

PEN, PRESS, AND PENCIL.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "COBWEB PAPERS."

IV.

WHEN I perused, with youthful interest, a book which fell under my notice one day in Boston, a book of wild imagery and intense power of expression—"The Ladye Annabel, by an Unknown Author," as its title-page informed the public—I had no thought of ever becoming acquainted, personally, with one of the strangest characters in real life that it has ever been my lot to know intimately. I was then contributing occasionally to a Philadelphia magazine conducted by one of my boyhood's friends; a periodical of no pretensions to first-class literary position, and yet, as I remember, comprising in its modest list of articles more real talent than is now the general feature of more than one assumptious monthly publication of its kind. The day of Graham and Godey had not then come to dictate reputations for writers of poetry and prose; though William E. Burton was sinking his earnings as an actor in their *avant-courier* the "Gentleman's Magazine," to which Edgar A. Poe, as editor, for a period lent the earlier efforts of his versatile genius and the questionable associations of his moral aberrations. In New York literary fields, Nathaniel P. Willis, and his *collaborateur*, George P. Morris, essayed to satirize and amuse in their "Corsair," while Seba Smith, who had won a "down-East" reputation as "Jack Downing," and his partner, Lawrence Labree, were running another frail bark ashore under the name of "Rover."

Bostonian reprinters had filled New England libraries with "Athenæum" and "Penny Magazines," content to rest their native dignity on Everett's periods in the "North American Review;" but neither Philadelphia nor the "Modern Athens," nor New York city could claim superiority in domains of "Maga" over Southern mind as then exuberant in pages of the "Magnolia" and "Southern Literary Messenger." Cooper in those days was yielding slowly under broadsides of Captain Marryat, and Scott was giving place to Bulwer in other realms of romance. Anon the French *feuilletonists*, Dumas, Sue, De Kock, "George Sand," were to flood cheap book-marts, and make

possible a field of wanton literature, sown broadcast with seeds that, in our day, bear Dead Sea fruits of mind and morals.

But, when my fancy followed the weird imaginings of that "Unknown Author" who wrote "The Ladye Annabel," and when soon after I encountered him in Philadelphia, there were no misgivings in my thought concerning evil to come from indiscriminate book-making. Greeted with warm clasp of a tenacious hand, small and shapely, and regarded by large gray eyes with a humid light in them, I listened to a voice which, in its low tones, was full of melody; and, impressible as I was in those days, we began a friendship which continued during that "Unknown Author's" fleeting life.

An "Unknown Author" still. Although his name is allowed to appear, with a list of his works, in Allibone's pages, and although that name was once a "household word" in American families—wherever enthusiastic patriotism and indignant protest in behalf of mankind, bowed and bleeding, could inspire response—yet George Lippard remains, to all literary appreciation, the "Unknown Author" that he styled himself on the title-page of "Ladye Annabel."

Yet that one book of his—crude though it be in conception and exuberant in language—discloses a force of imagination and an insight into human nature, pure or perverted, which we may look for in vain under names of English and American writers of fiction to whom Allibone and his critical kind award praise and repute.

But George Lippard wrote for no critical Areopagus, nor coveted its rewards, so commonly bestowed upon mediocrity, backed by booksellers, and pretension puffed by newspapers. This genius, like the *afflatus* of that heedless school-boy who whistled in school, might well have excused the aberration, by declaring that "it whistled itself." For, if ever an author gave rein to impulse in abandonment of conventional bit and bridle, that author was the boy of seventeen who penned his "Pilgrimage of St. George," and the dying man

of thirty, who inscribed his adoration of God and his love for man on the "White Banner" he began to publish as a monthly magazine.

But Lippard had no Mæcenas among book-publishers to usher his better impulses into print or encourage his literary versatility to become concentrated intellectual power. A child of the people, fretted from infancy by those "twin jailers" which Bulwer makes his Claude Melnotte, repressed by—"low birth and iron fortune"—the life he lived in youth was a struggle for his dependent household, with a "wolf at the door." Dreaming bright fancies, brooding over dark realities, were alternations of his days and nights. Bread for the soul he broke with angelic apparitions, when visions of fame and fortune vaulted with blue heavens the low roof of his Spring Garden domicile; but the visions were evermore displaced by cloudy forebodings of no bread for the body to break with his sister orphan and their aged aunts. From boyhood to manhood, with a few brief breaks of sunshine from a successful bargain with publishers, the *res angusta domi* were habitual goads to his labors and fetters on his thoughts. No man exalted labor more than Lippard did. "Genius and industry," he said, were forces to move the world. But he bowed himself to a field of exertion which soiled his genius while it rewarded not his toil. For the young author had made for himself enemies by too free usage of his turn for satire; and there were men in that day whose pens in journalism were dipped in gall more acrid than nutgall, to gratify personal pique or feed editorial spleen. And when a sporadic story here and there was flung off by Lippard in his dashing way—perhaps with anxiety for his imminent rent-day more than with heed for reputation—some "dog in office" opened with a howl of invidious criticism, and a pack of curs gave tongue behind, in mockery of style and travesty of language. "Ho! ho!" they yelled—"Ha! ha!" "Lippard's spasmodic pen again!"—"Ho! ho! ha! ha!"

