

GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA'S FIRST AND LAST WORK.

BY HIS WIDOW.

Illustrated by Portraits and Facsimile Manuscripts.

THROUGH the kindness of a friend who possesses the original manuscripts, I am enabled to place before the readers of the WINDSOR MAGAZINE facsimiles of the handwriting and composition of my husband in

the year 1842, as a boy of fourteen, and in 1895, when he was sick unto death, in the sixty-seventh year of his age. The following portion of "Gerald Moreland; or, The Forged Will" is the very first story

extant from his busy pen, and was written and composed in the noisy bustle and confusion of the family playroom during the Christmas holidays so long ago.

George Augustus Sala was the genius of a somewhat remarkable family, and as such he suffered considerably in his childhood, since—for the amusement of his brothers and sisters—he was supposed, vulgarly speaking, to be able to "turn on the tap" at all times and seasons for the outward expression of the varied thoughts and ideas seething within him, just as in the afternoon and evening of his life he was too frequently called upon to turn on that same tap by thoughtless or inconsiderate folks, without recompense or reward. As a child of a large family myself, I know full well that there are no more merciless critics in one's youth than one's own kith and kin of the school-room.

When by chance I came upon the closely and carefully written romance of "Gerald



From a photo by]

THE LATE GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

[Lieure, Paris.

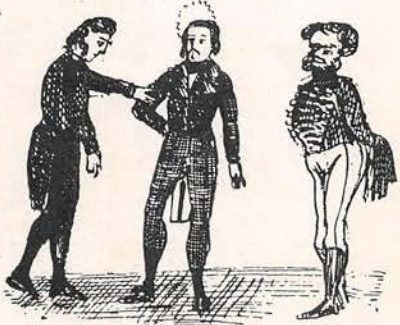
Moreland," I recognised that this probationary literary effort had been evolved quite as much from a determination to show his own flesh and blood that he was no ordinary boy, as by that strange power, Fate, which destined the author in after years to blossom out into one of the greatest of English journalists and men of letters of the nineteenth century. Sala wanted, even at fourteen years of age, to show his critical relatives what he could do, and the sensational tale of "The Forged Will" was the maiden result of his literary power. Five years before this period the author was a poor little blind fellow, shut out from the

at least half a dozen times before he felt justified in putting "Finis" and adding the queer looking little pen and ink sketches to the last page, which drawings were supposed, I have since been told, to be in imitation of a master he always loved—Rowlandson.

Although little George Sala's vision of outward life was so miserably curtailed in his unhappy childhood, his mind was never equally starved, as his favourite sister Gussy was his devoted slave and teacher, and read and talked to him incessantly in his years of darkness. Therefore, when sight was restored to him, it was the mere mechanism and formation of letters the lad had to master.

Gerald Moreland received his inheritance without any mole or mark and though in rather an unsettled state in consequence of the extravagance of Lawrence he soon managed with the assistance of Philip a Connor to put it in order. He had scarcely done that but a short period elapsed between the Gerald's recovery of his property and his marriage with Lucy Mangrove. The ceremony was performed at O'Donoghue's Castle where the new man and wife took up their residence. No word more and we have done. Farewell to Lawrence O'Donoghue. Though a sea search was made after him by the police he continued to elude their vigilance and escaped to France but three weeks after his arrival he got into debt and was thrown into Saint Riqui where he languished miserably for more than a year till at length he fell sick of the cholera and died in a stony country far from the land of his nativity unpaid for, unpaid and unpaid.

Finis



FACSIMILE OF THE MANUSCRIPT OF "GERALD MORELAND," THE FIRST STORY WRITTEN BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

light of life, unable to read or write; but an all-wise Power having mercifully restored his vision, or at least partially so, the lad set himself to master the art of reading and writing by aid of an old black-letter Chaucer which he had unearthed from his mother's bookshelves. Learning to write as he did from such a volume accounts for the almost print-like caligraphy which was always the joy and delight of printers and compositors.

