

## AN ACQUAINTANCE WITH HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN.

### I.



HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN has been dead for seventeen years, but his fame shows a vitality which suffers no diminution with the lapse of time. It is born anew with every fresh generation of children, and it is cherished by adults with the tenderness which clings to every memory of childhood. His "Wonder Stories" are the only books belonging to the pinafore period which are not discarded with advancing years; nay, which gain a new significance with maturing age. We read "The Ugly Duckling" with the same delight at thirty that we did at ten; for we discover a new substratum of meaning which escaped our infantine eyes. "The Emperor's New Clothes," which fascinates a child by the mere absurdity of its principal situation, recalls to the adult a charming bit of satire for which he finds daily application in his own experience. The novel "The Improvisatore," though it is fifty-seven years since it was written, is yet exhibited in the booksellers' windows on the Piazza di Spagna side by side with the latest Parisian successes; it is found in the satchels of nearly every tourist who crosses the Alps; and it was republished a few years ago, in a complete set of its author's works, by a well-known Boston publishing house. Father Time, as we all know, is the author's worst enemy; and an author who, though dead, can make such a vigorous fight against the ruthless old iconoclast has evidently the stuff in him for a long post-mortem career. He may be said to have made a successful launch toward immortality.

I had the good fortune to make Hans Christian Andersen's acquaintance in 1873, during a three weeks' sojourn in Copenhagen.

The Danish poet Vilhelm Bergsøe was my cicerone, and kindly furnished me with introductions to his literary friends. He told me a charming story of Andersen, just as we were on our way to the latter's dwelling. Mr. Bergsøe, it appeared, had some years ago been blind, and, after an operation had been performed on his eyes, had been obliged to spend several weeks at a hospital in a dark room. Time hung heavily on his hands, and his solitude was made doubly oppressive by his inability to read or to engage in any kind of occupation. One

morning there was a knock at the door, and a man whose face was invisible on account of the dark walked up to his bedside.

"I am Hans Christian Andersen," the stranger said, pressing the invalid's hand. "I was told that you were ill; I too have been ill, and I know what it is. Let me sit down and keep you company; I will, if you like, tell you some of my stories."

This was only the first of a long series of visits which Andersen made to the hospital during Mr. Bergsøe's slow and tedious convalescence. He told amusing incidents from his life, or pathetic ones, according as his mood varied, and occasionally he recited from memory his own poems and tales. The tenderness of his nature, and the gentle and child-like simplicity of heart for which he has been both praised and ridiculed, were vividly revealed to his listener in these improvised entertainments, and Mr. Bergsøe has never ceased to have a high regard for "the children's poet" since those happy hours in the dark.

It was about eight o'clock in the evening when we ascended the stairs to Andersen's lodgings. He had two old maids to keep house for him, and one of these obligingly opened the door. In the front room, into which we were ushered, was a portrait bust of the poet, standing on a pedestal, and round about were scattered a great number of blooming plants in flower-pots. The room, which served for parlor and reception-room, was plainly but comfortably furnished. The door to the inner chamber was presently opened, and a voice called to us to enter. We found Andersen's long and lank figure lying upon a sofa wrapped in a flowered dressing-gown.

"Ah, indeed. You come from America," he said, half rising from his pillow as Mr. Bergsøe presented me. "That is a long way off; but distance is nothing nowadays. I have many friends in America. Do you know Horatz Scooder?"

"Horatz Scooder," I repeated, trying vainly to recall the association of that name. "No; I do not know him."

"But you must have heard of him, surely," Andersen insisted. "I have been told that he is a very distinguished man of letters."

"He may be distinguished, but not as a man of letters," I replied; "for I know, at least by name, every author of any consequence in

the United States, and I never heard of Horatz Scooder."

"That is indeed singular," my host continued, with a puzzled face. "I have been told that his books are charming and popular. He translated my "Wonder Stories" into English."

"Ah, you mean Horace Scudder," I exclaimed, laughing. "Yes; he is a well-known man of letters, and I have the pleasure of his acquaintance."

Andersen seemed to be greatly relieved to know that the translator of his works had valid claims to distinction; though, if Fame were to undertake to mispronounce his name as badly as Andersen did, I fear Mr. Scudder would be unable to identify his own reputation.

