

## TORU DUTT, A YOUNG HINDOO POET.

BY MARGARET E. SANGSTER.

Among my readers there are doubtless very many who are familiar with the name at the head of this paper, and to whom it stands for a graceful Hindu maiden, dusky-browed, dark eyed, with the lissome movements and dreamy charm of her race. Very young, too,—only twenty-one years and six months old when, eleven years ago, she died at her father's house in Calcutta.

Toru, the daughter of high-caste parents in Bengal, was the youngest of three gifted children and was born on the 4th of March, 1856. The trio perished early, each giving evidence of unusual genius; each, more spirit than body, so that the flame consumed the temple when only the rich promise had been given to the world.

Toru, pure Hindu, with "the typical qualities of her race and blood," imbibed in her childhood an intense love for the mystic and poetic legends which the Sanscrit, the sacred language, preserved as gleaming jewels encased in golden urns. She became a devout follower of Christ, but she could not help her delight in the beautiful antiques of her country, which have furnished the motives for so much of the most charming verse of the period. In her ballads and legends of Hindustan, written, be it remembered, not in her native tongue, but in forceful, nervous English, which, as well as French, she used with ease, facility and rare precision, she tells in strains of melody quite equal to the work of Edwin Arnold the quaint stories which the Hindu nurse sings to her child when twilight falls on the nodding palms and the silver fountains and the glittering facades of mosque or shrine.

We have all read, of course, that traditional story of the prince, fore-doomed to death, and accompanied bravely on the last journey—himself going gaily forward fearing no ill—by his devoted wife, who had received warning, and in the sublime fidelity of a perfect love was ready to dare even death in person, in the forlorn hope that she might save her husband. Toru's version of this is very lovely. The messengers sent from the Court of Death return without the soul which they had been commissioned to bring. Sternly challenged by the grim monarch and asked why they had disobeyed "the mandate with the seal," they reply:

"Oh King, whom all men fear, he lies  
Deep in the dark Medhya wood,  
We fled from thence in wild surprise  
And left him in that solitude.  
We dared not touch him, for there sits  
Beside him, lighting all the place,  
A woman fair, whose brow permits  
In its austerity of grace  
And purity, no creatures foul  
As we seemed, by her loveliness,  
Or soul of evil ghost or ghoul,  
To venture close—"

Death, finding no minion willing, goes himself for the prince's soul and rends it away. But, undismayed, Savitri, the indomitable wife, follows him, pleads with him, gives him no rest, till her arguments conquer and the life, in the shape of the soul, "no bigger than the human thumb," is placed in her happy hands by the formidable god himself. She runs, nay, flies with the feet of a fawn, over the jungle paths, till she comes to the spot where the prince is lying, "stark and dumb,"

"Then placed his soul upon his heart,  
Whence, like a bee, it found its cell,  
And lo! he woke with sudden start."

Is there here an indication as to the place where the old poets, the dawn poets of the world, located the soul, in the heart, the seat of the emotions? We, in our colder age, are told that the brain is its home. Alas! let it reside in heart or brain, no despair of mournful tears, no heart-breaking agony of supplication, induces Death in our day to restore our dead to life.

Yet God forbid that we envy the pretty Pagan myth. He who has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel has given us a better hope to sustain, a more glorious resurrection to anticipate. Not even in the wildest tempest-gust of sorrow does it ever occur to the heart of a Christian to wish back again to this changeable world, with its fatalities, its accidents, its shattered ideals and broken idols, any soul which has set sail on that everlasting sea where "beyond these voices there is peace."

But this long lyric is wonderful poetry to

have been written by a girl under twenty, handicapped by the fact of writing in a foreign tongue, wrestling with foreign idioms and thinking, even though automatically translating while she thought, in a language not her own. The mother-tongue it is which is easiest to us always, in which we dream and talk in our sleep, and pray.

Here is another specimen—a love song so delicious and delicate that it sings itself over and over in our memories. No wonder that a veteran critic, with the jaded air and pessimistic expectation of one who has seen books go down in battalions, each more disappointing than its predecessor, was startled to ecstasy when opening Toru Dutt's "Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields," a shabby little volume, badly printed, and bound in yellow paper. Save the mark! He came first upon this:

"Still barred thy doors! The far East glows,  
The morning wind blows fresh and free,  
Should not the hour that wakes the rose  
Awaken also thee?  
All look for thee, Love, Light and Song,  
Light in the sky, deep red above,  
Song, in the lark of pinions strong,  
And in my heart, true love."