In "Gerald Moreland" the "best" handwriting of the youthful George Augustus is apparent, and, judging from the tidiness and cleanness of the original manuscript, I should say that the small scribe had copied it out

The composition was all teeming within his busy brain, panting to make itself heard and seen in written characters, and out it came at the tender age of fourteen. The story of "Gerald Moreland," a tale in one volume, contains about eleven thousand words, and, although naturally boyishly sensational, might well pass for the first literary production of a youth four years older. As to the neatness of the handwriting itself, I must leave my readers to pass judgment on that. From the title-page I note that the romance in question was finished at No. 29, Silver Street, Golden Square, on Tuesday, March 22, 1842,

and was affectionately dedicated to Miss Sarah E. Ashley. Now this Miss Sarah Edmonstone Ashley—whom I had the honour of knowing and visiting at De Vere Gardens, Kensington, in 1888, and whose death took place in that same year—was a dear, pretty, little old lady of nearly ninety years of age, the only surviving female cousin of my husband. In his boyhood this rich cousin was tenderly good and kind to

Gussy, just as he dedicated his "Autobiography" to me in his last years of labour. However, it is sufficient to say here that the story so affectionately addressed duly passed into the hands of his cousin, Sarah Ashley, and was religiously treasured by the estimable little lady, and through friends of hers it has come recently before my eyes. Miss Ashley was always, as I have said, a good friend to her boy cousin, tipping

Illustrations to "Gerald's Maidens"



Thirty four years after this Manuscript was completed my Cousin Sarah sent it back to me by the hands of my Wife. I write with greater regularity when I was fourteen years of age than I do now, when I am bordering on Fifty Eight & still my pen is as apt & agile; nor has the character (or rather the want of character) of my handwriting been altered very much. This is (& it also remembred) was written by candlelight: so my sight is growing dim.

George Augustus Sala.

*49, Lower St. Bedford Square
London*

28th July 1876

FACSIMILE OF PART OF THE FIRST STORY WRITTEN BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA, AT THE AGE OF FOURTEEN.

him. But the inspiration, at such an early period of his life, of dedicating his first story to Miss Ashley, I feel convinced, emanated from the elder members of the *Sala ménage*, for George Augustus Sala never had throughout his life what is commonly called "an eye to business." Had he been left entirely untrammelled in this his premier dedication he would possibly have inscribed it to the devoted companion in his hours of trouble, his affectionate little sister

him liberally when at school, and helping him by a weekly allowance when he was a starving youth of seventeen toiling on the fringes of art and literature; and finally, after the greater part of her riches had taken unto themselves wings and flown away, she left him a couple of thousand pounds as a legacy when she died.

This legacy, it is almost needless to say, was in the course of a month or two promptly expended, partly in the acquisition

of a fine array of bookshelves and innumerable books. The cheerful legatee was just as promptly relieved of the other moiety by many of his so-called friends, who, oddly enough, when they heard that G. A. S. had, as they horridly put it, "come in for a bit," had one and all most wonderful investments to recommend him that would yield a golden harvest, most pleasant to dwell upon. Or perhaps they were temporarily "short," and would like to borrow a "pony" or a "monkey," as the case might be, of "dear George Augustus," as they always called him when he was in health and strength, but which somehow or other changed to "poor old Sala" when he became non-earning, and was ill and sick, and could therefore be no further use to them either with his pen or his purse.

So much for the first story written by George Augustus Sala. And now for the last magazine article he ever wrote, called "Bedrooms on Wheels."

BEDROOMS ON WHEELS.

(Mr. Sala's last Magazine Article.)

