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Continued from week to week, the NEW STORY,

"THE TWO WIVES OF THE KING."

TRANSLATED FOR THE "SATURDAY READER" FROM THE FRENCH OF PAUL FEVAL.

CHARACTER.

"As face answereth to face in the water, so doth the heart of man to man."—PROVERBS.

THESE words contain, no doubt, a great and indisputable truth, one of those truths which the wisdom of inspiration announces with comprehensive brevity, and the slow and progressive teaching of human history confirms. But what manifold complexities and apparent contradictions surround the surface of this statement. How unlike is one man to another. What different things, in short, are human nature and personal character. Both Agamemnon and Menelaus returned safe and sound from that costly expedition whose incidents, great and small, have such a hold upon our faith and fancy. But the one arrived at his palace door with a Trojan belle in the front seat of his chariot, while the other appears to have been content to regain a wife who, even in those tolerant days, could scarcely have been considered a model matron. What made the difference in the conduct of these two men? Simply character. The influences which go to make variety of character are altogether another thing. We might talk almost forever upon that subject, but we will not begin.

These shades and variations of character give each of us a certain personality which lends human intercourse its zest and charm, not to speak of the vast and important results which ensue in consequence of the world being made up of individuals. To what an extent this thought might be expanded, it is easy to perceive, but mental anatomy of this description is not attractive to everybody; and we familiarly illustrate what we mean, when we say that one man of no greater, perhaps less, intelligence than his friend, will, in the places where money is made, and the world mastered, come off conqueror, while the other, equally kind in feeling, and upright in thought, will "read the *New York Ledger*" and play onto a flute, and be at all times nowhere.

Women are often said to be characterless, and as a general thing the remark is borne out by the truth. Even Tennyson, usually so gallant where the sex is concerned, asserts that "woman is the lesser man, and all thy motions matched with mine, are as moonlight unto sunlight, and as water unto wine." But to think only of two very familiar examples, it seems certain that Elizabeth and Mary Stuart had a good dash of wine in the water. And how distinct they were. In Elizabeth the queen was ever predominant; and in our imaginations that imperial figure will always outlive the woman. But Mary, unteach-

woman, and setting aside all controversy respecting her good or evil nature, ruled, not only able, and unconquerable, was still a thorough without the aid, but in defiance of the warnings of a good intellect, and swayed her fated sceptre with the white hand of "Aphrodite" alone. To this she owes the romantic charm which, in spite of reason, lingers around her name; and as we think of her turbulent days, that supreme and beautiful shape floats majestically along, invested with few of the glories of a queen, but regally enough indifferent to the tumult of human passion which seems to have made her atmosphere. Not only is personal character a thing apart from intellectual power, but the greatest intellect is enriched or impoverished according to the nobility or narrowness of the possessor's moral nature. I think that the splendour of even Milton's genius would have been enhanced, the grace and delicacy of his preceptions heightened, if he had been a man of tenderness of character. He had, no doubt, some grand qualities, but he had some very poor ones; and I have a fancy that there was a certain cold arrogance in his nature which, in the general estimate of him, has often done duty for dignity. I should like to know what the women with whom he lived and was familiar, really thought of him—for, despite the verdict of the whole world to the contrary, their decision would be the true one.

Charles Lamb is another instance. How the lovely and gracious character of the man adorned his genius and permeated every page he wrote. The sweet nature that won lasting love from cold stern men as well as from gentle women, enlightened and purified every region of his thought, and we constantly feel, in reading what he has left us, that his clear and delicate mind was largely indebted to what, for want of a better word, I call his personality.

Even the apparel of certain men and women express character. Can we fancy that famous red cloak of Sir Walter Raleigh, hanging idly upon its peg on days of disuse, without believing that every graceful fold bore the impress of its owner's gallant bearing? or do you suppose the puritan garments of the stern Oliver were not a good portrait of the man?

