

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD.

THIS active, energetic, and in every way remarkable man, who was not only the originator, proprietor, and purveyor, but the editor, — the actual and only editor, — of “Blackwood’s Magazine,” up to the day of his death, in 1834, has never been properly understood nor appreciated, either abroad or at home, owing to circumstances the public are unacquainted with.

While exercising despotic power, in all that concerned the management of that bold and saucy and at times unprincipled work, in all that concerned the management or the contributors, and never yielding even to “Old Christopher” himself, who passed for the editor, where any serious question sprang up, he was so careful to keep out of sight himself, and to thrust that old gentleman forward, upon all occasions, — a sort of myth, at the best, — a shadowy, mysterious personage, who deceived nobody, and whom all were glad enough to take on trust, well knowing that Professor Wilson was behind the mask, — that, up to this day, William Blackwood, the little, tough, wiry Scotch bookseller, with a big heart, and a pericardium of net-work, — interwoven steel springs, — has been regarded as the publisher and proprietor only, and Professor Wilson as the editor, and one who would suffer no interference with his prerogative, and “bear no brother near the throne.”

To bring about this belief, Blackwood spared no expense of indirect assertion, and no outlay of incidental evidence. Never faltering in his first plan, and never foregoing an opportunity of strengthening the public delusion, what cared he for the reputation of editorship, so long as the great mystery paid? Walter Scott had already shown how profitably and safely such a game might be played, year after year, in the midst of the enemies’ camp; and Blackwood was just the man to profit by such experience.

In the Life of Professor Wilson, by his daughter, Mrs. Gordon, edited here by Professor Mackenzie, there might be found enough to disabuse the public upon this point, if it were not read by the lamplight — or twilight — of long-cherished opinions.

But as Blackwood, the shrewd, sharp, wary Scotchman, always talked about “our worthy friend Christopher” as a real, and not a mythological personage, — as if, in short, he were himself and nobody else, — and never of Wilson but as one of the contributors, or as the author of “Margaret Lyndsay” or “The Isle of Palms,” and then with a look or a smile which he never explained, and which nobody out of the charmed circle ever understood, no wonder the delusion was kept up to the last.

“All I can say,” he once wrote me, while negotiating for more grist, — “all I can say is, that whatever is good in itself we are always happy to receive; the only difficulty is, that our worthy friend Christopher is a very absolute person, and therefore always judges for himself with regard to everything that is offered.” Now this — considering that he himself, William Blackwood, was Christopher North, in spirit, if not in substance, and that he himself, and not Wilson, was the autocrat from whose judgment there was no appeal — might pass anywhere, I think, for one of the happiest examples of persevering, impudent mystification ever hazarded by a respectable man, while writing confidentially to another, and quite of a piece with the celebrated Chaldee manuscript.

And now for my acquaintance with the man himself. I was living in Baltimore. I had given up my editorships. I had forsworn poetry and story-telling, (on paper,) and had not only entered upon the profession of the law with encouraging success, but had begun to settle upon my lees.

One day, while dining with my friend Henry Robinson, who introduced gas into Boston, after a series of disastrous experiments in Baltimore, and the conversation happening to turn upon that subject, we wandered off into the state of English opinions generally. He was an Englishman by birth and early education, though his heart was American to the core. Something was said about the literature of the day, and the question was asked, — "Who reads an American book?" I blazed out, of course, and, after denouncing the "Edinburgh Review," where the impudent question was first broached, accompanied by the suggestion, that, so long as we could "import our literature in bales and hogsheads," we had better not try to manufacture for ourselves, I made up my mind on the spot, and within the next following half-hour at furthest, to carry the war into Africa.

Mr. Walsh, — "Robert Walsh, Junior, Esquire," — the "American Gentleman," as he called himself in the title-page of his Dictionary, — had acknowledged, while undertaking our vindication, that our American Parnassus was barren, or fruitful only in weeds; and by common consent my countrymen had taken for the highest praise throughout the land what I regarded as at best a humiliating admission from our friends over sea. They had acknowledged, and we were base enough to feel flattered by the acknowledgment, that, although we could not even hope to write English, and were wellnigh destitute of invention, having no materials to work with, and little or no aptitude for anything but the manufacture of wooden nutmegs, horn gun-flints, and cuckoo-clocks, and being always too busy for anything better than dicker and truck in a small way, — the haberdashery of nations, — yet, after all, it might be said of us that we were capital imitators, or thieves and counterfeiters, so that our Brockden Brown was at least the American Godwin, — our Cooper, the American Scott, — our Irving, just flowering in the "Sketch-Book," the American Goldsmith or Ad-

dison, — and our Sigourney, the American Hemans.

