

OXFORD IN WINTER.

“Merie singen the Munchen binnen Ely
Tha Cnut Ching ren thereby;
Roweth Cnichtet nær the land
And hear we thes Munchen sæng.”

As one by one the noble army of our compatriots, perpetually roaming this continent in search of pleasure, health, or æsthetic advancement, became acquainted with our fixed determination to spend the winter in England, and in Oxford, the announcement was received with every possible shade of anxious pity and mild dismay. What? With all Italy and the Riviera wreathed in perpetual sunshine; with Egypt once more ready to receive callers, and even Athens easily accessible, — what sort of a suicidal whim was this? Now the consciousness that the motives which impelled us were almost purely sentimental caused us to hang our heads a little, even in the presence of our countryfolk, who do really, as the world will one day come to know, understand romantic purposes and unprofitable pursuits better than any other people in the world. It was not until we were called upon to answer for our eccentricity by the Briton at home, and to explain our motives under the stress of his coldly questioning eye, that the blank absurdity of our position was brought home to us, and we were thoroughly and distressingly cowed.

“You know, of course, that Oxford, apart from the colleges, is merely the dulllest of small country towns. All that is really beautiful and notable in the way of architecture you may see in a day, and sleep comfortably in London at night.”

“You understand that the country about Oxford is totally devoid of interest. It is quite the tameest landscape that we have.”

“You must not imagine that you are

going to find locomotion easy there. The roads are far too heavy for driving at this season, and the foot-ways are simply under water!”

“Ah, but, dear,” put in at this point a deprecatory and compassionate voice, “you know we did use to have nice walks sometimes, *along the curbstones!*”

“You must be prepared for the fact, however, that recent innovations have quite altered the character of society in Oxford. And really, now that the X’s are gone, and the Y’s and the Z’s, there is hardly anybody there one would care to know.”

“The house you have selected is probably the fustiest hole in all England. And have you good introductions? If so, you might possibly be entertained at Oxford at another season of the year; but not otherwise, and not now. Make no mistake.”

“But what you really ought thoroughly to appreciate is that Oxford is the unhealthiest spot in the three kingdoms. It reeks rheumatism, sweats typhoid, and sows consumption broadcast.”

“How can this be,” we cry, in our desperation, “when the flower of England has flourished there so amazingly for a thousand years?”

“Oh!” is the slightly irrelevant but no less withering response (and the attempt to indicate by any arrangement of vowels the complex pronunciation of this monosyllable would be vain to those who know it not, and superfluous to those who do), — “Oh! So you still credit the thousand-year myth! I fancied that modern research had quite established the fact that King Alfred never founded so much as a Sunday-school class in Oxford. The most venerable of the colleges cannot count more than six hundred years. Really, you know, if it’s antiquity you want,

and that sort of thing, would n't you have done better to stay in Rome, you know?"

To this day I am unable to explain why we should have held on our forlorn way against so tremendous a moral pressure. Was it obstinacy? Was it fatalism? I am quite sure that it was not until long after the fact that we perceived how mutually subversive were several of these obstructionist arguments. If the landscape was so uninteresting, might it not as well be under water? If society in Oxford had lost its charm, what did we want with introductions?

We drew near the goal of our dishonored dreams in the early twilight of a gray January day, and the watery prospect reminded us irresistibly of that through which the royal Cnut must have been voyaging, when he was arrested and charmed by the lusty choruses of the monks of Ely. We too had been alert for sacred voices from the shore, and not wholly unmindful of the far-off echo of monastery bells. And indeed, for some short time after we had landed and begun to look about us, there was little to disturb the antique severity of our illusions. Looking back upon those dim, soft, silent days, out of the social brightness and animating stir of the later time, we find that they had an extraordinary charm of their own, — a charm that we would fix, if possible, before it fades from memory, and if possible, also, convey.

The undergraduate world was all away, as yet, working off the effects of its Christmas puddings, and "somewhere out of human view" the doctor and the don were resting from their academic labors; so that we roamed unchallenged and unstayed through cloister, quadrangle, and sleeping garden, and explored many a devious and delightful walk, raised high amid the misty floods, and embowered in feathery brown trees, whose fair anatomy was doubled

in the waveless water upon either hand, and richly bordered with hardy and deep-tinted winter shrubbery. Linnets discoursed hopefully amid the beauteous interlacings of the arching boughs; blue periwinkle blossoms peeped between their perennial leaves; "sweet fields beyond those swelling floods stood dressed in living green;" even at that season, tower and gable, gray arch and timbered house-front, all wore their warm, rich mantles of unfading ivy, and along many a stained and crumbling wall the blossoming sprays of the winter jasmine streamed perpetual sunshine.

