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P R E F A C E

This little book contains, brief biographical sketches of some men of genius, both of the West and of the East who with all their distinguished career or eminent qualities have carried on a life-long struggle with pecuniary difficulties. Some of them have run into debt and incurred dangers of arrest and confinement. Not one of them seems however to have been weighed down by indebtedness or anxiety about money matters. The personages described in this little book have been selected at random not merely to illustrate 'genius in pecuniary trouble' but also to furnish sketches of persons interesting and inspiring in themselves.

Tikra House, Lucknow, }
June 1, 1932.

RAJENDRA SINGH

BACON.

(1501—1626)

Bacon was a literary luminary outshining most of his contemporaries. No English scholar was more devoted to the service of knowledge than he. His 'Essays' mark the first decisive triumph of English writing in prose. In the words of Frederic Harrison, "In the whole range of English literature no prose work has been more read, quoted, and praised—perhaps none has given more stimulus to thought—than the Essays of Francis Bacon." Bacon rose to a prominence which has ever been the ambition of many but the realization of only a few.

As a lad he was precocious. Later in life he told his chaplain that even during his Cambridge days he had found out the "unfruitfulness of Aristotle's method"—that is, his method of discovering new knowledge. He went to Cambridge at the age of twelve and he was called back home by the death of his father in 1579. His father had left him only a younger son's narrow portion. For the gratification of his ever-rising ambition he was ready to go to any length. The favour of the court was his ideal, and this ideal he strove early to attain.

What did he not do towards this end? Being often pinched in his means he was anxious to be employed in the Queen's service or to be put in some place of independence. For this reason he was sometimes obsequious to the men in power.

At the age of twenty-five he wrote a philosophical essay which he entitled "the Greatest Birth of Time." But this brought him nothing—neither money nor the consolations of philosophy. His fortunes became more and more involved. He was needy, in weak health, with careless and expensive habits, and embarrassed with debts. His debts increased and creditors grumbled.

The Earl of Essex was his best friend. He did not lose a single opportunity of advancing Bacon's interests.

In the year 1593 when the Attorney-General's place became vacant Essex took up his friend's cause in the warmest manner possible. He importuned the Queen, risking even her displeasure. He did what could have been possibly done, and yet he was unsuccessful. Bacon knew this and acknowledged it and wrote only a year before to Essex, "I am as much yours as any man's and as much yours as any man." And yet to such a friend and benefactor he had no qualms of conscience to be the means of ruin

and death! He was a blind worshipper of his own greedy self and he lost no opportunity, fair or foul, to gain the Queen's favour. The Queen used him as her instrument and he was willing to be so used.

After the trial and execution of Essex Bacon came in for his share of the royal favour. Out of one of the fines levied by the Queen on political offenders Bacon received £1,200/. He wrote to one of his creditors, "The Queen hath done something for me, though not in the proportion I had hoped." But this amount did not relieve him of his distress—he was in straitened means and experienced great difficulties with his creditors. He was twice arrested for debt. He was keenly disappointed because the Queen did not appoint him to any post in her Government. Under Elizabeth his fortunes did not rise. In 1593 there was again a threat of arrest to Bacon for debt.

Now fortune began to smile on him. James I succeeded Queen Elizabeth, and Bacon was knighted in 1603 along with 300 others. He did not, however, like to "be merely gregarious in a troop." He desired to have this honour alone. At the age of forty-seven he was appointed Solicitor-General. This had ever been his cherished dream for the realization of which he was ready to do anything.

His good fortune did not stop here. In 1617 he received the office of Lord Chancellor, and six months afterwards he was made a peer. He became Baron Verulam and Viscount St. Albans in January 1620. Now Bacon was completely off his head. Buckingham said to every one that Bacon "had been forgetful of his kindness and unfaithful to him." What wonder! When as Francis Bacon he could get Essex executed then as Viscount St. Albans he should not have hesitated to do the same thing if there was a necessity. Nothing was sacred to him: he could sacrifice anything to advance his own cause.

A turn in the tide had set in, though still unseen. There was a growing dissatisfaction with the King's extravagance and wastefulness, and it was feared that questions would be raised about the legality of some unpopular patents and oppressive monopolies that he had granted.

Two Committees were appointed by the House of Commons, one a committee on Grievances, such as the monopolies; the other, a Committee to enquire into abuses in the Courts of Justice. In the course of the proceedings, the question arose in the House as to the authorities or "Referees" who had certified to the legality of the Crown patents or grants which had been so grossly abused, and among

BACON

these "Referees" was the Lord Chancellor. The cloud was so far no bigger than a man's hand. But when the House of Commons decided to bring the whole matter before the House of Lords there was a general apprehension of trouble. In March the hour was struck. The Committee appointed to inquire into abuses in the Courts of Justice had been sitting and, as part of their business, an enquiry had been going on into the ways of the subordinate officers of the Court of Chancery. The fatal blow came on the 15th of March. A charge was suddenly reported, from the Committee to the Commons, against the Lord Chancellor, not of straining the prerogative, nor of conniving at his servant's misdoings, but of being himself a corrupt and venal judge. Two suitors charged him with receiving bribes. The Lords took the whole matter entirely in their own hands, appointing three Committees, and examining the witnesses themselves. Now witnesses came forward every day with fresh cases of gifts and presents,—"bribes" received by the Lord Chancellor. The King could not save him, and on the admission of his guilt he implored the House of Lords for mercy which was denied. The Great Seal was taken away from him. He said: "By the King's great favour I received the great Seal; by my own great fault I have lost it." The sentence was pronounced:

he was fined £40,000. He was to be imprisoned in the Tower during the King's pleasure. He was to be incapable of any office, place, or employment in the State or Commonwealth. He was never to sit in Parliament or come within the verge of the Court. About the fall of Bacon it has been very aptly said that "there had been, and were still to be, plenty of instances of the downfall of power, as ruinous and even more tragie; though scarcely any one more pathetic in its surprise and its shame."

After sometime his fine was remitted : that is, it was assigned to persons nominated by Bacon, who, as the Crown had the first claim on all his goods, served as a protection against his other creditors, who were many and some of them clamorous, and this was followed by his pardon. He was released from confinement two or three days later.

However the fact must be told : English literature will ever remain grateful for the service Bacon has rendered to it. As a man Bacon rose to the highest eminence and sank to the lowest depth.

Pope calls him the wisest, brightest and meanest of mankind, and Hallam remarks of him, "He was entrusted with the highest gifts of heaven and habitually abused them for the poorest purposes of earth—hiring them out for guineas, places and titles in the service of injustice, covetousness and oppression." What a tragedy ! And what a warning !

KEPLER.

(1571—1630)

The world will never forget the name of Kepler who dedicated his life to the service of astronomy.

He was born on December 21, 1571, at Weil in the Duchy of Wurtemberg. As a child he was sickly. In 1576 his father joined the army of the reigning Duke which was serving in the Netherlands. His wife followed him, leaving little Kepler in the care of his grandfather.

In 1578 there was a financial collapse in the fortune of Kepler's father, who returned to Germany ruined by an absconding acquaintance for whom he had stood surety. He was obliged to sell his house and most of his belongings and to keep a tavern at Elmendingen. The boy who had been sent to school a year ago was withdrawn to help his father in rough work. In 1583 the boy was again sent to school. In 1584 he was sent, at the charge of the Duke, to the monastic school of Maulbronn. His father, having quarrelled with his wife Catherine, went away abroad and died there. His mother whose disposition was not very amiable, next quarrelled with her own relatives. However young Kepler took his

M. A. degree in 1591 and stood second in the examination. He was anxious for an appointment even if it should involve his leaving home. He had not to wait long: he was appointed a lecturer in astronomy at Gratz. The post was unimportant and carried with it a small salary. Kepler's knowledge of astronomy was first very limited—just up to the standard of the compulsory school course; nor had he any particular leaning towards this science: In recalling his younger days he would say that he devoted much time “to the examination of the nature of heaven, of souls, of genii, of the elements, of the essence of fire, of the cause of fountains, the ebb and flow of the tides, the shape of the continents and inland seas, and things of this sort.”

In 1595 when he had more leisure, he turned his mind to the study of the number, size, and motion of the planetary orbits. This was one of those first attempts which are generally unsuccessful. His next attempt was more successful, dealing as it did with the relation between the distances of the planets and their times of revolution round the sun. Kepler sent a copy of his book recording the results of his study to Reymers, the Imperial Astronomer, “with a most fulsome letter, which Tycho, a famous astronomer who asserted that Reymers had simply

plagiarised his work, very strongly resented, thus drawing from Kepler a long letter of apology."

