THE LAST MANUSCRIPT OF HENRY WARD BEECHER.

[THIS fragmentary article was the last piece of Mr. Beecher's manuscript. He was engaged upon it during the last week of his life, and the pages were found on his table after the attack which resulted in his death. It was the rough draft of the beginning of a paper on his English tour of 1863 which he had arranged to write for THE CENTURY "War Book." On the morning of the day on which he was stricken Mr. Beecher came to the office of THE CENTURY to discuss certain details of the paper. In the course of a long conversation at the time concerning this tour and its effect upon the public opinion and the diplomacy of England, he touched interestingly upon many points. He said that he had no word of blame for English prejudices on the questions involved in the war, since he knew that they were founded in ignorance which only needed to be enlightened; that on the whole when they were fully informed as to the facts the English were a just and candid people; that he knew it was only necessary to demonstrate to them that the triumph of the North meant the end of slavery. He stated (and he expected to touch upon the topic in the article) that the first overtures for the purchase of English cruisers for use in our war had come not from the Confederacy, but from the United States Navy Department through Assistant-Secretary Fox. He spoke lightly and yet with feeling of the fact that his work in England had been pointedly ignored by Secretary Seward, specifically in a speech of the Secretary's to a New York committee in Washington, of which Mr. Beecher was one. He expressed gratification at learning in this conversation that Cobden had told an American gentleman (Mr. W. H. Osborn) that Beecher had saved the day for the North in England. (Mr. Cobden further said: "The gentlemen who preceded Mr. Beecher worked in society, in drawing-rooms, etc.; Mr. Beecher determined to reach public opinion through the press — his vigorous speeches were copied in all the journals of Great Britain. I consider him the first platform orator living. He slaps back with tremendous force, and when insulted by the mob who had collected to put him down, his instantaneous retorts were powerful; he displayed great qualities; demanded fair play, which the audience were compelled to give him. Thus the case reached the whole English people.") Mr. Beecher also dwelt especially upon the sacrifices which the championship of the North entailed upon the Lancashire operatives — emphasizing with personal expression the tribute with which this article closes, and which will be recognized as a fitting and characteristic last word in a life devoted to the cause of the poor and the oppressed.— EDITOR.]

IN June of 1863, in company with Professor John H. Raymond, I visited England. I have often seen it stated that I was sent by the United States Government, or at least with the knowledge and suggestion of President Lincoln's administration. But this is an error. I went upon my own errand, and, so far as I know, without the knowledge of Mr. Lincoln and his Cabinet; nor during my stay abroad did I receive any commission or communication of any kind from the American Government. I went simply for rest and re-invigoration.

Aside from the duties of my parish, I had since 1856, when Frémont was the candidate of the nascent Republican party, labored in season and out of season. During July, August, and September of 1856 I traversed the State of New York, addressing large popular audiences. For the most part the meetings were in the open air, and ranged from five to ten thousand people. My voice, by excessive speaking, had become very rough, and it required three years to restore it to its accustomed smoothness.

The country came to the election in 1860 with constantly increasing excitement. At that time I had assumed the editorship of the New York "Independent," and between preaching, lecturing, editing, and the intense solicitude for the fate of our armies, I began to flag, and determined to go to Europe for rest and recuperation.

We sailed on the *City of Richmond*, Captain Brooks. Lying on my back, I said to myself: For years I have been studying every phase of American slavery — its history, its relation to morals and religion, to political economy, to the welfare of the laboring men of the world. But, I reflected, this war will surely destroy slavery. Neither religion nor patriotism has checked or alleviated its evils. Commerce had yielded to its golden blandishments, and politics had protected it and fostered its influence upon governmental policy. Nothing but the fiery plow of war was to tear up its roots, and destroy it, branch and seed. And as I lay, half dreaming, I said to myself, All my preparation has been vain; I shall have no more use for my years of reflection and study. I knew not that just before me lay a work in which every element of preparation would be needed to the utmost!

We steamed up the Mersey in a dull, rainy morning. When the tug came off to the ship,

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FAC-SIMILE PAGE OF THE LAST MANUSCRIPT WRITTEN BY HENRY WARD BEECHER.

it brought a committee from Manchester requesting me to speak in that city. What I thought of them, I well remember; what they thought of me, I cannot imagine. My soft hat had been white when I embarked, but was crushed on my head gray and grimed, and a huge shawl was swathed about the shoulders, dripping with rain, and the incredulous look with which they greeted me was fully justified by my appearance.