"I wish you would tell me something about life in America," Andersen went on, after a little chat with Mr. Bergsøe about a common friend; "I dare say I am very ignorant. I have laid the scenes of my "Wonder Stories" almost everywhere in Europe and Africa and Asia; but of America I don't know enough to make even a fairy conduct herself there with propriety."

"If you would come over, I should be pleased to act as your cicerone," I answered, "though there would be a great many who would contest that honor with me."

"Oh, yes," he said; "if you could telegraph me over, I should be pleased to go. But I am a poor sailor, and am always ill on the ocean. But you must take my greeting with you to my friends in America, and, if you write anything about me, you must give my love to all the American children who read my books, and tell them I am sorry that I am too old and feeble to go to see them."

I declared my willingness to forward this message, and Andersen, after a moment's thought, continued:

"It is very strange that America should appear so incomprehensible to me. It may be because I got my first impression of the country from Cooper's novels, and nothing that I have read since has been able to displace that first impression. In the moon (you know the moon is an old friend of mine) I can imagine all sorts of delightful things happening, but in that great land of harsh prose where you come from, I should think a poetic imagination would starve to death for want of material or for want of recognition."

I endeavored to refute this assumption, and the conversation grew general. At the end of half an hour we took our leave, and Andersen, rising with difficulty, pressed my hand and said: "If you will come to see a sick old man, I need not tell you that you will be very welcome. I am a great deal alone, and I should like very much to chat with you, when you have nothing better to do."

## II.

A FEW days later, when I availed myself of the poet's invitation to call, I found him, as at our first meeting, lying on the sofa wrapped in a dressing-gown. He was pale and emaciated; but his face seemed ennobled by suffering, and had lost the plebeian look which is characteristic of all the portraits taken during the earlier periods of his life. The large receding forehead, which was spacious and of good proportions, was the only feature which gave any indication of intellect; the nose, mouth, and chin were rudely modeled, almost ugly.

The grayish blue eyes were full of kindness; but they were small, and could never have been luminous. The whole figure was loose-jointed and angular, and the arms and legs seemed too long in proportion to the trunk.

It was evening when I called, and a lamp, heavily shaded and placed behind a screen, lighted the room dimly.

"Ah, it is my American friend," was Andersen's greeting as I entered; "it is very kind of you to come back to me so soon."

He pressed my hands almost affectionately, and begged me to be seated.

"I have thought a great deal about America," he began, "since I saw you last. I have a great deal of time for thought now, because I can do nothing else. Is it true that the streets in New York are so crowded with wagons and trucks that you cross them only at the peril of your life?"

"Broadway," I replied, "is at certain times of the day, and at certain street-crossings, so crowded that ladies would not venture to cross without the escort of a policeman."

"Is it possible!" he exclaimed in childlike delight. "That is certainly amusing. I should like to see that very much — fine ladies conducted across the street by policemen. If I had known that a few years ago I should certainly have used it in a story."

He threw himself back on the sofa, and laughed heartily.

"There must be something colossal about life over there," he ejaculated with unwonted animation. "I am afraid it would not suit me. I should be bewildered by the din, lose my wits, and be run over. How did you ever get accustomed to it?"

"In the little university town where I live," I replied, "it is as quiet as it is in Copenhagen."

"Ah, indeed, yes. I did not think of that. But how do people conduct themselves over there? Are they not very hard and unfeeling, having regard for money and for nothing else?"

"I know that notion is very prevalent here; but though Americans have great regard for

money, they are far from being what you take them to be. In daily intercourse they are to me quite as congenial as my own countrymen."

"I am pleased to hear that. But you can not deny that they have shown themselves very unfeeling toward the poor Indians. I think it is quite shocking. I assure you, I wept when I read in a German paper how the American Congress had broken all their treaties, and driven the poor red man ever farther westward, until soon he who once owned the whole magnificent continent will not have a foot of ground he can call his own."

