

TALK AT A COUNTRY HOUSE.

TAKING LEAVE; ÉMILE SOUVESTRE; EDWARD LEAR; RETROSPECT.

I WAS recalled to town, and had to bring my pleasant Somersetshire visit to an end. When I told the squire, he said, "I am sorry you must go; but a good host must speed the parting as well as welcome the coming guest. We have not had much to show you, except the humors of the general election. I hope you have not found your visit dull."

Foster. Far from it. I have seen and heard so much that I wish I could sit down to look round and consider a little before I make my last day's march, like the soldier in the French story which one of the ladies read to us the other day.

Squire. You mean the description of the soldier returning home, who stops, when in sight of his native village, to look back on his past service before he finishes his concluding march. It is one of Émile Souvestre's idyls, — little pictures, — which are always so charming; but it ought to suit me rather than you, as it is the opening of his *Souvenirs d'un Vieillard*. Old age comes in every variety of form. There are all sorts of men, soldiers, statesmen, men of business, of letters, of sciences, and peasants, who die in harness. There are some men and women whose powers of body decay, while their minds keep, or even add to, their original vigor; with others the mind — or perhaps it is really the brain — goes before the body; while with others, again, there is a gradual and gentle decline of the powers of action both of mind and body to the last. And though we all instinctively feel death to be an evil for ourselves and for those who love us, yet a man may live too long, or at least till his life seems to have no further use than to point the moral that death is not only inevitable, but no less natural than life, so far as this world is concerned.

Foster. You remind me of Swift's horrible picture of the Struldbrugs.

Squire. The caricature is frightful, but the likeness cannot be denied. It would be better for us all, for ourselves as well as for the young men in whose way we stand, if we old men took Swift's warning more to heart; for the old man dying in harness is for the most part a mistake. He deludes himself when he thinks that his wider knowledge and greater experience will enable him to do the work as well as if he had still the young man's powers of action.

Foster. Old age did not dim the artist's eye nor enfeeble the hand of Titian or Tintoretto, nor abate the military genius of Radetzky or Moltke; and Michael Angelo was between eighty and ninety when he planned and superintended the building of the dome of St. Peter's, — hanging the Pantheon in heaven, as he said.

Squire. You carry too many guns for me. I might plead that artists are hardly men of action, or that exceptions prove the rule; but I confess that I have "generalized from too few particulars." I was thinking chiefly of our old generals in the Crimea, and our old statesmen in the last fifty years of our parliamentary history. Gibbon says, in his stately style, of one of the Roman emperors that he put an interval between life and death. I believe he means that he abdicated and went into a convent; but, without advising the conditions of the convent, I have no doubt that he is both the wisest and the happiest old man who does abdicate the functions of a life of action, and so in part puts an interval between life and death. Thus he may sit down, pleasantly enough, in sight of his home, and, like Souvestre's conscript, consider.

Foster. And tell us, whose service is still going on, something both interesting and instructive about his own experiences in that service.

Squire. We will hope so. Indeed, I often think that there is a use to the world in the occurrence of this interval between life and death, if both the old and the young employ it rightly. But the old man must beware of the besetting sin of such old age.

Foster. What is that?

Squire. Garrulous twaddle. Shakespeare, whom no form or condition of man's life escapes, has given us the picture of this garrulousness in Dogberry, Justice Shallow, and Polonius; but I need not quote him to you.

Foster. Who is, or was, Souvestre?

Squire. Émile Souvestre was a French man of letters in what I suppose I must call the last generation, though he was only six years older than myself. The son of an officer of engineers, and educated for the bar, he had early entered on a literary career in Paris, full of promise, when the death of his elder brother and the loss of the family property threw upon him the support of his widowed mother and sister-in-law. To provide for them he at once left Paris to enter on the humble work of serving customers behind the counter, and doing the other retail business of a bookseller in Nantes with whom he found employment. His literary ability and moral worth were soon recognized by one of those customers, a deputy and a man of wealth, who was engaged in plans for the better education of his countrymen. Souvestre's services were engaged for the conduct of a college founded by this gentleman; then he became a professor of rhetoric and editor of a newspaper at Brest, while occupying himself with other literary work also. Thence he eventually returned to Paris, where he spent the rest of his life, diversified only by visits to the provinces and to French Switzerland for the purpose of giving lectures

to the crowded audiences which always welcomed him. He was eminently patriotic; the ruling motive — I might say passion — of his life was the education (the culture, moral and religious, even more than the intellectual culture) of his countrymen. We English are apt to pride ourselves on our love of duty, but no Englishman makes duty the guiding star of his life more than did Souvestre. It is the keynote of everything he writes. And what he taught he had first tried and practiced in his own life. "In his own heart he first kept school;" and those who knew him most intimately said that the sense of duty, which was always strong and even stern to himself, only showed itself in perfect love to those around him.

Foster. What did he write?

