

RELICS OF BYRON.

A POEM AND LETTERS THAT HAVE BEEN A LONG TIME GETTING INTO PRINT.

Among the friends of Lord Byron who are well known through the poet's published letters, Francis Hodgson is eminent. He was one of the earliest and best of them. When Byron left England in 1809, three months after the publication of his "English Bards and Scotch Reviewers," for a tour in Spain, Greece and Turkey, accompanied by his college associate, John C. Hobhouse, Hodgson was the one friend to whom he wrote. And when his mother afterwards died and he made his will, Hodgson was one of the three persons to whom he bequeathed his "household goods and furniture, library, pictures, sabres, watches, plate, linen, trinkets, and other personal estate (except money and securities) situate within the walls of the mansion house." Two volumes of memoirs of Francis Hodgson have just been printed in London, and a single copy only of the advance sheets has been received in this country. These memoirs contain a poem and several letters from Lord Byron that were never before given to the world. The poem is dated Newstead Abbey, Aug. 26, 1811, and is as follows:

In the dome of my sires as the clear moonbeam falls
Through silence and shade o'er its desolate walls,
It shines from afar like the glories of old;
It girds but it warms not—'tis dazzling, but cold.

Let the sunbeam be bright for the younger of days;
'Tis the light that should shine on a race that decays.
When the stars are on high and the dew on the ground,
And the long shadow lingers the ruin around.

And the step that o'er echoes the gray floor of stone,
Falls sullenly now, for 'tis only my own;
And sunk are the voices that sounded in mirth,
And empty the goblets, and dreary the hearth.

And vain was each effort to raise and recall
The brightness of old to illumine our hall;
And vain was the hope to avert our decline,
And the fate of my fathers has faded to mine.

And this was the wealth and the fullness of fame,
And mine to inherit too haughty a name;
And these were the times and the triumphs of yore,
And mine to regret, but renew them no more.

And ruin is fixed on my tower and my wall,
Too booby to fade and too massey to fall;
It tells not of time's or the tempest's decay,
But the wreck of the line that have (sic) held in its sway

This poem was written two months after Byron's return to England and about three weeks after his mother died. He had also just lost two intimate friends. To his friend Mr. Dallas, the day before he wrote the poem, he said in a letter: "You will excuse all this, for I have nothing to say in this lone mansion but of myself, and yet I would willingly talk or think of aught else." Lord Byron returned from the East, as is well known, with his "Paraphrase of Horace's Art of Poetry," which he thought would yield him additional fame, and "Childe Harold," which he thought would yield him little or none. It was a few weeks before the date of the poem that he was induced to let Mr. Murray publish "Childe Harold." The memoirs of Hodgson contain unpublished letters from Byron, Lady Byron, Mrs. Augusta Leigh (Byron's sister), Thomas Moore, and many more eminent in literature fifty and sixty years ago. Byron and Hobhouse, after travelling together about a year, separated, Hobhouse returning to England, while Byron set out for Greece alone. Writing to Hodgson of this, he said:

"I have known a hundred instances of men setting out in couples, but not one of a similar return. Aberdeen's party split: several voyagers at present have done the same. I am confident that twelve months of any given individual is perfect ipecacuanha."

In November he was in Athens and sent the following bits of autobiography to his friend:

"I am living alone in the Franciscan monastery with one Friar (a Capuchin of course), and one Friar (a bandy-legged Turkish cook), two Albanian savages, a Tartar and a Dragoon; my only Englishman departs with this and other letters. The day before yesterday the Waynode (sic) (or governor of Athens) with the mufti of Thebes (a sort of Mussulman bishop) supped here with the padre of the convent, and my Attic feast went off with great *colat* (sic). I have had a present of a stallion from the pacha of the Morea. I caught a fever going to Olympia. I was blown ashore on the island of Salamis, on my way to Corinth through the gulf of Egina. I have kicked an Athenian postmaster. I have a friendship with the French consul and an Italian painter, and am on good terms with five Teutones and Cimbric, Danes and Germans who are travelling for an academy. Vale."

He liked the pachas. One of them called him "his son, desired his compliments to my mother, and said he was sure I was a man of birth, because I had small ears and curling hair."

