

her ladyship's shoulder. Fortunately Dr. Birt took his departure while I was up-stairs.

"Tut, tut, child, what a fuss to make about nothing! Your room was so shabby it disgraced the house. I must have had it seen to anyhow."

"But you needn't have bought me all my favourite books, and a davenport, and just everything I wanted. Oh, Lady Vane, how shall I ever thank you?"

"There, there, child, you've said quite enough about it; I can't bear scenes. Just read me that second leader, will you?" and Lady Vane points to a copy of the *Times*.

I do my best to struggle through the article in question, but I doubt if either Lady Vane or I am much wiser by the time the end is reached.

END OF CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH

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REMINISCENCES OF JOHN HULLAH, LL.D.

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NOT many months since there appeared in CASSELL'S MAGAZINE a short notice of the late composer of "The Storm" and the "Three Fishers." It has been thought that a few further reminiscences may possibly be welcome to the reader whose interest in the departed musician has been awakened or renewed by the friendly hand of one who seems to have personally known, and, knowing, to have loved John Hullah.

Though omissions may be easily accounted for, if not excused, by over-pressure of material as regards the recently published "Life of Mr. Hullah," the fact remains that neither in that "Life," nor in any of the numerous biographical notices which have appeared since his death, has mention been made of one or two quaint peculiarities, or of his very pronounced taste for philological research.

Peculiar, in the sense of eccentric, Mr. Hullah was not, but a few "ways" he had which were sometimes amusing, though sometimes also embarrassing to his friends, and perhaps to himself.

One of these "ways" is merely deemed worth mentioning as an indication—though, alas! not soon enough recognised as such—of that highly-strung nervous organisation which hastened his break-down and led to premature death; for premature death must certainly be considered when—even though the full span of man's existence be attained—it strikes a frame in which every organ still works as healthfully and as freely as in youth.

For the greater part of Mr. Hullah's life sound health had enabled him to control, as a rule, any betrayal of nervous irritability. He was only mastered by it when his strength fell to its lowest point. With him, as probably with most brain-workers, that lowest point was reached towards the close of a day, just immediately before dinner. Then it was that nervous exhaustion would often reveal itself in strange unusual outbursts of impatience about matters that at other times distressed him not at all. Did an organ-grinder set up a strain—no matter how distant a spot—freely and forcibly was he voted a nuisance only adequately punishable by decapitation. And yet earlier in the day that same organ-grinder might have

rumbled forth that self-same tune all but unnoticed; or, were toilette operations in progress, how strangely the necktie, that pliant slave of his will at ante-meridional hours, would develop an elfish power of disobedience! (Many a housewife will recognise *this* symptom of the ante-prandial exhaustion of Nature's great handiwork—Man!) More particularly so, of course, if he happened to be going out to dinner, on which occasions the nervous tension would often take the odd form of an inability to walk behind any one just at the moment when guests are announced. Sometimes, indeed, this impulse to precede his companion would seize him uncontrollably, and he would find himself prematurely face to face with his hostess. Not the remotest intention had he of discourtesy, for discourtesy was not in his nature; and yet the small infraction of etiquette would be committed, repented of, apologised for there and then by a quaint deprecatory look and turn of the head perfectly well understood by the person most sinned against, and yet most surely would he sin again when over-tired.

Where he was well known this peculiarity did not matter. Indeed, one old friend never missed an opportunity of bantering him on this habit of taking precedence, and always assisted at the ensuing apologetic pantomime with much *empressement*. But now and then his hosts were perhaps comparative strangers to him, and apt to be a trifle critical, and not always able to conceal their feelings. Of this an amusing instance happened in a provincial town where, in an unavoidable acceptance of an invitation to dinner from a *very* recently promoted member of the punctilious order of *nouveaux riches*, Mr. Hullah and his wife appeared, and were ushered through many pairs of imperfectly trained though gorgeously attired servants towards the drawing-room door, whence his name, shorn of its "h's," was bawled out in a voice the force of which fairly propelled him into the presence of his hostess, who, as yet a novice in the duty of receiving new guests, became at once hopelessly bewildered by this slight variation on society's rules as expounded in her books of etiquette. The forlorn little lady's embarrassment was, however, in this instance of short duration, for at a glance Mr. Hullah perceived her dilemma, recovered his own self-control, and, with his usual adroitness, good-

naturedly turned the tide of her discomfiture to her own advantage on the instant; and during dinner—when he found himself her near neighbour—he succeeded in floating her into such a calm sea of self-content that she there and then irrevocably lost her heart to him, which fact, with much *naïve* outpouring of her difficulties with the study of society's troublesome manners and customs, she hastened to impart to Mrs. Hullah so soon as the ladies were well on the outside of the dining-room door. Her enthusiasm culminated in the assurance that she thought Mr. Hullah "an angel" and a "real genius."