Squire. Though he died at the age of forty-eight, he left nearly seventy volumes. His history of his native and loved Brittany, *Les Derniers Bretons*, is full of life and interest as well as of local and literary research, and is recognized as classical. But his chief literary work — I speak not of his lectures, but of his books — was that of story-telling. He has given us an infinite variety of tales of French life in town and country, all of which are true idyls. The characters as well as the incidents are full of dramatic interest. The high and generous moral spirit which guides their destiny is never obtruded. It is the atmosphere which we really though unconsciously breathe. And though I do not pretend to pronounce judgment on style in any language but English, I think I may call that writing terse, lucid, and graceful which was crowned with the approval of the Académie Française; but a still higher eulogy was bestowed by that learned body upon Souvestre when they granted to his widow the testimonial founded by M. Lambert in recognition of the man who had been most useful to his country.

Foster. Have any of his books been translated into English?

Squire. His *Philosophe sous les Toits*, *Confessions d'un Ouvrier*, and two or three of the tales of Brittany were translated by one with whose hand my own was joined in the task; and of these at least a part was reprinted in America. His longer work, *Les Derniers Bretons*, was, absurdly enough, translated into English from a German version; the consequence, as the publisher said to me, of the bad habit of not reading prefaces. And one of his longer tales has been translated with the title of *Leaves from a Family Journal*.

Foster. Did you know him well?

Squire. I feel ready to say Yes, though I never saw him. Here is his own way of answering the question in a letter to his translator. (Takes a letter from a drawer and reads.)

"Et maintenant, madame, permettez-moi d'ajouter de vifs et sincères remerciements pour l'honneur que vous avez fait à l'auteur en choisissant son livre pour être traduit dans votre langue; c'est une distinction dont il se tient fort touché. Vouloir traduire un livre, c'est prouver qu'on entre en sympathie avec celui qui l'a écrit, et qu'on sent, qu'on pense comme lui. Il n'est rien de plus doux que ces adhésions obtenues de loin, et il y a un charme particulier dans les *amis inconnus* qui répondent à votre cœur sans que vous avez jamais entendu leur voix."¹

Of such unknown friends none lives so present to my memory as *Émile Souvestre*.

Foster. That must be the best kind of memory. But a memory for facts and words is a good thing, too, and must, I suppose, be an essential qualification for writing history.

Squire. Gibbon's memory must have

¹ "And now, madam, allow me to add my most sincere thanks for the honor you have done the author in choosing his book for translation into your own language; it is a distinction which he feels very sensibly. To resolve to translate a book is to give proof of hearty sympathy with the writer of it, and of feeling

been at once enormous and minute; Niebuhr wrote down his quotations of chapter and verse without needing to refer to the books themselves; Johannes von Müller could repeat the pedigrees of all the little German princes; and Macaulay could tell the names in succession, and backwards as well as forwards, of the Archbishops of Canterbury or the Popes, or both. A host of other instances of verbal memory crowd on me; the prettiest, if not the most important, is the story of Pope reading his *Rape of the Lock* to Parnell.

Foster. What is that? I do not remember it.

Squire. Pope read the first canto of his new poem to Parnell. Parnell said, "I am sure I have heard those lines before, — I think in a monkish Latin original." Pope declared that they were all his own; but Parnell persisted, and said he would find and send them to Pope. And on his return home he sent Pope — to his great annoyance till the truth was known — the Latin verses, which I think I can repeat, as well as Pope's own. Pope's lines are: —

"And now, unveil'd, the Toilet stands display'd,
Each silver vase in mystic order laid.
First, rob'd in white, the nymph intent adores,
With head uncover'd, the cosmetic powers.
A heavenly Image in the glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her eyes she rears;
Th' inferior Priestess, at her altar's side,
Trembling, begins the sacred rites of Pride.
Unnumber'd treasures ope at once, and here
The various offerings of the world appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious toil,
And decks the Goddess with the glittering spoil.

This casket India's glowing gems unlocks,
And all Arabia breathes from yonder box.
The Tortoise here and Elephant unite,
Transformed to combs, the speckled and the white.

Here files of pins extend their shining rows,
and thinking like himself. Nothing is more gratifying than to receive such assurances of sympathy from a distance, and there is a peculiar charm in the unknown friends whose hearts answer to your own, though you have never heard their voices."

Puffs, Powders, Patches, Bibles, Billet-doux.
 Now awful beauty puts on all its arms;
 The fair each moment rises in her charms,
 Repairs her smiles, awakens every grace,
 And calls forth all the wonders of her face;
 Sees by degrees a purer blush arise,
 And keener lightnings quicken in her eyes.
 The busy sylphs surround their darling care;
 These set the head, and those divide the hair;
 Some fold the sleeve, whilst others plait the
 gown;
 And Betty's praised for labours not her own."

