

FROM AN ANCIENT IRISH MOUND.

ON this lone mound of legend, heaped by hands
That have been still from immemorial years,
Above their mythic chief, whose vassal lands
Forget his name,—so long forgot by tears,—

I dream. Below me wrath and ruin are.
England's ally there shook down Philip's fleet.
Here sings a young bird like some morning star.
The old song's sorrow makes the new song sweet.

Sarah M. B. Piatt.

A GLIMPSE OF WASHINGTON IRVING AT HOME.



IT is now forty years and over since I was a school-boy at Tarrytown, and when I revisited the place not long ago I was not surprised to find it somewhat altered. The changes I remarked were, however,

only such as might have been looked for in a town so prettily situated and so near New York; and I was pleased to find that the memory of Washington Irving had restrained the hand of improvement from destroying the few objects to which his writings have given an interest, as well as from defacing the sites which tradition or popular imagination has identified with the scenes of his delightful legend. Sleepy Hollow is still very much the same lazy country road it was in the old days when we school-boys wandered along it in the summer afternoons picking blackberries from the wayside vines. Following the turn-pike-road down the hill, we come to Beekman's mill-pond; and crossing the pretty stream, the Pocantico, on the bridge over which Ichabod galloped, pursued in his mad flight by the headless horseman, we reach the old Dutch church, surrounded by the graves of many generations—those of the earlier settlers clustering thickly about the church itself, while the newer graves people the rising ground toward the north.

It is in this newer portion of the cemetery that Washington Irving lies. His grave is in the middle of a large plot purchased by him in 1853, six years before his death. The stone that marks his grave is a plain slab of white marble on which are engraved his name and date alone, without any memorial inscription. The path that leads to the entrance-gate of the plot is so worn by the feet of visitors that a stranger hardly needs to ask his way to the place.

I confess I heard not without a secret pleasure that the relic-hunters so chip and hammer the stone that marks Irving's grave as to make its frequent renewal necessary. It

did not seem to me a grievous wrong, nor in any true sense a profanation of the grave, but rather a testimony to the loveliness of Irving's character, and an evidence of the wide extent of his fame, that, from filling the circle of the educated and refined among his countrymen, has now come to include that lower stratum of our common humanity which has only instinctive and, so to speak, mechanical ways of expressing its feelings. Who is so insensible to the good opinion of his kind as not to think such a trodden path as this that leads to Irving's grave better than any written line of praise, and the very destruction of his monument, by this reprehensible clipping and chipping, a more enduring testimony to his work than any monument of brass!

It would not have been easy to find a place more in harmony with the associations that gather about Irving's name as a writer than the spot in which he is buried. Even to-day, with all the changes that have been brought about by the growth of the neighboring settlement, the spirit of peace and quiet that used to brood over the region hovers there undisturbed. Irving's own words, in the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," describing the grave-yard, the old church, and the stream that plays about its feet, reflect with the faithfulness of a mirror the scene as we behold it to-day.

Here is the church, a small building with rough sides of the country-stone, surmounted by a picturesque roof, and with an open bell-turret over which still veers the vane pierced with the initials of the Vrederick Felypsen who built the church and endowed it in 1699. In our rambles about the grave-yard we used to find the bricks of light-colored clay, brought from Holland, and of which, so tradition said, the church had been originally built, or which had, at any rate, been largely used in its construction.

The church was seldom used, except in the summer-time. On communion Sundays the handsome seventeenth-century Jacobean table of oak brought from Holland, where plenty like it may still be found, was set out, as it is to-day, with the plain vessels of silver "pre-

sented by Queen Anne," as the formula goes, that used to please my childish taste for things that had about them the flavor of old days.

