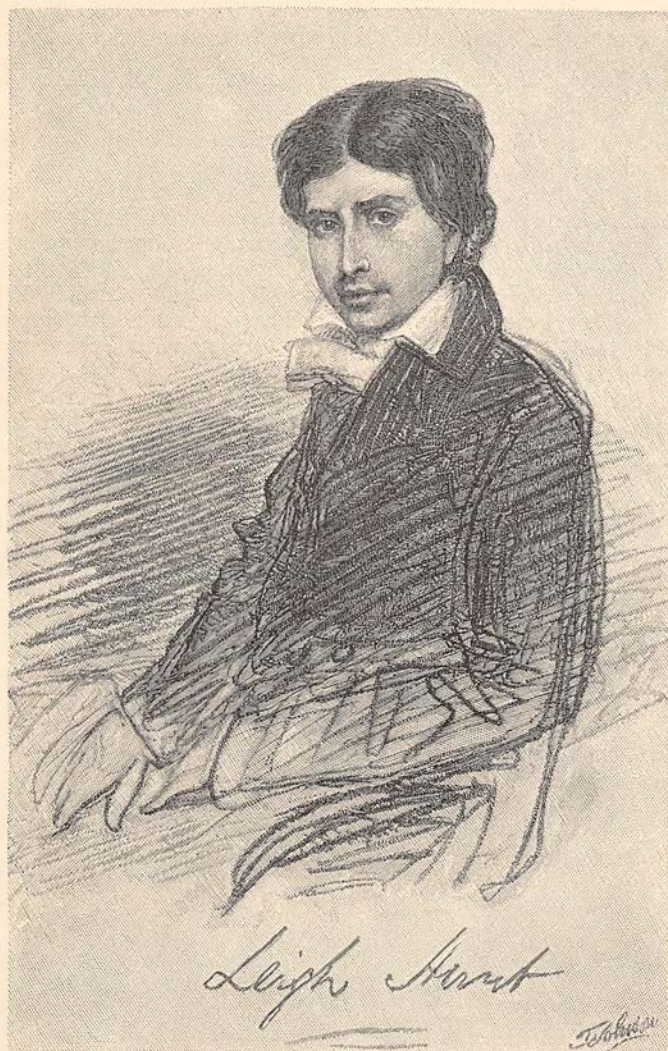


LEIGH HUNT.



[Photographed by Giulio Rossi, Milan, from a pencil sketch made in 1815 by Wageman at the request of Vincent Novello, when Leigh Hunt left prison after the libel on the Prince Regent.]

It is a peculiar point, in the gratification I feel on being requested to give further reminiscences of the poet whose friendship so much honored and charmed me, that the request comes from America,—a country that gave birth to his ancestors, and a country of whose regard for himself and his writings he was so affectionately proud. In the very last letters he ever wrote to us (quoted in our "Recollections of Writers," pages 267, 269, and 270), he confides to my beloved hus-

band and myself the keen delight he takes in America's sympathetic admiration for his "Works."

In his "Autobiography," Leigh Hunt gives a lively portrait sketch of his father, which foreshadows to me something of his own personal fascination, where he says: "My father took the degree of Master of Arts, both at Philadelphia and New York. When he spoke the farewell oration, on leaving college, two young ladies fell in love with him, one of

whom he afterward married. He was fair and handsome, with delicate features, a small aquiline nose, and blue eyes. To a graceful address he joined a remarkably fine voice, which he modulated with great effect. It was in reading the poets and other classics of England that he completed the conquest of my mother's heart. He used to spend the evenings in this manner with her and her family—a noble way of courtship; and my grandmother became so hearty in his cause that she succeeded in carrying it against her husband, who wished his daughter to marry a wealthy neighbor."