One is always generalizing one's recollections. It is Magdalen, I perceive, which is really in my mind when I use these words, and the stately tower of Magdalen was in fact the magnet which first attracted our wayward steps through the fine first quadrangle and the cloister, and along the broad terrace of the second, — gazing wistfully between the iron palings into the slumberous antiquities, both animal and vegetable, of the deer-park; then, retracing our steps, we descended to the river-side, and proceeded to describe the charmed circle of Addison's walk. It is strange that, of all the poets who belong to Oxford, the only one who has impressed his individuality sufficiently to give a lasting name to a locality should have been the most staid, self-conscious, didactic, and in truth prosaic of the tuneful choir. The lighter and more fiery singers appear to have sprung aloft and vanished in the ether, like the lark above the Oxfordshire meadows, thence to shower over the forest of domes and spires the music of a "sightless song." But the memory of Addison at Magdalen sufficed to set us listening for those melodious voices, and led us to search, first of all, along the dreamy Oxonian ways, for the trail of the poets, rather than for the more conspicuous vestiges of prelates and of kings.

It has often been said, and the opin-

ion seems somewhat widely to prevail, that as between the two great English universities Cambridge bears off the palm in the matter of poets. The truth is that the honors of song, like the honors of the river, have been pretty fairly divided between the two, and have alternated, or oscillated, with some degree of regularity; remaining continuously for a certain season with the one, and then passing over to the other.

Going back to the time when English poetry first began to assume the shapes that we know and love, we find that the author of the *Vision of Piers Plowman* was of Oxford, and Skelton, with his laughter-bubbling song to Merrie Margaret. Wyatt and Surrey were of Cambridge, and Spenser; but Sidney, Raleigh, and the majority of the great Elizabethan lyrists, as well as the splendid Cavalier singers of the succeeding reigns, with their sanity in love, their fervor in faith, and their gallantry in death, down to Lovelace, who closed the list, were Oxonians. Milton was of Cambridge, and Dryden, as well as Crashaw, Herbert, and the seventeenth-century mystics generally. Addison was of Oxford, and Collins and Shenstone and Young and Johnson. The Lake Poets were about equally divided between the two schools, and among the later nineteenth-century singers, if Cambridge can boast the greatest names of all, Byron and Tennyson, Oxford can reply with Shelley and Landor, Keble and Newman, Arnold, Clough, and Swinburne.

This, of course, is not an exhaustive list. We classify the names roughly as they occur to us, and then, still hanging about the bosky purlieus of Magdalen, we begin searching the memory for echoes from those poets who have belonged precisely to the superb foundation, just past its four hundredth birthday, of William of Waynflete. John Lyly, the euphuist, was here, and George Wither, the manly author of

“ Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman 's fair? ”

Wither himself speaks with peculiar fondness of his “happy years at Oxford.” His best poems were written in youth, and published under the title of *Juvenilia*; but there is one among the very latest having all the bright healthfulness of tone which marks the earlier pieces, and in which, with the memory, he seems almost to recover the melody of his morning hour:—

“ So shall my rest be safe and sweet
When I am lodgèd in my grave;
And when my soul and body meet
A joyful meeting they shall have.
Their essence then shall be divine,
This muddy flesh shall star-like shine,
And God shall that fresh youth restore
Which will abide forevermore.”

Sir Henry Wotton was also of Magdalen,— he who contributed so truly to the moral support of all subsequent generations by his noble hymn,

“ How happy is he born and taught
Who serveth not another's will! ”

He too composed (one feels that *composed* is the right word), in equally calm and polished verse, one of the last of the strictly chivalrous lyrics: the address, namely, to his formally selected and of course quite unattainable mistress, Elizabeth, Queen of Bohemia:—

“ You violets that first appear,
By your pure purple mantles known,
Like the proud virgins of the year,
As if the spring were all your own,
What are you when the rose is blown? ”

How the rose looked when fully blown one may see in the Bodleian Library, where her majesty's pictured face hangs among those of scholars and sages: very handsome, certainly, faultlessly so in a rather hard style, but not at all *simpatica*. One perceives that she took Wotton's worship quite as a matter of course, and does not wonder that he had all his wits about him when he sang her praise.