The same budding taste for antiquities led me and some of my school-mates to the old grave-yard, where we hunted up the oldest tombstones, scraping off the moss and lichens to decipher the names and dates, and enjoying many a laugh over their carved ornaments, scrolls, and cockle-shells, and sturdy, dew-lapped Dutch cherubs, with their stumpy little wings scored like checker-boards for plumage. Many of these gravestones were said to have been imported from Holland by the early settlers, like the bricks of which the church was built, the table in the church, and much of the furniture to be found in the farm-houses of the country-side, chairs and tables, cupboards, and even looking-glasses. The carvings, memorial verses, and scripture-texts upon these tombstones were cut by the more skillful workmen over-seas, and the names and dates were filled in here at home as occasion called.

Even so early as when Mr. Irving wrote the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," he tells us that the bridge over which Ichabod Crane clattered half dead with fright, pursued by the headless horseman, had long disappeared, and that the present one had been substituted for it, to avert the omen of the tragedy. The banks of the Pocantico above the bridge are greatly changed since those primitive days. They are now cleared of the underbrush that once clothed them so thickly and through which a narrow cow-path made its devious way. The cow-path is now an orderly lane, and the sunlight strikes through tamer leafage on a well-kept turf; for the banks of the pretty stream have been transformed into a rural pleasure-ground, where the plump Katrinas and spruce Ichabods of to-day may wander and flirt at their will on Sunday afternoons.

Although Tarrytown retains certain of the features that it had when I first knew it, yet the general character of the place is very different. When those of us who used to read Washington Irving's tales and sketches among the scenes in which they are popularly supposed to have been written read them now, in the midst of this combed and curled landscape, set about with overdressed houses, and inhabited by people who regulate their lives by the city clock, we no longer feel the harmony between the printed page and the life about us that we felt then. It was easy, in the old time, to believe the story of Ichabod Crane, because the characters described in the tale were just such people as we met daily in the village street, or in the church on Sundays, and Irving has

hardly made use of the novelist's license in portraying them.

The brisk little woman who was cook in our boarding-school was Mrs. Van Tassel; and the delicious fragrance of her bread, baked twice a week for us in an old-fashioned brick oven, has power even at this late day to make us forget that she had a temper of her own, of which her red-headed scape-grace of a son stood as much in awe as we. The question with us was, what was her relation to Katrina? For, to the boyish mind, the facts that she was a Van Tassel, and a native of Tarrytown, were convincing proofs that she belonged to the family of the renowned Baltus, albeit Fortune had played the good lady one of her jade's tricks in reducing her to the position of cook to a parcel of unruly boys.

And where, to-day, could be found such a figure as the weather-beaten deacon in the Dutch church presented when, in his blue coat and brass buttons, and his hair done up in a pigtail, he stood up in front of the pulpit and took the first note of the psalm-tune with a tuning-fork; the parson giving out two lines of each verse at a time, and the congregation following the precentor's lead with nasal unanimity!

I came on the scene a little late to get the full benefit of the primitive time; but there was enough simplicity left to stamp the image of the place on my memory as a sleepy neighborhood, where dreaming was more in fashion than doing. The village itself was a dull Dutch market-town, consisting, in the main, of one long street that lumbered slowly up the hill from the riverside to the narrow plateau along which the Albany turnpike runs. There was no communication with the city of New York except by steamboat or by sloop, for the railroad which has since ruined the banks of the most beautiful river in the world was not so much as thought of at that time. In the winter we drove to the city in sleighs. I believe no regular stage-coach plied between New York and Tarrytown.

Considering how dead the village was, so far as active interests were concerned, we were fortunate as school-boys in having anything to quicken our minds in the history and associations of the region. We became strongly interested in the legendary gossip of the time of the Revolution, much of which centered about André; his capture on our side of the river, and his trial and execution at Tappan, directly opposite us, on the other side of the broad Tappan Zee. The tree under which André's captors were sitting, playing cards, when he came up, for so the story ran, still stood in the field by the roadside; although, between the relic-hunters and the lightning, it

had come, when I knew it, to present a rather forlorn appearance. Mr. Irving made good dramatic use of this tree in his "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," but it is likely enough he had not seen it when he wrote the story.

Our minds, thus kept awake by living in an atmosphere charged with legendary lore and with local history, were still further inspired by living so near to a man of genius who had already made the country-side classic ground by his residence there, and by the legends he had enshrined in the amber of his style.

