

THE COUREUR-DU-BOIS.

In the glimmering light of the Old Regime
A figure appears like the flushing gleam
Of sunlight reflected from sparkling stream,
Or jewel without a flaw.
Flashing and fading but leaving a trace
In story and song of a hardy race,
Finely fashioned in form and face—
The Old Coureur-du-Bois.

No loiterer he 'neath the sheltering wing
Of ladies' bowers where gallants sing.
Through his woodland realm he roved a King!
His own sweet will his law.
From the wily savage he learned his trade
Of hunting and wood-craft; of nothing afraid:
Bravely battling, bearing his blade
As a free Coureur-du-Bois.

A brush with the foe, a carouse with a friend,
Were equally welcome, and made some amend
For the gloom and silence and hardships that tend
"To shorten one's life *ma foi*!"
A wife in the hamlet, another he'd take—
Some dusky maid—to his camp by the lake;
A rattling, roving, rollicking rake
This gay Coureur-du-Bois.

Then peace to his ashes! he bore his part
For his country's weal with a brave stout heart.
A child of nature, untutored in art,
In his narrow world he saw
But the dawning light of the rising sun
O'er an Empire vast his toil had won.
For doughty deeds and duty done
Salut! Coureur-du-Bois.

Montreal.

SAMUEL M. BAYLIS.

LONDON LETTER.

On the table by the book-shelves are silver bowls, majolica bowls full of honeysuckle and yellow azaleas; branches of wild roses in tall vases ornament the little piano; through the panes of the bow-window I can see into the charming corner garden, where are clumps of old fashioned flowers—red bergamot and cloves, sweet william and corn cockles—and twisting round trellises, quick growing hops, fragrant clematis and jasmine, convolvulus and beautiful lengths of vine make a veritable bower of this London house. Snatches of talk from down in the street come in with startling clearness over the green railings and scented blossoms, and reach me in this cushioned recess; echoing footsteps, like those hurrying ones that surrounded Lucie Manette's Soho home, tramp quickly, pace slowly, in and about the sunny road. Yonder a thrush piping his midday song from the branches of the maytree is silenced by the clatter of the Kensington bells ringing for service—in the aisle of the church, by the way, lies the Lord Warwick, who watched at Addison's death-bed—but the mechanical trill of a lark (Shelley's "blithe spirit") fluttering ceaselessly against the bars of its cage, continues heedless like all other complainers of either chimers or voices. No longer blithe, indeed, is this poor little captive from the corn-fields—who was the cruel person who first thought of imprisoning birds?—and the familiar turns and shakes sound sadly enough from over the square inch of turf and thimbleful of water, terrible substitutes for meadows and brooks without end.

In this charming parlour you too would like to be, I think, with the glass doors of the shelves wide open, and the possessor of these golden brown volumes ready to explain how this treasure came into the family, how that, bought for next to nothing, proved exactly the edition of all others the most scarce, now turning the leaves to show me notes, or a reference to some other writer, or an inscription (delightful suggestive signs of former readers, decorating like knots of ribbon or ruffles of lace the black and white pages) anon allowing me to take into my hands for closer inspection specimens of binding which, like some in our museums, or in the Bodleian Library, give one the same sort of pleasure produced by a fine picture. Here is a pocket Dante (1552) the covers made by Evis, binder to Henry III, Henry IV, and Louis XIII, on the flyleaf of which is the following sentence perfectly legible, the ink unfaded, the writing full of character: "Mr. Digges sent me this book from Oxford, 22nd Dec, 1599, Fran. Walleys." So the proud owner after near three hundred years tells you and me of his Christmas gift from that dear University, where maybe he was educated, and where doubtless Mr. Digges was his tutor. Was the volume kept as a pocket-piece, and read of spare moments. Did he bring it out, I wonder, in the honeymoon days (like the ungallant bridegroom in Mr. Boughton's picture) when the pretty bride in her pointed cap and brocade farthingale lost her charm for the moment, and the choice Italian and queer woodcuts of Mr. Digges' present consoled Francis Walleys for any disenchantment from which he may have suffered. If these pages could speak for themselves, instead of echoing Dante's words, they would tell of the time when