It seems a long way from Wotton to Collins, who was likewise a Magdalen

scholar; it is, in fact, as far as from the late mediæval to the early modern world. "How sleep the brave who sink to rest" is like a lyric of our own time; and in the beautiful Ode to Evening, of which Swinburne says, in his graphic way, that "Corot might have signed it upon canvas," one finds the very feeling of the Oxfordshire landscape:—

"For when thy folding-star, arising, shows
His paly circlet, at his warning lamp,
The fragrant Hours, and Elves
Who slept in buds the day,
And many a Nymph who wreathes her brows with
sedge,
And sheds the freshening dew, and, lovelier still,
The pensive Pleasures sweet,
Prepare thy shadowy car;
Then lead, calm votaress, where some sheety lake
Cheers the lone heath, or some time-hallowed pile
Or upland fallows gray
Reflect its last cool gleam."

The laws of association know nothing of the laws of precedence. They say of Magdalen, nowadays, that it aspires to be what Christ Church is; and they say nothing whatever of St. John's, which nevertheless comes next to Magdalen, if it does not surpass it, in visionary charm. A vision, or a dream, was also the first cause of its being. Early in the sixteenth century, one Sir Thomas White was admonished in the night-watches that he should build a college "for the education of youth in piety and learning" where he should find an elm with three trunks issuing from the same root. He finally discovered such an one in the court of the decayed college of St. Bernard, whose site is occupied by the present St. John's. Anthony à Wood, the antiquarian *par excellence* of Oxford, says that the original triple tree was living in 1677, a hundred and thirty years later, and they speak, but not with confidence, of a descendant of the same as still flourishing somewhere among the bowers of the exquisite gardens. The garden front of the present college, with its rich gables and oriels, its pictured windows and queer gargoyles, melting into unmeaning projections as the gray

stone crumbles, was built by Archbishop Laud, who was a great benefactor of St. John's, and for a number of years president of the college. Bishop Juxon was also president here, — he whom the king upon the scaffold bade "*Remember*;" and they show in the Welsh College of Jesus, hard by, a watch which was once the property of Charles I., and which is claimed by some as the very one which the king gave to his faithful prelate, along with that mysterious last mandate. Charles and Henrietta Maria were feasted by Laud in the hall to which the right-hand oriel belongs. Do they ever revisit the spacious window recess, where they may have loitered in the passive after-dinner hour, those two, Charles and Laud? And if so, with what reflections, now that the doom which was prepared for each has been so long accomplished? St. John's was always intensely loyal, and orthodox to the very verge of Romanism. It is but a few years ago that "an oak chest, that had long lain hid," full of gorgeous ecclesiastical vestments, was found in an out-of-the-way nook of the huge and rambling buildings. It was very shortly after the king's execution that James Shirley, the one poet whose name is associated with St. John's, wrote the one verse by which he keeps his hold on the memory of the present generation. It is a fitting strain to recall here, the dirge of a "lost cause," which may have deserved to lose, but which enlisted the very highest order of human loyalty, and the sacrifice of nobler lives than have often been laid down in merely human service:—

"The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things.
The garlands wither on your brow;
Then boast no more your mighty deeds;
Upon Death's purple altar now,
See where the victor-victim bleeds.
Your heads must come
To the cold tomb;
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet and blossom in the dust."

Worcester, too, had its one Cavalier poet, and the sweet lawns and immortal ivies of the place are wonderfully adapted to harbor the echoes of his song. Who does not remember how Richard Lovelace triumphed in captivity?

“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage:
Minds innocent and quiet take
That for an hermitage.
If I have freedom in my love,
And in my soul am free,
Angels alone that soar above
Enjoy such liberty!”

There are several other colleges, the airy voices in whose classic shades “syllable” the name of one poet only. The stately courts of All Souls have but a handful of living tenants, as the world well knows, though “fit” for the place, undoubtedly, as the select audience of the angel in Paradise. “We few, we happy few,” should be the motto of that illustrious little band of brothers, as of the heroes who fought on the day of which All Souls is a perpetual memorial; for it was founded to secure prayers for the souls of those who fell at Agincourt; and long and far lapsed from its original intention though it be, there is a certain suitability in the fact that its one minstrel should have been Edward Young, the official poet of night and death, who rises, perhaps, to his own highest poetic level in his half-remorseful appeal to the shades of the departed:—

“Ungrateful, shall we grieve their hovering shades,

Which wait the revolution in our hearts?
Shall we disdain their silent, soft address,
Their posthumous advice and pious prayer,
Senseless as herds that graze their hallowed graves?