And these are Parnell's: —

"Et nunc dilectum speculum, pro more retectum,
 Emicat in mensâ, quæ splendet pyxide densâ:
 Tum primum lymphâ, se purgat candida nympha;
 Jamque sine mendâ, cœlestis imago videnda,
 Nuda caput, bellos retinet, regit, implet,
 ocellos.
 Hâc stupet explorans, seu cultûs numen adorans.
 Inferior claram Pythonissa apparet ad aram,
 Fertque tibi cautè dicatque superbia! lautè,
 Dona venusta; oris quæ cunctis, plena laboris,
 Excerpta explorat dominamque deamque decorat.
 Pyxide devotâ, se pandit hic India tota,
 Et tota ex istâ transpirat Arabia cistâ:
 Testudo hic flectit dum se mea Lesbia pectit;
 Atque elephas lentè te pectit, Lesbia dente;
 Hunc maculis nôris, nioci jacet ille coloris.
 Hic jacet et mundè mundus muliebris abundè;
 Spinula resplendens æris longo ordine pendens,
 Pulvis suavis odore, et epistola suavis amore.
 In luit arma ergo, veneris pulcherrima virgo,
 Pulchrior in præsens tempus de tempore crescens;
 Jam reparat risus, jam surgit gratia visûs,
 Jam promit cultu, miracula latentia vultu.
 Pigmina jam miscet, quo plus sua purpura gliscet,
 Et geminans bellis splendet magè fulgor ocellis.
 Stant Lemures muti, nymphæ intentique saluti,
 Hic figit zonam, capiti locat ille coronam,
 Hæc manicis formam, plicis dat et altera normam;
 Et tibi vel Betty, tibi vel nitidissima Letty!
 Gloria factorum temerè conceditur horum."

You see they are a very exact representation of Pope, and monkish leonine hexameters.

Foster. Why do you call them leonine, and where is the story to be found?

Squire. I believe they are called leo-

nine because a lion's tail has, or was supposed to have, a tuft in the middle, and another at its end. But as to where I got the story, — I got it from my father; but whether you will find it in the books told as I have told it, I do not know.

Foster. You have always a good memory, squire, for this kind of story.

Squire. So my friends are kind enough to tell me. But I doubt it. I am certainly wanting in the sort of memory we were just now talking of, as possessed by Macaulay and others; and I should say that, as far as my own observation goes, the recollection of good stories, family traditions, and other memories of a like kind, are not so much recollections of the things themselves as they actually happened or were told, but rather pictures which have gradually taken shape and color in the narrator's imagination with such apparent distinctness and reality that he seems to himself and his friends to be showing them a collection of photographs, when in truth they are pictures in the composition of which there may be any amount of art combined with nature, and of fiction with fact. My brothers, old men, fond of family traditions and good stories, tell these each in a different way; and yet they are all clear-headed and well-informed. Sir Walter Raleigh asked how it could be possible to know rightly what happened in old times, when he found that he could not get accurate information as to something which was happening under the very window of his prison.

Foster. Then, like your Welsh or Irish judge, we must decline to hear more than one account of the matter, and write that down at once. So I hope I am well advised in keeping a journal.

Squire.

"A chiel's amang you taking notes,
 And, faith, he'll prent it."

Foster. Shall you object if I am lucky enough to find a publisher?

Squire. No. I think we all like to see ourselves in print; certainly I do.

Foster. I have often wished that you had a Talking Oak in your avenue.

Squire. Or, still better, a Writing Boswell, a ghostly predecessor of yourself, my dear Foster, who might appear from time to time from behind some sliding panel with his notebook, and read out his notes of the talk that has gone on for nearly six hundred years in this old house. If he could not tell us more than we know of the dispute between the two giants about the battlemented wall, he might tell us how to fill in the meagre outline of episcopal and royal records about William de Sutton and Basilia de Sutton (his aunt or sister, as I guess), who lived in the tower in the first half of the fourteenth century.

Foster. What are those records?

Squire. In 1315, the bishop wrote to William de Sutton entreating him "of his charity" to undertake the guardianship of the mismanaged revenues of the neighboring nunnery of Barrow; but the control was ineffectual, for, some years later, we find instructions to "restrain the prioress Joanna from wandering abroad," followed by a consistorial inquiry into the continual wasting of the revenues upon the burdensome family (*onerosa familia*) and the lodgers of the prioress, in which inquiry the sub-prioress was assisted by Basilia de Sutton, who was eventually herself made prioress after the death of Agnes, who had succeeded for a few months on the resignation of the discredited Joanna. But William de Sutton's services to the Church did not prevent his maintaining his claims against her. In the *placita*, or "plees" of 1322, we find him complaining before the king's judges of the trespass of the servants of the rector of the adjoining parish of Stanton Drew, and the parson's servant replying that he, the parson, had the right of pasturage after the crop had been taken off.

Foster. The old, never-ending feud of squire and parson. But how was it that the knight did not take law into his own

hands, and seize the rector's cows without more ado?

