

LETTER XVIII.

LONDON, Sunday, May 8.

MY DEAR S.:--

Mr. S. is very unwell, in bed, worn out with, the threefold labor of making and receiving calls, visiting, and delivering public addresses. C. went to hear Dr. McNeile, of Liverpool, preach--one of the leading men of the established church evangelical party, a strong millenarian. C. said that he was as fine a looking person in canonicals as he ever saw in the pulpit. In doctrine he is what we in America should call very strong old school. I went, as I had always predetermined to do, if ever I came to London, to hear Baptist Noel, drawn thither by the melody and memory of those beautiful hymns of his[N], which must meet a response in every Christian heart. He is tall and well formed, with one of the most classical and harmonious heads I ever saw. Singularly enough, he reminded me of a bust of Achilles at the London Museum. He is indeed a swift-footed Achilles, but in another race, another warfare. Born of a noble family, naturally endowed with sensitiveness and ideality to appreciate all the amenities and suavities of that brilliant sphere, the sacrifice must have been inconceivably great for him to renounce favor and preferment, position in society,--which, here in England, means more than Americans can ever dream of,--to descend from being a court chaplain, to become a preacher in a Baptist dissenting chapel. Whatever

may be thought of the correctness of the intellectual conclusions which led him to such a step, no one can fail to revere the strength and purity of principle which could prompt to such sacrifices. Many, perhaps, might have preferred that he should have chosen a less decided course. But if his judgment really led to these results, I see no way in which it was possible for him to have avoided it. It was with an emotion of reverence that I contrasted the bareness, plainness, and poverty of the little chapel with that evident air of elegance and cultivation which appeared in all that he said and did. The sermon was on the text, "Now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three." Naturally enough, the subject divided itself into faith, hope, and charity.

His style calm, flowing, and perfectly harmonious, his delivery serene and graceful, the whole flowed over one like a calm and clear strain of music. It was a sermon after the style of Tholuck and other German sermonizers, who seem to hold that the purpose of preaching is not to rouse the soul by an antagonistic struggle with sin through the reason, but to soothe the passions, quiet the will, and bring the mind into a frame in which it shall incline to follow its own convictions of duty. They take for granted, that the reason why men sin is not because they are ignorant, but because they are distracted and tempted by passion; that they do not need so much to be told what is their duty, as persuaded to do it. To me, brought up on the very battle field of controversial theology, accustomed to hear every religious idea guarded by definitions, and thoroughly hammered on a logical anvil before the preacher thought of making any use of it for heart or conscience,

though I enjoyed the discourse extremely, I could not help wondering what an American theological professor would make of such a sermon.

To preach on faith, hope, and charity all in one discourse--why, we should have six sermons on the nature of faith to begin with: on speculative faith; saving faith; practical faith, and the faith of miracles; then we should have the laws of faith, and the connection of faith with evidence, and the nature of evidence, and the different kinds of evidence, and so on. For my part I have had a suspicion since I have been here, that a touch of this kind of thing might improve English preaching; as, also, I do think that sermons of the kind I have described would be useful, by way of alterative, among us. If I could have but one of the two manners, I should prefer our own, because I think that this habit of preaching is one of the strongest educational forces that forms the mind of our country.

After the service was over I went into the vestry, and was introduced to Mr. Noel. The congregation of the established church, to which he ministered during his connection with it, are still warmly attached to him. His leaving them was a dreadful trial; some of them can scarcely mention his name without tears. C. says, with regard to the church singing, as far as he heard it, it is twenty years behind that in Boston. In the afternoon I staid at home to nurse Mr. S. A note from Lady John Russell inviting us there.

