

DICKENS ON THACKERAY.

A GRACEFUL AND TOUCHING TRIBUTE.

The following tribute to the memory of William Makepeace Thackeray, by Charles Dickens, opens the February number of the *Cornhill Magazine*.

"It has been desired by some of the personal friends of the great English writer who established this magazine, that its brief record of his having been stricken from among men should be written by the old comrade and brother-in-arms who pens these lines, and of whom he often wrote himself, and always with the warmest generosity.

"I saw him first, nearly twenty-eight years ago, when he proposed to become the illustrator of my earliest book. I saw him last, shortly before Christmas, at the Athenæum Club, when he told me that he had been in bed three days—that, after these attacks he was troubled with cold shiverings, 'which quite took the power of work out of him'—and that he had it in his mind to try a new remedy which he laughingly described. He was very cheerful and looked very bright. In the night of that day week he died.

"The long interval between these two periods is marked in my remembrance of him by many occasions when he was supremely humorous, when he was irresistibly extravagant, when he was softened and serious, when he was charming with children. But, by none do I recall him more tenderly than by two or three that start out of the crowd, when he unexpectedly presented himself in my room, announcing how that some passage in a certain book had made him cry yesterday, and how that he had come to dinner, 'because he couldn't help it,' and must talk some passage over. No one can ever have seen him more genial, natural, cordial, fresh and honestly impulsive, than I have seen him at those times. No one can be surer than I, of the greatness and the goodness of the heart that then disclosed itself.

"We had our differences of opinion. I thought that he too much feigned a want of earnestness, and that he made a pretence of undervaluing his art, which was not good for the art that he held in trust. But, when he fell upon these topics, it was never very gravely, and I have a lively image of him in my mind, twisting both his hands in his hair, and stamping about, laughing, to make an end of the discussion.

"When we were associated in remembrance of the late Mr Douglas Jerrold, he delivered a public lecture in London, in the course of which he read his very best contribution to Punch, describing the grown-up cares of a poor family of young children. No one hearing him could have doubted his natural gentleness, or his thoroughly unaffected manly sympathy with the weak and lowly. He read the paper most pathetically, and with a simplicity of tenderness that certainly moved one of his audience to tears. This was presently after his standing for Oxford, from which place he had despatched his agent to me, with a droll note (to which he afterwards added a verbal postscript,) urging me to 'come down and make a speech, and tell them who he was, for he doubted whether more than two of the electors had ever heard of him, and he thought there might be as many as six or eight who had heard of me.' He introduced the lecture just mentioned, with a reference to his late electioneering failure, which was full of good sense, good spirits and good humor.

"He had a particular delight in boys and an excellent way with them. I remember his once asking me with fantastic gravity, when he had been to Eton where my eldest boy then was, whether I felt as he did in regard of never seeing a boy without wanting instantly to give him a sovereign. I thought of this when I looked down into his grave, after he was laid there, for I looked down into it over the shoulder of a boy to whom he had been kind.

"These are slight remembrances; but it is to little familiar things suggestive of the voice, look, manner, never, never more to be encountered on this earth, that the mind first turns in a bereavement. And greater things that are known of him, in the way of his warm affections, his quiet endurance, his unselfish thoughtfulness for others, and his magnificent hand, may not be told.

"If, in the reckless vivacity of his youth, his satirical pen had ever gone astray or done amiss, he had caused it to prefer its own petition for forgiveness, long before:

"I've writ the foolish fancy of his brain,
The aimless jest that, striking, hath caused pain;
The idle word that had with back again."

"In no pages should I take it upon myself at this time to discourse of his books, of his refined knowledge of character, of his subtle acquaintance with the weakness of human nature, of his delightful playfulness as an essayist, of his quaint and touching ballads, of his mastery over the English language. Least of all, in these pages, enriched by his brilliant qualities from the first of the series, and beforehand accepted by the public through the strength of his great name.