That my blood boiled in my veins, whenever I thought of this, I must acknowledge; and within three weeks, I believe, I was on my way to London, with a novel in the rough, which, after undergoing many transformations, appeared in that city as "Brother Jonathan," — the manuscript of "Otho, a Tragedy," wholly recast and rewritten, with "*exit omnes*," and other monstrous Latin blunders corrected, and, on the whole, very much as it afterwards appeared in "The Yankee," — and heaps of letters, which I could not well afford to deliver, and therefore threw into the fire: leaving my law business to take care of itself, somewhat after the fashion of that Revolutionary volunteer, "Old Put," who, when he heard the sound of a trumpet and knew the lists were opened, left his plough in the furrow, and the cattle standing in the field. My law-library, and the building I occupied, I passed over to the care of a young man of great promise, just entering the profession, who not only burned up my supply of wood for the year, but failed to pay the rent, and then took the liberty of dying suddenly, poor fellow! without a word of notice to my landlord: so that I was fairly adrift.

On arriving in London, I took lodgings in Warwick Street, Pall Mall, introduced to the landlady by Leslie the painter, and occupying the very chambers where Washington Irving was delivered of the "Sketch-Book": my windows on the first floor looking out on the back entrance of Carlton House, by which the Princess Charlotte had escaped not long before, when she ran away from her father, as my landlady took care to inform me; adding, that, from the very window where we stood, she had seen the little madcap get into the carriage — a common hack, by the way — and go off at full speed.

I lost no time in looking about me, and preparing for a literary campaign, where I might forage upon the enemy, beat up his quarters when I chose,

and, if possible, get possession of a battery or so, and turn the guns upon his camp.

Being pretty well acquainted with the characteristics of all the monthlies and quarterlies, I was not long in determining that "Blackwood" was my *point d'appui*. The "Old Monthly" was dead asleep, and smouldering in white ashes; the "New Monthly," with Campbell for editor, was unfitted for the job I had in view; the "London," though clever and saucy and stinging, wanted manliness and nerve, and would be sure to fail me at a pinch, now that John Scott was disposed of. And as for the quarterlies, even supposing I could secure a place and keep it, they were all slow coaches, and much too dignified and stately, as they lumbered along the smooth, level turnpikes they were built for, to allow of any dashing or skirmishing from the windows. Even the "Westminster" was untrustworthy, as I afterwards found to my cost.

And so I settled down upon "Blackwood," the cleverest and spitefullest of the whole, with Lockhart, "the Scorpion," and Wilson, "the Leopard," for mischief-makers, and "Ebony" for the whipper-in, and "Christopher North" "in golden panoply complete" for *collaborateur*, a puzzle and a problem to the last. Before I slept, I believe, certainly within a few hours, I wrote a sketch of our five American Presidents, and of the five presidential candidates then actually in the field, and sent it off to Edinburgh with a letter, not for the publisher, not for Blackwood, but for the *Editor*, saying that I had adopted the name of "Carter Holmes," and writing as a traveller, pretty well acquainted with the United States and with the people thereof. This mask I wore, not with a view to escape responsibility, for I was ready to answer for all I said, but to baffle the curious and the inquisitive. Had I come out boldly as a native American, I knew there was no chance for me in that, or in any other leading British journal.

After a few days, I received the fol-

lowing in reply from Blackwood himself, the *Editor*, which I give at length.

"April 20, 1824.

"On my return from London a few days ago," says he, "I had the pleasure of receiving yours of the 7th March, — April, I suppose, as it only arrived here on the 10th current.

"I am very sorry that there was not room for your spirited and amusing sketches in this number; but they will appear in our next.

"You are exactly the correspondent that we want, and I hope you will continue to favor us with your communications, and you may depend upon being liberally treated. I do not wish to say much about terms, as I have a perfect horror at the manufacturing system of gentlemen who *do* articles for periodicals at so much per sheet. I feel confident that you are none of these, but one who, like the friends who have supported my Magazine, writes upon subjects which he takes an interest in, and therefore handles them *con amore*. It is this system of *piece-work* which has made most periodicals such commonplace affairs; and it is by keeping free of it that 'Maga' will preserve her name and fame.

"Meantime, I am perfectly sensible that the laborer is worthy of his hire, and that no gentleman need refuse the remuneration he is entitled to. It gives me great pleasure, therefore, to send an *honorarium* to all my contributors. I may also mention to you that this varies from seven to ten guineas, or perhaps more, per sheet, according to the nature of the articles.

"By way of *arles*, (*Anglicè*, earnest,) I annex a draft on Mr. Cadell for five guineas to account.

"With regard to your name, you will do just as you feel most convenient and agreeable. All I shall say is, that whatever is confided to me I keep sacredly to myself.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"W. BLACKWOOD."

"Five guineas!" said I to myself, — "twenty-five dollars cash, for a paper I had flung off at a single sitting, and which at home would have been thought well paid for with a "Much obliged," or, at most, with a five-dollar bill, — even the great "North American Review" then paying, where it paid at all, only a dollar a page in "that day of small things"; and to work I went forthwith, preparing another article upon another American subject, determined to be in season, and not allow the blaze I had lighted up to go out for want of kindling-stuff. The article, I may say here, created quite a sensation, and was copied into the Continental journals and papers, and even reappeared in the great "European Review," then just established at London, Paris, and Vienna, under the editorship of Alexander Walker, a Scotchman, who began his literary career by undertaking to supply the deficiencies of D'Alembert, while he wrote me about a *jeux d'esprit*, with all seriousness.

