

restraint. He had set himself not to utter fine sounding things that signified nothing, but to subdue his language, and exalt his thought. "Edwin of Deira," his last and least known, and least valued work, is his best. He laboured at it for four years; had laboured at it for two before the "Idylls of the King" were heard of, and yet when the work of the laureate appeared it was still unfinished: he had other work to do. When it did appear, it was set down as a mere imitation, and on the surface the resemblance is remarkable enough to justify the mistake. In the "Idylls," the music of Tennyson's verse reaches its perfection, and the verse of "Edwin" is almost equally melodious, and with the same pauses and cadences. That he admired Tennyson, and, to some extent, made him his model, is no doubt true, but he reached his own measure of excellence by an independent movement in the same direction, rather than by following his master. The unlikeness of "Edwin of Deira" to the "Idylls of the King," leaving quality out of the question, is far deeper than the outward resemblance. The greater poet, aiming at little, accomplished all his aim. The younger and lesser poet aimed far too high, and accomplished but little of his loftier purpose. A tale of happy and a tale of disappointed love, a court intrigue, a tragic passion and destiny, are the materials of the "Idylls." No less a theme than the introduction of Christianity into England is the leading subject-matter of "Edwin." Of course, the choice of a lofty theme may signify nothing but supreme self conceit. Such themes are handled and profaned fully every day. That "fools rush in where angels fear to tread" has passed into the stalest of proverbs, but the execution of this poem, though it does not fulfil, amply justifies the purpose of its writer. In it the last trace of extravagance disappears, and gives place to a purity and simplicity of diction worthy of his subject and thought. A slight account of the poem will not be out of place. Edwin, the son of Egbert, seeks shelter at the court of Redwald, the friend of his father, and like him, one of the Saxon kings, after having suffered defeat by Ethelbert.

"Fallen low,

I see a new proportion in the world."

says Edwin, relating his misfortunes, in words, giving a volume of meaning in a flash of thought. Redwald has seven sons; the flower and first-born, Regner, forms a sudden friendship for Edwin—

"The noble love that lives in noble men."

They dream together of being great kings, "giving peace" and "raising men." One fair daughter has Redwald also, whose eyes "seem to look through the surfaces of things," and for her Edwin conceives a passion, which, in his fallen fortunes, "seems unnatural as winter breeding roses." In 'he midst of a stag-hunt, which has swept on and left Bertha with Edwin, a little out of sight, the unexpected solitude surprises Edwin into uttering his love. The scene, amid the murmuring wood, where he kisses her hand while she sits,

"Blinded and crimson as the opening rose,  
And every leaf seemed watchful eye and ear,"

is full of the most delicate charm of fancy and feeling. Then Ethelbert, hearing where his deceased foe has found refuge, threatens Redwald with war, but offers, if he will deliver up Edwin, to share with him the dismembered kingdom. While his fate is being determined within the palace, Edwin, aware of what is going on, and more than doubtful of the issue, is seated on a stone, a bow-shot from the gate, when a stranger comes to him, and acquaints him with his future success, laying on him a sign by which he is to know him again—the sign of the cross. In the meantime, Bertha's tears and entreaties overcome the caution of her father, and the messenger of Ethelbert is sent away in wrath. Then follows the open declaration of Edwin's love, and his betrothal to Bertha, before the hosts of Redwald, headed by Regner, set out to war with Ethelbert. All the brothers go with the army, leaving the old king and Bertha to wait for tidings. At length the tidings come—the field is won, but the flower of the host has perished. Regner is dead.

"The long day waned,  
And, at the mournful setting of the sun,  
Up through the valley came the saddened files,  
With Regner's body borne on levelled spears;  
And, when they had laid the piteous burden down  
Within the gate, with a most bitter cry  
The loose-haired Bertha on it flung herself,  
And strove in sorrow's passionate unbelief  
To kiss dead lips to life. The sternest lids  
Were met with pity then. But when the king  
Was, like a child, led up to see his son  
With sense of woe in woe's own greatness drowned,  
With some obscure instinct of reverence  
For sorrow sadder than any crown  
The weeping people stood round hushed as death."

As picturesque as the above is pathetic is the return of Edwin to his ruined city, in the rebuilding of which he makes the first axe ring. The people, following their king, fall to work like ants and repair the destruction into which the invader had trampled their homes. In less than two months the town is rebuilt, with the palace in the midst of it. And then, when Regner's grave

"Had grown a portion of the accustomed world," Edwin goes to bring his bride. The parting and the welcome are both fine pieces of imaginative description. Deira empties itself to meet Bertha, the people spreading "thick as daisies" over the fields through which she has to pass into the town. Their domestic happiness, the birth of their child, the wise and gracious and severe rule of the king, and his sickness under a wound inflicted by a traitor, prepare the way for the reception which he gives to the Christian missionaries from Rome, with the result of his own baptism, and that of his whole people. At the close, there is hardly the same proportion kept between the purpose of the story and its actors. We hear too little of Bertha and her boy, too little even of the king. He is mixed up with the mass in the sudden conversion. Those who read the poem to its close, unless they read it for the purpose of criticism alone, long as it is, will wish it had been longer—that it had developed into the true epical proportions to which its outlines point. But then those who read epic poems to the end, and for their own sakes, are in a sad minority, and "Edwin of Deira" shorn as it is—an epic made easy—will never be widely-popular. Its writer did not reach the rank of the genius that commands the world, and only the genuine lovers of poetry can yield admiration, to humbler though not less valid claims. Among such this last poem of Alexander Smith will yet be valued at its true worth as one of the purest, sweetest, and loftiest productions of its day.