Now Kepler married a lady who had already twice married, and soon after he became involved in financial difficulties with her relatives. This was, perhaps, the first of a series of troubles of the same kind that pursued him throughout his life. He had to withdraw to Hungary because he had some trouble with the Styrian authorities on account of religious disputes. From there he sent short treatises to Tübingen, 'On the magnet', 'On the cause of the obliquity of the ecliptic' and 'On the Divine wisdom as shown in the Creation.'

Now he came to Prague, a removal caused by financial difficulties which in one way or another embittered the rest of Kepler's life.

In 1601 Tycho, who had become a great friend of Kepler's, presented him to the Emperor, who gave him the title of Imperial Mathematician, on condition of his assisting Tycho in his calculations. This condition was most welcome to Kepler himself: 'for nowhere else in the world was there such a collection of good observations fit for his own purpose of reforming the whole theory of astronomy.' On the death of Tycho Kepler succeeded him as principal mathematician to the Emperor on a reduced salary,

“which owing to the emptiness of the ‘Imperial Treasury’ was almost always in arrear.” To earn extra money he lapsed into astrology and had recourse to the casting of nativities or horoscopes for which he gained considerable reputation and received very good fees. In his book on astrology he makes the statement that he was forced to “adopt his astrological opinions from direct and positive observation.” This statement has been pooh-poohed by European scientists as pure bluff. He had no faith in the “common herd of prophesiers” who describe the operations of the stars as if they were a set of gods, the lords of heaven and earth, producing everything at their pleasure. He complained that these quack doctors of astrology never troubled themselves to consider what means the stars have of producing any effects on human beings on the earth, they themselves moving but in the sky and sending down to us nothing visible except rays of light. He further said that it was his sincere conviction that “the conjunctions and aspects of the planets certainly did affect things on the earth” and that he was “driven to this belief against his will by most unfailling experiences.” This is what Kepler actually says. How far he is sincere in this statement of his faith, and how far influenced by bread-winning con-

siderations, no one can say. But from the way in which astrology has continued to influence the people of India, quite apart from Kepler, one may well think that Kepler had as true a faith in astrology as some of the great Pandits of India.

In spite of his profession and practice of astrology Kepler's financial difficulties continued as before. When Sir Henry Wotton, British ambassador at Venice, visited Kepler, he found him as usual penniless and indebted. So he urged him to go to England, promising him a warm welcome there. But Kepler was unwilling to leave Germany at that time for several reasons, among which was his fear of being imprisoned. In 1624 the Jesuits did attack Kepler. They sealed up his library and would have dragged him to prison had he not been under the imperial protection.

Kepler made one more attempt to secure payment at Ratisbon of his salary which was in arrears, but again failed. The journey to Ratisbon was so toilsome that he succumbed to an attack of fever in November 1630 in his fifty-ninth year. It would not be far wrong to say that poverty was the cause of Kepler's death.

WILLIAM BECKFORD OF FONTHILL.

(1760—1844)

Of all illusions the illusion of wealth is the most illusory and the most common. No one is free from this malady. There have been notable instances, when in possession of wealth men have lived in worse wretchedness than the worst poverty. The great Duke of Marlborough is said to have walked several miles through the rain at night only to save sixpence and in this way he had accumulated a fortune. But alas! that for which he had laboured so hard and worked so unsparingly was nothing to him: it gave him neither comfort of body nor peace of mind. When he died his fortune passed into the hands of a family with the members of which he was not at all on good terms.

On the contrary there have also been notable instances of men who have spent money with reckless extravagance. The Bible says that riches take wings and fly away, and so they do, whether you hoard them or spend them. One of these extravagant men was William Beckford, an English writer who was born in 1760. He was only ten years of age when his father, who

was a wealthy West Indian proprietor, died leaving him an income of more than £ 100,000, a year which was to accumulate until the boy should reach his majority. The boy was a good lad and had brains. He was given the highest type of education possible in those days. Sir William Chambers instructed him in architecture, and the eminent Mozart taught him music. But with all the advantages of wealth, learning and training William Beckford started on a chequered career at the rather early age of 21. He proudly withdrew from the active business of life and went off to the Continent, where he devoted himself to a life of luxurious ease.

After some time Portugal caught his fancy and he settled down there and lavished his wealth upon a charming villa which Byron describes in the first canto of his *Childe Harold* thus:—

“There thou too, Vathek! England’s wealthiest son,
 Once formed thy paradise, as not aware
 When wanton Wealth her mightiest deeds
 hath done,
 Meek Peace voluptuous lures was ever wont
 to shun.

Here didst thou dwell, here schemes of
pleasure plan,
Beneath yon mountain's ever beauteous brow :
But now, as if a thing unblest by Man,
Thy fairy dwelling is as lone as thou !
Here giant weeds a passage scarce allow
To halls deserted, portals gaping wide :
Fresh lessons to the thinking bosom, how
Vain are the pleasancess on earth supplied ;
Swept into wrecks anon by Time's ungentle
tide ! ”

What a deplorable end of the edifice so fondly
reared up !

With the sanction of the King of Portugal, Beckford visited some wealthy and luxurious monasteries of that country. We shall get a good idea of the pomp and splendour of this journey if we let Beckford himself describe it. “ Everything that could be thought or dreamed of for our convenience or relaxation was carried in our train : nothing was left behind but care and sorrow. The ceiling of my apartment in the monastery was gilded and painted, the floor spread with Persian carpets of the finest texture ; the tables decked with superb ewers and basins of chased silver.” He goes on to describe the kitchen : “ A stream of water flowed through it,

from which were formed reservoirs containing every kind of river-fish. On one side were heaped up loads of game and venison; on the other side were vegetables and fruit in endless variety. Beyond a long line of stores extended a row of wheaten flour, finer than snow; rocks of sugar, jars of the purest oil, and pastry in various abundance. The banquet consisted of rarities and delicacies, of every season, from distant countries."

For a man of such a frame of mind there is no satisfaction, much less contentment. The villa in Portugal was left to its fate and Beckford returned home to England. He could not remain idle at home. Taking a capricious dislike to a splendid mansion on his estate which had been erected by his father at a vast cost, he ordered it to be pulled down. In its place he built a still more splendid palace called Fonthill Abbey.

In the building of this princely pile almost every cart in the country was employed, so that at one time agricultural labour was well-nigh suspended. Impatient of delay, he at one time compelled the workmen to proceed with the construction even at night. Torches were lighted to give light; fresh bands of labourers relieved at evening those who worked by day. Beckford's principal enjoyment

was in watching the erection of this structure, "he devoted the whole of his energies to make it realize the most fascinating vision of an excited imagination." When the abbey was completed Beckford got it surrounded by a twelve feet high wall and the grounds were so arranged as to contain walks and rides twenty miles in extent. Within this mysterious circle scarcely any visitors were allowed. There was a rumour that even the King was refused admittance. Strangers would disguise themselves as servants, as peasants, or as pedlars, in the hope of catching a glimpse of its glories.

A visitor who had the privilege of seeing the interior of the palace says, "Gold and silver vases and cups are so numerous here that they dazzle the eye, and when we look round at the cabinets, candelabra and ornaments which decorate the room, we may almost imagine that we stand in the treasury of some oriental prince, whose riches consist entirely of vessels of gold and silver enriched with precious stones of every sort, from the ruby to the diamond."

Now there came a turn in the tide. Beckford's affairs became involved. A sudden depreciation of West Indian property took place. Some lawsuits terminated unfavourably, and embarrassment followed em-

barrassment to help his ruin. The gates which had refused admittance to royalty were rudely thrust open by a sheriff's officer. The mansion erected at so vast an expense was sold and the greater part of the costly treasures scattered by the hammer of the auctioneer. Beckford repaired to a watering place to spend his old age. What a glorious beginning and what a lamentable end ! And what a mockery of wealth !

BURKE.

(1729—1797)

Burke will ever hold a high place among the politicians of his country, though contrary opinions have been held about him by the two chief political parties of England. For while the Tories have extolled him as "the saviour of Europe," the Whigs have branded him as the destroyer of his party. But opinion is now slowly settling down to the view that Burke is one of the immortal names in our history, not because, as his biographer Lord Morley explains, he saved Europe or destroyed the Whig party, but because he added to the eternal principles of wise political thought, and to the principles of wise political practice, and because he impresses us with a magnificence and elevation of expression that places him among the highest masters of literature.

In 1741 he was sent to school. From there he proceeded to Trinity College where he took his Bachelor's degree in 1748. But the years he spent at school and at the University were not years of "strenuous industry in the beaten paths of academic routine." He was "desultory and excursive." Like many other men of great gifts his application to his studies was not whole-hearted. He himself says,

“ All my studies have rather proceeded from sallies of passion, than from the preference of sound reason.”