I gave them a short and sharp refusal. In my then state of mind I felt that England had played false to my country. I was thoroughly angry. I determined to pass through to the Continent, and shake off the dust of my feet against our unnatural mother. Nothing was to be hoped from her; her statesmen, her courtiers, her lords, spiritual and temporal, her clergymen, for the most part, even her abolitionists and the very Quakers, who had for years pricked our consciences with gentle spurs, laying on us the responsibility of slavery, now that we had arisen, and begun a war which should exterminate it, refused us all sympathy, were almost coquetting with the South, or were indifferent. What had I to do with these lukewarm friends or undisguised enemies? Yes; I was soundly angry, and felt as Jonah, "I do well to be angry, even unto death."

A few days' rest, a trip to the lakes and into Wales, somewhat ameliorated my disposition, and anger ultimately was changed to compassion. I consented to attend a temperance breakfast at Glasgow, and on the pledge that no report should be published made a speech, which got me into disgrace with General Hooker, who, however, at a later date, after the war, was reconciled, and remained friendly. In London, too, I attended a breakfast of ministers and clergymen, and laid open some views of the struggle going on in America. Respectful attention, but little sympathy and no enthusiasm, was shown to the Northern cause.

I left England in no amiable mood, and made a hurried tour through France, Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, returning to London in September. While in Paris I was comforted with news of Vicksburg and Gettysburg. I staid at the Grand Hotel. In the glass-covered court there was daily an assemblage of Southerners. They were swollen with confidence in the Southern cause, and after the old-fashioned insolence of fire-eaters they made their presence known whenever I passed through the court, not only by contemptuous demeanor, but by sending insulting messages by the servants. At length came the tidings of the surrender of Vicksburg and of Lee's defeat! There was then no ocean telegraph. The news was sent to Queenstown and reached us on a Sunday morning. Mr. Dayton was then our Minister to France. I sat in church with his family. After the opening services, and while the notices for the week were being read, I turned to Miss Dayton and said: "Lee has been defeated." "True?" "Yes, certain." She turned to a young lady by her side, an American, too, and whispered the news. On rising to sing the hymn before the sermon, the two attempted to sing, but broke down on the first two lines, and in a flood of tears sat down. Three of us were busy at the same time. The news of the fall of Vicksburg came about noon of the same day. I learned it from George Jones, of "The New York Times," and dashed around to Mr. Dayton's mansion to tell the joyful tidings. On going down-stairs I met Mr. Jones coming up. Alas! he was too late! I did not in the wild excitement of the moment dream that I should not have snatched from him the pleasure of announcing the joyful tidings to our minister. It was a "beat." From that hour I had no reason to complain of the ungentlemanly conduct of the Southern gentlemen. They were seen no more during my stay in Paris.

I returned to London in September, meaning to embark for America. I refused to enter the field in England — refused all invitations to speak at public meetings, and was, generally, out of sorts with Great Britain. With one or two notable exceptions the leading papers of the kingdom were unfavorable to the North. The great majority of Parliament, with few exceptions, the nobility, the great body of professional men, men of education and wealth, the clergymen and dissenting ministers, Quakers and antislavery men of the old stripe, and in short, as it was said to me, "All men who can afford to ride in first-class cars, and put up at first-class hotels, are prejudiced against the North, even when not in sympathy with the South." To this must be added the discouragement of Americans in England; they seemed cowed by the sentiment about them, walked softly, and whispered like men conscious of danger.

