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JAMES T. FIELDS

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES AND PERSONAL SKETCHES

WITH

UNPUBLISHED FRAGMENTS AND TRIBUTES
FROM MEN AND WOMEN OF LETTERS

By *Annie Adams Fields.*

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“ Il n’y a pour les âmes d’autre solitude que celle de l’oubli.”

IN MEMORY.

As a guest who may not stay
Long and sad farewells to say
Glides with smiling face away,

Of the sweetness and the zest
Of thy happy life possessed
Thou hast left us at thy best.

Warm of heart and clear of brain,
Of thy sun-bright spirit's wane
Thou hast spared us all the pain.

Now that thou hast gone away,
What is left of one to say
Who was open as the day?

What is there to gloss or shun?
Save with kindly voices none
Speak thy name beneath the sun.

Safe thou art on every side,
Friendship nothing finds to hide,
Love's demand is satisfied.

Over manly strength and worth,
At thy desk of toil, or hearth,
Played the lambent light of mirth,—

Mirth that lit but never burned;
All thy blame to pity turned;
Hatred thou hadst never learned.

Every harsh and vexing thing
At thy home-fire lost its sting;
Where thou wast was always spring.

IN MEMORY.

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And thy perfect trust in good,
Faith in man and womanhood,
Chance and change and time withstood.

Small respect for cant and whine,
Bigot's zeal and hate malign,
Had that sunny soul of thine.

But to thee was duty's claim
Sacred, and thy lips became
Reverent with one holy Name.

Therefore, on thy unknown way
Go in God's peace! We who stay
But a little while delay.

Keep for us, O friend, where'er
Thou art waiting, all that here
Made thy earthly presence dear.

Something of thy pleasant past
On a ground of wonder cast,
In the stiller waters glassed!

Keep the human heart of thee:
Let the mortal only be
Clothed in immortality.

And when fall our feet as fell
Thine upon the asphodel,
Let thy old smile greet us well,

Proving in a world of bliss
What we fondly dream in this,—
Love is one with holiness!

JOHN GREENLEAF WHITTIER.

NOTE.



It will be observed that great care has been taken in these pages to omit, so far as possible, all personal mention of living friends. Some of those only who have passed beyond this narrow scope and vision have been recalled as making part of a life not to be altogether forgotten.

A few poems and extracts from letters, where friends may speak for themselves, have been incorporated as properly forming a part of this memorial.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

AND

PERSONAL SKETCHES.

PORTSMOUTH, New Hampshire's only seaport, is one of the few places in America touched with the hue of decay. During the Revolution, when our humble navy consisted only of seven ships, New Hampshire furnished one from the Portsmouth navy yard. But the city reached "the highest point of all" her "greatness" during the latest five years of the last century, and a quaint, fleeting glimpse of the old home world that so called "greatness" was. Calm after storm, the calm of closing day, was already brooding over the town when the boy who is the subject of this memoir was born, in 1816. His father was a ship-master, "much respected," writes one of his town's-people, "by all who knew him." His early death at sea left his widow with the care of his two little sons, and the ship-yards and wharves, attractive to every boy, became places of danger and distress in her eyes. The rapid Piscataqua,

worse in the more important part. Some portions have been published of the prose. I would rather that you should possess these different pieces than any other publishers. I desire no advantage from them. If you think them worth your attention, I will transcribe them legibly.¹ . . .

“Very truly yours,

“WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

“Feb. 2. Via NUNCIATINA 2671, FLORENCE.

“My ‘Honores’ are not come.”

This was the period of Mr. Fields's first intimate acquaintance with Charlotte Cushman, a woman of great energy and ability. Many of the pleasanter days in Rome that winter were passed under her roof and at her table. Here was to be seen, from day to day, everybody of interest either among the residents in Rome or the chance visitors to that city. Her dramatic talent and her courage made her a power in the social circle. Miss Cushman was a keen observer and appreciator of that disinterested power of doing for others, which was one of the distinguishing characteristics of her friend's disposition. It is amusing to see how full her letters are of suggestions for forwarding her own plans or those of others in whom she was interested.

¹ The idea of the publication of this book was given up by Mr. Fields because of Mr. Landor's insistence on the subject of *The Defense*.

“A thousand thanks about the something for me to read next season. ‘Show, show, show!’ It would have rejoiced your sympathetic soul to have seen 2,000 people under the influence of the ‘Young Gray Head.’ . . . You would have seen the reward of your search, and in pointing it out to me as a reading.”

“I want very much to introduce to you the bearer of this, . . . and you will make something of him, . . . for you seem to have the power to make of people what you will. I think you are the great original philosopher’s stone.” . . .

Again she writes:—

“I want you to come to see me and give me some vitality. . . . I want to be taken up bodily and made to do whatever is right, and good, and pleasant. . . . We unite in declaring you are the most wonderful fellow for finding out just what will suit the friends you love and honor with your gifts. I sit down with double-barreled determination to write and say I am keeping well, seeming to contradict the ‘malignancy’ of disease which my surgeon feared for me. . . . Tell me one thing. Do the lines in the ‘Adonais’ of Shelley, beginning at stanza 31, ‘Midst others of less note,’ etc., refer to Byron? or to whom? Please tell me. . . . I know you are very busy, and I would not trouble you, but we cannot get — to any *action* save through your *personal* pressure. . . . I will beg *you* to assume this responsibility. . . . E. S. has made such a lovely little figure of the Angel of Youth, . . . and a colossal head of the original (secesher, I call it) Rebel, ‘The Archangel Ruined’

as she calls it, alias Lucifer, which is full of power, and ought to be ordered by somebody at home. . . . How wonderful are the 'Biglow Papers;' there is more said in those papers than has been said by any writer and speaker yet."

The diary continues:—

"Came to Jermyn Street. When Walter Scott was in London he always lived in this street, usually at the Cherry Hotel, just opposite."

"Met Mr. Edward Jesse at the British Museum at one o'clock. Through him we were able to see and understand many things of which we should otherwise have been ignorant. He introduced us to Professor Owen, who kindly escorted us over the department in which he is chiefly interested. Mr. Jesse is over eighty years old, but hale and hearty."

A few extracts from the correspondence with this aged naturalist may not be out of place here. Mr. Jesse's books have given him a niche with lovers of out-of-door life and students of natural objects.

"EAST SHEEN, MORTLAKE, SURREY, 1854.

"MY DEAR MR. FIELDS: I am become an old fellow and do not much like to look into futurity, as having any certainty of a prolonged existence, but if I am alive next year you have not any one in England who will be more glad to see you than myself. . . . I send you my last note from Mr. Mitford, received to-day. He alludes to a large mass of papers of Shenstone the poet, now in my possession. I am afraid that the unfair attack made

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Fields, Annie A.
Boston, 1881.

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