This has ever been the distinguishing trait of the character of great men of every³clime and country. They could never tie themselves down to the routine studies of a school or college. Take the case of Cowper, Byron, Rabindra Nath Tagore, to mention only a few names. Their independent spirit brooked no restraint.

Burke prepared for the legal profession, but was never called to the bar. For law he had a profound respect. Once he wrote that this is “ a science which does more to quicken and invigorate the understanding than all the other kinds of learning put together.” In spite of this attitude towards law it was literature, “ the most seductive, the most deceiving, the most dangerous of professions,” that attracted him. His father who was most anxious to have him in the rank of a barrister, was disappointed and displeased, so much so that he stopped his son’s allowance. However Burke was undaunted. In 1756 he published two pamphlets—“ A Vindication of Natural Society,” and a more important essay, on “ the Sublime and Beautiful.” It is said that the latter was written when he was only nineteen years old. Till the age of thirty he had no thought for politics,

though in literature he had already made his mark. In December 1765 he was returned to Parliament and in 1766 he made his first speech and received a compliment from Pitt, the Great Commoner. There is, however, a mystery which nobody could explain, and this is how Burke, in 1769, purchased a house and lands, in the parishes of Penn and Beaconsfield. Naturally enough it was often asked where the money came from. "A man who, hardly more than a few months before, was still contented to earn an extra hundred pounds a year by writing for Dodsley, should now have launched out as the buyer of a fine house and estate, which cost upwards of twenty-two thousand pounds, which could not be kept up on less than two thousand five hundred a year, and of which the returns did not amount to one-fifth of that sum." That was not all. He paid a yearly allowance to Barry, the painter, in order to enable him to study the pictures in the great European galleries, and to make a prolonged residence at Rome. This provided an opportunity to his enemies. It was alleged that he had plunged into furious gambling in East India stock. About the price of the house it is said that fourteen thousand pounds were left on mortgage, and that this sum remained outstanding until the sale of the property by Mrs. Burke in 1812. A fur-

ther sum of £ 6000 was advanced by Lord Rockingham on Parke's bonds. This was perhaps' the first step in the wrong direction. The truth is that, from the middle of 1769, when we find him applying to Garrick for the loan of a thousand pounds, down to 1794, when the King gave him a pension, Burke was never free from debts and want of money. All honour is due to Lord Rockingham; when he died in 1782 he had left instructions to his executors that all Burke's bonds should be destroyed and his debts to him wiped off. Burke was lucky again. His friend, Reynolds, died in 1792 and left him a legacy of two thousand pounds, besides cancelling a bond of the same amount.

For his political principles and for his breadth of vision Burke will be ever remembered. In speaking once in the House of Commons he said, "If ever the time should come, when this House shall be found prompt to execute and slow to inquire; ready to punish the excess of the people, and slow to listen to their grievances; ready to grant supplies, and slow to examine the account; ready to invest magistrates with large powers, and slow to inquire into the exercise of them; ready to entertain notions of the military power as incorporated with the constitution, when you learn this in the air of St. James's,

then the business is done ; then the House of Commons will change that character which it receives from the people only." On another occasion he said, " I do say that in all disputes between the people and their rulers, the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people." Again, " I do not know the method of drawing up an indictment against a whole people." On the day preceding one of his elections to Parliament, when one of the competitors fell down dead, Burke said, " What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue." What an honourable and manly attitude was adopted by Burke when he observed this in addressing his constituents, " Certainly, gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence, and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him ; their opinions high respect, their business unremitting attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasure, his satisfactions, to theirs ; and above all, ever, and in all cases, to prefer their interest to his own. But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. Your representative

owes you not his industry only, but his judgment ; and he betrays you if instead of serving you, he sacrifices it to your opinion." This is a worthy passage, worthy of a great thinker.

Burke, by nature, was very hospitable. Two Brahman agents of the ex-Peshwa Raghunath Rao went to England from India. They underwent many inconveniences ; but as soon as Burke came to know of their arrival he brought them to his house and gave them for their use a separate garden-house where they were free to prepare their own meals and perform such rites as their religion prescribed. His impeachment of Warren Hastings and specially the masterpiece known as the speech on the Nawab of Arcot's debts, will ever be remembered as the highest watermark of human eloquence. In February 1788 Hastings was charged in a speech by Burke in which it has been said that Burke " was wound up to such a pitch of eloquence and passion that every listener, including the great criminal, held his breath in an agony of horror ; that women were carried out fainting ; that the Speaker himself became incapable of saying another word....."

Burke would have held a high office were it not for his notoriously straitened circumstances. In his last days his popularity was gone, his friends deserted

him for his uncompromising attitude ; he was disowned by the members of his own party , and to him were imputed all sinister motives. " His name was introduced into ironical toasts." Windham once sent word to his host that " he would rather not meet Burke at dinner."

As if this were not enough, he lost his son, the mainstay of his hopes. Burke wrote, " The storm has gone over me, and I lie like one of those old oaks which the late hurricane has scattered about me. I am stripped of all my honours ; I am torn up by the roots and lie prostrate on the earth. They who should have been to me as posterity, are in the place of ancestors." What anguish and pain ! Burke lived only three years after this blow.

Pitt was well aware of the serious embarrassments by which Burke was pressed hard. The King was interested in making a provision for Burke. Pitt granted an immediate pension of £1,200 a year from the Civil List for Mrs. Burke's life, which was to be followed by a proposal to Parliament to be made in a message from the King, to confer an annuity of greater value upon " a statesman who had served the country to his own loss for thirty years." The grant was never brought before Parliament but was directly conferred by the Crown. It was resented

by the Opposition and vigorously attacked, in another connection, by the Duke of Bedford and Lord Lauderdale.

On the 9th of July 1797, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, Burke died. With a true friend's tenderness Fox, with whom Burke in his last days was not at all on good terms, proposed that Burke should be buried among the great dead in Westminster Abbey. Burke had however left strict injunctions that his funeral should be private, and so he was laid in the little church at Beaconsfield.

Men know Burke as a great English statesman and politician : very few know how he had to struggle with difficulties about money.

MIRABEAU.
(1749—1791)

Paradoxical though it may sound yet in great men ability and morality have often been divorced from each other. The history of the French Revolution is the history of Mirabeau. The one without the other is quite incomplete. And yet Mirabeau was never troubled by moral considerations. It is said that the fear inspired by his unscrupulous character heightened the general opinion of his ability. Principles he had none. All through his life he served the passing hour and was a supreme opportunist. When he chose he could rise to any height, and when he had some purpose in view he could sink to the lowest depth. He was changeable as the weather and as varying as the wind. Once he interfered in a quarrel between his parents as his father's agent. His zeal in defending his father was so great as to provoke his mother to fire a pistol at his head. Then he as warmly espoused the cause of his mother against the hypocritical tyranny of his father. The next moment again he turned round to his father's side and assisted him in the public exposure of his mother's frailties. To change sides a third time would be

difficult for the most brazen effrontery. Yet on his return from Provence, Mirabeau not only declared himself once more the partisan of Madame de Mirabeau (his mother) but was also able to persuade her to allow him to retain the greater part of a loan of 21,000 livres raised on the estate, the life interest in which she had recovered. Money seemed to him to be the be-all and end-all. In money matters he was most careless and extravagant. "No income," as his father once said, "could have sufficed for the expenses of a man who would squander in a week all the treasures of Our Lady of Loretto."

He was involved in many an entanglement. His adultery indeed was notorious. Further, his vanity was excessive; he was violent and impetuous, dictatorial and intolerant in society.

He was not less repulsive in his personal appearance. His countenance was described "as swart, prodigious, patched with foul moles and eye-offending marks." Everything was against him except his abilities. He was reputed to be one of the first writers of France and the first orator of his age. He was the greatest statesman, or rather the only great statesman, in a body of persons to whom the future destinies of France were committed. Count de la Mark once remarked to Mirabeau, "There is

no lack of talent in this assembly, but when something more than words is required, you have no rival." In short he possessed all the qualifications of a consummate politician. What would he not have achieved if he had possessed a strong moral character! But he was sadly lacking in this essential quality. His reputation, as is generally the case, travelled faster than he. Accounts of his extravagance and misdeeds preceded him, and he was heard with attention, but not with respect. Sometimes there were distinct hisses of disapprobation when he spoke in the assembly.