We were not aware, at that time, how slight was Mr. Irving's acquaintance with the region when he wrote the legend that has made it immortal. When he published the story of Rip Van Winkle he had not visited the Catskill Mountains, and he went to Tarrytown for the first time in 1798, when he was fifteen years old, with his dog and gun, for a few days, and it would appear that he did not see the place again for several years — certainly not until some time after "The Sketch Book" had made him famous.

Mr. Irving first heard the story of the headless horseman from his brother-in-law, Mr. Van Wart, in Birmingham, at the time of his visit to England in 1819. The two homesick friends fell to talking about old times and scenes, and among the stories that Mr. Van Wart recalled was this one, which so tickled Irving's fancy that he sat down at once — such was his happy, off-hand way — and rapidly sketched the outline of his story, which he afterward finished in London and sent home to America, to be published, with other stories, as the sixth number of "The Sketch Book." He says himself that the story is a mere thread on which to string descriptions of scenery, and surely all that he wrote came from his heart. He had seen the Hudson for the first time in the full flush of eager boyhood, sailing up the river from New York to Albany, but without stopping anywhere, and the strong impression made upon his mind at that time by the beauty of the scenery, strengthened a little later by his visit to Tarrytown, was sufficient to root his imagination in that region. Years afterward, homesick and discouraged in London, the seed so early sown burst into sudden life; and in that one picture and its companion, Rip Van Winkle, all the landscape was painted breathing warm with life and feeling, but with little more care for detailed resemblance to any one spot than a Claude or a Turner shows.

Not far up the Sleepy Hollow road was the little country school-house which we had decided, on no better authority than that of childish imagination, must be the school-house

in which Ichabod Crane taught. One day I ventured to ask Mr. Irving if it was really the same, and I can still see the sunshine-smile in his handsome face as he put me by with some quizzical, non-committal answer. Had I been wise, I should have known enough to be content with the credentials furnished by imagination. But children have a very commonplace hunger for facts, and so in my ignorance I exchanged a pleasing certainty for an empty doubt.

While I was at school at Tarrytown, Mr. Irving was living on his little Sabine farm of Wolfert's Roost, which afterward was so widely known as Sunnyside. The place, which originally contained ten acres, afterward increased first to fifteen and finally to eighteen acres, lay on the river-bank a few miles below the village, in a neighborhood vaguely known as "Dearman's." There was no distinct settlement at this point in my time, but in 1854, the place, having secreted enough population to warrant it, was set off from Tarrytown and incorporated as a village, to which, out of compliment to Mr. Irving, the name of Irvington was given.

Mr. Irving had never been a man of means, and at the time I speak of his early fame as a writer had almost died away. Had I been at school in any other place than Tarrytown, I suspect I should have heard very little about him. But our schoolmaster had named his school the Irving Institute, and had persuaded Mr. Irving, out of his abounding good nature and liking for young folks, to visit the school occasionally at "Commencement" time, and give out the prizes. This of course made it necessary to keep us acquainted with Irving's writings, and there were some of us who found this no ungrateful task. "The History of New York" and "The Sketch Book" we knew by heart. In the village, too, Irving was not without local honors. The new hotel was called the Irving Hotel, the myth-making spirit had already given a local habitation to all the incidents of the "Legend of Sleepy Hollow," and strangers were directed on Sunday to the church where Mr. Irving was a regular attendant, and where they could study the great man at their leisure.

All this, however, was the result of Mr. Irving's residence in the neighborhood. In New York, to say nothing of the country at large, comparatively little was said about Irving. He was reckoned a little old-fashioned, and people's eyes were turned rather to Longfellow and Hawthorne and Emerson, and to Lowell, the newest risen star.

