

"Gee-whittiker, thunder and turf, gosh all —Friday —Look-a there! Ain't she growed!" he yelled, holding the picture by the corner and moving it into all sorts of positions. "That 's my little girl, our Flaxen; she can't grow so purty but what I 'd know her. See that hair done up on the top of her head! Look at that dress, an' the thingumajigs around her neck! Oh, she 's gittin' there, Smith, hey?"

"She 's changin' pretty fast," said Bert, listlessly.

"Changin' fast! Say, ol' man, what 's the matter with ye? Are ye sick?"

"I 'm played out, that 's all."

"Darn my skin! I should think ye would be, draggin' all day, an' then walkin' all o' four mile to the post-office. Jest lay down on the bed there, ol' boy, while I read the letter to ye. Say, ol' man, don't you git up in the mornin' till you please. I 'll look after the breakfast," insisted Anson, struck with remorse by the expression on Bert's face.

"But here 's the letter. Short an' sweet."

DEAR BOYS [Bless the little fist that wrote that!]: I send my picture. I think it is a nice

(To be concluded in the next number.)

one. The girls say it flatters me, but Will says it don't [What the devil do we care what Will says?] —I guess it does, don't you? I wish I had a picture of you both; I want to show the girls how handsome you are [She means me, of course, said Ans'. No, confound it; how handsome you are] both of you. I wish you would send me your pictures both of you. I ain't got much to say. I will write again soon. ELGA.

Bert looked at the picture over Anson's shoulder, but did not seem to pay much attention to it.

"Wal, I 'll go out an' shut the barn door. Nights git cold after the sun goes down. You need n't peel the 'taters to-night. We 'll bake 'em, brussels an' all, to-morrow mornin'."

When Anson had gone, Bert snatched up the picture with great eagerness, and gazed upon it with a steady, devouring glance. How womanly she looked with her hair done up so, and the broad fair face and full bosom.

He heard Anson returning from the barn, and hastily laid the picture down, and when Anson entered was apparently dropping off to sleep.

*Hamlin Garland.*

## WOLCOTT BALESTIER.



It was about three years ago — it was early in 1889 — that, on an evening which must always remain memorable to some of us, two or three English writers met, at the house of Mrs. Humphry Ward, a young

American man of business who had just made her acquaintance. Among those who then saw Mr. Wolcott Balestier for the first time were Mr. Henry James (soon to become his closest and most valued friend in England) and the writer of these lines. As I look back upon that evening, and ask myself what it was in the eager face I watched across the table-cloth which could create so instant a thrill of attraction, so unresisted a prescience of an intimate friendship ready to invade me, I can hardly find an answer. The type was not of that warm and sympathetic class so familiar in our race; neither in color, form, nor character was it English. In later moments one analyzed that type — a mixture of the suave colonial French and the strained, nervous New England blood. But, at first sight, a newly presented acquaintance

gained an impression of Mr. Balestier as a carefully dressed young-old man or elderly youth, clean-shaven, with smooth dark hair, thin nose, large, sensitive ears, and whimsically mobile mouth. The singular points in this general appearance, however, were given by the extreme pallor of the complexion, and by the fire in the deeply set dark-blue eyes. For the rest, a spare and stooping figure, atonic, ungraceful, a general physique absurdly and even exasperatingly ill-matched with the vigor of will, the extreme rapidity of graceful mental motion, the Protean variety and charm of intellectual vitality, that inhabited this frail bodily dwelling. To the very last, after seeing him almost daily for nearly three years, I never could entirely lose the sense of the capricious contrast between this wonderful intelligence and the unhelpful frame that did it so much wrong.

Charles Wolcott Balestier had just entered his twenty-eighth year when first I knew him. He was born at Rochester, New York, on the 13th of December, 1861. His paternal great-grandfather had been a French planter in the island of Martinique; his maternal grandfather, whom he is said to have physically resembled, was a jurist who completed commercial negotiations between the United States and Japan.

Of his early life I know but little; Mr. Henry James, when he undertakes the task of biography, will doubtless tell us so much as it is interesting to preserve of all this. Wolcott Balestier was at school in his native city, and at college for a short time at Cornell University, but his education was, I suppose, mainly that of life itself. After his boyhood he spent a few years on the outskirts of literature. I learn from Mr. W. D. Howells that at the age of seventeen he began to send little tales and essays to the office of the "Atlantic Monthly." He edited a newspaper, later on, in Rochester; he published in succession three short novels; and he was employed in the Astor Library in New York.

All these incidents, however, have little significance. But in the winter of 1882 he made an excursion to Leadville, which profoundly impressed his imagination. The Colorado air was more than his weak chest could endure, and he soon came back; but two years later he made a second trip to the West, in company with his elder sister, and this lasted for many months. He returned, at length, through Mexico and the Southern States. The glimpses that he gained in 1885 of the strange life of the West remained to the end of his career the most vivid and exciting which his memory retained. The desire to write earnestly seized him, and it was in Colorado that the first crude sketch of the book afterward rewritten as "Benefits Forgot" was composed. Soon after his return to New York he became known to and highly appreciated by Mr. John W. Lovell, and in the winter of 1888 he came over to England to represent that publisher, and to open an office in London.

