

could have picked up such a wife in my beggarly days."

"For my carriage and gowgaws," said Joan, "if I can have a pair of stout shoes, to keep my feet dry when I go for the water, I shall be only too thankful."

"But indeed, Joan," persisted her husband, gently, "that such a change will come to us I am as confident as a man can well be; and I do think it becometh thee, as well as me, to look forward and grow accustomed to the prospect, or where wilt thou be when it comes upon thee?"

"Next week is prospect enough for me," said Joan; "and a dreary prospect, too, with no money to meet it with, and all the town against us."

"Then there is Dick. He should assuredly be got over certain habits of his which will, in our new life, be constantly bringing the old life to the unpleasant remembrance of ourselves and others."

"At present I have as much as ever I can do to get him over the disappointment of not having a new coat, instead of this patched one, to go to school in," answered Joan, holding up the coat for Arkdale to view.

Arkdale ceased speaking to her, and set himself to studying his speech for to-morrow. Joan went on with her mending. Jenkyns wished his master and mistress good-night, and went out.

He had scarcely been gone time enough to ascend the area steps when a confused noise was heard—a noise which made Arkdale and Joan start, and turn their eyes towards the door. Humphrey rose and reached down his hat.

"Fools!" he muttered; "would they dare lay hands on the poor lad?"

Arkdale went out. Joan went to the door and listened. A crowd had just issued from the "George." One man, with his bleared, uncertain eyes, had espied Jenkyns, and begun to hoot him, and Arkdale found all the rest following his example, and making a stoppage in the road.

"Hi, mates, hi! here's th' wizard's 'prentice!"

"Yes, my boys, and here's his master," shouted Arkdale. "Come, a free passage for the lad, and consult me if you want anything. I manage my own business myself, as everybody knows."

"An' a black business, too! Look at his hands, mates—look at his hands!"

This was directed at poor Jenkyns, whose hands were much stained with the dye. A volley of howls followed, in which the words, "wizard," "inventor," and the "Broomhill pond," were mixed confusedly.

"Inventor! Yes, my lads," said Arkdale, "and I'll show you an invention presently that shall disperse ye a little quicker than ye came—something of a horse-whip shape 'tis."

There was another prolonged yell at this, and then a hurrying of feet from every street and alley within earshot.

Arkdale felt a touch on his arm. It was Joan.

"Come in, for pity's sake," said she. "Are you mad, to anger the poor wretches you have wrong—I mean, try, Humphrey—try and pacify them. Give 'em some o' the fine reasoning you give me, that keeps me quiet, spite of every beat of my heart telling me 'tis wrong. Say something, only pacify them, for the poor wives' sakes."

"Reason with them!" said Arkdale, turning upon her almost fiercely. "Have I not reasoned with them—the thick-headed sots? Haven't I met them whenever and wherever I could—in my own home and in their homes—and talked and reasoned with them? I'll reason with them in another way now."

Joan had never seen such passion burst from him before. She clung to his arm, and turned a weak, piteous face to the crowd.

"There, get thee in," said he, more kindly—"get thee in, and Jenkyns, lad, go thou with thy mistress and keep the place safe."

"And you, master?" asked Jenkyns.

"And you, dear Humphrey?" asked Joan.

"I'm off to George Prots, he and Thomson offered to come to-night in case of a row. I don't care for 'em myself, not I; but who knows, per-

haps the thing's not safe with such a pack as this round the house."

"Don't go through 'em, Humphrey," said Joan, drawing him towards the steps, "go round the back way. You can get over the wall; can't he, Jenkyns?"

(To be continued.)

ALEXANDER SMITH.

LAST things" have always a tender and melancholy interest; and when it is death that has closed a series of accustomed and expected acts, the last becomes inexpressibly sad and sacred. One of these "last things" is the beautiful "Autumn Homily" which appeared in the pages of the *Quarter*, on the 1st of December, 1866, from the pen of Alexander Smith. He died on the 5th of January, having just entered on his thirty-seventh year. One reads the simple little homily now with deeper feeling; and therefore it gives out a deeper meaning. With almost startling distinctness it wears the features of his mind, and marks the design of his life. He is discoursing on autumn, and the time of life which it represents—a favourite subject with him. He delights in the season—in its bounty, its fulfilment, its repose. He holds its counterpart in human life happier than youth with its hopes, and better than manhood with its toils. He paints just such an age as might have been his own—such an autumn as might have been confidently predicted for his spring of promise and his summer of steady sunshine; for his work was done in the sunshine of a serene temper and an affectionate heart. But for him there is no harvest, and no winter. We can but gather the summer fruits of a mind which was ripening to the last. Those who knew him best owned that there was more in him than he ever expressed, of which they caught mere glimpses, and that he expressed more of his poetic nature in the intercourse of friendship than in anything he ever wrote. He had a humour behind which there always seemed a depth of pathos which was not uttered, and a pathetic tenderness through which there was ever ready to break the smile of a happy humour, and neither of these was ever fully translated by his pen. Neither did these qualities appear to the outer world, in which he moved a man much given to silence, of quick observation, and quiet unobtrusive manners, the very embodiment of common sense.

