and his elocution that of a consummate artist. But this we had realised before: It was not the charm of his diction

that enthralled us, but the melody of his verse—fresh and pure from the heavenly spring. And when he had finished there were awestruck whispers —which I seem to hear still—even from the Philistines : ' It is his own poem ! ' Few of that company can have been surprised when, about a decade later, all the world had hailed Stephen Phillips as one of the greatest of living poets."

Mr. Bleackley's " Impression " was gathered long before Phillips had reached the plenitude and the maturity of his power, for the poet was then a very young man, leaving Cambridge as he did without taking a degree, and joining his cousin's Sir F. R. Benson's touring theatrical company. Those who heard Phillips at his prime and at his best, will agree with me that his rendering of poetry cannot be described by such words as " reading," " recitation," or " recital." The plain unexaggerated fact is that by mere words his rendering of poetry cannot be described.

I am not writing of his acting, nor of his public reading, for, excellent and memorable as were both, I doubt whether those who have heard and seen Phillips only upon the stage, or the platform, have any idea what he was like at his best—and at his best he never was in public. It was in his own or in a friend's home, and in the company only of intimates, of whose sympathy and understanding he was assured, that Phillips was his natural self, and therefore, his natural self (alas, that he was not always that natural self !) being inherently noble, at his highest and best. I have heard spiritualists assert that the presence of one single person of un-

sympathetic temperament has made it impossible to attain the necessary trance condition on the part of the medium, and so has brought a séance to nought.

Whether that be so or not I cannot say, for I have no knowledge of spiritualism, but I recall occasions when Stephen Phillips had been strangely disappointing, and, in explaining his failure to me afterwards, he said:

"I couldn't help it. That man or that woman's very presence spoilt everything and put me off. I seemed to feel his or her cold and fish-like eyes fastened upon me as I read. I was all the time as aware of that person's boredom as sailors are aware, by the change in the coldness of the atmosphere, of approaching bergs. Worse, I was like a skater, fallen into a hole under the ice; who can find no way out, but is held down and drowned under a roof of solid and unbroken ice. One man, one woman, like that in my audience, or even in a room, keeps me self-conscious all the time, and so makes poetry impossible; for poetry, high poetry, is the sublimation, the exaltation, of the senses into soul. It is the forgetting of self, the losing, merging and fusing of one's very individuality into pure thought, and into visions and revelations of the Truth and the Loveliness that are of God."

II

It has been my fortune to know not a few poets. It has been my fate to play listener while they, or most of them, read aloud their verses. To them,

presumably, some sort of satisfaction was to be derived from the self-imposed task; otherwise I should not have been thus afflicted. To me the case was one of holding on, directly under the enemy's artillery and without returning his fire, the casualties in my own moral garrison being heavy. I was in fact for the most part as severely punished as was Stephen Phillips on one occasion of which he told me.

The wife of a friend of his was chatting in her drawing-room one afternoon with two or three callers, among whom was Phillips. To them entered the host her husband, who, drawing the author of *Marpessa* aside, whispered to him, "Come along, Phillips, let's enjoy ourselves!"

"I was rather tiring of the drawing-room talk," said Phillips, in relating the incident, "and my host's alluring words were like Hope. They told a flattering tale. 'Rumour has it,' I said to myself, 'that there are in his cellars some bottles of port upon which it is good to look when the colour is tawny in the glass. Nectar for the gods, was the way one connoisseur described it. Does this mean that my host is going to crack a bottle in my honour? Does this mean he is going to fit me out with one of those choice cigars which he has also the reputation of possessing?' 'Come along, Phillips, and let's enjoy ourselves!' were his words.

"And what do you think happened? He lured me away to a dark and chilly library, and read Francis Thompson's poems to me for three mortal hours. If that is his idea of enjoying himself it isn't mine!"

Nor mine, I hasten to add, unless the reader

were Stephen Phillips himself, to listen to whom was the most exquisite artistic pleasure imaginable. I agree with Mr. Bleackley that it was not Phillips's voice, nor his diction, nor his art that enthralled the hearers, but I question whether Mr. Bleackley is right in attributing the effect produced to the fact that the poet was speaking his own poem. For that effect was the same whether the poem were by Phillips himself or by Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, or Swinburne. In ordinary conversation Phillips's voice was not notably beautiful. It was clear, musical, resonant, and finely modulated—that was all. Had one done no more than talk with him, I am not sure that his voice would thus far have impressed itself upon the memory. But in speaking poetry, his voice was as different from the voice to which one was accustomed in conversation as is a lit taper from the same taper when unkindled. Poetry kindled the taper of his soul to flame, as only poetry could. His genius was more supremely evident at such times—that is to say, when he was *living* poetry, when he was, as it were, caught up and filled by some Pentecostal spirit of poetry outside himself—than when he was, in travail and labour, if under the pure impulse of inspiration, creating poetry. Then from the man to whom we were listening the fetters of the senses (alas, that those fetters should sometimes hold so closely and so heavily as to drag us downwards to earth!) seemed to fall away, and his soul to soar back to the heaven whence he had fallen.

He would begin to read or to recite with slow unemotional deliberateness—the enunciation perfect,

and the voice exquisitely modulated—but at first there was just a suspicion of a chant, an incantation, as if by a spell to call up the Spirit of Poetry before us. It was beautiful, it was the perfection of elocutionary art, but for the time being it seemed cold and afar from us and our lives, like the frozen marble beauty of Greek statuary. Soon his voice would deepen, and the room become strangely still. It was the listeners now who reminded one of statuary, for each sat unmoving, scarcely breathing, every sense, every thought, centred on the reader who, his great eyes ablaze, yet all unseeing, sat as if in a trance. This was no longer Stephen Phillips, our friend and intimate with whom we had walked and talked.

All of us know what it is suddenly and unexpectedly to hear that we shall see on earth, no more, a friend, who but yesterday was with us, and of us, alive and well, his familiar and happy self. "No! No! He is not dead! It cannot be! It must not be!" we cry out when first told—as if death were something unnatural and abnormal; as if it were but some oversight, some mistake, against which we have but to enter our protest, to move High God to set it right. But even as we thus cry out, even as we stagger back under the shock, and turn sick and faint—so unendurable is our first sense of pity for the dead—even then our pity passes, for we know it is we, the living, not the dead, who are in need of pity. Even then and thus early (so instantly ancient is death, once we realise that it has come) some strange new majesty, august and awful, has come between our friend and us, as if to withdraw him an æon and a world away.

And for the moment, and while the spell was upon him, and upon us, the soul of Stephen Phillips, when he was thus entranced by poetry, seemed scarcely less far-removed from us, and from our little world, than are the newly dead. For though to no mortal has the soul of a man been visible, to some of us who have listened to Stephen Phillips in those rare moments, it seemed as if *the soul of a man had at least become audible.*

Then, in some vague way, one's thoughts wandered back to the time when God walked in the Garden in the cool of the evening, and His Voice was heard by mortals. For then the exigencies of Time and Space were abrogated. The little room, wherein the poet sat and read, while we listened, was so strangely transformed for us, that we saw the vision of Dante and Milton unfold themselves before our eyes. The poet could so speak a word as to make it seem like the Spirit of God breathing upon the face of the waters, and calling new worlds into being. He could so speak that single word as to make it almost a world in itself.

When in Swinburne's second chorus in *Atalanta in Calydon* Phillips came to the lines

> He weaves, and is clothed with derision,
> Sows, and he shall not reap,
> His life is a watch or a vision
> Between a sleep and a sleep,

with the last word "sleep," as it came from Stephen Phillips's lips, the very world itself seemed to close tired eyes, to wander away into unconsciousness, and finally to fall on sleep.

James Russell Lowell once said that if Shakespeare be read in the very presence of the sea itself, his voice shall but seem the nobler, for the sublime criticism of ocean; and the words recall Stephen Phillips to me as I write, for in his voice, when he was deeply stirred by poetry, there was something measured, unhasting, majestic, like the vastness of great waters, moving in flood of full tide under the moon.

I have tried to give the reader some idea of his rendering of poetry, and I have failed, for, as I have already said, it cannot be described. Some godlike spirit, outside himself, seemed, in these supreme and consecrated hours, suddenly to possess him, and, when the hour and the consecration were past, as suddenly to leave him. But, while that hour lasted, there was only one word for Stephen Phillips, poet, and that word was Genius.

EDWARD WHYMPER

AS I KNEW HIM

I

THOUGH I head this article "Edward Whymper as I Knew Him," I prefer first to write of Edward Whymper as he was before I knew him—or rather before he knew me. In the town where he and I were then living he had been dubbed "Bradlaugh turned Baedeker" by one resident who insisted on Whymper's likeness to the late Charles Bradlaugh, and was aware that the Great Mountaineer had written various "Guides." Another name by which he was known was "The Sphinx," possibly because of his silence, his aloofness, and the mystery with which he was supposed to surround himself. To the good folk of the town he was indeed always something of an enigma. In the street he stalked straightforwardly along, looking only in front of him, set of mouth, stony of eye and severe of brow, if anyone either spoke to, or stared at him. On the journey up to London, when most people read their morning paper, he was rarely seen with a newspaper in his hand, but stared, pipe in mouth, out of the window, except when going through proofs or working at papers which he produced from a black leather bag, without which he

was never seen in the train. On the journey down, when work for the day was done, his would-be sociable fellow passengers found Whymper taciturn and reticent, responding, or rather not responding, to any conversational advance, if possible, in a monosyllable.

The town in question was Southend, where he lived in Cliff Town Parade, and I, ten minutes' walk away at Westcliff. Though he contended that there was no place within fifty miles of London with such fine air, and though he never wearied (like Robert Buchanan, who, as well as his brother poet, Sir Edwin Arnold, was at one time a resident of Southend) of extolling the atmospheric effects of sunshine and shadow upon the saltings, and though (again like Buchanan, who had said as much to me) he vowed that nowhere else in England were there to be seen more glorious pageants of sunrise and sunset —to the people of Southend, especially to his fellow travellers on the railway, he had taken an implacable dislike. When in London I was first introduced to him, he and I fell out upon the subject. Hearing that I lived at Southend, he asked me whether I did not agree with him that nowhere else would one meet such objectionable folk as those who journeyed backward and forward to town.

I replied that though Southend had no claim to be the home of rank and fashion (overrun as it was and is, during the summer months, by swarming hordes of East End trippers), I had found my fellow travellers and the residents generally —of the middle classes as they admittedly were—cordial, sociable, and kindly, and that for my part, so far from feeling

as he did, I liked them and had many friends among them.

This for some reason exasperated Whymper, who launched out in fierce abuse of his unoffending fellow townsmen.

"My good sir," he stormed, "I ask you where else in England, where else in God's world if you like, will you come across such a collection and crew of defaulting solicitors, bagmen, undischarged bankrupts, shady stockbrokers and stock jobbers, potmen, pawnbrokers and publicans as on that particular railway which you and I use?"

I did not agree with him, and told him so plainly if courteously, whereupon, seeing that I was more amused than annoyed by his storming, he suddenly turned good-tempered, diverted the conversation into other channels, and when we parted was quite friendly.

His attitude on this occasion, as I afterwards discovered, was characteristically Whymperian. He could respect a man who stood up to him and was undismayed by his storming; he had "no use," as the Americans say, for one who was ready cheaply and insincerely to profess himself entirely in agreement. He would at any time rather be bearded than humoured, and the fact that on our first meeting I refused to be browbeaten was, I now believe, one of the reasons why he and I thereafter became good friends.

One picture of Edward Whymper, as I saw him many times, is vivid in my memory. The morning train to town is on the point of starting, the guard has waved his flag, blown his whistle, and is urging late comers

to "hurry up." Along the platform, indifferent to the guard's frantic arm-waving, never lengthening his step by so much as one inch, never quickening his pace by as much as by one second, but strolling as leisurely as if the train were not to start for an hour, and looking at each carriage for the face he is seeking, walks a closely-knit, sturdily-built man of middle height. His dress is unusual, as he is well aware, accounting for it once by reminding me of a great nobleman who, equally eccentric in the matter of dress, remarked, "Where I live, every one knows who and what I am, so it doesn't matter what I wear. In London no one knows who and what I am, so I am equally free to please myself."

More often than not Whymper, when going to town, wore a black greatcoat over a woollen sweater, and had a brown seal fur cap with lapels pulled down over the ears and fastened under the chin, for, like many who have spent much time in Canada, he felt colder in the damp and foggy climate of England, even when the temperature is moderate, than he did in the drier, clearer atmosphere of the Great Dominion, and when the thermometer stands at 40 degrees below zero.

But unusual as are a fur cap and sweater, when worn as I have seen Whymper wear them even when journeying to London, at the height of the season, they struck one as less incongruous than the ill-brushed, out-of-date silk hat in which, with black leather or cloth leggings, he occasionally weirdly arrayed himself. He sees my face at the window, stops, and, as leisurely as he had walked, enters the carriage and seats himself opposite to me, his back

to the engine. To me he merely nods, or if on that occasion inclined to be loquacious, goes so far as to say "Good morning," but never another word. The other occupants of the compartment he either entirely ignores or favours with a baleful glare. Then he puts his bag upon his knee, produces a packet of biscuits, and, looking out of the window all the time, munches them with jaws that move as rhythmically and methodically as if run by clockwork. His breakfast of dry biscuits finished, he dives into his bag for a flask, solemnly unscrews the stopper, as solemnly lifts the flask to his mouth, takes a drink, smacks his lips, replaces the stopper in the flask and then the flask in the bag, snaps the lock and puts the bag at his side. This done, he fishes in his pocket for pipe, tobacco and matches, charges and lights his pipe, takes with evident enjoyment two or three long draws at it, sniffing possibly with relish and with open nostrils at the smoke which rises from the bowl, settles himself comfortably in his corner, and then, and not till then, turns to me with a cheery "Well, and how are you this morning?" I reply with equal cheeriness, and probably the whole way up to town we talk—only we two—incessantly.

But had I, *before* he had munched his biscuits, swigged at his flask, replaced the latter in his bag, lit his pipe and settled himself in the corner, addressed him in any way, I should have had the shortest of answers, and the chances are that for the rest of the journey he would have remained silent. That was Edward Whymper's way, and a man who liked more to have his own way I never met. My liking was for himself, not for his ways;

but since it was his whim to be let alone, to speak to no one and to be spoken to by no one until he had breakfasted and lit his pipe, I was quite willing so to let him go his own way, knowing that soon the oracle would speak of its own accord, and would say many things which were well worth anyone's attention and hearing.

II

" In the *Memoir of Tennyson* by his son, there will be a letter—only one—to myself," said Whymper to me in 1897. " Except for the fact that it was one of the last, if indeed not the very last letter Tennyson penned, it doesn't strike me as being important enough for inclusion. But it has a curious history. I had sent Tennyson a copy of one of my books, *Travels among the Great Andes of the Equator*. Here is his reply. I'll read it to you :

' DEAR SIR,

' Accept my thanks for your most interesting volume. I don't think I have been higher than about 7000 feet, and so I look on your Chimborazos and Cotopaxis with all the greater veneration.

' Yours very truly,

' TENNYSON.'

" Now you can hardly call that a characteristic or even a particularly interesting letter," continued Whymper, " but the writing appears to have given the poet some trouble, for the present Lord Tennyson tells me that, after his father's death, he found several drafts of it, I think he said six, in a blotting

pad. It was, as I say, one of the last, if not the very last letter Tennyson ever wrote, and one of two things about it is true. Either his approaching end had so affected his powers that he found it difficult to frame even an ordinary letter of acknowledgment, or else, realising that his letters would one day inevitably be collected and printed, he was too fastidious an artist to let even a casual note of thanks come from his pen without striving to impart to it some touch of distinction and originality, some turn of a phrase which would give a hint of the power and the personality of the writer. What's *your* solution of the problem ? "

As I had no solution to offer, Whymper told me another story of Tennyson, which by this time may or may not—I do not know—have got into print.* But even if so—since I first heard it when it was quite new, and since stories of the sort get varied in the telling—there is some probability that Whymper's version is the correct one. I set it down, as nearly as I can recollect, as he told it.

At a garden party, a rather gushing young girl went up to the hostess and said : " Oh, is that really, as I'm told, Lord Tennyson sitting there by himself smoking on that rustic seat ? " " Yes, my dear, that is he," was the reply. " He occasionally does me the honour of calling to see me, and dropped in, not knowing that I was entertaining to-day." " Oh, I should so like to meet him. Do introduce me," said the girl. " My dear, Lord Tennyson hates to be bothered by strangers," answered the hostess.

* Since this was written, I have told the story in a brief sketch of Whymper that was published in a monthly magazine.

"And one reason perhaps why he comes to see me is that he knows I never exploit him in that way." "Oh, but I should love to be able to say I've met him," persisted the other. "Well, *say* you have met him and leave it at that," was the answer. "Here you are and there he is, so it won't be altogether untrue. He won't trouble to contradict it if he ever heard it, which is not likely, and I'm sure I shan't."

The girl, however, would take no refusal. Nothing would content her but actually meeting and speaking to Tennyson, so losing patience her hostess said: "Very well. If he is rude to you—as he can be to people who force themselves upon him—your blood be upon your own head. You can't say I haven't warned you. Come along." "Lord Tennyson," said the hostess when the two had walked together to the seat where the Laureate was smoking, "this is Miss B——, daughter of an old friend of mine, who is very, very anxious to have the honour of saying How-do-you-do to you." "How-d'you-do?" responded Tennyson gruffly, and scarcely looking up.

Seating herself beside him the girl attempted awkwardly to carry on some sort of conversation, but, as all she got in reply was an occasional "Humph!" or else stony silence, she lost her nerve and began, schoolgirl-wise, to wriggle and fidget in her seat. Then the Great Man spoke. "You're like the rest of them," he grunted, "you're laced too tightly. I can hear your stays creak." Abashed and embarrassed the girl withdrew. Later in the afternoon Tennyson came behind

her, and laying a hand on her shoulder, said kindly, "I was wrong just now, young lady. It wasn't your stays I heard creaking, but my braces. They're hitched up too tightly. Sorry." And he lounged away.

The story may not be new and may not be true, but Whymper found huge enjoyment in the telling of it, possibly because he had himself the reputation of sharing Tennyson's dislike to the intrusive stranger. To speak plainly indeed, Whymper could be very rude, as witness the following incident. He invited me once to accompany him to a lecture given by a great climber. Soon after we had entered the hall and before the lecture commenced, a man, whom Whymper told me later he was sure he had never set eyes on, bustled up to where we were sitting, and extending a hand said effusively :

"Oh, how-do-you-do, Mr. Whymper? You won't remember me, but I had the pleasure of meeting you in Switzerland."

"No, I certainly don't remember having had the pleasure of meeting you," was Whymper's caustic reply. "And I assure you my memory is of the best."

"Ah, I was afraid you wouldn't remember me," answered the other still unabashed. "It was at Zermatt. I knew your friend Leslie Stephen very well."

"Possibly," answered Whymper drily. "The question is whether my friend Mr. Leslie Stephen would be equally sure that he knew *you*."

III

If ever a man carried out in practice the precept : " To know yourself is wisdom ; not to know your neighbours is genius," that man was Edward Whymper.

He had, it is true, a knack of scraping and continuing acquaintance with neighbours and fellow residents entirely out of his own station. From a barber, a bird stuffer, a boatman or a net-mender he would acquire a lot of out-of-the-way information, and indeed would chat to them by the hour, if not exactly with joviality, at least without the somewhat pompous precision which at other times and in other company he affected. But during the thirteen years in which I was living at Westcliff and Whymper was living at Southend, I was, I believe, the only neighbour or fellow resident whose home he ever entered or who was invited to visit his house. If I use the word " house " rather than " home " of the building in which he passed much of his life, it is not merely because he had chambers at St. Martin's House, Ludgate Hill, but because a more unhomelike place than Whymper's Southend residence can hardly be imagined. To ensure solitude and quiet he had made an arrangement by which he took practically the whole of what is called an " apartment house." It was a tall building with basement rooms below and at least three storeys above. In the top storey Whymper himself lived, and in the very bottom, the basement in fact, his housekeeper or landlady and her family had their

rooms. All the intervening storeys were by Whymper's command left vacant. The windows, except the basement, were curtainless, and Whymper's own room was carpetless and barrack-bare except for a few necessary pieces of furniture, and photographs of his own taking—peaks he had climbed, mountain wastes and wildernesses he had explored, scenes on the Canadian Pacific Railway and the like. On the floor was a rolled-up mattress, to which he pointed. "That," he said, with a queer smile twisting at the turned-down corners of his mouth, "is my bed. The rugs and pillow are inside. At night I unroll the thing, and there I am. What could be simpler?"