Francis Hodgson was Byron's senior by seven years. In his time he was well known as a writer. The friendship began in March, 1808, when Byron went to Cambridge to take his M.A. degree. They had both been severely criticised in the *Edinburgh Review*, and Hodgson had already answered his critics "in a satire of no ordinary spirit and power." Byron's famous reply was in preparation. That they talked upon this subject freely cannot be doubted. Their early tastes were much alike. Both were zealous admirers of Dryden, and both had a profound reverence for Pope. But in religious matters they were not of the same mind. Hodgson was a son of a clergyman and himself entered holy orders, rising eventually to the post of provost of Eton. Lord Byron had been

reared in Calvinism and taught from boyhood to identify it with Christianity. "Being early disgusted," he says, "with a Calvinistic Scotch school, where I was cudgelled to church for the first ten years of my life, afflicted me with this malady." They had a correspondence in September, 1811, on the subject of revealed religion. Lord Byron wrote:

"It is a little hard to send a man preaching to Judea and leave the rest of the world—niggers and what not—dark as their complexions, without a ray of light for so many years to lead them on high; and who will believe that God will damn men for not knowing what they were never taught? I hope I am sincere; I was so at least on a bed of sickness in a far-distant country, when I had neither friend nor comforter nor hope to sustain me. I looked to death as a relief from pain, without a wish for an after-life, but a confidence that the God who punishes in this existence had left that last asylum for the weary. I am no Platonist, I am nothing at all; but I would sooner be a Paulician, Manichean, Spinozist, Gentile, Pyrrhonian, Zoroastrian, than one of the seventy-two villainous sects who are tearing each other to pieces for the Love of the Lord and hatred of each other. Talk of Galileism! Show me the effects—are you better, wiser, kinder by your precepts? I will bring you ten Mussulmans who will shame you all in good-will toward men, prayers to God, and duty to their neighbours."

And again:

"I trust that God is not a Jew, but the God of all mankind; and as you allow that a virtuous Gentile may be saved, you do away with the necessity of being a Jew or a Christian. I do not believe in any revealed religion, because no religion is revealed; and if it pleases the church to damn me for not allowing a nonentity, I throw myself on the mercy of the 'Great First Cause, least understood,' who must do what is most proper; though I conceive He never made anything to be tortured in another life, whatever it may be in this."

In spite of these passages Hodgson was not without hope for his friend. He believed him thoroughly sincere in his belief and his unbelief, and that as he became more mature his unbelief was being gradually relinquished. But at this point there came a sudden wreck to his domestic happiness which plunged him into a hopeless cynicism. To the original manuscript of the "Epistle to a Friend," in which Byron describes himself as

One whose deepening crimes
Suit with the saddest of the times,

Hodgson appended this note: "N.B. The poor dear soul meant nothing of this. F. H." Hodgson, however, had no good opinion of Shelley. He calls him "one of the most worthless of his contemporaries." Some years afterwards Byron's sister gave him a Bible, which he carried with him to Italy and Greece. After his death the following lines, which are not published with his works, were found:

Within this awful volume lies
The mystery of mysteries.
Oh! happiest day of human race,
To whom our God has given grace.

To hear, to read, to fear, to pray;
To lift the latch, and force the way;
And better had they never been born
Who read to doubt or read to scorn.

To these the following fragment is added:

Oh, that to me the wings were given
Which bear the turtle to her nest;
Then would I cleave the vault of heaven,
And flee away and be at rest.

About the time Byron announced his engagement to Miss Millbanke, Hodgson was himself engaged to be married. It was in these days, also, that he began a correspondence with the poet's famous sister Augusta, with whom he had been acquainted for some time. The letters relate largely to Byron's engagement and married life, and are printed in these memoirs for the first time. They are of the highest importance. The marriage took place in January, 1815. Early in March, Mrs. Leigh is "so happy and pleased with the bride that she does not know how to express her satisfaction." Lady Byron has written her that "she never saw her father and mother so happy; that she believes the latter would go to the bottom of the sea herself to find fish for B.'s dinner; that he (B.) owns at last that he is very happy and comfortable at Seaham, though he had pre-determined to be very miserable." At the end of the month Byron's nerves are troubling his sister, still she is sure he is safe in the keeping of his wife, whom the more she sees "the more she loves and esteems." In September Hodgson is married, and they all send congratulations, Byron being "in the best of spirits." A little later Mrs. Leigh writes to Hodgson:

"I will own to you, what I would not secretly to any other person, that I had many causes and circumstances of which I cannot write. Thank God! that they do not appear likely to be realized. In short, there seems to be but one drawback to all our felicity, and that alas! is the disposal of dear Newstead, which I am afraid is irrevocably decreed. I received the fatal communication from Lord B. ten days ago, and will own to you that it was not only grief, but disappointment, for I had flattered myself such a sacrifice would not be made."