Monday, May 9. I should tell you that at the Duchess of Sutherland's an

artist, named Burnard, presented me with a very fine cameo head of Wilberforce, cut from a statue in Westminster Abbey. He is from Cornwall, in the south of England, and has attained some celebrity as an artist. He wanted to take a bust of me; and though it always makes me laugh to think of having a new likeness, considering the melancholy results of all former enterprises, yet still I find myself easy to be entreated, in hopes, as Mr. Micawber says, that something may "turn up," though I fear the difficulty is radical in the subject. So I made an appointment with Mr. Burnard, and my very kind friend, Mr. B., in addition to all the other confusions I have occasioned in his mansion, consented to have his study turned into a studio. Upon the heels of this comes another sculptor, who has a bust begun, which he says is going to be finished in Parian, and published whether I sit for it or not, though, of course, he would much prefer to get a look at me now and then. Well, Mr. B. says he may come, too; so there you may imagine me in the study, perched upon a very high stool, dividing my glances between the two sculptors, one of whom, is taking one side of my face, and one the other.

To-day I went with Mr. and Mrs. B. to hear the examination of a borough-school for boys. Mrs. B. told me it was not precisely a charity school, but one where the means of education were furnished at so cheap a rate, that the poorest classes could enjoy them. Arrived at the hall, we found quite a number of distingués, bishops, lords, and clergy, besides numbers of others assembled to hear. The room was hung round with the drawings of the boys, and specimens of handwriting. I was quite

astonished at some of them. They were executed by pen, pencil, or crayon--drawings of machinery, landscapes, heads, groups, and flowers, all in a style which any parent among us would be proud to exhibit, if done by our own children. The boys looked very bright and intelligent, and I was delighted with the system, of instruction which had evidently been pursued with them. We heard them first in the reading and recitation of poetry; after that in arithmetic and algebra, then in natural philosophy, and last, and most satisfactorily, in the Bible. It was perfectly evident from the nature of the questions and answers, that it was not a crammed examination, and that the readiness of reply proceeded not from a mere commitment of words, but from a system of intellectual training, which led to a good understanding of the subject. In arithmetic and algebra the answers were so remarkable as to induce the belief in some that the boys must have been privately prepared on their questions; but the teacher desired Lord John Russell to write down any number of questions which he wished to have given to the toys to solve, from his own mind. Lord John wrote down two or three problems, and I was amused at the zeal and avidity with which the boys seized upon and mastered them. Young England was evidently wide awake, and the prime minister himself was not to catch them, napping. The little fellows' eyes-glistened as they rattled off their solutions. As I know nothing about mathematics, I was all the more impressed; but when they came to be examined in the Bible, I was more astonished than ever. The masters had said that they would be willing any of the gentlemen should question them, and Mr. B. commenced a course of questions on the doctrines of Christianity; asking, Is there any text by which you can prove this, or

that? and immediately, with great accuracy, the boys would cite text upon text, quoting not only the more obvious ones, but sometimes applying Scripture with an ingenuity and force which I had not thought of, and always quoting chapter and verse of every text. I do not know who is at the head of this teaching, nor how far it is a sample of English schools; but I know that these boys had been wonderfully well taught, and I felt all my old professional enthusiasm arising.

After the examination Lord John came forward, and gave the boys a good fatherly talk. He told them that they had the happiness to live under a free government, where all offices are alike open to industry and merit, and where any boy might hope by application and talent to rise to any station below that of the sovereign. He made some sensible, practical comments, on their Scripture lessons, and, in short, gave precisely such a kind of address as one of our New England judges or governors might to schoolboys in similar circumstances. Lord John hesitates a little in his delivery, but has a plain, common-sense way of "speaking right on," which seems to be taking. He is a very simple man in his manners, apparently not at all self-conscious, and entered into the feelings of the boys and the masters with good-natured sympathy, which was very winning. I should think he was one of the kind of men who are always perfectly easy and self-possessed let what will come, and who never could be placed in a situation in which he did not feel himself quite at home, and perfectly competent to do whatever was to be done.