Squire. I remember suggesting this very question to Freeman here in the tower; and he said that we must not think of the mediæval knights in England as if they had the habits of those robber knights of Germany and France; for in England there were very few such men. The English mediæval knight, he said, was for the most part a man carrying on perpetual small lawsuits at Westminster about rights of land. That ghostly Boswell could tell us when the tower was built, and who added the "old Manor Place" where Leland found Sir John St. Loe; what was the talk that went on between the knight and his visitor, who so accurately observed and carefully recorded everything that he saw or heard, — the names and the pedigrees of the landowners, the names of the villagers, the natural features of the country, its springs and brooks, its "meetly wooded hills," and its ammonites which he calls "stones figurid like serpents." Then we might hear how, in the next generation, Building Bess talked over her plans for paneling the old parlor with its carved mantelpiece, and building her new one, with all the St. Loe quarterings emblazoned over the fireplace, and the chapel above the parlor. Then we might hear again those talks between John Locke and John Strachey, to the renewal of which Locke looked forward with so much pleasure on his return from Holland: how their fathers had served in Popham's regiment; of the movements of the armies of king and Parliament in the immediate neighborhood; then of present politics, at home and in Holland and France; then of free trade and of religious toleration; and then, too, as we know from Locke's letters, of the lead mines of Mendip, or the domestic gossip of Strachey's neighbors. Then he might tell how a later tenant of the old house may have related to his wife and children how he

had worked in India with Clive, and in America with the Howes, and had at last negotiated successfully with Franklin and Adams the Treaty of Paris, which recognized the independence of the United States. And then, I can say with the witch in Macbeth, "I myself have all the other:" I can call up from my own memory talk in this house with men not undistinguished in the generation now passing away.

Foster. You told me the other day who wrote the article on Nonsense in the Quarterly, so you can tell me something about the unpublished Eclogue which is alluded to, but not given, in the article.

Squire. Here it is. The "competitors," as the Clown in Twelfth Night would have called them, are Mr. and Mrs. Symonds, who were, like Lear himself, spending the winter at Cannes. You may take this copy, — I have another; and when you "prent" your notes, put this Eclogue into them. There will be no breach of confidence in doing so. (The squire reads.)

ECLOGUE.

(Composed at Cannes, December 9, 1867.)

Edwardus. What makes you look so black,
so glum, so cross?

Is it neuralgia, headache, or remorse?

Johannes. What makes you look as cross, or
even more so, —

Less like a man than is a broken torso?

Edw. What if my life is odious, should I
grin?

If you are savage, need I care a pin?

Joh. And if I suffer, am I then an owl?

May I not frown and grind my teeth and growl?

Edw. Of course you may; but may not I
growl, too?

May I not frown and grind my teeth like you?

Joh. See Catherine comes! To her, to her,
Let each his several miseries refer:
She shall decide whose woes are least or worst,
And which, as growler, shall rank last or first.

Catherine. Proceed to growl in silence. I'll
attend,

And hear your foolish growlings to the end:
And when they're done, I shall correctly judge
Which of your griefs are real or only fudge.
Begin; let each his mournful voice prepare,
(And, pray! however angry, do not swear!)

Joh. We came abroad for warmth, and find
sharp cold;

Cannes is an imposition, and we're sold.

Edw. Why did I leave my native land to
find

Sharp hailstones, snow, and most disgusting
wind?

Joh. What boots it that we orange trees or
lemon see,

If we must suffer from *such* vile inclemency?

Edw. Why did I take the lodgings I have
got,

Where all I don't want is? All I want, not?

Joh. Last week I called aloud, Oh! oh! oh!
oh!

The ground is wholly overspread with snow!

Is that, at any rate, a theme for mirth

Which makes a sugar-cake of all the earth?

Edw. Why must I sneeze and snuffle, groan
and cough,

If my hat's on my head, or if it's off?

Why must I sink all poetry in this prose,

The everlasting blowing of my nose?

Joh. When I walk out, the mud my foot-
steps clogs;

Besides, I suffer from attacks of dogs.

Edw. Me a vast awful bulldog, black and
brown,

Completely terrified when near the town;

As calves perceiving butchers, trembling, reel,

So did *my* calves the approaching monster feel.

Joh. Already from two rooms we're driven
away,

Because the beastly chimneys smoke all day:

Is this a trifle, say? Is this a joke,

That we, like hams, should be becooked in
smoke?

Edw. Say! what avails it that my servant
speak

Italian, English, Arabic, and Greek,

Besides Albanian? If he don't speak French,

How can he ask for salt, or shrimps, or tench?

Joh. When on the foolish hearth fresh wood
I place,

It whistles, sings, and squeaks before my face;

And if it does, unless the fire burns bright,

And if it does, yet squeaks, how can I write?

Edw. Alas, I needs must go and call on
swells;

And they may say, "Pray draw me the Es-
trelles."

On one I went last week to leave a card:

The swell was out, the servant eyed me hard.

"This chap's a thief disguised," his face ex-
prest.

If I go there again I may be blest!

Joh. Why must I suffer in this wind and
gloom?

Roomatics in a vile cold attic room?