The only points in variance with the son's appearance are the "fair" complexion, the "aquiline" nose, and the "blue" eyes; for Leigh Hunt was dark-complexioned, with small, straight nose, and nearly black eyes. But the "handsome" face, the "delicate features," the "graceful address," and the "remarkably fine voice" were all there; together with the irresistible attraction that won him all women's hearts and most men's interest as soon as they had interchanged but a few words with him, and had seen him face to face. Even those who differed with him in professed opinions, and were strongly prejudiced against him on public and party grounds, had no sooner met him than they succumbed to the winning charm of the man himself. Then the force of Pope's couplet describing Belinda,

"If to her share some female errors fall,  
Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all,"

was livingly exemplified. None could withstand the grace, the bewitching look, tone, and cordial bearing that held the eyes, the ears, the thoughts captivated and spell-bound as he spoke. A few—a very few—men I have seen possessed this peculiar fascination of aspect in their approach and address to women. Elliston, the famous actor of gay gallants, had it in look and manner—a kind of "breathing earnestness" (as Leigh Hunt himself once called it) at once respectful and eager, a mingling of deference and ardor; with eyes that were full of expressive eloquence, smiling yet serious. But Elliston's was mere "aspect," while Leigh Hunt's was aspect confirmed by spontaneous speech, impulsive, effusive, appealing. Elliston's words were those of others, uttered with exquisite meaning and inflection of voice; while Leigh Hunt's words were his own, genial, poetically conceived and poetically turned, flowing out of the emotion of the moment, and poured forth with the musical intonation of immediate feeling. Then his first accost, his very way of shaking hands, were the perfection

of ability in setting a stranger at ease with him. The delightful little paper "On Shaking Hands," which he himself wrote in the "Indicator" for the 12th of July, 1820, shows how accurately he understood the subject; and his own method of giving that truly English salutation afforded a complete specimen of how it could be best accomplished. How restfully, how confidently, how warmly one's hand found itself within his! How gently, yet how sufficiently, it was clasped! How contentedly it lay folded there! I think of the last time mine felt one of his round it, his other holding my husband's in friendly grasp, the while he looked at us both and then gave me his farewell kiss, taking leave on our going to settle abroad. In reply to a letter I sent him telling him how the thought of that moment would go with us in proud remembrance to the end of our lives,—and confessing some romantic purposes of my youth, among which figured a project of taking a pilgrimage to Italy on foot, that I might lay at his an imagined fortune, had one come to me,—Leigh Hunt wrote us a letter interpenetrated with his kindest delicacy of feeling: so interpenetrated, indeed, that I should hardly venture, even now, to give it to the world, were it not that the world has grown more and more to appreciate the true beauty of his nature, and were it not that the very feeling itself does honor to himself and to him of whom he so affectionately speaks therein:

"To C. and M. C. C.

"HAMMERSMITH, Oct. 9th, at night, 1856.

"MY VERY DEAR FRIENDS:

"You will not suppose that I am going to expect any 'more last words' to such a letter as yours, and at such a moment. Most unreasonable would the expectation be during your hurry, and most unreasonable in itself at any time, precious as all and any such words must be to me ever. But you will as little wonder that I cannot help sending you a few more last words of my own, to thank you for such glorifications of my poor self with your loving hearts, and to add, that all which you could wish me, or ever could have wished me, to feel or think, relatively to yourselves, is with the exactest correspondence felt and thought, and has been so expressed or intimated, I think, as far as ever you warranted me in conceiving that I had a right to say it. It could not have been possible for either of you to admit me to any share of your confidence that would not have met with the like thorough understanding of sympathy. I recollect well, and ever gratefully, the 'pilgrimages' to Horsemonger Lane, but had no idea of the one that was

wished for to Italy; though the moment I hear of it, I recognize the future biographer of the girlhoods of Shakespeare's heroines. What an honor to me to have given occasion to such an impulse! and how worthy of one of the friends and gentlemen in Shakespeare not to have had it grudged me by him who knew the pilgrim afterward, and who gathered her fine idealizing heart into the realizing goodness of his own! Well may you both Shakespearianize as you do, and help in improving the community with the graces of his nature and of your own. Little, however, have I felt inclined to smile even 'my tenderest smiles' at such enthusiasm. I retain too much serious faith in it,—I will not say 'even now,'—for I can imagine no 'now' at which I have ever feared to lose, or can lose it. I still believe in it, in spite of vicissitudes, calamities, calumnies; still love it; still act upon it; should feel, if I did not, that I had no longer any right to be loved by friends living, or to rejoin those who are dead; and therefore I was moved to tears of mingled admiration for others and pity for myself, to think what a world of love there had been in me,—*is* in me,—of a twentieth part of which few persons have had the slightest conception, even of those who fancied they had. (Far am I from blaming; I only lament.) Most kind, and considerate, and affectionate was the reception given to the parting kiss which my old lips ventured upon; and enhancing it was the allowance conceded by one who seems to possess the veritable privilege of growing younger with time. Even I—— But hold. The most grateful occasion, and the most Shakespearian good reasons, must not tempt me into words possibly misjudgeable by any chance eyes inferior to those of you two; and not knowing whether you may not have set off before this letter comes to Bayswater, I cannot be sure into whose hands it may fall. Think the kindest of me always, whatever it be.

