

I dare say, but I must say that when I call on official business upon one of His Most Gracious Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, it is highly unbecoming and indeed indecorous, partaking, almost, I might almost say, of the nature of aw— (Very pompous, to contrast with his absurd appearance. Asterisks, who has been shrieking with laughter, recognises that this is the real man, is struck with the most dreadful apprehension—collects his wits . . .)

Asterisks: My dear Lord Owen, this is a most dreadful business. That you should suspect me of playing you such a schoolboy trick! We are both victims of these terrible women, I fear. That trap was meant for me, I make no doubt. Come along, I must give you a bath and a change of clothes. See! I'm a good deal splashed myself!

Field-Marshal: Well, I suppose—

Asterisks: No supposing; come along. (Exeunt.)

(Belloney disguised as the Minister re-enters almost immediately, and starts busily writing letters, humming cheerfully in a shrill falsetto. After him—)

Enter a real Constable (played by James) and salutes.)

Minister: Constable, I expect to be attacked by a most desperate female woman. Destroy her instantly when I give the signal!

(The Policeman exhibits a brace of revolvers and three toy cannon, which he trains on doors and window.)

James: Ready, sir, ready!

(Enter, wildly, a man in a bath-towel, with his hair full of soap (played by Asterisks); starts at seeing the presentment of himself in the chair.)

Asterisks: By heaven, I'm going mad! Constable (grasping his arm), you're solid anyhow! Tell me, before I rave—is there anybody sitting in that chair, or is there not?

James: Ho, yus, La Milo. That's Mr. Hasterisks, the 'Ome Sekertury.

Asterisks: It's the devil! It's the woman! And she's got my clothes!

Belloney (rising with dignity): Constable, arrest that woman!

(A struggle. They go out. Belloney gives a short dance of triumph, comes forward and bows, removing the false nose and moustache.)

Books and Persons.

(AN OCCASIONAL CAUSERIE.)

I HAVE had great joy in Mr. Nowell Charles Smith's new and comprehensive edition of Wordsworth, published by Methuen's in three volumes as majestic as Wordsworth himself at his most pontifical. The price is fifteen shillings net, and having regard to the immense labour involved in such an edition, it is very cheap. I would sooner pay fifteen shillings for a real book like this than a guinea for the memoirs of any tin god that ever sat up at nights to keep a diary; yea, even though the average collection of memoirs will furnish material to light seven hundred pipes. We have lately been much favoured with first-rate editions of poets. I mention Mr. de Selincourt's Keats, and Mr. George Sampson's amazing and not-to-be-sufficiently-lauded Blake. Mr. Smith's work is worthy to stand on the same shelf with these. A shining virtue of Mr. Smith's edition is that it embodies the main results of the researches and excavations not only of Professor Knight, but, more important, of the wonderful Mr. Hutchinson, whose contributions to the "Academy," in days of yore, were the delight of Wordsworthians.

Personally, I became a member of the order of Wordsworthians in the historic year 1891, when Matthew Arnold's "Selections" were issued to the public at the price of half a crown. I suppose that Matthew Arnold and Sir Leslie Stephen were the two sanest Wordsworthians of us all. And Matthew Arnold put Wordsworth above all modern poets except Dante, Shakespeare, Goethe, Milton, and Molière. The test of a Wordsworthian is the ability to read every line that the poet wrote. I regret to say that, strictly, Matthew Arnold was not a perfect Wordsworthian; he con-

fessed, with manly sincerity, that he could not read "Vaudracour and Julia" with pleasure. This was a pity and Matthew Arnold's loss. For a strict Wordsworthian, while utterly conserving his reverence for the most poetic of poets, can discover a keen ecstasy in the perusal of the unconsciously funny lines which Wordsworth was constantly perpetrating. And I would back myself to win the first prize in any competition for Wordsworth's funniest line with a quotation from "Vaudracour and Julia." My prize-line would assuredly be:

Yea, his first word of greeting was,—"All right . . .

It is true that the passage goes on . . .

Is gone from me. . . .

But that does not impair the magnificent funniness.

* * *

From his tenderest years Wordsworth succeeded in combining the virtues of Milton and of "Punch" in a manner that no other poet has approached. Thus, at the age of eighteen, he could write:

Now while the solemn evening shadows sail,
On slowly-waving pinions, down the vale;
And fronting the bright west, yon oak entwines
Its darkening boughs. . . .

Which really is rather splendid for a boy. And he could immediately follow that, speaking of a family of swans, with:

While tender cares and mild domestic loves
With furtive watch pursue her as she moves,
The female with a meeker charm succeeds. . . .

* * *

Wordsworth richly atoned for his unconscious farcicalness by a multitude of single lines that, in their pregnant sublimity, attend the Wordsworthian like a shadow throughout his life, warning him continually when he is in danger of making a fool of himself. Thus, whenever through mere idleness I begin to waste the irrecoverable moments of eternity, I always think of that masterly phrase (from, I think, the "Prelude," but I will not be sure):

Unprofitably travelling towards the grave.

This line is a most convenient and effective stone to throw at one's languid friends. Finally let me hail Mr. Nowell Smith as a benefactor.

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There seems to be some chance of Stendhal becoming relatively popular in this country. I have been asked about editions. I should like to recommend, as a commencement, the singularly agreeable volume of selections issued by the "Mercure de France" at 3½ francs, or, bound in half-calf in a style that does not offend a bibliophile, 6 francs (less dis.). This book, of over five hundred pages, is a model. The selector has taken no thought for the *jeune fille*; he has simply chosen the best. The book ends with eight appendices, some learned, including a biography and an exhaustive list of Stendhal's numerous "fittings," compiled by that arch-Stendhalian, M. Paul Léauté. It begins with a portrait.

JACOB TONSON.

The Rev. R. J. CAMPBELL,

M.A. (of the City Temple),

WILL LECTURE AT THE

St. James's Hall,

GREAT PORTLAND STREET, LONDON, W.

On Wednesday next, JUNE 3rd.

Subject:

PRACTICAL HOUSING.

SIR JOHN DICKSON-POYNTER, Bart., M.P.,
will take the Chair at 8 p.m.

Admission 1s. Reserved seats 2s. 6d.

Applications for tickets, and for the programme of the visit to the Rt. Hon. JOHN BURNS, M.P., to the estate of the Ealing Tenants, Ltd., on Whit Monday, to be made to

Mr. F. LITCHFIELD, 6, Bloomsbury Square, W.C.