Edw. Swells drive about the road with haste
and fury,

As Jehu drove about all over Jewry.
Just now, while walking slowly, I was all but
Run over by the Lady Emma Talbot,
Whom not long since a lovely babe I knew,
With eyes and cap-ribbons of perfect blue.

Joh. Downstairs and upstairs every blessed
minute

There 's each room with pianofortes in it.
How can I write with noises such as those,
And being always discomposed, compose?

Edw. Seven Germans through my garden
lately strayed,
And all on instruments of torture played;
They blew, they screamed, they yelled. How
can I paint

Unless my room is quiet, which it ain't?

Joh. How can I study if a hundred flies
Each moment blunder into both my eyes?

Edw. How can I draw with green, or blue,
or red,

If flies and beetles vex my old bald head?

Joh. How can I translate German metaphysics,
if mosquitoes round my forehead whizz?

Edw. I've bought some bacon, (though it's
much too fat,)

But round the house there prowls a hideous
cat;

Once should I see my bacon in her mouth,
What care I if my rooms look north or south?

Joh. Pain from a pane in one cracked window
comes,

Which sings and whistles, buzzes, shrieks and
hums;

In vain amain with pain the pane with this
chord,

I fain would strain to stop the beastly discord!

Edw. If rain and wind and snow and such
like ills

Continue here, how shall I pay my bills?

For who through cold and slush and rain will
come

To see my drawings, and to purchase some?

And if they don't, what destiny is mine?

How can I ever get to Palestine?

Joh. The blinding sun strikes through the
olive-trees,

When I walk out, and always makes me
sneeze.

Edw. Next door, if all night long the moon
is shining

There sits a dog, who wakes me up with whining.

Cath. Forbear! you both are bores, you've
growled enough:

No longer will I listen to such stuff!

All men have nuisances and bores to afflict 'um;
Hark, then, and bow to my official dictum!

For you, Johannes, there is most excuse,
(Some interruptions are the very deuce;)

You're younger than the other cove, who
surely

Might have some sense; besides, you're somewhat poorly.

This, therefore, is my sentence: that you nurse
The Baby for seven hours, and nothing worse.
For you, Edwardus, I shall say no more
Than that your griefs are fudge, yourself a
bore.

Return at once to cold, stewed, minced, hashed
mutton,

To wristbands ever guiltless of a button,
To raging winds and sea, (where don't you wish
Your luck may ever let you catch one fish?)

To make large drawings nobody will buy,

To paint oil pictures which will never dry,

To write new books which nobody will read,

To drink weak tea, on tough old pigs to feed,

Till springtime brings the birds and leaves and
flowers,

And time restores a world of happier hours.

Foster. It is very good, and certainly
ought to find a place among Lear's
works. It is quite a new kind among
the many sorts of Nonsense, the variety
of which is one of their characteristics.
Did you know Lear well?

Squire. I was not one of his early
friends; but I had friends among these,
and latterly I saw him often, here, or in
his own house, or mine, on the Riviera.
He was a warm-hearted, affectionate
man, with a craving for sympathy expressed
in his whole manner, and which
was no doubt heightened by his having
no more of home life than was afforded
him by his old Albanian man-servant
and his tailless cat Foss. He loved
children, as his nonsense books so abundantly
bear witness; and many of his
songs and stories were either written for
this or that child, or given to him or
her, written in his own handwriting and
with his own inimitable pictures. One
of my nieces had his *The Owl* and the
Pussy Cat, and one of my sons *The Duck*
and the *Kangaroo*, and *Calico Pie*, in what
may be called the originals,—one of them
in a letter signed "Yours affectionately,
Derry down derry dumps;" and my daughter
has a series of heraldic representations of
Foss, proper, couchant, passant, rampant,
regardant, dansant, a'untin, drawn for her
on the backs of letters. His letters to

his grown-up friends were embellished in like manner. When he wrote to ask me to inquire about a new hotel above the Lake of Como, where he had thought of spending the summer till he heard a report that there was smallpox there, he illustrated the inquiry by a sketch of himself covered with spots; and when writing to ask where he could hear of some friends who always traveled with a lapdog, he represented the dog overtopping the whole of the party. He sometimes, too, sent his grown-up friends some of his verses; he sent me the then unpublished conclusion of Mr. and Mrs. Discobbolos, and to another older friend some other unpublished verses which I can give you.

INCIDENTS IN THE LIFE OF MY UNCLE ARLY.

I.

Oh! my aged Uncle Arly,
Sitting on a heap of Barley
Through the silent hours of night,
Close beside a leafy thicket:
On his nose there was a cricket,
In his hat a Railway-Ticket,
(But his shoes were far too tight.)

II.

Long ago, in youth, he squander'd
All his goods away, and wander'd
To the Timskoop-hills afar.
There on golden sunsets blazing
Every evening found him gazing,
Singing, "Orb! you're quite amazing!
How I wonder what you are!"

III.