Something of Irving's literary position in New York at that time was owing, no doubt, to the grudge that existed against him in the

minds of the descendants of the early Dutch settlers, on account of his "History of New York." I crossed the ocean not long ago with a member of a New York family whose name is known as honorably as it is widely, and whose members have done good service in many fields of culture. In the long summer days on deck we talked of many things, and naturally enough, both of us being New Yorkers, we came upon Irving. I was taken aback by the heat with which my companion attacked his name. He frankly expressed his dislike, and when I pressed for a reason, I found it to be that Irving had made New York ridiculous. The city had a more than respectable early history: it was one highly honorable, and Irving's book had turned it into irretrievable caricature. It would need a talent as great as his own — for the talent was frankly conceded — to paint the canvas over again; it was doubtful, now, if it would ever be done.

I could not sympathize in the least with my companion's view. As I looked at the matter, I thought New Yorkers ought to be much obliged to Irving for having built up so lively a structure on the flat marshland of their early history. And why should not New York have a fanciful early history as well as Rome or England? We read the stories of the Greek cities as if we believed them; why should we stick so at our own fabulist and his work — "the Dutch Herodotus, Diedrich Knickerbocker," as Mr. John Duer, one of the old Knickerbockers, had the magnanimity to call him? Is it not likely that the stories of Menelaus and Helen, of the wooden horse, and of sulking Achilles, were as disagreeable to old Greek and Trojan families as the fables of Van Twiller and Stuyvesant were to the old New Yorkers?

Irving has been called the last of the mythologists, but it must be admitted that Cable and Craddock are showing delightful skill in work of a similar kind. And the way in which a brilliant, charming, and sympathetic writer has been criticised in New Orleans enables us to understand how Irving was treated in New York. His nephew's "Life and Letters" has some amusing anecdotes relating to the subject. Irving himself treated the matter rather lightly, but even he must have had some feeling on the subject, for in his revised edition of the "History," he withdrew the original dedication to the New York Historical Society. A distinguished scholar, a member of one of the oldest and most respectable of the Dutch families, had said, in an address delivered before the Society, speaking of Irving and his "History": "It is painful to see a mind, as admirable for its exquisite perception of the beautiful as it is for its quick

sense of the ridiculous, wasting the riches of its fancy on an ungrateful theme, and its exuberant humor in a coarse caricature."

And to show how deep was the irritation caused by this "coarse caricature," which Walter Scott and all the cultivated world of England found so delightful, and which was the foundation of Irving's fame and fortune, I would record that, while writing this paper, finding myself in the country, away from my books, I asked a member of a family which may surely stand as representative of everything the Knickerbockers had of best, if in her father's library — very rich in English literature, and in beautiful editions, the envy of the bibliophile — I could not find "The Sketch Book."

"Well, no," was the half-amused, half-ashamed reply. "We have not, I believe, a single work of Irving's. You know when grandfather lived, and we were young, Irving was *taboo!*"

But in 1846, after his return from Spain, where he had most acceptably filled the position of Minister, Irving's sky, which, when all is said, had never been seriously obscured, cleared finally, and took on that mellow beauty which continued to the end of his life. Perhaps no incident will serve better to mark the date of the change in Irving's literary fortunes than the publication of Lowell's "Fable for Critics":

"Set forth in October, the 31st day,
In the year '48, G. P. Putnam, Broadway."

Lowell's enthusiastic greeting to Irving in this delightful burst of youthful spirits, one of the best characterizations in the poem, begins with an allusion to Irving's recent return from Spain. In the same year with the publication of the "Fable for Critics" began the re-issue of Irving's works by Mr. Putnam, most generous of publishers and kindest of men, whom not even a Napoleon would have found it in his heart to shoot, or if he had, no Charles Lamb would have toasted him for it. The success of this venture was very great. The eyes of the public were again turned upon Irving, and his early triumphs were renewed: no less than two hundred and fifty thousand volumes of the new issue of his works were sold during his lifetime.

Neither the public honors that were heaped upon him after his return, nor the prosperity that came so unexpectedly to reward his literary labors, had any charm to wean Mr. Irving from his taste for the simple pleasures of a country life, his plain house, his old friends, his little study lined with books, his rambles on horseback among the well-known hills and lanes, his vine-trellised piazza (we have no American

name for this distinctively American thing) where he could sit at his ease in the summer evenings and hear the waves of the Hudson River lapping the shore at his feet.

