

words with my friend, although they were old cronies, and the shock which I experienced at my first glimpse was repeated when he spoke, with a stutter which unmistakably associated him with his prototype. His shyness was very marked, and my friend was careful not to lead in conversation. He left Shorthouse to say what he felt like saying, and merely nodded an affirmative.

Subsequently I met him in the same place almost weekly for three or four years, and after a few weeks he thawed out a little. When he found that we had kindred interests, and especially that I was an assiduous reader of the Mystics, he spoke somewhat freely, never of himself, always of books or men. He was an omnivorous reader and I never met a lay-man so well posted on philosophical and religious literature. He was a great student of history and could quote long passages from Gibbon, Allison and Hume, but he had no admiration for Macaulay or Froude. In poetry he most admired Chaucer, Spencer, Shelley and Keats. I thought it at the time singular, although later experience has removed the surprise, that whilst he could not speak three words conversationally without the most painful stutter, he delivered his quotations perfectly.

I found Shorthouse to be one of the kindest hearted men I ever met with a transparently simple, and even childish nature. He seemed incapable of an unkind or depreciatory thought. He saw the best in every man's character, imputed no motive, and on one memorable occasion when we were discussing the character of Mr. Chamberlain he bitterly resented the criticism levelled at his fellow townsman, and declared, with more heat than I ever knew him to evince, that the world has nothing to do with men's motives, for they are beyond our ken; all we have a right to judge is conduct.

In these conversations he never let drop the slightest hint that he had then almost completed a work upon which he had been engaged for more than twenty years, and which apparently his innate modesty prevented him from realizing would be epoch-making.

I shall never forget the day when the window of Cornish's book-shop on New Street, near the corner of Corporation Street, displayed a long row of books bound in blue cloth which bore in gilt lettering the inscription "John Ingle-sant," by John Henry Shorthouse. Whilst fully realizing the literary capacity of my chance acquaintance, I was surprised that he had kept his secret so well, and wondered what the book would be like. Needless to say I bought it, half read it the first night and finished it the next.

This is not the place to review that superb work. It has left its mark on contemporary literature, and for lofty conception, skilful construction, delicacy of expression and profundity of thought, still stands far ahead of any competitor. Indeed it is in a class by itself and is the real progenitor of the religious, philosophical, mystical novel, developed upon more popular, but far less artistic and poetical lines, by Mrs. Humphrey Ward and other weaker imitators. It represents a man's life work, and to its production Shorthouse brought a brilliant intellect, and a profoundly spiritual and cultured nature. His bright fancy relieves the book from the possibility of monotony, and some of its narrative chapters rank with the best work of Dumas.

Fame came to Shorthouse in a day, for once the critics made no mistake, they recognized the merit of his production instantly and there was not one discordant note in the chorus of praise which was showered on him from every direction. But it made no difference to him, he walked the streets of his native city with the same air of abstraction, nodding to the few who knew him, and speaking rarely to anyone.

He usually wore a dark gray overcoat and a white cloth top hat which certainly added to the distinction of his appearance. No one else could have worn that hat without looking absurd. On Shorthouse it seemed all right and accorded with his general appearance, as of other worldliness.

I last saw him in the autumn of 1893, in the same garb, moving noiselessly