Before he settled in life he was heavily in debt. "By the time he had been married fifteen months, his debts amounted to some £ 200,000. He had pawned his wife's jewels, and had begun to cut down the timber on his estate. The more his debts increased the more careless he became. Once when he was arrested for debt his father said in a tone of bitter disappointment that "the scoundrel deserved to be left to rot on the straw of a debtor's prison." However the father moved in the matter and got him released. When he went to his ancestral home he sold furniture, wasted timber, and what not, to raise money. Under royal orders he had "to betake himself to, and remain at the neighbouring

little town of Mianosque." Such was the man, such were his habits, such the morality of the mad course, he was running without the least care or compunction.

He had one great quality which made him supreme—his boundless love for liberty. In his Essay on Despotism he had called the King the paid servant of his people; he now reminded the Germans that princes existed only for the good of their people. Wherever there was any question of liberty he was uncompromising and unyielding. A "Citizen of Marseilles" wrote to his townsmen that "for fifteen years he (Mirabeau) has graven the principle of liberty and equality—the most sacred rights of man—in monumental works destined to out-live bronze and copper. Public assemblies are swayed by his voice, as the waves are hushed by the crash of thunder. His courage is even more astounding than his ability. His public life has been a series of struggles and triumphs in the cause of truth." This was perhaps true. He himself asserted that "in public affairs he never suffered himself to be bribed to do that which his own heart and judgment condemned."

As a matter of fact Mirabeau was universally admired, but the long shadow of his past life was

cast before him. The Court saw in him only a demagogue, the nobility a renegade, the Commons an unprincipled political adventurer, alliance with whom was both discreditable and dangerous. Evil rumours about him were afloat. It was suspected that he had received 100,000 livres from the Queen as a bribe to support the royal cause. He performed many oratorical feats in the Assembly; he was both popular and powerful; but the public was slow to recognise that "private immorality is no obstacle to public virtue."

The Ministership had all along been before the eyes of Mirabeau as the Attorney-generalship was ever before the covetous gaze of Bacon. But to his sore disappointment success eluded his grasp. He was never constant: he vacillated "between two alternative policies." When he fell ill he said to his attending doctor, "you are a great physician, but there is one greater than you—the Author of the wind that subdues all, of the water that penetrates and fertilises all, of the fire that vivifies and dissolves all."

To Frochot, who was supporting him, he said, "Yes, raise that head; would that I could bequeath it to you." He was proud of his head, as he often said. When Mirabeau's death was known

“ the public grief and consternation was universal. No prince or king was ever so generally lamented, by all classes and by all parties.” Only those rejoiced who wished to prolong or perpetuate anarchy. These were a small minority of extreme men.

Mirabeau was also a prince of debtors : “ at the time of his funeral the tailor’s bill for his wedding suit was still unpaid.”

SHERIDAN.

(1751—1816)

Sheridan and oratory seem to have been at one time two interchangeable terms. You cannot think of the one without thinking of the other. The mere mention of the name of Sheridan at once brings before the eyes a picture of the Parliament where he denounced Warren Hastings in the most eloquent speech of the English language, about which Pitt said that the members of the House of Commons were "under the wand of the enchanter."

In his boyhood he, not unlike other great men, neglected deep study and was careless about his time. He could not stick long to anything. In nothing had he an abiding interest.

Sheridan first appeared before the world as a dramatist. Among his dramatic works "The Rivals" and "The School for Scandal" are widely known. In this period of his life all he cared for was his plays and the theatrical performances in which he himself took a prominent part. But this passion did not last long. His brief career in literature was soon over. His migration to London was a turning-point in his life. Here he turned over a new leaf:

“When he established himself in London with his beautiful young wife they had neither means nor prospects to justify the life which they immediately began to lead, making their house, which had no feasible means of support, into a sort of little social centre.” Fox was reported to have said, “An evening at Sheridan’s is worth a week’s waiting for.” It was all very good for a stranger to get himself acquainted with “the leading lights” of the metropolis, but where was the money to come from? He did not, perhaps, take into account the fact that the foundations of his social success were insecure and that the whole thing was apt to topple over like a house of cards.

In 1780 at the age of twenty-nine Sheridan entered Parliament. Being well known in society he was heard with attention, but his maiden speech fell flat, so much so that when he asked Woodfall’s opinion about it his candid friend said, “I am sorry to say I do not think this is your line. You had much better have stuck to your former pursuits.”

Sheridan rested his head on his hand and then said, “It is in me, however, and it shall come out.” He is said to have written his speeches out carefully and learnt them by heart. He wrote his speeches

on copy-books which he had used in the first rough drafts of his plays.

After some practice in public speaking only hints scribbled on a small piece of paper were enough to guide him, and sometimes he indulged in a telling retort or a bold attack without any previous preparation at all. Once during a debate Sheridan attacked Pitt by remarking, "This convinces me that the right honourable gentleman was more a practical politician than an experienced one." Pitt retorted in his reply; "No man admires more than I do the abilities of that right honourable gentleman, the elegant sallies of his thought, the gay effusions of his fancy, his dramatic turns, and his epigrammatic points; and if they were reserved for a proper stage, they would no doubt receive what the honourable gentleman's abilities always did receive, the plaudits of the audience." In rising to an explanation Sheridan was equal to the occasion and remarked, "Flattered and encouraged by the right honourable gentleman's panegyric on my talents, if I ever engage in the compositions he alludes to, I may be tempted to an act of presumption—to attempt an improvement on one of Jonson's best characters—the character of the Angry Boy in the *Alchemist*." Now his reputation as an orator was

secure, though not yet at its zenith. The impeachment of Warren Hastings provided him the opportunity to leave indelible marks on the sands of time. For full five hours he spoke. At the conclusion with perfect histrionic art he fell into the arms of Burke, who declared it to be "the most astonishing effort of eloquence argument and wit united of which there was any record or tradition." Fox remarked, "All that he had ever heard—all that he had ever read, when compared with it dwindled into nothing, and vanished like vapour before the sun." Pitt said, "It surpassed all the eloquence of ancient or of modern times, and possessed everything that genius or art could furnish to agitate and control the human mind." The effect was not less great. Sir William Dalton immediately moved an adjournment of the House and confessed that "in the state of mind in which Mr. Sheridan's speech had left him it was impossible for him to give a determinate opinion." Further, Mr. Logan, author of the famous defence of Hastings, who was naturally prepossessed in favour of the accused, declared after listening to Sheridan's oration, "Of all monsters of iniquity the most enormous is Warren Hastings." Sheridan was now so famous that his father, as he walked the

streets, was pointed out as the parent of the great orator.

How fortunate Sheridan would have been if his remarkable career had now come to an end, for the closing chapter was full of unspeakable pathos and tragedy. The path he was treading was slippery and dangerous, and no wonder that it led him to his financial break-down. His theatre which was a meagre source of income was not now paying its way. The pay of the actors was in arrears and the popularity of his dramatic plays was gone. He was harassed by an endless stream of creditors and could not stir out of his house without being waylaid by them. Mrs. Sheridan died in 1792. This was a terrible blow to him. It completely shattered his mind and body. He was now "heedless of everything, name and fame, credit and fortune, the good opinion of his friends, the support of the public, all except the indulgence of the whim of the moment, or of the habit which was leading him to destruction." With a tender thought for him a member of the Commons proposed the adjournment of the House. Sheridan himself opposed it by saying, "Whatever might be the extent of the calamity he hoped it would not interfere with the public business of the country." He lost his

seat in Parliament. He was now absolutely at the mercy of his creditors, for as long as he was a member of Parliament he could not be arrested for debt. It is said that once he was actually arrested and imprisoned in a sponging-house for two or three days. Writs and executions came in rapid succession, and bailiffs at length gained possession of his house. He lingered on till the 7th of July 1816, when Death released him from his embarrassments.

PITT.

(1759—1806)

Pitt holds a very high place among British statesmen. In some respects he stands unsurpassed, nay, not even equalled. His genius developed and displayed itself earlier than human genius usually does. He was born in politics and in politics he died. From his birth he was so sickly and feeble in constitution that it was feared that he would not survive to realise the designs of his father. But he did survive and amply fulfilled the hopes which were fondly entertained of him.

On the advice of his father's physician, Dr. Addington, the child was reared on port wine to fortify his constitution from further inroads of gout. But unfortunate was the moment when this course of treatment was decided upon, for throughout his life he was so addicted to it that his complexion was described as "port like". He exceeded the limit and enjoyed excess. Here is an anecdote: "Sometimes, indeed, the Speaker, who himself was decorously convivial, had to stop the supplies and say, "Now, Pitt, you shall not have another drop." For parliamentary life Pitt was fitted by nature and further

fitted by his father's training. In the words of Lord Rosebery, "He went into the House of Commons as an heir enters his home; he breathed in it his native atmosphere,—he had indeed breathed no other; in the nursery, in the schoolroom, at the University, he lived in its temperature; it had been, so to speak, made over to him as a bequest by its unquestioned master. Throughout his life, from the cradle to the grave, he may be said to have known no wider existence. The objects and amusements that other men seek in a thousand ways, were for him all concentrated there. It was his mistress, his stud, his dice-box, his game-preserve; it was his ambition, his library, his creed. For it, and it alone, had the consummate Chatham trained him from his birth. No young Hannibal was ever more solemnly devoted to his country than Pitt to Parliament."

