

A STONE MASON WHO BECAME FAMOUS.

We wonder how many of our young people have read a book called "My Schools and Schoolmasters." It is, we fear, less known by this generation than by the previous one, but those who have not read it have missed one of the greatest treats that the world of books has in store for them.

Hugh Miller, who in it tells the story of his life, was born in the town of Cromarty, on the north-east coast of Scotland, in October, 1802. For many generations back his family had been sea-faring men, and though he was only five years old when his father was lost at sea, he had the clearest remembrance of the joy in the house over the fastidious vessel when she was yet far from land. After his father's death he was brought up under the care of his mother's two uncles, and few boys have the privilege of being under the care of two such men. Young Miller did not take kindly to school, he was too fond of the open air, and the restraint was very irksome to him. The windows of the schoolhouse commanded a fine view of the Bay of Cromarty and not a vessel could enter or leave the harbor without his knowledge. He was intimately acquainted with every one of them, even to the smallest detail of their rigging, and much of his study time was spent in drawing them on his slate. When very young he revelled in such books as "Sinbad the Sailor," "Jack the Giant-Killer," "Beauty and the Beast," "Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp," and, later on, "Pilgrim's Progress," "Cook's and Anson's Voyages," and "Blind Harry the Rhymers' History of Wallace." The latter was especially his delight, rousing all his Scotch patriotism, which was further stimulated by the inexhaustible fund of stories dealt out to him from time to time by his "Uncle James." The tastes of his "Uncle Sandy" ran in another direction. Natural history was his hobby and young Hugh being much with him soon learned to be as fond of it as he. "Together they explored caves, roamed the beach for crabs and lobsters, whose habits Uncle Sandy could well describe; he also knew all about moths, and butterflies, spiders and bees,—in short was a born natural-history man, so that the boy regarded him in the light of a professor, and doubtless, thus early obtained from him the bias toward his future studies." Up and down the beach the boy would wander with a big hammer belonging to his great grandfather, John Feddes, the buccaneer, chipping away at stones which attracted his attention, unheeding the taunts of the passers-by who asked him if he was "gettin' siller in the stanes," and returning home laden with bits of mica, porphyry, garnet, etc., would exhibit with delight his treasures to his uncle, and learn from him all that the latter could teach him about them.

In this way was his boyhood spent, and it must have been somewhat of a shock to him to wake up when nearly seventeen years old to find that he was a boy no longer, but that he must begin to prepare for his man's place in the world, and to work for his own living. His uncles were very anxious that he should be a minister, but he felt that that was not the work for which God had fitted him. Passionately fond of writing and study, while supplying him with food and clothing, would still leave him leisure to pursue them. He noticed that the winter frosts prevented stone masons from working during several months of the year, and looking forward to having all this leisure to devote to his studies, a stone mason he decided to be.

The change in his life was a great one. His boyhood "had been happy beyond the common lot." "I had been a wanderer," he says, "among rocks and woods—a reader of curious books when I could get them—a gleaner of old traditional stories; and now I was going to exchange all my day-dreams, and all my amusements, for the kind of life

in which men toil every day that they may be enabled to eat and eat every day that they may be enabled to toil."

But did he look upon this as a misfortune? Telling long years afterwards of that first day's work he said, "To be sure, my hands were a little sore, and I felt nearly as much fatigued as if I had been climbing among the rocks; but I had wrought and been useful, and had yet enjoyed the day fully as much as usual. I was as light of heart next morning as any of my brother workmen." And how about the results of this labor?

Looking back over twenty years to this his beginning of a life of toil he says "My advice to young working-men, desirous of bettering their circumstances, and adding to the amount of their enjoyment, is a very simple one. Keep your consciences clear, your curiosity fresh, and embrace every opportunity to cultivate your minds. Learn to make a right use of your eyes; the commonest things are worth looking at—even stones and weeds, and the most familiar animals. Read good books, not forgetting the best of all; there is more true philosophy in the Bible than in every work

keen delight, the situation of the quarry; the thick fir wood on the one side, the little clear stream running by on the other, and in front the noble bay which had been his playground all his life. He examined the high bank of clay which rose above the quarry where he was working, took the keenest interest in the preparation of the blast when wedge and lever failed, and although his hands were blistered and sore with the unaccustomed use of the shovel, examined with interest and pity the beauties of a goldfinch and a woodpecker, which having taken shelter in the cliff above had been killed by the explosion, and fallen with a huge mass of clay almost at his feet. When the mass of rock they had been working at was raised he saw that the bed on which it had rested was "ridged and furrowed like a bank of sand that had been left by the tide an hour before," and knew from this that though now far above high water mark, the rock on which he was standing had in ages gone by, far beyond the reckoning of man, been itself a sand bank washed by the waters of a river or sea. He examined the cliffs along the shore formed of thin layers of different kinds of stone, and in each layer

one of degradation. I had sunk by my own act for the time to a lower level of intelligence than that on which it was my privilege to be placed, and though the state could have been no very favorable one for forming a resolution, I, in that hour, determined that I should never again sacrifice my capacity of intellectual employment to a drinking usage; and with God's help, I was enabled to hold my determination."

