

"Orpheus," "Samson," and the "Judgment of Paris" should lead him to such daring exploits as the superb portrait of Zangwill. Solomon is, in technical matters, a master. In imagination he is probably deficient—at least there seems to be some want of inspiration in his large compositions. But strangely enough, the imagination which appears to be almost inert when required to support him in the building up of his large classical pictures, stands him in good stead in the production of portraits—a class of work in which this element is popularly supposed to play little part, whereas, in reality it is always present in every great achievement in this branch of art.

Although the Academy annually bestows its travelling scholarship and medal upon some student for the best composition illustrating a given subject; and although the prize work is always that in which is displayed the greatest amount of the kind of knowledge which it is the function of the schools to impart, viz., of drawing and painting *correctly* from the nude, composition, perspective, etc.,—yet it seldom happens that the gainer of the scholarship continues in after life to follow the traditions of the schools and to paint subjects from the Bible and Homer. Solomon is therefore rather an exception to the rule of Academy students (amongst whom he took high rank if he did not actually win the scholarship); and it must be a satisfaction to his teachers to see him still painting pictures which have all the scholarly, painstaking, elaborateness of a prize painting. But it is more especially in his departures from this well-beaten path that he is applauded by the initiated. Such a departure was the Zangwill portrait. In this forcible presentment of another young Hebrew as brilliant as the painter in another field of art, the subject is seated almost facing the spectator, his hands resting on a cane. He is wrapped voluminously in a cape coat, as though he had just returned from a walk, and this heightens the impression that the man was painted unawares. There is no appearance of preparation for the operation of having a portrait painted: there is no hint of a dentist's chair. The utmost skilfulness of hand has happily aided in the completion of a picture which seems to me to have more distinction than any of the recent portraits by the younger British school. There is little doubt that Solomon will uphold the honour of his country's art: what country (now that he is an Associate) will claim the genius of Abbey? But of him, more anon.

E. WYLY GRIER

George Augustus Sala.*

ADMIRERS of this noted journalist will welcome the very complete and interesting story of his life, lately published by the Scribners. All Autobiographies must necessarily be defective: they show the man from one point of view only—his own, but though the reader may with little loss exercise the "judicious art of skipping," he will find these pages full of pleasant reading. The frontispiece to these handsome volumes is a portrait of the author, and it is very hard to identify the portly successful man of letters with the picture he gives of himself as a child. A pitiful picture indeed—almost totally blind and rendered miserably nervous by the efforts of friends and quacks to improve his condition. It would be laughable, but for the pity of it—the wee boy with shaven head, covered by a black silk handkerchief whose fringe did duty for hair, the victim of well-meaning friends and submitting to all sorts of horrid remedies: cupping leeches, "golden ointment," and "Grimstone's eye-snuff." During this wretched period his sister Augusta, four years his senior, read aloud for him *Histories of England and France*, many of the *Waverley* novels, and the daily papers. Speaking of the benefit to his memory which this mode of education entailed he says, "It is my firm and unalterable belief, often repeated, that so long as our mental faculties have not failed, we do not and we cannot forget anything. . . . I hold that we can always be learning fresh things, and by the exercise of the will so discipline and subordinate our memory as to retain both the old and the new knowledge which we have gathered. . . . The worst of

memories should be improved and developed by discipline, training, and the exercise of stern volition; whereas the best memories will go to seed and become useless if the rein of discipline be relaxed."

Mrs. Sala, his mother, was the daughter of a West Indian slave-owner and from her he inherited a sharp and dictatorial temper. But in many respects she was a good mother and justly deserved the loving admiration which her son always felt for her. She was a versatile character, alternating between music-teaching and acting as a means of livelihood. This brought her into contact with many of the best minds of the day, and it was a goodly company to which the little George Augustus was introduced in his childhood: the lovely Miss Sheridan, the Duchess of St. Albans, once the darling of London play-goers; poor absent-minded Donizette, composer of "Lucia di Lammermoor" and "Don Pasquale"; the lovable Bellini; D'Arsay, the king of dandies; Theodore Hook, and no less a personage than Louis Napoleon Bonaparte, pretender to the throne of France.

At eleven years of age Sala was sent to a school in Paris, but remained only two years, then to an English school for about the same length of time, and his education was supposed to be finished! At fifteen he "went into the world" and drifted from one employment to another. His first literary attempt of any value was a story in the *Family Herald*, but owing to discouragement from candid friends he wrote no more for several years. Then, a comic poem contributed to *Chat* a weekly halfpenny paper, opened the way to regular employment, and six weeks after his introduction to the manager, he was asked to edit the sheet. However, the "*Chat*" office was soon closed and Sala was again adrift. During these years he suffered many privations. "I was very, very poor," he says. "Was it miserable poverty? Well; it was poverty; and the vast majority of people hold that poverty and misery are the same thing. I doubt that conclusion gravely, and I claim to be somewhat of an expert in the matter, seeing that between the ages of seventeen and twenty-three, I experienced the very direst indigence. . . . Understand me. I do not call him poor who has enough of anything, be it truffles and champertin, or tripe and onions, or bread and cheese. . . . To be very poor is, I grant, sometimes to be very miserable and to be extremely miserable for a time is, I hold, a most beneficial mental and bodily state for any man to be in."

It seems that a lack of thoroughness was the "drag on his wheel," for until the age of twenty-three, he could not draw, nor engrave, nor write well enough to be received as a skilful journeyman in any workshop. He realized this and apprenticed himself to an engraver of steel and copper, determined to be master of one trade at least. On attaining his majority, he received a small legacy and his friends strongly advised him to go to Oxford or Cambridge, but he preferred the independence and variety of his make-shift life. He used some of his scanty capital in starting a *Conservative* magazine but the first number was the only one published. At this time he met a gentleman whom he introduces to us as Mr. Hopeful, a confirmed gambler with a system. With this questionable friend Sala sets out in quest of wealth. He decided to woo fortune at a gaming table in Aix la Chapelle. He returned a poorer and a wiser man.

He finally determined to devote himself to journalism. "Beshrew art! I had worked at it since I was fourteen and a half. . . . And I had to confess, with inward despair, that I was not destined to excel, either as a painter . . . or as a draughtsman. Why should I not endeavour by sedulous study to qualify myself for the profession of a journalist? I managed to purchase at an Aunt Sally shop near Clare Market at least a hundred numbers of the *Quarterly Review*. They were not consecutive; they were ragged and dog-eared. . . . Then I bought a set of the *Examiner* newspaper from its commencement in 1808 to 1841; and then I shut myself up, devoting myself four hours a day to bread-winning graphic work for Ackermann (a firm for whom he did engraving) and giving up at least six hours more to hard and fast study of essays in the *Quarterly* and the *Examiner*, which I knew to have been written by such masters of English style as Walter Scott, Charles Lamb, Hunt, Haylitt, and Southey. I was determined, in my own mind, to throw art to the dogs so soon as ever I could and be a working journalist."

In 1857 he met Dickens, and was soon afterward given

*"The Life and Adventures of George Augustus Sala: Written by himself." Two volumes. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. Toronto: William Briggs. \$5.00. 1895.