From the age of fourteen, when he went to Cambridge with his tutor and nurse, he seems to have "left youth and gaiety behind." After his first speech in Parliament Burke remarked, "He is not a chip of the old block, it is the old block itself."

In 1781 he took his seat in the House of Commons and exactly three years afterwards, at the age of twenty-five, he was appointed Prime Minister. He held the post for eighteen strenuous years.

Unfortunately, however, he too had a seamy side. It was difficult to imagine that a man like him—with a wide knowledge of the world—a man whom Nature had endowed with the best of her gifts should be sinking into debt. To quote Lord Rosebery again, “Pitt’s retirement from office lasted three years. His first duty, like that of most ex-ministers, was to examine his private affairs; and, like most ex-ministers, with a distressing result. He was heavily in debt. He had to sell Hollwood. That Tusculum was heavily mortgaged, and realised little surplus. His distress became known; for he was in danger of arrest. It was proposed to ask Parliament for a grant. The merchants of London offered him a free gift of £100,000. Pitt instantly put an end to such projects. He could not hold office again with the consciousness of such obligations. The King begged him to accept £30,000 from his Privy Purse. Pitt, with some emotion, declined this offer also. Finally, he condescended to take a loan of some £12,000 from a few personal friends. This discharged the most clamant and petty creditors. But it left a heavy balance, and the loan was never paid off; for nearly all the contributors refused to include it in the debts paid by Parliament at Pitt’s death. And to the last day of his life executions were threatened and

even levied at his house." Could anything be more pathetic? It is more so in view of the fact that he always remained a bachelor and "had no expenses except those of homely hospitality." He enjoyed a fairly good income,—£10,000 a year—for many years from his various offices, though at his death his salary as First Lord of the Treasury was seven quarters in arrear. His father had also left him an income from £250 to £300 a year. This was, however, not immediately available. Lord Temple, his uncle, advanced him the necessary funds to purchase him a suite of rooms at Lincoln's Inn.

It was really an act of unexampled magnanimity to decline offers of monetary help in the way that Pitt did. And yet Pitt was not unlike other debtors. It is said that "when he could not pay his coachmaker, he would order a new carriage, as an emollient measure." This is generally the practice with all debtors. When he returned from his last journey to his villa in the feeblest health, and his eyes rested on the map of Europe, he said, "Roll up that map: it will not be wanted these ten years." Before closing his eyes for ever he was heard saying in a clear voice, "O, my country! how I leave my country." The noble words of a noble soul.

SCOTT.

(1771—1832)

Sir Walter Scott can neither be mistaken nor forgotten by anybody. He stands on his own high pedestal. By birth he belonged to a riding, sporting, and fighting Scottish clan. He was the first member of that clan to make his mark in English literature. Bodily, too, he could not be mistaken: he was lame. When only eighteen months of age he had a teething fever, and though he was saved from death, he became lame for ever. Naturally by birth, he had a large mouth. There is a very interesting story about it. Six generations removed, Sir Walter Scott was the lineal descendant of that Walter Scott who in Border history and legend was known as Auld Wat of Harden. His son William was a very handsome fellow. Caught during a raid on Sir Gideon Murray's lands, William was given by Sir Gideon the choice of either being hanged or marrying the ugliest of Sir Gideon's three ugly daughters, "reputed as carrying off the prize for ugliness among the women of four counties." William's choice fell on the last alternative. However she proved an excellent wife,

and "transmitted a distinct trace of her large mouth to all her descendants."

By birth likewise Scott had nerves of steel. When at work he felt no need for food or rest. No amount of drudgery or labour could deter him from a task on the performance of which he was bent. He was also bold and fearless. He himself tells the story of his having once arrived at a county inn where he was told that there was no bed for him. "No place to lie down at all?" he asked. "No" was the reply, "none, except a room in which there is a corpse lying." "Well," said he, "did the person die of any contagious disorder?" "Oh, no; not at all" said they. "Well then," continued Scott, "let me have the other bed. So I laid me down, and never had a better night's sleep in my life."

He was undoubtedly a great man but, unfortunately, like some other great men, not very careful in financial adjustments. He was a man of great ambitions and had an unappeasable thirst for landed property. There was no question of price when anything possessed his fancy.

In 1812 he shifted to Abbotsford to realize his favourite dream of buying a mountain farm. The place was bought for £4,000, half of which was

borrowed from his brother, and half raised on the security of a poem, *Rokerby*, yet unwritten. This loan was the first step in the wrong direction. Scott never realized into what troubles he was carefully running. Although literature was his main source of income yet "he was not a man to pinch and live narrowly." About his mansion one visitor remarked, "it seems like a poem in stone." Another visitor observed, "this house is like places we dream about." All this was, however, a mirage. Although he thought himself at that time under the most stringent obligations both to his creditors and his children, to do all in his power to redeem himself and his estate from debt, yet this must have been a passing notion. It was not that he did not receive ample money from his publishers, and it was also not that his God-gifted merits were not recognised, but the fact was that he could not curb his strong passions which, like an unbridled horse, outran discretion. In one year his writings yielded him the enormous revenue of £ 15,000. The King conferred on him a baronetcy, marked with special royal favours. When he visited Ireland the people gave him a rousing reception. When he entered a street, the watchword was passed down like lightning on both sides, and the shop-keepers and their wives

stood bowing all the way down; while he mob and boys huzzaed as at the chariot-wheels of a conqueror." In 1813 the Prince Regent offered Scott the Poet Laureateship which he did not accept as it was revolting to his pride that he should become a venal bard to "commemorate in verse, as an official duty, all conspicuous incidents affecting the throne."

A financial crisis, however, came in 1825. It is estimated that during his life time he earned £ 140,000—by his literary work alone. He had a certain income of £ 1,000 a year from his and Lady Scott's private property, £ 1,300 a year as clerk of session, £ 300 more as Sheriff of Selkirk. On the debit side he had to pay £ 117,000. It was not here that the trouble lay. Scott had always forestalled his income,—spending the purchase-money of his poems and novels before they were written, without taking into account his health and the abhorred approaches of age which was creeping on him. The closing scene of a long tragedy came at last. In the attempt to pay off his debts he overtaxed his energies, and brought on a fatal disease which hastened the tragic end of an exceptionally brilliant career. Once during his last illness he requested his daughter to be carried to his

desk so that he might write. His daughter put his pen into his hand, but his fingers refused to move. Tears rolled down his cheeks and he sighed, "Take me back to my own room. There is no rest for Sir Walter but in his grave." Alas! how capricious are the moods of Fortune.

BYRON.

(1788—1824)

Whether Byron was "Evil incarnate" as denounced by Southey, or a "sulky dandy" as styled by Carlyle, or a "man monster" as he pictured himself, it is no exaggeration to say that he stood head and shoulders above his contemporaries in certain respects. In the world of letters in that century his was a unique personality. Goethe ranked him as the first English poet after Shakespeare. He used to say "Byron is not antique, and not romantic, but he is the present day itself." In Byron Goethe saw his own youth incarnated. Both were identical. The distinguishing trait of Byron's character was his pride. When he was a mere boy his friend, wishing to compliment him, said, "We shall have the pleasure some day of reading your speeches in the House of Commons." Byron with precocious consciousness replied, "I hope not. If you read any speeches of mine, it will be in the House of Lords." However in none of the two Houses did he ever speak. Politics and he remained ever strangers.

For him it was too much to set aside considerations of rank. He resented the comparison that

was frequently made between him and Rousseau and would say, "He was of the people—I of the aristocracy."

Unfortunately he had all along been labouring under a physical handicap: he was lame. Accounts differ. Either at birth or at a very early period one of his feet was seriously clubbed or twisted, and in spite of all that surgical means could effect, no improvement was made. Byron never forgot this shortcoming. Sir Walter Scott was lame; Pope was a cripple; Milton was blind; but in their letters and works there is not a single word of complaint about their physical misfortune. Byron was just the opposite. In 1805 he was sent to Trinity College, Cambridge. His attendance was irregular, his temper bad, and his spirits low. This introduced him to idle company, and there was a set-back to his progress. However he managed to take his degree in March 1808. After that he indulged in dissipation, and was "heavily dipped." His was an unbridled passion for "shooting, gambling, swimming, alternately drinking deep and trying to starve himself into elegance." The result was, "Weary of love, of life, devoured by spleen, I rest a perfect Timon, not yet nineteen." His health was in disorder and so were his finances.