One curious little incident occurs to me here in connection with the signature I had adopted. Perhaps the Spiritualists may be able to account for it. Having finished my second article, and folded it up, and directed it, as before, to the "Editor," and being about to affix the seal, — for wafers were not used by decent people in England, and self-sealing envelopes were unheard of in that day, — I went below, where I heard voices in conversation that I knew, to borrow a seal, not wishing to use mine, which not only bore an eagle's head for a crest, but my initials and the striped shield of my country.

There were present Humphreys, the engraver, — Lady Lilicraft, one of Washington Irving's lay figures, and the cast-off *chère amie* of an English lordling, — Peter Powell, of whom a word or two hereafter, — Chester Harding, — and the celebrated John Dunn Hunter, whose portrait Harding had just under way.

When I had stated my request, two or three hands, with two or three seals, were instantly reached forth. I took the nearest, and was not a little sur-

prised, on looking at the impression, to find the very initials I needed, in old English. The seal belonged to Chester Harding; and as my *nom de plume* was "Carter Holmes," the "C. H." seemed quite providential. From that time forward, I continued to use the same seal whenever I found Harding within reach, until, one day, a still stranger "happening" occurred. I was in a hurry, and could not wait. Any seal would do, of course; and the mistress, pitying my perplexity, said there was a seal up-stairs somewhere which might serve my turn, if she could find it. After a short absence, she returned, and, handing me an old-fashioned affair, which I did not stop to look at, I made the impression, and was just about sending off the parcel, when my attention was attracted by the very same initials of "C. H.," as you live! Her husband's name was Charles Halloway, Harding was Chester Harding, and I was "Carter Holmes"!

One word now about another of Irving's associates and playmates, — Peter Powell, whom I often met with at Mrs. Halloway's. You will find him frequently mentioned by name in the "Life and Letters of Washington Irving," as a "fellow of infinite jest and most excellent fancy," and full of the strangest contrivances for "setting the table in a roar"; and more than once, though I do not now remember where, I have met with a grotesque shadow, under a fictitious name, — a sort of Santa Claus or Æsop at large, — either in the "Sketch-Book" or in the "Tales of a Traveller," which I saw at a glance, when I came to know the original, could be no other than Peter Powell himself.

But as Irving did not particularize, I must. Peter would personate a dancing bear; and with the help of a shaggy overcoat pulled up about his ears, and a pair of black kid gloves, he being a small man, hardly taller than a good-sized bear, when standing up with his knees bent, the representation was not only surprisingly faithful, but sometimes absolutely startling.

He would serve you out with passages from a new opera, taking all the parts himself, either separately or together, and with feet, hands, and voice, a table, a chair, and a paper trumpet extemporized for the occasion from a sheet of music-paper, would almost persuade you that a rehearsal was going on at your elbow.

He would tie a couple of knots in his pocket-handkerchief, throw the rest of it over his hand so as to conceal the action, thrust his left forefinger into the lowest knot for a head, while the uppermost would go for a turban, spread out the middle finger and thumb, covered with the drapery, and make the figure bow and salaam, as if it were alive, to the unspeakable amazement of the little ones. Many years after this, I tried the same trick with the Aztec children, and drove the little monsters half crazy with delight.

He would imitate rooks in their noisiest flight, by putting on a pair of black gloves, and spreading the fingers, and cawing; and butterflies alighting on a flower, by pressing his two hands together where they join the wrist, closing the fingers with a fluttering motion, and moving them this way and that, until it was quite impossible to misunderstand the representation; and he would give you a sailor's hornpipe at the dinner-table, by striping two of his fingers with a pen, drawing a face on the back of his hand, with vest and waistband to explain the trousers, and set you screaming as he went through the steps and flourishes on a plate, with the greatest possible seriousness and propriety.

But enough. Let us now return to Blackwood. For my next paper he paid me ten guineas, — fifty dollars, — and, in reply to certain suggestions of mine, wrote as follows. I give this letter to show how much of a business man he was, and how well fitted for the duties of editorship.

“EDINBURGH, 17 May, 1824.

“DEAR SIR, — Yours of the 13th makes me feel very much ashamed at

having so long delayed answering your two former favors. The truth is, that you have given me such a bill of fare of what you could furnish for our monthly entertainment, I felt it would be necessary to write you more at length than I had leisure for at the time I received your letter; and, like everything that is delayed at the proper moment, every day has presented excuses for procrastination.

“If I had the pleasure of knowing you, I might have been able, as you say, to have given you some hints as to subjects; but in present circumstances, all I have to say is, that *whatever is good in itself we are always happy to receive*, [&c., &c., as hereinbefore quoted in relation to “Christopher North.”] I shall only add, that anything of yours he will be disposed to view with a favorable eye. As to the theatre, exhibitions, &c., the daily papers are so stuffed with notices of them, that even what is good has but a poor chance. However, I do not mean to say that these subjects should be excluded from your communications; all I mean is, that you should just write upon what you yourself feel a strong interest in.