Endowed by nature with a fine capacity for blundering, an infirmity chiefly due, I should say, to the possession of a memory which, copious enough in some respects, is incurably unretentive as to names and dates (for example, I have said before now in print that Charles V. died at Trieste instead of Yusti; that the great mediæval banking-house, Fuggers, had their headquarters at Antwerp instead of at Augsburg, and that Jerome Bonaparte was king of Mecklenburg instead of Westphalia), a very considerable portion of my working hours is devoted to laborious endeavours to be accurate. I have often laughed, but the laugh was the bitter one of the Hebrew man of old, when I read that I am in the habit of "dashing off" my leading articles and other light literary wares; and it is only the very few—perhaps not half a dozen people who have seen me at my work, who know how slowly and carefully I write, and how many dusty books I am often obliged to consult before I can verify a fact or a proper name, which will only be incidentally mentioned in an essay of which the average natural life is about twenty-four hours—who would be able, were they willing, to describe my manner of "dashing off" an article of some fifteen hundred words.* Now I propose to write

a disquisition on "Bedrooms on Wheels," otherwise railway sleeping-cars, and I am impelled to undertake such a task first, by the remembrance of what an important factor in modern civilisation the sleeping-car has become, and next, by the circumstance that in the course of the last quarter of a century I have had personal experience of sleeping-cars in the United States, in most of the countries of the European continent, in England and in Australia. The first "sleeper" in which I engaged a berth was in a train on the line between Philadelphia and Washington, some time in 1864, when the War of Secession was at its height. The last "bedrooms on wheels" I reclined in were in the express from Sydney (New South Wales) to Melbourne (Victoria), on December 30, 1885—a sixteen hours' journey through the bush, associated with mournful memories, since thirteen days afterwards I was on the sea on my way to India alone—and next in December of 1890, when I accompanied my second wife on her first visit to Rome by the International Wagon-Lit Company.

Persistent and consistent in the yearning for accuracy, I am anxious, before I begin to talk about sleeping-cars, to know who invented them. Who put the first bedroom, or rather nest of beds, on the wheels of a railway carriage? Very possibly you may at once and contemptuously answer Pullman. Still, to an inborn lover of fact such a reply would not be wholly satisfactory. You might as well tell me that Elias Howe invented the sewing machine, or Watt the steam engine,

& Mellvaine, from a collection of sketches on celebrities which I contributed to the *Gentlewoman* during the first year of its appearance, I remember alluding to the wrath usually displayed by my husband when unthinking folks joked him upon what they were pleased to call his facility for "dashing off" his leaders. My small volume begins with a sketch of "G. A. S. at his work," and in it I came across this passage, which was written by me in the happiest days of all my life:—"The expression 'dashing off' has about the same effect on my husband as the exhibition of a red rag is supposed to have on a bull, only G. A. S. stops short at bellowing, and does not gore nor trample upon anybody. I remember one day he came to me in a terribly wrathful mood, brandishing a letter which he had just received from Mr. Spurgeon, for whom he always had a sincere admiration. 'Look here!' he shouted, 'there's another good man gone wrong—dear old Spurgeon complimenting me on the ease with which I dash off my *D.T.* leaders!' Next came a good deal of strong language, and then the irate journalist lighted a cigar, relapsed into his habitual calm, and sat down to work." It was only the other day I was shown the letter my husband wrote to "dear old Spurgeon," greatly reproaching him for thinking he could dash off his *D.T.* leaders, or, indeed, any other articles he wrote. The particular leader Spurgeon wrote about referred to a well-known story relative to the boys of Westminster School and a certain headmaster.—B. S.

* In a little book I wrote in 1892, called "Famous People I have Met," and published by Messrs. Osgood

or Daguerre photography, or Gillott steel pens, or Rowland Hill the adhesive postage stamp. As a rule the reputed inventor has always a more or less mysterious and generally ignored precursor. I have had the honour to know Mr. Pullman, who on many occasions showed me signal courtesy when I have been travelling very far afield in the States. I know that the Pullman cars are the handsomest, the most luxurious and the safest in the world. I have spent a whole day under the guidance of Mr. Pullman himself at Pullman city itself—which flourishing settlement is, by a slight anomaly, situated within the confines of the “village” of Hyde Park, near Chicago—and have seen the cars hewn from wood, fashioned, upholstered, painted, varnished, and mounted on their springs and their wheels; still, it did not occur to me to ask the founder and the father of the city whether he was the discoverer of the vehicle which bears his name, or whether, just as there were strong men before Agamemnon, there were sleeping-car builders prior to Pullman. I have a dim impression of having heard something of one Wagner in connection with early “sleepers,” and I remember also having once met an English engineer who told me that the second Brunel, while he was building the Great Western Railway, caused to be constructed for his own personal use a small carriage containing a bed, which he would have coupled on to any engine or tender that came handy as he travelled up and down the unfinished line. This carriage, I think the engineer told me, is still preserved as a kind of relic in the Great Western Railway Company’s shops at Swindon.*