As I am not writing about myself, but about Andersen, I shall not reproduce my special plea in the case of *The White Man versus The Red Man*. We had a very animated discussion; and Andersen, who scarcely knew by name the pitiless doctrine of the survival of the fittest, grew quite alarmed at the novelty of the theory which I advanced. He had heard of Darwin, and took him to be a very absurd and insignificant crank who believed that he was descended from a monkey. It surprised him to hear me speak of him with respect as the greatest naturalist of the age.

"Oh, it is very sad," he said, with a naïveté which laid bare his simple, childlike soul, "that men cannot be satisfied with what God has taught them, but must question his word as if they knew better than he. Useful inventions which make life easier and happier, those I approve of with all my heart, and to them the scientists ought to confine their labors. But when they come to me and want to deprive me of my faith in God and his word, then I say to them, 'Excuse me, gentlemen, I know as much about this as you do, and cannot accept you as guides.'"

I did not choose to take up the cudgels for Darwin just then, because I much preferred to have Andersen talk about things concerning which he had a more definite knowledge. The subject was therefore allowed to lapse, and after a moment's pause my host began to question me about my route of travel and my plans for the future. "I wish I could give you some letters," he said, as I referred to my intention of going to Paris; "but my Parisian friends are either dead or so old that you scarcely would care to see them. Victor Hugo, to be sure, is still vigorous; but my acquaintance with him is only slight. Alexandre Dumas is dead. I shall never forget his great woolly head and his irrepressible jollity."

"I believe you tell a story of your first meeting with him in your autobiography," I remarked.

"Yes; I told as much of it as I dared to tell," he replied. "But there is more of it, and, if you like, I will tell you what I left out."

On my urging him to supply the suppressed details, he laughed gently to himself, and continued:

"It was during my second visit to Paris in 1842 that I met Dumas. Whenever I called I was told that he was not up yet, until I concluded that he spent the whole day in bed. I knew, however, that he could not be sleeping; for he was publishing at the rate of two or three romances and plays a month, and they all showed the stamp of his luxurious imagination. I know it has been proved in court that he did not actually write all of them; but he at least plotted them and supervised the writing. He lived in very grand style when I went to see him, and they said he was a great gormand, who prided himself more on a salad he had invented than on 'The Count of Monte Cristo.' I was very anxious to see him, as I had a letter of introduction, and all Paris was talking about him. At last, when I had called half a dozen times in vain, being always told that he was in bed, I sent up my letter and determined to wait until he should get up. After a while the servant returned and asked me to accompany him to M. Dumas's bedroom. It was a splendidly furnished room, but in great disorder. As I entered, Dumas looked up, nodded kindly to me, and said: 'Sit down a minute; I am just having a visit from a lady'; and, seeing my astonishment, he burst into a hearty laugh, and added: 'It is my Muse. She will be going directly.'

"He was sitting up in bed as he said this, writing at lightning speed, in a clear, beautiful hand, and shying each sheet, as he finished it, across the floor in all directions. I could scarcely step for fear of spoiling his manuscript. I waited for ten or fifteen minutes, during which he kept scratching away, crying out every now and then, 'Viva! Bon, mon garçon!' 'Excellent, Alexandre!' At last, with a jerk, as of an earthquake, he rolled his huge form out of bed, wrapped the blanket about him, toga-fashion, and in this costume advanced toward me, declaiming furiously at the top of his voice. As he strode along with theatrical gestures I fell back, half alarmed at his vehemence; and when I had reached the door he seized me by the lapels of my coat, shook me gently, and said, 'Now is n't that magnificent, eh? Superb; worthy of Racine!' I assented, as soon as I could catch my breath, that it was very magnificent. 'It's my new play,' he said. 'I write an act, and often more, before breakfast. This is the third act I have just finished.'

"Another time I called upon him; he was living in the Hôtel des Princes in Rue Richelieu. He asked if I would not like to become acquainted with the celebrities of Paris. I an-

swered that I had the honor of knowing Victor Hugo already.

