



Life, Literature and Education.

Makers of English Literature.



Thomas Babington Macaulay.

The course of articles on the authors of Canada seemed to be so enjoyed by the readers of the "Farmer's Advocate and Home Magazine," that it has been decided to carry out the same idea on a slightly different line, taking now the best of English and American authors. But as every individual reader would have his own opinion as to the relative worth of the works of these authors, there will be no attempt made to follow any order of merit, but the account of an author and his work will appear as near as possible to the anniversary of his birth. Each article will contain biographical information, a literary appreciation of the writer, and a typical selection from the writings of the author under review. In pursuance of that method of arrangement, the first writer dealt with in this series is Thomas Babington Macaulay. Readers who do not reserve their copies of the paper would do well to preserve these articles in the form of a literary scrap book.

Zachary Macaulay was an enthusiastic opponent of the slave trade, and he, with Clarkson and Wilberforce, formed the energetic trio to whose untiring opposition slavery in British dominions was finally forced to succumb. He was also a prominent member of the Evangelical sect, which had its headquarters in Clapham, the home of the Macaulays. To him was born, on October 25th, 1800, a son, Thomas Babington Macaulay.

The boy was educated at a private school until he was eighteen, when he went to Cambridge. There he found himself surrounded with men of high intellect and attainments, and soon revealed to them and to himself that his keen mind and brilliant ready speech had gained for

him a prominent position in the group. His university course was not marked by an all-round excellence, but numerous prizes and scholarships awarded him for his standing in English subjects showed the bent of his mind. He was called to the Bar in 1826, and two years later became Commissioner in Bankruptcy, but the failure of his father in business compelled him to find some way of supplementing his official income. Fortunately for English literature, he called the pen to his aid. The result was the writing of those brilliant essays to the Edinburgh Review, which were continued for thirty years, to the glory of both writer and publisher. There were forty-one essays in all, and that all should be of equal excellence is not to be expected, but of that number, twenty at least are immortal. Most of these are of an historical nature, but their value as literature far exceeds their worth as history. There are inaccuracies of statement, exaggerations, errors in presenting the matter of the subject that the careful reader cannot fail to notice, but above and around and beyond all these discrepancies is a majesty of style and a splendor of language whose charm will never die.

His was the gift of true oratory, whether he wrote or whether he spoke, and this gift appears in his essays, so that the reader hears what he says, rather than sees what is on the printed page. In Parliament, both in the Commons and the Lords, he gained the ear of the House, and when Macaulay was to speak members hurried to their places, not so much to be instructed by what he said—though that in itself was of no slight value—but for the pure mental enjoyment produced by his manner of saying it. His most famous speeches before the House were on the Reform Bill of 1832, and on the Maynooth Grant of 1845.

His history of England, over which he labored so zealously, was never completed. He had just written to the close of the reign of William III, when death stepped in and called the historian from his labors, in 1859. Perhaps if we get his own idea of what a history should be, we may better estimate aright the criticisms of his work as a writer of history. He says: "History, at least in its state of ideal perfection, is a compound of poetry and philosophy. It impresses general truths on the mind by a vivid representation of particular characters and incidents. A truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated."

"I shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies."

History, in his opinion, should combine accuracy of fact with picturesqueness of presentation, and the chief characters must be stars on the stage, with all the accessories and subordinate characters skilfully and artistically arranged by the author, to enhance their importance. That was his aim, and the most carping critic cannot truthfully say that he did not attain it. Keeping this, his own conception of the historian's work, before the mind, it is not hard

to understand some of the charges brought against him. He was inaccurate, sometimes sacrificing correctness to picturesqueness. He was said to be biased in his treatment of his characters from a political standpoint, but he was an ardent Whig, and any man who writes forcibly and sincerely can scarcely help flavoring his statements with the essence of his convictions. The same explanation will account for the insufficient concealment of the historian behind his history, at which the critics have thrown stones. An extract from his essay on William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, will give an idea of his clear and vigorous style:

"The Duke of Richmond had given notice of an address to the throne against the further prosecution of hostilities with America. Chatham determined to appear in his place in the House. He was in a state of great excitement. His medical attendants were uneasy, and strongly advised him to calm himself and remain at home. But he was not to be controlled. He rested himself in the Chancellor's room till the debate commenced, and then, leaning on his two young relations, limped to his seat. He bowed, it was remarked, with great courtliness to those peers who rose to make way for him and his supporters. His crutch was in his hand. He wore, as was his fashion, a rich velvet coat. His legs were swathed in flannel. His wig was so large and his face so emaciated that none of his features could be discerned except the high curve of his nose and his eyes, which still retained a gleam of the old fire."

"When the Duke of Richmond had spoken Chatham rose. For some time his voice was inaudible. At length his tones became distinct and his action animated. Here and there his hearers caught a thought or an expression which reminded them of William Pitt. But it was clear that he was not himself. He lost the thread of his discourse, hesitated, and repeated the same words several times. The House listened in solemn silence, and with an aspect of profound respect and compassion. The stillness was so deep that the dropping of a handkerchief would have been heard. The Duke of Richmond replied with great tenderness and courtesy; but while he spoke the old man was observed to be restless and irritable. The Duke sat down. Chatham stood up again, pressed his hand on his breast and sank down in an apoplectic fit. Three or four lords who sat near caught him in his fall. The dying man was carried to his home in Hayes, where, after lingering a few weeks, he expired, in his seventieth year."

As a poet, Macaulay cannot be said to occupy the first rank. He had his limitations—the deep things of human hearts did not touch him closely enough. But he knew his limitations, and respected them. As a writer of ballads and of stories in verse he had no superior in his own generation, and very few since. There is a martial swing and force about his poems that is inspiring, that makes the reader hold his head high and step to the music of military bands when he reads Macaulay's stirring rhymes. Who has not thrilled over the story of how Horatius kept the bridge in the brave

days of old, and gone in fancy to the battlefield under the banner of Henry of Navarre?

The king is come to marshal us, in all his armor drest,
And he has bound a snow-white plume upon his gallant crest.
He looked upon his people, and a tear was in his eye;
He looked upon the traitors, and his glance was stern and high.
Right graciously he smiled on us, as rolled from wing to wing,
Down all our line, a deafening shout, "God save our Lord the King!"
"And if my standard-bearer fall, as fall full well he may—
For never saw I promise yet of such a bloody fray—
Press where ye see my white plume shine amidst the ranks of war,
And be your oriflamme to-day, the helmet of Navarre."

How to Make Happy Marriages.

Marriage, in one sense, is an institution of the state; therefore, she should put it out of the bounds of possibility that people can marry each other in two days or a week, says Mr. T. P. O'Connor, in *Black and White*. How many marriages would be broken off if the state required a three years' engagement before people are married? After all, if a woman wants to become a nun in two months, no convent in the world will accept her. She must be a novice for two or three years; during that time she has to make an examination of her conscience every day, and to find out if she has a vocation for a nun. But women and men marry without the slightest preparation, without the slightest thought of the future, while Dame Nature laughs at her most odd pairings. She wants her world peopled—that is her part; the men and women who are ill suited to each other are not her affair.

Girls and boys at school should be taught to look upon marriage as the most beautiful, the happiest, the most desirable and the most possible thing in the world. Boys should be taught to keep their minds and their bodies pure for the state which they will probably enter, and to have a sense of protection and loyalty to girls; and girls should be taught industry, self-sacrifice and responsibility for the married state.

Mr. Dickens at Home.

Charles Dickens once resided in the exposed house on the cliff at Broadstairs that is now called Bleak House, and has been duly tabletted. On one occasion we asked of the keeper of a small shop, who lived on the cliff? He said that he did not know, but once there was a famous gentleman lived there—"Dear! dear! I forget his name," he said, "but he used to write books." And then to his wife in the back room he called out, "Mary, my dear, who was it who used to live on the cliff—a gentleman as wrote books?"

"A Mr. Dickens, my dear," was the reply.

"Ah, yes," said the shopman, "a Mr. Dickens!"