Now he had to wrangle with creditors and awyers. He lapsed into cynicism, saw nothing to admire, and became tired of everything. At first he used to say, "My qualities were much more oratorical and martial than poetical; no one had the least notion that I should subside into poesy." To a distracted mind everything is disdainful. His urgent need was money. He went on borrowing so that the total of his debts kept soaring up. He wrote once to one of his friends, "I may, if possible, convert my title into cash, though, I am afraid, twenty pounds will be too much to ask, as Time goes, if I were an Earl.....but a Barony must fetch ten, perhaps fifteen, and that is some thing when we have not as many pence." Necessity is but another name of cruelty. Lord Byron, the proud, the aristocrat of aristocrats, was thinking of converting his title into cash.

Byron was married not for love—money was the chief object. Such a marriage naturally ended in disaster and disappointment. He wrote once to his half-sister Augusta: "As to Lady Byron, when I discover one rich enough to suit me and foolish enough to have me, I will give her leave to make me miserable if she can. Money is the magnet; as to women, one is as well as another, the older the

better, we have then a chance of getting her to Heaven." This was his view of marriage. On another occasion he wrote, "The great object of life is sensation—to feel that we exist, even though in pain. It is this "craving void" which drives us to gaming—to battle—to travel—to intemperance—to pursuits of any description, whose principal attraction is the agitation inseparable from their accomplishment."

What else could have been expected from a man of such temperament—"everything in turn, and nothing long?" He was fond of chewing tobacco. For "sensation" what would he not have done. If Napoleon had not been a man of iron will he would have fallen a prey to the habit of smoking the Hookah. It is said that the first time he smoked a Hookah presented to him by the Sultan of Turkey he took a long and deep pull at it. He started coughing. He was annoyed and never repeated the attempt.

His ancestral house and property was sold and he was left "without a hope and almost without a desire."

Now his reckless habits and not unquestionable ways of living brought upon him the indignation of the public. Mrs. Mardyn, the actress, was on his

account, on one occasion, driven off the public stage. He was advised not to go to the theatre, lest he should be hissed ; nor to Parliament, lest he should be insulted. He had to bid farewell to England. In a farewell poem to Tom Moore how pathetically he says :

“ Here’s a sigh to those who love me,
And a smile to those who hate ;
And whatever sky’s above me,
Here’s a heart for every fate ! ”

When his *Don Juan* was published he was remembered again. He was the most talked of person in the literary world. One critic wrote, “ *Don Juan* will be read as long as satire, wit, mirth, and supreme excellence shall be esteemed among men.” Goethe said of the poem, “ full of soul, bitterly savage in its misanthropy, exquisitely delicate in its tenderness.” Sir Walter Scott in the midst of panegyrics said, “ It has the variety of Shakespeare himself.”

There were of course some adverse criticisms, like the one made by Dr. John Watkins, who called *Don Juan* “ the Odyssey of Immorality.” Among all the poetical works of Byron *Don Juan* tops the list. At the time of his death he was in Greece. He went there to fight for the independence of Greece

against the Turks. There his health gave way. At last a rheumatic fever set in and hastened the end. He died on the 19th April 1824. His dearest desire was not fulfilled—he wished to die on the battlefield “fighting like one weary of existence, I shall meet immediate, painless death.” His mortal remains were brought to England and when permission to have them interred in Westminster Abbey was refused they were conveyed to the village church of Hucknall. What a pathetic end of a career so full of brilliant promises at the beginning!

GHALIB.

(1795—1869)

Like Voltaire, Ghalib is better known to the literary world of India by his nom-de-plume than by his real name, Mirza Asadullah Khan. First in Urdu poetry his nom-de-plume was "Asad," but he discarded this afterwards and adopted that of "Ghalib", the one he used in Persian poetry.

He was born in 1795 in Agra. He came of a very high and noble family. His ancestors had seen much better days. His grandfather came to India during the reign of Shah Alam and was appointed one of the Generals of the Army, and on his death Ghalib's father got the same appointment. So like Sir Walter Scott Ghalib belonged to a fighting class, and again like him Ghalib was the first member of a warlike clan to make his mark in literature. While yet a child he lost both his father and uncle, and now there was none to lead him to a straight course. Ghalib himself has said that he knew no teacher except his own independent nature. Nature taught him what the best teachers fail to teach. He was fortunate enough to escape from the dull and deadening routine of work at a school. He had not

to encounter angry looks for playing a prank, or to bear sharp rebukes for a puerile sally, or to suffer a censure for an ordinary mistake which the teacher himself must have made many times in his younger days. When Ghalib was fourteen he asked an Irani who stayed with him for two years to teach him. This was the only education, the only training he ever received, and on this foundation he raised such an enduring edifice that the assaults of time cannot damage it.

However the effect of his waywardness on his character was far from wholesome. In later life he recalled his younger days by remarking that he was ignorant of his duty, an enemy to self-respect, an associate of undesirable companions, a friend of the despicable, in short, always prepared to tempt Providence to do the worst for him.

At the age of thirteen he was married, and then he had to leave Agra for Delhi. His married life was not very happy. He was a devout lover of wine, while his wife was too orthodox in her views to tolerate drink. There lay the trouble. He did not hesitate in saying that he was only a half-Musalman. He was also careless in performing prayers and observing the prescribed rites of the Muslim religion. Ghalib was endowed with a wonder-

ful memory. In his whole life he never bought a book—either he took it on loan from his friends, or on hire from some library. By going only once through a book he retained all that was worth retaining. The sense of self-respect was very great in him. There was a vacancy on the staff of the Delhi College. A certain Mr. Thomson asked Ghalib to accept the professorship and expressed a desire to meet him. Ghalib went, and when Mr. Thomson did not come out of his room to receive him he came back and remarked that he was desirous of Government Service for the reason of adding, so to say, one more feather to his cap, but not to detract from what he possessed. On no other terms but of equality would he meet the elite of the city.

He never owned a house. All his life he lived in a rented building. Like a poet, he was extremely careless about his finances. Although he adopted poetry as his profession yet he did not live narrowly. He had a fairly good income : he was appointed by Serajuddin to write the history of the Taimur Royal family on Rs. 50 per mensem ; from the British Government he received Rs. 700 per mensem as pension ; and Rs. 100 a month from the Rampur Darbar. For a man of his nature and temperament no amount could suffice. After the Mutiny in Delhi,

before things had settled down, he was in great financial distress. All that his father had left and also all that he had got from his maternal ancestors had already disappeared. He himself once wrote that he had to sell all his clothes, wrappers and even bedding, as, in his words, "everybody else ate bread and he ate cloth." The history of Ghalib's life is the history of financial embarrassments. Never was he free from them. The greatest cause of his never-ending troubles was his addiction to wine. Money he must have to buy wine to slake his unquenchable thirst, come from whatever source it might. Money could and did come from the house of money-lenders at an exorbitant rate of interest. Repayment was impossible in the circumstances, and the result was that sometimes he had to go without his daily potion, and at last he was sued by a wine merchant for long-outstanding dues.

The matter went up to the Court and in reply to the plaint Ghalib wrote one verse and sent it to be filed. He wrote "I drank on credit and, yes, I understood that my indigence would one day bring in new troubles." Fortunately the judge of the Court was a Mohammedan gentleman who appreciated poetry. He read the verse and was so charmed with it that he satisfied the claim of the plaintiff

from his own pocket and asked Ghalib to complete the Ghazal. The Ghazal was completed. This incident brought into existence one of the finest Ghazals of a master mind. His harassments never ended, nor could they ever end. He was sick of his life and always wished for death which was very late in coming.

He could not give up wine. Once a friend told him that the prayers of those who drank were not accepted by God. Ghalib quietly remarked that those who have got wine to drink have nothing else to pray for.

As poet both in Persian and Urdu he was unrivalled. He did not cater to the needs only of his time : his eye was on the future. Even now when literary standards have risen his works are much esteemed : they are as fresh as when they were written. Every reader will find something to his taste. All the essentials of a poet were in him : simplicity of language, originality of ideas, the natural way of expression, a critical eye for flaws in poetry, sagacity, unclouded vision, liberal views, strong convictions—all these helped him to be what he was, and what he was it is difficult to describe. He did not write poetry at the cost of prose. In the field of prose, too, he was a leading writer. His

style was very charming and quite free from ambiguity.