"'Victor Hugo,' he interrupted me; 'oh, yes; he is well enough, but he is no great celebrity. No; come along with me, and I will show you celebrities who are better worth knowing.' I thanked him very much, and declared myself ready to go with him. To my surprise he took me to the greenroom of the Théâtre Saint-Martin. They were giving a ballet, and we found ourselves in a throng of ladies dressed in tricot and gauze petticoats. I assure you, I was very much embarrassed; but Dumas was not in the least abashed. I would have made my escape, but Dumas seized me by the arm and introduced me to two fairies with whom he was talking. I saw from the way they looked at me that Dumas had been talking to them about me. I feared they were making sport of me, and it hurt me very much. As I retired a second time, Dumas came after me, laughing merrily.

"'No skulking, my lad,' he said; 'come back and make yourself agreeable.'

"I assured him I did not know French enough to be agreeable to ladies.

"'Oh, never mind that,' he insisted; but I saw plainly enough that he was making merry at my expense, and I bade him good-evening.

"'Well,' he said, as he shook my hand at parting, 'how do you like our celebrities?'

"As he was about to return to the greenroom he suddenly changed his mind, took my arm, and invited me to dine with him at his hôtel. He seemed to feel sorry that he had offended me, and ever afterward he was one of my kindest friends in Paris. On the boulevards we met a young man who resembled Dumas somewhat, though he was much handsomer.

"'That is my son,' said the elder Dumas, as he stopped and introduced the young man, who has since become so famous."

### III.

THE last time I called upon Andersen he had just received a visit from some lofty personage,—a member of some royal family, if I remember rightly,—and he could talk of nothing but the gracious condescension and kindness of the duke or prince. He was less interesting to me than he had been on previous occasions, because his excessive humility seemed unbecoming in a man who by dint of genius had risen from the lowest origin to a world-wide fame. We conversed for a while about royalty in general, and he had kind words and admiration for every rogue who sat or had sat upon a throne. They had all been unjustly maligned by those dreadful people, the socialists and republicans, who had the

cruelty continually to harass and wound the feelings of the good and noble kings. He told me how kind King So-and-so and Duke So-and-so had been to him, how they had granted him a pension, given him presents, and admired his writings.

"If you will pull out the top drawer in the bureau there, you will find a ring which her Majesty Queen Caroline Amelia graciously gave to me as a souvenir of our voyage to the island of Föhr."

I went to the bureau, and after some searching among a number of similar souvenirs found the ring. He evidently expected me to regard it with reverent interest, and he seemed disappointed at my lack of enthusiasm. I endeavored to be sympathetic and not to display the cloven foot of democratic sentiment, which would at once have put an end to his friendship for me.

"In the left-hand corner of the same drawer," he went on, after I had duly inspected the precious ring, "you will find a little case containing the Order of the Red Eagle of the Third Class, which his Majesty King Friedrich Wilhelm IV. of Prussia graciously bestowed upon me in commemoration of the happy evening when I read 'The Swineherd' and 'The Ugly Duckling' to their Majesties at the Palace in Potsdam."

I handed him the box containing the order, and he opened it and gazed upon it with eyes full of childlike delight. I endeavored to do the same, but with ill success.

"He was a noble and highly cultivated man, the King of Prussia," he said, as he took the order from its case and invited me to admire it. "He had a gracious and affable manner which won all hearts. He had a great deal of *esprit* too, and frequently said witty things."

"Heine says that he was much addicted to the bottle," I remarked lightly.

"Heine was a mocking, irreverent spirit," Andersen replied warmly. "Nothing was sacred to him—not even God himself. How could you then expect that he would have reverence for his king?"

"I know," he continued after a pause, "that it is the fashion nowadays to malign the memory of departed kings. Friedrich Wilhelm had his failings, no doubt, but no one can make me believe that he was not a great and noble man. His bearing was so kingly, his condescension so kind and spontaneous, and goodness of heart shone out of his eyes when he spoke to me. If his brother, the present king, had had as kind a heart, we should not have lost Sleswick-Holstein."

For more than an hour Andersen entertained me with stories and anecdotes connected with his souvenirs of celebrated people. He had a

great variety of things, and each object recalled some pleasant incident in his own career or in that of the giver. He grew eloquent and animated. He showed me a large screen which had been gotten up for a church fair in England, to be put up at lottery for some charitable purpose. It was embroidered (in colored silks, if my memory does not deceive me) by the ladies of the congregation, and represented a dozen or more scenes from Andersen's "Wonder Stories." The winner had sent it to the author of the tales.