In closing the letter, she described "a sort of domestic masquerade which has just taken place, in which Byron playfully snatched Lady Millbanke's wig from her head and dressed himself up in a dressing-gown turned inside out, while Lady Byron stalked about in his travel

ling cap and cloak, with sham whiskers and mustachios to match." This was eleven months after marriage. One month later the storm came Mrs. Leigh wrote Hodgson, entreating him to come to London. He took the first mail coach, but found Byron in such a nervous condition that he would see nobody. But his love for Hodgson soon overcame him, and the friend was admitted. The result of the interview was that Hodgson immediately addressed to Lady Byron "a very courteous, measured and judicial letter of remonstrance, every word of which, coming from such a man, at such a time, is worthy of careful study." In it he says:

"I am convinced that the deep and rooted feeling of his (Byron's) heart is regret and sorrow for the occurrences which have so deeply wounded you; and the most unmixed admiration of your conduct in all its particulars, and the warmest affection. But may I be allowed to state to Lady Byron that Lord B., after his general acknowledgment of having frequently been very wrong, and from various causes, in a painful state of irritation, yet declares himself ignorant of the specific things which have given the principal offence, and that he wishes to learn them; that he may, if extenuation or atonement be possible, endeavor to make some reply, or, at all events, may understand the fullness of those reasons which have now, and as unexpectedly as afflictively, driven your ladyship to the step you have taken."

To this appeal Lady Byron replied vaguely and incoherently, and with dark allusions to her husband's efforts to undermine her religious convictions. She also accused him of unkindness, but made no allusions to grievous moral offences of any kind. The letter in itself is enough, in the *Athenaeum's* opinion, "to destroy the whole fabric of her later inventions." As to Mrs. Leigh, any suspicions of her having "any share in the sorrows of this unhappy family must," that paper thinks, "be finally set at rest." Her letters reveal an impulsive creature with "an anxious love for and a delicate sympathy with all around her that are exquisitely engaging."

The memoirs are rich in much other information relating to "the most celebrated Englishman of the nineteenth century." It is well known that he was very proud of having swam the Hellespont. On July 4, 1810, he wrote from Constantinople: "I shall begin by telling you, having only told it you twice before, that I swam from Sestos to Abydos. I do this that you may be impressed with proper respect for me, the performer; for I plume myself on this achievement more than I could possibly do on any kind of glory, political, poetical or rhetorical." Of how his poor foot wounded his pride the world also knows. In one of the letters on religion he says: "And our carcasses, which are to rise again, are they worth rising? I hope that, if mine is, I shall have a better pair of legs than I have moved on these two-and-twenty years, or I shall be sadly behind in the squeeze into paradise." A few days before the first two cantos of "Childe Harold" were published, he wrote indifferently: "My poetry comes out on Saturday." And a year later: "I have no intention of continuing 'Childe Harold.'" When the first instalment of "Don Juan" came out it caused great distress to his sister, who thus alludes to it: "I assure you I am very low about him. This new poem, if persisted in, will be the ruin of him, from what I can learn." In his copy of Ruffhead's "Life of Pope," the word *mankind* is underlined, and in the margin he wrote: "A malignant race, with Christianity in their mouths and Molochism in their hearts."

In 1812, Hodgson's money matters were in a bad way. He was in debt to the extent of £1,000. The mother of a young lady to whom he was attached refused her consent to the marriage unless all his debts were paid. Byron at once, though not himself rich, offered to discharge his friend's debts, but the offer was several times refused. At last Hodgson accepted it, and when expressing his gratitude, Lord Byron replied to him, with the strongest marks of feeling and disinclination to have the subject mentioned, "Don't speak of it; I always intended to do it." Bonds and promissory notes were repeatedly offered him, but always refused. "What," he said, "is the use of a bond? I should only destroy or cancel it, or leave you the same by will." Hodgson at one time proposed to write Byron's life. Following the news of his death, Mrs. Leigh sent him a very full and succinct account of the burning of the poet's memoirs in Mr. Murray's parlor. Upon this Hodgson made his suggestion, but Moore came in with prior claim. Of Byron, as he appeared at Venice in 1818, Hodgson says he was "looking very well, but fat, immensely large, and his hair long."

PRACTICAL.—A wife is handy about the house. She'll take a great interest in you. If you go out at night she'll be awake when you get home, and she'll tell you all about yourself, and more too. Of course she will know where you've been and what kept you out so late, and will tell you. Yet right after she has told you, she will ask you where you have been and what kept you so late. And after you tell her and she won't believe you, you mustn't mind that; and if, after going to bed, she says she hasn't closed her eyes the whole night, and then keeps up the matinee two hours longer and won't go to sleep when she has the chance, you mustn't mind that, either; it's her nature. You'll become accustomed to her little ways in time.

VARIETIES.