"But, on the table before me, there lies all that he had written of his latest and last story. That it would be very sad to any one—that it is inexpressibly so to a writer—in its evidences of matured designs never to be accomplished, of intentions begun to be executed and destined never to be completed, of careful preparation for long roads of thought that he was never to traverse, and for shining goals that he was never to reach, will be readily believed. The pain, however, that I have felt in perusing it, has not been deeper than the

conviction that he was in the healthiest vigor of his powers when he wrought on this last labor. In respect of earnest feeling, far-seeing purpose, character, incident, and a certain loving picturesqueness blending the whole, I believe it to be much the best of all his works. That he fully meant it to be so, that he had become strongly attached to it, and that he bestowed great pains upon it, I trace in almost every page. It contains one picture which must have cost him extreme distress, and which is a masterpiece. There are two children in it, touched with a hand as loving and tender as ever a father caressed his little child with. There is some young love, as pure and innocent and pretty as the truth. And it is very remarkable that, by reason of the singular construction of the story, more than one main incident usually belonging to the end of such a fiction is anticipated in the beginning, and thus there is an approach to completeness in the fragment, as to the satisfaction of the reader's mind concerning the most interesting persons, which could hardly have been better attained if the writer's breaking-off had been foreseen.

"The last line he wrote, and the last proof he corrected, are among these papers through which I have so sorrowfully made my way. The condition of the little pages of manuscript where death stopped his hand, shows that he had carried them about, and often taken them out of his pocket here and there, for patient revision and interlineation. The last words he corrected in print were, 'And my heart throbbed with an exquisite bliss.' God grant that on that Christmas Eve when he laid his head back on his pillow and threw up his arms as he had been wont to do when very weary, some consciousness of duty done and Christian hope throughout life humbly cherished, may have caused his own heart to so throb, when he passed away to his Redeemer's rest!

"He was found peacefully lying as above described, composed, undisturbed, and to all appearance asleep, on the 24th of December, 1863. He was only in his fifty-third year; so young a man that the mother who blessed him in his first sleep blessed him in his last. Twenty years before, he had written, after being in a white squall:

"And when, its force expended,
The harmless storm was ended,
And, as the sunrise splendour
Came blushing o'er the sea;
I thought, as day was breaking,
My little girls were waking,
And smiling, and making
A prayer at home for me."

"Those little girls had grown to be women when the mournful day broke that saw their father lying dead. In those twenty years of companionship with him, they had learned much from him; and one of them has a literary course before her, worthy of her famous name.

"On the bright wintry day, the last but one of the old year, he was laid in his grave at Kensal Green, there to mingle the dust to which the mortal part of him had returned, with that of a third child, lost in her infancy, years ago. The heads of a great concourse of his fellow-workers in the arts, were bowed around the tomb."

WHAT ARE WE LIVING FOR?

What are we living for? Very few of us know, or care to enquire. We do not provide ourselves with charts when we launch our bark on the broad ocean of life, but sail with sealed papers, no care to know the port of our destination. There is a pleasant mystery in floating about at random, and gliding down unknown currents—our enjoyment heightened meanwhile by the uncertainty as to whither they will lead us. If we think of the life-voyage on sunshiny days, it is as a pleasure trip, to be enjoyed as well as we may; or as a trading voyage, to gather floating sea-weed, barnacles, couch-shells and wampums—all lawful currency—in exchange for brain, and heart, and time; or as an idle excursion, undertaken to kill the time, to be accomplished with the least care and thought. Then, when the clouds darken, and the rain falls heavily about us,—when fierce winds siege our frail vessel in their grasp, and briny, bitter waves threaten to engulf us in their depths—then we watch the billows with a melancholy pleasure, sadly hoping for the final plunge, and thinking of our dreary voyage as a hard necessity, from which it was a pleasure to be released on any terms. Very few of us can breast the storm with fortitude. Very few of us look out beyond the thick darkness to the glimmer of the faint beacon light which marks our goal. Or rather, very few of us steer for the beacon light at all, but go off in vague, aimless excursions, content with the pleasure of floating calmly on the waves.

What do we live for? Is it to glide easily from birth to death—then "to die and make no sign;" nor leave any beyond the fragile stone which quickly crumbles beneath the breath of time? Jagged bricks are we, fitting loosely in life's structure; fragmentary beings, made up of doubts, and hopes, and fears, without an earnest purpose; glorious possibilities, imperfectly developed into mediocre attainments. Life was given to us for a purpose—it is a stepping stone to a higher, more glorious state of being. It is our business to fit ourselves for our transformation—to keep up the sacred fire which is burning in our hearts, and feed it plentifully with fragrant oils, that its aroma and light may be diffused through all about us. The possibility of a glorious life lies hidden in each human breast; it is the business of each owner to unearth the gem, and to cut and polish it, that its rays

