

SCENES FROM HUXLEY'S HOME LIFE.

BY HIS SON, LEONARD HUXLEY.



Y father was characterized by a rare union of exquisite tenderness and inflexible determination. Sensibility too often ripens at the expense of judgment; but here strong feeling was the servant, not the master, of a clear mind.

As children we were aware of this side of his character. We felt our little hypocrisies shrivel up before him; we felt a confidence in the infallible rectitude of his moral judgments which inspired a kind of awe. His arbitrament was instant and final, though rarely invoked, and was perhaps the more tremendous in proportion to its rarity. This aspect, as of the oracle without appeal, was heightened in our minds by the fact that we saw but little of him. An eight-o'clock breakfast was the preliminary to an early start «into town»; and until years brought us promotion to the dining-room, we were scarcely certain of seeing him for a moment when he came home to dine or to dress for dinner elsewhere. This was one of the penalties of his hard-driven existence. In the struggle he had scarcely any time left to devote to his children. Well might he describe himself as the «lodger in the house» which he maintained.

But on Sundays he often used to take us walks,—the three elder ones,—somewhere northward, as a rule, from our home in St. John's Wood. In those days the walk to Hampstead led over open fields or by real country lanes, and the Heath did not boast a Rotten Row of its own, nor require the adornment of posts and placards threatening pains and penalties on breakers of the Heath by-laws. Bricks and mortar ceased on the Finchley road just beyond the Swiss Cottage. The West End Lane, winding solitary between its high hedges and rural ditches, was half mysterious to explore, like a real country road at the seaside in holiday time, and gladdened sometimes in June with real dog-roses, although the church and a few houses had already begun to encroach on the open fields at the end of the Abbey road—fields where I distinctly remember having tea amid the new-made hay.

This, I think, was our favorite walk. The mystery and thrill of it were enhanced by an-

other circumstance. The lodge of an old house stood close to the road on the left, and within view through the high iron gates stood a stone kennel, in which a real bloodhound was often to be seen—a fearful joy, completed by the sense of protection in my father's presence. This bloodhound evoked the story of a gentleman staying in a country house in Jamaica, who one hot night sallied forth in remarkably light attire to get cool, only to find himself pulled down by a couple of bloodhounds that kept watch and ward over him, threatening his life at any movement or sound, until morning and the gardener released him from a cooler position than he had bargained for.

My father often used to delight us with sea stories and tales of animals, and occasionally with geological sketches suggested by the gravels of Hampstead, or the great hollows scooped out near the Frogna! end, which he dubbed, one the Giant's Bath, and the other the Giantess's Bath—names which took our fancy. But regular «shop» he would not talk to us, contrary to the expectation of many good people who have asked me, at one time or another, whether we did not receive quite a scientific training from such companionship.

It was on one of these walks along the Finchley road that we were met by a quondam opponent of my father's, whose face of astonishment at unexpectedly seeing so terrible an ogre displaying the common affection of a man and a parent afforded him boundless amusement for years afterward.

In the country it was a little better. There, although the greater part of the «holiday» was spent in hard work, yet the afternoons regularly saw him take his favorite exercise of a good tramp over fields or commons; and several delightful memories leap up, notably of a walk one hot morning from Littlehampton to near Arundel, where we luckily managed to get some lunch at a lodge-keeper's cottage—a hot lunch which had been kept for «John,» but John had not come in. My father kept us amused by all manner of jokes about what the luckless John would do if he were to come in, after all, and find his good dinner entirely demolished. This, too, was the occasion when I was first taught to look

at a wasp with unfeigned interest, for a bold fellow settled on my plate, and fell upon some meat with great vigor, and my father pointed out the queer lateral movement of the wasp's jaws. I think I have felt more kindly toward wasps ever since.

I remember his fooling us delightfully over a tortoise he had bought from a barrow on his way home one evening. We three elder children—for the family divided naturally into the three big ones and the four little ones—danced about in an agony of excitement, expecting a mouse or a rat, or some other suggested monster, to leap out of the parcel. Alas! this was the tortoise whose career was cut short by a misguided charwoman, who took the creature (so she said) for a brick, and flung it against the garden wall with all her might. This treatment would have been bad for a brick; for the tortoise it was fatal.