To-day the Duchess of Sutherland called with the Duchess of Argyle. Miss

Greenfield happened to be present, and I begged leave to present her, giving a slight sketch of her history. I was pleased with the kind and easy affability with which the Duchess of Sutherland conversed with her, betraying by no inflection of voice, and nothing in air or manner, the great lady talking with the poor girl. She asked all her questions with as much delicacy, and made her request to hear her sing with as much consideration and politeness, as if she had been addressing any one in her own circle. She seemed much pleased with her singing, and remarked that she should be happy to give her an opportunity of performing in Stafford House, so soon as she should be a little relieved of a heavy cold which seemed to oppress her at present. This, of course, will be decisive in her favor in London. The duchess is to let us know when the arrangement is completed.

I never realized so much that there really is no natural prejudice against color in the human mind. Miss Greenfield is a dark mulattress, of a pleasing and gentle face, though by no means handsome. She is short and thick set, with a chest of great amplitude, as one would think on hearing her tenor. I have never seen in any of the persons to whom I have presented her the least indications of suppressed surprise or disgust, any more than we should exhibit on the reception of a dark-complexioned Spaniard or Portuguese. Miss Greenfield bears her success with much quietness and good sense.

Tuesday, May 10. C. and I were to go to-day, with Mrs. Cropper and Lady Hatherton, to call on the poet Rogers. I was told that he was in very

delicate health, but that he still received friends at his house. We found the house a perfect cabinet collection of the most rare and costly works of art--choicest marbles, vases, pictures, gems, and statuary met the eye every where. We spent the time in examining some of these while the servant went to announce us. The mild and venerable old man himself was the choicest picture of all. He has a splendid head, a benign face, and reminded me of an engraving I once saw of Titian. He seemed very glad to see us, spoke to me of the gathering at Stafford House, and asked me what I thought of the place. When I expressed my admiration, he said, "Ah, I have often said it is a fairy palace, and that the duchess is the good fairy." Again, he said, "I have seen all the palaces of Europe, but there is none that I prefer to this." Quite a large circle of friends now came in and were presented. He did not rise to receive them, but sat back in his easy chair, and conversed quietly with us all, sparkling out now and then in a little ripple of playfulness. In this room were his best beloved pictures, and it is his pleasure to show them to his friends.

By a contrivance quite new to me, the pictures are made to revolve on a pivot, so that by touching a spring they move out from the wall, and can be seen in different lights. There was a picture over the mantel-piece of a Roman Triumphal Procession, painted by Rubens, which attracted my attention by its rich coloring and spirited representation of animals.

The coloring of Rubens always satisfies my eye better than that of any other master, only a sort of want of grace in the conception disturbs

me. In this case both conception and coloring are replete with beauty. Rogers seems to be carefully waited on by an attendant who has learned to interpret every motion and anticipate every desire.

I took leave of him with a touch of sadness. Of all the brilliant circle of poets, which has so delighted us, he is the last--and he so feeble! His memories, I am told, extend back to a personal knowledge of Dr. Johnson. How I should like to sit by him, and search into that cabinet of recollections! He presented me his poems, beautifully illustrated by Turner, with his own autograph on the fly leaf. He writes still a clear, firm, beautiful hand, like a lady's.

After that, we all went over to Stafford House, and the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland went with us into Lord Ellesmere's collection adjoining. Lord Ellesmere sails for America to-day, to be present at the opening of the Crystal Palace. He left us a very polite message. The Duchess of Argyle, with her two little boys, was there also. Lord Carlisle very soon came in, and with him--who do you think? Tell Hattie and Eliza if they could have seen the noble staghound that came bounding in with him, they would have turned from all the pictures on the wall to this living work of art.

Landseer thinks he does well when he paints a dog; another man chisels one in stone: what would they think of themselves if they could string the nerves and muscles, and wake up the affections and instincts, of the real, living creature? That were to be an artist indeed! The dog walked

about the gallery, much at home, putting his nose up first to one and then another of the distinguished persons by whom he was surrounded; and once in a while stopping, in an easy race about the hall, would plant himself before a picture, with his head on one side, and an air of high-bred approval, much as I have seen young gentlemen do in similar circumstances. All he wanted was an eyeglass, and he would have been perfectly set up as a critic.