Like the ancient Medes and Persians,
Always by his own exertions
He subsisted on those hills;
Whiles, by teaching children spelling,
Or at times by merely yelling,
Or at intervals by selling
"Propter's Nicodemus-Pills."

IV.

Later, in his morning rambles,
He perceived the moving brambles
Something square and white disclose:—
'T was a First-class Railway-Ticket;
But on stooping down to pick it
Off the ground, a pea-green cricket
Settled on my Uncle's nose.

v.

Never, nevermore, oh! never
Did that cricket leave him ever,—
Dawn or evening, day or night;
Clinging as a constant treasure,
Chirping with a cheerful measure,
Wholly to my uncle's pleasure,
(Though his shoes were far too tight.)

VI.

So for three and forty winters,
Till his shoes were worn to splinters,
All those hills he wander'd o'er,—
Sometimes silent, sometimes yelling;
Till he came to Borley-Melling,
Near his old ancestral dwelling,
(But his shoes were far too tight.)

VII.

On a little heap of barley
Died my aged Uncle Arly,
And they buried him one night,
Close beside the leafy thicket;
There, his hat and Railway-Ticket;
There, his ever faithful cricket;
("But his shoes were far too tight.")

VILLA TENNYSON, SAN REMO,
11 March, 1886.

Foster. I have heard that the connoisseurs of art — critics, or whatever you call them — see some fault in his serious pictures, but I forget what it is. They seem to me very good, especially those taken on the Nile. But only a true artist could have drawn those nonsense outlines in all their variety. Then, too, how appropriate is the music to which he married his immortal caricature of pen and pencil! But is it true that much of this music has been lost to us because he did not know how to write down what he had composed?

Squire. I fear it is so; though he published some of the music to which he has so admirably set not only his own comic verses, but several of Tennyson's songs. There is much more that can now live only in the memory of those who knew and loved him. I say "loved," because he was eminently a man of whom it might be said, —

"And you must love him ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love."

I recall the image of the genial old man,

with his black spectacles, or rather goggles, his gaunt figure, and his face expressive of mingled fun and melancholy, as he showed us his picturesque house at San Remo, or, later in the day, sat down at the piano in our room at the hotel, and played and sang to his own music his own pathetic nonsense of the Yonghy Bonghy Bò. It may seem absurd to you, as it certainly would to many people, to say that in that song, so overflowing with nonsense, the old man was making fun of his deepest thoughts and feelings, — fun because they lay too deep for words. Villa Tennyson, so named after his friend, was a bachelor's home of mixed comfort and discomfort, with its garden of half-tropical flowers going down to the shore on which the blue Mediterranean was ever lapping, while the thick olive woods were sloping up the hills. It is impossible not to think of the abode "in the middle of the woods, on the Coast of Coromandel, where the early pumpkins blow," or to look up and down in imagination the dusty highroad which runs east and west, and not expect to see the heap of stones on which the Lady Jingly Jones might be sitting, with her milk-white hens of Dorking. I have not the least ground for saying that these fictions have any foundation in fact; but there they are, as the good old man has given them to us.

Foster. Do you think that Lear would have said, with Wordsworth's Matthew,

"If there be one who need bemoan
His kindred laid in earth,
The household hearts that were his own,
It is the man of mirth"?

Squire. I do not know; but the "household hearts" of old Matthew were those of wife and child, and these Lear knew not. You are right to remember that Wordsworth is not deploring old age generally, but the old age of the man of mirth. Wordsworth liked paradox, as his great Ode on Immortality shows; and those beautiful lines on Matthew are full of it.

Foster. What do you mean by paradox? Is not what he says true?

Squire. It seems to be becoming the fashion to use "paradox" as a fine expression for "false;" but "paradox" properly means "contrary to common opinion," and it may be used in either the good or the bad sense. It may be a true or a false statement, according as the popular opinion which it contravenes is right or wrong. In the poem you refer to, Wordsworth, with dramatic propriety, puts into the mouth of Matthew the paradoxical assertion that

"the wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind."

Now, this is untrue as a general proposition, though true of the particular case to which Matthew afterwards limits it; and the paradoxical effect is produced by his first putting it forward as if the general proposition were true. It is not true that the old man who can no longer see to read regrets this less than he does that he can still see the trees and the sunshine and the faces of those dear to him; for he does not regret at all, but is very glad that all these are still left to him. It is because so much is left behind that the old man is able to bear with so little regret the loss of what age takes away. But when Matthew goes on to define and limit his statement, it becomes clear and true enough. He is speaking of the "man of mirth," of the man of mirth in his old age, whose kindred are in the grave; then, when tender but now hardly sad memories of the "household hearts that were his own" come upon him, and he can say, "The will of God be done," it jars on him to be asked to play the fool for the amusement of the thoughtless though affectionate youth who knows nothing — for he has had no experience — of these things.

Foster. You spoke of dramatic propriety. I suppose you refer to Wordsworth's own explanation that he had not given a matter-of-fact description of the

active old schoolmaster of Hawkshead, but a poetical picture, in which, as in that of the Wanderer, he had introduced traits of character from other men, so as to make a dramatic whole. These are not his words, but, if I remember rightly, this is the sense of them.