One of my father's greatest gifts was a first-rate power of draftsmanship. When time allowed, he would delight us with drawing all manner of pictures for us, from ships, such as a boy loves, to animals or people. I have a vivid recollection of a moss-trooper, in steel cap and buff jerkin, with a great gray horse, drawn with colored chalks on a big sheet of brown paper. But, as a rule, he professed a horror of being watched, or receiving suggestions, while he drew. "Take care, take care," he would exclaim, "or I can't say what it will turn out!"

This gift of drawing was a great solace to me when I had the misfortune to be laid up with scarlet fever at the mature age of seven. The solitary days—for I was the first to catch it from an insidious nursemaid—were very long, and I looked forward with intense interest to one half-hour after dinner, when my father would come up and draw scenes from the history of a remarkable bull-terrier and his family that went to the seaside in the most human and child-delighting manner. I have seldom suffered a greater disappointment than when, one evening, I fell asleep just before this fairy half-hour, and lost it out of my life.

Earlier in this same year we had all spent six weeks at Swanage, a place quiet enough at this day, but at that time quieter still. Here Dr. Anton Dohrn, founder of the Marine Biological Station at Naples, on whom recently Oxford has conferred the degree of D. C. L., spent a day or two with us, and with his warm heart, his ready tongue, his good spirits, and his quick enthusiasm, became a great friend of us all. A year later he is de-

lighted to hear that "his memory is green among the children"; and his general impression of the atmosphere in which parents and children lived together is summed up in the title by which he called them ever after—"the Happy Family." "I have been reading several chapters in Mill's (*Utilitarianism*) to-day," he writes after leaving Swanage, "and have found the word (*happiness*) several times. If I had to give any one the definition of this much-debated word, I would say, (*Go and see the Huxley family at Swanage, and if you would enjoy the scene I enjoyed, you would feel what is 'happiness,' and nevermore ask for a definition of this sentiment.*)"

It was a misfortune for us that my father's unceasing work made such intercourse rare; but after his retirement in 1885 his grandchildren reaped the benefit of his greater leisure. In his age his love of children brimmed over with undiminished force, and unimpeded by circumstances. He would make endless fun with them, even pretending to misbehave at table, and being banished temporarily to the corner. Little Miss Madge, a quaint, observant mite of three and a half, on her first visit was much astonished at a grave and reverend signor thus conducting himself, and at last broke out with, "Well, you are the curious't old man I ever seen!" This tickled his fancy amazingly, and he delighted in telling the story. Another little granddaughter spent a winter or two with her grandparents at Eastbourne to escape the chills and fogs of London. Not only was she gifted with a most unusual faculty of draftsmanship, but she had a good head for figures, a clear and logical mind, quite able to hold a good deal of plain reasoning. So she developed a great liking for astronomy, under her grandfather's tuition. One day a visitor, entering unexpectedly, was astonished to see the pair of them kneeling on the floor in the hall, before a large sheet of paper, on which the professor was drawing a diagram of the solar system on a large scale, while the child was listening with the closest attention to the account of the planets and their movements, which he knew so well how to make simple and precise without ever being dull.

Children seemed to have a natural confidence in the expression of mingled power and sympathy which, especially in his later years, irradiated his features, and proclaimed to all the sublimation of a broad native humanity tried by adversity and struggle in the pursuit of noble ends. It was the confi-

dence that an appeal would not be rejected, whether for help in distress or for the satisfaction of the child's natural desire of knowledge.

Spirit and determination in children always delighted him. His grandson Julian, a curly-haired rogue, alternately cherub and pickle, was a source of great amusement and interest to him. The boy must have been about four years old when my father one day came in from the garden, where he had been diligently watering his favorite plants with a big hose, and said: «I like that chap! I like the way he looks you straight in the face and disobeys you. I told him not to go on the wet grass again. He just looked up boldly, straight at me, as much as to say, (What do *you* mean by ordering me about?) and deliberately walked on to the grass.»