Tread under foot their agonies and groans,
Frustrate their anguish, and destroy their deaths?”

Far different is the note of the solitary singer of gray old Lincoln,—of Sir William Davenant, the kinsman (perhaps) of Shakespeare, who caught the tune of the skylark more charmingly than any other minstrel between him and Shelley:—

“The lark now leaves his watery nest,
And, climbing, shakes his dewy wings.
He takes your window for the east,
And to implore your light he sings:
Awake! Awake! The morn will never rise
Till she can dress her beauty at your eyes!”

Close by, under the venerable towers of University, Shelley himself made his brief, inglorious, and stormy sojourn at Oxford. “Expelled from atheism at nineteen.” Well, if that most ethereal of rebels ever revisits, in these days, the glimpses of the Oxford moon, he ought to consider himself avenged. To us, there seems a distinct reminiscence of the scene of his boyish defiance in those piercing lines from the Ode to the West Wind:—

“if even
I were as in my boyhood, and could be
The comrade of thy wanderings over heaven,
As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed
Scarce seemed a vision, I would ne'er have
striven
As thus, with thee in prayer, in my sore need.
I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!
Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is!
What if my leaves are falling, like its own?
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies
Will take from thee a deep autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness.”

This wild cry reminds us, by a pathetic law of contrast, of another appeal to the airs of heaven, by quite another Oxford poet,—by the saintly John Keble of Oriel, who sings on All Saints Day,—

“Why blowest thou not, thou wintry wind,
Now every leaf is brown and sere,
And, idly droops, to thee resigned
The fading chaplet of the year?
Yet wears the pure, aerial sky
Her summer veil, half drawn on high
Of silvery haze; and dark and still
The shadows sleep on every slanting hill.
How quiet shows the woodland scene!
Each flower and tree, its duty done,
Reposing in decay serene,
Like weary men, when age is won:
Such calm old age as conscience pure
And self-commanding hearts insure,
Waiting their summons to the sky;
Content to live, but not afraid to die.”

But Keble's is no solitary glory in Oriel. Langland was here five hundred years ago, and Sir Walter Raleigh was here. It is not, however, so much of the daring youth of the latter and his middle age of storms, of his deeds of

high emprise and great thoughts upon secular things, that we are minded, beneath Oriël's monumental walls, as of the swan songs which he lifted up in prison, and in the immediate view of death :—

“Go, soul, the body's guest,”
and,

“Give me my scallop-shell of quiet,
My staff of faith to rest upon;
My scrip of joy, immortal diet,
My bottle of salvation;
My gown of glory, hope's true gage,
And thus I'll take my pilgrimage.
Blood must be my body's balmer;
No other balm will there be given;
While my soul, a quiet Palmer,
Traveleth towards the land of Heaven.”

Nevertheless, as we turn toward that corner of the hoary quadrangle where must inevitably lie its intensest interest for the latter-day pilgrim, and do homage in our hearts to him whom the “kindly light amid the encircling gloom” led so far away from his scholarly life in these peaceful precincts, we are reminded again of Sir Walter Raleigh, and of certain words that stand written in the History of the World; and we fancy for the moment that we can hear across the silent courts and the graves of three centuries the deep of prophetic insight calling unto the deep of impassioned self-devotion :—

“All art and care bestowed and had of the church wherein God is to be served and worshiped is accounted a kind of popery, and proceeding from an idolatrous disposition. Insomuch as time would soon bring to pass, if it were not resisted, that God would be turned out of churches into barns, and from thence again into the fields and mountains, and under the hedges, and the offices of the ministry be as contemptible as their places; all order, discipline, and church government left to newness of opinion and men's fancies. Yea, and soon after, as many kinds of religion would spring up as there are parish churches within England; every contentious and ignorant person clothing his fancy with the

spirit of God, and his imagination with the gift of revelation. Insomuch as when the truth, which is but one, shall appear to the simple multitude no less variable than contrary to itself, the faith of men will soon after die away by degrees, and all religion be held in scorn and contempt.”