And here I may remark that his habits in the matter of sleeping were, like his habits in the matter of meals, unusual. Four o'clock in the afternoon was his favourite and not unfrequent hour for dining, after which he would sometimes go to bed, getting up again late in the evening for the nocturnal rambles which he loved. I have often heard him expatiate eloquently on the joys of finding himself afoot and alone when more conventional folk were abed, and I have known him extend his tramps from past midnight till day was breaking.

That he and I came eventually to know each other well, and to see each other frequently was due, I am convinced, entirely to the fact that after our introduction, except to nod when we passed in the street or met at the railway station or in the train, I left him severely alone. That, as I now know, though I was unaware of it at the time, was the surest passport to his favour. Rude even to bear-

ishness as he could on occasion be, Whymper would sometimes go out of his way to show courtesy and even to enter into conversation with an entire stranger. But in all such cases *the advance must come from him.* If it came from the other, he was at once on his dignity, withdrawing as instantly into his shell as an alarmed snail. No curled hedgehog could present a more prickly front than when in a train, in a club, or elsewhere, some representative of the lion-hunting fraternity, or of that class of person who dearly loves to claim acquaintance with a celebrity, made overtures to him; whereas, left to himself, it often happened that, like the hedgehog, he would of his own accord uncurl.

It was so in my own case. Instead of merely nodding when we met, he took to stopping to exchange a few words, telling me on one occasion that I had very much alarmed him.

"How?" I inquired.

"I have been reading a little book of yours, called *A Book of Strange Sins,*" he answered. "From the moment I first heard of it I was in terror lest my own most secret and dearest sin had been exposed and laid open to the light of day. But in searching its pages anxiously and fearfully, I was relieved, not to say reprieved, to find that my particular vices have escaped your notice."

Then, finding that though making no claim to be a mountaineer I had done some small amount of climbing in Switzerland and elsewhere, and finding, moreover, that I made no further advances, he took to joining me on my way backward and forward to the station, becoming more and more friendly at

each meeting, and finally he got in the habit of looking out for me that he and I might travel up and down together. Then he wrote :

" Come and crack a flask with me on Sunday next any time you like after 8.30 p.m."

I accepted the invitation, of which he again reminded me when I met him in the street next day.

" Don't forget," he said, " that you are supping with me on Sunday any time that suits you after half-past eight."

At half-past eight on Sunday I was with him.

" I know you are a smoker," he said, producing a parcel of fat and long Manilla cigars, each carefully cased in silver paper.

They had been in his possession, he told me (I could well believe it), for twenty-five years, and better cigars I have never smoked. Then, as he happened to be in the mood for talking and I am a good listener, he talked incessantly, incisively and brilliantly till nine, ten, eleven had come and gone, when frankly I began to feel hungry, and no sign of supper. Twelve and half-past twelve came, and I fear my attention wandered, for I was trying to recall the condition of the joint which had done duty among my own hungry family some twelve hours before. Should the same joint have reappeared at the table for the usual Sunday night " cold supper," the chances were that on returning home I should be reduced to piratical raids upon the larder in search of bread and cheese.

" And now, what do you say to supper ? " said Whymper, laying down the pipe at which

he had been puffing with curious and rhythmic regularity.

In smoking, as in everything else, he was methodical, and had one counted the seconds that passed between each puff, the intervals would have been nearly identical.

Had I answered him truthfully I should have replied, "Say? What can I say except 'Thank heaven!' and that I'm starving?" instead of which I answered with apparent politeness but hidden irony:

"Thank you. When you're quite ready."

I regretted it the next moment, for, taking me too literally at my word, he resumed his pipe, relighted it, and pointing the stem at a photograph of himself upon the mantelshelf, remarked:

"I'm extraordinarily particular about small matters. Does anything strike you in that portrait?"

"It's a very good likeness," I sighed, with a strange sinking of the inner man, "and very characteristic, inasmuch as you are smoking, if I mistake not, that very pipe."

He smiled cryptically.

"Does nothing else strike you? Look again!"

I groaned inwardly, but looked.

"And the same suit?"

"Anything else?"

"Well," I said desperately, "you look so cheerful, so well fed and so happy, that I can only suppose you had just had your supper. Now as I lunched at one o'clock and haven't had as much as a sup of tea since, I'm horribly hungry, and in want of mine."

Saying no more than a mere "Come along," and carrying the pipe and the photograph in his hand, he led the way into the next room, where supper—all cold—was upon the table. But such a supper! Anchovies, chicken, calves' foot jelly, clotted Devonshire cream and other delicacies, with rare old Burgundy and the best of champagne.

When I had been abundantly helped, Whymper took up the photograph, and again pointing at it with the pipe-stem, said:

"What I wondered was whether you'd notice that the smoke coming from the bowl of the pipe has been painted-in upon the negative. There was no smoke visible in the original picture. When you get to know me better you'll find that I'm slow and methodical but minutely accurate, even about little things. I think you told me once that you set some store by the many signed portraits that have been given to you by your literary friends. Since the portrait was the cause of keeping you from your supper, and if you'd care to add so uncouth a face as mine to your gallery, I'll give it you. But I'll sign it first."

It was well that he had warned me that he was slow and methodical. Never was there such a business as the signing of that portrait. First he carefully washed and examined his pen, trying it at least half a dozen times upon a sheet of note-paper. Then the ink did not run as freely as it should, and further protracted operations of a cleansing and refilling nature were necessary. Next a book on which to rest the picture and a blotting-pad had to be found and placed in position. Then, after further

and repeated trial-trips of his pen upon the harbour waters of a sheet of note-paper, he launched his craft upon the big seas and settled down seriously to the business of signing the photograph. Had it been a death-warrant or a cheque for £100,000 to which he was momentously affixing a signature, he could not have gone to work more carefully. In a round, neat, clerkly hand he slowly and laboriously penned his name "Edward Whymper" with the date beneath the portrait—and the deed was done.

I have described thus lengthily the slow and methodical way in which he set about signing this photograph for the reason that, trivial as the incident may seem, it is illustrative of the character and methods of the man. He walked slowly, thought slowly, worked slowly, and talked slowly, not because of any sluggishness of brain or body, but because every word, every action, was calculated and deliberate. It was because he was so slow that he was so sure. Just as in mountaineering he never moved a step until he was certain of the foothold in front of him, so in conversation he never spoke before he thought.

Artist as he originally was by profession, lecturer and mountaineer as, either by chance or by circumstance, he afterwards became, by temperament he was essentially a man of science; and even in casual conversation he hated what was slipshod, random, or inexact. He was an admirable listener to anyone who was speaking from knowledge; and I have often admired the courtly, if somewhat stately, attention he would accord to those who spoke, and with authority upon some subject on which Whymper

himself was not an expert. But when the conversation was mainly in his hands, he liked to feel that he was chairman as well as principal speaker at the meeting, and would never allow the talk to run off at a tangent. If his companion ventured an opinion upon some side issue which the conversation had suggested, Whymper would pull him up magisterially by interposing, "You were saying just now that you thought so and so. We will, if you please, confine ourselves to that side of the matter before opening up another." Courteously as he phrased it, his "if you please" was peremptory rather than persuasive, and so in a sense was merely formally polite.

IV

Of all the men I have ever known, none so habitually refrained from talking shop as Whymper. Hence of Whymper the mountaineer—and mountaineering was in a sense with him a profession—as well as of Whymper the artist and the lecturer, I have nothing of interest to say. One reason perhaps is that of mountaineering I know comparatively nothing and of art even less. Of Whymper the lecturer I am more competent to speak, as for ten years I was his fellow lecturer, constantly either preceding or following him upon the same platform all over the country. We were both in the hands of the same agent, I might say the only agent, for Mr. Gerald Christy may be said to control the lecture field and practically to be without a rival. Hence as a fellow Christy minstrel (as Mr. Christy's lec-

turers, musicians and entertainers are sometimes called) Whymper and I might be supposed occasionally to compare notes. But though he was interested to hear of my lecturing experiences he rarely spoke of his own.

Of one provincial platform and Press experience, however, he was incontinently communicative and explosive. He lectured for a Young Men's Society (not the Y.M.C.A. as was stated in some subsequent Press notices) at the Claughton Music Hall, Birkenhead. At either side of the platform was a door leading into a small room for the use of artistes. In the room on the right a cheerful fire had been hospitably lit, by order of the committee, the unoccupied room on the left being without a fire and in total darkness. Between these two rooms and leading out of each, was a flight of stairs, meeting in the centre and then continuing in one flight down to the ground floor of the building, where was a back exit. Whymper, who was given to "exploring" on a small scale, as well as a vast one, must needs find out what was in the unlighted room as well as in the lighted and fire-warmed room which had been placed at his disposal. ("Please bear in mind," the secretary of the society subsequently wrote to me, "that he had no business to be poking into the place at all.")

Having examined, so far as he could in the dark, the unoccupied room, Whymper then opened the door leading out to the stairs, the flare of the fire on the opposite side throwing into shadow the staircase which lay between the two rooms. Thinking that there was a level passage from one room to the

other, he made to walk along it, and fell head first down the stairs, severely injuring his shoulder. So severe indeed was the injury, that the lecture had to be abandoned, and Whymper to be taken in a cab to his hotel and put to bed, where he remained a week. He was extremely angry and exasperated with the committee and the secretary, who were in no way to blame, but his exasperation then was as nothing to his fury when in a newspaper he read a notice of the incident. It was headed " One of Life's Little Ironies," and was to the effect that " though Mr. Whymper, who had made the first ascent of the Matterhorn when four of his companions had lost their lives, had probably climbed more dangerous peaks than any man living or dead, and without any serious mishap to himself, it was surely one of life's little ironies that he should receive his most serious hurt by falling off a platform while peacefully and presumably safely addressing a Y.M.C.A. audience in the provinces."

In one of Mr. W. W. Jacobs's delightful books he tells of a bargee whose language in hospital was so awful that " they fetched one of the sisters and the clergyman to hear it." As an Irishman who dearly enjoys the spectacle of " wigs on the green," I could have wished that the secretary and some of the committee of the Young Men's Society in question could have been present as I was when the newspaper paragraph quoted first came to Mr. Whymper's notice. The secretary humorously suggests that the fact that Whymper demanded payment of his doctor's bill and hotel expenses from the society, only to be politely told that the

accident was no affair of theirs, probably played some part in adding to the irritation and explosiveness with which Whymper read the paragraph and commentary upon the accident.

One other accident that befell him—though not in connection with lecturing—I may relate. He was, as every one knows, a keen naturalist as well as an entomologist, and when returning from Canada brought with him a squirrel, which in the seclusion of his cabin he used often to set free that he might study its ways as he studied the ways of all creatures whether free or in captivity. Aboard ship he was less able to indulge his eccentricities in the matter of unconventional hours for meals and for work than when on shore, but even there he would often read or work far into the night, making up for the consequent loss of sleep by snatching a nap at an hour when the majority of his fellow passengers were most wide awake. On one such occasion Whymper forgot to return the squirrel to its cage; and in frolicking round the cabin, and leaping from floor to berth, the little creature, having no fear of its master, scampered along his prostrate form, and in passing scratched slightly the sleeper's face. Apparently the squirrel had picked up some poisonous matter in the curve of its sharp claw, which getting into the scratch poisoned Whymper's face, so that for weeks, as he said, he was hideous to behold, and had, I believe, to cancel certain lecturing engagements.

"All my worse hurts," he said to me when describing the incident and waxing warm at the memory of the lecturing accident, to which I have already

referred, "came to me from some trivial cause. When there is real danger ahead, no one is more careful, more wary, or watchful than I. Luckily there was no member of the Young Men's Society present on this occasion, or the reptilian who sent paragraphs to the Press: 'Edward Whymper, the Great Mountaineer, falls off a lecturing platform and seriously injures himself,' would have earned a scurrilous half-dollar by paragraphing the Press with an announcement headed, 'Edward Whymper badly wounded by a squirrel.'"

I assured him that it was the nimble journalist, not any member of the Young Men's Society, who was responsible for the paragraph in question, but his wrath at the memory of the incident was not to be appeased, and, to whatever deserving institutions he may have left legacies, I do not anticipate that the Society in question was among them.

Whymper, as I have said, never or rarely talked shop, but he did talk—though never egotistically—of himself. He told me that he came of a Suffolk family, but could trace his descent, though he still had hopes of doing so, no farther back than his great-great-grandfather. The men of his race rarely married. When they did marry they were nearly always the fathers of girls. His brother Frank was, he told me, Postmaster-General of India. Speaking of his own extraordinary physical activity and stamina, he said that he had actually walked the entire length of the Canadian-Pacific Railway, being nearly killed once while doing so. I gathered that he had made more money out of certain businesses in which he was interested, especially a colour-

printing process, than from either lecturing or books, though his books and guide-book have of course had a great sale, and early editions of his mountaineering works fetch high sums among collectors. Unlike some authors, so far from having any grievance against publishers, he said that of Mr. John Murray he could not speak too highly, and that "going one better," as he put it, than Mrs. Bishop, the great traveller—who left in her will her copyrights in token of her appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Murray—he proposed while he was alive to make Mr. Murray a present of the copyright of some of his books. This purpose he did not, I now understand, carry into effect during his lifetime, but I believe I am correct in saying that at his death his copyrights were bequeathed to Mr. Murray. Speaking of his own career, he said that not mountaineering, nor exploring, nor authorship so fascinated him and gratified him as his discoveries in geology.

One of his geological anecdotes concerned a fossil forest in Greenland, which, when Whymper heard of it, he at once set out to explore. There he found a large fossil cone which he was at great pains to split into two halves, that he might the better examine it. It was sent to a certain famous German professor, an expert of world-wide reputation in fossil flora, who wrote saying that he attached much importance to the find, and asked Whymper to come to see him, which Whymper did. Producing the split cone, the professor pronounced it a magnolia, in fact two magnolias and of different species. "No, no," said Whymper. "One magnolia.

There can't be any doubt about that." "You are mistaken," said the professor curtly, annoyed at being contradicted. "I have put both under the microscope, and I assert positively that they are of a different species." "One," repeated Whymper. "Two," insisted the other. Then Whymper joined the two halves.

Next to geology Whymper seemed most interested in aneroids. It was a subject on which he—by no means a boastful man—claimed to be an expert and on which he purchased every book that was issued. Especially prized by him were two books on aneroids, one bought in Rouen, the other in Geneva by a Monsieur Pascal, whom Whymper said was generally believed to be the writer Blaise Pascal, but was in reality only a relative.

Of his mountaineering experiences he said but little, and never once during the thirteen years that I knew him did he of his own accord refer to the historic Matterhorn tragedy. He did, however, tell me of the circumstances under which he became a mountaineer.

"It was purely accidental," he said. "The idea of climbing had never occurred to me, one reason being, as you who have done some climbing yourself will readily appreciate, that it costs money; and I was then a young fellow with all his way to make in the world, and was looking out for a means to make money, not to spend it, and was in fact rather at my wits' end to know how to earn a livelihood. The profession I was supposed to follow was art, and even thus early my draughtmanship and woodcut work were, I think I may say,

creditable. Anyhow, more than one person who was competent to judge thought so, and in fact said so. It was owing to somebody saying so that I got the job which led to my becoming a mountaineer. There was a feeling among climbers that the record of their work required illustrating. They're human like the rest of the world, and some of them fancied that it would add to the éclat, the importance, and the heroism of their achievements if they could be depicted crossing a crevasse that yawned like a blue hell below them, holding on for dear life and like a fly to a wall against a perpendicular rock, with a sheer abyss and drop of a thousand feet beneath them, or skyed upon some heaven-piercing and hitherto inaccessible peak that made unclimbing folk turn sick and giddy to think of.

"You know the sort of thing—Professor Tyndall crossing the Great Crevasse, on this or that mountain, Mr. Leslie Stephen negotiating the most difficult and dangerous pass on t'other one, or somebody else setting the British flag on a hitherto unsurmounted peak. The question was how to do it and whom to get to do it. To-day they'd do it by photography; but photography wasn't then what it is now, and it was evident that their man would have to be a capable draughtsman, and that he'd have to be a man of nerve, stamina and power of endurance, as he also would have to do some climbing. Well, to cut a long story short, some one who had chanced to see my work in art and to think well of it, suggested me as a likely man. I was glad of a job and jumped at it, but once having started climbing, as I neces-

sarily had to, in six months I had climbed peaks that no one else had ever attempted; and that is the history in brief, if not the whole story, of how I became a climber."

V

Edward Whymper was a man of few friends, I had almost written of no friends, for though he was upon what, in the case of another man, would be described as terms of friendship with many of the world's most distinguished workers, and though he enjoyed their company and their intercourse as they enjoyed his, I should describe the bond which held him and them together as "liking" and interest in each other and in each other's achievements rather than as friendship in the closer sense of the word. The mould into which he was cast was austere, stern, and could be forbidding. He was a "marked" man wherever he went; and in all companies a man of masterful personality, who inspired attention and respect in every one, and something like fear in a few, but who, except in the case of children, rarely inspired affection. That he was aware his manner was not always conciliatory—was in fact at times forbidding—seems likely from a story which I have heard him tell on several occasions and always with infinite gusto.

"I was walking up Fleet Street one day," he began, pursing his lips, mouthing and almost smacking them over his words as if the flavour were pleasant to the palate, "when I chanced to see a sixpence lying upon the ground. Now

according to the law of the land, anything we find in the street is in a public place and must be taken to the nearest police station. I wasn't going to be at the bother of picking up a sixpence merely to take myself and it to the police station, so I cast an eye around and walking just behind me I saw a poor ragged devil without so much as a shirt to his back or a pair of shoes to his feet. I didn't require to speak or even to point to the sixpence. I just caught the fellow's eyes and looked with my own two eyes at the sixpence upon the pavement. That was quite enough. He followed my glance, saw the coin lying there, knew that my glance meant 'You can have it if you like,' and my good fellow was down on it in a moment. Well, I didn't stop to let the fellow thank me, but just walked on. It so happens, however, that I'm peculiarly sensitive to outside impressions. If I'm in the street and some one is taking stock of me, even though I can't see them, I'm conscious of it in a moment. If I'm in a hall, listening, say, to a lecture, and some one behind me has recognised me, or is interested in me for any reason, I'm just as aware of it as if I had eyes in the back of my head. Well, I passed up Fleet Street, and along the Strand till, approaching Charing Cross, I became suddenly aware that some one behind was watching me as if for a purpose. I turned, and there was my ragged, shirtless, bootless devil of a tramp, who had followed me all that way, poor devil, I supposed to thank me. So I thought it decent to slow my pace, and when he was just alongside of me I half turned to give him the chance to speak, and waited to hear what he had to say.

What do you think it was? To express his thanks? Not a bit. When he was level with me, he hissed, almost spat in my ear, 'You blank, blank, blankey blank, blank! too blanky proud blank, are you? to pick up a sixpence—blank you!'

"That, I said to myself at the time," continued Whymper, "is all the thanks you get for trying to do a good turn to the British vagrant. But, on thinking it over, I've come to the conclusion that there was something unintentionally offensive or shall we say patronising, in the way I looked at the man and then at the sixpence—something which he resented so bitterly that he had to follow me all that way to spit it out."

Another incident, which amused him at the time, happened when he and I had walked out from Southend to Shoeburyness, a distance of some four miles. It was on a Sunday morning, and when we arrived at Shoeburyness he remarked:

"I had some very salt bloaters for breakfast. Do you mind if, Sunday morning as it is, I call at the first inn to slake my thirst?"

"Of course not," I replied.

As it was within the prohibited hours when inns are closed except to *bona fide* travellers—by which is meant those who have travelled three miles from the place where they slept the previous night—we found the inn door closed. Whymper knocked sharply and loudly at it in his usual masterful way, and, when it was opened by a frowsy looking fellow in shirt sleeves, said dryly, in more senses than one:

"I am thirsty and want a drink, please."

"Are you *bona fide* travellers?" inquired the fellow.

"Well," remarked Whymper partly to the fellow and partly to me, "there was a time early in my career when some doubts were cast upon my qualifications as a mountaineer and even, upon my word, in regard to my statement as to what had happened, but, this is the first time I have been challenged in regard to my being a *bona fide* traveller. I'll say nothing about the qualification of my friend here, but considering that since the last time I passed this hostelry I have travelled some seven or eight thousand miles, I think I'm entitled to describe myself as a traveller in a very *bona fide* sense. As a matter of fact, we have come from Southend this morning, which I believe is outside the statutory three miles. Do I look, my good fellow, like a man who'd tell you a lie about a thing like that?"