The disobedient youth who so charmed his grandfather's heart was the prototype of Sandy in Mrs. Humphry Ward's «David Grieve.» When the book came out my father wrote to the author: «We are very proud of Julian's apotheosis. He is a most delightful imp, and the way in which he used to defy me on occasion, when he was here, was quite refreshing. The strength of his conviction that people who interfere with his freedom are certainly foolish, probably wicked, is quite Gladstonian.»

Next spring, however, there was a modified verdict. It was still, «I like that chap; he looks you straight in the face. But there's a falling off in one respect since last August—he now does what he's told.»

Happily this phase did not last too long. In the autumn he writes to me: «I am glad to hear that Julian can be naughty on occasion. There must be something wrong with any of my descendants, even if modified by his mother's notorious placidity, who is as uniformly good as that boy used to be.»

The greater obedience was rewarded by promotion. My father would take him round the sacred garden, would let him help water, and actually played cricket with him on the lawn, a thing he certainly had not done since playing with his own children on the natural green of the Littlehampton common, some time at the end of the sixties.

The mention of cricket recalls another incident. He was hard at work in his study one afternoon the same August. Julian was playing in the garden with the housemaid. Presently the four-year-old came running in, quite out of breath. «Oh, grandpater, I am making such a lot of runs! Please get a piece

of paper and pencil, and write them down for me, or I shall forget how many they are.»

So he got up from his work, rummaged out a tiny pocket-book, tore out a few pages already written upon, and entered on a clean sheet, «Julian, thirty-nine runs.»

«Thank you—thank you so much»; and off went the boy. A quiet interval ensued. Then in he ran again, radiant, pocket-book in hand. «Grandpater, please write down again what I have made—sixty-five runs.» So he wrote again. And soon the scene was repeated a third time, to the tune of one hundred and twelve runs; and then came the housemaid's innings, which ended in a triumphant victory for Julian. On inquiry, however, it turned out that he had had fifteen innings to her one. Great was the enjoyment with which my father told us the tale; but we were secretly touched by the way he entered into the child's feelings when it would have been so easy to say, «Run away; I'm busy.»

A year after, when Julian had learned to write, and was reading the immortal «Water-Babies,» wherein fun is poked at his grandfather's name among the authorities upon water-babies and water-beasts of every description, he greatly desired more light as to the reality of water-babies. There is a picture by Linley Sambourne showing my father and Owen examining a bottled water-baby under big magnifying-glasses. Here, then, was a real authority to consult. So he wrote a letter of inquiry, first anxiously asking his

Dear Grandpater have you
seen a Water-baby?
Did you put it in a bottle?
Did it wonder if it could
get out? Can I see it some
day?

Your Loving
JULIAN.

mother if he would receive in reply a «proper letter,» that he could read for himself, or a «wrong kind of letter,» that must be read to him. To this he received the following reply from his grandfather, neatly printed, letter by letter, very unlike the orderly confusion with which his pen usually rushed across the paper,—time being so short for such a multitude of writings,—to the great perplexity, often, of his foreign correspondents:

HODESLEA
STAVELY ROAD,
EASTBOURNE. March 24
1892.

My dear Julian

I never could make
sure about that Water
Baby. I have seen
Babies in water and
Babies in bottles; but
the Baby in the water
was not in a bottle and
the Baby in the bottle was
not in water.

Ever
your loving
Grandpater

Those who knew him most closely can picture the delight with which he must have flung himself into the fun of the thing; and yet he could not give rein to his humor but some flash of his wisdom endued it with living power. And the wisdom was not all for the young, nor the humor all for the old. The blending of the two makes of the letter a fit pendant to the "Water-Babies," in the same spirit that had drawn both men together years before.