And they carried the day against "industry and genius" dragging chains of poverty! It was sport for flippant editors to hound down struggling ambition, with their "Ho! ho!" and "Ha! ha!" Poor George Lippard was relegated to the ranks of melodramatic playwrights and prompters, whose stage-whispers are answered by "Hi! hi!" from newsboy critics in the gallery. No effort at honest

review discriminated his best from his worst—his paintings of glorified nature from a few incongruous "pot-boilers;" but the "Ho! ho!" censors smashed his canvas whenever unrolled, and the "Ha! ha!" paragraphs followed him year by year to the epitaph on his literary grave.

For, in those three ponderous tomes which embalm for encyclopædic immortality every British pamphleteer and American tractarian whom Allibone could make an author, under microscopic scrutiny, and which have no mention at all of writers whom Allibone's omniscience overlooked—in those three cemeteries of English literature there is but one line over the ashes of George Lippard, in a catalogue of his works—a line inscribed by no American pen; dictated by no just American estimate of merit; but a line, "cruel as death," rewritten by Allibone from a British journal, and made the summary of all that "Unknown Author" deserved, whose "Legends of the Revolution," "Jesus and the Poor" and "The Arisen Washington," are lessons of high thought and pure purposes, worth more than libraries of meretricious volumes lauded in that cyclopædic compilation.

And this line, transcribed by Allibone, stabbing the lowly dust of George Lippard with a pen that was barbed and venomed by some ignorant or malignant British writer, is all that tells of my "Unknown Author's" brief but busy life: "The scavenger's trade may be useful, but we don't like his company."

Poor George Lippard! with his reverence for all things lofty and aspiring; his exaltation of manhood; his chivalrous respect for womanhood; his pleadings in behalf of human suffering; his fierce, uncompromising hatred of oppression and wrong; his love for the pure; his poetic ideal of the good; his kindred with intellect everywhere, expressed so earnestly, if redundantly, in that requiem he wrote upon a brother novelist, Charles Brockden Brown, whom he called "The Broken-hearted."

If ever a man of rare genius and choice human sympathies was removed in thought and word from all relations with a "scavenger's trade," it was the author of that human book, "The Nazarene." And if ever such a man died by the way-side "broken-hearted," it was he who began his march with young love smiling over his "Pilgrimage of St. George," and who survived to weep

over that young love buried away from his heart in Monument Cemetery.

I remember the summer's day when we rode out together to that "city of the dead," and the widower threw himself prostrate on the grave of his "Rose," the wife of a few short years. I turned the head of my horse to other pathways, that his grief might be solitary; but, ever as I caught a glimpse of that grass-plot through vistas of foliage, I could see the husband lying on the wife's grave, and I knew he was wrestling with griefs that would not be quieted.

He was wifeless, then, and sisterless; as he had from childhood been motherless and fatherless. I recall the day when I met him on Chestnut street, after reading a notice of his young sister's death in a morning paper. We had been estranged during months on some worthless provocation, but when I saw him that hour with bowed head, slowly and aimlessly walking, I went to him, with words now forgotten, and placed a few penciled lines in his hand. And to-day I can recall the light that lifted up his head and shot from his gray eyes as our looks encountered. Long afterwards he said to me, alluding to his sombre mood that day, "When I saw you coming I was bitter

in my heart against you, for you were smiling; but when I read those lines you gave me, I could have laid down my heart under your feet!"

Such Oriental expression of feeling was natural to the man. "I was hungry to see you!" he exclaimed, with both hands clasping the hands of a friend. And to another he spoke of a "streak of sunshine in his face."

And I thought it but natural on his lips, one afternoon as we sat at an open window of my rooms in New York, inhaling the odors of May blossoms, mingled with aromas of coffee and cigars, to hear the solemn asseveration:

"May flowers are blooming here, but the June roses will bloom over my grave in Philadelphia!"

"Nonsense, George," I replied; "you'll live to gather June roses many a year."

He fixed his large gray eyes upon me as he emitted smoke from his cigar and shook his head.

"My friend," said he, "I am a man without a hope!"

And we parted, that evening of May, to meet no more. A month later George Lippard was forever at rest, and the June roses were blooming over his grave.