Of his three full years in this latter city I can speak with some authority, for I was in close relation with him during the greater part of that time. He arrived in England without possessing the acquaintance of a single Englishman, and he died leaving behind him a wider circle of literary friends than, probably, any living American possesses. He had an ardent desire to form personal connections with those whose writings in any way interested him,—to have his finger, as he said, on the pulse of literature,—and the peculiarity of his position in London, as the representative of an American publishing-house, not merely facilitated the carrying out of this ambition, but turned that pleasure into a duty. He possessed a singularly winning mode of address with strangers whose attention he wished to gain. It might be described as combining the extreme of sympathetic resignation with the self-respect needful to make that resignation valuable. It was in the nature of the business in which Mr. Balestier was occupied during his stay in England

that novels (prose fiction in all its forms) should take up most of his thoughts. I suppose that there was not one English novelist, from Mr. George Meredith and Mr. Thomas Hardy down to the most obscure and "subterranean" writer of popular tales, with whom he did not come into relations of one sort or another, but sympathetic and courteous in every case. He was able to preserve in a very remarkable degree his fine native taste in literature, while conscientiously and eagerly "trading" for his friends in New York in literary goods which were not literature at all. This balance of his mind constantly amazed me. His lofty standard of literary merit was never lowered; it grew, if anything, more exacting; yet no touch of priggishness, of disdain, colored his intercourse with those who produce what the public buys in defiance of taste, the honest purveyors of deciduous fiction.

Mr. Balestier's ambition on landing, an obscure youth, in an England which had never heard of him was no less than to conquer a place of influence in the center of English literary society. Within three years he had positively succeeded in gaining such a position, and was daily strengthening it. There has been no such recent invasion of London; he was not merely, as we used to tell him, "one of our conquerors," but the most successful of them all.

What was so novel and so delightful in his relations with authors was the exquisite adroitness with which he made his approaches. He never lost a shy conquest through awkwardness or roughness. If an anthology of appreciations of Wolcott Balestier could be formed, it would show that to each literary man and woman whom he visited he displayed a tincture of his or her own native color. As I write these words a letter comes from the author of "John Inglesant," to whom in the winter of 1890 I gave Balestier a letter of introduction. "The impression he left upon me," says Mr. Shorthouse, "was so refined and delicate in its charm that I looked back to it all through that terrible winter with a bright recollection of what is to me the most delightful of experiences, a quiet dinner with a sympathetic and intelligent man."

Our notices of the dead tend to grow stereotyped and featureless. We attribute to them all the virtues, all the talents, but shrink from the task of discrimination. But the sketch which should dwell on Wolcott Balestier mainly as on an amiable young novelist cut off in the flower of his literary youth would fail more notably than usual in giving an impression of the man. Of his literary work I shall presently speak: to praise it with exaggeration would, as I shall try to show, be unwise. But all men are not mere machines for writing books, and Balestier,

preëminently, was not. The character was far more unique, more curious, than the mere talent for composition, and what the character was I must now try to describe. He had, in the first place, a business capacity which in its degree may not be very rare, if we regard the whole industrial field, but which as directed to the profession of publication was, I am not afraid to say, unique. He glanced over the field of the publishing-houses, and saw them all divided in interests, pulling various ways, impeding one another, sacrificing the author to their traditions and their lack of enterprise. He dreamed great dreams of consolidation, at which those who are incapable of the effort of dreaming may now smile, if they will. But no one who is acquainted with details to which I must not do more than allude here will deny that he possessed many of the characteristics needed to turn his dreams into facts. He held in his grasp the details of the trade, yet combined with them an astonishing power of generalization. I have never known any one connected with the art or trade of literature who had anything like his power of marshaling before his memory, in due order, all the militant English writers of the moment, small as well as great. There they stood in seemly rows, the names that every Englishman honors and never buys, the names that every Englishman buys and never honors. Balestier knew them all, knew their current value, appraised them for future quotation, keeping his own critical judgment, all the while, unbent, but steadily suspended.

To reach this condition of experience time, of course, had been required, but really very little. Within twelve months he knew the English book-market as, probably, no Englishman knew it. Into this business of his he threw an indomitable will, infinite patience, a curious hunting or sporting zest, and what may be called the industrial imagination. His mind moved with extreme rapidity; he never seemed to require to be told a fact or given a hint twice. When you saw him a few days later, the fact had gathered to itself a cluster of associate supports, the hint had already ripened to action. I may quote an instance which has a pathetic interest now. In the autumn of 1889, fresh from reading "Soldiers Three," I told him that he ought to keep his eye on a new Indian writer, Rudyard Kipling. "Rudyard Kipling?" he answered impatiently; "is it a man or a woman? What's its real name?" A little nettled, I said: "You will find that you won't be allowed to go on asking questions like those. He is going to be one of the greatest writers of the day." "Pooh, pooh!" Balestier replied; "now you are shouting!" And no further reference was made to the subject. But three days later I found a pile of the blue

Indian pamphlets on his desk, and within a week he had added the future collaborator in "The Naulahka" to the troop of what he used to call his "personal conquests."