He was generally the first of the elders down of a morning, and it was eminently refreshing to hear the sound of his voice as he gave a cheery welcome to the grandchildren whom he would find down-stairs, playing with the wonderful box of stone bricks that lived at Hodeslea, or looking at picture-books. "You must spare me one of your boys for science," he used to say playfully; for they were both wide awake to all their living surroundings, and delighted in books on natural history. Miss Buckley's charming "Life and

Her Children" is really responsible for the following incident: My father was speaking at lunch of the fact that until you come as high in the animal kingdom as monkeys the male parent has no affection for his young. Suddenly a little voice broke in from the side of the table: "Oh, yes, grandpater. There's the male stickleback builds a house and looks after his young ones, and the mother does n't care for them a bit."

Nothing could better illustrate my father's tenderness to the little ones than a chance comparison in a letter dealing with a very different subject: "— is the most wonderful innocent I ever met with. I could no more be angry with him than I could with one of my grandchildren."

This sympathy with the joys of childhood was united to an equal tenderness for their sorrows and sufferings. He writes to his staunch ally, Parker, on hearing that one of his little boys had died: "Why did you not tell us before that the child was named after me, that we might have made his short life happier by a toy or two?"

His own griefs had taught him to respond to others' griefs, and he fully recognized the power of intense suffering to deepen and broaden the humanity of a man. Little as he wore his heart upon his sleeve, he was profoundly moved by the death of beloved children, the vicissitudes of their illnesses, the mourning of a mother over her children.

"*Experto crede,*" he writes to a friend in 1888, "of all anxieties, the hardest to bear is that about one's children." The first blow had come early. The eldest boy was just four years old, the very delight of his parents, the sunshine of the house. A sudden visitation of scarlet fever carried him off. The blow was somewhat lightened by the birth of another son three months later; but even then my father could write of the household: "The boy's advent is a great blessing to her in all ways. For myself, I hardly know whether it is pleasure or pain. The ground has gone from under my feet once, and I hardly know how to rest on anything again. Irrational, you will say, but nevertheless natural."

In after years, perhaps by contrast with the unalterable poignancy of the mother's sorrow, he declared that he felt, with King David, "While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept. . . . But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast?" Yet both in this case and in the later loss of his brilliant daughter Marian, it was long before he had the heart to take up the interests of life again, although the other half of the saying

was true enough, and his anxiety while his daughter was ill retarded his recovery when he was sent abroad for his health. Another illustration dates from the summer of 1883, when a blundering telegram from Paris led him to believe that his eldest son, who had just gone abroad, had been seized with fever or had met with an accident. He rushed over to Paris «in a horrid state of alarm,» only to find a telegram from home explaining matters. On his return, he writes to Dr. Foster, and winds up: «Judging by my scrawl, which is worse than usual, I should say the anxiety had left its mark; but I am none the worse otherwise.» And a few years later: «I wish there were no such thing as anxiety. I stood it worse than ever.» His later correspondence, indeed, contains many references to his own and his friends' children. One may be quoted: «I am very glad to hear of R——'s success, and my wife joins with me in congratulations. It is a comfort to see one's shoots planted out and taking root, though the idea that one's cares and anxieties about them are diminished we find to be an illusion.»

A sketch of my father's home life would be incomplete without a word as to his domestic pets. Dogs were rather a trouble in London, and we seldom kept one; but cats were great favorites of his—those cozy creatures that add a final touch of homelikeness to a home, and are like the cricket that Leigh Hunt apostrophizes as

Warm little housekeeper, who class

With those who think the candles come too soon,
Loving the fire, and with your tricksome tune
Nick the glad, silent moments as they pass!

The story is told of Mohammed that once, rather than disturb his cat, he cut off the sleeve of his robe, on which it had gone to sleep. Not less kindly has my father been found in his study reading in an uncomfortable seat, while the cat was lazily curled up in the one arm-chair. He laughingly defended himself by saying he could not turn the poor beast out. At dinner-time he might often be seen with a big cat either on the arm of his chair or couched on his shoulder, demanding proper attention, and, if it thought itself neglected, putting out an eager paw at the morsels on their way to its master's mouth.

In 1893 he was written to by a gentleman who was writing an article on «Pets of Celebrities,» and sent the following reply, which is well worth reviving:

«A long series of cats has reigned over my household for the last forty years or thereabouts; but I am sorry to say that I have no

pictorial or other record of their physical and moral excellencies.