"Your most obliged, grateful, and loving friend,  
LEIGH HUNT.

"Mrs. Hunt is a great deal better, which puts me in good spirits."

Leigh Hunt's sensitive delicacy was one of his most marked characteristics, and one that peculiarly impressed itself on those who enjoyed personal communion with him. He was delicate as a woman in conduct, in words, in ways of thinking. I have heard him use paraphrase in speaking of things that the generality of men are accustomed to mention plainly, as a matter of course; and though he could—on occasion—use very

straightforward terms in treating a poetical subject warmly, or in reprobating a vice sternly, and employ very playful terms when treating a humorous subject wittily, I never heard him utter a coarse or a light word in the many times I have heard him converse with freedom among intimate friends. Airy elegance, sportive fancy, marked his lively talk; levity, never. But though Leigh Hunt was almost womanly in his scrupulous delicacy, he had not the very least touch of effeminacy in his composition. He was essentially manly,—of that fine type of manliness which includes the best gentleness and tenderness of womanly nature, blended with the highest moral fortitude of manhood. We know that the man who created *Imogen*, *Portia*, *Viola*, *Rosalind*, *Hamlet*, *Romeo*, *Troilus*, *Othello*, comprised this dual womanly and manly nature in his own; and we know that Nelson, who knew not what fear was, desired when dying to have a kiss from the lips of his faithful lieutenant, Hardy. So with Leigh Hunt: he was sensitive as a woman, yet in every fiber—moral, intellectual, and physical—thoroughly a man. A notable instance of his extreme sensitiveness recurs to me that I witnessed once, when he was writhing under the attacks of a brother-writer, made upon him at the time his book entitled "Lord Byron and his Contemporaries" first appeared. The attack was acrimonious, ungenerous; and Leigh Hunt had just seen it when he called upon my father, and was smarting under the peculiar pain it gave him, for various reasons. The surprise and indignation to find a fellow-author attack him, the necessity he felt to resent it openly, the prevision of the probable consequences to both when he should express his resentment, the hatred of animosity, the shrinking from contention—all agitated him extremely. But he asked there and then for pen, ink, and paper, and made his first sketch of a stinging retort he intended immediately to publish. It was in sharp, brief, rhyming stanzas; and I remember begging for the rough copy, when he had made a clear one, before leaving the house. Also, before he left, he gave vent to some of the emotions that filled him at the thought of a possibility suggested by friends then present. They thought it very likely that the publication of this "stinging retort"—bitterly contemptuous as it was—might provoke a challenge from the writer of the "attack," and the subject of dueling was animatedly canvassed. Leigh Hunt confessed to his feeling extreme dread—nay, terror—at the thought of having to fight a duel; and proceeded to explain the source of this fear in almost the exact words he has put into the mouth of Sir Philip