Another of Mr. Hullah's peculiarities was an occasional fit of perfect abstraction, which yet did not prevent him from receiving vivid impressions through one or other of the senses. In illustration of this habit, Mr. W. A. Barrett related the following anecdote to the present writer:—

He and Mr. Hullah were sitting side by side at a concert, which, being largely made up of Wagner's music, did not much interest the latter, who gradually became absorbed in his own thoughts, and sat motionless for a long while, evidently unaware of what was going on around him. His abstraction continued even after Miss Antoinette Sterling, for whose singing he had an ardent admiration, had commenced to sing his own "Three Fishers," nor did he make the slightest movement until the last phrase was pealing forth in Miss Sterling's fullest notes, when slowly rising to his feet, he murmured—

"What a fine song that is!"

It was quite clear, Mr. Barrett commented, that it was not for some seconds after he had spoken that Mr. Hullah awoke to a consciousness that what had fallen so pleasingly on his ear was of his own composing!

Another story of absent-mindedness Mr. Hullah used to tell of himself.

Being in a quiet country place, he had strolled out alone one day, the better to get by heart a favourite sonnet of Milton's. Conning the lines with occasional reference to his little volume, he wandered into a field, of which he perceived the only other occupant to be a donkey, standing at the edge of a ditch with his nose within easy reach of an overhanging nettle-bush, but perfectly motionless; so motionless, indeed, was this particular donkey that the student of Milton lost all consciousness of him as a living thing, and when, after a few turns up and down, he desired to sit, he mechanically took a seat sideways on Neddy's back. No protest was made by sound or movement until Mr. Hullah, having arranged his equilibrium satisfactorily, settled down to deeper study, when the abominable animal suddenly kicked up his heels and

sent Mr. Hullah and his Milton compactly through the nettles into the ditch, whence they emerged one by one, actively and passively, not much hurt, though ignobly smirched, to find that the donkey had resumed his statuesque attitude.

Among what the late Mr. Mark Pattison called Mr. Hullah's "literary instincts" may be classed his strong taste for and ingenuity in tracing out collateral meanings and derivations of words.

For close or systematic pursuit of this form of learning he had never in his life enjoyed sufficient leisure—not more, it may truly be said, than a few hours annually during his summer holiday. Never, however, did he fail, go where he might, to make some trifling addition to his small collection of books and pamphlets in foreign tongues. Of course, this habit of picking up, as opportunity offered, orally or through books, as much knowledge as he could of European languages and their dialects, tended to strengthen his taste and sharpen his ingenuity in a manner which not infrequently puzzled the acute and analytical mind of the trained scholar exceedingly. While Mr. Pattison would move by slow and safe steps from point to point, weighing and testing the value of every reading of the word or phrase under discussion, Mr. Hullah's resourceful memory, and power of rapid application of whatever knowledge he possessed, would tempt him to theorise on philological questions with an audacious suggestiveness that was always amusing and often very interesting.

An inquiry once aroused in his mind, backwards he would track a word through every conceivable intricacy and unforeseen contortion of meaning, whether as expressing fact or abstract idea, until he had trace of the tap-root in some far-down forgotten substratum of old English, Scotch, Welsh, or Irish soil; or if on the more familiar hunting-grounds of French, Italian, or German, he would dig through to their classic sources with a scent as keen, if not as sure, as that of some practised Latin or Greek philological mole.

Sometimes—as his old friend, Dr. (now Sir Douglas) Maclagan, himself no mean amateur adept in philological chase, would bear witness—Mr. Hullah would alight on a derivation by swift inspiration; sometimes by a more prolonged but ingeniously acute mental process, which, had it been drilled by a sound philological training, might have made him a leading philologist of his day. However that might have been must be left to the vague regions of surmise, but certain it is that he strove to apply to these philological studies, as to all his other pursuits, his motto of thoroughness—

"*Per scalam ascendimus.*"

F. R. H.

