

tleman was most kind and attentive to Hood, teaching him the peculiarities of the language when well, and acting as his attendant during the severe attacks of hemorrhage and spasms from which Hood was a constant sufferer. Time will not permit me to make any quotations from his letters to his wife during this tour (he travelled alone). Let me, therefore, pass on to the time when he once more settles down in England.

He had gained an immense store of information while away, and his knowledge of engraving and drawing saved him a deal of anxiety and not a little cash, besides he was able to give his publishers technical instructions regarding the preparation of the plates for the new volume. "Up the Rhine."

He was especially anxious to make this book as perfect as possible, and in his letters to his publishers he was most careful to ask them to reproduce his drawings exactly, adding that they were fac-similes of what he had seen, and consequently any alteration would spoil them.

What a treat, after an absence of nearly five years, to find himself once more at home!

Shortly after landing he visited his friends, Dr. and Mrs. Elliott, at Stratford, and it is remarkable how providential that visit turned out to be. Dr. Elliott was a specialist on diseases of the lungs, and had already had some experience of Mr. Hood's attacks of hemorrhage. The poor fellow had not been very long at Stratford when a most terrible attack of his old disease laid him so near to death's door that, to use his own favorite expression, he could hear the hinges creaking. Had it not been for Dr. Elliott, he certainly must have died, but the doctor never left him day or night until he was comparatively out of danger. As soon as he was sufficiently recovered to be removed he took a house at Canterwell, where his wife shortly afterwards joined him. It was a long time before he was able to get out again, and his wife had to act as his nurse, his amanuensis, and his commercial agent. When he had recovered he paid a visit to his publisher.

It will be remembered that in 1835 Hood sold all his belongings, and obtaining an advance on his future earnings, set out to Rotterdam for the purpose of writing to pay his debts. He had spent five years away, and now, for the first time he is seen at his publishers asking for a statement of his account.

What was his surprise and disappointment, however, to find that his account was in a regular muddle, that his books had been pirated, and that his publisher, in whom he had placed the utmost confidence, had been reaping the proceeds of this piracy.

Hood entered an action for the recovery of his books and the establishment of his name as an author, but to do this he spent all he had, and he was once more penniless. However, as he said, he started again with a clear name and a clearer pocket.

In 1841, his deepest, and, to my mind, most beautiful poem, *The Dream of Eugene Aram* (originally published in the *Gem* in the year 1829), was translated into German.

It is too long to reprint here, too beautiful to permit of an omission of a single line. Let me then suggest to any who have not yet read it that an evening with Eugene Aram would have a lasting effect upon them for good.

Another run of better luck offered itself during the year 1841, through the death of Theodore Hook, editor of the *New Monthly Magazine*. The proprietor had learned to appreciate Hood's talent, and at once asked him to accept the vacant post. This was the second time Hood had been asked to step into a dead man's shoes. He was only too glad to accept anything which would bring him in a regular income, and accepted the honourable position at a salary of £300 per annum.

We may be sure he was not long before he let Dr. and Mrs. Elliot know of his sudden wealth—it was wealth to him.

In his letter he said: "The prospect of a certainty makes me feel passing rich, for poverty has come so very near of late, that hope grew sick as the witch grew near."

Soon after he was installed editor of the *New*

Monthly he removed from the sombre district of Camberwell to the more aristocratic neighbourhood of St. John's Wood.

Here he used to invite his select friends to an occasional dinner, and though the champagne did not sparkle, sides used to ache from the time the dinner began until the guests left the house in the small hours of the morning. During his residence at St. John's Wood he formed a fast friendship with Charles Dickens, at whose request, on the death of Elton, the celebrated actor, at sea, Hood wrote the following beautiful address which, after a performance of "Hamlet" at the Haymarket Theatre for the benefit of Elton's widow and children, was spoken by the late Mrs. Warner:

Hush! Not a sound! No whisper! No demur!
No restless motion—No intrusive stir!
But with staid presence, and a quiet breath,
One solemn moment dedicate to Death

* * * * *
For now no fancied miseries bespeak
The panting bosom, and the wetted cheek;
No fabled Tempest, or dramatic wreck,
No Royal Sire washed from the mimic deck
And dirged by sea nymphs to his briny grave;
Alas! deep, deep, beneath the sullen wave
His heart once warm and throbbing as your own
Now, cold and senseless as the shingle stone;
His lips, so eloquent, choked up with sand;
The bright eye glazed, and the impressive hand,
Idly entangled with the ocean weed,
Full fathoms five, a Father lies *indeed*.

Yes! where the foaming billows rave the while
Around the rocky Farne and Holy Isle,
Deaf to their roar, as to the dear applause
That greets deserving in the drama's cause,
Blind to the honours that appal the bold,
To all he hoped, or feared, or loved of old;
To love—and love's deep agony, acold;
He, who could move the passions moved by none,
Drifts, an unconscious corse; poor Elton's race is run.