the Virgin Queen in her unloved and unlovely and addled old age was on the throne, the King of Scotland waiting impatiently for her decease, and Shakespeare prospering in London (do you know that Donnelly declares "the newspapers of England are standing with journalistic bludgeons round the rotten corpse of a national delusion," a sentiment worthy of Jefferson Bucks, when, turning his attention from War he dallied with Literature) had just applied to the Herald's office for a grant of arms, had helped to produce "Every Man in His Humour" at the Blackfriars Theatre, and was seriously thinking of buying the Great House in Stratford to which to repair when the pleasures of the "Mermaid" ceased to attract. What a trio of adventurous centuries has the tiny book lived successfully through. Civil wars have raged outside of its velvet case, kings have gone into exile, thrones have crumbled into dust, great discoveries have been made, adventurers have come to new lands. Over its covers eager voices have called for the favorite toasts, angry ones have discussed the policy of His Majesty's Ministers in connection with the American rebels, triumphant ones have told of the Trafalgar and Waterloo days, and just a year or two ago of the fall of Sebastopol. Almost as fresh as when it left the hands of the binder, the Dante lies on its shelf touched only occasionally and reverently by careful admirers, and if Mr. Walleys discover its whereabouts (do you remember Mr. Lang's pleasant verses on a similar subject?) I think he will feel satisfied at the manner with which his gift from Oxford is treated in its present home.

From near Mary Wollstonecroft's *Letters from Norway and Sweden* (1797), I take down the first volume of Murphy's *Life of Dr. Johnson*, "bought at the sale of Mrs. Piozzi's library," says a note on the front page, and I find in the lady's own writing just above that note that in November, 1816, she purchased the books of Aplum at Bath. Turning the leaf between these annotations and the shockingly bad portrait of the lexicographer forming the frontispiece, I come to where is fixed a sheet of rough yellow paper addressed to the flighty dame who owned, according to Dr. Burney, those "expressive eyes," and on which is scrawled the following: "Dear Lady (I read), I am this evening come to Bolt Court after a ramble in which I have had very little pleasure, and now I have not you to talk to nor Mrs. Mason. I carried bad health out, and have brought it home. What else I bring is abundance of compliments to you from everybody. Lucy I cannot persuade to write to you, but she is very much obliged. Be pleased to write word to Streatham that they should find me the 'Biographia Britannica' as soon as possible. I believe I owe Queenie a letter, for which I hope she will forgive me. I am apt to omit things of more importance. Let me hear from you now quick. Our letters will pass and repass like shuttlecocks. I am, dearest madame, your most humble servant, Sam Johnson. Nov. 6, 1777." And this, which the receiver did not think interesting enough to include in her collection of printed letters is not the only treasure the book contains. For on nearly every page Mrs. Piozzi, reading before me, has left some specimen of bitter wit, with those friends who interfered in her second marriage (unwarrantably it seems now, surely?) had reason to dread, or some token of the learning of a woman who knew Latin and was the companion of most of the wise folk of the day. In her beautiful writing, extraordinary for a person well on the way to eighty years of age, she sets down many a sentence that would sting those of whom she speaks. "Tacitus informs us"—the author of the life thus pompously begins a paragraph, interrupted by Mrs. Piozzi's sneering laugh, "Dear Murphy," she cries from the margin, "when he was serious he always talked of Tacitus; when he was merry he always talked of Foote!" Again, a little later on, when Prior is mentioned, "His Cloe was Clotilda Tickell I find" (she writes). "She lived to be 101 years old, and died an object of disgust and deformity." By the side of Johnson's death bed Mrs. Piozzi lingers with her pen in hand. "They should have told him they apprehended a mortification. Why treat such a mind like the mind of a common patient?" She sets against the dreadful description of his bodily and mental sufferings. So on almost every page, here, there, where you least expect "Thrale's grey widow" bids you turn your attention to her. "Alas poor H. L. P.," she writes in one or two places, and "Alas poor H. L. P.," one cannot help repeating after her, with her daughters estranged, her second husband dead, with most of her old friends open enemies, she sits in the drawing-room in that steep gloomy Gay Street in Bath, with the pages open before her reminding her of that past life which must seem so very far away. Step by step she goes over those old days at Streatham Common, in Southwark, in Grosvenor Square, in Brighthelmston, when Johnson was her guest for months at a time; thinks again of Baretti and Garrick, of Burke and Goldsmith, Fanny Burney and charming S. S., (why did that clever young lady never marry?) of little Harry's death, and of Queenie, and how pretty she looked the day she sat to Sir Joshua. How often we have all met at that cheerful board and listened to the famous tales, and how well we know the Reynolds portraits, and the prints pasted on the dining-room walls. "She has done nothing right since Thrale's bridle has been off her neck," declared Johnson in an angry mood, a speech which it would have been kinder if Boswell had suppressed, but the truth of which is proved by the manner in which she managed the years when left to herself, the Conway episode showing how easily, to the end, her vanity and credulity could be taken advantage of. One does not like to think of her, for so long surrounded by the best society London could give, now deserted in her old age by those fair weather friends. One never knows if Piozzi was happy in his choice, but I warrant he heard often enough from his wife of the immense sacrifice she had made for him; and I think he must have had hard work to soothe her when Johnson wrote those cruel letters and Miss Burney looked in the other direction when they met at routs.

There is much to tell you of all the other books with which these shelves are piled, English, and French, Italian and Latin, but I am afraid I might