No striking qualities, as we know, are without their defects. The most trying peculiarity of Wolcott Balestier was the result of his rapidity in decisive manœuvering. He had cultivated such a perfect gift for being all things to all men, discretion and tact were so requisite in his calling, that he fell, and that increasingly, into the error of excessive reticence. This mysterious secrecy, which grew on him toward the last, his profound caution and subtlety, would doubtless have become modified; this feature of his character needed but to become a little exaggerated, and he would himself have perceived and corrected it. There was perhaps a little temptation to vanity in the case of a young man possessed of so many secrets, and convinced of his worth as a confidential adviser. He "had the unfortunate habit of staring very hard at his own actions, and when he found his relations to others refining themselves under a calcium light, he endeavored to put up the screen." These words from a story of his own may be twisted into an application that he never intended. In the light of his absolute and unshaken discretion, of his ardent loyalty to his particular friends, of his zeal for the welfare of others, this little tortuous foible for mystery dwindles into something almost too small to be recorded.

For the ordinary relaxations of mankind, especially for the barbarous entertainments of us red-blooded islanders, he had an amused and tolerant disdain. He rode a little, but he had no care for any other sort of exercise. He played no games, he followed no species of sport. His whole soul burned in his enterprises, in his vast industrial dreams. If he tried golf, it was because he was fond of Mr. Norris; if he discussed agriculture and Wessex, it was because that was the way to the heart of Mr. Thomas Hardy. Nothing came amiss to him in conversation, and he was so apt a learner that he would talk charmingly of politics, of wine, of history, even of the fine arts. But only three things really occupied his mind—the picturesque procession of the democratic life of to-day, the features and fortunes of his friends, and those commercial adventures for the conduct of which he had so extraordinary a genius.

It is by design that I have not spoken hitherto of his own literary productions. It would be easier, I think, to exaggerate their positive value than to overrate the value of the man who wrote them. Moreover, there is a certain impropriety in publicly analyzing what has not yet been given to the public. The three novels which he published in America ("A Patent

Philtre," 1884; "A Fair Device," 1884; "A Victorious Defeat," 1886) were the outcome of an admiration for the later novels of Mr. W. D. Howells, but they had not the merit even of being good imitations. He was conscious of their weakness, and he deliberately set himself to forget them. Meanwhile the large issues of life in the West and its social peculiarities fascinated him. The result of his study of the Leadville of 1885 will be found in a novel called "Benefits Forgot," which was finished in 1890, and which will appear in these pages. During the last year of his life Wolcott Balestier took to composition again with much fervor and assiduity. There is no question that his intimate friendship with so eager and brilliant an artist as Mr. Rudyard Kipling was of vast service to him. The short stories of this last year are exceedingly remarkable. There remains the part of "The Naulahka" which he contributed, but on this it is impossible here to dwell. His posthumous writings will be presented in succession to the readers of *THE CENTURY MAGAZINE*, and when they have passed through this periodical form, they will fill two or three volumes. What he might have done, if he had lived ten years longer, none of us can conjecture.

The melancholy task remains to me of tell-

ing how so much light and fire was extinguished. He habitually overworked himself to such a degree, the visible mental strain was so obvious, that his health had long given us the deepest anxiety. I, for one, for a year had almost ceased to hope that he could survive. Yet it now appears, both from the record of his family and from the opinion of the German doctors, that there was no organic mischief, and that he might, in spite of his weakness, have lived to old age. He was overworked, but he never worried; he was exhausted, but he did not experience the curse of sleeplessness. Last November, however, after some days of indisposition, looking all the while extremely ill, he left us for business reasons, and went to Berlin. We heard of him a few days later as laid up in Dresden. His mother and sisters immediately went to him from Paris. The disease proved to be typhoid fever in a most malignant form, and on the twenty-first day, Sunday, the 6th of December, 1891, he died, having not quite completed his thirtieth year. He lies buried in the American cemetery at Dresden, and our anticipations lie with him;

For what was he? Some novel power  
Sprang up for ever at a touch,  
And hope could never hope too much  
In watching him from hour to hour.

*Edmund Gosse.*



## IN MEMORIAM WOLCOTT BALESTIER.

TEARS do but blind; our grief hath vision clear;  
The shadows that now lower a little space,  
And hide from us familiar form and face,  
Will lift and lighten with each fleeting year,  
And thou wilt seem not far, but very near,  
Infolded ever in our love's embrace.  
Still dost thou live, and in thy wonted place.  
Thy realm is thought, and Death is powerless here;  
Oft wilt thou greet us in the days to come,  
The laurel's beauty gleaming on thy brow,  
And soul to soul we shall commune with thee,  
And thoughts for which even poesy is dumb  
Shall find a voice, and we shall listen now  
To genius touched by immortality.

*James R. Campbell.*