Everybody knows the exterior of the cottage at Sunnyside from pictures, engravings, photographs, or from having himself been one of the hundreds of pilgrims who have visited it. When Irving bought the place, in 1835, there stood upon it a small stone house called Wolfert's Roost (Roost, rest), from a former owner, Wolfert Acker (the name of Acker is still heard in the neighborhood), who had been one of the Committee of Public Safety, and who had come here to set up his Rest, and take his ease. Mr. Irving called in the services of an architect, Mr. George Harvey, to fit up the cottage for his occupancy, and he was fortunate in finding so sympathetic an assistant. When it was finished, it had not only lost nothing of the character which first struck Irving's fancy, but it had that air of "old times" about it which is so hard to give to a new place, or even to an old place made over. The architect gave it back comfortable, and suited to Mr. Irving's needs, yet no less picturesque than it was when he first described it — the "little old-fashioned stone mansion, all made up of gable-ends, and as full of angles and corners as an old cocked hat."

The principal external feature was a substantial porch, supporting a room overhead, and with a crow-step gable surmounted by a weather-cock. Over the entrance to the porch is a stone bearing the architect's name and title, "George Harvey, Bomr," an abbreviation for "Boumeister," which Mr. Irving had raked up as Dutch for "architect."

Every visitor, too, must have remarked the fine growth of English ivy which covers the eastern side of the cottage with a thick mantle of green — so thick, indeed, that the windows of the second story had the look of being cut out of the solid mass of shining verdure. This ivy has grown from a slip brought from Melrose Abbey and presented to Mr. Irving by his friend Mrs. Renwick. This lady, Mr. Pierre Irving tells us, was a Miss Jeffrey of Lochmaben, Dumfriesshire, Scotland. She was the heroine of Burns's "Blue-eyed Lassie," as well as of another of his songs, "When first I saw my Jennie's face."

After Mr. Irving's return from Spain, in 1846, the services of Mr. Harvey were again called in for an addition to the cottage which should make living in it more comfortable as a permanent dwelling, with better offices and more commodious servants' quarters, and this work was accomplished as successfully as the other. No material changes were made in the internal arrangement of the older part of the

building, but externally, as a whole, the alteration was very marked: the sky-line was much enlivened by the pagoda-like roof over one portion, which was the subject of some good-natured raillery on the part of Irving's neighbors; and when it was completed the house had a picturesque charm uncommon enough at that time. With the turn in Mr. Irving's literary fortunes which began at this time everything relating to his personality became of interest to the public, and artists found the cottage at Sunnyside a popular subject for sketches and pictures.

The interior of Mr. Irving's house hardly corresponded with the promise made by the outside. As I remember, it was plainly but comfortably furnished; and, compared with almost any house lived in by a person of Irving's position to-day, would certainly be said to have a bare look. I was particularly struck with this in the parlor, where the only ornament I remember was the portrait of Irving painted in 1820 by Stuart Newton, and of which the head and bust, showing the fur collar of his coat, is engraved in his nephew's "Life and Letters."

If the parlor were somewhat bare, Mr. Irving's study was hardly more attractive. It was a small room, to the right on entering, with windows looking to the south and east; that facing the east was framed in the ivy of which I have spoken. In the middle of the room was the plain table, always in a state of healthy disorder, at which Irving wrote, and at the north end was an alcove filled with books. As a youngster fond of reading, and with my mind made up as to how the workroom of a famous author ought to look, I was much disappointed at the somewhat uninviting appearance of this small chamber. But Irving's literary work had not been of a nature to make many books necessary, and the writings that have given him his true reputation — the "History of New York," and "The Sketch Book," with its followers in the same field — were all written and published before he came to Sunnyside to live. There was nothing in Irving's surroundings, or in his way of life, to suggest the literary man. His house might have been that of any gentleman bachelor with a happy turn for indolence, with no expensive tastes, but with an inborn relish for the simple pleasures of country life.

