



Augusta Evans Wilson.

BY LIZZIE P. LEWIS.



It is natural for us to wish to see the men and women of talent, whose works we admire. We like to gaze upon the face that is irradiated with transcendent spirit, and listen to the words that spring fresh and glowing from a highly gifted soul. Windows are crowded when a great man passes along the street, and when a famous writer is announced to lecture, no room will hold the crowds that flock to see as well as hear him.

Henry Clay never returned from visiting a city without having his arm swollen from continual shaking of hands; and when Webster passed through the country, every farmer left his plow to behold the famous orator. The peasants of Italy were eager to pick a thread from the coarse garments of St. Bernard, and bright-eyed girls of our own day flocked about the hallways of the places where Dickens was to lecture, that they might by some fortunate chance get a brush on the cheek from his shaggy overcoat, or win a glance from him.

Pilgrimages are constantly being made to Abbotsford, to Stratford-upon-Avon, to Mt. Vernon, to Kensal Green—everywhere, where great poets, or statesmen, or warriors, or artists have lived, or where are buried their mortal remains.

And those whom we cannot see, or hold by the hand, or converse with face to face, we like to hear about; we are impatient to receive any facts that will enable us to picture to ourselves those of rare mental endowments whom Providence has forbidden our eyes to behold. Unless our hearts are made of stone, we cannot help feeling a personal interest in

the men and women whose books have amused or instructed us.

Nor is it likely that the author of an interesting romance, of a fine poem, of an able history, or of a heroic deed, would wish us to quite lose sight of his identity, while contemplating what he has done. In this belief, we ask our readers to accompany us to Ashland, about five miles from the city of Mobile, the beautiful home of Mrs. Augusta Evans Wilson, whose name has been so long familiar to the public ear, and who has contributed so much to the pleasure and entertainment of her fellow-countrymen.

As we enter through the open gates, a long line of stately, overarching trees, bounded on either side by sloping, velvety lawns, leads up to the pleasant, old-fashioned country mansion, the very picture of that open, free-handed hospitality which was, before the Civil War, the great characteristic of the Southern people.

Sauntering slowly up the avenue, it seems almost as if the songs of poets had there come to life and taken visible form and being. Bumble-bees buzz lazily by, and float away over the sweet violets and wild thyme and fragrant clover; choruses from twittering, trilling, and whistling birds sink down upon us from the leafy verdure overhead, and faint, tender scents and hushed cries from far-away

insects overcome us with sudden thrills of exquisite calm, like an unspoken psalm of wonder and praise.

At the rear of the mansion are the gardens and green-houses, which are Mrs. Wilson's especial pride and delight. She has a passion for flowers, and they thrive under her gentle training as if they responded to the love she lavishes upon them.

There, too, may be seen the Alderney cows, sleek, tame creatures, who moo and shake their heads and crop the sweet grass with a pleasant crunch, while they watch us with their soft, kind eyes. Not far away is the barn-yard, very like a famous painting in the National Gallery, where the Cochin China cocks and hens amble around as they shake out their soft, golden plumage, and the Spanish grandees, black robed with crimson crests, and beautiful sunset tints of purple and violet, of green and gold, strut about with conscious pride among the lower orders of the population, while the young ducks squat on the grass, uttering now and then a placid "quack-quack," whether by way of welcome, or as an expression of opinion on things in general, we are unable to decide.

The mistress of all these pleasant things is a native of Georgia, having been born near Columbus, in 1836. When quite young, her father removed to Texas, where, however, he remained but a short time before going to Alabama, where he settled permanently.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans were persons of high culture and refinement, and devoted to their daughter, who returned their affection with more than filial tenderness. Her entire education was received at home, and from her



ASHLAND (FRONT VIEW.)



ASHLAND (REAR VIEW).

parents, who early perceived signs of that talent and fertile imagination which in her mature years has borne such rich and abundant fruits.

In a letter written by Mrs. Wilson she says, in referring to these dearly loved parents and her indebtedness to them: "I was reared at home, taught at home, and the little which I have accomplished is due to the loving care of my father, and the wise guidance and aid of my noble and devoted mother. To them I owe what success I may have attained, and if ever I win laurel, it shall be laid at their dear feet." Happy parents! Noble daughter!