“I *would* be happy to see your novel, [“Brother Jonathan,”] but it is now too late of thinking to publish at this season. If you will send it, addressed to me, to Mr. Cadell's, with a note, desiring it to be forwarded by first mail-coach, I *will* receive it quite safely; and I will, in the course of ten days after its reception, write you my sentiments with regard to it. No one shall see it; for in these matters I judge for myself. If you should go to the Continent, perhaps you could leave the manuscript in such a state that it could be printed in your absence.

“I am, dear Sir, yours truly,

“W. BLACKWOOD.”

Here was encouragement, certainly; and it was clear enough that he had a willingness to be pleased, if nothing more.

I lost no time, therefore, in recasting and rewriting the whole of “Brother

Jonathan," which, as I have mentioned before, was blocked out before I left America. But, having my board to pay, and not willing to stake much on a single cast, though ready enough "to stand the hazard of the die" after my washerwoman was satisfied, I kept on writing for the magazines and quarterlies, and always about America, and by special desire too, until my papers were to be found, not only in Blackwood every month, but in the "New Monthly," the "Old Monthly," the "London," the "European," the "Oriental Herald," the "Westminster," and others.

On the 8th of the following November, Mr. Blackwood, having worried through the manuscript of "Brother Jonathan," wrote me a letter of six enormous pages, from which I give the following extracts, to show the temper of the man, his downright honesty and heartiness, and great good sense.

"My dear Sir," he says, "you will be blaming me for not writing you sooner; and when I tell you that the delay was caused by my unwillingness to write you"—(here I began to foresee what was coming)—"so very differently from what I had so fondly and anxiously expected, I fear you will blame me, not for the delay, but for my want of taste and judgment in not properly appreciating the merits of 'Brother Jonathan.'"

Here he wronged me; for I was quite prepared to agree with him, having spoiled the original draft by working it up too much, and overdoing and exaggerating all that I was best pleased with.

"Never," he continues,—"never did I take up any manuscript with more sincere wishes for its being everything that could be desired. Unfortunately, my expectations have been disappointed." (Comfortable, hey?) "While I admire the originality and talent and power which the work displays,"—(I began to breathe more freely.)—"I must frankly tell you, that, in my humble opinion, there are defects in your plan, and there are incidents, as well as reflections, which, in this country,

would certainly injure any work, however great its talent.

"I wish I had the pleasure of seeing you for half an hour, as I could explain by word of mouth so much better than I can by scribbling what my ideas are, and such as they are. Distrusting my own judgment, after I had carefully perused the manuscript, I gave it, in the strictest confidence, to a friend whose opinion I value much, and begged of him, without saying one word of my opinion, to give me his frankly and without reserve. My mind was so far satisfied, when I received his remarks, as I found, that, in general, he had taken the same view of the work as I had done. I inclose his remarks, as they will save me from going over the same ground."

The remarks referred to were by Professor Wilson, I have good reason to believe. They filled half a dozen pages, and were eminently judicious and proper, and, I may add, far from being unpalatable.

"I shall now, in a rambling way," continues Mr. Blackwood, "state anything that has occurred to me, and I shall make no apology for offering you my crude remarks; only you will suppose me to be speaking to you, and telling you such and such things strike me so and so, that I may be quite wrong," &c., &c.

And then he proceeds to say, —

"The character of the Yankees (Chapter I.) is too didactic, though excellent anywhere else than in the commencement of a novel."

Here, too, he was right. I threw the whole chapter aside in rewriting the book as it now stands, and sent the substance to Campbell's "New Monthly," where it appeared forthwith.

After frankly stating a number of well-founded objections, and suggesting two or three important changes in the plot, he finishes after the following fashion: allow me to commend it to all who find themselves obliged to "give the mitten," or to snub a respectable aspirant. By so doing, they may keep life in him, if nothing more: —

"I have said a good deal more than I intended to, as to what things have struck me as defects in your work. Its excellences I need not take up your time with dwelling upon. With all the power, interest, and originality, I regret most exceedingly, that, in its present state, I would most earnestly advise you not to publish. It would be doing yourself the greatest injustice. I feel perfectly confident, however, that, with such materials as these, you could make a glorious book, if you would set about it again in the proper way. I do not think it would cost you much trouble, provided that the thing were to strike you."

By way of postscript, he adds, —

"I received your parcel, with No. 3 of the American Writers, and the critique on Cadell's American work. Are you not giving us too much of the *Vite Virum Obscurorum*? There is a danger of palling the public with too much even of a very good thing. This, too, terrifies me at the length of your critique, as we have had so many American articles lately. It is, in fact, as you say, a work, not an article. However, we shall see what can be done."

The critique here referred to was a review of a book entitled "Summary View of America," and published by Cadell, who was also the London publisher for Blackwood. It was full of dangerous, though somewhat plausible errors, and mischievous, though perhaps unintentional, misrepresentations of our whole political and social system. I did not spare the book, nor the author, nor the publisher; and notwithstanding the great length of the paper, which grew up of itself, as I read the work with pen in hand, into most unreasonable proportions, though divided into brief paragraphs, it appeared, nevertheless, in the next following month, as a leader, with a note from "C. N.," which has already been given in the sketch of Bentham.