For seventeen years he worked as a stone mason doing faithfully whatever he undertook, and in his leisure hours gathering facts and making discoveries which he afterwards gave to the world in "The Old Red Sandstone." His first published work was "Poems Written in the Leisure Hours of a Journeyman Mason," issued in 1829. This procured him considerable notice, but in spite of this he believed he saw that he could never be a poet, and so turned his attention resolutely to prose. His first prose volume was "Scenes and Legends in Cromarty," published in 1835. Some time before this he married Miss Lydia Fraser, "a young lady of great personal attraction, and rare intellectual gifts."

But Mr. Miller was not to remain a stone mason all his life. A branch of the Commercial Bank was established in Cromarty, and the manager knowing his stirring integrity of character offered him the position of accountant. He knew nothing of the work, but yielding to strong urging, he went to the head bank at Edinburgh to learn it, and then took the position. Shortly after this some letters of his on the Scotch Church Controversy brought him into still further prominence and he was invited to Edinburgh to edit the *Witness* newspaper, the organ of the Free Church party, and in this work he continued until the day of his death in 1856.

During the following seventeen years of his life in Edinburgh his principal literary work was done. Here along with his work of editing he produced "First Impressions of England and its people," "My schools and schoolmasters," "The Footprints of the Creator," "The Testimony of the rocks," and "The Old Red Sandstone." He possessed the warm friendship of many of the leading geologists of the day. Murchison, Agassiz, Lyell, all bore testimony to the value of his researches in the world of geology, and at the meeting of the British Association in 1840 it was resolved that one of the most remarkable of the fossils which he had discovered should be named for him.

But these years of unremitting toil and exhausting brain labor began to tell upon his health, and his mind began to give way. He became unable to sleep, strange, horrid fancies filled his brain, fits of delirium came upon him, and in one of these, with a pistol shot, he took his own life; a sad warning to all who may be tempted to put too great a strain upon the powers of either mind or body.

Great as Hugh Miller was in science he was still greater as a man. Honest, earnest, industrious, high-minded, God-fearing, he, by his own unaided efforts, raised himself from humble station to a position of trust and high influence among his fellow men, and Scotland has few sons of whom she has better reason to be proud than "the stone mason of Cromarty."

If you wish to keep a knife sharp don't put it in hot grease; stir your potatoes while frying, or turn meat with a fork or an old case knife kept on purpose. Don't allow soap to lie in water and waste. When you have enough remove it to its dish, and if the water is hard use lye, a very little, in your dish water, some in wash water always. If you haven't suitable ashes to make it buy concentrated lye and see how much you save in a few weeks. I know a lady who says it takes five bars of soap to do her washing and complains because she can't take a magazine. I could do it with one bar and two cents' worth of lye I know. Don't throw waste paper or rags into your yard, if you can't use them to advantage burn them in the stove.—*The Household.*



of every sceptic that ever wrote; and we would be all miserable creatures without it. There is none of the intellectual and none of the moral faculties, the exercise of which does not lead to enjoyment, nay, it is chiefly in the active employment of these that all enjoyment consists; and hence it is that happiness bears so little reference to station."

He was none the less a good stone mason because his leisure hours were spent exploring the woods or the rocks on the seashore. He closely followed the example of his uncle David who "made conscience of every stone he laid" and of whom it was well known that no wall built by him ever bulged or fell. An advice of his uncle James which he also followed was, "give your neighbor the cast of the tauk—'good measure heaped up and, running over,' and you will not lose by it in the end."

If ever a man "learned to make a right use of his eyes" Hugh Miller did. His first day in the quarry, which many lads would have bemoaned as the beginning of a long life of hardship, was to him a veritable opening of Wonderland. He noted with

teeming with fossils, as in the leaves of a printed book, he could read the history of its own formation.

Another remarkable trait in the character of this man was his steady refusal to touch anything that would intoxicate. Bad as are the drinking customs of to-day they were infinitely worse then. A total abstainer was something extremely rare among the masons, says Mr. Miller, "when a foundation was laid the workmen were treated to drink; they were treated to drink when the walls were levelled for laying the joists; they were treated to drink when the building was finished; they were treated to drink when an apprentice joined the squad; treated to drink when his 'apron was washed'; treated to drink when 'his time was out'; and occasionally they learned to treat one another to drink." But one day when he had been thus treated he came home and took up his books as usual; but something was wrong. "As I opened the pages of a favorite author," he says, "the letters danced before my eyes, and I could no longer master the sense. The condition to which I had brought myself was