Toru and her sister, Aru, who, let me say in passing, gave artistic promise almost as splendid in its way as Toru's literary genius, was taken, after a childhood spent in deep seclusion and great happiness, from Calcutta, first to France and next to England. They were placed for a while in a French pension, where their progress was simply dazzling and almost miraculous. Their father took them to Italy and to England, where at Cambridge they attended the lectures for women, studying with eager zeal and severe application. Then they went back to Bengal, where a brief four years only passed and both were gone! Consumption fastened first on one fragile life and then on the other.

One wishes, reading the list of Toru's achievements, as one always wishes when the torch burns out so soon, that there might have been attention to the laws of health, some wise economy of vitality, instead of that lavish expenditure; some care for the body, as well as for the wonderful brain. A complete romance written in French, a number of short tales, an English story in fragmentary form, many sonnets and translations, and a volume of verse, were found among her papers after Toru's death, and these were added to the "Sheaf" above mentioned, her only published work.

Of course, these were of unequal merit, but none were below mediocrity, and some were remarkable for power of conception and literary finish. No wonder that Edmund Gosse exclaims:

"It is difficult to exaggerate when we try to estimate what we have lost in the premature death of Toru Dutt. Literature has no honors which need have been beyond the grasp of a girl who, at the age of twenty-one, and in languages separated from her own by so deep a chasm, had produced so much of lasting worth."

Reading these bits of verse, as I have, with real enjoyment, I have been tempted to cull for the girl readers whom I have in mind, here a flower, there a gem. But I forbear. "Everybody does not love poetry as you do," said a girlish voice at my side. So I refrain from copying a ringing ballad about France in the spasm of 1870's darkness, and I leave unquoted the tender study called "The Tree of Life," and the exquisite sonnet which describes the garden home in Calcutta, with the palms, like pillars gray, and the bamboos to the eastward, and the white lotus with its cups of silver, and the green profound of the mango-clumps blending with the light green, graceful tamarinds. I will give you, instead, a stanza or two from a tender poem entitled, "Near Hastings." The two stranger girls, weary and ill, were sitting on the shingly beach, when a lady came up, saw that they were strangers, and gave them—but let Toru tell it herself:

"We talked a while; some roses red,  
That seemed as wet with tears,  
She gave my sister, and she said,  
'God bless you both, my dears!'  
'Sweet were the roses; sweet and full  
And large as lotus flowers,  
That in our own wide tanks we cull  
To deck our Indian bowers.  
'But sweeter was the love that gave  
These flowers to one unknown;  
I think that He who came to save,  
The gift a debt will own."

Sweet child of a far-off land! Fair flower  
That drooped so soon! Sister and priestess

in the halls of song! Over the years that divide us, be they few or many, my heart looks forward to meeting you in the many mansions where no preparation of earth is wasted, no training is in vain, where the gifted and the glorious shall go on from one degree to another in the Master's very presence.

And the thought comes, pardon it, gentle reader, though you call it a moral, What are you and I doing, my Christian sisters, for the hosts of Hindu women of whom Toru Dutt was one? The kiss of the prince awakened the Sleeping Beauty and all her train. The touch of Christ's love shall arouse to life and beauty millions of unspeakably precious possibilities, when woman shall assume her queenhood in the homes of India. What, my dear girl friends, will you do to make the time come more quickly?—*Christian Intelligencer.*

## STONEWALL JACKSON'S SUNDAY KEEPING.

He never posted a letter without calculating whether it would have to travel on Sunday to reach its place of destination, and if so, he would not mail it till Monday morning. Still further did he carry his Puritanical observance. Unnumbered times have I known him to receive important letters so late on Saturday night that he would not break his fixed resolution never to use his eyes, which were very delicate, by artificial light; he would carry the letters in his pocket till Monday morning, then rise with the sun to read them. "In the winter of '61-'62, while Jackson's forces were at Winchester, he sent a brigade to destroy the canal leading to Washington. The expedition proved a failure; and he attributed it in some measure to the fact that Sunday had been needlessly trespassed upon. So when a second expedition was planned he determined there should be no Sabbath-breaking connected with it, that he could prevent. The advance was to be made early on Monday morning. On Saturday he ordered my husband (Colonel Preston, at that time on his staff,) to see that the necessary powder was in readiness. The quartermaster could not find a sufficient quantity in Winchester on Saturday, but during Sunday it was procured. On Sunday evening the fact in some way got to Jackson's ears. At a very early hour on Monday he dispatched an officer to Shepherdstown for other powder, which was brought. Then summoning Colonel Preston, he said very decisively:

"Colonel, I desire that you will see that the powder which is used for this expedition is not the powder that was procured on Sunday."—*Century.*

## SEEK THE HAPPY MEDIUM.

Mr. Scott's letter this week calls attention to the possibility of overdoing the practice of economy in domestic expenses. This is a lesson not much needed by the average American, who is much more apt to spend too thoughtlessly than to economize too carefully. Nevertheless, it is necessary for many people even in this country. The love of money is the root of all evil, and it grows on a man very fast when he begins to accumulate, if he is not very careful. Once fairly ensconced in the inner recesses of the heart this passion for accumulation is extremely difficult to eradicate or even to check.