"I don't know," replied the man looking Whymper very hard in the face, "but I'll tell you what you do look like if you wish. You look to me like a man who if he'd made up his mind to have a drink would have it whether he was a *bona fide* traveller or not, and wouldn't let no one else stop him from having it, and that's more."

"I observe, my man," said Whymper sententiously, as the door was opened to admit us, "that you are no indifferent judge of character, but I am curious also to know whether you are disposed to have a drink yourself."

The man's answer, in Parliamentary parlance, was in the affirmative

VI

At what I am now about to say of Edward Whymper, he would himself either have hooted with cynical ridicule or else would have heard with a slow and cold smile of amused scorn, but to me his was a sad, gloomy, if not indeed a pathetic figure. I do not say this because he was a lonely man—and in all life I have met no one who was quite as lonely as he—but because he walked always in the shadow of self. I am not implying that he was selfish, for he was not. In his business transactions—albeit not an easy man to "best," and not above driving a hard bargain with those whom he distrusted—he was not only as good as his word, but was the soul of integrity and honour. Prepared as he was to fulfil his share of the contract to the letter, he expected and required that others should do the same. Yet when dealing with those who had treated him handsomely he could be quixotically generous. Even to those to whom he owed nothing, he did many unselfish kindnesses for which he expected no gratitude, and was prepared to go unrequited. While the professional mendicant was sternly and mercilessly shown the door, the deserving poor he was always, if stealthily and secretly, ready to help.

Yet, looking back on him as I knew him all those years, I ask myself whether there was really one being in the world who really "mattered" to Edward Whymper, or by whose death his serenity would have been disturbed. It was Robert Montgomery, I believe, who wrote a poem in which he

pictured the tragic loneliness of "the last man" left alone in the world.

Had it been possible, by some such universal cataclysm as, say, a world-wide earthquake, for every living creature, with one exception, to perish off the face of the earth, and had Edward Whymper been that one exception, I verily believe that, whistling softly to himself at the wonder of it all, he would, with untrembling fingers, calmly have filled and lit his pipe, and have sat down, were anything left to sit upon, to contemplate the ruins of a world, and then, first of all, to consider how to get his next meal, and, after that, to think out how to accommodate himself to the unusual and inconvenient circumstances in which he found himself. Nor would he have forgotten, with such instruments as happened to be within reach, to take such astronomical and meteorological bearings as he thought would prove valuable in the interests of science.

It is of course preposterous and inconceivable to suppose any such situation as I have imagined, and some of my readers may reasonably suppose that I am either laughing at them or wishing them to laugh at Whymper or myself. I assure them I am doing nothing of the sort, for, with no inconsiderable knowledge of the man, I honestly believe that in such circumstances he would have behaved exactly as I have said. They are magnificent, those qualities of absolute self-dependence, self-containment and self-contentment which Whymper possessed, but to me at least and at times they seemed almost superhuman. He walked, as I have said, in the shadow of self; was content so to walk, and apparently had

no conception of and no wish to live a life to the happiness or sorrow of which it was in the power of others to contribute. A man who can so isolate himself is possibly to be envied, even if it never occurred to him that he is also to be pitied. Yet in spite of the fact that he was perfectly satisfied with his lot in life, and in living that life according to the cut-and-dried system by which he ordered it, and in spite, too, of the fact that he would have assured one that he was, and indeed believed himself to be, a happy man, Edward Whymper was, as I have said, not only the loneliest but the most pathetic human creature I have ever known.

VII

Whymper's comments upon his contemporaries and their work were always exceedingly penetrative. Of some he spoke very generously but never effusively, of others critically and of a few sarcastically. I well remember the cynical smile with which he called my attention to an inscription in a presentation volume. It had been sent to him by a well-known writer, of whom I say no more than that he had once held a very distinguished position in the Society of Authors. The inscription ran: "To Edward Whymper, Esq. with the author's complements," and as I write, I seem to see Whymper's squarish finger stubbed under the guilty "e" in compliments. No one did he seem to hold in greater respect and regard than Mr. Edward Clodd, of whom he once spoke to me as "not only a profound thinker and scholar and brilliant writer, but a loyal

and true friend and the intimate associate of many of the great men of our time." I remember once inviting Whymper to be my guest at a dinner in town, and mentioning that Clodd was to be of the party.

"You know," said he, "how generally I hum and ha when anyone asks me to a function or a dinner, and that I'd rather at any time dine on bread and cheese and in pyjamas (which he often wore in the house) here in Southend than be at the trouble of getting into a black coat and journeying up to London to eat a ten-course dinner. But, if Clodd is to be one of your guests, I'm your man."

I had only three guests, Whymper, Mr. Clodd, and Mr. Warwick Deeping, and the two older men who had not met for a very long time had so much to say about celebrities who were the friends of both, and of historic former meetings, that Deeping (always a silent man by choice) and myself (host though I was) were content for the most part to listen. Apart from his wish to see an old friend whom he held in great respect, Whymper had, if I am not mistaken, another and more personal reason for accepting my invitation to meet Clodd at dinner, which is why I refer to that otherwise unimportant function.

And this brings me to a somewhat painful incident of which, when Whymper was alive, I was occasionally reminded, always to his disparagement, by literary friends. If I touch briefly upon it here, it is not because I wish to rake up an old story, which, inasmuch as it concerns two distinguished men who are both dead, might very well be forgotten, but because since Whymper's death it has again been

going the rounds, and because I have an explanation to put forward in regard to what happened.

Whymper was on a certain occasion—it is no use mincing matters—unpardonably rude to one whom Sir Arthur Conan Doyle once described to me as "the most modest, the most unassuming, and at the same time the most learned man I have ever known"—the late Grant Allen. It was my privilege to know and to be the guest of Grant Allen in his home, and I am of opinion that he was not only the most modest, most unassuming, and most learned, but also the gentlest, most generous, and most lovable of men. Meeting Whymper at a dinner—I was not present, but in common, I expect, with some of my readers I have heard the story often—Allen quite innocently, and never dreaming that the question could give offence, asked Whymper concerning the historic accident on the Matterhorn, to be told curtly that the accident was his own business, and he did not choose to discuss it.

Unpardonably rude, as I have said, as such a reply was, and to such a man as Allen, that rudeness is, I fancy, capable of explanation. To those who knew Whymper only slightly and—overlooking the sensitive breathing nostrils, so wide and circular at the opening—saw only the cold hardness of his face and eyes, the rat-trap-like snap of mouth and jaw, he seemed a man of iron; and this impression the story of his indomitable courage, his dogged determination to succeed where others had failed, went far to confirm. That such a man, a man rough-hewn as he seemed out of block granite, and with sinews of steel, could be cognisant of the fact that

he had " nerves," much less could suffer from them, would occur to no one. None the less, I happen to know that the shock of that tragedy in early life among the Alps, when, powerless to help them, he had to stand inactively by and see his companions hurled to certain death, left its mark upon him to the end of his life, and was sometimes re-enacted in his dreams. In his later years, when his iron constitution began to weaken and when his nerves were less steady than of old, any sudden reference to that early tragedy would, in his more irritable moments, annoy and anger him, and I am convinced that it was in such conditions his rude and surly rebuff to Grant Allen was spoken. That Whymper afterwards regretted it I have reason to know. I believe that it was because Clodd was the close and devoted friend of Allen, and had, moreover, been present when the rebuff was administered, and had been pained by it, that Whymper was anxious to meet Clodd, either for the reason that—indifferent as he generally was to what others thought of him—he was for once anxious to efface any bad impression that the incident had created, or because he hoped to have some opportunity of speaking of Allen (he was too proud a man to have written to Allen direct) in such a way as to mend matters.

That this is not mere surmise on my part I am convinced from what I have myself heard Whymper say and from the way he afterwards spoke of Allen. He was, as I say, a proud man, a taciturn man, and sometimes a rude man, but at heart he was just; and unnecessarily and undeservedly to have given pain to another troubled him as much, if not more, than

anything *could* trouble one whom few things outside himself could affect.

Since writing the above I ventured to submit a draft of this paper to my friend Mr. Clodd, whose very interesting reply I have permission to quote as written:

MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

I read the enclosed last night. Like Cromwell, Whymper would say, "Paint me, warts and wrinkles and all," and you have done as he would have wished, producing a faithful and withal sympathetic portrait.

I have just queried an obscure sentence here and there, but have not touched the punctuation, which I presume has had your attention in the original.

I don't know whether the Tennyson story has appeared in print. Edmund Gosse told it to me years back. Of course the son wouldn't admit anything conveying an idea of his father's gruffness. When I referred to the *Life* as a Biography, Meredith said to me, "Don't call it that: 'tis only a Eulogy." What I now remember about the Allen rebuff is that Whymper had been lecturing in various places, and that Allen—who was thinking of making money that way—asked him about his fees. And this Whymper wouldn't tell him. On the same occasion, Hardy being of the company, Whymper narrated in detail the Matterhorn catastrophe, which gave Hardy the impetus to a sonnet. Whymper was the only man Hardy ever expressed the desire to meet again—hence their coming to me in the Easter of 1910.

You truly assess him as a lonely man, but there was a soft place under a hard shell, and this comes

out in the tenderness towards children and all helpless things of which you speak. I am glad to have your witness to his liking for me. His visits to me remain a cherished memory.

Yours sincerely,

EDWARD CLODD.

I was under the impression, before receiving Mr. Clodd's very interesting letter, and from what Grant Allen told me of the rebuff, that it was the latter's question about the Matterhorn which caused the trouble. But the incident happened under Mr. Clodd's roof, and his memory is not likely to fail him. Possibly Allen had already annoyed Whymper by asking to be told the story of the Matterhorn, and the inquiry about lecture fees following upon that provoked Whymper's ready wrath. That he should thereafter voluntarily have described the ice accident to Mr. Thomas Hardy (at mention of whose honoured name I stand respectfully at salute) in no way surprises me, and in fact confirms what I have said in an earlier section of this paper to the effect that " the advance must always come from Whymper himself," that he was not indisposed to talk when left to himself, but was quick to suspect any appearance of being " exploited " or " drawn." That he resented having questions about the Matterhorn catastrophe suddenly sprung upon him I have reason to know, for I have more than once heard him snub, almost savagely, a tactless inquirer. Allen's question about fees (he was the last man in the world to be impertinent) may seem to some readers unwarrantable, but none of us in Mr.

Christy's list made any secret of the matter, as Allen—himself a lecturer, but not for Mr. Christy—was aware. On the contrary, Whymper asked me, soon after I first met him, what fees I received, telling me in return what his own handsome payments were.

There we will leave the comparatively trivial incident of his rudeness to Allen. I should not have written thus lengthily of it, but for the receipt of Mr. Clodd's letter, and because my picture of Whymper depends, for any faithfulness it has, not upon bold strokes of the brush, but upon the slow and careful painting in of comparatively unimportant but none the less cumulative details.

Edward Whymper was a man whom it was easy to misjudge, and was so misjudged of many if only for the reason that he would go out of his way to flatter, to please, or to pay court to none, or to be other than his natural self to all those with whom he was brought into contact. Rank and title, great social position, the power of the purse and the power of the Press, nor his own self-interests, could ever move Edward Whymper to seek the favour of those who for their own sake, or for the sake of what they have done, he did not already respect. Secure in the knowledge of his own just and honourable dealings with all men, and seeking only the approval of his conscience, he was content to go his own way in the world, a strange, strong, lonely, but in many respects a remarkable man—I think in force of character and determination the most remarkable man I have ever known. To me, as to many others of whom I am aware, he did many kindnesses and

showed constant friendliness, and if in the opinion of my readers I seem but ill to have requited these kindnesses and that friendliness, by drawing a faithful rather than a flattering picture of the man as I knew him, it is because he was too sincere, too honest, too genuine, too fearless to wish it otherwise. Let me, however, in concluding this sketch, give one more picture of him as I often saw him—a picture which I have purposely kept to the last for the reason that it shows him in a light which is probably all unknown to those who did not see him in his home and in his daily life, and because it is a memory of him upon which I like to linger.

Born bachelor as he always seemed to me—I left Westcliff shortly before his marriage, and did not know him and cannot imagine him as a married man—he was extremely fond of and invariably kind to children. With children he was another being, and, grim as he could be to grown-ups, children invariably liked and trusted him. My earliest experience of this was on the evening after my first supper with him. He had been to town, and, as I was walking towards the station to purchase an evening paper, I saw him stalking in front of me, arrayed in a black greatcoat and top hat and black leather leggings. In one hand he carried his bag, and by the other he clasped the hand of a tiny girl-child, poorly clad and hatless, whom he stooped to comfort as tenderly as could any woman, and in fact took out his own handkerchief to wipe away her tears. The little mite, who hailed from East London, had been sent by some charitable person

for a week by the sea to one of the many Holiday Homes for the Poor in Southend. How she had become lost I do not remember, but lost she certainly was, learning which Whymper had comforted, quieted, and coaxed her into telling him where her temporary home was, and when I met him he was on his way to take her there. My own stepson, then a lad of twelve and a cadet on H.M.S. *Worcester*, was devoted to him, being especially proud that the greatest of mountaineers was at the trouble of giving him lessons in climbing. Up and down the cliff slopes of Southend, Whymper marched the lad, impressing upon him the importance of always going at one steady and uniform rate, never, except under exceptional circumstances when haste was absolutely necessary, forcing the pace or indulging in sprinting; teaching him to walk from the hips mechanically and machine wise, so that no strain was put upon the heart and lungs, and instructing him in the control and use of the breath. When after the holiday the boy went back to the *Worcester*, he sent Whymper his autograph book, asking him to inscribe his name therein. In it, the man whom some people thought grim, surly, and morose, wrote: "I have been dying to see you again. When *are* you coming along? Edward Whymper. Feb. 24, 1905."

The boy whom Whymper always spoke of as his "friend" is at this moment serving his King and country in France as a soldier, throwing up his post in Canada directly war was declared. He is too young to feel—as some of us who are young no longer now, alas, feel, as has been said, that old

friends are the best, and it is to the grave we must go to find them; but he is only one of many to whom, when they were children, the dead man showed constant kindness, and who will to their life's end hold the name of the great mountaineer, who was also a true child-lover, in honour, gratitude, and affection.

OSCAR WILDE

"TO the memory of one who by some strange madness, beyond understanding, made shipwreck of his own life and of the life of others; one of whom the world speaks in whispers, but of whom I say openly that I never heard an objectionable word from his lips and saw in him at no time anything more vicious than vanity; to the memory of

OSCAR WILDE,

actor (in a great life tragedy as in everything else), artist (in more crafts than one, including flattery), poet, critic, convict, genius, and, as I knew him, gentleman: I dedicate these pages in memory of many kindnesses."

In these words I wished, soon after Wilde's death, to dedicate a book, but the publisher of the book in question was obdurate. He would not, he said, have Wilde's name on the dedication page of any work issued by him, and went so far as to urge me not to fulfil the intention I had even then formed of one day writing a chapter on Oscar Wilde as I knew him. Yet in Oscar Wilde as I knew him, as stated in the above dedication, except for his vanity there was no offence.

The preface, since my relations with the publisher of whom I speak were pleasant and friendly, I withdrew. If I have let sixteen years elapse before writing the chapter, it was for no other reason than that I felt the thing could wait—would perhaps be the better for waiting—and that the pressure of other work kept me employed.

But one day a man, who to my knowledge has eaten Wilde's salt and received many kindnesses from him in the season of Wilde's prosperity, called to see me concerning some literary project. On my shelves are books given and inscribed to me by Wilde and signed " from his sincere friend," and on my mantelshelf stands a portrait similarly inscribed and signed. Seeing this portrait, my caller observed:

" If I were you I should put that thing out of sight, and, if you happen at any time to hear his name mentioned, I should keep the fact that he had been a friend of yours to yourself."

That decided me to write my long delayed chapter. I begin by a protest. In his very interesting *Notes from a Painter's Life*, my friend Mr. C. E. Hallé speaks of Wilde's " repulsive appearance." At the time of Wilde's conviction some of the sketches of him, presumably made in court and published in certain prints, did so portray him, possibly because, as he was just then being held up to public execration, so to picture him fitted in with the popular conception. Mr. Hallé wrote " after the event " of Wilde's downfall, when it is easy not only to be wise, but also to see in the outer man some signs of the evil within. But from the statement that Wilde's appearance was " repulsive " I entirely dissent. It

is true there was a flabby fleshiness of face and neck, a bulkiness of body, an animality about the large and pursy lips—which did not close naturally, but in a hard, indrawn and archless line—that suggested self-indulgence, but did not to me suggest vice. Otherwise, except for this fleshiness and for the animality of the mouth, I saw no evil in Wilde's face. The forehead, what was visible of it—for he disposed brown locks of his thick and carefully parted hair over either temple—was high and finely formed. The nose was well shaped, the nostrils close and narrow —not open and " breathing " as generally seen in highly sensitive men. The eyes were peculiar, the almond-shaped lids being minutely out of alignment. I mean by this that the lids were so cut and the eyes so set in the head that the outer corners of the lids drooped downwards very slightly and towards the ears, as seen sometimes in Orientals. Liquid, soft, large and smiling, Wilde's eyes, if they seemed to see all things—life, death, other mortals and most of all himself—half banteringly, met one's own eyes frankly. His smile seemed to me to come from his eyes, not from his lips, which he tightened rather than relaxed in laughter. His general expression— always excepting the mouth, which, its animality notwithstanding, had none of the cruelty which goes so often with sensuality—was kindly.

The best portrait I have seen of Wilde is one in my possession which has never been published. It was taken when he was the guest of the late Lady Palmer (then Mrs. Walter Palmer), with whom I had at the time some acquaintance. She was a close friend of Wilde (who christened her " Moonbeam ")

and of George Meredith (whom she sometimes half-seriously, half-playfully spoke of as " The Master "). In the portrait, Lady Palmer is seated with Meredith, Mrs. Jopling Rowe being seated on her right and Mr. H. B. Irving on her left. Behind Meredith's chair stands Wilde with Miss Meredith (afterwards Mrs. Julian Sturgis), Sir J. Forbes-Robertson, and I think Mr. David Bisham on his right. The portrait of Wilde, if grave, is frank, untroubled, and attractive, for, when he chose to be serious, the large lines of his face and features sobered into a repose and into a massiveness which were not without dignity. Too often, however, Dignity suddenly let fall her cloak, and Vanity, naked and unashamed, was revealed in her place.

Yet there is this to be said of Wilde's vanity, that its very nakedness was its best excuse. A loin-cloth, a fig-leaf would have offended, but it was so artlessly naked that one merely smiled and passed on. Moreover, it was never a jealous or a malicious vanity. It was so occupied in admiring itself in the mirror that the smile on its face was never distorted into a scowl at sight of another's success. Wilde's vanity, I repeat, was as entirely free from venom as was his wit. No one's comments on society, on the men and women he met, the authors he read, were more incisive or more caustic, but I remember none in which the thought was slanderous or the intention spiteful.

A propos of Wilde's vanity, here is a story told me long ago by Lieutenant-Colonel Spencer, who then held a post of some sort in connection with the Masters in Lunacy. Visiting the Zoological Gardens

one day—in his private capacity, I assume, not in connection with the Lunacy Commission—he entered the Monkey House. Within the big cement wire enclosure a certain liveliness—the war phrase seems to have come to stay—was evident. What it was all about Colonel Spencer did not know, but with one exception the occupants were very excited, leaping wildly from end to end of the cage, and from top to bottom, jabbering, groaning, snarling, emitting shrill shrieks of terror or hoarse howls of rage.

The one exception was an evil-looking and elderly monkey which sat humped and brooding in a corner, absolutely motionless except for the twitching of his nostrils and the angry way in which he switched his eyes first upon what he apparently thought to be the staring human idiots outside, and then at the capering and noisy monkey imbeciles within. "What's the matter with that monkey?" Colonel Spencer inquired of a keeper. "Is he ill? He seems too bored even to scratch." The keeper shook his head. "No, he isn't ill, sir," he answered. "Wot's the matter with 'im, sir? Why, wanity." Then stirring up the sulking monkey with his cane, he added, "'Ere, get up—Hoscar Wilde!"

One day it was Wilde's caprice to amuse himself by talking the most blatantly insincere nonsense, directed against my own political views, and deliberately intended to "draw" me. He was in his most exasperating mood, exuding, or affecting to exude, egotism at every pore, and fondling, or making pretence to fondle, his vanity as some spinsters fondle a favourite cat. At last I could stand it no longer, and wickedly told him the story of Colonel Spencer's

visit to the Monkey House at the Zoo and the keeper's comment about the sulky monkey. "Wot's the matter with 'im, sir? Why, wanity. 'Ere, get up—Hoscar Wilde."

