

unnecessary, and land might be had for little more than the asking. I knew this was all nonsense, for if there was such a land all the idle people in the world would flock to it, and good land would be wasted for want of the working. For myself I expected to have to work for my living, and to work hard, but I hoped to get good pay for it in time.

I experienced quite a new sensation before I had been out many days, and that was, being my own master, having no work to do and no one to obey. At first, I think, I was silly enough to feel conceited about it, but when I needed advice, and had no one to guide me, it seemed to me that it would be much easier to be told what to do and to obey, than to decide for myself, and indeed I must own that my conceit was soon greatly lessened by my many mistakes. I enjoyed the voyage very much; the beautiful tossing and sparkling water, the fresh breeze that gave me courage and vigor, the bright sunshine that made the water blue, and the Cape Flyaways that shaded it, green, and gave the sailors a joke for the land lubbers. I liked to hear the sailors' chants as they worked at the capstan, or raised a sail, and the novelty of bells in place of clocks to mark the time, the service of the Church of England read by the Captain on Sunday, the constant noise and shake of the steam engine, as she sent the ship through the water at a spanking rate, all combined to make my life a pleasure and a holiday, and as, day after day, the number of miles made told us we were nearing our destination, I actually began to wish the journey longer.

*(To be continued.)*

## From Current Periodicals.

### THE SALT MARSHES.

BY CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

HERE clove the keels of centuries ago,  
Where now unvisited the flats lie bare.  
Here seethed the sweep of journeying waters, where  
No more the tumbling floods of Fundy flow,  
And only in the samphire pipes creep slow  
The salty currents of the sap. The air  
Hums desolately with wings that seaward fare,  
Over the lonely reaches beating low.

The wastes of hard and meager weeds are thronged  
With murmurs of a past that time has wronged;  
And ghosts of many an ancient memory  
Dwell by the brackish pools and ditches blind,  
In these low lying pastures of the wind,  
These marshes pale and meadows by the sea.

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### THE LIVES OF MEN OF LETTERS.

BY CHARLES F. NEWCOMBE, TORONTO.

IN his delightful Introduction to "The Essays of Elia", which Mr. Augustine Birrell has edited, this critic has raised an exceedingly interesting question, and touched upon a thought that must have frequently forced itself upon the true lover of literature.

"It would be hard to explain", says Mr. Birrell, "why the lives of men, so querulous, so affected, so centred in self, so adverse to the probing of criticism, so blind to the smallness of their fame as most authors stand revealed in their biographies and letters to have been, should yet be so incessantly interesting".

It is frequently asserted that the various epochs of literature, with their effect upon general movements in the history of the world, together with the story of the lives of the writers of a particular age, are of quite secondary importance to a study of the works which we owe to the genius of those writers. Excellent as this precept is, in a general sense, those who urge this practice are liable to forget the value of an author's life in relation to his work. To follow strictly such a rule may even cause a great misunderstanding as to the purport of a work of art. By refusing to gain some knowledge of the details of an author's life we undoubtedly lose a large part of the interest which attaches itself to his work. We wish to know how a man has been helped by his predecessors in his life of thought, we long to trace the progress of his mental activity and power; and it may be said with truth that, with an even stronger interest, we follow him in the ups and downs of his journey from obscurity—perchance to fame. Our knowledge of the life of a man of letters, with even those minor details and incidents which are in themselves, perhaps, insignificant, has a certain charm about it which we are unable to recognise in the lives of other men. In the present day it would be folly to add to that "talk" of the kind that has been wisely designated "chatter about Shelley," and "prattle about Lamb". Even worse is that repellant kind of criticism which suggests the idea of poking your finger into the breakfast room, the study, or the house generally, of a modern poet or novelist. The intense pleasure which some readers find in the knowledge that "Lord Tennyson had a cup of coffee for his breakfast on Monday morning", or "Mr. George Meredith was seen in the stalls of a London theatre on Tuesday evening", or something that very nearly approaches twaddle of this description, is amazing; but it is a criticism—save the mark!—that will die a natural death.

The story of Goldsmith's happy-go-lucky existence—the wild escapades of his boyhood, the ever cheerful temper and generosity of his manhood—this life touches a tender chord of sympathy, blended possibly with humour, in the hearts of all admirers of the work he left us—the immortal "Vicar of Wakefield".

Dr. Johnson's life, apart from its almost inseparable connection with the name of Boswell, is to many readers of far greater interest than are the works his mighty brain brought forth as the result of his patient and laborious toil. Carlyle has reminded us that this sturdy, independent Samuel Johnson was "yet a giant invincible soul". It is difficult to pass over Carlyle's magnificent outburst of