So we turn to the next-door neighbor of Oriël, — Corpus Christi, with the angels bearing the Host above its gateway; with its quaint little cloister, and the elaborate sun-dial in its homely but venerable quadrangle; less rich in poetic associations than its fellow, albeit one of the sweetest, in more senses than one, of the Oxford legends concerns the bees of Ludovicus Vives, a Spanish scholar of Valencia, who was sent by Cardinal Wolsey to be teacher of rhetoric here, and was one of the first Fellows of the college. “He was welcomed thither,” according to that industrious antiquary, Brian Twynne, “by a swarm of bees, which, to signify the incomparable sweetness of his eloquence, settled themselves over his head under the leads of his study, at the west end of the cloister, where they continued about one hundred and thirty years. . . . In the year 1630, the leads over Vives his study being plucked up, it being then the study of Mr. Gabriel Brydges, their stall was taken, and with it an incredible mass of honey; but the bees, as presaging their intended and imminent destruction, whereas they were never known to have swarmed before, did that spring, to preserve their famous kind, send down a fair swarm into the president's garden, which, in the year 1633, yielded ten swarms, one whereof pitched in the garden, for the president; the other they sent up as a new colony, to preserve the memory of this mellifluous doctor, as the university styled him in a letter to the cardinal.” Another historian of Oxfordshire here takes up the tale. “And there,” he says, “they continued till, by the parliament visitation in 1648,

for their loyalty to the king, they were all but two turned out of their places. At what time, with the rest of the inhabitants of the college, they removed themselves, but no farther than the east end of the same cloister, where (as if the feminine sympathized with the masculine monarchy) they instantly declined, and came shortly to nothing. After the extirpation of which ancient race, there came, 't is true, another colony to the east end of the cloister, where they continued until after the return of his most sacred majesty that now is; but, it not being certain that they were any of the remains of the ancient stock (though 't is said they removed them to the first place), nor any of them long continuing there, I have chose rather to fix their period in the year 1648 than to give too much credit to uncertainties. And thus, unhappily, after sixscore years' continuance, ended the famous stock of Vives his bees; where 't is pity they had not remained, as Virgil calls them *immortale genus*." The naïve logic of this last observation reminds us that John Conington, the lamented commentator and translator of Virgil, was also of Corpus.

We have spoken of Cardinal Newman in connection with Oriel, where he was Fellow, and attained his first fame. His undergraduate years were passed at Trinity, which boasts, amid a throng of slightly distinguished names, its trio of more memorable poets. But what a strange association of spirits is here! Thomas Lodge, the friend of Lyly, a better euphuist than his master, — the gay, anacreontic author of "Love in my bosom, like a bee," and "Like to the clear in highest sphere," — Walter Savage Landor, and John Henry Newman. Can these all be creatures of the same race? There may be notes in some of Landor's earlier lyrics which chord not ill with some of Lodge's, but how is one to measure the spiritual distance between the tranquil and disdainful pa-

ganism of Landor's fine last word upon himself, —

"I strove with none, for none was worth my
strife;

Nature I loved, and, next to Nature, Art.
I warned both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart," —

and the soft song of the disembodied spirit in the Dream of Gerontius: —

"Take me away, and in the lowest deep
There let me be!
And there in hope the lone night-watches keep
Told out for me!"

And yet these men were contemporaries. "Were," one says, and instinctively applies the word to both. It is no more Newman's patriarchal years and sacred seclusion than his remoteness in spiritual ascendancy which leads one perpetually to forget that he has not yet passed the barrier of this lower life, and to class him with the mighty dead. It is exactly the reverse with Arthur Hugh Clough, at Balliol, — the college of all others whose glories are of the present, its star rising, its interest the "hope of unaccomplished years." One thinks of the author of *Qua Cursum Ventus* and "Say not the struggle naught availeth" as living yet, and engaged beside his kinsmen and his peers; a transfigured rather than a spectral figure, — like those of the divine brethren at Lake Regillus. And Balliol has its ancient glories, too, which the glow of the prosperous present ought not wholly to eclipse.

Sir Edward Dyer was of Balliol, the bosom friend of Sir Philip Sidney, who made, with him and Fulke Greville, that trio for whom Sidney supplied the motto, —

"Join hearts and hands! So let it be;
Make but one mind in bodies three."