Weep for the dead! Yet do not merely weep
For him who slumbers in the oozy deep;
Mourn for the dead! Yet not alone for him,
O'er whom the cormorant and gannet swim,
But like Grace Darling in her little boat,
Stretch out a saving hand to those that float;
The orphan seven, so prematurely hurled
Upon the billows of the stormy world,
And struggling—save your pity, take their part,
With breakers huge enough to break the heart.

In the Christmas number of *Punch*, 1843, appeared Hood's most popular, and many consider, his greatest work, "The Song of the Shirt." It was, of course, written anonymously, but it ran through the country like wildfire. Paper after paper quoted it and it became the talk of the day. It was translated into French, German and Italian. It was printed on cotton pocket handkerchiefs, and in this way sold in the streets, the poor wretches who sold, singing the verses to an adaptation of their own, as though the words were actually their own. This gave Hood the greatest satisfaction, for he felt that at least one of his poems had touched the heart of that class of the community, among whom his poverty had compelled him to live, and for whom his sympathy and tenderness taught him to write.

Puns have been styled the lowest form of wit, and the critics have fallen foul of them from time immemorial to the present day. In the hands of such men as Hook and Hood, however, puns have a special charm. Vulgarity disappears. The following is one of Hood's many poems, showing his peculiar ability to play upon the double-meaning of words having a similar sound:

Ben Battle was a soldier bold,
And used to war's alarm,
But a cannon ball took off his legs,
So he laid down his arms.

Now as they bore him off the field,
Said he, let others shoot,
For here I leave my second leg
And the forty-second foot.

The army surgeon made him limbs,
Said he: They're only pegs,
But there's as wooden members, quite,
As represent my legs.

Now, Ben he loved a pretty maid,
Her name was Nelly Gray,
So he went to pay her his devours
When he'd devoured his pay.

But when he called on Nellie Gray,
She made him quite a scoff,
And when she saw his wooden legs,
Began to take them off.

Oh, Nellie Gray! Oh, Nellie Gray!
Is this your love so warm?
The love that loves a scarlet coat
Should be more uniform.

Said she I loved a soldier once,
For he was blythe and brave,
But I will never have a man
With both legs in the grave.

Before you had those timber toes,
Your love I did allow,
But then, you know, you stand upon
Another footing now.

I wish I ne'er had seen your face,
But now—a long farewell,
For you will be my death—alas,
You will not be my Nell.

Now when he went from Nellie Gray,
His heart so heavy got,
And life was such a burden grown,
It made him take a knot.

So, round his melancholy neck,
A rope he did entwine,
And for the second time in life
Enlisted in the Line.

One end he tied around a beam,
And then removed his pegs,
And, as his legs were off—of course
He soon was off his legs.

And there he hung till he was dead
As any nail in town,
For though distress had cut him up,
It couldn't cut him down.

A dozen men sat on his corpse,
To find out why he died,
And they buried him in four cross roads
With a stake in his inside.

I now pass on to the last scene of this great man's life.

In a room, surrounded by his friends, poor Hood lies, or rather, sits, propped up with pillows, waiting the last summons.

He knows, everyone knows he is dying. But what a death-bed. Everything which his poor suffering body requires is sent to him by those whom he would not naturally have counted among his friends: grapes, wine, beef tea, jellies; nothing was wanting.

Hood had spent his life writing for the amusement and instruction of others, he had made himself great by means of his pen. In the midst of his severe attacks of spasms, etc., he had dictated to his wife pictures from real life, which would touch the hearts of all who read them, and in the same breath, although dangerously ill, he had given out such splitting jokes as would elicit involuntary bursts of laughter. And now, when the great man is dying, he is comforted by the realization of the fact that his writings have been appreciated. Among the many tokens of sympathy which he received, the most touching was an anonymous letter as follows: A Shirt, with best wishes from a sincere friend. This letter contained a Bank of England note for twenty pounds.

How much easier would Hood's life have been had his admirers only sought out the man in his poverty. His life would probably have been prolonged, he would have been saved many days and nights of anxiety, and the literature of England would have been further enriched with the productions of his immortal pen. As it was, however, on the 4th of May, 1845, at noon, his wife heard him say faintly: "O, Lord, say, 'Arise take up thy cross and follow me.'" So saying, he sank back and died. A public subscription was raised and a monument erected to his memory, in Kensal Green Cemetery, with the simple, but most touching inscription:

He sang the Song of the Shirt..

ERNEST SMITH.

Conscience is like the murmur of a delicate sea-shell.
We cannot hear it while our passions are tossing and beating on the shores of life