The conversation then turned upon his writings, and I told him how his stories had been the dearest books of my childhood, and seemed associated with all that was delightful in the memory of it. I told him how happy and flattered I had felt at finding the name of the little boy in "Ole Shut-Eye" the same as my own, and that half unconsciously I had appropriated his experiences and half believed them to be my own.

This little confession seemed to touch An-

dersen strangely. Tears filled his eyes; he seized both my hands, and pressed them warmly.

"Now you understand," he said, "what a happy lot it is to be the children's poet."

I rose to take my leave, but lingered talking; and on my expressing a desire to hear him read, he half rose upon his sofa, adjusted his pillows, and began to recite from memory "The Ugly Duckling."

His manner was easy and conversational, full of caressing inflections, such as one employs in telling a tale to a child. In the pathetic passages he was visibly affected, and he closed almost solemnly.

"It is the story of my own life," he said. "I was myself the despised swan in the poultry-yard, the poet in the house of the Philistines." I felt suddenly, as he finished his recital, that I understood the man. I had caught the keynote of his character. All that was good and noble in him rose in vivid light before me. I never saw him again.

*Hjalmar H. Boyesen.*

## TOPICS OF THE TIME.

### The Louisiana Lottery a National Infamy.

A MONTH ago we asked our readers to reflect on "The Degradation of a State," as revealed in the history of the Louisiana State Lottery. It was shown, on the testimony of the originators of the Lottery, that its charter was obtained and maintained by wholesale bribery and corruption; that this meanest and most pernicious form of public swindling was fastened upon Louisiana and the country in general by a gang of New York lottery-dealers and racing-men; that those gamblers were, in their own words, the conductors of a "business reprobated by law and contrary to public policy and good morals"; that, in effect, Louisiana has licensed a gambling corporation to break the laws of all the other States of the Union, and to plunder their citizens of millions of dollars annually; and that Louisiana herself has been a sufferer, not only by the impoverishment of her working-classes, but by the moral degeneracy of rich and poor alike, and by the subversion of the most sacred duties of State government.

For twenty-four years this giant parasite, this vile contagion, has been nourished by Louisiana for the sake of a paltry \$40,000 a year, which is only a fraction of the hundreds of thousands enticed annually from her own people; for twenty-four years it has fattened on the whole country, thanks to the venal cunning of its managers, and the blindness or indifference of the guardians of the laws, and even of the people themselves. Never before has one State of the Union so prostituted her authority to her own reproach and to the injury of her sister States; and never before has the general public been so apathetic toward such imposition, such infection, such robbery. A point has been reached where the existence of the Louisiana Lottery is not merely the degradation of a State; it is a national infamy.

Eighteen months ago, Congress tardily took effective measures to deprive the Lottery of the free use of the mails. This was attained only by giving other Federal courts than those of Louisiana jurisdiction over lottery infractions of the postal laws. But this salutary measure has only impaired the power of the monster by adding to its running expenses and by curtailing its advertising. Newspapers containing its advertisements may no longer be sent through the mails. This has given its organs a text for complaint on the score of infringing the liberty of the press; and with the aid of some of the most noted and respectable lawyers of the country, ostensibly in the interest of the newspapers, an attack is being made on the constitutionality of the law. Even if the law is upheld by the Supreme Court, the Lottery will get along very well, as at present, with the aid of the express companies, which in some ways are almost as far-reaching as the mails; and in case the expresses are prevented from serving the Lottery, it will still be possible to carry on the business by private messengers to all the large cities.

It has been suggested that a national tax, so large as to be prohibitory, on each lottery ticket sold, would be an effective measure of suppression. Congressman Little of New York has in fact, introduced a bill to this end, which ought to be made a law before the Louisiana election in April, partly for the moral effect it would have in that contest. The bill is skilfully drawn as to methods and penalties, which, with the great inducement offered to informers, would render concealment hazardous; yet the margin of profit is so enormous that the managers could lose three fourths of their plunder and still chuckle. When it is a fact that a million to a million and a half worth of lottery tickets are now sold monthly in States where the business has to be conducted by stealth, it will be possible,