This absence of picturesque or artistic surroundings, supposing it to have been noticed at all, was quickly forgotten, however, by all who met him, in the charms of his manners, and in the pleasure of listening to his talk. Yet it was not at once seen wherein the charm of his manner lay. No one of the stock epithets describes him. He had at fifty-seven,

when I first saw him, the unconscious animal spirits of a boy. He could make himself at home with anybody, and put a child, or even a bore, at his ease. His fine face, to which no artist ever did justice, such was its mobility of expression, was now all sunshine over his own mirth or that of somebody else, now working with emotion as he recalled old times or spoke of some friend from whom death had separated him, or from whom he had just now parted with little hope to meet again. Easy and natural as were Mr. Irving's manners, there was a strong individuality behind them: they are reflected in his books, whose limpid style seems so easy to imitate, and yet is beyond the reach of effort.

I happened to be with him on one occasion when a young man whom he knew called upon him, and in the course of the conversation informed him that he had recently married. "Who is the lady?" said Mr. Irving; and on hearing the name—"What! a granddaughter of Mrs.—, the lady who declined to dance with Washington? Dear me! dear me! Since I have been writing the 'Life of Washington,' I have heard of no end of ladies who had danced with Washington, but Mrs.— is the only one I ever heard of who had declined to dance with him!"

And in the newspapers lately there was a story which might certainly have been true, if it were not. Irving was walking one day in his orchard when a small boy who was prowling about accosted him, and with a confidential air offered to show him "the old man's best tree," if he would shake it for him! Irving agreed; and "By George, sir! if he didn't actually take me to the very best tree on my place!"

When I was last at Tarrytown, I was visiting at one of those handsome houses and

well-kept places which make the sleepy, slouchy ways of the region, such as it was in my school-boy days, seem more than ever like a dream. My hostess took me to the edge of the velvet lawn, and showed me a rock. "That," she said, "we call Irving's seat. This place, when we bought it, was a farm. It belonged to old Captain S—, and he told us that Mr. Irving used to climb this hill and sit on this rock overlooking the river and the landscape, and Captain S— found it so pleasant to have him come, that he had the rock shaped into a rude seat to make it more comfortable. Here Irving would spread the plaid with which he was accustomed to protect his shoulders and which he used instead of an overcoat in walking about, and here he sat with his old farmer friend beside him, and passed the hour in homely chat or alone with his own thoughts."

The last time I saw Mr. Irving in his own house something turned the conversation to the group of American artists—Leslie, Stuart Newton, Allston, and the rest—with whom he was so intimate in London at the time of his first visit. I think what led to his speaking of his friends was my asking him some question about his portrait by Stuart Newton, which, as I have said, hung in the drawing-room. After a little, the talk turned on Allston, and he began to speak of him in the tenderest, most affectionate way. "I was just reading over one of his letters," he said; and he rose quickly from his chair and went into his study to fetch it. Returning at once with the letter in his hand, he began to read it, but had not gone far when his recollections overcame him, his eyes filled with tears, and exclaiming, "I can't bear it," he threw the letter down on the floor. Recovering himself, he changed the subject, and I presently withdrew.

Clarence Cook.



THE DESERTER.

BLINDEST and most frantic prayer,
Clutching at a senseless boon,
His that begs, in mad despair,
Death to come;—he comes so soon!

Like a reveler that strains
Lip and throat to drink it up—
The last ruby that remains,
One red droplet in the cup.

Like a child that, sullen, mute,
Sulking spurns, with chin on breast,
Of the Tree of Life a fruit,
His gift of whom he is the guest.

Outcast on the thither shore,
Open scorn to him shall give
Souls that heavier burdens bore:—
"See the wretch that dared not live!"

Anthony Morehead.



AFTER A DAGUERRETYPE BY PLUMB, ABOUT 1850.

ENGRAVED BY T. JOHNSON.

Washington Irving