I have seen the festive drapery of peculiar women, thrown aside and faded past renovation, yet never quite losing some suggestive trace of the loveliness and distinction of the fair creature it once adorned; and I remember at this moment, the hat of a man who was rarely sober under any circumstances; and so strongly did that article of costume partake of and represent the usual condition of its owner, that it was very difficult to determine which of the two was most tipsy and demoralized.

And character is almost, if not quite unchangeable. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots." "Though thou bray a fool in a mortar, yet will not his foolishness depart from him." The peculiar cast of each man and woman is fashioned by a hand that never varies or works in vain, and he or she will retain forever, with unflinching tenacity, the grand privilege of being themselves and no other. Identical conditions and pursuits never affect this truth. Paul was Paul, and not Peter, while the two walked this lower world; and the development of the highest heaven will not merge their distinctive individualities into one likeness. The man of fifty, with every faculty and passion matured, is only an advance upon the youth of seventeen, and is made up of precisely the same elements which, in their embryo condition, were perhaps so faintly marked; and a true thought found felicitous expression when Wordsworth said

"The boy is father to the man."

But are we contradicting Solomon? No. The "heart of man" is another thing. That is still the awful realm of good and evil—the kingdom of changeful passion and universal identity. The wise man's own experience illuminated for himself the whole moral world, and his profound precepts and warnings stand like luminous beacons along the dark and rugged paths of human life. But even he gave himself to "folly and madness," and learned only from the wholesome bitterness of retribution and adversity, the perfect lessons he has bequeathed to us; who continue to do as he did, and regardless of his counsel only recognize its inevitable truth when the avenger overtakes us, and every hour verifies, that "As face answereth to face in the water, so doth the heart of man to man." M. J.

THE LOST TALES OF MILETUS. By the Right Hon. Bulwer Lytton, Bart. M.P. New York: Harper & Bros. Montreal: Dawson Bros.

The poems contained in this volume are eight in number; and are constructed from hints of the plots of Milesian tales of which only fragments have come down to us. The titles are "The Secret Way," "Death and Sisyphus," "Corinna; or the Grotto of Pan at Ephesus," "The Fate of Calchas," "The Oread's Son; a Legend of Sicily," "The Wife of Miletus," "Bridals in the Spirit Land," and "Cydippe; or the Apple." The author in his preface says: "I have adopted for the stories contained in this volume, forms of poetic rhythm, and the nature of the subjects treated seemed to me favourable for an experiment which I have long desired to adventure, viz, that of new combinations of blank or rhymeless metre, composed not in lines of arbitrary length and modulation, (of which we have a few illustrious examples) but in the regularity and compactness of uniform stanza, constructed upon principles of rhythm very simple in themselves, but which, so far as I am aware, have not been hitherto adopted for narrative purposes."

We do not think the Right Hon. Baronet has been happy in his originality, if the facility with which these poems may be turned into prose is to be accepted as a test. Here are two stanzas from "The Secret Way" which we have selected at a glance; and will write out exactly as they are given, but in prose form, and leave the reader to make the best poetry of them he can. "So he dismissed them, if with churlish words, with royal presents, and to festal pomps. But one, by Median law nearest his throne, the chief priest of the magi, having heard all, with not unprecident fears followed the Prince and urged recall of words which, sent from King to King, are fraught with dragon seeds whose growth is armies."

We think the reader will admit that there is no very musical ring in the above quotation, or it would be impossible to reduce it to anything so much like prose without altering the construction of the sentences. Nor would it be difficult to multiply quotations tending to show the prosaic nature of the combination of metre and rhythm adopted by the author in this poem. The same remark will apply to the series, if we except "Bridals in the Spirit Land," the rhythm of which is very similar to that of Longfellow's "Hiawatha."

We do not attempt to deny that there are passages in these tales which breathe the true spirit of poesy, but Sir Bulwer Lytton's fame will undoubtedly rest upon his prose works. His poems will be unread and perhaps forgotten when thousands in succeeding generations will still be fascinated with the genius displayed in his admirable novels.