«The present occupant of the throne is a large young gray tabby, Oliver by name. Not that he is in any sense a protector, for I doubt whether he has the heart to kill a mouse. However, I saw him catch and eat the first butterfly of the season, and trust that the germ of courage thus manifested may develop, with age, into efficient mousing.

«As to sagacity, I should say that his judgment respecting the warmest place and the softest cushion in a room is infallible, his punctuality at meal-times is admirable, and his pertinacity in jumping on people's shoulders till they give him some of the best of what is going indicates great firmness.»

The withdrawal from the engrossing struggles of life in London, which once more made it possible for some part of my father's energies to run over abundantly upon the little ones, brought another and a very fascinating interest into his life. His love of nature had never run to collection-making, either of plants or animals. He, like one of his German friends, regarded mere «spider-hunters and hay naturalists» as the camp-followers and hangers-on of science. As he so often said, it was the engineering side of physiology, the general plan of animal construction, worked out in infinitely varying detail, which interested him. But now, when long stooping over the microscope became physically impossible, and the power of keeping in the front rank of investigators deserted him, he found some object to pursue in the outdoor world. Driven abroad for his health, in 1886, to spend the summer in the mountain air of Arolla, he began to investigate the Alpine flora, and more particularly the groups and distribution of gentians. «As the best sign of renewed vitality,» he writes to Hooker, «which I can give you, let me say that I have taken to botany. I bought a Swiss flora in Lausanne, and no sooner went to work than I was inveigled by the gentians and their variations. My flora was Gremli's analytical,—no great good, except for finding out names,—but a man in the hotel had Rapin, which helped. I have got hold of some odd things, but I don't doubt they are all known. Please tell me the best monograph on gentians. I must get my head clear about them while I am about it.»

He gives another account of it to Dr. Foster: «By way of amusement I bought a Swiss flora in Lausanne, and took to botanizing; and my devotion to the gentians led the Bishop of Chichester, a dear old man who paid us (that is, the hotel) a visit, to declare

that I sought the (Ur-gentian) as a kind of holy grail.)

This botanizing, which continued the following year at Arolla, «in the interests of the business of being idle,» and later at the Maloja, and culminated in a paper read before the Linnæan Society, took a new form in his last five years, when he had built himself a house and laid out a garden in Eastbourne. Here he threw himself into gardening with characteristic ardor. He described his position as a kind of mean between the science of the botanist and the empiricism of the working gardener. He had plenty to suggest, but his gardener, like so many of his tribe, had a rooted mistrust of any gardening lore culled from books. «Books? They'll say anything in them books.» And he shared, moreover, that common superstition, perhaps really based upon a question of labor, that watering of flowers, unnecessary in wet weather, is actively bad in dry. So my father's chief occupation in the garden was to march about with a long hose, watering, and watering especially his rockeries of Alpines in the upper garden and along the terraces lying below the house. The saxifrages and the creepers on the house were his favorite plants. When he was not watering the one he would be nailing up the other, for the winds of Eastbourne are remarkably boisterous, and shrivel up what they do not blow down. «I believe I shall take to gardening,» he writes, a few months after entering the new house, «if I live long enough. I have got so far as to take a lively interest in the condition of my shrubs, which have been awfully treated by the long cold.» To a great extent this pottering round the garden took the place of the long walks on the bracing downs which had been one of the chief inducements to settling at Eastbourne. After a spell of writing or reading, the garden lay always handy and inviting a stroll of inspection for as long or as short a time as he liked; indeed, my mother was not quite so well satisfied with the saxifrage mania, and declared he caught cold in pottering about his plants. The first terrace behind the house, sheltered from the north, was the place for a bit of exercise on a wet day, and rejoiced in the name of «the quarter-deck.» In the lower garden a corresponding walk was made between two hedges of cypress, designed, when they grew up, to shelter the path from the southerly winds.

«I begin to think with *Candide*,» he writes in 1891, «that (*cultivons notre jardin*) comprises the whole duty of man.»

