

University is far off from touch with the city; still farther from the Dominion; and sadly so from the Continent and the World. It feels no pulse but its own, and even in that excludes the healthy, active and wholesome heat of the graduates and undergraduates. These, whether consulted or unconsulted, constitute the real and vital sap of the University. Consulted, they should form a force at once conciliated, powerful, and enthusiastic. Unconsulted, they still remain a force, and one, either of actual opposition or, what is worse, of hopeless alienation and indifference.

VILLE MARIE.

THE TREE.

Was there no beauty, then, in barren stem,
No symmetry in jagged twig and limb,
That slow discarding lustrous diadem
Lay etched upon the sunset's orange rim?

Were it, too, better never to have been
A thing leaf-crowned and wholly, fleshly fair;
A being all benignant, purely green,
Sheltered and sheltering, innocent of care?

Strange—that for half the year the tree must go
Uncrowned, unclad, soul-shivering to the blast,
Each glossy leaf be trodden deep in snow,
Each acorn to the ground be roughly cast!

Careless of coming frost aloft it looks,
All confident of many another spring;
O'er dry, brown fields and saddened, silent brooks,
And woods where not a bird is left to sing.

This the great secret of its grand content,
This the full meaning of its giant calm,
This the true measure of the reverent
Straight mien that springtime's sweetest airs embalm.

O, to have been the tree—and not the man!
To grow in ever wheeling, circling pride,
Conscious of all the noble, gracious plan
That smiled at Doubt, and gave a God to guide!

Think! to have harboured orange oriole,
And flaming tanager and chattering jay,
And wise gray sparrow—would not this console
The weariness born of many a leafless day?

Since it were known—they come again in five
Or six months' time of waiting, then to wait,
Even through songless seasons, were to thrive
On sweet probation, though in sombre state.

Were it not bliss, some melting morn in June,
To look and see among one's crumpled leaves—
Late to unfold, but deep at heart in tune
With all of green the young wood interweaves—

A flash of living light, incarnate gem,
That holds a voice in quivering rustled throat,
That hangs, a jewel, on the budding stem,
That sings a song of Hope—Death's antidote?

SERANUS.

LONDON LETTER.

TO a part of London comparatively little known I pilgrimaged to-day in order to say my prayers in the riverside St. Mary's, over the low graveyard walls of which queer Georgian edifice Turner leaned to watch the brown-sailed boats slipping silently past to the sea,—that church where Blake was married, where Pope's St. John was buried. In the early morning, the sky, a wonderful grey of many shades, looked as if rain were imminent, but a chill wind swept the drops away directly they began to patter on the pavements, and soon beautiful white clouds drifted across the steel colour through which here and there a faint blue background was to be seen. Most cockneys become as weather-wise as are countryfolk and can foretell quite as accurately as the shepherd on the hills what prospect there is of a fine day; but in London who cares for such a trivial matter? One has so much else to think of that showers or fogs are hardly considered; we are above being influenced by atmospheric effects!

By Westminster Bridge I took to the water, leaving the streets behind me filled with the sound of church-bells, with great crowds trooping from every direction to go to the Abbey, to St. Margaret's to that hideous building in the centre of Smith Square under the shadow of which lives the Doll's Dressmaker, and as we cast off from the rickety landing-stage and slowly began to make our way towards the Houses of Parliament, a ding-dong sounded from both sides of the land in the prettiest, most harmonious fashion. Then the mists, beginning to rise from over low-lying Lambeth and Vauxhall, showed me where the picturesque Palace stands with its face turned to the tide, that grave grey face on which the centuries have left so little mark; and mysterious Millbank on the right (one is reminded of Venice, "a palace and a prison on each hand") seemed to melt into those rows of houses small and large which modern taste has planted on the marshy lands about the Grosvenor Road. And as the blue in the sky becomes deeper in tone, and the air all around altered in colour, the panorama unfolding itself on the right-hand