In his last days he used to say that his name would not perish as he had got it registered in the office of all-embracing love ; and he was quite right, for his works are a monument stronger than brass or stone, and they will defy the ravages of time.

CHARLES BRADLAUGH.

(1833—1891)

In fidelity to his convictions and in rigid adherence to his opinions nobody was more staunch than Charles Bradlaugh. His life was a sermon on suffering. The more he suffered the more firm he became. He was "ever a fighter"—fought all through his life and died fighting. He was brave, but never cruel and "contemptuous only towards baseness." In debates "he was scrupulously courteous." To him "personal vindictiveness was quite alien." Of differences of opinion among his associates he was tolerant in the very highest degree. Bradlaugh was born in 1833. At the age of seven he was sent to school and he remained there for five years. At twelve he became errand-boy in an office in Cloak Lane in which his father was a clerk. He contrived in two years of errand-running to lay the foundations of that legal knowledge which was to make him in his maturity "the greatest lay lawyer in England." He was an omnivorous reader and second-hand bookstalls were his favourite haunts. He saved what he could from omnibus fares and tolls to buy books of his own. The first book he owned was the Peoples' Charter. At

the age of fourteen he copied out for himself parts of Emerson's lecture on Self-Reliance. The boy was promising and precocious. At the age of fifteen he became a Sunday School teacher.

A clergyman advised him to prepare himself for entering the church. Now Bradlaugh set himself to the critical study of the Gospels and the Thirty-nine Articles. He found some contradictions and was naturally confused. He asked his pastor to enlighten him. But instead of explaining his difficulties, the pastor reported the boy to his father as one inclined towards "atheistical leanings." This was a turning-point in the boy's career. He was driven away from the Sunday school. Now he naturally shrank from the Church. He was devoted to his own religious faith, and being a born debater, he stood in defence of it when teaching his class. His only fault was that he was a free thinker, and for this he was persecuted relentlessly. When it became known that the boy was an ardent teetotaller it was believed that "the heretic was going to the devil." What a paradox! In every country and in every age wine has been regarded as an impediment to spiritual development and salvation, and yet here was a young man, who for his abstinence was condemned by the church authorities. The poor boy had to pay for his sobriety. For Packer

brought pressure to bear on the father to notify to the boy's employees that he would withdraw his pecuniary security if within three days the lad did not alter his religious opinions. Difficulties did not deter him and he was determined not to live in idleness or depend on his father for maintenance. ' On the third day the boy packed up his little belongings and with a heavy heart " went out into the sun ". He now set to work to make a living as a middleman or broker in the coal business. There, too, the religious difficulty came in his way. The best lady customer of his one day said, " Charles, I hear you are an infidel," and after alluding to the horrors that lie in wait in hell for infidels, she concluded by saying, " I should be afraid that my bread would smell of brimstone." This finished everything. Hospitalities, of course, afforded him meals, but this was galling to his sense of self-respect and the accumulation of tiny debts weighed heavily on his spirit. At last he decided to join the army. He was anxious for service in India for which he was offered £6 and 10 s., and he had expressly enlisted for that purpose. " But the recruiting sergeant of the East India Foot had made a bargain with a sergeant of the 50th Foot, and Bradlaugh found himself sold like a piece of moveable property. However he attracted the notice of the

examining medical officer who advised him to choose any other English regiment. Bradlaugh selected the 7th (Princess Royal's) Dragoon Guards, which was then stationed in Ireland.

Bradlaugh was not happy in Ireland. His wild ways and his waywardness brewed trouble for him, and his non-observance of discipline would have landed him on some dangerous ground if his father, who died in 1853, had not left the requisite amount of £30 for the young man's discharge from the army. He was, however, immensely glad to return to civil status. But it was not easy for him to get a job.

At last he found work as an office boy to a solicitor on a salary of ten shillings which was afterwards raised to fifteen. In nine months' time the boy picked up the solicitor's work so quickly that he was completely in charge of his employer's Common Law business. His salary was now raised to £65.

Christians of the orthodox school warned the solicitor of the freethinking activities of his clerk, but the solicitor took a sensible view of things and did nothing except stipulating that his business should not be allowed to suffer on account of any propaganda work that might be carried on by his clerk. In 1858 Bradlaugh became President of the London Secular Society, and also editor of *the Investigator*, the weekly

organ of the freethinkers. However by reason of ill-health and pecuniary difficulties he had to give both up. His *National Reformer* was started in 1860. And now came on a spell of misfortune. His wife lost her health ; his home was completely wrecked ; his debts were increasing, and to crown all, his eleven-year old son died. Nothing, however, could damp or daunt his spirit. He set himself to work again—the same propaganda—the same freethinking, the same free-speaking and the same freewriting. These activities involved him in many difficulties and lawsuits that cost him dear.

In politics, too, he was an independent. He was born to be free, and free he remained to the end of his life. He was a great friend of Mazzini ; and for the cause of Italy he personally laboured. But the two friends fell out in 1870 when Mazzini took the Prussian side, and Bradlaugh the French, and they never met again. Bradlaugh delivered a series of speeches in aid of Garibaldi and collected a hundred guineas for him. He had great sympathy for freedom whether at home or abroad. For fighting for his convictions, as a soldier and as a civilian, in politics and in religion, he had no equal, and this it was that constantly involved him in debt. In his legal struggles he was exceptionally fortunate : in a majority of

cases he won, but in the few cases which he lost the cost of the decree against him was borne by some friend. If it came to a bodily fight, Bradlaugh was not afraid of giving blow for blow. At one Hyde Park meeting when he was delivering a speech he was knocked down "in a vigorous rush" and blows rained on the arm which he raised to protect his head. When he managed to be up on his legs he snatched a short baton from a friend and with it he struck blows right and left and thus successfully dispersed his opponents.

In 1880 his parliamentary struggles began. Parliamentary oath-taking, the ceremony of swearing in a new member of Parliament, has a history behind it. The practice began in England in the time of Elizabeth and has ever since remained in vogue. After 1870 France dispensed with oaths, so did the German Reichstag. About the same time Austria substituted affirmation for an oath. The United States permit the option of taking an oath or making a solemn affirmation. In Italy the formula is simply: "I swear." The most mediævally elaborate oath subsists or used to subsist in Spain. Since 1829 the Catholics in England have been allowed to take the Catholic oath; since 1833 the Quakers have been permitted to make a simple affirmation of loyalty; after 1859 the Jews were allowed to swear in the

Judaic form ; and in 1866 the adjuration of all the religious oaths was reduced to the uniform formula : " So help me God." In 1865 Mill " swore allegiance on the true faith of a Christian," and so did John Morley in 1883.

Bradlaugh's parliamentary fight began in this way. On May 3, 1880, he gave notice to the Clerk of the House of Commons of his right to be allowed to affirm " as a person for the time being permitted to make a solemn affirmation or declaration instead of taking an oath." The matter was referred to a Select Committee.

Now Bradlaugh's case began to be exploited for party purposes. In the House of Commons when the motion for the appointment of the Select Committee was made, 171 supported it, while only 74 voted against it. So the motion for referring the matter to a select committee was carried, and the committee was composed of sixteen members, with Mr. Spencer H. Walpole as Chairman. After discussion when votes were taken there was a tie, and the Chairman voted with the *Noes*.

In May when Bradlaugh presented himself to take the oath he made the mistake of allowing Sir H. D. Wolff to make a hostile motion. The Tory motion was that " the claimant (i. e., Bradlaugh) should not

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be allowed to take the oath." Gladstone moved an amendment for referring the matter to another Select Committee, and this was carried by 289 votes to 214. The Committee was appointed, and it proceeded to examine Bradlaugh in a lengthy manner. After full inquiry the Committee reported that Bradlaugh could not take the oath ; but they recommended that " he be allowed to affirm at his legal peril." When Bradlaugh presented himself and claimed to be sworn in, he was refused, but was nevertheless allowed, after debate, to make his first speech at the Bar. But he was recalled to the Table and formally commanded to withdraw from the House. This he respectfully and repeatedly refused to do. A sharp discussion ended in Bradlaugh " being committed to the Clock Tower " on the motion of the much-perturbed Northcote.

He was taken into custody by the Sergeant and locked up " in the historic room on the second story of the Clock Tower ". At last in July he took his seat, on making a solemn affirmation. Bradlaugh proved an ideal member of Parliament in every respect, and did much useful work. He was a devoted advocate of India's " interests, needs and claims ", and thus earned the title of " member for India ". Once he came out to India and attended a session of the Indian National Congress where he delivered a speech

which was full of sympathy for the country's aspirations. His private debts were mounting high so as to swallow up two legacies. Two of his friends, Mr. W. T. Stead and the Rev. Mr. Millson, raised a subscription to afford financial relief to him. In 1891 he died. It has been well said about Bradlaugh that "if England thereafter grew intellectually more honest and morally more civilized, she owes the betterment in a large measure to the strong soul who compelled her to respect her own laws."