Sir Edward Dyer has enriched our literature with at least one admirable lyric: "My mind to me a kingdom is." In its final stanza, there is a pride as high as Landor's own, but of a saner and more noble order: —

"Some have too much, yet still do crave;
 I little have, and seek no more:
 They are but poor, though much they have,
 And I am rich, with little store.
 They poor; I rich. They beg; I give.
 They lack; I leave. They pine, I live."

Is there, or is there not (there ought to be), one tree in the winter gardens of Balliol beneath which, in passing, one would always remember that Southey also was of this college, — abundantly endowed and unreasonably abused Southey; who must have had a stratum of genuine humility underlying his more obvious self-conceit, and who realized in an old age of singular beauty the aspiration, —

"And should my youth, as youth is apt, I know,
 Some harshness show,
 All vain asperities I, day by day,
 Would wear away,
 Till the smooth temper of my age should be
 Like the high leaves upon the holly-tree!"

But the spirit of Sir Philip Sidney, once evoked, is drawing our loitering steps at last toward Christ Church, — Christ Church, the aristocratic and superb, to which, since we did not give it precedence over all the rest, we must be supposed to have gradually ascended. We can barely turn aside on our way to the famous towered gateway, to remember that little Pembroke, on the other side of the busy street, sheltered Francis Beaumont and Shenstone and Samuel Johnson; the burly figure of the latter, as might be expected, subtending such an angle as effectually to screen from view all the other worthies of Pembroke, and its predecessor upon the same spot, — Broadgates Hall.

The haughty person in ecclesiastical dress, in the niche above the portal of Christ Church, has confronted ten generations, unmoved by the throbbings and boomings of Great Tom of Oxford, which hangs in the belfry above. He seems always to be saying, curtly and grimly, "It should have been called *Cardinal's*," which would not, in sooth, have sounded ill. It is a wonder that Henry VIII., when he resumed and contin-

ued, on a much less magnificent scale than was originally planned, the unfinished work of Cardinal Wolsey, should have refrained from calling the college "*King's*," but happily he elected to give it a nobler name than either, — the name of the small but beautiful cathedral included in the circuit of its walls. The first Bishop of Oxford, Robert King, or Kynge, was the last abbot of disestablished and devastated Osney, and so the old order changed and gave place to the new. Christ Church has been the chosen school of royal and titled students ever since, and of many a renowned Anglican churchman. But whose are the voices of singing men that here make themselves audible, above the chiming of bells and the clinking of spurs, as we hearken toward the past? Philip Sidney's first, the pride and darling of the English people, the brightest exemplar of all youth everywhere who speak the English tongue; and Ben Jonson's, the honeyed singer; and Thomas Otway's, the stern and sad.

"A wandering bard, whose muse was crazy
 grown,
 Cloyed with the nauseous follies of the buzzing
 town,
 Came, looked about him, sighed, and laid him
 down:

'T was far from any path, but where the earth
 Was bare and naked all, as at her birth,
 When, by the Word, it first was made,
 Ere God had said,

'Let grass and flowers and every green thing
 grow,
 With fruitful herbs after their kind,' — and it was
 so.

The whistling winds blew fiercely round his head;
 Cold was his lodging, hard his bed.
 Aloft his eyes on the wide heavens he cast,
 Where, we are told, peace only is found at last;
 And as he did its hopeless distance see,
 Sighed deep, and cried, 'How far is peace from
 me!'"

There was, in fact, no peace for this wailing banshee among the bards of Oxford until he was released, at thirty-four, from a most painful life by a most tragical death. A wider contrast could not be, whether in spirit or in fortunes, than that between the unhappy Otway

and the remaining two poets of Christ Church whose names we found at home in our recollection. With these two, however, the chief if not the only episcopal poets of England, we discovered that we were upon terms of such old and dear familiarity that we made it our special object, in those early days, to gather every possible memorial of them.

It would be strange indeed if the present writer could forget that a voice, now silent fifteen years, used oftenest to pronounce its half-humorous maternal blessing in these words :—

“ What I shall leave thee none can tell,
But all shall say, I wish thee well,
I wish thee well; before all wealth,
Both bodily and ghostly health!
Not too much wealth or wit come to thee;
So much of either might undo thee!”