Meantime, as the days went on, men began to say, "It is best that the nation should be divided." Indeed an eminent clergyman of London, a warm personal friend, said to me: "I tell you, Beecher, we have seen for some time that your nation was getting too strong, and was dividing with England the rule of the sea, and we felt that the time would come when we should have to step in and repress you — and so, we are glad to have the South step in and do it for us." No matter what my reply was: it was more pungent than wise or polite. The whole atmosphere was chilly, and I felt myself to be in a hostile nation. Some bright spots there were — and, singu-

larly enough, they represented the extremes of society. When the capture of the *Trent*, with Mason and Slidell, had set Great Britain into a blaze, and Lord John Russell was about to send to the British representative at Washington a dispatch couched in terms that would have inflamed our people, the Queen had employed her husband, Prince Albert, to modify the tone, and to strike out some of the most offensive passages entirely.[1] It was the dictate of wisdom, both on moral and political grounds, and quenched the sparks that, if suffered to take air, might have burst into dangerous flames. It is said that aside from political prudence there was a maternal inspiration. The extraordinary enthusiasm with which the then young Prince of Wales had been received by the American people of the North, which in cordiality had surpassed his reception in Canada, gave to Queen Victoria great gratification. This illustrious lady, among other excellences, has, in eminent degree, fidelity to friends and friendship.

On the other hand, the laboring classes, especially cotton workers in Lancashire, were friendly to the cause of the North. But for the non-voting hand-workers of Great Britain, Parliament would without doubt have decreed belligerent rights to the South. It was in the hearts of the legislators, but they were restrained by the knowledge of the strong sympathy of the common people for the cause of liberty. Trained in America, where universal manhood suffrage prevails, it puzzled me to understand how the Government should be affected by men without votes. It was explained to me that Englishmen without the right of suffrage were jealous of legislation, and were in danger of great excitement and even of violence when the voting class disregarded the popular wishes. The weakness of the unvoting common people was, under certain circumstances, their strength —at any rate to the extent of making legislators cautious in pursuing a measure against the known wishes of the common people.

It would naturally be expected that the men whose livelihood depended upon the South and its cotton would be prejudiced against a war which interrupted commercial intercourse and stopped the supply of cotton. But it is to be remembered that Manchester had been educated by such men as John Bright, Richard Cobden, [and] W. E. Forster, who with others of like noble natures had fought the Corn Laws and brought in the policy of free trade.

A more pathetic example of the heroism of the poor was never exhibited than in the case of the Lancashire weavers. They saw their industries wasting, the bread grew scarce, even their poverty became poorer, nor was there any sign upon the horizon that this cloud would soon pass away, and yet they held fast their integrity; and, believing that the cause of the North was the cause of the day laborer the world over, they patiently bore famine and distress with fortitude till the day dawned. No other men among all English-speaking people gave a testimony of the love of liberty so heroic and so pathetic as the weavers of Lancashire.

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Henry Ward Beecher.

[1] While Her Majesty was doubtless in entire accord with the Prince Consort in this matter, the authoritative account given by Sir Theodore Martin in his "Life of the Prince Consort," Vol. V., pp. 349, 350 (D. Appleton & Co.), would indicate that the initiative came from the Prince.—EDITOR.

TOPICS OF THE TIME.

Christmas.

IT was old Thomas Tusser, away back in fifteen hundred and something, who sang:

> At Christmas play, and make good cheer,
> For Christmas comes but once a year.

The return of this anniversary is no longer a matter of indifference in any department of thought or life. In Tusser's day it was chiefly an occasion for mirth under the sanction of religion — and far off be the time when such an observance of Christmas shall cease. For what this age needs — and coming ages promise to need it quite as much — is mirthfulness.

The intensity of modern life and the deepening of consciousness through intelligence breed sadness. We think too much and work too hard to have time for enjoyment, and if we suddenly discover that we have need of it, we take it in inordinate quantities, rather than in simple and natural ways; we go out and buy pleasure at so much the hour instead of somehow contriving to live a mirthful life. Close observers of modern society, like Walter Besant, have discovered that a main lack in the lives of the poor is that of cheer, and he urges that philanthropic plans should embrace measures for daily brightening the lives of the people by some simple experience of a pleasurable sort. It would be a somber fact if the number of those who live through a day without a laugh or even a smile could be ascertained,—a strange miscarriage of Nature, since man is the only being within her dominion who is capable of that action. Christmas has rendered the world this good service, that now for many centuries it has called men to sympathetic cheerfulness. It comes, indeed, but once a year, but for some days the cloud on the brow of humanity lifts a little and the wail dies out of its voice. At times it has been too obstreperous in its mirth and called for puritanic check, but for the most it has been true to its origin and stirred the human heart to sympathetic gladness and hope. We shall soon hear the growls of the pessimistic critic over the wastefulness of