HARISHCHANDRA,

(1850—1885)

Harishchandra was the father of modern Hindi, the most celebrated Hindi dramatist and poet of recent times, the most prolific writer, so prolific that he was nicknamed a "writing machine" by Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitra. He was born in September 1850. Before his time there were only a very few who were aware of the full capabilities of the Hindi language, and even those who were could not think of a plan to develop it on modern lines.

Although the free flow of Hindi before him had often been interrupted, and oftener impeded, it was never lost in the dreary sands of neglect or oblivion owing to the existence of some of the great classics written in earlier periods. There are, however, periods in the history of every literature when poetry yields its place to prose, and novels and romances are in greater demand. This is the time to free a language from its old shackles and conventions and prejudices, and to help its development so that it may come to hold her own among the living languages of the world. But this can only be done by a genius.⁴ Literary associations can do but little

in this direction. Such a genius was Harishchandra, about whom Grierson has very rightly remarked that "he has done more for the popularization of vernacular literature than almost any living Indian."

When Harishchandra was only five years old he composed a Hindi couplet, and this infant production gave the first indication of his precociousness, as also of the fact that the poetic fire was already burning in him. In his sixth year he astonished his father, himself a great dramatist of his time, by putting a new meaning upon the lines of a poet. By nature he was independent, strong-headed, wild and impulsive.

"The neighbours stared and sighed,
Yet blessed the lad,
Some deemed him wondrous wise
And some believed him mad."

After his father's death, which occurred when Harishchandra was only nine years old, he was as free as the wind. In spite of the fact that the best arrangements had been made for his studies the wild boy could never be harnessed to profitable work. He was, like other great men, always found wanting in application, yet in his school, which he attended only for a short time, he showed a brilliance, remarkable though fitful. He studied at the Queen's

College also, but did not stay there to take a degree. This, however, has given no cause for lamentation to his biographers, one of whom actually rejoices at this, saying that it was well that Harishchandra was at the Queen's College, Benares only for a short time, or "else who knows the country might have lost a poet to gain a half-educated Deputy Magistrate or a briefless Vakil." Without anybody's help or guidance Harishchandra acquired a sound knowledge of Bengali, and not only that he had a fair knowledge of some other vernaculars of the country. He was a man of wonderful memory ; he could repeat page after page of any manuscript or book after reading it only once or twice. Harishchandra was quite careless about his finances. The natural result followed ; he was running into debt. His debts were accumulating, but he took no notice of that. Even when he was in financial straits he purchased anything that caught his fancy, regardless whether he had the means to buy it or not. On the occasion of the Diwali, instead of burning oil, Harishchandra burnt Indian perfumes in the lamps lighted to celebrate the festival. But though careless and extravagant of his money Harishchandra was most careful of his time. He read and wrote almost ceaselessly, denying himself food and sleep to complete

some half-finished literary piece or to lay down the lines of some new literary work. But though he gained considerable reputation as a writer, his works did not prove a financial success. Money, however, came from other sources: some of the Indian princes who were patrons of letters, came forward to help the poet. One of the letters addressed to him by the Private Secretary of his Highness the Maharana of Mewar went the length of saying that "this Raj is to be treated by Harishchandra as his own property." Such was the generous treatment extended to him by some of the ruling chiefs of India, and yet Harishchandra was continually struggling with financial difficulties.

One of his so-called friends advanced him some money and sold him an old and worn out boat and got him to execute a bond for Rs. 3,000. Harishchandra must have money, from whatever source it might come and whatever might be the rate of interest. What he never knew was the repayment of a loan. His friend sued him for repayment. The court in which the suit lay happened to be presided over by Syed Ahmed (afterwards the famous Sir Syed). When Harishchandra appeared in the Court Syed Ahmad was very much affected by the sad plight in which he found the poet. He gave Harishchandra a

seat on the dais and asked him what was the exact amount that he had borrowed. Harishchandra replied that the amount was mentioned in the bond. Again after asking a few more questions Syed Ahmad requested Harishchandra to go out of the Court room and think and then come again and tell the court the exact sum that he had received. He went out, and then came back and told the Judge that he had received all the money noted in the bond. Harishchandra was not the man to deny what he had agreed to, whether the sum mentioned in the bond was or was not the sum he had actually received. Harishchandra died in January 1885. In him the country lost a very great poet. In the short lease of life that had been granted to him he wrote 175 books dealing with a large number of subjects. He was a monumental poet in more senses of the word than one.

GOLDSMITH.

(1728—1774)

Horace Walpole called Goldsmith “ an inspired idiot ”, but Goldsmith had more in him than Horace Walpole could dream of. He was full of pride and vanity ; he was given to drinking and gambling ; he was full of whim and caprice ; and yet his heart was that of a man and his feelings the true feelings of a poet. Goldsmith was born in 1728. By nature he was “ shy and sensitive ”, by disposition a happy : go-lucky sort of fellow, by temperament a “ philosophic vagabond,” by habit idle and indolent, in appearance ugly, untidy and stupid. His ungainly figure, his uncommonly thin legs and his pock-pitted face, excited ridicule. Seriousness was unknown to him. He himself wrote, “ Innocently to amuse the imagination in this dream of life is wisdom.” A new definition of wisdom altogether !

Like Cowper he was tormented by his schoolmates. His school days were not, however, a happy period of his life. There is a story about him. At his uncle’s dancing party, a fiddler, struck by the odd looks of the boy who was capering about the room, called out “ *Æsop* ”, whereupon Goldsmith instantly replied :

“ Our herald hath proclaimed this saying,
See Æsop dancing and his money playing.”

This was, perhaps, the first and last time when he was not confused, otherwise Goldsmith suffered all along from want of self-confidence. In retirement he had full command of himself.

Goldsmith's "She Stoops to conquer" is, as everybody knows, founded on a mistake. Once on his way home on a borrowed hack, when he was feeling very grand for having a gold guinea in his pocket earned by writing street-ballads, night overtook him and he asked the way to the "best house." He was directed by a facetious person to the house of the squire. It was a piece of good luck that the squire saw through the joke and played the part of an inn-keeper. After dinner the odd-looking schoolboy ordered a bottle of wine and invited his landlord, his wife and daughter to join him. How awkward must he have felt when the reality of the situation revealed itself to him.

After completing, rather muddling through his education in 1749 the question was what he was to do to earn a livelihood. How long could he live on the slender resources of his mother (his father had already died) or on the generosity of his uncle who was very kind to him, and ever ready to overlook past failures and provide him with funds for a new

start. At last he gained a medical degree and became a sort of qualified physician.

In society he was very nervous and he occasionally did and said very awkward and blundering things." There is a well-known story about this. Goldsmith went to France with a certain Mrs. Horneck and her two handsome daughters. At Lille they were standing with him at a window ; and they attracted the attention of some soldiers and other passers-by. Goldsmith was furious and turned indignantly away, remarking that " elsewhere he had also his admirers." Could anything be more absurd !

Perhaps the most striking feature of Goldsmith's career was his life-long financial embarrassments, though the cause of these lay in himself. It is not at all fair to say that he was ignored by the literary world. Dr. Johnson used to say, " Doctor Goldsmith is one of the first men we now have as an author," and he was ever anxious " to impress on others Goldsmith's claims to respect and consideration." Nor is it fair to say that his literary ventures brought him no money, but the fact is that "he did not care to practise those excellent maxims of prudence and frugality which he frequently preached."

It has been well said that "if Goldsmith had received ten times as much money as the booksellers

gave him, he would still have died in debt." Careless and extravagant as he was he could never make both ends meet and had occasionally "to go into hiding to escape from his creditors." The following story told by Johnson is well-known:—"I received one morning a message from poor Goldsmith that he was in great distress, and, as it was not in his power to come to me, begging that I would come to him as soon as possible. I sent him a guinea, and promised to come to him directly. I accordingly went as soon as I was dressed, and found that his landlady had arrested him for his rent, at which he was in a violent passion. I perceived that he had already changed my guinea, and had got a bottle of Madeira and a glass before him." He was certainly past all reform.

In 1774 at the age of forty-six he died. When the attending doctor found his pulse in disorder he inquired whether his mind was at ease, Goldsmith said, "No. It was not." These were his last words.

What a tragic end of a brilliantly gifted man!