Herne, in his spirited (so-called) novel of "Sir Ralph Esher." Sir Philip, owing to his friend the fear he felt of having to meet his injurer in the field, says: "He is a human being; and the idea of encountering a human face in hostility, with all its mysteries of life, and death, and suffering, is very dreadful to me. I am courageous enough in principle, and can do anything for it; but I am all fear in imagination—I may add, all sympathy." This "imagination" and this "sympathy" were at the root of much that struck the world as inconsistent and incomprehensibly wavering in Leigh Hunt's conduct at times; in the alterations he made in the various editions of some of his poems, for instance, and in the changes of opinion that he avowed at different epochs with regard to public men. He was so sensitively conscientious, and so swayed by imagination and sympathy respecting motives, characteristics, and possible causes, that he occasionally doubted his own previous conclusions, and felt it incumbent upon him to render justice by avowal and retraction and frank redress. His own candor and generosity on such occasions did not always meet with equal candor and generosity on the part of those who judged him, and he was often misunderstood and maligned where he ought to have been comprehended and appreciated. Since his death, indeed, the greater breadth and liberality of opinion that has grown in the world—and which breadth and liberality he himself was greatly instrumental in promoting—has permitted truer estimation of Leigh Hunt's character and sentiments. Even during the latter part of his life, men had come to understand him better; but, in the earlier portion, he was misjudged to a degree acutely felt by himself, and which can scarcely now be believed by men of the present day, when freedom of opinion and latitude of thought are more generally tolerated and more leniently treated. Into the characters of Sir Philip Herne and of Sir Ralph Esher (in the work above alluded to) Leigh Hunt has put several of his own peculiar qualities, embodying, as it were, in these two men respectively, the two sets of characteristics which were singularly united in himself. Sir Ralph Esher, all sprightly ease, vivacity, good temper, high spirits, facile disposition, social grace and accomplishment, represents the mercurial temperament and lively portion of Leigh Hunt's self; while the grave sweetness, the constancy, the sensitive conscience, the high principle, the noble heart and mind of Sir Philip Herne, portray the graver side of the author's individuality. It is a delightful book—in itself and as an autographic sketch—to

those who know, as I do by experience, how remarkably and clearly it depicts its writer; and to those who are now told this fact, it will become doubly and trebly interesting henceforth.

Some of Leigh Hunt's briefest notes contain concentrated and characteristic tokens of his blendedly serious and cheerful nature. The following few lines, written to my father, who had just sustained the loss of a favorite child, Sydney, give evidence of this:

"July —, 1820.

"This comes from Leigh Hunt, merely to say that he often thinks of his friend Vincent Novello, and to hope that, when he has vented his first natural feelings on the death of one so dear to him, he will think of others to whom he himself is dear, and let them see him as soon again and as cheerful again as possible."

And in another letter, dated "Florence, 11th June, 1825," there is a passage affording similar evidence:

"Remember me to him [C. C. C.], and all friends. Is it really possible that I may see you all again before long, or has the question for the present been already settled against me? I shall exert myself to do my best, either way. Necessity, besides her striving daughter Invention, has a strong one, not quite so lively, yclept Patience. I know a little of the one, and am an old friend of the other."

In another, dated "3d January, 1831," with a parenthesis under the date ("many happy New Years to all"), and making pathetic allusion to pressure of work, as well as to pressure of other kind, he concludes thus, with mingled earnestness and playfulness:

"God bless you, my dear Clarke. I will come and see you all very shortly, and shall be highly gratified to know of the work you mention. What is it, pray? I long to be peeping, since you are so pleased yourself.

"Closing my note at this height in the page, seems as if I had gone to the top of the house to take leave of you, instead of the street door.

Ever cordially yours,

"L. H."

The "work" above alluded to was "Tales from Chaucer," first published in 1833. And here is a characteristic passage from yet another letter, dated "21st August, 1823, Albaro":

"How comfortable you are all going to be in your new house! Make room for me some

night among you, and imagine I am there, and drink to me. If you would do so, and send me, amongst you, the observations you all addressed to me, it would delight me to answer. That ox's foot! It is a horrible thing, and I hope you have had the last of it. I once had a real horse tread on my toes—a horrible, blind, deaf, and unfeeling tread; I seem to feel it now; but the metaphorical tread is worse than the literal."

It may be needful to explain that "trodden upon by the ox's foot" is an old English metaphorical phrase for depression of spirits, dejection, melancholy; and Johnson, in his Dictionary, quotes from Camden: "The black ox hath not trod on his foot."

In the same year as the one dating the last-given excerpt, my father received a memorable letter from Leigh Hunt, which was written to be printed in "The Liberal," and which afforded a curious specimen of the conditions then to be observed in sending a letter by the post. It was written on an immense sheet of paper, as it was legally requisite that a letter should be all contained in one single sheet, and yet the matter of this one demanded considerable space. So cramped was the legitimate room allowed, and so little was left at the close, that Leigh Hunt had to scribble in minutest characters and almost outside, after filling the folds-down; and he thus concludes: "God bless you and all friends. If I write another word, my illegitimate signature will stare the postman in the face." Modern correspondents, rejoicing in the blessings inaugurated by Rowland Hill, and who now can send a letter across the globe for twopence-halfpenny, will learn with a smile of surprise that the postage of this letter amounted to three shillings and tenpence! There are two passages in this letter that I shall quote, because they discuss points concerning Genoa that are singularly borne out by my own experience in recent years. The first, upon music, has special interest, as being addressed to a musician; the second (upon the spirit of contempt for truth and upright dealing which, alas, is a marked blemish in Italian character) is now noted, in the sincere hope that it may strike with desire to effect a self-cure those Italians who may chance to read the extract in question:

"To Vincent Novello.