Squire. So I understand him. True poet as he is, he gives us no abstract philosophical disquisition on old age in general, or portrait of an actual old man; nor, what would be no less undramatic and untrue to nature, a picture of a Frankenstein in whom all characteristics of all old men are brought into an impossible combination. Those three poems, *Matthew*, *The Two April Mornings*, and *The Fountain*, make up one work of art of a very perfect kind. It will bear any analysis and any criticism, and come out all the brighter and the more beautiful.

Foster. I see what you mean. The *Matthew* of Wordsworth is an ideal man, and so having the individuality, and therefore the limitations, of any real man, and without which he would be a mere monster, and not a man at all. He is "a gray-haired man of glee," who even in his old age still carries his love of fun to such a height that it may be properly called "madness." But in all this mad fun there come intervals of deep melancholy and sadness, such as indeed I suppose we all have noticed in men of wild high spirits. So much I see; but he means more than this.

Squire. The poet brings out the rest by the introduction of the other personage of the drama, himself, as he was the youthful, and therefore thoughtless though affectionate companion of the old man. In after years he remembered, what he could not at the time understand, that, in answer to his youthful demand for renewed fun, old *Matthew* would give way to the melancholy reflection that men like himself

"Are pressed by heavy laws;
And often, glad no more,
We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore."

It is not the loss of his *Emma* which now makes him sad,—he can think of it, and say from his heart, "The will of God be done;" but he thinks that if he had still with him "the household hearts that were his own" he might, like the birds, sing his merry carols, or be silent and forgetful at his own will, and not be bound, as he now is, to pay that heavy price for the affection, real though it is, of his youthful friend. What a pathos there is in the reply of the old childless man to the youth's offer, at once affectionate and thoughtless,—what should he know of death?—when he offers himself to supply the place of the children gone!

"Alas! it cannot be."

Perhaps we might say that the craving, the unsatisfied craving for sympathy, at any cost, is the keynote, the motive, of this beautiful little trilogy. Yet those are not the last words. The poet, true to life and to his art, ends with the old man, after all, singing again the witty rhymes about the crazy clock. Soldiers strike up a merry tune as they march back from the burial of a comrade. Joy, not sorrow, is the last word. "The dead are not dead, but alive!"

It was time for me to be going. We joined the ladies in the great parlor, and the elder lady said, "We are sorry you must go, Mr. Foster, but I hope you will keep your promise." The squire asked, "What was that?" And his elder daughter replied, "We told Mr. Foster of the custom of the Guest Book at my uncle's, in which every visitor is expected to write something on his going away. And we proposed that he should give us some such farewell."

Squire. Well, Foster, what did, or do, you say?

Foster. I quoted Puffendorf and Grotius, or at least Shakespeare and Walter Scott:—

"Stand not upon the order of your going,
But go at once;"

and

“‘On, Stanley, on!’
Were the last words of Marmion;”

and I suggested, though the lines were not very complimentary to myself, —

“He fitted the halter and traversed the cart,
And often took leave, yet seemed loath to depart.”

But I was told that none of these were original, and so I promised to produce something of my own.

Squire. And what is it?

Foster. I must make a confession. I had cudgeled my prosaic brains to no purpose, vainly trying to say something appropriate. Then I thought of your translation of what Sa’di had said on a like occasion; and I have made a paraphrase of that. (Takes a paper from his pocket and reads.)

Through France and Germany I’ve wandered,
And sometimes laughed, and sometimes wondered

How men in country and in city
Were rude or friendly, dull or witty.

I’ve lived in Naples and in Rome,
But nothing like this English home
In all my travels did I find,
No place so fair, no folk so kind,
Nor of such genial heart and mind.

And now my holiday is done,
And I, unwilling, must be gone.
I still would keep the memory green
Of all that I have heard and seen:

The Giant’s battlemented wall,
The portraits hanging in the Hall,
The Terrace and the Waterfall,
The Limes, the Oaks, the old knight’s Tower,
My lady’s Parlor and her Bower;
The welcome of the eldest Son,
When he the Election fought and won;
The pleasant talk we had together,
“What news to-day?” or “How’s the weather?”

Then changing to a loftier strain,
’T would rise and fall, and rise again,
And tell of all I loved to hear:
Of Shakespeare, Milton, Maurice, Lear;
Of Persian Poets; how men read
The language of the Arrowhead;
Of Love and Marriage, Life and Death;
Of worlds above, around, beneath.
Nor, Ladies, is the day forgot
When we rode down to Camelot,

And Arthur, Launcelot, and Elaine
Seemed in that hour to live again.
And though I take a careless leave,
Nor wear my heart upon my sleeve,
These memories never will decay
Nor fade into the light of common day.

Squire. Bravo, Foster! Your version of Sa’di reminds me of Sir John Cutmore’s silk stockings, which were mended with worsted till there was not a thread of the old silk left.