* The engineer alluded to above was my father, the late Robert Stannard, son of Robert Stannard, the friend of Stephenson, who drained Chat Moss, and who, among many other inventions, designed the famous clog horse-shoe and the portable wrought-iron V-railways, introduced by William Roscoe in 1816. Like many another clever inventor, my grandfather was not publicly given the credit during his lifetime of conceiving and carrying out, in the sub-contract he took from Stephenson, from Eccles to about three miles over the Moss, the great drainage achievement by the simple yet ingenious method of a formation of boughs of trees firmly interlaced into a rough kind of wickerwork. But tardy recognition came to him in the year 1889, when, at a meeting of the Manchester Association of Engineers, which was held in February at the Grand Hotel, Aytoun Street, Sir William Bailey read a paper called “A New Chapter in the History of the Manchester and Liverpool Railway.” In this he proved that it was Robert Stannard the elder, and not Stephenson, who “did the trick” in the Chat Moss engineering feat. The fact was in 1889 publicly commented upon at great length by the leader-writers of nearly every prominent London daily newspaper. The only pity of it was that my paternal grandparent was dead and could not hear, or that he had not learnt the art in his busy lifetime, so

Obviously, however, the mere fact of Brunel the second having devised some sort of a bedroom on wheels does not prove him to have been the inventor of the sleeping-car. Indeed, almost ever since there have been wheeled vehicles in existence, appliances of some order or another have been made use of to render the vehicles in question serviceable for the conveyance of the sick and the lazy. You shall see sculptured in a sepulchral marble in the museum at Baden the reproduction of an ancient Roman sleeping-car called an *arcera*. It was a long two-wheeled chariot, the antiquaries tell us, sometimes of board and sometimes of wickerwork, and furnished with a pillow and a mattress on which the invalid or the indolent could recline at full length. The *arcera* is so cited in the laws of the Twelve Tables; but the antique code in question omits to specify the fare chargeable when a traveller wished to hire such a wheeled bedroom for a journey, say from Rome to Brundisium. It was destined, however, when Grecian and Oriental luxury crept into Italy, to be superseded by the more luxurious *lectica* or litter, which was fitted with a feather bed and had curtains at the sides which could be opened or drawn to at will. These litters were not on wheels but on poles, and instead of being drawn by horses or mules were carried by men-slaves, who might in the long run be found cheaper than four-footed beasts of the fields. The Roman *lectica*, brought with other varieties from the East, was, in short, a lineal ascendant of the Indian palanquin, which you may see any day in Calcutta, but made use of only by “educated baboos” and corpulent Eurasian Government clerks, although there were days when the high and mighty “writers” of the John Company were carried to and from Fort William in palanquins (Sanskrit, *palyān*, a bed), and even grander sahibs condescended to return in them. Witness Sir Arthur Wellesley, writing in 1804 to Major Shaw, “Give orders that a palanquin may be made for me; let it be very light, with the panels made of canvas instead of wood, and the poles fixed as for a dooly. Your Bengally palanquins are so heavy that they cannot be used out of Calcutta.” A dooly, or doolie, is a rudimentary and cheaper form of palanquin,

necessary to the proper recognition of merit than as now, of blowing his own trumpet a little louder than those of his fellow-workers, and so drowning their music in favour of his own. I have noticed that men of genius are rarely very apt performers on the trumpet, and that mental activity frequently develops asthmatic complications.—B. S.

made use of by the poor, and in warfare, as an ambulance. You remember the celebrated but, I am afraid, apocryphal story about "the ferocious doolies."