If the temperate request of the last couplet was as scrupulously fulfilled in the original as in the applied case, the cheery author of it should have been well content. But indeed it was hardly in his nature to have been otherwise, in any event. Richard Corbett, the seventh Bishop of Oxford, was the spiritual (or perhaps temperamental) ancestor of Sydney Smith, — a man whose delightful and unflinching humor irradiates every tradition of him with wholesome sunshine. He was already celebrated as a poet and wit, when he matriculated at Christ Church in 1605. Seven years later, on the death of Henry, Prince of Wales, Corbett, then a proctor, was deputed to pronounce the prince's oration, and, according to Anthony à Wood, “very oratorically speeched it, in St. Mary's Church, before a numerous auditory.” Corbett was of Laud's way of thinking, the quaintest of preachers, the tersest, wittiest, and most refreshing of correspondents. His generosity was more than regal. He contributed £400, an enormous sum in those days, toward the restoration of St. Paul's Cathedral, for which he pleaded from his pulpit in this homely and forcible style: “St. Paul's Church,

— one word in behalf of St. Paul! He hath spoken many in ours. He hath raised our inward temples. Let us help to requite him in the outward,” etc. Local history teems with reminiscences of Bishop Corbett's fun. It was he who, finding one day near the beautiful market-cross of Abingdon, five miles from Oxford, a dejected ballad-singer, who had sold none of his wares, assumed the dress and function of the wandering bard, and trolled forth the ballads in his own peculiarly rich voice, until he had gathered a crowd about him and sold them all. It was he who shouted to the throng that pressed uncomfortably near him on a confirmation day, “Bear off, or I'll confirm ye with my staff!” It was he who gave that cruel account of the upset of his coach in “an extraordinary deep and dirty lane,” when his fat friend Dr. Stubbins was within: “Dr. Stubbins was up to his elbows in mud, and I was up to my elbows in Stubbins.” It was he, and he alone, of the Oxford poets, who ever cared to celebrate in song the richest of all the antiquarian treasures hereabout, — the beautiful old German stained glass in the windows of Fairford Church, preserved from the ravages of Cromwell's soldiery by so extraordinary an act of aesthetic precaution :—

“ Tell me, ye anti-saints, why brass
With you is shorter-lived than glass,
And why the saints have 'scaped their falls
Better from windows than from walls?

. . . Then, Fairford, boast
Thy church hath kept what all have lost,
And is preserved from the banè
Of either war or Puritan.
Whose life is colored in thy paint,
The inside dross, the outside saint!

I know no paint of poetry
Can mend such colored imagery
In sullen ink; yet, Fairford, I
May relish thy fair memory.
Such is the echo's fainter sound,
Such is the light, when the sun's drowned;
So did the fancy look upon
This work before it was begun.”

The genial bishop was eventually trans-

lated from Oxford to Norwich, where he died in 1635, and where he lies buried.

Our other early association with the episcopal poets of Christ Church is a softer and more pensive one. From a time to which our own individual memory runneth not back to the contrary, certain fragments of sad and tender verse have been hovering there, which the ripening judgment of maturer years has pronounced among the most beautiful elegiac lines ever written in English. There can be no need to quote to any true lover of old English poetry the lament of Bishop King for his girlish wife:—

“Sleep on, my love, in thy cold bed
Never to be disquieted.”

A preposterous hope sprang up with-in us, on our first visit to Christ Church, that the Bishop King buried in the north aisle of the cathedral, and pictured in glass above, might prove to be our own Bishop King; and that the exquisite domestic life reflected in those fond verses might have been lived in the brave old many-gabled mansion down toward Folly Bridge, which still goes by the name of Bishop King's Palace. That hope soon demonstrated its own absurdity, for the last abbot of Osney could not well have had a wife to lament. A very little research, however, disclosed facts of a yet more intimate and curious interest than the fancies which they displaced. Henry King, Bishop of Chichester, the author of the elegy, was grandson to Philip King, the favorite nephew and heir to the wealth of Robert, first Bishop of Oxford. The father of Henry was John King, Bishop of London and scholar of Christ Church, and at one time chaplain to Queen Elizabeth. Henry King and his brother John, three years his junior, entered Christ Church together, and passed through their university career *paribus passibus*. Before they left the college, their three younger brothers were entered there, making five students