Meanwhile this indefatigable purveyor, who knew I was engaged upon "Brother Jonathan," recasting and re-writing the whole, — not for the second

time, but for the twentieth time, I verily believe, — and that I was beginning to write for other journals upon American affairs, wanted me to furnish an occasional paper for the "Noctes Ambrosianæ," to be incorporated, warp and woof, into the dialogues which appeared month after month and year after year, up to the death of poor Wilson in 1853, and were afterward embodied in a book by Dr. R. Shelton Mackenzie, and republished here.

This I could not bring myself to undertake, without first seeing the interlocutors face to face, and looking into their eyes, and hearing them laugh together "like a rhinoceros," or like the chorus in "Der Freischütz." Though I knew Wilson, and Lockhart, and Hogg, and "Old Christopher," and "O'Doherty," and "Timothy Tickler," and "Ebony," by reputation, it was only as a company of shadows, and not as creatures of substantial flesh and blood. The lightning had struck; my guns were in position; I had got the range of the enemies' camp, and meant to be in no hurry, but "to fight it out on the line" I had chosen, if it took me till doomsday. I refused, therefore. I was willing to wait. I knew, to be sure, that the Chinese could grow oranges from the seed in half an hour; but then the oranges were peas, and I wanted to grow "some pumpkins." In short, I would not

"wear
My strength away in wrestling with the air."

Next he wanted me to write a review of "Margaret Lyndsay," a charming story by Wilson himself, of which I had incidentally expressed the highest opinion, in our correspondence. Mr. Blackwood sprang at the idea, like a half-famished pickerel at a frog. But no. Although such a paper would be quite in my way, for I have always delighted in showing off, and teaching grandmothers to suck eggs, I could not be persuaded, for reasons which may be guessed at by the proud and sensitive and foolish, so long as the question about "Brother Jonathan" was undecided.

On the 24th of November, having

received my answer to his of the 8th, he wrote again as follows : —

“MY DEAR SIR,— I felt very anxious, indeed, till I had the pleasure of receiving your letter of the 11th, fearing that you might not, perhaps, take the remarks I sent you in the spirit of kindness in which they were honestly and sincerely made. Your letter has satisfied me that you will yet make a glorious book of ‘Brother Jonathan.’”

“Let the better feelings and passions of our nature have freer scope and happier development and results. This is what your work wants ; for mankind like better to see the bright side of the picture than the dark one. I do not think it necessary to say one word more to you on the subject. Your own taste and feelings must direct you as to what is necessary to be done. All that I hope and pray for is, that you may have set seriously to work with the revision and correction.”

Are not these two extracts enough to show of themselves the leading characteristics of “Ebony,” or “Old Christopher” ? How business-like, and yet how friendly and judicious are the suggestions !

Meanwhile, I had furnished a paper for him, entitled “Men and Women ; or, A Brief Hypothesis concerning the Differences in their Genius.” My object was to show, that, although unlike, they were not unequal ; that each had a standard for itself. I did not urge that Arabs, who are reckoned pretty good judges of horse-flesh, always give the preference to mares for endurance and swiftness, — that the female bird of prey is larger and fiercer than the male, — that the female body-guard of the King of Dahomey are terrible Amazons, — nor that, where women reign, men rule, and *vice versa* ; but that, by endowing woman with a more sensitive organization, our Father had given her what was better than a mane for the lioness, a beard for the goat, or a voice and plumage to the female singing-bird, etc., etc. This

also appeared, and was handsomely paid for.

“In this number,” he says, “you will see, that, though we have given an additional half-sheet, we have only had room for your ‘American Writers.’ . . . I hope you are going on with the series ; and that you do not dwell more than is necessary upon the *Poste Minores*, whom no one cares about. This is what has sometimes been objected to your articles ; and among other remonstrances I have received, I extract the following from the letter of a gentleman for whom I have a great respect. He says your article contains ‘misstatements, and some of them of a mischievous tendency ; but what mostly concerns you to know is the odium which is likely to be thrown on your Magazine, in America at least, by the manner in which (from malice or blundering) some meritorious individuals are dealt with, *who have every claim to the shelter of private life.*’”

As the meddling gentleman from whose letter the passage was taken did not particularize, all I could do in reply, and that I lost no time in doing, was to give him the lie direct, and offer my name to the publisher. I called for specifications and proof, which never came ; and have an idea that the writer was an artist — a great coxcomb — of whom I had spoken too well, on paper, though not well enough to satisfy his inordinate vanity.

“I make no apology to you,” continues “Old Christopher,” “for giving you this extract from my friend’s letter. He is, I trust, writing under some strong feeling of something or other, which has concerned some one whom he knows ; but I am sure he is perfectly sincere in what he says. I hope, therefore, you will be particularly on your guard against saying anything which any one would be entitled on good grounds to say was unfair or ungentlemanly. I regret that, in the hurry of the sheet going to press, what is said of Hall (John E. Hall of Philadelphia) was not modified. ‘Blackguard’ is a shocking appellation ; and had my friend seen

this number, I should not have wondered at his remarks. You will, I am sure, excuse me," etc., etc.

"All very just and proper," said I to myself; but coming from a man who not long before had said in "Maga," or allowed somebody to say for him, with a chuckle of triumph never to be forgotten, that Canning had given the lie to Brougham on the floor of Parliament, I must acknowledge that I felt rather astonished at his sensitiveness.