" March, 1823.

"MY DEAR N.:

"I write you, as you request, 'a very long letter, on the largest-sized paper and in the smallest handwriting.' You call the request a modest one, and I cannot but allow it has

some pretensions to bashfulness, not only inasmuch as it comes in the corner of another, but because it is—let me see—just twenty lines long. However, you see what I think your twenty lines worth; and you are so accustomed, in the matter of intercourse, to have the part of obliger to yourself that it would be indecent to haggle with you about the tare and tret of an epistle. If you send me forty lines, I suppose I must write you a quarto.

"You ask me to tell you a world of things about Italian composers, singers, etc. Alas! my dear N. I may truly say to you that, for music, you must 'look at home'—at least, as far as my own experience goes. Even the biographies which you speak of are, I fear, not to be found in any great quantity; but I will do my best to get them together. Both Pisa and Genoa have little pretensions either to music or books. We ought to be at Rome for one, and Milan for the other. Florence, perhaps, has a reasonable quantity of both, besides being rich in its galleries; but I will tell you one thing which, albeit you are of Italian origin, will mortify you to hear, namely, that Mozart is nothing in Italy, and Rossini everything. Nobody ever says anything of Mozart since 'Figaro' (tell it not in Gothland!) was *hissed at Florence*. His name appears to be suppressed by agreement, while Rossini is talked of, written of, copied, sung, hummed, whistled, and demi-semi-quavered from morning to night. If there is a portrait in a shop-window, it is Rossini's. If you hear a song in the street, it is Rossini's. If you go to a music-shop to have something copied,—'An air of Rossini's?' Meyer, I believe, is the only German who takes the turn with him at the Opera here; but Mozart, be assured, never. I believe they would shut their ears at a burst of his harmony, as your friends, the Chinese, did at Lord Macartney's band. I suspect, however, that there are more reasons than one for this extraordinary piece of intolerance, and not altogether so unhandsome as they appear at first sight. As to theatres, I need not tell you the dislike which singers have to compositions that afford them no excuse for running in their own quavers and cadences. They hate to be

'Married to immortal verse.'

They prefer a good, flimsy, dying sort of a 'do-me-no-harm, good man,' whom they can twist about and desert as they please; this is common to theatres everywhere. But in Italy, besides a natural prejudice in favor of their own composers, there has always been another, you know, against that richness of accompa-

niment with which the Germans follow up their vocal music, turning every air, as it were, into a triumphal procession. They think that if a melody is full of nature and passion, it should be oftener suffered to make out its own merits, and triumph by its own sufficing beauty: like Adam in the poem, when he walked forth to meet the angel,

‘— without more train  
Accompanied, than with his own complete  
Perfections.’

Or Eve afterwards, when she received him,

‘Undecked, save with herself; more lovely fair  
Than wood-nymph, or the fairest goddess feigned  
Of three that in Mount Ida naked strove:  
\* \* \* \* \* No veil  
She needed virtue-proof; no thought infirm  
Altered her cheek.’

“(What poetry is there! What sentiment! What delicacy! What words full of meaning!) You know what I think on this subject, when the composer is a truly great one, like Paesello: and I know what you think, too, when the air is one of his divinest, like ‘*Il mio ben*’ in the opera of ‘Nina.’ But Rossini is not Paesello? True. He gives us a delightful air now and then; but, in the hurry of his industry and his musical spirits, pours forth a torrent of commonplaces. His is not a flow of music,

‘Whose foam is amber, and their gravel gold.’