Foster. I do not pretend to compare myself with Sa’di; but, as I have still five minutes to spare, I should like to appeal to the judgment of the ladies, as to the silk stockings, by reading your translation of the Persian lines. You gave me leave to copy them; and here they are. (Reads.)

Through many far-off lands I, wandering,
went;

With men of every kind my days I spent;
To me each corner did some pleasure yield,
I gleaned some ears from every harvest field.
So pure of heart and of such humble mind,
None like the men of Shiraz did I find.

Blest be that land! It won my heart away
From cities famous for imperial sway.
’T was pain to leave a garden all so fair,
And not some token to my friends to bear.
Methought, when travelers from Egypt come,
They bring back sweetmeats to their friends at home;

And if no sweetmeats in my hand I bring,
Words sweeter far than sugar poets sing.
Those sugared sweetmeats men but seem to eat,
In books the wise store up the real sweet.
A palace of Instruction then I framed,
And set therein ten gates, which thus I named:
First, Justice, Counsel, Order, How Kings
should reign,

And in the fear of God their rule maintain;
The next Beneficence, by which we can
Praise God in dealing forth his gifts to Man;
The third, Love, — not of passion and of sense
In man, but Love of God, deep and intense;
The fourth, Humility; Resignation next;
The sixth, Contentment, by no troubles vexed;
The seventh, Education, — how to rule
And train yourself, and in your heart keep school.

The eighth, Thanksgiving for the Almighty’s care;
The ninth, Repentance; and the tenth gate,
Prayer.

In an auspicious day and happy hour,
And in the year six hundred fifty-four,

My Book I finished, filled this treasury
 With store of pearls, of truth and poetry.
 But still I fear my jewels to display,
 And on my hands my head in doubt I lay !
 For oysters — shells and pearls are in one sea,
 The scrub-bush grows beside the stately tree ;
 Yet have I heard, O man of generous mind,
 The generous critic loves not fault to find ;
 The silken robe with gay embroidery shines,
 Yet that silk robe a cotton quilting lines.
 Then if the cotton in my verse you see,
 Be not severe, but hide it generously.
 I boast not of my costly wares, but stand
 And humbly ask for alms with outstretched hand.
 I have heard that in the day of hope and fear,
 That day when all before the Judge appear,
 He will, in mercy, bid them all to live,
 And for the righteous' sake the bad forgive.
 Thou, too, if badness in my verse shouldst see,
 Do thou likewise, — be merciful to me.
 When in a thousand one good verse you find,
 Withhold your censure, be humane and kind.

Of such a work as mine 't is true, indeed,
 That Persia, land of letters, has no need :
 Far off with awe you hear me, like a drum,
 But find the music rough when near I come.
 You say, What brings this Sa'di, bold-faced
 man ?

Roses to rose beds, pepper to Hindustan ?
 So, too, the date with sugar-encrusted skin, —
 You strip it back, and find a bone within.

Then came the English good-by, which
 says so little and means so much ; and
 as I left the room I heard the squire
 say, half to himself, " And, faith, he 'll
 prent it."

I crossed the north court, and as I
 passed through the gateway in the wall
 I looked back, and saw the squire, with
 his children and grandchildren, standing
 at the door under the tower.

Edward Strachey.

BEHIND HYMETTUS.

IN TWO PARTS. PART ONE.

I.

IN THE DEME OF DEMOSTHENES.

ATTICA is but a small spot on the map,
 to fill so vast a space in history. Broad
 roads were its boast even in Homeric
 times, long ones never. You can go well-
 nigh anywhere within its borders and
 get back to your seven-o'clock Athenian
 dinner.

On a bright winter morning (Decem-
 ber 20, 1892), after an hour's round-
 about ride on the little Attic railway, we
 left the train at Liopesi, hardly two hours'
 walk east of Athens if the mountain did
 not bar the way. It is a charming spot
 even for a passing glimpse, fronted by
 far-spreading olive woods, with here and
 there a fine oak, and backed by the cen-
 tral bulk of Hymettus. But the charm
 grows as imagination suffuses the scene
 with the atmosphere of ancient story.

For here lay old Pæania, the birthplace
 of Demosthenes. Here he must have
 toddled, and lisped his baby Greek, and
 begun that growth which was to make
 him forever the master of all who speak.
 As a lad, he had only to scramble up
 this steep mountain side to look upon
 Athens and Sunium, upon Salamis and
 Marathon. If too delicate for that, he
 still had this Eden of the Attic Midland
 before his eyes, with its mountain walls,
 and the long blue line of Eubœa loom-
 ing over against it.

Let us see if the modern village has
 aught to remind us of the great fore-
 time. It is but five minutes' walk through
 the olives from the little station to the
 village well, where we meet a number
 of the town folk, and in the little café
 adjoining yet more. The Pæanian re-
 sinato is fine, and a little of it opens the
 mouth of the Pæanian cobbler at work
 on his outdoor bench, and well versed