So far from being annoyed, Wilde simply rocked, or affected to rock with delight.

"I hoped once," he said, "to live to see a new shape in chrysanthemums or sunflowers, or possibly a new colour in roses, blue for choice, called after me. But that one's name should percolate even to the Zoological Gardens, that it should come naturally to the lips of a keeper in the Monkey House, is fame indeed. Do remind me to tell George Alexander the story. It will make him so dreadfully jealous."

And I answered grimly:

"Your game, Wilde!"

II

My friendship with Wilde was literary in its beginnings. Flattered vanity on my part possibly contributed not a little to it, for when I was a young and—if that be possible—a more obscure man even than I am now, Wilde, already famous, was one of the very first to speak an encouraging word. Here is the first letter I received from him:

16 TITE STREET, CHELSEA.

DEAR MR. KERNAHAN,

If you have nothing to do on Wednesday, will you come and dine at the Hotel de Florence, Rupert Street, at 7.45—morning dress, and chianti yellow or red!

I am charmed to see your book is having so great a success. It is strong and fine and true. Your next book will be a great book.

Truly yours,

OSCAR WILDE.

This letter, it will be observed, is undated. Apparently Wilde never dated his letters, for of all the letters of his which I have preserved not a solitary one bears a date, other perhaps than the name of the day of the week on which it was written, and that only rarely. He had the impudence once at a dinner-party, when taken to task by a great lady for not having answered a letter, to reply :

" But, my dear lady, I never answer or write letters. Ask my friend there, whose faithful correspondent I am." Then turning to me, he said, " Tell Lady —— when you heard from me last."

As I had heard from him that morning, I dissembled by saying :

" How can I answer that, Wilde, for among my other discoveries of the eccentricities of genius I have discovered that genius, at least as represented by you, never dates its letters. I never had one from you that was dated."

Not long after the receipt of this first letter, I proposed to write what I may call a " grown-up fairy story," and asked Wilde whether I might borrow as sub-title a phrase I had once heard him use of a fairy tale of his own making—" A Story for Children from Eight to Eighty." He replied as follows, then, as always, with a capital *D* for " dear " :

16 TITE STREET,
CHELSEA, S.W.

MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

I am only too pleased that any little phrase of mine will find a place in any title you may give to any story. Use it, of course. I am sure your story will be delightful. Hoping to see you soon.

Your friend,
OSCAR WILDE.

My story written and published, I despatched it cap in hand to carry my acknowledgments to the teller of supremely lovely fairy stories—imagined, not invented—from whom my own drab and home-spun-clad little tale had impudently "lifted" a beautiful sub-title to wear, a borrowed plume, in its otherwise undecorated hat.

Here is Wilde's very characteristic reply. It needs no signature to indicate the writer. No other author of the day would have written thus graciously and thus generously:

16 TITE STREET,
CHELSEA, S.W.

MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

I should have thanked you long ago for sending me your charming Fairy Tale, but the season with its red roses of pleasure has absorbed me quite and I have almost forgotten how to write a letter. However, I know you will forgive me, and I must tell you how graceful and artistic I think your story is—full of delicate imagination, and a symbolism suggestive of many meanings, not narrowed

down to one moral, but many-sided, as I think symbolism should be.

But your strength lies not in such graceful winsome work. You must deal directly with Life—modern terrible Life—wrestle with it, and force it to yield you its secret. You have the power and the pen. You know what passion is, what passions are. You can give them their red raiment and make them move before us. You can fashion puppets with bodies of flesh and souls of turmoil, and so you must sit down and do a great thing.

It is all in you.

Your sincere friend,

OSCAR WILDE.

That Wilde was an artist in flattery as well as an egotist, is not to be denied, but when quite early in our friendship I was shown by a certain woman poet a presentation copy of Wilde's book of poems inscribed "To a poet and a poem," and within the next few weeks saw upon a table in the drawing-room of a very beautiful and singularly accomplished woman, the late Rosamund Marriott-Watson ("Graham Tomson"), who was a friend of Wilde's and mine, a fine portrait of himself also inscribed "To a poet and a poem," I was not so foolish as to take too seriously the flattering things he said.

Egotist as Wilde was, his was not the expansive egotism which, in spreading its wings to invite admiration, seeks to eclipse and to shut out its fellow egotists from their own little place in the sun. Most egotists are eager only for flattery and applause. Wilde was equally eager, but he was ready for the time being to forget himself and his eagerness in

applauding and flattering others. Not many egotists of my acquaintance, especially literary egotists, write letters like that I have quoted, in which there is no word of himself, or of his own work, but only of his friend.

The last letter I ever received from Wilde is in the same vein. It is as usual undated, but as the play to which it refers was his first, *Lady Windermere's Fan*, I am, by the assistance of Mr. Stuart Mason's admirably compiled *Oscar Wilde Calendar*, enabled to fix the date as the middle of February, 1892.

HOTEL ALBEMARLE,
PICCADILLY, LONDON.

MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

Will you come and see my play Thursday night. I want it to be liked by an artist like you.

Yours ever,
O. W.

Wilde came to see me, I think, the morning after the production of the play, or at all events within a morning or two after, and hugged himself with delight when, in reply to his question, "Do tell me what you admired most in the play," I said:

"Your impudence! To dare to come before the footlights in response to enthusiastic calls—smoking a cigarette too—and compliment a British audience on having the unexpected good taste—for your manner said as plainly as it could, 'Really, my dear people, I didn't think you had it in you!'—

to appreciate a work of art on its merits! You are a genius, Wilde, in impudence at least if in nothing else."

"And you are a plagiarist as well as a flatterer," he replied. "You stole that last remark from a story you have heard me tell about Richard Le Gallienne. I'm going to punish you by telling you the story, for, though you stole part of it, I am sure you have never heard it. No one ever has heard the story he steals and calls his own; no one ever has read—the odds are that he will swear he has never heard of—the book from which he has plagiarised. Our friend Richard is very beautiful, isn't he? Wasn't it you who told me that Swinburne described him to you as 'Shelley with a chin'? I don't agree. Swinburne might just as well have described himself as 'Shelley without a chin.' No, it is the Angel Gabriel in Rossetti's National Gallery painting of the Annunciation of which Richard reminds me. The hair, worn long and fanning out into a wonderful halo around the head, always reminds me of Rossetti's angel. However, my story is that an American woman, in that terribly crude way that Americans have, asked Richard, 'Why do you wear your hair so long, Mr. Le Gallienne?' Richard is sometimes brilliant as well as always beautiful, but on this occasion he could think of nothing less banal and foolish to say than 'Perhaps, dear lady, for advertisement.' 'But you, Mr. Le Gallienne! You who have such genius!' Richard blushed and bowed and smiled until the lady added cruelly—'for advertisement!'"

Wilde was quite right in saying I had heard the

story before. It had been told me as happening to himself in America in the days when he wore his own hair very long, and I am of opinion that it was much more likely to have happened to Wilde, who was both a notoriety hunter and an advertiser, than to Le Gallienne, who is neither.

A propos of Wilde's love of advertising, I once heard the fact commented upon—perhaps rudely and crudely—to Wilde himself. Just as I was about to enter the Savage Club in company with a Brother Savage, who was well known as an admirer of Dickens, we encountered Wilde, and I invited him to join us at lunch.

"In the usual way," he answered, "I should say that I was charmed, but out of compliment to our friend here, I will for once condescend to quote that dreadful and tedious person Dickens and answer, 'Barkis is willin'.' Where are you lunching —Romano's?"

"No," I said, "the Savage Club."

"Oh, the Savage Club," said Wilde. "I never enter the Savage Club. It tires me so. It used to be gentlemanly Bohemian, but ever since the Prince of Wales became a member and sometimes dines there, it is nothing but savagely snobbish. Besides, the members are all supposed to be professionally connected with Literature, Science, and Art, and I abhor professionalism of every sort."

My Dickens friend, who shares every Savage's love for the old club (he told me afterwards, whether correctly or not I do not know, that Wilde's aversion was due to the fact that his brother Willie Wilde had unsuccessfully put up for membership), was

annoyed by what Wilde had said both about the club and about Charles Dickens.

"I can understand your dislike of professionalism —in advertisement, Mr. Wilde," he said bluntly. "And, since you have condescended to stoop to quote Dickens, I may add that, in the matter of advertisement, Barkis as represented by Wilde is not only willing but more than Mr. Willing the advertising agent himself. Good morning."

One other story of Wilde and Le Gallienne occurs to me. Wilde held Le Gallienne, as I do, in warm liking as a friend and in genuine admiration as a poet; but, meeting him one day at a theatre, bowed gravely and coldly and made as if to pass on. Le Gallienne stopped to say something, and, noticing the aloofness of Wilde's manner, inquired:

"What is the matter, Oscar? Have I offended you in anything?"

"Not offended so much as very greatly pained me, Richard," was the stern reply.

"I pained you! In what way?"

"You have brought out a new book since I saw you last."

"Yes, what of it?"

"You have treated me very badly in your book, Richard."

"I treated you badly in my book!" protested Le Gallienne in amazement. "You must be confusing my book with somebody else's. My last book was *The Religion of a Literary Man.* I'm sure you can't have read it, or you wouldn't say I had treated you badly."

"That's the very book; I have read every word

of it," persisted Wilde, "and your treatment of me in that book is infamous and brutal. I couldn't have believed it of you, Richard—such friends as we have been too!"

"I treated you badly in my *Religion of a Literary Man*?" said Le Gallienne impatiently. "You must be dreaming, man. Why, I never so much as mentioned you in it."

"That's just it, Richard," said Wilde, smilingly.

Here is a recollection of another sort. About the time when Wilde's star was culminating, he boarded a Rhine steamer on the deck of which I was sitting. The passengers included a number of Americans, one of whom instantly recognised Wilde, and seating himself beside the new-comer, inquired:

"Guess, sir, you are the great Mr. Oscar Wilde about whom every one is talking?"

Smilingly, but not without an assumption of the bland boredom which he occasionally adopted toward strangers of whom he was uncertain, Wilde assented. The other, an elderly man wearing a white cravat, may or may not at some time have been connected with a church. Possibly he was then editing some publication, religious or otherwise, and in his time may have done some interviewing, for he plied Wilde with many curious and even over-curious questions concerning his movements, views, and projects. The latter, amused at first, soon tired. His eyes wandered from his interviewer to scan the faces of the passengers, and catching sight of me made as if to rise and join me.

The interviewer, who had not yet done with

him, and was something of a strategist, cut off Wilde's retreat by a forward movement of himself and the deck-chair, in which he was sitting, so as to block the way. It was apparently merely the unconscious hitching of one's seat a little nearer to an interesting companion, the better to carry on the conversation, but it was adroitly followed by a very flattering remark in the form of a question, and Wilde relapsed lumpily into his seat to answer. For the next few minutes I could have imagined myself watching a game of "living chess." Wilde, evidently wearying, wished to move his king, as represented by himself, across the board and into the square adjacent to myself, but for every "move" he made his adversary pushed forward another conversational "piece" to call a check. At last, shaking his head in laughing remonstrance, Wilde rose, and the other, seeing the game was up, did the same.

"It has been a real pleasure and honour to meet you, sir," he said. "Guess when I get home and tell my wife I've talked to the great Oscar Wilde she won't believe me. If you would just write your autograph there, I'd take it as a kindness." He had been searching his pockets while speaking for a sheet of paper, but finding none opened his Baedeker where there was a blank sheet and thrust it into Wilde's hand.

The latter, with a suggestion in his manner of the condescension which is so becoming to greatness, scrawled his name—a big terminal Greek "e" tailing off into space at the end—in the book, and bowing a polite, in response to the other's effusive, farewell, made straight for a deck-chair next to me, and

plumping himself heavily in it began to talk animatedly.

Meanwhile, the interviewer was excitedly going the round of his party to exhibit his trophy.

"Oscar Wilde's on board, the great æsthete!" he said. "I've had a long talk with him. See, here's his own autograph in my Baedeker. There he is, the big man talking to the one in a grey suit."

The excitement spread, and soon we had the entire party standing in a ring, or perhaps I should say a halo, around the object of their worship, who though still talking animatedly missed nothing of it all, and by his beaming face seemed to enjoy his lionising. I suspect him, in fact, of amusing himself by playing up to it, for, seeing that some of his admirers were not only looking, but while doing their best to appear not to be doing so were also listening intently, his talk struck me as meant for them as much as for me. He worked off a witty saying or two which I had heard before, and just as I had seen him glance sideways at a big plate-glass Bond Street shop window to admire his figure or the cut of his coat, so he stole sideway glances at the faces around as if to see whether admiration of his wit was mirrored there.

Then he told stories of celebrities, literary or otherwise, of whom he spoke intimately, called some of them, as in the case of Besant and Whistler, by their Christian names, and so tensely was his audience holding its breath to listen, that when at Bingen he rose and said, "I'm getting off here," one could almost hear the held breath "ough" out like a deflating tyre.

No sooner was he gone than the interviewer seated himself in the deck chair vacated by Wilde, and inquired politely:

"Are you a lit-er-ary man, sir?"

"Why, yes," I said, "I suppose so, in a way. That's how I earn my living."

"May I ask your name?"

"Certainly," I said (meaning thereby "you may ask, but it does not follow that I shall tell you"). "I am afraid 'Brown' is not a very striking name, but don't tell me you have never heard it, for there is nothing so annoys an author as that."

He was a kindly man, and made haste to reassure me.

"I know it well," he protested. "Yours is not an uncommon name, I believe, in England. It is less common in the States. Your Christian name is—is—is—?"

"John," I submitted modestly.

His brow cleared. "Exactly," he nodded. "I know it well."

Then he seemed uncertain again, and looked thoughtfully but absently at a castle-crowned hill. I imagine he was running through and ticking off as the names occurred to him the list of all the illustrious John Browns. Possibly he thought of the author of *Rab and His Friends*, and decided that I was too young. Possibly of Queen Victoria's favourite gillie, who was generally pictured in kilts, whereas I wore knickerbockers.

"You have published books?" he asked.

I nodded.

"Only in England perhaps?"

"No, they have been issued in America too."

"Sold?"

"The people who bought them were," I said.

"Tell me the name of one of your books, please."

I shook my head.

"Can't. Not allowed."

"Not allowed? Why not?"

"Because," I answered, rattling off the first nonsense which came to my head, "I'm a member of the famous 'Silence Club,' the members of which are known as the W.N.T.S.'s. You have heard of the club of course, even if you haven't heard of me?"

"Yes," he said. "I feel sure I have; but I was never quite sure what it meant. What does W.N.T.S. stand for?"

"It means 'We Never Talk Shop.' An author who so much as mentions the title of his book except to his publisher, his bookseller, or an agent is unconditionally expelled."

Then I delivered my counter-attack. He had mentioned to Wilde that he hailed from Boston. It so happens that at my friend Louise Chandler Moulton's receptions I had met nearly every eminent Boston or even American author, so I put a few questions to my interviewer which showed an inner knowledge of Boston and American literary life and celebrities that seemed positively to startle him. He was now convinced that I was a celebrity of world-wide fame, and that such a comet should come within his own orbit, without his getting to know as much as the comet's name, was not to be endured by a self-respecting journalist. He literally agonised, as well as perspired, in his unavailing

efforts to trick, wheedle or implore my obscure name from me. For one moment I was minded to tell him my name if only to enjoy the shock of its unknownness, but I resisted the temptation and, tiring in my turn as Wilde had tired, I rose and said that as I was getting off at the next stopping place I would wish him "Good day." He did not even ask for John Brown's autograph. He even seemed suddenly in a hurry to get rid of me, the reason for which I afterwards discovered. He had, I suppose, heard me tell Wilde that my luggage was on board; and the last I saw of him was in the boat's hold, where he was stooping, pince-nez on nose, over the up-piled bags, boxes, dressing-cases and trunks, painfully raking them over, and every moment hoping to be rewarded by finding mine labelled "Robert Louis Stevenson," "Rudyard Kipling," "Algernon C. Swinburne" or "Thomas Hardy." I trust he found it.

When we were back in town I told Wilde my own adventure with the interviewer after the former had left the boat. His comment was:

"It sounds like a terrible serial story that I once saw in a magazine, each chapter of which was written by a different hand. 'The Adventures of Oscar Wilde, by himself, continued by Coulson Kernahan.' How positively dreadful!"

I wonder what Wilde will have to say to me, if hereafter we should discuss together the brief and fragmentary continuation of his own story which in these Recollections I have endeavoured to carry on?

III

Once when Wilde, a novelist and I were lunching together, and when Wilde, after declaring that the wine was so "heavenly" that it should be drunk kneeling, was discoursing learnedly on the pleasures of the table—how the flesh of this or that bird, fish or beast should be cooked and eaten, with what wine and with what sauce, the novelist put in:

"If I were to adapt Bunyan, I should say that you ought to have been christened Os-carnalwise Wilde instead of plain Oscar."

"How ridiculous of you to suppose that anyone, least of all my dear mother, would christen me 'plain Oscar,'" was the reply. "My name has two O's, two F's and two W's. A name which is destined to be in everybody's mouth must not be too long. It comes so expensive in the advertisements. When one is unknown, a number of Christian names are useful, perhaps needful. As one becomes famous, one sheds some of them, just as a balloonist, when rising higher, sheds unnecessary ballast, or as you will shed your Christian name when raised to the peerage. I started as Oscar Finghal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde. All but two of the five names have already been thrown overboard. Soon I shall discard another and be known simply as 'The Wilde' or 'The Oscar.' Which it is to be depends upon one of my imitators—that horrid Hall Caine, who used to be known very properly as Thomas Henry; quite appropriate names for a man who writes and dresses as he does. I can't say which he does worse as I have

never read him, but I have often been made ill by the way he wears his clothes.

"And, by the by, never say you have 'adapted' anything from anyone. Appropriate what is already yours—for to publish anything is to make it public property—but never adapt, or, if you do, suppress the fact. It is hardly fair to Bunyan, if you improve on him, to point out, some hundreds of years after, how much cleverer you are than he; and it is even more unfair, if you spoil what he has said, and then 'hold him accountable.'"

"That, I suppose," said the novelist drily, "is why when you said the other day that 'Whenever a great man dies, William Sharp and the undertaker come in together,' you suppressed the fact that the same thing had already been said in other words by W. S. Gilbert."

"Precisely," said Wilde. "It is not for me publicly to point out Gilbert's inferiority. That would be ungenerous. But no one can blame me, if the fact is patent to all."

Mention of Sir W. S. Gilbert prompted the other to say that a friend of his had occasion to take a cab at Harrow where the author of *The Bab Ballads* had built a house. Driving from the station to his destination, his friend noticed this house, and asked the cabman who lived there. "I don't know 'is name, sir," said the cabman. "But I do know (I have driven 'im once or twice) that 'e is sometimes haffable and sometimes harbitrary. They do say in the town, sir, that 'e's wot's called a retired 'umorist, whatever that may be."

From Harrow the conversation shifted to the

neighbouring city of St. Albans, where I was then living.

"That reminds me," said Wilde, turning to me, "that I want to run down to St. Albans once again to bathe my fingers in the mediæval twilight of the grey old Abbey. We two will come to you to-morrow. You shall meet us at the station, give us lunch at your rooms—a cutlet, a flask of red chianti and a cigarette is all we ask—and then you shall take us over the Abbey."

"I shall be delighted," I said, "but do you remember my meeting you the other day when you were coming away from the Royal Academy? I asked you how you were, and you replied, 'Ill, my dear fellow, ill and wounded to the soul at the thought of the hideousness of what in this degenerate country, and these degenerate days, dares to call itself Art. Get me some wine quickly, or I'm sure I shall faint.' Well, I'm living in bachelor diggings where it would be highly inconvenient to have dead or dying artists on hand or lying about. The pictures on show in my bachelor rooms, like the furniture, are not of my selection. If you were wounded by what you saw in the Academy, you would die at sight of one work of art on my walls. It is a hideous and vulgar representation of 'Daniel in the Lions' Den,' done in crude chromo, four colours."

Wilde affected to shudder.

"How awful!" he said. "But I can think of something more awful even than that."

"What's that?" I asked.

"A poor lion in a den of Daniels," was his reply.

IV

A factor in Wilde's downfall was, I am sometimes told, evil association, but if so it was a factor on which I can throw no light, as if evil associates he had I saw nothing of them.