It is for the most part common water, quick in its course, and bringing down only grains of gold, however worth sifting. Nevertheless, he has animal spirits; he runs merrily; his stream is for the most part native; and the Italians are as willing to be made merry with ‘thin potations’ as with old hock. I meant to show you how it was they were prepared to undervalue Mozart; and I think I can now explain to you, in one word, how it is that they contrive to render themselves deaf to the rest of his merits, and to the inspiration which he himself drank at an Italian source. Mozart was a German. I do not mean simply that he was a German in music, but he was a German by birth. The Germans in Italy, the lords over Italian freedom and the Italian soil, trumpet his superiority over Italian composers; and however right they may be,—at all events with regard to modern ones,—this is enough to make the Italians hate him. It mortifies them the more because they know he is an exception to the general dullness of their conquerors; and not even the nonchalance of his own conduct toward kings and emperors (which was truly edify-

ing\*) could reconcile them to the misery of preferring anything German to the best thing Italian.

“The Genoese are not a musical specimen of the Italians; but the national talent seems lurking everywhere you go. The most beggarly minstrel gets another to make out a harmony with him, and some sort of an instrument, if only a gourd with a string or two. Such, at least, appeared to me a strange-looking ‘wild-fowl’ of a fiddle, which a man was strumming the other day,—or rather a gourd stuck upon a long fiddle of deal. Perhaps you know of such an instrument. I think I have seen something like it in pictures. They all sing out their words distinctly, some accompanying themselves all the while in the guitar style, others putting in a symphony now and then, even if it be nothing better than two notes always the same. There is one blind beggar who seems an enthusiast for Rossini. Imagine a sturdy-looking fellow in rags, laying his hot face against his fiddle, rolling his blind eyeballs against the sunshine, and vociferating, with all the true open mouth and syllabical particularity of the Italians, a part of one of the duets of that lively master. His companion, having his eyesight and being, therefore, not so vivacious, sings his part with sedate vigor; though even when the former is singing a solo, I have heard him throw in some unisons at intervals, as if his help were equally wanting to the blind man, vocal as well as corporeal.”

\* Leigh Hunt here subjoined the following note:

“Even when this great musician was a child he felt the superiority of genius over rank. If his flatterers, however high their station, exhibited no real feeling for the art, he played nothing but trifling pieces for their amusement, and was insensible even to their flattery. When called upon to display the astonishing prematurity of his powers before the Emperor Francis I., he said to His Majesty, with a simplicity that must have been somewhat frightful at court:

“‘Is not Mr. Wagenseil here? We must send for him; *he understands the thing.*’

“The Emperor sent for Wagenseil, who took His Majesty’s place by the side of the performer.

“‘Sir,’ said Mozart, ‘I am going to play one of your *concertos*; you must turn over the leaves for me.’

“The Emperor Joseph II. said to him once, speaking of his opera ‘*L’enlèvement du Sérail*’:

“‘My dear Mozart, this is too fine for my ears; there are too many notes.’

“‘I beg your Majesty’s pardon,’ replied Mozart: ‘there are just as many as are necessary.’

“The example of Mozart might be instructive to certain German men of talent, who do not blush to fall in with all the nonsense of the allied sovereigns. How delightful would it be, for instance, if Mr. Gentz, when about to write some legislation under his master’s eye, were to say, ‘Is Mr. Bentham here? We must send for him; he understands the thing.’ Or the Emperor should say to him, ‘My dear Gentz, this is too fine for my notions; there are too many popular provisions,’—for Mr. Gentz to answer, ‘I beg your Majesty’s pardon: there are just as many as necessary.’”

With regard to the earlier portion of the above extract, I myself heard Mozart's operatic masterpiece, "Don Giovanni," performed at the Carlo Felice theater of Genoa in 1867, by first-rate artists; yet it was received with a coldness amounting to dislike, and was only tolerated for a very few nights.

The second extract is the following:

"From what I have seen myself (and I would not mention it if it had not been corroborated by others who have resided in Italy several years), there is a prevailing contempt of truth in this country that would astonish even an oppressed Irishman. I have heard instances of falsehood, not only among money-getters, but among 'ladies and gentlemen' in ordinary, so extreme, so childish, and apparently so unconscious of wrong, that the very excess of it, however shocking in one respect, relieved one's feelings in another, and showed how much might be done by proper institutions to exalt the character of a people naturally so ingenuous and so ductile. The great Italian virtues, under their present governments, are being catholic—not being 'taken in' by others and taking in everybody else. Persons employed to do the least or the greatest jobs will endeavor to cheat you through thick and thin. It is a perpetual warfare, in which you are at last obliged to fight in self-defence. If you pay anybody what he asks you, it never enters into his imagination that you do it from anything but folly. You are pronounced a *minchione* (a ninny), one of their greatest terms of reproach. On the other hand, if you battle well through your bargain, a perversion of the natural principle of self-defence leads to a feeling of real respect for you. A dispute may arise; the man may grin, stare, threaten, and pour out torrents of reasons and injured innocence, as they always do; but be firm, and he goes away equally angry and admiring. If you take them in, doubtless the admiration as well as the anger is still in proportion, like that of the gallant knights of old when they were beaten in single combat. An English lady told me an amusing story the other day, which will show you the spirit of this matter at once. A friend of hers, at Pisa, was in the habit of dealing with a man whose knaveries, as usual, compelled her to keep a reasonable eye to her side of the bargain. She said to this man one day, 'Ha, so-and-so, no doubt you think me a great *minchione*.' The man, at this speech, put on a look of the sincerest deference and respect; and in a tone of deprecation not at all intended, as you might suppose, for a grave joke, but for the most serious thing in the world, replied: '*Minchione! no! è gran furba lei*' (You a ninny! oh no, ma'am; you are a great thief)."

Perhaps "*gran furba*" might be translated more in consonance with what an Italian means when he uses these words as an idiomatic expression by the English phrases "a deep one," "a knowing customer," "a cunning hand," "a sly fox"; but Leigh Hunt, of course, preferred the stronger antithesis, and the more startling one, as an intended compliment.

The portrait appended to the present written sketch of Leigh Hunt gives an excellent idea of his personal appearance when I first knew him. It is taken from a pencil-drawing by Wageman, to whom Leigh Hunt sat in 1815 (at the request of my father, Vincent Novello), just after leaving Horsemonger Lane jail, where he had suffered two years' imprisonment for a libel on the Prince Regent in the "Examiner" newspaper. The slender proportions of the figure at that period, the mixture of thought, sweetness, and brightness in the countenance, the eyes penetrating yet kindly, the mouth grave yet glad ("grave with glad thoughts," to use his own expression in his "Hero and Leander"), are all traceable in that little picture; and I prefer it to any portrait of him that I have ever seen. The dress, too,—that simple frock-coat, with the loosely worn shirt-collar, then first allowed to pend easily downward,—is there truly represented. At the time when the Prince Regent (to hide a defect produced by disease) and his fashionable imitators (to ape him even in his least creditable modes) enveloped their throats with cravats of enormous size and voluminous folds, bolstered high around their necks and surmounted by stiff stuck-up collars, it became almost a party-badge and a sign of ultra liberalism with Hunt, Byron, Shelley, Keats, and their admirers to wear soft turn-down collars—easy, graceful, com-modious.

When I first remember Leigh Hunt, he had a quaint way with children, of making the one he chanced to be noticing a theme for a kind of breathless running comment, or string of humorous fancies—clear enough to himself and his grown hearers, but strangely puzzling to his juvenile auditor. Once, after dinner, at my father's house, "the children" came in to dessert according to established wont when there was company; and one of my younger sisters was taken upon Leigh Hunt's knee. In the eagerness of conversation, he did not quite finish the almonds and raisins upon his plate; and the child, spying the last neglected plum, drew his attention by pointing to it, looking up in his face, and saying, "There's a raisin!" He, thinking the little girl probably had hopes for herself relative to the disregarded sweet, laughingly

replied, "You've a *reason* for showing me that *raisin*"; and followed up his Dogberian pronunciation and pun with a volley of quips and quibbles on the word, ever after calling her "Little Reason." Those who have read Leigh Hunt's bright sparkle of fancies strung together in rhyming stanzas entitled "To J. H., four years old," beginning:

"Ah, little ranting Johnny,  
For ever blithe and bonny,  
And singing nonny, nonny,  
With his hat just thrown upon ye;  
Or whistling like the thrushes  
With voice in silver gushes;  
Or twisting random posies  
With daisies, weeds, and roses,"

will understand the peculiar whimsicality of his ways at that time with other children, from this address to his own little son.

