

RICHARD REALF.

BY W. H.

THE period between February, 1854, and December, 1859, was remarkable in the United States for the appearance of many singular characters, who seemed to have followed the perception of a great struggle, the clouds of which were then darkening the political horizon, to a point where all that was heroic, of body or mind, was in demand. The 'Irrepressible Conflict' between slavery and freedom was narrowing down to actual battle, and the fighting men were rallying. They who fought with arguments; they who poured out torrents of eloquence in speeches; they who reported and execrated the wrong in the newspapers; the poets who wrote fiery songs; the minstrels who sung them; and they who quietly provided themselves with Sharp's rifles for the more deadly and earnest encounter, were on the *qui vive*. The new Territory of Kansas was the immediate battle ground; and thither every heroic philanthropist who was loose-footed repaired. There, with their representative leader, JOHN BROWN, they took up land, built cabins, laid out towns, made settlements of free State men, built school-houses, in which they preached, prayed, and stored their arms and munitions of war, and from which they wrote letters to the newspapers, especially the *New York Tribune*. The City of Lawrence sprung up as if in a night, and some of the ablest and brightest writers for the press, with many lesser lights, lit down there as if in a flock, and made a centre of public opinion, that spread over and permeated the Northern States. It was the great rendezvous of a crusade, to which

every 'Peter-the-Hermit' sent his recruits; where they prepared for the strife which ended ten years later.

Among these recruits appeared a young Englishman, who was already known for his genius as a poet, his ability in general literature, and his altogether remarkable career. RICHARD REALF, the subject of this sketch, was born in England of obscure parentage, so poor that they were unable to give him an education of any kind, or even provide him with the commonest necessaries. Somehow, he attracted notice at a very tender age, when he was taken up and provided for at school by Lady Byron, who gave him the benefit of her patronage in a most liberal manner. This lady not only assisted him by ordinary patronage, but supported him with her bounty, as a part of her household, for a time. She introduced him to her literary set, and thus enabled him to bring out a volume of poems, that were received in that and other literary circles with great favour. In this relation he enjoyed the friendship and patronage of such people as the Bishop of Chichester, Charles de la Pryme, who collected and published his verses, Mrs. Jameson, Miss Mitford, Harriet Martineau, Walter Savage Landor, Samuel Rogers, Sheridan Knowles, Leigh Hunt, and Bulwer.

In this position, he told me, he felt like a caged bird, and often chafed to madness under a sense of the weight of chains, which, though golden, he could not endure. He felt that he did not belong to them, and that his relation to his patrons was unnatural and overpoweringly oppressive—so much so, he said, as to degrade him