There are sages learned in things vehicular who maintain that the machine which we call a "coach" was, in the origin, only a bedchamber on wheels, inasmuch that the Emperor Charles V., being woe-fully troubled with the gout, was accustomed to travel in a Hungarian *gutsche*, a long, low chariot in which he could lie at full length and sleep off the pangs engendered by his inordinate repasts of brawn, Lyons sausages, venison pasties and pickled partridges, washed down by potations as excessive of burgundy, Rhine wine and Flemish beer. *Gutsche* is said to be an obsolete Magyar word for a bed or sofa, but the more modern dictionary makers pertly tell us that the word "coach" is

derived from the Hungarian *kocs*, from *Kocs*, the name of a place in Hungary where the vehicle was invented, to which pert assertion I say "Pickles!" Some day we may be told that Pullman cars are so called because, late in the nineteenth century, they were built at a place called Pullman city— (Here the last article of Mr. Sala ends abruptly.)



From a photo by]

MRS. GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

[Hana.

that the unwonted energy was but the flickering of the candle, I didn't go out and enjoy myself, although to please him I pretended that I had done so, and was even

"Shall I take it down for you," I asked, when he started to write the article you have just read. "No," was the cheerful reply that spring afternoon in 1895. "I really feel so well that I'd like to write it myself while you go out and enjoy yourself, dear, and bring me in all the news." Needless to say, having the anguish of knowing

Bedrooms on wheels. 3.

dupes form of palanquin, made use of by the poor, and, in warfare, as an ambulance. You remember the celebrated but, I am afraid, apocryphal story about "the ferocious doolies."

Thus are sages learned in things vehicular who maintain that the machine which we call "coach" was, in the origin, only a bedchamber on wheels inasmuch that the Emperor Charles V., being woe-fully ^{troubled} with the gout was accustomed to travel in a Hungarian *gutsche*, a long low chariot in which he could ~~to~~ lie at full length, and sleep off the pangs engendered by his inordinate repasts of brawn, Lyons sawage, venison pasties and pickled partridges washed down by potations as excessive of, bur- gundy, Rhine wine and Flemish beer. *Gutsche* is said to an obsolete Ma- gyar word for a bed or sofa; but the more modern dictionary makers pertly tell us that the word "coach" is derived from the Hungarian *Kocs*, from *Kocs*, the name of a place in Hungary where the vehicle was invented. To which pert assertion I say "pickles!" "Some day we may be told that Pullman cars are so called because, late in the nineteenth century they were built at a place called Pullman city

so deceitful as to take him up later a beautiful malmaison carnation—his favourite flower—for his button-hole that evening, to keep up the delusion of my jaunt in search of enjoyment. As I re-entered his study that afternoon he gave me over the three slips of closely written MS., on flimsy foreign notepaper—the last page of which I produce in facsimile—and said, "Take them, dearest. I am *so* tired, I don't think I shall ever write another magazine article. Put the sheets in your despatch-box, and finish them for me. When I am dead you will perhaps want bread, and then you can sell 'Bedrooms on Wheels.'"

Although for two years previously I had "finished" many dozen articles for him when his strength failed him, I never found heart to finish this last little article, and I never shall. I put the slips away in my despatch-box as he bade me. Surely enough it was just as he so sadly prophesied, for often since cruel Death came between us I

have wanted for the common necessities of life during many weeks and months of weariness and ill-health. Those terrible hours, however, are passed now, and I have struggled on to not only the "bread" stage, but the "butter" stage also, and I can earn my livelihood again by my pen and my brain. But it was in the early days of my sickness and sorrow—when those people my husband had formerly helped and benefited should have ministered to my wants, but neglected to do so—that I was forced to sell the manuscript of not only "Bedrooms on Wheels," but countless other literary treasures and letters he had given me on our wedding day. But although these treasures are no longer mine, I have been very kindly offered the loan of them all for my forthcoming biography, called "The Life and Letters of George Augustus Sala," which, I hope, will be ready for press in a brief space of time.



THE END