may sparkle in their purest brilliancy. The true end of life is self-culture, progression, perfection; to develop and mature the germs implanted in our natures. No one attains this end who does not do the best thing in life that he is capable of. Talents were never given to men that they might bury them in a napkin. Every human being has a speciality; it is his business to improve it. He may not be an eagle, soaring over the mountain cliffs, yet the sparrow gladdens as many hearts in the valley as the eagle does in the eyrie. The trouble is, that through indolence or diffidence, we do not try our wings; or if we mount from the ground we fear to lose sight of it, lest some unknown sun may dissolve our pinions, and cast us from our giddy height. But no one ever yet attained to eminence who did not lose sight of himself in gazing on his goal. The purpose must swallow up the individual, else the individual will swallow up the purpose, and stand discredited and alone in the midst of a desert, aspiring to be a king yet without a prospective kingdom. As regards our special work in life, it is evident that ambition often takes the place of capability, and dazzles the unwary by glittering ignis fatui. This does not do the world much harm, for the lion's skin must fit closely to be worn gracefully; but to the misguided victims it is a source of great loss, for thereby their own work in life is left undone; and no other can do it for them.

If we would do this in all integrity, we must prove our own natures with a skillful, unsparing hand, seeing the limit of our highest capacity, and when found, press earnestly on, nor stop till we attain it, taking care, meanwhile, that we do not overestimate our own abilities. Life is larger than most people think. Why be ambitious? Why not work calmly and earnestly toward the right? We are but sands in the domain of time. We can fill, at best, but a small corner in our century. It is scarcely worth while to be dazzled by the glare of personal ambition, when it must necessarily be so fleeting. Yet the corner is a part of the world, and it is necessary to the general harmony that it should be well filled. We lose sight of personal ambition, in the popular acceptance of the term, when we look upon the world in a broad light. We grow into a noble ambition that looks for its motion to the development of the world, and struggle upward in our chosen vocation, forgetful of self, and willing that the planet is rolled along by the force of our efforts. Yet, if we look narrowly into the matter, we find that it finally resolves itself into a personal ambition of noble type. Reason teaches that the growth of the world must be accomplished by the growth of individuals, and that self-culture must ever be the corner-stone of our efforts. Thus we work most truly for our century when we work most truly for ourselves; cultivating and using our best capabilities, purifying our lives from every unworthy thought or action, and letting our precepts always follow our examples. While we aim at the reform of society, we must begin the reform in our own hearts; while we mine for the resources of the age in which we live, we must first explore the veins in our own natures, and while we hope for the final perfect development of the human race, we must remember that it will be delayed by just so much as our own is neglected. The present is all with which we have to do as active agents. If we aspire to a glorious future for those who shall come after us, it must be our noblest ambition to pave the way for it by pure lives and noble actions. "Do the duty that lies nearest thee" seeking earnestly for more light, act up to your highest convictions of justice, love your neighbor as yourself, look to no motive but the right, accept no guide but truth, and so shall you attain to the true end of life.—[Placerville News.]

[From the New York Post.]

THE MUSICAL CAREER OF THE LATE STEPHEN C. FOSTER.

On the tomb of Donizetti, in the cathedral at Bergamo, is a modest inscription saying that the dead composer was "a finder of many melodies." The simple record—too unpretending for the merits of the Italian composer—will be peculiarly applicable to the late Stephen C. Foster, the song-writer, who died on the 18th instant, in this city.

Mr. Foster was born in Pittsburgh, July 4, 1826, the same day on which Thomas Jefferson and John Adams died. His father was a well-to-do farmer, and laid out on his property a town which he intended to call Fosterville. Soon afterwards, says Mr. McKnight, of the *Pittsburgh Evening Chronicle*, in his interesting biographical notice of the late song-writer, the gallant Captain Lawrence was killed, fighting his ship, the *Chesapeake*, and Mr. Foster patriotically changed the name of his town to Lawrenceville, adopting as the motto on the corporation seal the dying words of Lawrence, "Don't give up the ship."

When seven years old, young Stephen Foster showed enough musical precocity to learn, unaided, the flageolet; and later he played other instruments, though, like most composers, he was never eminent as a performer. Like Moore, he was fond of singing his own songs, and when he accompanied himself on the piano or guitar, there was a charming and plaintive sadness in his voice which touched the hearts of his listeners. His melodies are so sweet, so simple, so unpretending, that few people supposed that he had studied music scientifically, and was familiar with the more classical works of Mozart, Beethoven and Weber. He, also, was a man of considerable versatility in other

branches. He understood French and German, painted in water colors, was a good accountant, and wrote all the words as well as the music of his songs. These words were in style almost identical with his melodies—sweet, simple, and no worse in rhyme or rhythm than the majority of popular lyrics.