Louise Chandler Moulton sings of

> This brief delusion that we call our life,
> Where all we can accomplish is to die,

and of the many figures in the literary, artistic, and social world of the day whom I met in Wilde's company, some have achieved death, some, knighthood (Mr. Stephen Phillips once said in my hearing, he was not sure which was the better—or the worse), and some, distinction. Of the remainder, the worst that could be said against them is that they have since come a crash financially, as Wilde himself did. It was only in money matters that I ever had cause to think Wilde immoral.

In setting down these recollections and impressions I do not write as one of his intimates. We were friends, we corresponded, I dined with him and Mrs. Wilde at 16 Tite Street, and he with me, and we forgathered now and then at clubs, theatrical first nights, and literary at homes ; but the occasions on which we met were not very many, all told ; nor did I desire more closely to cultivate him, and for two reasons. One was that the expensive rate at which he lived made him impossible as other than a very occasional companion, and the other was that

"straightness" in money matters is to me one of the first essentials in the man of whom one makes a friend. On this point Wilde and I did not see alike. He laughed at me when I said that, while counting it no dishonour to be poor, I did count it something of a dishonour deliberately and self-indulgently to incur liabilities one might not be able to meet. In his vocabulary there were few more contemptuous words than that of "tradesman," as the following incident, which I may perhaps be pardoned for interpolating, will show.

When *The Picture of Dorian Grey* was in the press, Wilde came in to see me one morning.

"My nerves are all to pieces," he said, "and I'm going to Paris for a change. Here are the proofs of my novel. I have read them very carefully, and I think all is correct with one exception. Like most Irishmen, I sometimes write 'I will be there,' when it should be 'I shall be there,' and so on. Would you, like a dear good fellow, mind going through the proofs, and if you see any 'wills' or 'shalls' used wrongly, put them right and then pass for press? Of course, if you should spot anything else that strikes you as wrong, I'd be infinitely obliged if you would make the correction."

I agreed, went through proofs, made the necessary alterations, and passed for press. Two or three days after I had a telegram from Paris. "Terrible blunder in book, coming back specially. Stop all proofs. Wilde." I did so, and awaited events. Wilde arrived in a hansom.

"It is not too late? For heaven's sake tell me it is not too late?" he affected to gasp.

"Oh, make yourself easy. It was not too late. I stopped the proofs," I answered.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed theatrically, throwing himself into a chair and making a great show of wiping away the perspiration from a perfectly dry brow. "I should never have forgiven myself, or you, had my book gone out disfigured by such a blunder—by such a crime as I count it against art."

Then in a faint undertone, as if the thing were too unholy to speak of above one's breath, he said:

"There's a picture framer—a mere tradesman—in my story, isn't there?"

"Yes," I said.

"What have I called him?"

"Ashton, I think. Yes, Ashton," I answered.

He simulated a shudder and seemed to wince at the words.

"Don't repeat it! Don't repeat it! It is more than my shattered nerves can stand. Ashton is a gentleman's name," he spoke brokenly, and wrung his hands as if in anguish. "And I've given it—God forgive me—to a tradesman! It must be changed to Hubbard. Hubbard positively smells of the tradesman!"

And having successfully worked off this wheeze on me, Oscar became himself again, and sat up with a happy smile to enjoy his own and my congratulations on the exquisiteness of his art.

Wilde's contempt for tradesmen, as instanced in this anecdote, I did not share. Once, when he had spoken thus contemptuously because a shopkeeper was suing a certain impecunious but extravagant artist acquaintance of his and mine for a debt in-

curred, I told Wilde that even if I despised " tradesmen " as he and the artist did, I should despise myself much more were I to defraud a despised tradesman by ordering goods for which I had neither the means nor the intention to pay. He was not in the least offended, perhaps because the remark suggested an aphorism—the exact wording I forget, but it was to the effect that only mediocrity concerned itself with tradesmen's bills, that a writer of genius, whether a playwright or a novelist, ran into debt as surely as his play or his book ran into royalties. I remember the occasion well, though I do not remember the phrasing of his aphorism, for on that particular morning he had, for the first time within my experience, shown less than his usual nice consideration for others which—whether due merely to love of approbation or to finer feelings—made him so agreeable and delightful a companion.

When he came in I offered him my cigarette case. They were of a brand he had often himself smoked in the past—in fact it was he who had first recommended them to me—quite good tobacco and well made, but moderate in price, and with no pretence to be of the very best. He took one, lit it, drew a few puffs, and then tossing it practically unsmoked on the fire, drew out his own bejewelled case and lit up one of his own. That was very unlike Wilde as I had known him in his less prosperous days. Then he would have said, " I have accustomed myself to smoke another brand lately and am something of a creature of habit. Do you mind if I smoke one of my own ? "

Perhaps the omission was due only to preoccupa-

tion and forgetfulness. Perhaps the incident will be accounted too trivial, thus seriously to put on record. Possibly, but it is often by the cumulative effect of small and seemingly trivial details—not always by the bold broad strokes—that the truest portrait is drawn. Into the tragedy of human life we are not often permitted to look, but just as, since all fish swim against the stream, a minnow will serve to show the run of the current, no less than a pike, so trivial incidents serve sometimes to point the trend of life or of character as truly as great happenings.

Nor in Wilde's case were other signs of change in him wanting. His first play had just then been produced and with success. He struck me on that particular morning as unpleasantly flushed, as already coarsened, almost bloated by success. There was a suspicion of insolence in his manner that was new to me, and from that time onward he and I—perhaps the fault was mine—seemed to lose touch of each other, and to drift entirely apart. Wilde died in the late autumn of 1900. I never saw or heard from him again after the spring of 1892.

V

Was it not Mr. Stead who defined paradox as a truth standing on its head ? Wilde's aim in paradox was so to manipulate truth and falsehood as to make the result startle one by appearing to reverse the existing standard. A paradox by him was sometimes a lie and a truth trotting side by side together in double harness like a pair of horses, but each so

cleverly disguised that one was not quite sure which horse was which.

More often a paradox by Wilde was a lie (or a seeming lie) and a truth (or a seeming truth) driven the one in front of the other tandem-wise; but whichever Wilde had placed last was tolerably sure to take one by surprise by lashing out with its heels when one came to look at it. When Wilde had carefully arranged a paradox with a kick in it and wished to see one jump, he spoke the first half smilingly to put one off one's guard. Then he would pause, suddenly become grave and thoughtful as if searching his words. But the pause was not for loss of a word. It was no pause of momentary inaction. It was, on the contrary, if I may vary the simile, like the backward swing of a rifle, and was meant only to give fuller play and power to the forward thrust that bayonets an enemy. No sooner was one off one's guard by the smile and the momentary silence, than swift and sure came the sting of the stab.

Let me give an illustration. Wilde once asked me some question concerning my religious belief which I did my best to answer frankly and, as he was good enough afterwards to say, without the cant which he so loathed. When I had made an end of it, he said gravely:

"You are so evidently, so unmistakably sincere and most of all so truthful" (all this running smoothly and smilingly) "that" (then came the grave look and the pause as if at a loss for a word, followed by the swift stab) "I can't believe a single word you say."

And so, having discharged his missile, Wilde, no

longer lolling indolently forward in his seat, pulled himself backwards, and up like a gunner taking a pace to the rear, or to the side of his gun the better to see the crash of the shell upon the target, and then, if I may so word it, "smiled all over." He was so openly, so provokingly pleased with himself and with this particular paradox that not to be a party to the gratification of such sinful vanity, instead of complimenting him, as he had expected, on its neatness, I ignored the palpable hit, and inquired:

"Where are you dining to-night, Wilde?"

"At the Duchess of So-and-so's," he answered.

"Precisely. Who is the guest you have marked down, upon whom—when everybody is listening—to work off that carefully prepared impromptu wheeze about 'You are so truthful that I can't believe a single word you say,' which you have just fired off on me?"

Wilde sighed deeply and threw out his hands with a gesture of despair, but the ghost of a glint of a smile in the corner of his eye signalled a bull's-eye to me.

"Compliments are thrown away on such coarse creatures as you," he said. "This very morning I called into being a new and wonderful aphorism—'A gentleman never goes east of Temple Bar'—notwithstanding which I have brought wit and fame and fashion to lighten your editorial room in the City. Why? To pay you the supremest compliment one artist can pay another one. To make you the only confidant of one of my most graceful and delicate fancies. I was about to tell you——"

"Yes, I know," I interpolated rudely, "you have coined a witty new aphorism, or thought out a lovely fancy. You do both and do them more than well. But you are going to the Duchess's dinner party to-night, and you will contrive so to turn what is said that your aphorism or fancy seems to rise as naturally and spontaneously to the surface of the conversation as the bubbles rise to the surface of the glass of champagne at your side. But you are not, as actors say, sure of your 'words.' You think it would be as well to have something of the nature of a dress rehearsal. So you have dropped in here, on your way to your florist's or to some one else, to try it upon me as somebody is said to try his jokes on his dog before publishing them. I don't mind playing 'dog' in your rôle in the least, but I object to being made a stalking-horse for the Duchess's honoured guest."

I have no intention in these Recollections to play the reporter to my own uninteresting share in the conversation, but one must do so sometimes for obvious reasons. In this case, I wish to illustrate the means by which I sometimes succeeded in inducing Wilde to drop attitudinising and to be his natural self.

There is a certain Professor of my acquaintance, a man of brilliant abilities and incomparable knowledge, whom I used to meet at a club—let us call him Clough. When Clough could be induced to talk upon the matters in which he was an expert, he was worth travelling many miles to hear. Unfortunately he had an aggressive, even offensive manner, and was troubled with self-complacent egotism. It

was only after a systematic course of roughness and rudeness at the hands of his fellow clubmen that Clough was endurable, or could be got to talk of anything but himself.

One would sometimes hear a fellow clubman say, "Clough is in the other room, just down from the 'Varsity; and more full of information than ever. Two or three capable members are administering the usual course of medicine—'Cloughing' we call it now—of flatly contradicting every word he says, 'trailing' him, snubbing him, and otherwise reducing his abnormally swollen head to moderate dimensions. Then he will be better worth listening to on his own subjects than any other man in England. Don't miss it."

Similarly, in my intercourse with Wilde, I found that a certain amount of "Cloughing," such as, "Now then, Wilde! You know you are only showing off, as we used to say at home when I was one of a family of kids. Stow it, and talk sense," had equally good result. He would protest at first when minded to let me off lightly, that such "engaging ingenuousness" alarmed and silenced him. At other times he would vow that my coarseness made him shudder and wince—that it was like crushing a beautiful butterfly, to bludgeon a sensitive creature of moods and impulses with unseemly jibes and blatant speech. Having, however, thus delivered himself and made his protest, he would often stultify that protest and provide me with an excuse to myself for my Philistinism, by throwing aside his stilts (assumed possibly because he imagined they advertised him to advantage above the heads of

those who walk afoot in the Vanity Fair of Literature and Art), and by showing himself infinitely more interesting when seen naturally and near at hand than when stilting it affectedly in mid-air above one's head.

At times, and when he had forgotten his grievance at being thus rudely pulled down, he would forget—egotist that he was—even himself, in speaking of his hopes, his ambitions and his dreams ; and in his rare flashes of sincerity would show himself as greater and nobler of soul than many who met and talked to him only in the *salon* or in society perhaps realised.

There is a graceful fancy of Wilde's—I do not know whether he ever told it in print—the hero of which was a poet lad who had dreamed so often and written such lovely songs about the mermaid, that at last—since the dream-world was more real to him than the waking world—he was convinced that mermaids there really are in the seas around our shores, and that if one watched long and patiently they might by mortal eye be seen. So day and night the poet watched and waited, but saw nothing. And when his friends asked him, " Have you seen the mermaids ? " he answered, " Yes, by moonlight I saw them at play among the rollers," telling thereafter what he had seen and with such vividness and beauty that almost he persuaded the listeners to believe the story. But one night by moonlight the poet did indeed have sight of the mermaids, and in silence he came away and thereafter told no one what he had seen.

So, of Wilde himself, I cannot but hope and believe

that though he told many stories of exceeding beauty, none of which were true, yet hidden away in his heart was much that was gracious, true, noble and beautiful, the story of which will now never be known, for like the poet lad of his fantasy he told it to no one. Of what was evil and what was good in his life, only a merciful God can strike the balance, and only a merciful God shall judge.

VI

As one who knew Wilde personally, I am sometimes asked whether I was not instinctively aware that the man was bad. Frankly I was not. Possibly because scandal does not interest me, and other things do, I had not heard the rumours which I now understand were even then prevalent, and so I took him as I found him, an agreeable companion, a brilliant conversationalist, a versatile and accomplished man of letters. On the crime of which he has since been committed, I make no comment, if only for the reason that I did not follow the evidence at his trial, just as I abstained from reading Mr. W. T. Stead's *Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon*—not because of any innate niceness on my part, but for the same reason which causes me to turn aside if, in my morning's walk, I come across offal which it is not my business to remove. The Wilde of the days of which I am writing was foppish in dress and affected in manner. He talked and wrote much nonsense, as I held it to be, about there being no such thing as a moral or an immoral book or picture; that the book or picture was either a work

of art, or was not a work of art, and there the matter ended; but much of this talk I attributed to pose, and I had even then learned that some of the men who are most anxious to have us believe them moralists—and stern moralists at that—are often less moral in their life than some of those who make no pretence of any morals at all.

To the folk who objected that Wilde has boasted of being a "pagan" I replied that he probably used the word—just then very much in vogue—in the same sense in which Mr. Kenneth Grahame used it when he entitled a volume, bubbling over with the joy of life, with animal spirits, keen observation, and exquisite humour, *Pagan Papers*. Wilde's "paganism" I took as meaning no more than that he claimed for himself freedom from formula, most of all freedom from cant in his attitude towards the accepted conventions, whether literary, artistic, social, or even religious.

That he was not an irreligious man, I had reason to know. One day when we were chatting together, Wilde mentioned a little book of mine of which I will say no more here than that it made no uncertain confession of the writer's faith in Christianity. This led Wilde—uninvited by me, for I make it a rule never to obtrude my religious views upon others—to express himself upon the subject of religion, especially of Christianity, and with such intense reverence, such manifest earnestness, that I perhaps looked something of the surprise I felt.

"You are surprised," he said, "to hear Oscar Wilde, the *poseur*, as people call him, the man who is supposed to hold nothing too sacred, talking

seriously and on serious things. *No*, I am *not* making believe to be earnest, as I do make believe about so much else. I am speaking as I feel, and you will perhaps hardly realise what an intense relief it is to meet some one to whom one can talk about such matters without cant. It is cant and officialdom " (he spoke bitterly) " which is keeping the men and women who think out of the churches to-day. It is cant which more than anything else stands between them and Christ. Shall I tell you what is my greatest ambition—more even than an ambition—the dream of my life? Not to be remembered hereafter as an artist, poet, thinker, or playwright, but as the man who reclothed the sublimest conception which the world has ever known—the Salvation of Humanity, the Sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross by Christ—with new and burning words, with new and illuminating symbols, with new and divine vision, free from the accretions of cant which the centuries have gathered around it. I should thereby be giving the world back again the greatest gift ever given to mankind since Christ Himself gave it, peerless and pure two thousand years ago—the pure gift of Christianity as taught by Christ.

" Yes," he went on, " I hope before I die to write the Epic of the Cross, the Iliad of Christianity, which shall live for all time."

On another occasion Wilde unfolded to me the opening scene in a sort of religious drama which he intended one day to write—the finding to-day of the body of the Christ in the very rock-sepulchre where Joseph of Arimathea had laid it, and a great and

consequent eclipse of faith in Him and in His resurrection. Thereafter, by a new revelation of the Christ, Wilde was, in his drama, newly to recreate Christianity and faith in Christianity, but of this Second Act of his World-Drama I heard no more, as our talk was at this point interrupted, and he never renewed it.

I speak of this proposed religious drama here for the singular reason that I, too, had long been turning over in my mind some such work and some such opening scene as in Wilde's drama—I mean the finding of the body of Christ.

Wilde went no further with his project, but in a book of mine, written some years after, I carried my own project into effect. To this day I am uncertain how much of my opening scene was Wilde's, and how much mine. The idea appears to have occurred to both, but whereas, in Wilde's mind, it was clear and defined, in mine it was then no more than an idea. I sometimes wonder whether his words did not make vivid to me what before was vague. Of one thing at least I am sure, that he was the first to speak of such an opening scene, which fact in itself constitutes some sort of previous claim. The rest of the book was entirely mine, and probably the whole, but the facts seem to me not uninteresting, and having made confession of the possibility at least of some debt incurred, I must leave it to the reader to say whether I ought or ought not to be condemned in "conscience money."

I have already said that I have reason to know that Wilde was not irreligious, and I propose now to give my reasons for refusing to believe him to be

irreclaimably bad. One has some hesitation in quoting oneself, but, in a dream-parable booklet of mine, there is a passage which I may perhaps be forgiven for printing here, when I say that I had Wilde in my mind when I wrote it. In my dream-parable, Satan, even as once of old he had presented himself to speak with God concerning Job, appears to-day before the Most High, urging that men and women have become godless and faithless. He craves permission to prove this by putting them to certain tests. The permission is accorded on condition that Satan himself becomes mortal, even as they. In the following passage Satan is supposed to be speaking, after the failure and defeat of his projects.

Master and Maker, hear me ere I die. For until Thou didst in Thy wisdom decree that ere I might work my will on mortals, myself must become mortal even as they—until then, the thoughts of these mortals were as foreign to my understanding as are the thoughts in the brain of a bird, to the fowler who spreads his net to catch the little creature. Like the fowler, I knew that I must change my bait, according to the creature that I set out to snare, that this one could be taken by avarice, that one by vanity, a third by spiritual pride, a fourth by bodily lust. When they came to my lure, and I caught them; when I saw the poor fools struggling in my net, I laughed and hugged myself to think of their misery and of the impotent anguish of God. And so I grew wise in the ways and the weaknesses of men and women, while knowing nothing of the hearts which beat in their breasts.

But now that I have become mortal, even as they,

—now at last, to the wonder and the mystery of mortal life, are my eyes opened. Now perceive I that, in the least and most shameful of these lives, is to be seen, even in uttermost wreckage, something so sacred, so august, so beautiful, so divine, that the very angels of light might stand amazed in envious wonder and awe.

For if men and women have failed greatly, at least they have striven greatly—how greatly, how valiantly, how desperately, only the God Who sees all. may know.

It may be that by Him, that very striving itself, even the unsuccessful striving, shall mercifully be taken into account. The sin and the shame are human: the wish and the effort to overcome them are divine. For that which in a man's truer, nobler moments, he has longed unutterably to be, *that in some sense he is, and shall be accounted,* in the eyes of the God, Who taketh not pleasure in remembering sin, but in rewarding righteousness.

That even in sin, a man should think such thoughts, should carry unsullied in his heart some white flower of his childhood, and, in spite of what is ugly and impure in himself, should project so pure and perfect a vision of hoped-for, longed-for Loveliness and Purity, sets that man, even in his sins, a world removed above the angels. When I who was once an angel fell, I fell from uttermost light to uttermost dark. Ceasing to be an angel, I became a devil. Man falls, but even in his fall retains something that is divine.

Yonder man into whose great brain I entered, working strange madness within! Him first I taught to love Beauty, because it is of Thee. Him I haunted of beauty, haunted with visions of forms more fair than earthly eyes may know, luring him

at last to look upon Beauty as of greater worth than all else, and as a law unto itself.

And because the love of beauty is not far removed from the love of pleasure, it was not difficult for me to lead on such as he to love pleasure for itself. With innocent pleasures at first I plied him, and when they staled, I enticed him with grosser joys, till the pleasure-seeker became the voluptuary, and, in the veins of the voluptuary, desire soon quickened into lust.

Next, because wine, like water to drooping flowers, lent fictitious strength to his flagging pulse, made the live thoughts to quicken in his tired brain, and set the tongue of his wit a-wagging; because he loved to stand well with his comrades, among whom to chink glasses together was the sign of fellowship—because of all these I enticed him to drink and yet again to drink, until Alcohol, the Arch Destroyer, had stolen away his will power, silenced his conscience, perverted his moral sense, inflamed with foul passion his degenerate brain, and made the wreck and the ruin of him that he now is.

Yet even now, as I steal gloatingly through the dark chambers of that House of Shame which was once the fair temple of the living God, even now there still smoulders under the ashes of a fouled hearthstone some spark of the fire which was kindled of God, a fire which I strive in vain to trample out, since, because it is of God, it is inextinguishable and eternal.