A habit of cultivating cheerful thoughts and surrounding himself by lovely objects conducive to inspire refined and beautiful ideas, was a main feature in Leigh Hunt's daily life, and one that, early cherished, never forsook him to the very last. He carried out, in his own small writing-room,—wherever it might chance to be,—the wisdom inculcated (at a time when such tastes were rarer than they have become now, thanks in great measure to the teachings of Leigh Hunt himself) in such essays as the one called "Casts from Sculpture and Gems," in "The Indicator" for 17th Nov., 1819, where he tells his readers of the plaster copies from classical statues in these persuasive words, with a touch of characteristic playfulness in them:

"There is the Venus de' Medici, the Gladiator, the Quoilt-player, the Antinoüs, the Piping Faun, the Apollo Belvedere, all after the antique; and there is a couching Venus, after John of Bologna, the original of which must have been like Venus re-appearing from the antique world. Few people are aware how cheaply these things are sold. The little statues are three or four shilling apiece, perhaps less; and a profit is got upon the head of Sappho at eighteen-pence. You may set a price upon Paris's head, and have the knave brought you at two shillings. \* \* \* Thus for eighteen-pence a room may be adorned with a cast after the antique. And it must be a very fine picture, in our opinion, which can equal the effect even of a bust, much less of a large statue. There is a kind of presence in sculpture, which there is not in the flat surface and more obvious artifice of painting. It is more companion-like; or, rather, it is more god-like, intellectual, and predominant. The very beauty of its shape becomes meditative. There is a look in its calm, sightless eyes that seems to dispense with the common medium of vision,—a perceiving thought, an undisturbable depth of intuition."

The same graceful persuasion—similarly followed out by his own constant practice—runs through that enchanting essay in the

"London Journal" for 2d July, 1834, entitled "Breakfast in Summer." After picturing the least promising kind of room as the one to which poverty may possibly limit the reader, he suggests that "perhaps the morning sun comes into his room," adding: "The sun is ever beautiful and noble, and brings a cheerfulness out of heaven itself into the humblest apartment, if we have but the spirit to welcome it." Then he goes on to suppose a room where even the sun does not enter, and asks:

"What ornament is there, what supply of light or beauty could we discover, at once exquisite and cheap, that should furnish our humble board with a grace, precious in the eyes of the most intelligent among the rich? Flowers. Set flowers on your table, a whole nosegay if you can get it, or but two or three, or a single flower—a rose, a pink, nay, a daisy. Bring a few daisies and buttercups from your last field-walk, and keep them alive in a little water; aye, preserve but a branch of clover, or a handful of flowering grass,—one of the most elegant as well as cheap of nature's productions,—and you have something on your table that reminds you of the beauties of God's creation, and gives you a link with the poets and sages that have done it most honor. Put but a rose, or a lily, or a violet on your table, and *you and Lord Bacon* have a custom in common; for that great and wise man was in the habit of having the flowers in season set upon his table. \* \* \* Flowers on a morning table are specially suitable to the time. They look like the happy wakening of the creation; they bring the perfumes of the breath of nature into your room; they seem the representations and embodiments of the very smiles of your home, the graces of its good-morrow, proofs that some intellectual beauty is in ourselves or those about us, some house Aurora (if we are so lucky as to have such a companion) helping to strew our life with sweets, or in ourselves some masculine mildness not unworthy to possess such a companion, or unlikely to gain her.

"Even a few leaves, if we can get no flowers, are far better than no such ornament—a branch from the next tree, or the next herb-market, or some twigs that have been plucked from a flowering hedge. They are often, nay, always, beautiful, particularly in spring, when their green is tenderest. The first new boughs in spring, plucked and put into a water-bottle, have often an effect that may compete with flowers themselves, considering their novelty, and indeed

'Leaves would be counted flowers, if earth had none.'

\* \* \* For our part, as far as ourself alone is concerned, it seems to us that we would not be mastered by the blackest storm of existence, in the worst pass that our pilgrimage could bring us to, as long as we had shelter over our heads, a table with bread and a cup of tea upon it, and a single one of these green smiles upon the board, to show us that good-natured Nature was alive."

And well and nobly and truly did Leigh Hunt fulfill the pledge conveyed in that closing sentence! He bore adversity firmly,—nay, smilingly; and no less won admiration from those who had the privilege of knowing him when alive, than he secured lasting esteem and affection after he left earth.