from one family at one time,—a fact hardly to be paralleled in the history of Oxford. The father, the subsequent Bishop of London, had been dean of Christ Church, and was vice-chancellor of the university when his boys were there. When they had left Oxford and he had received his own preferment, he began crowning their lives with riches and honor, by the frank exercise of a natural and amiable nepotism, which Henry rather primly calls “providing so far as in him lay for a succession in his blood to lay hand to the same plow.” Henry and John were made prebendaries of St. Paul's, — the former at twenty-four, the latter at twenty-two; and the only trace we have of anything like hostile criticism of this affectionate arrangement is in a letter of Chamberlain's to Sir Dudley Carleton, in which he says that “Henry King, the son of the bishop, preached his first sermon at St. Paul's Cross; and it was thought a bold thing of them both [that is, the youth and his father]; *but this world, they say, is made for the presumptuous*. He did reasonably well, but nothing extraordinary, nor near his father, being rather slow of utterance, and *orator parum vehemens*.” So much we can readily believe. Vehemence of speech and action would have been quite inconsistent with a character which, however, had an invincible sweetness, that well-nigh disarmed envy. His brief, bright married life with Anne Berkeley was passed in London, in a house near St. Paul's yard, while he was resident canon of the cathedral. The bridegroom was twenty-six, when they married; the bride, only seventeen. In less than seven years he wrote the lines of our life-long love:—

“And I remember must, with tears,
Thou scarce hadst seen so many years
As day tells hours. . . .
 My Little World!
Stay for me there! I will not fail
To meet thee in that hollow vale.”

And think not much of my delay;
I am already on the way,
And follow thee with all the speed
Desire can make, or sorrows breed
Each minute is a short degree,
And every hour a step towards thee!"

Once only before that time had Henry King emerged from the quiet scenes of home love and literary pastime, and the assiduous good works so congenial to his nature, into anything like public controversy. His devoted father had died three years before, and immediately after his decease rumors got abroad, which appeared to rest on good authority, to the effect that the metropolitan bishop had been, during his latest years, declining more and more toward the Church of Rome, and had even received its sacraments in his last illness, at the hands of one Father Preston, a Benedictine monk. It was also said that Bishop John King had written a letter to King James, confessing the true state of his mind, which the king, after reading, had instantly torn in twain and thrust into the fire. However these charges may have originated, they were explicitly and publicly denied by Henry King in a sermon and a pamphlet, and by Father Preston so far as his own complicity was concerned, on examination before the Archbishop of Canterbury. One is surprised at the frequent occurrence, in the annals of the English church of the seventeenth century, of this charge of reversion to Rome, until one remembers that its absence would be more surprising still. A serious and sturdy people, constant in its affections and tenacious of its memories, does not change its heart wholly and finally in a day, or even in a century.

It is quite consistent with the mild but generous character of Henry King that he should always have been reckoned a moderate in politics and religion, until the gathering misfortunes of Charles I. quickened him to a keener loyalty. His curate in the living of

Petworth, which he held from Charles, was fired upon in his pulpit by an insurgent in the congregation, and he himself was driven from the see of Chichester, which he had then occupied only a few months. During the period of exile which followed, he made some exceedingly close and beautiful versions from the Psalms, and his Lament for the king's death, although inferior to the Elegy on his wife, was noble, and in parts impassioned. Readers old enough to have affected Scott's Woodstock in their youth will certainly remember the effect with which young Albert Lee, when captured by Cromwell in the old Oxfordshire palace, is made to confound the Protector by offering him a text of Scripture for meditation: "Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?" It seems highly probable, however, that Scott had in his mind, either consciously or unconsciously, the closing lines of Bishop King's Lament, which are these: —

"But he whose trump proclaims Revenge is mine
Bids us our sorrow by our hope confine;
And reconcile our reason to our faith,
Which, in thy ruin, such concussions hath.
It dares conclude God doth not keep his word,
If Zimri die in peace, who slew his lord."

Henry King was restored to his see by Charles II., and died in Chichester in 1669.

So much for our greeting by the ghosts of Oxford. There came an early day when shadow was succeeded by substance, and the faith which had led us thither against such formidable odds was exchanged for "glad fruition;" when the hands that were extended to us gave warm and cordial pressure, — no longer the *frustra compressa manus* of illusive shades. The result of all which has been to animate us by so romantic an optimism that we incline to believe the ancient glories of Oxford to be pale beside those of the present, while we devoutly pray that those of the future may outshine them all.

Harriet Waters Preston.