## THE STORY OF THREE HEARTS

(FROM A. PETOFI.)

I.

THERE was a knight bereft of native land,  
For it was crush'd beneath the foeman's hand,  
Laid waste and desolate; the fitful glare  
From burning homesteads fill'd the heavy air;  
The scorching flames, with their ill-omen'd light,  
Sadly illum'd the features of the knight.  
His blood, which erst was for his country shed,  
Still trickled—but, alas! in vain he bled;  
That blood his nation's fortunes to restore  
Served not; he lives, his country is no more!  
Despised and banish'd from his home at last,  
He is a branch torn by the wintry blast  
From off the parent tree whereon it grew,  
And wildly hurried on, the wide world through.  
The tempest bore him onward, tarrying not,  
But when his footsteps reach'd the sacred spot  
Where erst his country's boundary stone did stand,  
He threw himself upon the burning sand,  
And there the last drops of his tears he gave  
Unto the earth, now made his people's grave.  
Tears were his only fortune now, so he  
Must needs expend them only sparingly.  
He then arose, to wander far and wide,  
His mute grief like a shadow by his side.

II.

When weary with his wanderings, and distress'd,  
Within a silent vale he sought for rest,  
In a strange country, 'midst a foreign nation;  
And there it was his secret consolation  
That death would find him out more easily  
Than if he wildly roam'd o'er land and sea.

The greatest prize upon earth's face the knight  
Full surely deem'd to be death's blossom white.  
For this he waited in the vale each day  
Whither he came, and where he now would stay.

III.

Within that valley lived a maiden fair,  
A very paragon of beauty rare;  
And yet the knight her beauty could not see,  
His soul saw but his country's misery.  
He saw not how upon his countenance  
The maid was wont to cast her timid glance;  
He was unconscious of the fiery glow  
That glance was wont upon his face to throw—  
So pass'd the maid's sad days within the vale,  
Her face grew paler than the lily pale  
With the fierce pain of yearning long suppress'd;  
For she, the peasant maiden, ne'er confess'd;  
(Although she was of wealthy race) that she  
Did love the high-born knight so tenderly.

IV.

In that same valley lived a comely youth,  
Honest but poor, of humble birth in truth,  
He spent his days in hopeless misery,  
And would have surely perish'd, had not he  
From time to time his drooping strength restored  
By gazing on the maiden face adored.  
Only in secret he her charms dared view  
Which o'er life's gloom their magic lustre threw,  
For he, who deem'd himself well off whoso'er  
Somewhat more fond than usual was his share,  
How could he tell the wealthy peasant maiden  
How with love's pangs his heart was deeply laden?  
Yet he was happy and of cheerful mien,  
Could he but see her at a distance even.

V.

At length the solemn hour arrived which bore  
The hapless knight to that eternal shore  
Where 'gainst brave nations no proud tyrant churl  
His puny thunderbolts has power to hurl.  
Back to his mother earth his corpse they gave,  
But, ah! no stone was there to mark his grave.  
The maiden's heart, with speechless grief oppress'd,  
Was turn'd to stone already in her breast;  
And when the heart hath lost its feeling thus,  
What charms can this vain world hold out to us?  
She died, born down by her great sorrow's burden,  
And slept where pain was still'd, and peace her  
guardion.

And the poor wight, disconsolate and lonely,  
How could he live a life of sorrow only,  
When she, for whom alone he lived, had died!—  
He heal'd his bleeding heart by suicide!

VI.

At midnight, when the graves gave up their dead,  
The poor youth rose from out his narrow bed,  
And wander'd forth to seek the grassy dell  
Where they had buried her he loved so well.  
That face now glorified his pain would see,  
Whose earthly eyes had beam'd so tenderly.  
Yet in her tomb he found her not; alone  
Had she along the spirit pathway gone  
To the knight's grave, once more to see him there;  
His grave was empty, vain was all her prayer;  
The knight had gone to a far land, to see  
If his dear native country yet was free!

EDGAR A. BOWRING.

## FOUND AT LAST.

IT was about nine or ten months since that I had met Laurence Thornton at Nice—or, rather, found him, for at that time he was extremely weak, having just recovered from a very severe illness. A valetudinarian is not the most pleasant companion that one can have; but I did my best to overcome selfishness in the matter. So I offered him whatever assistance I could give, which he joyfully accepted, in no way liking to be under the surveillance of a French nurse. He seemed to be a very strange fellow, and all that I then knew of him was that he had been travelling, and had fallen sick at Nice, when just on the point of starting for England. He was reserved, too, as to his past life, but in other respects he was extremely agreeable, with rather a *distingué* appearance, and decidedly handsome. As soon as he was able to move about, we set out for England, at his de-