In 1852 the publication of the "Life Drama" created "a sensation" in literary circles, and called its youthful author at once out of obscurity into fame. It had been written several years earlier, in the leisure afforded by his profession, that of a pattern-designer, and, as the work of a mere lad, was, and is, one of the most remarkable productions of genius. Every paper had its article headed "The New Poet." His work was loaded with extravagant praise. He himself was everywhere welcomed, flattered, and caressed. Those who knew him in these early days can bear witness with what gentle dignity and perfect modesty he met the storm of applause. He would submit to be lionised a little, with the amused air of a good-tempered man assailed by a troop of children, who want to finger his clothes and look at his watch. To the writer of this paper he would sometimes say, with the same amused air, as if he were a mere observer, "I shall have to pay for this"—meaning the extravagant praise. "They" (the critics) "will lash me yet." He knew that they were praising him in the wrong place, and for the wrong qualities—for the qualities which would pass away as his mind matured. And when his words came true, and undue depreciation followed unbounded laudation, he held on his way with the same self-respecting and manly dignity. He was not indifferent. He could weigh and give heed to discriminating criticism, even when adverse. He was not callous even of that which was unworthy; for he was void of contempt, and of the mockery which is "the fume of little minds." But, though contemptuous words might sting him, the sweetness of his nature healed the wound at once, it never rankled.

In his domestic relations he was beyond all praise. As son and brother, as husband and father, he left no claim on his duty and affection unsatisfied. He did not think that for the sake of a divine gift he might neglect a common need, and hence a life without reproach or stain, and as nearly approaching the perfection of dutifulness as man's life may. In 1858 he married Miss Flora Macdonald, the daughter of Captain Macdonald, of Ord, in the Isle of Skye, who was buried on the same day as his son-in-law; thus leaving the daughter and wife doubly bereaved. With her sorrow, in the midst of her little ones, it is not for the stranger to inter-meddle.

Above all, Alexander Smith had the faculty of friendship. He made friends, and he kept them to the end. He did not pick up people and drop them again, as the fashion is in our busy time, as if life were a railway journey, and his companions fellow-travellers for a single stage. These friendships of his were something old-fashioned and idyllic as the loves of David and Jonathan. His chivalrous admiration comes out in his appreciative criticism of his fellow-poet, Sydney Dobell. In 1854 they published a volume of sonnets together, not distinguishing their separate work; and twelve years later, Mr. Smith is pleading fervently with a disregarding public in favour of his friend. Another friend, of thirteen years' standing, who can say that he opened to him his whole mind, writes:—"His was a heart very pure and simple, and I cannot hope to have such communion with the like again." And as his heart was so was his life, and so also is his work.

Of his industry he has left ample evidence. In 1851, appointed Secretary to the University of Edinburgh, he discharged the duties of that office with scrupulous faithfulness. It has been said that these duties were far from heavy, but they had gradually increased, without bringing any increase of remuneration, and, occupying him from ten to four daily, only gave him £200 a year. All that he did, he did when the work of the day was over, or when other men were making holiday. To take his prose writing first: he was a constant contributor to one or two papers, and to several magazines. In 1863 he produced a charming volume of essays, entitled "Dreamthorp," full of quiet, reflective, dreamy poetry. In 1865 he brought out an edition of Burns, with a memoir of the poet, which is one of the best things he ever wrote; and, in the same year, two bulky volumes of sketches, called "A Summer in Skye." From these sketches his power as a prose-writer may best be estimated; and the estimate will be a very high one. For clearness of outline and delicacy of colour his scene-painting could hardly be surpassed, and some of his portraits—such as Father McCrimmon, the landlord, and McIan—live in the memory like people one has known. His style is subdued and yet imaginative, and the rhythm of his sentences as musical as verse. In 1866 he published a novel, "Alfred Haggart's Household." The first volume of this domestic story is the best, the second was written in illness, and under the pressure of overwork. Destitute of plot, and with the very scantiest materials—an ordinary young couple, who have made an improvident marriage, and are rather perplexed for ways and means, and their two very ordinary children—its interest depends entirely on the charm of its style and its simple fidelity to nature; and—especially in the first volume—these will be found more than sufficient to delight any reader whose taste is not depraved by the craving for sensation.

Alexander Smith has left us three volumes of poetry, with popularity curiously the inverse of their worth. The "Life Drama" was overlaid with an imagery brilliant to extravagance, and which, to a great extent concealed its finer qualities. The "City Poems," which followed, in 1857, and fell comparatively flat, were much more sober in tone and colour, but showed far higher and more various power, and deeper insight into character and the play of human motives and passions. In these poems his unlimited word-power, was placed under due