If therefore when I seem most to have conquered, there never yet was God wholly defeated—of what use is it further to wage the unequal conflict? For God never entirely lets go His hold on a human soul; and that to which God holds fast, Satan

shall never finally wrest from Him. Say the world, think the world, what it will, in the warfare for souls God wins, and has won all along the line.

It was, as I say, Wilde who was in my mind when I penned that passage commencing "Yonder man into whose great brain I entered, working strange madness within." To me he seems to have been less hopelessly bad than partly mad.

We are told that it is possible, by locating and destroying certain cells or nerve-centres in the brain, so to affect the mind of the subject as to destroy his sense of colour, his sense of touch, or even, it is believed, to destroy his sense of right and wrong.

Wilde died of meningitis, which is a brain affection, and I think that the fact should be considered retrospectively. A post-mortem examination would possibly have revealed some disease or degeneration of certain brain-cells which may account for much that is painful in his career and character. This degeneration of brain-cells may have been inherited and congenital, in which case, condemnation on our part is silenced; or it may have been due to excesses of his own choosing and committing. Even if this be so, the price he paid was surely so terrible, and so tragic, as in a sense to be accounted an atonement, and even to entitle him to our pity. In the passage quoted from my dream-parable, I have hinted at some form of demoniacal possession which may or may not be a positive, as opposed to a negative form of madness. There is a brain derangement by which the power to reason aright and to co-ordinate ideas is lost; a brain derangement

which results mainly in vacancy of mind. But there is yet another and more terrible form of derangement in which, so it seems to me, that unseen evil powers, outside himself, seize upon and possess the brain chambers, thus vacated, and direct and rule the unhappy victim, not according to his own will, which indeed has passed out of his control, but according to the wish or will of the power by which he is possessed.

On such a question we dare not dogmatise; but I am humbly of opinion that in the great re-awakening to the realities (not to the outward forms) of religion, which some of us think will follow the war, there will be a return to simplicity of belief, and that the too often disregarded New Testament explanation of certain mysterious happenings will be proved to be more in accordance with the later discoveries of Science than some advocates of the Higher Criticism now think. For my own part I have never doubted the accuracy of the Gospel records in regard to demoniacal possession. We have Christ's own words: "For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter," "Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting," and "I charge thee come out of him and enter no more into him."

That some men and women whose wills are weakened—possibly by habitual disregard of conscience or by continued wrongdoing for which they cannot be held irresponsible—*do* commit, under the urging and direction of evil spirits by which they are possessed, crimes and cruelties for which they are not in the fullest sense responsible, I think more

than possible. My friend, the late Benjamin Waugh, Founder of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, on more than one occasion placed before me the full facts and the indisputable proofs of acts so fiendish as to be difficult to ascribe to human motive or passions.

In the most terrible sonnet ever penned, Shakespeare says :

> The expense of spirit in a waste of shame
> Is lust in action, and till action, lust
> Is perjured, murderous, bloody, full of blame,
> Savage, extreme, rude, cruel, not to trust,

and, to lust, some particularly bestial outrages which came before the Society were clearly attributable. Others were as clearly the outcome of avarice, greed, hatred, jealousy and blind fury of anger. But some crimes there were, such as the torturing of her own children by a mother, and, in another case, the deliberate jabbing out of the eyes of an unoffending pony by a woman, not under the influence of drink, and in whom the medical experts declared they otherwise found no symptoms of insanity, which, if only for the sake of our common humanity, one would be relieved to think were due to demoniacal possession, for which the victim was, in this last stage at least, irresponsible.

In the near future it is possible that Science will by closer inquiry and by completer records be found once more in harmony with Scripture. Hypnotism, a science which as yet is not a science, but merely a haphazard accumulation of unorganised data, pointing to the possession of unexplained powers and possibilities by the individual, has established

the fact that the living can thus be influenced and obsessed by the living. If so, why not by the dead, who, when emancipated from the body, may possibly be able to concentrate even greater spiritual force upon the living than when they were themselves alive?

I am not likely to live to see it, but my belief is that all these so-called occult matters, Hypnotism, Thought-reading, Obsession, Clairvoyance, Spiritualism, and the like will one day fall into line with Science, and be proved to be not supernatural, but merely the manifestation of natural laws—of certain psychical powers and forces which may be easily explainable and demonstrable with further and exacter knowledge, but concerning the working of which we are at present very much in the dark.

I have written at greater length than I intended, in hinting and in hoping that Wilde was at times under the subjection of powers and forces of darkness outside himself. I say "at times" intentionally, and for the following reason. It would be gratifying to one's *amour propre* (I use a French term for once, as it expresses my meaning more nearly than any English equivalent) could I take high ground, and aver that I was vaguely conscious—warned, as it were, by some fine instinct—of evil in the presence of Wilde, but so to aver would be untrue. I have not lived to nearly threescore years without meeting men from whom one does thus instinctively shrink, and concerning whom one found it impossible to breathe the same air. I experienced nothing of the sort in Wilde's company, and, since his guilt seems uncontrovertible, I ask my-

self whether it is not possible that Wilde lived a sort of Jekyll and Hyde life, of the latter of which I saw nothing, inasmuch as just as some wounded or plague-stricken creature withdraws itself from the herd, so, during the Hyde period of madness or of obsession, some instinct moved him to withdraw from his home, his haunts and the companions of his everyday life, only to return when the obsession or madness had passed, and once again he was his sane and normal self.

This " periodicity " is not infrequent in madness, whether the madness be due to a brain derangement, explainable by pathology, or to some such demoniacal possession as that of which I have spoken. A memorable instance is that of Mary Lamb, who was herself aware of the return of homicidal mania, and at such times of her own accord placed herself under restraint. Recalling the fact that I saw in Wilde no sign either of the presence of evil or of insanity, I ask myself whether in picturing Dorian Grey as at one season living normally and reputably, and at another disappearing into some oblivion of iniquity, he was not consciously or unconsciously picturing for us his own tortured self. I write " tortured " advisedly, for whether he were wholly, or only partly, or not at all, responsible, I refuse to believe that the man, as in his saner moments I knew him, *could* sink thus low, without fighting desperately, if vainly—how desperately only the God who made him knows—before allowing himself in the hopelessness of despair to forget his failures in filth, as other unhappy geniuses have before now drowned their souls in drink.

One talk with him I particularly remember. I had been reading the proofs of *Dorian Grey*, and, on our next meeting, I said that he had put damnable words into the mouth of one of his characters.

"Such poisonous stuff is not likely to affect grown men and women," I said, "but for a writer of your power and persuasiveness to set up a puppet like Lord Henry to provide ready-made excuses for indulgence, and to make evil seem necessary, unavoidable, and easy, by whispering into the ears of readers, of impressionable age and inflammable passion, that 'the only way to get rid of a temptation is to yield to it'—when you do that, you are helping to circulate devils' doctrines in God's world."

Wilde was visibly perturbed.

"You are quite right," he said. "It *is* damnable; it *is* devils' doctrine. I will take it out."

But, alas, other influences, whether within himself in the shape of the whisperings of some evil spirit, by which he was, as I believe, at times possessed, or in the form of so-called friends, whose influence over him was of the worst, I cannot say, but some days after the conversation recorded above I received the following letter:

GRAND HÔTEL DE L'ATHENÉE,
15 RUE SCRIBE, PARIS.

MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

Thank you for your charming letter. I have been very ill and unable to correct my proofs, but have sent them off now. *I have changed my mind about the passage about temptation.* One can't pull

a work of art about without spoiling it, and after all it is merely Luther's "Pecca Fortiter" put dramatically into the lips of a character.

Do you think I should add to preface the definition of "morbid" and "unhealthy" art I gave in the *Fortnightly* for February? The one on morbidity is really good.

Will you also look after my "wills" and "shalls" in proof! I am Celtic in my use of these words, not English.

You are excellent on Rossetti. I read you with delight.

Your sincere friend,

OSCAR WILDE.

When next I met Wilde I recurred to the matter, but it was then too late, for the book, he said, was in great part printed. Moreover, he had now another excuse to put forward.

"After I had left you," he said, "I remembered that a friend of mine, a well-known critic, had read the book in manuscript when it was first written. He said something to the same effect as you did, but less strongly. Honestly it was that, more than anything else, which finally decided me to leave the passage in. Had I taken it out, he would have claimed that I did so in deference to his strictures, and haul down my flag to a professional critic I never have and never will."

This incident (though Wilde has been dead sixteen years I have neither written of it nor spoken of it before) shows Wilde as weak, it shows him as yielding—as we all, alas, too often yield—to evil influences, and to inclination as opposed to con-

science, and as a man who was determined to shine at all costs. His vanity would not allow him to withhold the word that he was pleased to think daring, original, and above all brilliant, though he knew that word to be only brilliantly bad. Even in his sinning, it seems to me, he fed and flattered his insatiable vanity, by electing, even in sin, to be unlike others ; and how far vanity, even more than viciousness, was accountable for Wilde's downfall, only the God who made him and the devil who fostered and fed that vanity, till it less resembled a pardonable human weakness than a hideous excrescence and disease, can ever truly say.

The setting of Wilde's sun (which had risen on so fair a prospect, and with such promise of splendour) in foul quagmires of sin and shame, was the greatest tragedy I have known. I met his friend and mine, Mr. Hall Caine, immediately after the verdict and sentence. I have seen Caine ill, and I have seen him deeply moved, even distressed, but I remember always to his honour (for Wilde not seldom made Caine's writing the butt of his wit) the anguish in his face as he said :

" God pity him in this hour when human pity there seems none ! To think of it ! that man, that genius as he is, whom you and I have seen fêted and flattered ! whose hand we have grasped in friendship ! a felon, and come to infamy unspeakable ! It haunts me, it is like some foul and horrible stain on our craft and on us all, which nothing can wash out. It is the most awful tragedy in the whole history of literature."

S. J. STONE, THE HYMN-WRITER

I

THE Rev. S. J. Stone, M.A., was the author of two hymns that are known wherever the English tongue is spoken, one the beautiful Lenten litany of love, trust and repentance, "Weary of earth and laden with my sin"; the other that soul-stirring triumph-song, "The Church's One Foundation," which—set as it is to majestic battle-march music that fires the imagination—has become, as it were, the Marseillaise of the Church militant and victorious.

When Stone died, and where he wished to die, in the Charterhouse, the busy world learned that the Rector of a City Church, who had done memorable work in an East End parish, and was the author of some famous hymns, had passed away. Those who knew and loved him were aware that a great soul, a hero-heart, a rarely beautiful spirit, had gone to God.

In my little life, the years of which are fast approaching threescore, it has so happened that I have known, sometimes intimately, a number of so-called "eminent" women and men. I have known not a few who in intellectual power, in the brilliance of their gifts, their attainments and achievements, or in what is called "fame," stood immeasurably

higher than Stone. I have known none who, judged by the beauty, purity, and nobility of life and character, was half as great as he. I do not say this, be it noted, under the emotional stress which follows the death of a dearly-loved friend. In such an hour of bitter self-reproach when in retrospect we think of the kindly act which, had it been done (alas, that it was not done!) would have helped our friend through a time of trouble; the generous word which had it been spoken (alas, that it remained unspoken!) might have heartened him when we knew him to be most cast down—these and possibly our poignant sense of remorse, it may be for an actual wrong done, not infrequently cause us to lose our sense of proportion. For the time being at least we over-estimate what was good in him, and under-estimate what was indifferent, or worse.

It is not so that I write of S. J. Stone. Sixteen long years, in which life has never been, nor will be, quite the same, missing that loved presence, have passed away since he was laid to rest in Norwood Cemetery; and to-day with my own life's end nearing I can say, not only for myself, but for many others who knew him, that so brave of heart was he as to make possible for us the courage of a Cœur de Lion, so knightly of nature as to make possible the honour of an Arthur or a Galahad, so nearly stainless in the standard he set himself, in the standard he attained, as to come, as near as human flesh and blood can come, almost to making possible the purity of the Christ.

I am not unaware what will be in the mind of many who read these words. Some will suspect me

if not of insincerity, at least of the foolish use of superlative and hyperbole. Not a few will hold my last comparison as scarcely reverent. And all the while there will not be a single woman or man, with any intimate knowledge of Stone, who, reading what I have written, will not say, at least of what is wholly appreciative (many will resent what I have hereafter to say of his temperamental weaknesses and human defects), "All this is truth, sober and unexaggerated, and yet the man himself was in many respects infinitely greater than he is drawn."

II

Ever since Stone died my intention has been, before laying down my own pen, some day and so far as I am able, to picture him as I knew him. It seemed to me a duty, no less than a trust, that some of us should put on record what manner of man it was who wrote these noble hymns, and how nobly he lived and died. My reason for delaying thus long about what to me is a labour of love, was the difficulty of picturing Stone as he was, without seeming to exaggerate. Fortunately it has not been left only to me to bear tribute, for the Rev. F. G. Ellerton, Vicar of Ellesmere, to whose father we owe the famous hymn, "Saviour, again to Thy dear Name we raise," has written a Memoir of his former Vicar (I recollect Mr. Ellerton as Stone's curate, more than a score of years ago), which was prefixed to a volume of "Selections" from Stone's *Poems and Hymns*. Only one who had lived and worked with Stone could have drawn so true and sympathetic a

picture of Stone the Christian, Stone the Churchman, Stone the hymn-writer, and Stone the man; and, except for the fact that Mr. Ellerton and I approach our subjects from different standpoints, his beautiful Appreciation will be found amply to confirm what I say in my briefer Silhouette.

It is to a sister of mine that I owe my first meeting with Stone. From her girlhood upward she had contributed poems, sketches and stories to the magazines, earning each year by her pen sums which to the rest of us—how wonderful it all was!—seemed princely, and very proud of her we all were.

Ill-health, and her determination never, after marriage, to let her writing interfere with her duties as wife and mother, have prevented her from following up, except very occasionally, the work in literature which she so loved, though two years ago she was able to publish, and with success, a first long novel.

But at that time she had made some girlish reputation as a writer of religious verse, and was commissioned to contribute "A Golden Song" each week to a well-known periodical. Stone's attention was attracted by the sweet-briar simplicity and beauty of some of these "Golden Songs," and when he and my sister chanced to meet, each was singularly drawn to the other, and so it was that first she and he, thereafter he and I, became friends and remained so to the end.

Now let me try to describe Stone as he was at the time of our first meeting, when he was in early middle life. Emerson said once that we take a man's

measure when first we meet him—and every time we meet him. One's first comment at sight of Stone would inevitably have been: "A Man!" And one's second: "An Englishman!"

Englishman was written, as the phrase runs, "all over him"—in appearance, in voice, as well as bearing—and I can conceive no disguise out of which the unmistakable Englishman would not have peeped. Unmistakably English as he was in appearance, yet, when one talked with him, and he became interested, enthusiastic, excited, when he spoke of his life's work, his life's hopes and dreams, but most of all when one could induce him to talk of England, Oxford, patriotism, loyalty, love, duty or poetry, and saw the flash in the eye, the throb at the temples, and heard the thrill in the voice, one's next comment was, "Here surely is not part Anglo-Saxon, but all Celt!"

The Celt in him, for—though he never told us whence it came—the quicksilver of Celtic blood, there must have been in his veins, made mock continually of the Anglo-Saxon. Yet, either the Fairy Godmother, or the forgotten forbear who was responsible for this freakish intermingling of quick-running Celtic blood, all ardour and eagerness, with the slower, surer and steadier pulsing of an Anglo-Saxon strain, doled out to Stone none of the Celtic defects but only of the Celtic best. From the irritability, uncertainty, and the "impossibility" which make some Celts—at all events some of us Irishmen—an inscrutable problem and mystery of Providence, as well as an ever-present perplexity to our best friends, Stone was entirely free. In that

respect he was inwardly, and in character, as truly English as he was truly English in the outer man.

He was of exceptional physique and presence. Only slightly above the middle height, but muscular of limb, broad and square-shouldered, and deep-chested as a lion, Stone was a fine specimen of virile manhood. Proud of his strength, for, though devoid of vanity, he had his full share of what I may call a seemly and proper pride, he carried himself well and erectly—head up, shoulders squared—walking with a step that was firm, steady and soldierly.

And here I may interpolate that, a soldier's grandson as he was, all Stone's boyhood longings were set on soldiering. Only the knowledge that it was the heart's desire of the father and mother he so revered that he should follow his father by taking Holy Orders, and later the conviction that he was called of God to the ministry, kept him from a commission in the Army. His renunciation of his boyhood's dream was the first great act of obedience in a life of consistent obedience and devotion to duty. The sacrifice—as it was—of his own wishes, was made manfully and uncomplainingly, and he threw himself whole-heartedly thereafter into his ministerial work. But the pang remained, and to the last, when he spoke of soldiering, there was that in his voice and in his eye which reminded one of an exile, looking across far waters to the land of his birth. To Stone, to have led a company, or a half-company, and for the first time, into action in the service of his Sovereign and of his country, would have been, in the words of George Meredith, the very "bend of passion's rapids," as supreme a moment as Ros-

setti's "sacred hour for which the years did sigh." That he would have made a gallant soldier, I am sure, but not a great one. Leading a charge, he would have been irresistible, but his was too highly-strung, too impulsive a temperament, calmly to plan out and to carry through the cold-blooded details of a campaign. He was to the last a soldier in heart, if not in looks, for, by the beard and a certain breezy bluffness of presence, he might very well have passed for a sailor. The head was finely moulded and on large leonine lines, the forehead broad, full and lofty, the nose strong, straight, purposeful and well-proportioned, and the set of the firm mouth, and the shaping of the determined chin, were in keeping with the forcefulness and the frankness of the eyes and of the whole face. The darkness—so dark as to be almost black—of the straight thick hair, which was brushed up and off the forehead, accentuated the Saxon ruddiness of his complexion and the glossy red-brown (like that of a newly-fallen chestnut) of his crisply curling moustache and beard, which in sunlight were almost auburn.

His eyes instantly challenged and held your own, for he invariably looked the person to whom he spoke fully and fearlessly, but never inquisitively (one cannot think of the word in connection with Stone), in the face; and it was his eyes that most remained in your memory when he was gone. "Intent," set, and full of fire, the look in them was like the spoken word of command which calls soldiers to attention. Brown in colouring, they were not the hard, glittering and unrevealing brown which one

sometimes sees in woman or in man, but eyes that, when he was reading poetry, could shine as if his soul were a lit taper, of which they were the flame. At other times, I have seen them as merry as a happy boy's, as untroubled as cool clear agate stones at the bottom of a brook. His were eyes that recalled the love and devotion which look out at us from the eyes of some nobly-natured dog, yet eyes that when he was preaching, and the very soul within him was trembling under a terrible sense of responsibility to his people and to God, could burn fiercely red, like a fanned coal in a furnace, but always as true, brave and loyal eyes as ever looked out of human head.

III

In the fact that Stone was at heart intensely human lay the secret of his hold upon the hearts of others. I have claimed high place for him and have called him by high name, but a " saint " at least I have never called him nor claimed him to be. We have been told that it is impossible to be heroic in a high hat, nor is it easy to picture a " saint " in a very pepper of a temper (to say nothing of a boating sweater) at loggerheads, and more than half minded to knock down, a foul-mouthed bargee. Stone's Homeric laughter would not have accorded ill with some Valhalla of the gods, but his rollicking sense of fun, his schoolboy high spirits, still remembered affectionately and joyfully as they are by some who were with him, first as a boy, and thereafter as more than a middle-aged man at Charter-

house, suggest neither a nimbus nor the Saints' Calendar.

In later life, when the endless calls upon his time barred him from following, other than rarely, the field sports that he so loved, and even from the exercise which was so necessary for a man of his physique, Stone not only put on weight, as happens always with athletes out of training, but developed a tendency to stoutness—not, I gather, from some study of the Old Masters, in keeping with the character of Saints, who as a class do not appear to run to flesh.

Neither in looks nor in his life was there anything about Stone of the ascetic who, living aloof and apart, tells over to himself—the beads, as it were, in a rosary of self-mortification—the list of pleasures denied, until in the contemplation of his self-denials he comes at last to find a melancholy pleasure. Stone, on the contrary, was the most natural and normal of men, with a healthy appetite for the good things of this world. If he fasted, as was the case during such a season as Holy Week, none knew of it except himself. He held that the season, in which the Church bids us look back in awe and worship upon the agony of our Lord's Passion, is not a time for bodily indulgence by Christ's minister. But fasting in a monkish sense, or as followed by the Roman Catholic Church, he neither followed himself nor enjoined others to follow, and such fasting as he practised was more in the way of salutary discipline than anything else, and he imposed no fasting upon others.