On the 19th of February, 1825, — by which time I had completed the series of "American Writers," pursuing my first plan without deviating from it a hair's breadth, and introducing an American department into three or four monthlies, — never, in fact, writing a word upon any other subject than our literature, authors, manners, politics, and painters, except in two instances, that I now remember, — he wrote as follows.

"MY DEAR SIR, — You have finished your series in capital style. The whole is spirited and most original. Many may differ from you on some points, but beauties or blemishes, no one will pretend to say that they are not your own. And may I add, that I hardly know any work except 'Maga' where you could have felt yourself so much at your ease in most fearlessly saying what you thought right of men and things." All very true; and it was for that reason that I launched forth in "Blackwood," hit or miss, neck or nothing, determined to make a spoon or spoil a horn. And then he adds, — "Washington Irving once told me that he considered my 'Maga' as a daringly original work. It was too much for his delicate nerves."

Undoubtedly; and it was for that reason that the papers I wrote in a different style for the "European Magazine," New Series, — out of which grew the famous controversy with Mathews for his admirable misrepresentations of Yankee character, — were attributed for a long while to Washington Irving himself; but he could not have written them, any more than I could have writ-

ten the "Sketch-Book" or "Bracebridge Hall."

"I hope," continues our friend "Ebony," — "I hope you are thinking of something else for me, as you must have much to communicate with regard to America, men and matters, which we know nothing of in this country, both as to what has been done and what is now doing. Perhaps it might be well to give anything of this kind just in separate articles, as one is sometimes rather fettered in a regular series. However, all this depends upon the subject-matter and the way in which it happens to strike yourself. . . . I enclose you an order on Mr. Cadell for fifteen guineas."

Thus much to show, that, however absolute and arbitrary "our worthy friend Christopher" was on ordinary occasions, he was a man of the kindest feelings, delicate, magnanimous, and liberal.

In the course of the next following three months "Brother Jonathan" was finished, read, accepted, and paid for at my own price, — two hundred guineas, — the same that Murray paid Irving for his "Sketch-Book," with a contingent proviso for another hundred guineas, which never amounted to anything.

Meanwhile, however, we were in constant communication by letter, and I give now the following extracts to show his exceeding carefulness, and the consequences — the disastrous consequences, I might say — to both of us. I have already mentioned, that, in the progress of revision, I had probably written the book, not twice, but twenty times over; and this I believe to be true. I had grown too fastidious, over-anxious, nervous, and fidgety. I could not endure the coming together of the same or similar sounds, — *ds* and *ts*, for example, or *vs* and *fs*, — and wrote some pages or paragraphs at least forty or fifty times over to prevent this, and thereby sacrificed all freedom and naturalness. When Mr. Blackwood wrote me, therefore, as follows, it only served to confirm me in my evil habit, — a disease, in fact, — and the result was further alter-

ations and corrections, so numerous and so troublesome, though trivial in themselves, that, in going through the press, the printer himself, Mr. Spottiswood, got alarmed, and charged accordingly.

On the 14th of April he writes me at length about the book. "I wished also, before writing you, to be able to give you the opinion of my friend whose remarks I formerly sent you. In some things I agree with him, in others I do not; but I think it best you should judge yourself as to all that he says. I also enclose you a note from another friend, whose judgment I value more than that of any one I know, almost." Here follows a string of suggestions, most of which I took advantage of, in carrying this, my third complete copy of the work, through the press. No wonder it grew more and more artificial, as it grew more and more strange and euphonious.

He continues, — "I have read the manuscript again very carefully," (the third time, — a manuscript of three volumes!) "and I do think you have improved the work very much. I cannot again venture to suggest anything to you, even if I could, (which I am very doubtful of,) because you give yourself so much labor, and any crude ideas of mine may perhaps be more injurious than useful. You must yourself feel best what is necessary, and to your own judgment everything must be left. I have therefore put up the manuscript with this, as it must be printed under your own eye in London. All that I would advise you to do is, *to go over the manuscript before sending it to the printer, and correct it as you would do a proof*; for, should any material alterations occur to you, you can easily make them on the blank pages. . . .

"I suppose you would wish the work to be printed in post 8vo, like 'Reginald Dalton' and others that I have published. This is certainly the most elegant form, but it is expensive, and it is perhaps worthy of consideration whether or not it might be advisable to take the less expensive form of 12mo, similar to my second edition of 'Adam

Blair' (by Lockhart, the 'Scorpion'). I am, I confess, in considerable doubt both ways. If, however, you prefer the post 8vo, my doubts will be at an end. I have written a few lines to my friends the Messrs. Spottiswood, (the King's printers,) in order that you may at once put the manuscript into their hands, as soon as you are ready. If you prefer the post 8vo, you will get from Mr. Cadell a volume of 'Reginald Dalton' or of 'Percy Mallory'; but if you like the 12mo, you will get a copy of the second edition of 'Adam Blair,' and give your directions to Messrs. Spottiswood accordingly. . . .