bank disclosed first the trees and iron wickets of old Ranelagh Gardens, then the fire-red buildings of Chelsea Hospital, and, all too soon, the Apothecaries' Cedar by which Sir Hans Sloane stands on his pedestal in his wig and embroidered coat, while on the left (so like one's first view of Rotterdam) the serried ranks of warehouses and tall chimneys were broken by the shadowy lawns of Battersea Park. They may talk as they will of the Rhine and its wonders. The twopenny ruins, and pretty little mountains and disappointing vineyards, the glaring white villages, have been burnt into one's memory by the scorching sunshine, but one never looks back to the voyage from Cologne to Biebrich with half the fondness with which one remembers the shortest of journeys on our pleasant Thames. The legends connected with the ivied towers are much less interesting than are the stories of which our streets are full; the sharp outlines and bizarre hues of the dull settlements on the edge of the Rhine are not to be compared to the misty smoke-wreathed London suburbs with their dim background of vague meadow and hill, their surprising capacity for all sorts of artistic arrangement and symphonies. But ah, friendly reader, if you have ever indulged in the luxury of a steamboat down to Chelsea, you will remember better than I can describe the manifold charms upon which your eyes fell; and if on the contrary you were never unfashionable enough to travel that way there are a hundred chances to one against my making you realize the delight of such a proceeding. To anyone who had ears to hear the air was full of voices, the pathways crowded with old-world Quality, the Silent Highway teemed with the gay barges and quaint wherries belonging to another Time than our own. Hardly out of the sound of Bow-Bells, we yet are touching on either hand the real Country, as the children say, or at least as much of it as a Londoner can understand,—not the empty forlorn country, history-less, but commons peopled with one's heroes and heroines, lawns on which Horace Walpole went walking with my Lady Caroline Petersham, gardens where Pope and Chesterfield aired their best manners in the company of Queen Anne's faithful Secretary of State. It requires a deal of self-control to make me land at my proper destination; for Chiswick Mall, sacred to the memory of Miss Pinkerton, I knew to be round that silver-grey corner, and Kew Green, a little further on again, is of all places the most charming of a Sunday morning. But if I had not then disembarked—a great word, that, as applied to a penny steamer!—I would have been too late for any service.

On leaving the landing, you come very soon to the church which Mr. Gilchrist has described in his best Carlylese manner in the "Life of Blake," which building has altered very little since the poet and artist knelt by the side of his "beloved" here, except that the painted curtains and gold imitation tassels from the hand of the Vicar no longer drape the east wall in which the Elizabethan window is set over the altar. The lunettes of the Lamb and Dove, abhorred of Blake's biographer, are still in their places, and high up in the gallery there are fine medallions by Roubiliac of Lord Bolingbroke and his second wife, the French Marchioness de Villette. A chapel of some sort has stood here for centuries, says Thornbury, but it is to be hoped the older churches were in better taste than the present one (rebuilt in 1777), which is by no means a first-rate specimen of even the architecture of that tasteless period. The place, however, must always be interesting, because of the presence of the poet who wrote "The Songs of Innocence" (I take it for granted you know by heart "Piping Down the Valleys Wide," and "Little Lamb, Who Made Thee?") the artist who designed the fine illustrations to Blair's "Grave," and because that extraordinary genius Turner untiringly painted for hours in the vestry by the porch, enthralled with the shifting views of the river caught through the queer shaped window of the little room. He would come across from the cottage where he lived, and which still stands in Chelsea covered with creepers, and remain for hours, forgetful of time, absorbed in work. What a happiness to be possessed of a painter's soul, to be able to see all that Turner saw in sunlight, in a stretch of cloudland, in a tall-masted boat—the most beautiful thing man has invented—in the restless tide, these every-day wonders are always regarded, more or less keenly, but even the most observant of us, of course, don't realize half of what is before us. Not only to see more than others, as if some fairy had touched one's eyelids with a magic fluid, but to be able to re-create on canvas, what must that be like? Turner, the man in his gloomy Queen Anne street galleries, in the ivy Chelsea cottage, is not an heroic figure by any means, more's the pity; but after all it is only with Turner, the artist, that you and I have to do. Though the story of his every-day life is perplexing enough, and full of shadows, the light that never was on land or sea shines from his work, the work is the man, perfected. His brushes, speaking a language that is easily understood, tell of their owner nothing but good. It is useless to pay attention to the biographer. I doubt if Turner himself knew what to make of his blundering, weak alter ego, the other self who talked with a coarse accent, who drank with the sailors. The real man is the refined painter, who speaks the finest language in the finest way, the companion of kings and princes, he who shows us familiar English scenes, and draws for us Swiss mountain and German river, who spends his days at the feet of Nature. And we have no right to ask anything beyond what he has chosen to tell us.