None the less, though Stone was, as I have said,

no saint, I doubt whether any saint who was ever canonised had half so child-pure a heart or lived half so stainless a life. His was not the negative purity of the cold-blooded, the anæmic, or the passionless, to whom the temptations of the flesh made small appeal. He was a full-blooded, healthy and whole-natured man, a splendid "animal," by whom the animal (which by God's wisdom and grace is in us all) was not done violence to, stamped down, crushed out, and unnaturally suppressed, to his own physical and spiritual detriment and even danger. That is the unwisest of all courses to pursue. By mutilating and maiming the beautiful work and image of God in us, which since He made it must in itself be innocent and beautiful, we sin against our own human nature and against God. Human nature is like a tree. It must have space in which to fulfil the purpose for which it was intended, and in which to grow. Crush down, and seek to crush out, its natural expansion, and it takes distorted shapes (crippled limbs, as it were, on the tree of life) and hideous fungus-like boles and excrescences appear on what would otherwise have been a fair, straight, and shapely young growth. In Stone (to return to my original metaphor) the animal, which is in us all, was not a beast to be bludgeoned down, or to drag us to earth, but a beautiful wild and winged creature which brings strength and gladness to human life, and, wisely guided and controlled, may even bear us aloft and afar. In Stone it was so dominated by an iron will, so sublimated by knightly and noble ideals, and by his innate purity of soul, as to make impossible what was gross, sensual or base.

And may I add, perhaps wickedly, that the animal in him was sometimes a joy as when by sheer brute force, if you like so to call it, he fell upon (so I was once told) three blackguards who, late one dark night, were foully assaulting a poor girl in what was then a lonely part of London Fields. Stone heard her screams, rushed to her help, and knocked out his first man with one blow. Then he closed with number two, and trouncing him so soundly that the fellow howled for mercy, flung him to the ground, and made off after number three, who had taken to his heels.

I can well imagine Stone's sportsmanlike joy and the flash of his eyes when, as I am informed, he said, "Thank heaven I learned to use my fists at Charterhouse! and thank heaven for what rowing did for my biceps at Oxford. I think I've given those two scoundrels a lesson." He shook his head reminiscently and mournfully. "I'd have given five pounds to have got my fists on that third rascal's hide. Honestly, I've enjoyed pommelling those other two scoundrels more than anything that has happened since I came to Haggerston."

Then, seeing, perhaps, a whimsical look in his companion's eye, and perhaps already asking himself whether "taking on" three blackguards at fisticuffs, and badly punishing two out of the three in a fair fight, would by every one be considered decorous or becoming in a clergyman, he broke into infectious laughter that was directed entirely against himself.

No, apart from the question whether this story (I tell it as it was told me long ago) be true or not

true, I do not claim for S. J. Stone that he was a saint. To some men the consciousness of what Stevenson called "a healthy dash of the brute" necessitates an ever watchful "on guard" lest one day the brute spring out to overpower the angel. To Stone—so wholly had he made honour, purity, and truth the very habit of his life—a lapse into anything false, impure, or dishonourable, into thinking or speaking, or even into allowing others, in his presence, to speak what was evil or slanderous, had become impossible. Had the proofs, or what seemed like the proofs, of some base act on Stone's part been brought to the knowledge of any friend who knew him, as I knew him, that friend would not have stooped to examine them. His reply would have been, "I know this man, and though I am aware that he can be prejudiced, stubborn, overbearing, irritable, and that faults of temper, errors of judgment, and the like, may be laid to his charge, I know him well enough to be sure that of what is base he is incapable. Were all the facts before me, they would do no more than reveal him, possibly in a quixotic, but at least in a nobly chivalrous light."

For all his quixotism, chivalry, and hot-headedness, Stone held so strongly that, as Christ's minister, a clergyman must in certain matters be so entirely beyond even a shadow of reproach, that he was singularly wise and guarded in his dealings with the other sex. The foolish girls or women who go simpering to a clergyman, especially if a bachelor as Stone was, to ask advice on love-affairs and the like, he instantly if considerately dismissed to seek the

advice of their mother or of some good woman known to him ; and at all times, and upon all questions, he avoided seeing women-callers alone—not because he feared evil in them or in himself, but because he felt he owed it to his sacred office to avoid even the appearance of anything upon which evil-thinking folk might choose to put an evil construction.

He was not without experiences—what clergyman is ?—of, in other respects, worthy and well-meaning women who, even in connection with Church work, contrive to set people by the ears, or otherwise to cause dissension and trouble. With these he was impatient. He did not hesitate to deal summarily with them, nor firmly, if considerately, to speak his mind ; but Womanhood, I might almost say every woman, he held, if only for his own mother's sake, if only because of a woman the Saviour of the world was born, in a reverence that no folly or sin could altogether break down. I have heard him speak to the poor harlot of the street—his " Sister " as he would not have hesitated to call her—with sorrowful courtliness, and with the pitifulness, the gentleness, and the consideration, which one uses to (as indeed not a few of such unhappy women are) an erring and ignorant child.

I remember, on another and very different occasion, a girl of the soft and silly type coming to the vicarage one day when I was with Stone—I think she came about a Confirmation Class. She had a certain innocence in her face; not the challenging, starry purity that one sees in some faces, but a negative, babyish innocence, which was pretty enough, and appealing in its way, but that meant no more,

probably, than that the girl had not yet had to make choice for herself between good and evil.

"Did you notice the flower-like beauty of that child's face?" Stone asked me, when she had gone. "In the presence of such exquisite purity and innocence," he went on gravely, and with intense reverence in his voice, "one feels convicted of sin, as it were. One is so conscious of one's own coarseness, grossness, and impurity as to feel unworthy to stand in such presence!"

And all the time, the white armour of purity in which he was clad, the armour and purity of his own soul's—a strong man's—forging, was compared with hers, as is the purity of fine gold tried in the furnace to metal mixed with base earth and newly brought all untested from a mine.

IV

His unfailing sense of humour, his boyish and buoyant love of fun, like the cork jacket by means of which a swimmer rides an incoming wave, carried Stone through difficulties which would have depressed another. Let me put one such instance on record. To brighten in any way the drab days of the poorest folks in his East End parish, he counted a privilege as well as a happiness, and he was constantly devising means for bringing some new gladness to their lives—the gift of a sorely needed bit of furniture, or a coveted ornament, a boating party with the children in Victoria Park, a magic-lantern entertainment—anything in fact which seemed to him likely to make them forget their many troubles and to call them out of themselves.

Most of the women in his parish were poor, many pitifully so. Here was a wife toiling all day in a laundry, to keep the home together, while her husband was out of work, or worse still, while her husband was on the drink ; and there, a widow, the sole support of several children.

One day when Stone received an unexpected cheque—I think it was for the sale of his book of poems—he unfolded to me, radiant himself with happiness at the thought, a plan for taking some score of the very poorest mothers of the parish for an outing to Southend.

The great day—as it was in the lives of these poor people—came, and was fortunately fine. The party caught an early train to Southend, spent a long summer day by the sea, gathered at the appointed time, happy if tired, at the railway station, to find that Stone had misread the time-table, and that the last train to London had just gone. Here were some twenty mothers—mostly with husbands who looked to them for the preparation and cooking of supper at night, and of breakfast next morning. To these husbands telegrams of explanation and appeasement must, if the worse came to the worst, and return that night were impossible, be despatched. Other mothers there were with children awaiting their mother's home-coming for a last meal and to be put to bed ; and all the twenty good women—if to London they could not get that night—themselves requiring supper, and some decent place in which to sleep. Stone's face, brick-red with mortified self-anger at his own muddling, as the agitated mothers crowded and clamoured around him, two or

three shrilly or tearfully expatiating on the terrible things that would await them at the hands of their lord and master, should that lord and master and the children go supperless to bed, and rise breakfastless next morning, was, I am told, a study in dismay and bewilderment, until he discovered that, by paying for it out of his own pocket, a special train could be run.

Relieved to find that no one except himself would have to suffer for his carelessness, and even while ruefully regarding the document by the signing of which he made himself responsible for the entire cost (no inconsiderable sum to a poor man as he was) of the special train, the Gilbertian side of the situation—that he, a bachelor, should have a score of wives and mothers upon his hands—dawned upon him. He broke, so my informant tells me, into bluff and hearty Berserker-like laughter, till his chestnut beard wagged, and his burly form rocked; and vowing that—though he must in consequence go short for many a day of every luxury—the lesson he had received, and the story which he would then be able to tell against himself, were cheap at the price, he signed the document, and made mock of himself and his own carelessness all the way home.

Another story was once told me of Stone, concerning the accuracy of which I have my doubts. What happened might well, I admit, have happened to him, but my impression is that it was a friend of his who was the guilty party. However, here is the story, as it was told me, of Stone.

He was to take an afternoon service at a church —I think in Hoxton. Like many poets and some

clergymen he was not always punctual, and when he arrived he surmised, by the fact that the bell had stopped, and that there was no thin and dribbling stream of late-comers filing through the doors, that he was more than a little late. The congregation as he saw was on its knees, so diving into the vestry, which was empty, he hastily threw his surplice over his head, and hurrying to his place in the chancel, read out the opening words of the Evening Prayer.

"When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive," and thence passed on to the familiar "Dearly beloved brethren," and so on to the end of the service —to discover when returning to the vestry, that he had inflicted upon the unfortunate congregation the penance of two Evensongs on the same afternoon. He had been under the impression that the service commenced at four o'clock, whereas the hour fixed was three. In Stone's absence the curate-in-charge had felt that there was nothing for it but for him, the curate, to read the service himself, which he did, and in fact he had made an end of it, had pronounced the Benediction, and for some reason had left the church, not by the vestry, but by another door leading direct to the vicarage. It was the custom at the church in quest on for the congregation to stand while the clergy were passing out, and to return to their knees for a brief silent prayer, after the clergy had passed out. It was at this moment that Stone is supposed to have arrived and hurried in, to begin the service all over again.

V

At Oxford Stone had been an athlete, and an athlete and sportsman—oarsman, skater, fisherman and first-class shot—he remained almost to his life's end. He was captain of the Pembroke boat, and stroked the college eight. Legend has it that he was chosen for his "Blue"—but did not have the honour of rowing against Cambridge for the following reason.

Between his merits as an oarsman and those of another candidate, there was absolutely nothing to choose. The other man was as good as, but no better than Stone, and Stone was as good as, but no better than, the other. As a way out of the difficulty it was thought best to decide the question by the spin of a coin, and Stone's luck was uppermost. He was delighted, for no man would more eagerly have coveted his "Blue" than he, until he learned that it was a matter of "now or never" for his rival, who was shortly going down, and so would stand no other chance of rowing in the great race. As it could matter neither way for the boat's success which had the seat, Stone, who was staying on at Pembroke and so would be eligible another year, pleaded that his rival be given this, his only chance—with the result that Stone's own second chance never came.

So runs the legend of how Stone missed his "Blue." As I never questioned him concerning its truth, and he was the last man to speak of such an incident himself, I relate it merely as it was related to me,

and with no other comment than that such impulsive generosity is just what might have been expected from this clerical Don Quixote of lost causes, lost chances, forlorn hopes and self-forgetful chivalry.

To say of a man that all his geese were swans, as was often said of Stone, implies, indirectly, that he was something of a fool, if a generous one. It is true that Stone wished to think well of whatever a friend had done. If it were ill done he was not so blind as not to know it was ill done, and was too honest not to say so, if asked for an opinion, or to remain silent, if unasked. But if it were not ill done, then young and keen-visioned Joy, as well as dim-eyed Dame Pride alike clapped magnifying glasses on nose, to show him the thing not as it was, but as it appeared through the eyes of joy and pride in a friend's work.

So, too, in regard to the friend himself. If Stone saw, or thought he saw, in his friend, some streak, no matter how rudimentary or infinitesimal of, let us say unselfishness, he saw it not as it was in his friend, but magnified to the scale in which it existed in himself. Hence his appreciation of a friend's gifts or qualities and his own gratitude for some small service rendered were preposterously out of all proportion to the facts. For instance, I had been at some quite small trouble in reading, by his wish, the proofs of his *Lays of Iona*, and also, by his wish, in sending him my criticisms. Here is his letter (Oct. 23, 1897) in acknowledgment:

MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

What *thoroughness* of friendship you have shown me from first to last in the matter of the *Lays!* Certainly I will alter the "no" to "not" in the Preface, if a second edition permits me. I had not noticed the error and jumped with a "How could I"! of exclamation when I read your note. You comforted me very much in the latter part of your note when you spoke of sundry passages you approved, especially by what you said of the humorous part of the work. I had specially feared about this, and indeed I had put in these two occasional pieces only to please my sister.

Good-bye, dear friend,

Ever yours gratefully and affectionately,

S. J. STONE.

Everyone who knew Stone intimately will bear me out in saying that the gratitude here expressed, and disproportionate as it may be, was absolutely sincere. He literally glowed with gratitude for any small service done, or trivial personal kindness, and said no word more than he meant in making his acknowledgment, for of "gush," of what was effusive or insincere, he had something like horror, and was as incapable of it, as he was of falsehood or of craft. And in regard to men and women whom he loved, it was not so much that he mistook geese for swans, as that he remembered that, on land, a swan's waddle is no less unlovely than a goose's, whereas, on water or on wing, a goose, no less than a swan, is not without grace. He idealised his friends—he saw in his mind's eyes, his geese a-wing

in the heavens or a-sail on water, as well as waddling on land, and loved them for the possibilities, and for the hidden graces he saw within. He was by no means the merely credulous, if generous fool, that some thought him. On the contrary, for most human weaknesses, he had an uncommonly shrewd and sharp eye, but he appealed always to the best and noblest, never to the vain or selfish side of those with whom he came into contact, and so his own unwavering faith in God, in Christ, and in human nature, was not only the cause of, but seemed to create similar and sincere faith on the part of others, just as his own integrity made even the rascal or the infirm of purpose ashamed of rascality or of weakness. But tricked, betrayed and deceived, or confronted with evil, Stone's wrath was terrible and consuming.

I remember the blaze in his eyes, the fury in his face, concerning a scoundrel who had boasted of the deliberate betrayal, and cowardly and calculated desertion of a trustful girl. Had the villain fallen at the moment, when Stone first heard the facts, into my friend's hands, there would have been left upon the fellow's body and face, and from Stone's fist, marks which would have borne witness to the end of his life of the punishment he had received. His own bitterest enemy, Stone could freely forgive, but for the man or woman whom he held to be the enemy of God, he had small mercy. Even in matters not of great consequence, but upon which he felt strongly, he was inclined to override his opponent, and generally to carry things with a high hand. That he always spoke, wrote, or acted with judg-

ment, I do not maintain. His motives none could question, but his judgment, even his best friend sometimes doubted.

When I speak of him as obstinate, I must not be understood as meaning the type of obstinacy which is more frequently associated with weakness than with strength. Obstinacy, however, of a sort—stubbornness if you so like to call it—was undoubtedly a temperamental defect. He was inflexibly convinced that his own beliefs in regard to God, to the Throne, to the State, to the Church, and even in regard to politics—inherited as some of these beliefs were, influenced as were others by class feeling, by education, and by environment—were the only possible beliefs for a Christian, a Churchman, an Englishman and a gentleman. Hence he could not understand the position of those who differed, and was impatient of opposition.

I once heard him described by some one who misunderstood him as a man with a grievance, and a man with too thin a skin. His sensitiveness I do not deny, but it was a sensitiveness which was all for others, never for himself. And so far from being one of those single-cuticle abnormalities whose skin "goose-fleshes" at the very thought of cold, who at the approach of a rough blast wince in anticipation as well as in reality, and suffer more perhaps from the imagined effects of the buffeting than from the buffeting itself, Stone not only never troubled to ask whether the blast was, or was not, coming his way, but enjoyed battling with it when it came. If things went badly with him, he took Fate's blows unconcernedly, and blamed only himself. About

his own ills and sorrows, or breakdown in health, he was the most cheerful of men, but he could and would concern himself about the sorrows or troubles of others, and would move heaven and earth in his efforts to right their wrongs, if wrongs to be righted there were. That is not the way of the man with a grievance. The man with a grievance growls but never fights. He wears his grievance as a badge in his buttonhole, that all may see, and you could do him no unkinder turn than to remove the cause of it.

Stone never had a grievance, but he was ready to make the grievances of his people, real grievances, their grievous wrongs, not fancied ones, his own; and more than one employer of sweated labour, more than one owner of an insanitary slum, and occasionally some Parish Council, or public body in which Bumbledom and vested interests were not unknown, had cause to think Stone too touchy, too sensitive, and too thin-skinned, where the lives of little children, and the bodily and spiritual welfare of his people were concerned.

VI

In politics Stone was the stoutest of old-fashioned Tories, and by every instinct and sympathy an aristocrat. Like a certain courtier of high birth who expressed pleasure at receiving the Garter because "there is no pretence of damned merit about it," he believed whole-heartedly in the hereditary principle. I am not sure, indeed, that he would not have thought it well that spiritual as well as

temporal rank should go by inheritance. An archbishop who came of a long line of archbishops and was trained from birth upwards for that high office, Stone would probably have held to be a more fitting Spiritual Head than one whose preferment was due to his politics, to his suavity, and to the certainty that he would act upon "safe" and conventional lines. He believed in Government at home and abroad, in Great Britain as well as in her Dominions and Colonies, by the "ruling orders," by the class that he held to be born with the power to command. In himself he possessed the power to command in a remarkable degree. I have heard him sternly rebuke and even silence seditious or blasphemous Sunday afternoon speakers in Victoria or Hyde Park, and I do not remember one occasion when he was answered with other than a certain sullen and unwilling deference, for, in spite of his authoritative and even autocratic way, something there was about him that compelled respect. A Socialistic orator of my acquaintance once spoke of him—not to his face—as one whose politics were pig-headed and his loyalty pig-iron. I am not altogether sure what constitutes pig-iron, but if the Socialist meant that Stone's loyalty was rigid and unbending I do not know that I should quarrel with the description. It was in his loyalty to the throne that all his intolerance came out. Even those who were at heart no less loyal than he laughed sometimes at the boyishness and the extravagance of his worship for the Queen. The Queen, since she reigned by divine right, could do no wrong, and had Stone lived in Stuart times he would have died upon the

scaffold, or fallen upon the field, for his Sovereign's sake; nor am I sure that even for a Richard the Third or a King John, had either been his Sovereign, he would not equally have drawn the sword.

In religious as in other matters, all Stone's sympathies were with those who have an affirmation to make, as contrasted with those who have an objection to lodge. He detested iconoclasts, and was prejudiced beforehand against any belief that he classed with "negatives" as opposed to "positives." Just as he disliked the name of Protestant, because he could not understand a Christian man electing to be known by a name which "protests" against another's faith, instead of affirming his own, so he found it hard to understand a Church which by its name proclaimed itself as not being in "conformity" with or as "dissenting" from another Church.

Stone could not understand that anyone should prefer the Free Church to the Anglican Catholic Church, but since it was so (and that it was so he sincerely and deeply grieved) he felt it better, while friendly and cordial to all the Nonconformists with whom he was brought into contact, that each should go his own way and worship God in his own manner. Hence he was not of the school of Churchmen who busy themselves in bringing about a closer union between Anglicanism and the Free Churches, and are for the removal of landmarks and the interchange of pulpits.

On the other hand, he attacked the religion of no one who believed in the Fatherhood of God, the Divinity, Atonement, and Resurrection of our Lord, but reserved all his fighting power for what (a true

Browning lover) he would have accounted "the arch fiend in visible form"—the enemies of God and His Christ. He had no sympathy whatever with Churchmen who occupy themselves in bickerings and controversies with Nonconformists, or in denouncing the Church of Rome. To him good Churchmanship—and never was there stronger Churchman than he—meant, not disapproval of, dislike to, or antagonism towards other Churches, be they Roman or Free, but active love, practical loyalty and devotion to his own beloved Mother Church. Hence he never proselytised. He never sought to turn a Nonconformist into a Churchman, or a Roman into an English Catholic, but he wuld have fought to the last to keep a member of the Church of England from forsaking that Communion for any other.

But there was no indefiniteness about his attitude to Rome. Writing to me in 1899 about some one he and I knew, who had gone over to Rome, he said:

"I am deeply sorry. Rome is a real branch of the Church of the Redemption, and has the creeds, the ministry, and the Sacraments. But to leave our august Mother for Rome! I do not mean to imply that to be a Roman, or to become a Roman, has necessarily anything to do with vital error. I speak strongly only on the point of *comparison*, and as a loyal, happy, and satisfied Catholic of the English branch. Certain defects I own to in our English Mother, but they are very small and few, as regards the accretions and superfluities, to say the least of them (of which the gravest is Mariolatry), of her Roman Sister. On the other hand they *are* sisters."