As for the pictures, I have purposely delayed coming to them. Imagine a botanist dropped into the middle of a blooming prairie, waving with unnumbered dyes and forms of flowers, and only an hour to examine and make acquaintance with them! Room, after room we passed, filled with Titians, Murillos, Guidos, &c. There were four Raphaels, the first I had ever seen. Must I confess the truth? Raphael had been my dream for years. I expected something which would overcome and bewilder me. I expected a divine baptism, a celestial mesmerism; and I found four very beautiful pictures--pictures which left me quite in possession of my senses, and at liberty to ask myself, am I pleased, and how much? It was not that I did not admire, for I did; but that I did not admire enough. The pictures are all holy families, cabinet size: the figures, Mary, Joseph, the infant Jesus, and John, in various attitudes. A little perverse imp in my heart suggested the questions, "If a modern artist had painted these, what would be thought of them? If I did not know it was Raphael, what should I think?" And I confess that, in that case, I should think that there was in one or two of them a certain hardness and sharpness of outline that was not pleasing to me. Neither, any more than

Murillo, has he in these pictures shadowed forth, to my eye, the idea of Mary. Protestant as I am, no Catholic picture contents me. I thought to myself that I had seen among living women, and in a face not far off, a nobler and sweeter idea of womanhood.

It is too much to ask of any earthly artist, however, to gratify the aspirations and cravings of those who have dreamed of them for years unsatisfied. Perhaps no earthly canvas and brush can accomplish this marvel. I think the idealist must lay aside his highest ideal, and be satisfied he shall never meet it, and then he will begin to enjoy. With this mood and understanding I did enjoy very much an Assumption of the Virgin, by Guido, and more especially Diana and her Nymphs, by Titian: in this were that softness of outline, and that blending of light and shadow into each other, of which I felt the want in the Raphaels. I felt as if there was a perfection of cultivated art in this, a classical elegance, which, so far as it went, left the eye or mind nothing to desire. It seemed to me that Titian was a Greek painter, the painter of an etherealized sensuousness, which leaves the spiritual nature wholly unmoved, and therefore all that he attempts he attains. Raphael, on the contrary, has spiritualism; his works enter a sphere where it is more difficult to satisfy the soul; nay, perhaps from the nature of the case, impossible.

There were some glorious pieces of sunshine by Cuyp. There was a massive sea piece by Turner, in which the strong solemn swell of the green waves, and the misty wreathings of clouds, were powerfully given.

There was a highly dramatic piece, by Paul de la Roche, representing Charles I. in a guard room, insulted by the soldiery. He sits, pale, calm, and resolute, while they are puffing tobacco smoke in his face, and passing vulgar jokes. His thoughts appear to be far away, his eyes looking beyond them with an air of patient, proud weariness.

Independently of the pleasure one receives from particular pictures in these galleries, there is a general exaltation, apart from, critical considerations, an excitement of the nerves, a kind of dreamy state, which is a gain in our experience. Often in a landscape we first single out particular objects,--this old oak,--that cascade,--that ruin,--and derive from them, an individual joy; then relapsing, we view the landscape as a whole, and seem, to be surrounded by a kind of atmosphere of thought, the result of the combined influence of all. This state, too, I think is not without its influence in educating the æsthetic sense.

Even in pictures which we comparatively reject, because we see them, in the presence of superior ones, there is a wealth of beauty which would grow on us from day to day, could we see them, often. When I give a sigh to the thought that in our country we are of necessity, to a great extent, shut from the world of art, I then rejoice in the inspiring thought that Nature is ever the superior. No tree painting can compare with a splendid elm, in the plenitude of its majesty. There are colorings beyond those of Rubens poured forth around us in every autumn

scene; there are Murillos smiling by our household firesides; and as for Madonnas and Venuses, I think with Byron,--

"I've seen more splendid women, ripe and real,
Than all the nonsense of their stone ideal."

Still, I long for the full advent of our American, day of art, already dawning auspiciously.

After finishing our inspection, we went back to Stafford House to lunch.