The choir had sung their last hymn long ago, but I lingered still in the aisles, while outside, the congregation

gathered in the fitful sunshine, discoursing of all-absorbing Battersea topics, or of the less interesting affairs of the outer world. I was fortunate enough to find someone who told me that part of Lord Bolingbroke's house still exists not far from here, and that the present owners take the greatest care of a certain cedar parlour (an apartment which always remind me of Sir Charles Grandison), supposed to be the writing-room of a little crooked poet, despised of Lady Mary Wortly Montague. He often stayed here, as is well known, with his beloved St. John, he who was among the few, as Pope told Spence, possessing the true nobleman-look—you'll recollect one of Hazlitt's Essays on the subject of this peculiar look. My friend was so communicative, and told me so much worth hearing, that it was late before I could tear myself away from the eighteenth century and the village of Battersea, so late that when at last I reached the other side of the river I found all the studios in Tite Street packed full of visitors, and the yearly round of picture-seeing in full swing.

I have the most confused recollection of the rest of the afternoon. I know I saw many clever pictures whose owners were very modest, who would hardly bear to listen to any commendation of their work, terribly nervous as they were at the chance of its getting hung in the Academy. And I saw a great many mediocre, or insincere, or affected pieces, the painters of which were in too many cases conceited and arrogant, scorning any word of advice. I can tell you how pretty were some of the visitors' gowns, how charming the low bonnets after the tall monstrosities that have been worn so long; and I have vivid recollections of stupid speeches made in the flurry of the moment by stupid would-be critics, and of a wise sentence or two spoken by someone who knew the right thing to say. Only the outsiders showed to-day: we have to wait another week till the Academicians and Associates arrange their canvases in the best light, fling open their front doors and invite us to tea and cake. Confused, we trailed in and out, following the same set of people everywhere, listening all through the afternoon to the same sort of remarks. If I am not able to describe accurately all the landscapes I saw, I at least heard a deal of gossip, and if I have only a vague recollection of some of the portraits, I don't think it mattered much to the painters. No amount of praise would have satisfied the conceited artists, and as for the modest ones, they would rather not talk of their own work. That Studio Sunday is successful as an entertainment no one can doubt, and it is one way of our seeing pictures for which, unfortunately, there may be no other means of exhibition.

WALTER POWELL.

BETWEEN THE LIGHTS—WITH OLD BOOKS.

THE HOUSE OF THE SEVEN GABLES.

I WONDER how many people still read Nathaniel Hawthorne? I am afraid not many. In these days of making many books, the good old favourites of fine flavour and delicate aroma become too easily lost sight of under the piles of bran-new literature that load the shelves of our bookstores, tricked out in the most tempting of covers and "taking" of titles. Such monstrous or grotesque personages as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *She*, or such vulgar and commonplace ones as *Mr. Silas Tapham* and *Mr. Barnes of New York*, and their friends and acquaintances crowd to the wall the finely drawn and truly artistic creations of *The Marble Faun*, *The Scarlet Letter*, *The House of the Seven Gables*. This last I have been lately reading, as it happens, for the first time, and its perusal has greatly freshened and quickened an appreciation of Hawthorne, dating from a juvenile perusal of *The Scarlet Letter*, which a maturer judgment shows to have been not only well founded, but not nearly equal to the merits of this great artist. And, whatever difference of opinion there may be in regard to the "Tale of Fiction," the present mania for what is merely sensational and grotesque, as compared with far nobler and more enduring attractions, does not speak well for the true intellectual elevation of our much reading and writing age.

The "plot" of *The House of the Seven Gables*, is simple enough, and the "incidents" and "action" about as slight as can be conceived. There is only one exciting "situation," and that is exciting, simply because the fine, powerful drawing has so enlisted our interests in his hero and heroine—by no means interesting at first sight—that, for the time being, we live in their life and make their feelings and fortunes our own. The heroine of the story—if such we may call her—is a solitary, shy, anti-quated spinster, of gaunt form, and with an involuntary "scowl" that maliciously belies her character, who is unceremoniously styled by her humble neighbours, "Old-Maid Pyncheon," and who, at the outset of the story, is in the agony of a conflict between a family pride inherited from generations of haughty puritan ancestors, and the prosaic necessity of opening a little shop to eke out her scanty livelihood. The hero is her brother—a newly released convict—amiably self-indulgent and pleasure-loving by nature, and seemingly rendered half imbecile by his long confinement within the prison cells. The light that irradiates these two sombre portraits is the self-forgetful devotion of the sister to her unfortunate brother—the one love of her otherwise loveless life. In strong and sweet contrast to these two owls—as the author himself quaintly calls them—is the fresh, fair, wholesome little Phoebe Pyncheon, with her country bloom, her gentle serenity, her practical New England common-sense. The