He loved the name of "Catholic," and resented the somewhat arrogant claim to a monopoly in that beautiful word by the Church of Rome, and if one of his own congregation used it in this restricted sense, he never failed, gently but firmly, to make the correction "Roman Catholic." His own Churchmanship he would probably have described as that of an Anglican Catholic to which, while agreeing, I may add that he was, at one and the same time, of the Sacerdotal and of the Evangelical Schools.

Stone's sacerdotalism, paradoxical as it may seem to say so, was not of a "priestly" order, and "priest" was perhaps the last word which anyone who did not know him to be a clergyman would have used of him, or by which his personality would by a stranger have been described. A Sacerdotalist he undoubtedly was in the sense of holding firmly by apostolical succession; but to me he seemed a Sacerdotalist chiefly in the taking of his sacred office sacredly. Nor to this day, and for all his sacerdotalism, am I sure which of the two he placed the higher—the priesthood or the people. None could have held more firmly than he that a priest is consecrated of God. None could have been more entirely convinced that the priesthood is consecrated by, and exists only by, and for, the people. He was, if anything, more of a congregationalist—using the word apart from its purely denominational meaning—than are the majority of ministers of that denomination themselves. The congregational character of the service at his church was, next to reverence, the outstanding feature. The congregation were as

much in evidence throughout as the clergy. They repeated aloud every prayer for which there was precedent, or authority for so doing, instead of the prayer being offered, as in most churches, only by one of the clergy.

So, too, with the musical service. There was no anthem, and so far from the burden of the singing resting upon the choir, Stone often announced a hymn thus: "The congregation alone singing all except the first and last verses." More "hearty" congregational singing than at his church I have never heard outside the Metropolitan Tabernacle (unlovely name for a Christian Church !) when under that great preacher and true minister of God, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, five thousand voices unaccompanied by organ or any other musical instrument joined in singing the Old Hundredth. High Churchman as doctrinally Stone was, he was not a Ritualist. Incense and vestments were never used in any church of his, and though his people turned naturally to him for help and advice in trouble, "Confessions," in the accepted sense of the word, were unknown. He was never in conflict with his Bishop, or the other ecclesiastical authorities, if only for the reason that his loyalty and his fine sense of discipline made him constitutionally incapable of breaking the law. He knelt reverently in prayer before and after Consecration, and at other times, but genuflexions and ceremonious and constant bowing to the altar on the part of the celebrant, his assistants and the choir, were absent from the service for which he was responsible.

On one slight but significant act of reverential

ritual he, however, laid stress. Whenever, in church or out of church, Stone spoke or heard spoken the name of our Lord, he never failed, no matter where or with whom he was, reverently, even if unnoticeably, slightly to bow his head. "God the Father and God the Holy Ghost," I once heard him say, "no man has ever seen. But God, the Son, for our sakes, stooped to become Man, and to be seen of men. For that reason, a reason surely which should make us more, not less loving and adoring, some have doubted or denied His Godhead. Hence when I hear that Holy Name, I incline my head in adoring worship, as a protest if you like against the base ingratitude which—because for our sakes He stooped to become Man—would deny that He is more than man, and in acknowledgment of Him as my Redeemer, my Lord and my God." He was indeed so entirely a poet that no word or name, which stood for that which he revered, was ever by him lightly uttered or used. Between his mother and himself—his father died either just before, or soon after, I came to know the son, and I never saw the two together, though I know that their relationship was ideal—existed the most beautiful love and devotion, and if only for her sake, the very word "mother" was consecrate upon his lips. Four times only is the halo seen around the head of mortal. Around the head of a little soul newly come from God, there is seen the rainbow-hued halo of childhood; around the head of lad or maiden, man or woman, who, in love's supreme and sacred season, is lifted nearest to God, there radiates the rose-coloured halo of love; around the head of those

who have newly gone to God, glows the purple-royal halo of death ; and around the head of a young mother, fondling her first-born, shines out the white and sacred halo of motherhood.

To Stone the halo of motherhood was visible, even around the head of those whom this world counts and calls " fallen." Motherhood was to him, in itself, and apart from the attendant circumstances, so sacred and beautiful, that the very word " mother," as he spoke it, seemed surrounded by the halo of his reverence. The widowed Queen whom he knew and loved, and by whom he was held in regard and esteem, was to him no less our Mother—the type and symbol of English Motherhood—than she was our Sovereign. Of the august and ancient Catholic Church of which he was so loyal a son he rarely used the simile " The Bride of Christ," which one frequently hears in sermons, but spoke of her, and with eyes aglow, as the Mother of her people ; and it was of England, our Mother, that he sang with passionate love in many of his poems. So, too, the words " Holy Communion " assumed, as he spoke them, a meaning that was sacramental. The reverent lowering of his voice was like the dipping of a battleship's ensign.

Again, in that portion of the service, in which, preceding the reading of the Ten Commandments, the Celebrant says, " God spake these words, and said," many clergymen lay no stress on any particular word, but speak or intone all six in one more or less monotonous voice. It was not so with Stone. He spoke the passage thus :

" God——" the Holy Name was uttered with in-

tense reverence and solemnity, which recalled to the congregation how awful is the Source whence these ancient Commandments come. Then there was a pause that every hearer might attune his or her thought to reverent attention, and the Celebrant would continue—"spake these words, and said," passing on thence to the First Commandment.

And, lastly, I would say that I never heard human voice thrill with such devotion, such worshipping and wondering adoration, as that with which he spoke the name of our Saviour. That Name, the Holy and adored Name of JESUS, was so linked with all that he held sacred that he never uttered it without pausing before and after the Holy Name, that no less hallowed a word should be neighbour to that Name on his lips.

VII

Upon one incident in my long friendship with Stone I look back with pain and sorrow. He came in late one night, just as the last post had brought me the news—I would not write of such things here except in so far as it bears upon my friend—that the whole edition of my first little book had been sold out.

To-day the writing of a book, if only because it may be the means of bringing influence to bear upon others, is, I am of opinion, an occupation to be followed diligently, conscientiously, and with pleasurable zest. None the less, as compared with what some men are doing in the way of direct personal service to God, to their King, their country and their fellow

creatures, it seems to me an occupation too inactive to afford cause for congratulation that one is thus employed. But in those days I desired nothing more than to be a successful author, little imagining that success in authorship does not necessarily mean the making either of literature or of a man.

When Stone came in that night, so full was I of the great news, as I held it to be, about my book, that I must needs rush at him, as volubly and importantly to pour it all out, as if the fate of empires hung upon the issue. He had a genius for friendship, and heard me out patiently and gently to the end, to say: "I am so glad, so very glad, dear fellow, and congratulate you with all my heart," or words to that effect. Then he broached the subject of his call, a matter of infinitely more importance than any news of mine. It did not concern himself, or I should, I hope, have acted differently, but a member of his congregation, unknown to me, whom Stone was trying to assist in a time of trouble and anxiety. So far as I remember I hastily promised the assistance for which he asked, but, when he essayed to speak further of the matter, I interrupted him rudely, once again and boastfully to speak of my book.

Stone so habitually suppressed it, that few suspected how great was his gift of satire. When he chose, or rather had he so chosen, he could so wing his satiric shaft as to pierce the thickest hide, and never was he more tempted to employ this "devil's weapon" as he held it to be, than when irritated by vulgar boastfulness.

Looking back long years after upon this incident,

I know that to no one could what happened that night be more irritating, and even objectionable, than to Stone. On the part of a friend, it was an affront to everything by which he held in our social code, a wound to his own pride of breeding and good manners. How sorely I must have tempted and irritated him, I now fully realise, yet his affection for the offender held back the stinging word, and neither then, nor at any other time in our long friendship, did I ever hear from him one reproachful or ungentle word. I recall his forbearance to me—a very young man when he was becoming middle-aged, and so might reasonably have spoken—on this particular occasion, an occasion which even now I cannot recall without shame. I recall a score of times when I grieved him by my apathy upon some question upon which he felt intensely, for Stone's convictions were so positively held that he would readily have gone to the stake in defence of them, and that those he loved, and to whom he looked for sympathy, could be apathetic upon matters which he held to be of vital consequence, was to him a positive pain. I recall all these, and many other things in which I failed or wounded him by some indifference, some thoughtless act, or unconsidered word, and remembering that never once did he fail me by sympathy, interest, help or love withheld—I sicken at my own unworthiness, and at the thought of the sorry return I made for all his love and forbearance.

It is with relief that I turn to another incident in the early days of our friendship.

One night, in the eighties, when I was dining with

Stone and his and my kind old friend, the Rev. Frederick Arnold, at St. Paul's Vicarage, Haggerston, a maid brought in the last post. Stone asked permission to run through his letters, in case there was anything requiring an immediate answer. Over one he uttered an exclamation of glad and grateful surprise.

"Good news?" one of us asked.

"Very good," said Stone, flushed and radiant. He hesitated a moment. Then, handing Mr. Arnold the letter, he said, "There is no reason why you two, one an old, and the other a young, but both true and dear friends of mine, should not see it."

It was from the Bishop of London—I think Bishop Jackson, but of this I am not quite sure. In any case it was a very gracious letter. Upon Stone, the Bishop said, the mantle of John Keble had by virtue of his hymns, admittedly fallen. Thus far Stone had for some fifteen years given all his time, energies, and abilities to working among poor and uneducated folk in an East End parish, where practically the whole of the small stipend was swallowed up in church work and charities, and where Stone had no time or opportunity to do justice to his gifts as a writer. The Bishop was aware, he said, that Stone was fast wearing himself out, and could not go on much longer. Hence he had pleasure in putting before Stone the offer of preferment to a West End parish, where he would have an educated, intellectual, and appreciative congregation, as well as the leisure and the opportunity to devote his great gifts as poet and hymn-writer for the benefit of the church and the world.

It was a tempting offer, for much as Stone loved sport and travel he had hitherto had neither the time nor the money for anything more extended than a few weeks in Switzerland or in "God's Infirmary" (as quoting George MacDonald he often called the country), generally on a visit to his old friend the Rev. Donald Carr, of Woolstaston Rectory, Salop. Moreover, though Stone grudged no service given to God or to his own congregation, he grieved sometimes that he had so little time to devote to hymn-writing and to literature, concerning which he had many projects. In a letter dated June 15, 1892, he had written to me, "I am up to my ears in work and behindhand because, if you please, I am in the thick of writing a religious novel. I am not really joking!"

But grateful as he was for the Bishop's kind and fatherly offer, Stone declined it as, later on, he declined similar offers, including a Colonial Bishopric.

"I am not and I do not expect to be the man I was," he said to Mr. Arnold and me that night, "but I ought to be, and am, thankful that, nervously constituted as I am, I have gone through fifteen years in the East End, out of twenty-three in the Ministry. When health and strength give out, when for my people's sake I must let the work pass into younger and stronger hands, I will go. Till then, in Haggerston, where my heart is, and where the people whom I love are living, I must remain."

And in Haggerston he remained working early in the morning and late in the night until 1890, when the collapse, alike of nerve and physical strength,

came, and he had to resign—to be appointed by the Lord Chancellor to the comparatively easy living of All Hallows, London Wall.

But Stone was not the man to spare himself in his new sphere of labour. What the wrench of parting and the strain necessitated by sweeping aside the cobwebs, and by trying to warm into life the dry bones, as he put it, of a long-neglected City church cost him, may be gathered from the one and only sad letter I ever had from him. It is written from the house of his sister, Mrs. Boyd.

WOODSIDE LODGE,
SOUTH NORWOOD HILL, S.E.,
Nov. 28, 1891.

MY DEAR KERNAHAN,

I have, in a very busy life, never passed through such a time of depression as in the last nine or ten months. In the Spring I left the old Parish of 21 years' work and 31 years' memories—and how I got through the next couple of months I scarcely know. Only by Grace of God. I went to Southend for a fortnight, but it was simply a *ghastly* time, I was ill in body and mind. Except for the faith which Tennyson describes in the case of Enoch Arden's coming home, through which a man (believing in the Incarnation, and therefore in the Perfect Human Sympathy of God) cannot be "all unhappy," I don't know what would have become of me. I left behind me, you know how much—how many is represented by 537 communicants, nearly all of them my spiritual children, and I had before me, not a "howling wilderness" but a silent wilderness of the worst of the City churches. A howling wilderness would have stirred up the

soldier's blood that is in me—but the desolation which I felt so ill was like a winding sheet. You must come and see me at All Hallows, and while I show you the beautiful present, I will show you in actual fact some of the dry bones.

I need not tell you that I have had a great deal to do Haggerstonwards. And oh ! my correspondence with my old children !

I hope this does not sound to you like complaint or self-pity. I only mean it as explanation—which would not be given in these terms, except to one very much (I know) of my own temperament. Indeed, there is no cause for anything but thankfulness. My nerves were too worn out for Haggerston any longer. My successor is one almost entirely after my own heart—my new parish is exactly one (nearest to Haggerston in the City) I wished for. The task of renovation, though it makes me a poor man for a year or two, has been very good by way of distraction and for the delight of making a garden out of such a wilderness of dry bones, and after another six or nine months I may be able to afford a curate, and, having no further special financial or parochial anxieties, be able to settle to some final literary work. Indeed, I am as I ought to be, very thankful.

So far most egotistically.

I am interested with my whole heart in what you tell me of yourself. Do come and see me, to tell more. I will promise to send you what I write, if you will undertake to do the same.

God bless you, dear friend.

Ever your most affectionate,

S. J. STONE.

The depression passed, and Stone recovered sufficiently to throw himself, heart and soul, and for some years, into his now memorable work among the "hands" employed in City warehouses, shops and factories. Once again it was for the poor, or for the comparatively poor that he toiled, and once again he spared himself in nothing. His letters (I have enough almost for a book) tell of the joy and contentment he found in the work, and of his thankfulness to God for what had been done.

But he had made the change from the heavier work at Haggerston too late, and even in the easier charge, which, in order that he might husband his failing strength and outworn energies had been found for him, he would not, or could not spare himself—with the result that, in the autumn of 1899, he had another breakdown. Meeting him unexpectedly one day on the Embankment, after not seeing him for some little time, I was inexpressibly shocked at the change. He told me that he had been feeling very ill for some weeks, and was then on his way to meet the friend who was accompanying him to see a specialist, and that I should, without delay, know the result of the examination which was to be made. Not many hours had passed before I had a letter. The malady, Stone said, was cancer, it was feared in a malignant form, and there must be an operation, and soon.

With all the old and infinite thought and tenderness for others, he gave me gently to understand that the case was not too hopeful—he was terribly run down, his heart was weak: he had overstrained it while at Oxford—and even should he survive the

operation, there was small likelihood of recovery. Here is the conclusion of his letter:

Keep a quiet mind about me, dear friend. I have not so learned Christ that I make any real difference between life and death, but remember me before God.

Ever yours most affectionately,

S. J. STONE.

Scarcely a day of the months which followed was free from pain. Yet he wrote, "I live in a kind of thankful wonder that I should be so encompassed by the goodness of God and the lovingkindness of men." To the end he retained all his old interests. He continued, in the brief respites from terrible bouts of pain, to attend the church of All Hallows, of which he was still rector, and to minister to his people, and even to follow, with intense patriotic interest, every event in the South African War.

The day preceding his death, Sunday, he was at All Hallows; and the very day of his passing he wrote, "I am in such pain that I can neither write nor dictate. At others I am just able to write 'with mine own hand.' But whether at the worst or at the best in a *bodily* state, spiritually I am not only in patience, but in joy of heart and soul." Soon after came a brief space of unconsciousness and—the end.

So died one who was liker Christ than any other man or woman I have known. His love for his fellows was so passionate and so unselfish that, could he have taken upon himself, to save them from sin, sorrow, and suffering, a similar burden to that which

his Lord and Master bore, he would not have hesitated—he would gladly have hastened—to make the sacrifice.

The mistakes he made were many, though I remember none that was not made from high motive, generous impulse, misplaced zeal, or childlike singleness of purpose, which to the last led him to credit others with truth, loyalty, honour, and sincerity, like to his own. In the beautiful hymn which he so loved, and with which he so often ended evensong, we read :

> And none, O Lord, have perfect rest,
> For none are wholly free from sin,

but if sin there was in Stone, as in all that is human, I can truly say that, in our twenty-five years' intimate friendship, I saw in him no sign of anything approaching sin, other than—if sins they be—a noble anger and a lofty pride. To have loved, and to have been loved and trusted by him, was no less a high privilege than it was a high responsibility, for if any of us, who at some time of our lives, shared Stone's interests and ideals, and were brought under the compelling power and inspiration of his personality, should hereafter come to forget what manner of man he was—should play false with, or altogether fall away, from those ideals, or be content to strive after any less noble standard of conduct and character than he set and attained—then heavy indeed must be our reckoning, in the day when for these, to whom much has been given, much will be required.

For Stone had something of the talismanic per-

sonality of his Master. Just as, without one spoken word—without more than a look—from the Christ the unclean were convicted of sin by the talisman of His purity, so all that was noblest, divinest and knightliest in man, all that was white-souled, selfless, tender, true, lofty, and lovely in womanhood, recognised something of itself in Stone, and in his presence all were at their highest and their best.

Nor was this due merely to what has been called a "magnetic personality." That there are men and women who for good or for evil (it is just as likely to be for the latter as for the former) possess some magnetic or mesmeric power over others, I am, and from personal knowledge, aware. But Stone's influence was neither mesmeric nor magnetic. It was by the unconscious spiritual alchemy of a soul so rare (I repeat and purposely near the end of this article what I said in the beginning) as to make possible the courage of a Cœur de Lion, the honour of a King Arthur or Sir Galahad—as to make possible even in a sense the sinlessness of Christ. To have known, if only once in a lifetime—and in spite of bitter disillusionments, of repeated betrayals on the part of some others—such a man as S. J. Stone, is in itself enough to keep sweet one's faith in humanity, in immortality, and in God.

Some time before Stone's death I had been much thrown into the company of a gifted and brilliant thinker and man of Science, who had very little belief—I will not say in the existence of a God, but at least in the existence of a God who takes thought for the welfare of mortals, and no belief whatever in existence after death. In our walks and con-

versations he had adduced many arguments in support of annihilation, which it was difficult to answer; and I remember that, when on the morning that Stone died, I stooped to press my lips to the forehead of the friend I loved and revered as I have loved and revered none other since nor shall again, it seemed for a moment as if the man of whom I have spoken as disbelieving in personal immortality, were, in spirit, at my elbow and whispering in my ear. "Look well upon your friend's face!" the Voice seemed to say, "and you shall see written there: 'Nobly done, bravely done, greatly done, if you will,' but you shall also see written there, '*Done and ended! done and ended—and for evermore!*'" I remember, too, that it seemed as if some evil power, outside myself, were trying, by means of what hypnotists call "suggestion," to compel me to see, upon the dead face, what that evil power wished me to see there.

For one moment, after the whispering of the words "Done and ended! done and ended—and for evermore," I thought I saw something in the dead face that seemed dumbly to acquiesce in, and to endorse the tempter's words, until another and very different voice (I have wondered sometimes whether it were not my friend's) whispered to me, "If the friend whom you loved be indeed annihilated and has ceased to be—then the Eternal and Omnipotent God whom he, a man and a mortal, ever remembered *has forgotten him, for annihilation means no more and no less than utterly to be forgotten of God.* If that be so, if God can forget, if He can forget those who never forgot Him, then is that God less loving, less

faithful, and less remembering than the mortal whom He has made. Can you, dare you, think this awful and unthinkable thing of the Living and Loving God in whom your friend so wholly trusted ? "

And, looking upon the face of my friend, I saw written there, not only the august dignity, the lone and awful majesty of death, but also the rapture, the peace, the serenity, the triumph of one who staggers spent and bleeding but victorious from the battle, to hear himself acclaimed God's soldier and Christ's knight, and to kneel in wondering awe, in worshipping ecstasy, at the feet of his Saviour and his God.

And remembering what I saw written on the dead face of my friend, remembering the life he led and the God in whom he trusted, I have no fear that my own faith will fail me again in life or in death.

And we also bless thy holy Name for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear ; beseeching thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of thy heavenly kingdom. Grant this, O Father, for Jesus Christ's sake, our only Mediator and Advocate. Amen.

THE END

SOME OPINIONS OF MR. KERNAHAN'S PUBLISHED WORK

Saturday Review.—" There is a touch of genius, perhaps even more than a touch, about this brilliant and original booklet."

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[In collaboration with the late Mr. Frederick Locker-Lampson.]

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