"I do not think that the volumes should be less than three hundred and sixty pages, for thin volumes look so catchpenny-like. At the same time, it is better to have thin volumes than to keep in or add anything that interrupts or interferes with the story. . . .

"I have been quite overloaded with articles this month, and some of them very long, which cannot for various reasons be delayed. I shall therefore be obliged to keep both of your articles till next month. I am vexed at not being able to get in your tale," (the original sketch of "Rachel Dyer," and the first of a series which I had in contemplation,) "which is very striking and powerful; but it was too long for this number, having so many other long articles, and it would have destroyed it to have divided it. The 'American Books,' too, is very interesting, though you perhaps hit poor Cooper rather hard, and some of the Cockneys will be apt to quote it when 'Brother Jonathan' comes into their paws. . . . I enclose you ten guineas on account."

April 26th he writes, — "I am very much pleased with the appearance of the sheet, and above all with what you have done to it. The work now starts fair and straightforward, and you will feel your own way much better and take a much firmer hold of your reader by allowing the narrative to take its natural course."

In due time I had my pockets picked of my last shilling, and "Brother Jon-

athan" appeared just in the nick of time and in the best possible shape to keep me out of a sponging-house. For a while it created quite a sensation, and led to many new engagements with different periodicals. It was well received on the Continent, and reviewed in the leading journals of France. It would have been republished in this country, had not the sheets been suppressed, which I sent in advance to Wiley, the publisher of Cooper's works, till it was too late. Other copies were lost, I know not how, and I gave up the idea of astonishing the natives here.

Meanwhile Mr. Blackwood and I had never met. Hindrances had happened, month after month, when it seemed that we should certainly have a chance for a grapple; and he had behaved so handsomely to me through all our negotiations and correspondence, that I wanted to look into his eyes.

At last he came down upon me when least expected. Mrs. Halloway tapped at my door to say that a strange gentleman was below, inquiring for Mr. Carter Holmes; and then she handed me Mr. Blackwood's card. "Show him up," said I, as a knowing smile drifted athwart her fine old-fashioned English face,—for she had the secret under lock-and-key, and used to collect my drafts and take charge of the letters to and from "Carter Holmes." The girl who went to the door knew nothing of such a gentleman, and so the landlady took the business into her own hands.

We met after a most agreeable fashion, and I was greatly pleased with my visitor, though disappointed in his personal appearance. I found him a short, "stuffed" man, of about five feet six, I should say, with a plain, straightforward business air,—like that of a substantial tradesman,—and a look of uncommon though quiet shrewdness. You could see at a glance that he was a man to be trusted,—frank and fearless, without being either boastful or aggressive. After talking over matters generally, and getting my pay in cash,—guineas for pounds,—without taking a bill or engaging my name for a discount in the

usual course of trade, he invited me to dine with him at an eating-house in the Strand, saying that he had asked "Ensign O'Doherty" (Dr. Maginn) to meet me: the man who wrote Hebrew and Greek and Latin poetry, and had begun for "Blackwood" not long before with rendering the ballad of "Chevy Chase" into Latin verse. I could see, that, although Mr. Blackwood had the highest opinion of the Doctor's genius and scholarship, he was a little shy of him, and I dare say saw through and through him, as I think I did.

The dinner was a plain, substantial affair, without wine or delicacies,—or even whiskey,—which may have been out of deference to me; for when asked what I would "take?" I answered, "Nothing beyond a glass of ale or porter." It may be that our friend the Doctor was a little disappointed, or that "Ebony," knowing his weakness upon that point, was unwilling to show him up altogether, on whiskey-punch, or old Port, before a stranger; for, instead of talking freely and pleasantly, and keeping up appearances, the Doctor grew shy and reserved, and answered the simplest questions with an air of embarrassment, as if he were afraid of being entrapped. In short, he disappointed me. There was nothing in his language, look, or manner to justify his reputation as "Ensign O'Doherty"; nor was there anything in the little that he said or did to indicate the lamentable tendency of his gifted nature, which ended within a few months, or a year or two at most, in his utter degradation and ruin. He had the air and manners of a gentleman, though not of one who had seen much of the world; with a mild, pleasant expression of countenance, and a dash of seriousness. He seemed to be about five-and-twenty, according to my present recollection, of middling stature, and of a decidedly intellectual type; but he said nothing to be remembered while we were together; and I have since had an intimation that he was never himself when sober, and that Mr. Blackwood had just taken him out of a sponging-house to meet me.

Otherwise, our dinner passed off in a very agreeable, unpretending fashion, and we separated, never to meet again, — with a settled conviction on my part, however, that I understood the characters of both as well as if we had been dining together for a twelvemonth.

Soon after this, Mr. Millar, the first publisher of the "Sketch-Book," engaged me to write for the "European Magazine," New Series, without allowing me to know that the "John Bull" newspaper and Theodore Hook were at the bottom of the affair. I wrote for it month after month, upon American matters, until I discovered the truth, and had just got through a sharp controversy with Mathews, when I found it necessary to knock off: the "John Bull" constantly abusing America, and Theodore Hook losing no opportunity of saying the most offensive and brutal things of us, — as, for example, that Mr. Jefferson and Mr. Adams both died drunk on the 4th of July.

