



GRANT ALLEN'S PERSONALITY.

This charming character sketch of the late eminent Canadian, Grant Allen, was written for *MONTREAL LIFE* by a gentleman who knew him most intimately, and is in a position to speak with authority of the deceased writer.

ON October 25, in his beautiful Surrey home, "The Croft," after many weeks of suffering, there passed away a writer whom the late Cotter Morrison once described as "the most versatile man in England."

One need but read the titles of Grant Allen's 50 odd volumes to appreciate this statement. A man who could thrill his readers with some of the cleverest bits of fiction ever written, such as "The Rev. John Creedy" and other sketches, in "Strange Stories," was one monstrum digito praetercunctum, but when to his numerous tales and novels, some of which are



THE LATE GRANT ALLEN.

extremely popular, we add poetry, and to poetry biography, and to biography history, and to history aesthetics, and to aesthetics philosophy, and to philosophy a theory of physics, and when we find that this manifold activity was crowned by devotion to natural science, of which his many delightful works on evolution in plant and animal life are the fruit, we begin to appreciate the fact that Cotter Morrison's tribute was no mere after-dinner eulogy.

Versatility, indeed, marked Grant Allen's career from boyhood. In his seventh year he could read his father's Greek Testament, and yet, as a child, he was ever the foremost to discover the harbingers of spring in the flowers, birds and animals of forest and field. While he was yet a lad his drawing-master prophesied for him fame as an artist, and wept when he was taken away to prepare for the university. Entering Merton College he won a pastmastership for unusual excellence in Greek and Latin, yet his chief delight was in the field of natural science and the evolutionary philosophy of the day. After leaving Oxford he was appointed professor of mental philosophy and logic in a West Indian college, of which he soon became principal. Though a very successful teacher, his ambition carried him into another sphere, and as soon as the London journals began to accept his articles, he took the final plunge into the sea of literary life as a journalist and war-correspondent. Later, when his fame was well established, he

became a public lecturer, his debut being made before the Royal Society.

In the light of modern science, some explanation of this versatility may be found in Grant Allen's family history. His father, himself an author and a man of great intellectual force, belongs to a brilliant Irish family. On the other hand, through his mother, a Montreal de Longueuil, he was a direct descendant, in the ninth generation, of the famous Frenchman, Charles Le Moyne, who, according to Parkman, was "founder of a family, the most truly eminent in Canada," and whose eleven warrior sons form unquestionably the most picturesque group in early Canadian history. His maternal grandmother belonged to a family of English soldiers and sailors, the well-known Devonshire Collins, while his great-grandfather was a distinguished Scot, Capt. David Alexander Grant, of Blairfindy, who, for his devotion to the Pretender, was dispossessed of his estates.

This Canadian compound of French and English, Irish and Scotch blood, of the best types, was brought up amid the most favorable surroundings for the development of genius. From the hands of his parents—both of them endowed with unusual refinement and mental capacity—he passed to the best schools in Connecticut, France and England. He enjoyed the advantages of travel, and made himself a thorough master of French and Italian literature and art. Having lived in the north and south of Europe, in Canada and in the tropics, he had a more intimate knowledge of Nature, in her varied phenomena, than is commonly enjoyed by scientific students.

Grant Allen went through life with his eyes open. Nothing escaped him, and, as his memory was always phenomenal, he possessed an extraordinary fund of information. His habit of interesting himself in everything and everybody, together with his constant play of wit and fancy, accounts for the unrivalled charm of his conversation. He could pass, with the greatest ease, from the simplest topics of everyday life to the most intricate questions of abstract thought. "He is the most entertaining man I ever met," said an American writer lately; "he made me feel that nothing was too common to be uninteresting." He had a passion for beauty, as is abundantly illustrated in his nature studies and other literary work, but was also manifested in the minor fields of artistic activity. Charming Mrs. Allen, who was very fond and very proud of her husband, used to say that if her dresses were beautiful—and no woman dressed more tastefully—it was because they were designed or selected by her husband.

A man of such varied talents, who found a genuine joy in life at every turn, and was of a kindly and sympathetic nature, was sure to be eagerly sought after. Enthusiastic himself, he aroused enthusiasm in others. It is well known that Grant Allen first brought more than one young author before the public eye. William Watson might still be looking for recognition if Grant Allen had not heralded his praises in a London monthly. Other writers, whom we may not name, but who are now known the world over, received from him substantial aid at the outset of their careers. His numerous friends were devotedly attached to him, and his intimate circle included men famous in every walk of life. Chief among these were Herbert Spencer,

Deepest and mightiest of our later seers,

as he calls him; George Meredith, the great novelist; Edward Clodd, the literary banker; Cotton, of the Academy, and Sir George Newnes, the London journalist. He was always proud to show a beautiful German microscope, which Darwin and his eminent co-workers once presented him in recognition of his services in popularizing science. "It has been my good fortune," he said a few years ago, "to be acquainted with every eminent man of science in England."

In his home life, Grant Allen was a most affectionate son and brother, the most devoted of husbands, the most loving of fathers. When "The Woman Who Did" appeared, the

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