LEO'S GIFT TO SWEDEN'S KING.—Pope Leo sent to the King of Sweden a diploma constituting him an honorary member of the literary society "Gil Arcadi Romani." This society was founded in Rome in 1669, with the object of continuing literary and scientific researches commenced by Queen Christina of Sweden, the daughter of the great Gustavus Adolphus, during her residence in the Eternal City. The symbol of the society is the flute of Pan, surrounded by wreaths of laurel. On his nomination as a member everybody receives a new name, and the King of Sweden has been rechristened under the name of Poliandro Samio. Other Kings of Sweden have been members; Gustav III. was called Anassandro Cheromo, and Charles XII. was named Arfilio Maratonio.

PRINCESS LOUISE AND HER DOG.—Her Royal Highness is setting one good example to the ladies of the Dominion which it will be well for their health if they imitate. She is an early riser, and has been indulging in several long walks before breakfast of five or six miles. She is generally attended by one or more of her suite, and walks with that ease and grace which can only be acquired by habitual exercise in the open air. She dresses with great simplicity, but appears rather afraid of the cold, as she muffles up a great deal. In these walks she is accompanied by a splendid Collie dog, a present from her mother, who bears around his neck a very common looking leather collar with a brass plate, on which is engraved: "I belong to H. R. H. the Princess Louise, Kensington Palace." The dog is a magnificent specimen of his breed, and the princess is said to be exceedingly fond of him, partly on account of his donor and partly because at the fire at Inverary Castle it was the barking of Rover which awakened her, and saved her, perhaps, from a horrible death.

A TRICK OF HELLER'S.—A correspondent of the Cincinnati *Commercial* tells the following story of Robert Heller's skill in slight-of-hand tricks: "Lager beer was the leading beverage in the Cincinnati Sketch Club. One day there were gathered some seventy gentlemen—artists, ministers, doctors, poets, musicians, men of letters, in fact, all professions were represented—when Heller announced the fact that he would make disappear a full glass of lager, not by the usual method—that was, that he would make disappear this glass and the beer, and it would be found in the rear pocket of some one of those present, and he would be unaware of its presence. A moment! It was not in Heller's hands, and where had it gone? Every eye was intent on Heller, and crowding closely around the performer. Mr. Samuel N. Pike, who was languidly leaning against the mantel-shelf, smoking, and quite unconcerned, some 20 feet away, put his hand in his coat-pocket (as we all did, not knowing but that each was the victim) and withdrew it hurriedly, dripping with beer. The veritable glass, half full of the frothing fluid, was in his pocket."

A REMINISCENCE OF DICKENS.—Among batch of letters just received by this week's steamer is one from a tourist friend, who has been good enough to copy entire a page or so out of a guide book, settling forth some facts in connection with Charles Dickens which are unfamiliar, I believe, to the majority of Americans. It reads as follows: "There is a very attractive 'room'—or speaking more correctly, 'myth'—in Ipswich, to wit: Mr. Pickwick's room, at the Great White Horse Hotel, the true history of which is curious and hitherto unpublished. When Charles Dickens was a very young man and unknown to fame, he reported for the *Morning Chronicle*—which journal lent the services of the future novelist to The Suffolk *Chronicle* on the occasion of a Suffolk assize. Arriving at his destination, the young pressman engaged the comfortable best room of the chief hotel, the Great White Horse. But later in the day, as the influx of visitors became great, the churlish landlord, named Brooks—generally called 'Old Billy Brooks'—who had small respect for the press and very limited ideas as to its power, surrendered Dickens' bedroom to some legal magnate, assigning to 'that newspaper fellow' one far less roomy and comfortable, and placed, in fact, just over some stabling. Dickens was naturally much annoyed, but said little, biding his time. When 'Pickwick' took the literary world by storm its ludicrous and scarcely exaggerated description of the White Horse, 'where they sold the worst possible wine at the best possible price,' entirely altered Mr. Brooks's notions as to the power of the pen, and much of his life was spent in raving about the injury Dickens was doing him. Not long afterwards Brooks died, and the hotel changed hands. But as the years rolled by the landlords began to discover that the brilliant humorist had done far more good than harm by making the hotel one of Mr. Pickwick's resorts. Tourists and travelers of all kinds—especially Americans—flocked to the White Horse to view the scene of Mr. Pickwick's startling adventure with the middle-aged lady. Whether the attendants always paint but the same room we cannot say—clearly, one room will do just as well as another, but it is certain that visitors keep coming to see it to the present. Truly, these pilgrimages to Pickwick's room are a singular proof of the power of genius." The writer of the above subscribes himself Charles Sully, who is certainly to be thanked for this addition to what we know, and want to know, about the master novelist.