We have known an old Scotchman who in his youth had learned to look on both sides of a penny before parting with it, and could never get over the notion that it was necessary to add to his pile every year even after he had got well up into the millions. The strange part of it was, that, being a bachelor and having no near relatives to whom he was anxious to leave any considerable portion of his fortune, he had no reason for continuing his accumulations except the pleasure he found in doing so and the ingrained idea that it was the right thing to do. Yet the good old soul (he was over eighty) took a deep interest in missions and other good work, would distribute tracts on the street and visit the sick, carrying some small comforts with him. He would give away hundreds of dollars while saving a few cents by lighting his own office fire rather than incur the expense of keeping an office-boy. He seemed really to take pleasure in giving, until he had distributed the proportion of his in-

come which he thought it right to give away, but beyond that he could not go. He was trying to do right, but the power to do good which his immense fortune afforded was restricted within very narrow limits by the narrowing influence of the habit of accumulating. The grace of God had got hold of the man and was working in him, but the demon of avarice could not be completely cast out.

Such a case is sad enough, but it is a much more pleasant picture than that of the miser who has not come under the softening influence of God's grace. In him the love of money reigns supreme, and his soul becomes narrower and smaller till it could scarcely be discovered by a spiritual microscope of the ten thousandth power.

Avarice is a terrible disease, and though not epidemic in this country as yet, may soon become so if all the teachings with regard to personal expenditure, are confined to the duty of practising economy.

Let no one, however, take this lesson as a justification of careless extravagance. It is clearly the duty of everyone to lay by something against a rainy day if he can. Every young man should begin by making a systematic division of his income in accordance with his responsibilities: So much a week for expenses, so much for giving away, and so much for putting by. If he finds that his duty to those dependent upon him makes it impossible for him to give much, or to put by anything, he must just go ahead and trust to his Heavenly Father to care for him when the rainy day comes.

The best protection against the seductiveness of avarice is systematic and sympathetic giving, even if the sums given should be of necessity very small.—*N. Y. Witness.*

## A WAY TO HELP A BAD BOY TO BE GOOD.

BY MARGARET MEREDITH.

I was talking the other day to a handsome young mechanic who has been, till now, an utterly wild fellow, and who is trying to make a stand to do right and to be saved. I thought I knew all about boys, and the possible ways to work for them, but he in a single request, suggested one of the best things I had ever heard suggested, I thought, as a help to such as he. "Please get me a book that tells how a bad boy got good." Now, could anything promise better to show him the way to be saved? the actual experience of another in the same case as himself.

I supposed that the book would be as easy as possible to pick up, but it was not. Sunday-school stories of that kind are plenty, but this must be a true story. It must enter fully into the history of the change, its circumstances and its feelings, its ups and downs and difficulties, its temptations, its encouragement. I had access to a great library, and by much help and advice succeeded in getting a quarto memoir which had three pages of account of the steps of change from bad to good. Then, at the instance of a lady better versed than we of this generation are apt to be in memoirs, I sent for the "Life of John Newton," and it proved excellent: interesting all through, and minute in its description, by Newton's own lips, of his thoughts and feelings at every stage of the struggle out of darkness into light. He was such an extremely "bad boy," to be sure, that to offer his story unmasked to one not good would be likely to be considered something of an insult; but asked for, as it was—or explained, as it might be—there could be few more helpful delineations of how a very, very bad boy became very, very good.

A few such books, found out and put in your Sunday-school library, or in your own library, would probably be some day a great assistance to you in trying to guide aright a troubled, uncertain soul, who thinks perhaps at every new temptation or unexpected phase of feeling, that no one could be saved against such odds, or need hope to be saved by such unpromising struggles.—*Churchman.*

Dr. G. M. BEARD, Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine, says:—"I do not find that alcohol is so good a stimulant to thought as coffee, tea, opium, or tobacco. On myself alcohol has rather a benumbing and stupefying effect, whatever may be the dose employed."