"Inez," her first novel, was written and published when only seventeen, but her fame was established by "Beulah," a novel of great power and vivid interest, and which took the American fiction-reading public by storm.

Edition after edition was called for, and for a time it was an absorbing theme of conversation. Expressions of opinion were diverse. There were those who criticised, as well as those who admired; by some it was thought strained, over-scholarly, and far-fetched, while others again could find nothing at which to censure, and gave themselves up unreservedly to admiration for the author's talents, and delight in the scenes and characters she had portrayed.

Her succeeding books were received with the same hearty cordiality—"Macaria," "St. Elmo," "Vashti, or until Death do us Part," and "Infelice." The manuscript of "Vashti," which consists of seven hundred and eighty-nine pages of legal cap paper, closely written, has been bound, and lies upon the library table at Ashland. For this novel, the publisher, G. W. Carleton, paid fifteen thousand dollars

cash, besides the regular royalty after its publication.

But her books are not read alone in the Western Hemisphere, as they are to be found at English railway stations for sale, and have also been translated into German and reprinted in the "Fatherland," where they find a ready sale.

In 1868 Miss Evans was married to Mr. L. M. Wilson, President of the Mobile and Montgomery Railroad, a gentleman of great wealth, though considerably the senior of the two. But it has proved one of those exceptional marriages of which we occasionally hear, where heart and mind are so fully and entirely satisfied that nothing is left to desire.

Mrs. Wilson's tender devotion to her husband is only equaled by his chivalrous regard for her. Every morning finds a fragrant bouquet by his breakfast plate, freshly gathered by her own hands, and every afternoon, in rain and storm as well as in fair weather and sunshine, finds her waiting his coming at the end of the avenue.

The marriage has not been blessed by children, but Mrs. Wilson has had the charge of her husband's daughter and granddaughter, to whom she acts a mother's part with steadfast devotion.

Mrs. Wilson is also very efficient in works of charity and philanthropy. She is a faithful and consistent member of the Methodist communion, and President and Directress of the Orphan Asylum of Mobile. Not only does she hear when the poor and needy call upon her, but, like the Master whose servant she is, her open hand is stretched out to help and succor

the outcast and the infirm, even before they ask.

But her talents are not exclusively of a philanthropic and literary character. She is, in the language of one of her friends, "a superb housekeeper." No details of housewifery are so trifling as to be disregarded by her, she feeling that the eye of a faithful and Christian mistress will serve to make and keep faithful and efficient servants. The dainties which burden her pantry shelves and tickle the palates of her household and numerous guests, the cakes and jellies, the wines and conserves, are either compounded by her own hands or under her immediate supervision.

Since 1876 Mrs. Wilson has published nothing, "Infelice" being her last work. Her health has not been good for some time past, which may be partly the cause of her idle pen, though to those who have had a glimpse into her satisfied heart and her happy home it would seem as if, with Aurora Leigh, she had said:

"O art, my art, thou'rt much, but love is more!
Art symbolizes heaven, but love is God,
And makes heaven."

A Wasted Harvest.

BY H. W.

STRAYED near the field in the dawn,
Where the rose runners trailed by the stream;
Soon swift the strong reapers came steadily on,
Broad and white
Did their scythe-blades all sparkle and beam
Through the dawn with its pearl-crested light.

LINGERED until the June sun
Shot lances, fierce pointed and hot.
They faltered at last and left one by one
And they found
Where a maple had flung down a shadowy spot,
Then I slept on the grass-tufted ground.

SLEPT through the sultry-eyed noon,
And on till the day waned and fled;
I woke to the smile of the harvest-tide moon,
Chill, while they
Who had reaped in the field on their homeward
path sped,
With their scythes beaming white on the way.

AWOKE in the shade all alone,
And I heard the faint sigh of the sheaves.
The leaves from a willow were carelessly strown,
And still there
I was left with no harvest but fluttering leaves
That were blown through the dew-chilly air.

AN AFTER-THOUGHT.

THE Lord of the harvest is kind,
He may come to the sheaving who will.
Shall we in the harvest fields faithfully bind,
Until dim
Fall the shadows, or sleep till the evening falls
chill,
With no harvest sheaf gathered for Him?