In the evening we went to Lord John Russell's. We found Lady Russell and her daughters sitting quietly around the evening lamp, quite by themselves. She is elegant and interesting in her personal appearance, and has the same charm of simplicity and sincerity of manner which we have found in so many of the upper sphere. She is the daughter of the Earl of Minto, and the second wife of Lord John. We passed here an entirely quiet and domestic evening, with only the family circle. The conversation turned on various topics of practical benevolence, connected with the care and education of the poorer classes. Allusion being made to Mrs. Tyler's letter, Lady Russell expressed some concern lest the sincere and well-intended expression of the feeling of the English ladies might have done harm. I said that I did not think the spirit of Mrs. Tyler's letter was to be taken as representing the feeling of American ladies generally,--only of that class who are determined to maintain the rightfulness of slavery.

It seems to me that the better and more thinking part of the higher classes in England have conscientiously accepted the responsibility which the world has charged upon them of elevating and educating the poorer classes. In every circle since I have been here in England, I have heard the subject discussed as one of paramount importance.

One or two young gentlemen dropped in in the course of the evening, and the discourse branched out on the various topics of the day; such as the weather, literature, art, spiritual rappings, and table turnings, and all the floating et ceteras of life. Lady Russell apologized for the absence of Lord John in Parliament, and invited us to dine with, them at their residence in Richmond Park next week, when there is to be a parliamentary recess.

We left about ten o'clock, and went to pass the night with our friends Mr. and Mrs. Cropper at their hotel, being engaged to breakfast at the West End in the morning.

END OF VOLUME I.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote A: Since my return to the United States I have been informed that the Freewill Baptist denomination have adopted the same rigid principle of slavery exclusion that characterizes the Scotch Seceders

and the Quakers. Let this be known to their honor.]

[Footnote B: This venerated, and erudite jurist, the friend and biographer of the celebrated Lord Jeffrey, has recently died.]

[Footnote C: This, alas! is no longer true. By the recent passage of the infamous Nebraska bill, this whole region, with the exception of two states already organized, is laid open to slavery. This faithless measure was nobly resisted by a large and able minority in Congress--honor to them.]

[Footnote D: This most learned and amiable judge recently died, while in the very act of charging a jury.]

[Footnote E: This resolution, drawn and offered, I think, by my hospitable friend, Mr. Binney, I have mislaid, and cannot find it. It was, however, in character and spirit, just what Mr. James here declares it to be.]

[Footnote F: I have been told since my return, that there are some slaveholding Congregational churches in the south; but they have no connection with our New England churches, and certainly are not generally known as Congregationalists distinct from the Presbyterians.]

[Footnote G: This has always been supposed and claimed in the United States. Now the time has come to test its truth. If there is this

antislavery feeling in nine tenths of the people, the impudent iniquity of the Nebraska bill will call it forth.]

[Footnote H: Eight years ago I conscientiously approved and zealously defended this course of the American Board. Subsequent events have satisfied me, that, in the present circumstances of our country, making concessions to slaveholders, however slightly, and with whatever motives, even if not wrong in principle, is productive of no good. It does but strengthen slavery, and makes its demands still more exorbitant, and neutralizes the power of gospel truth.]

[Footnote I: This state of things is fast changing. Church members at the south now defend slavery as right. This is a new thing.]

[Footnote J: When your chimney has smoked as long as ours, it will, may be, need sweeping too.]

[Footnote K: Had I known all about New York and Boston which recent examinations have developed, I should have answered very differently. The fact is, that we in America can no longer congratulate ourselves on not having a degraded and miserable class in our cities, and it will be seen to be necessary for us to arouse to the very same efforts which, have been so successfully making in England.]

[Footnote L: This idea is beautifully wrought out by Mrs. Jamieson in her Characteristics of the Women of Shakspeare, to which, the author is

indebted for the suggestion.]

[Footnote M: James Russell Lowell's "Beaver Brook."]

[Footnote N: The hymns beginning with, these lines, "If human, kindness meet return," and "Behold where, in a mortal form," are specimens.]