I had also contributed a series of papers to the "London Magazine," under the title of "Yankee Notions," and was showing up John Dunn Hunter as he deserved, in which I was followed soon after by Mr. Sparks in the "North American Review," about the time that the "Edinburgh Review" adopted in the lump my theory of "Men and Women," already referred to, saying in September, 1826, substantially what I had said in October, 1824. "We think it probable," says Mr. Jeffrey, "that some men have originally a greater excitability or general vivacity of mind than others, and that is the chief difference. But considering how variously they may be developed or directed in after-life, it seems to us of no sort of importance whether we call it a *temperament*, and say that it is shown by the color of the hair and the eyes, or maintain that it is a balance of active powers and propensities, the organs of which are in the skull."

I had also written for the "Westminster," and, in short, was furnishing about all of the monthlies and two of the quarterlies with American *pabulum*; and yet

the public were not satisfied. It seemed as if "increase of appetite did grow with what it fed on." This, of course, must have been very gratifying to "Old Christopher," though he did not like the idea of anybody's knowing who wrote for the "Maga," and letting the "delicious secret out." He wanted all his contributors to himself, either in fact or in appearance; and when he found, from something I said in the "London," or somewhere else, that I was known as the writer of the "Blackwood Papers," he took me to task in a way that displeased me. So we quarrelled, — or rather I quarrelled, — for he did not. He kept his temper, and I lost mine, — for which, by the way, I ought to be thankful; and the affair ended by my withdrawing the first of a series of "North American Stories," which I was preparing for him, and returning the fifteen guineas he had paid me for it. It was already in type, and was the framework or skeleton of "Rachel Dyer."

On the whole, I must acknowledge that I was chiefly to blame, though not altogether. I never wrote another line for him, and we had no further correspondence.

About the same time, another misunderstanding arose between him and "O'Doherty," who entered upon a rival enterprise, and became editor of a new monthly, the title of which I do not now remember. It was of the "Blackwood" type, though somewhat exaggerated, being ferocious where "Blackwood" was only sarcastic, and utterly regardless of truth, where "Blackwood" was rather cautious and circumspect in all that required proof. In the very first number there appeared what was claimed to be an extract from that "Life of Byron" which he had given to Moore, and which had been suppressed, if not bought up. It was entitled "My Wedding Night," and went into particulars so much in the style of Byron, that I, for one, have always believed it faithful, and neither an imitation nor a counterfeit. I have since been assured that Lady Caroline Lamb, and two or three more at least "of that ilk," had the reading of these

memoirs, and of course portions of the whole might have been copied. But however that may be, the publication by Dr. Maginn of the chapter mentioned was either such a piece of heartless treachery or such an impudent fabrication as no decent person would venture to encourage. Though other chapters were promised, not another line appeared; the magazine blew up, the Doctor was *tabooed*, and soon after died a miserable death.

But enough. That William Blackwood was an extraordinary man is evident enough from the astonishing suc-

cess of his Magazine. Whatever may have been its history, its faults, or its follies, it has maintained itself now in the public favor of the world itself for nearly fifty years, and most of the time at a prodigious elevation, in unapproachable solitude. Burning and acrimonious, unrelenting, and at times deadly in its hatred, full of desperate partisanship, and of judicial blindness toward all who belonged to the other side in politics, it was always full of earnestness and originality and tumultuous life, and oftentimes not only generous, but magnanimous and forgiving.

THE CHIMNEY-CORNER.

XI.

THE WOMAN QUESTION: OR, WHAT WILL YOU DO WITH HER?

“WHAT do you think of this Woman’s Rights question?” said Bob Stephens. “From some of your remarks, I apprehend that you think there is something in it. I may be wrong, but I must confess that I have looked with disgust on the whole movement. No man reverences women as I do; but I reverence them *as* women. I reverence them for those very things in which their sex differs from ours; but when they come upon our ground, and begin to work and fight after our manner and with our weapons, I regard them as fearful anomalies, neither men nor women. These Women’s Rights Conventions appear to me to have ventilated crudities, absurdities, and blasphemies. To hear them talk about men, one would suppose that the two sexes were natural born enemies, and wonders whether they ever had fathers and brothers. One would think, upon their showing, that all men were a set of ruffians, in league against women,—they seeming, at the same time, to forget how on their very platforms the most constant

and gallant defenders of their rights are men. Wendell Phillips and Wentworth Higginson have put at the service of the cause masculine training and manly vehemence, and complacently accepted the wholesale abuse of their own sex at the hands of their warrior sisters. One would think, were all they say of female powers true, that our Joan-of-Arcs ought to have disdained to fight under male captains.”

“I think,” said my wife, “that, in all this talk about the rights of men, and the rights of women, and the rights of children, the world seems to be forgetting what is quite as important, the *duties* of men and women and children. We all hear of our *rights* till we forget our *duties*; and even theology is beginning to concern itself more with what man has a right to expect of his Creator than what the Creator has a right to expect of man.”

“You say the truth,” said I; “there is danger of just this overaction: and yet rights must be discussed; because, in order to understand the duties, we