From this time his letters contain many

references to the garden. He is astonished when his gardener asks leave to exhibit in the local show, but delighted with his pluck. Hooker jestingly sends him a plant «which will flourish on any dry, neglected bit of wall, so I think it will just suit you.»

«Great improvements,» he writes in 1892, «have been going on, and the next time you come you shall walk in the (avenue) of four box-trees. Only five to be had for love or money at present, but there are hopes of a sixth, and then the (avenue) will be full ten yards long! *Figurez vous çà!*»

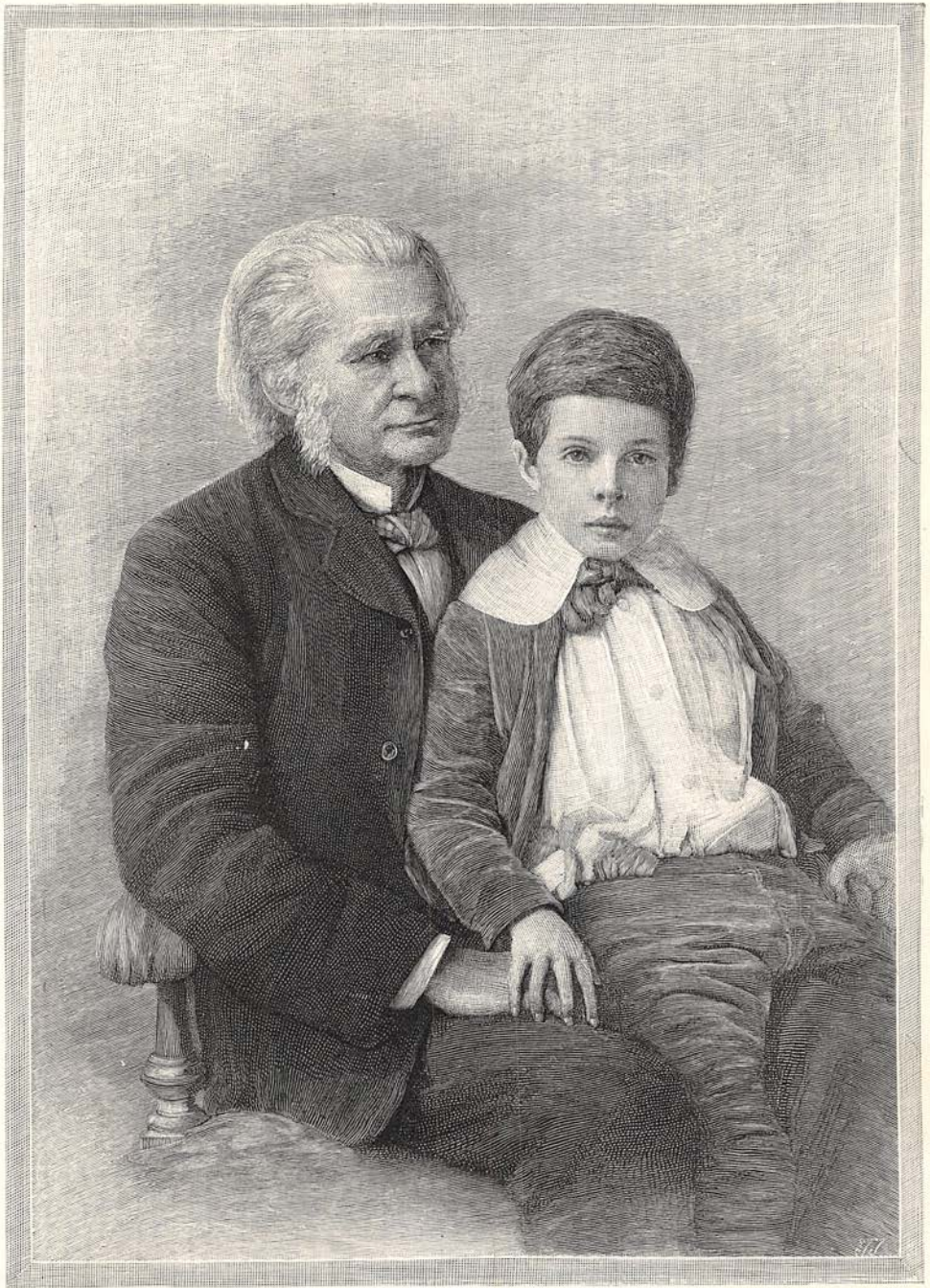
Sad things will happen, however. The local florist vowed that the box-trees would not stand the Eastbourne winds. My father was set on seeing whether he could not get them to grow despite the gardeners, whom he had once or twice found false prophets. But this time they were right. Vain were watering and mulching, and all the arts of the husbandman. The trees turned browner and browner every day, and the little avenue from terrace to terrace had to be ignominiously uprooted and removed. A sad blow this, worse even than the following.