George Willis, the Baltimore music publisher, published his first song in 1842. It was called "Open thy lattice, love," and was followed by "Old Uncle Ned," and "Oh! Susanna," which were issued by Peters of Cincinnati. Then appeared the "Louisiana Belle," "Nelly was a lady," "Camptown Races," "My Old Kentucky Home," "Massa's in the cold, cold ground," "Nelly Bly," "Oh, boys carry me 'long," "Old Folks at Home," and others. With these Foster established his reputation as a writer of negro minstrelsy, and at the same time made considerable money, his New York publishers, Firth, Pond & Co., paying him over \$15,000 on "Old Folks at Home," alone—the most profitable piece of music ever published in this city. E. P. Christy paid Foster \$500 for the privilege of having his name published on one edition of this song.

During the past ten years Foster's compositions were of a more sentimental and refined character. He dropped the burlesque negro words and wrote and composed such songs as "Willie, we have missed you," "Ellen Bayne," "Maggie by my side," "Come where my love lies dreaming," "Little Ella," "Jennie with the light brown hair," "Willie, my brave," "Farewell, my Little dear," "Oh, comrades, fill no glass for me," "Old Dog Tray," "Mollie, do you love me?" "Summer breath," "Ah, my the red rose live away," "Come with thy sweet voice again," "I see her still in my dreams," "Suffer little children to come unto me," "Ella is an Angel," "I will be true to thee," and over a hundred others. His last composition—a song said to include one of his most beautiful melodies—will soon be published by Horace Waters in this city. His later works exhibit greater grace and tenderness than his earlier ones; and had he lived, and taken proper care of his health, he might have obtained the most enviable eminence as a musician. As it is, he had the blessed, heaven-sent gift of melody, and his compositions, if not his name, are known all over the world. Russians, Italians, Germans, French and even Egyptians and Chinese, have heard and admired those sweet strains which made Stephen C. Foster pre-eminently the ballad writer of America. We hope his publishers will make a collection—if not of all—of his best songs and choruses, and publish them in some enduring form; for their popularity will not die with the man whose genial imagination gave them birth.

THE OFFENSIVE RELIGIONIST.—Says the Country Parson:

It must be admitted, with great regret, that people who make a considerable profession of religion have succeeded in making themselves more thoroughly disagreeable than almost any other human beings have made themselves. You find people who claim not merely to be pious and Christian people, but to be very much more pious and Christian than others, who are extremely uncharitable, unamiable, repulsive, stupid and intensely opinionated and self-satisfied. We know, from a very high authority, that a Christian ought to be an epistle in commendation of the blessed faith he holds. But it is beyond question that many people who profess to be Christians, are like grim gorgons' heads, warning people off from having anything to do with Christianity. Why should a middle-aged clergyman walk about the streets with a sullen and malignant scowl always on his face, which, at the best, would be a very ugly one? Why should another walk with his nose in the air, and his eyes rolled up, until they seem very likely to roll out? And why should a third be dabbled over with a clammy perspiration and prolong all his vowels to twice the usual length? It is, indeed, a most woful thing, that people who evince a spirit in every respect the contrary to that of our blessed Redeemer, should fancy that they are Christians of singular attainments; and it is more woful still that many young people should be scared into religion or unbelief by the wretched delusion that these creatures, wickedly caricaturing Christianity, are fairly representing it. I have seen more deliberate malice, more lying and cheating, more backbiting and slandering, denser stupidity and greater self-sufficiency among bad-hearted and wrong-headed religionists, than among any other human beings. I have known more malignity and slander conveyed in the form of prayer than should have consigned an ordinary slanderer to the pillory. I have known a person who made evening prayer a means of infuriating and stabbing the servants, under the pretext of confessing their sins. "Thou knowest, Lord, how thy servants have been occupied this day;" with these words did the blasphemous mockery of prayer begin the Sunday evening, in a house I could easily indicate; and then the man, under the pretext of addressing the Almighty, raked up the misdoings of the servants (they being present, of course,) in a fashion which, if he had ventured on at any other time, would probably have led some of them to assault him.

—It is a remarkable fact that, although common sheep delight in verdant fields, religious flocks are not anxious for green pastors.

—Why is sympathy like blind-man's-buff? Because it is a fellow feeling for a fellow creature.