«A lovely clematis in full flower, which I had spent hours in nailing up, has just died suddenly. I am more inconsolable than *Jonah!*» Next spring he inquires, «Is Mr. Leach going to publish his lecture on (Hardy Clematis and Creepers)? They are just the things I want to know about. What with gales of wind, cold, and lack of rain, gardening here is pursued under difficulties, but we are getting on by degrees.»

He answers some gardening chaff of Dr. Michael Foster's: «Wait till I cut you out at the Horticultural. I have not made up my mind what to compete in yet. Look out when I do!» And when the latter offers to propose him for that society, he replies, «Proud an' 'appy should I be to belong to the Horticultural if you will see to it. Could send specimens of nailing up creepers, if qualification is required.»

One thing that proved my father to be a genuine garden-lover was his pleasure in giving cuttings of his favorite plants to the friends who lived near him. His friends were as generous to him.

A delightful surprise was sprung upon him from an unexpected quarter. My friend and neighbor Mr. Leonard, whose Alpine garden at Guildford is an endless delight to his acquaintances, heard from me that my father was devoted to saxifrages. He promptly asked me to find out how many species my father possessed, and begged to be allowed



ENGRAVED BY T. JOHNSON.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY KENT & LACEY.

PROFESSOR HUXLEY AND HIS GRANDSON.

to send specimens of the kinds he had not. As my father possessed only forty species, he wrote back: «Embrace Mr. Leonard for me, and tell him I gladly accept his kind offer.» The saxifrages duly arrived, to the great embellishment of the rockeries.

After his long battlings for his early loves of science and liberty of thought, his later love of the tranquil garden seemed in harmony with the dignified rest from struggle. To those who thought of the past and the present, there was something touching in the sight of the old man whose unquenched fires now lent a gentler glow to the peaceful retirement he had at length won for himself.

His latter days were fruitful and happy in their unflagging intellectual interests, set off by the new delights of the *succidiam alteram*, that second resource of hale old age for many a century.

All through his last and prolonged illness, from earliest spring till midsummer, he loved to hear how the garden was getting on, and would ask after certain flowers. When the bitter cold spring was over, and the warm weather came, he spent most of the day outside, and even recovered so far as to be able to walk once into the lower garden and visit his favorite flowers. These children of his old age helped to cheer him to the last.

«LET THERE BE LIGHT!»

BY STUART STERNE.

«THE life of man,» said one of passing ken,
 «Is like a sparrow's flight
 Through a lit hall—out of one dark again
 Into another night!»

Some sit at feasts with myrtle crowned and rose,
 Some toil with heavy heart,
 Within that House of Life whose portals close
 On us, who thence depart—

Go, unaccompanied, without one friend,
 Even as we came, alone,
 Blind, dumb, our solitary path to wend
 Into the dim unknown.

On that strange journey shall, some time, somewhere,
 We mayhap come to find
 Some other House of Life, more wide, more fair
 Than this we leave behind?

Oh, question vain! Oh, passionate cry of earth!
 To which the brazen sky,
 Since our small world from chaos had its birth,
 Has never made reply!

And yet, O souls unnumbered as the sand
 Beside the eternal sea,
 Who took your flight from out the Father's hand
 That fashioned thee and me,

Surely our faltering course cannot go far
 Through that dim second night,
 Ere there shall cleave the darkness, like a star,
 His voice, «Let there be light!»