Charles Kingsley.¹

EVERSLEY was the home of Charles Kingsley during the whole of his literary life. As poet, naturalist, philanthropist, social reformer, prophet, and preacher, he was for thirty-three years identified with the "delicious self-sown firs and moors" of the parish he loved so well. In Bramshill Park, the seat of Sir William Cope, the lord of this manor, still stands the tree where his ancestor, Archbishop Abbott, in the time of James I., accidentally shot the keeper. The Prelate saw the white splinters of his cross-bow sparkling from the tree; he saw the forester fall; his features collapsed into a look of rigid sorrow, and he never smiled again. That portrait haunted the childhood of Charles Kingsley. In this church of St. Mary the Virgin he entered on his first curacy, in July, 1842; here he was installed as rector in May, 1844; here early in that same year he brought his bride. Beneath those pine trees he composed most of the works which he wrote in the adjacent study. In that rectory-house he passed thirty-one years of intellectual vigour, moral worth, and domestic affection. From that pulpit were preached those *Village Sermons*, *Sermons on National Subjects*, and *Sermons for the Times*, which were listened to by villagers, and read wherever the English language is spoken. When, January 23rd, 1875, he died in that parsonage house, Westminster Abbey claimed the honour of his tomb, but through the triumph of a more tender sentiment he reposes in the spot he had selected, by the grave of Charlotte, wife of Anthony Froude, in the churchyard which his hand had planted with shrubs and edged with turf. His bust stands in the Baptistry of Westminster Abbey, by the side of his friend Frederick Maurice, his "dear master," in that new poe corner where Keble, Wordsworth, George Herbert, and Cowper are likewise memorialized, an share with him the honour due to

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genius, allied with piety and virtue. But here close by us is his resting-place, beneath a white marble cross, engraved with his favourite passion flower. Circling round the cross are the words, "God is love;" beneath is the sentiment uttered to his wife when, a few weeks previous to his own death, he supposed her to be dying—"Amavimus, Amamus, Amabimus;" "We have loved, we do love, we shall love."

Charles Kingsley cannot be severed from the localities which pictured their beauties upon his genius. Though a man of literature, he was specially the child of nature.

And Nature, the old nurse, took
The child upon her knee,
Saying, "Here is a story-book
Thy Father has written for thee."
"Come wander with me," she said,
"Into regions yet untrod,
And read what is still unread
In the manuscripts of God;"
And he wandered away and away,
With Nature, the dear old nurse,
Who sang to him night and day
The rhymes of the universe.
And whenever the way seemed long,
Or his heart began to fail,
She would sing a more wonderful song,
Or tell a more wonderful tale.

Born at Holne Vicarage, near Dartmoor, June 12th, 1819; then in his early childhood in Nottinghamshire, where he became familiar with the fen country; then in Clovelly, where a new world of beauty was open to him, and became his inspiration from the age of eleven to his seventeenth year. The quaint village, the picturesque scenery, the fishermen, the wild, daring life, the tragic scenes he witnessed—all left upon his memory an indelible impression. We recognise Clovelly and his school days under Derwent Coleridge at Helston in the "Three Fishers"—

Three fishers went sailing away to the West,
Away to the West as the sun went down;
Each thought on the woman who loved him the best,
And the children stood watching them out of the town;
For men must work, and women must weep,
And there's little to earn, and many to keep,
Though the harbour bar be moaning.

Three wives sat up in the lighthouse tower,
And they trimmed the lamps as the sun went down;
They looked at the squall, and they looked at the shower,
And the night-rack came rolling up ragged and brown.

But men must work, and women must weep,
Though storms be sudden, and waters deep,
And the harbour bar be moaning.

Three corpses lay out on the shining sands
In the morning gleam as the tide went down,
And the women are weeping and wringing their hands
For those who will never come home to the town ;
For men must work, and women must weep,
And the sooner it's over, the sooner to sleep ;
And good-bye to the bar and its moaning.

In 1836 his father was removed from the Rectory of Clovelly to that of Chelsea, and Charles, after a year at King's College School, went to Magdalene College, Cambridge. In the summer of 1839 his father took brief charge of the village of Checkenden, in Oxfordshire, and with his family resided for two months in the little parsonage house ; there Charles, then an undergraduate at Cambridge, first met Fanny Grenfell, who became his wife in 1844. He graduated at Cambridge in 1842, taking a first class in classics and a senior optime in mathematics. In the same year he became curate (two years afterwards rector) of Eversley, the parish he held until his death in January, 1875. From 1859 to 1869 he was Regius Professor of Modern History at Cambridge. In 1869 he was preferred to a canonry in Chester Cathedral, and transferred in 1873 to a canonry in Westminster.

He took his rank as a poet and dramatist when, at the age of twenty-nine, he published the *Saints' Tragedy*, founded on the history and legend of Elizabeth of Hungary. This poem portrays sympathetically the character of the saint, and the peculiarities of mediæval life, whilst repudiating what he deemed to be superstitious and false in moral theory and miracle.

Hypatia presented an earlier epoch of ecclesiastical history. When Dean Stanley preached in Westminster Abbey, he singled out *Hypatia* for special praise, as a work "in which his moral enthusiasm scathed with an everlasting brand the name of the Alexandrian Cyril and his followers for their outrages on humanity and morality, in the name of a hollow Christianity and a spurious orthodoxy." "Read it," said the Dean, "if you would learn some of the most impressive lessons of ecclesiastical history. Read and inwardly digest those pages ; perhaps the most powerful he ever wrote, which close that wonderful story by discriminating the destinies which awaited each of its characters as they passed, one after another, 'each to his own place.'"

This work, however, obtained him many enemies. Charles Kingsley says:—"It was written with my heart's blood, and was received (as I expected) with curses from many of the very Churchmen whom I was trying to warn and save; yet I think the book did good. I know that it has not hurt me, save, perhaps, in that ecclesiastical career to which I have never aspired. I am trying to make the Church party (with whom are my deepest sympathies) understand that if they would conquer they must be themselves—what their formulæ, rightly understood, are already—the most liberal and wide-minded men in Christendom."

Of his Cambridge lectures, entitled, *The Roman and the Teuton*, Max Muller says:—"They produced a permanent impression on many a young mind. They contain the thoughts of a poet and a moralist, a politician, a theologian, and before all, of a friend and counsellor of young men, while reading for them and with them one of the most awful periods of the history of mankind—the agonies of a dying empire, and the birth of new nationalities." The Prince of Wales, who attended the course, made no secret of his indignation at the attacks which followed the publication of the lectures.

Prince Albert had specially committed his son, when at Cambridge, to Kingsley's tutorship in history. Hence arose a lasting relationship of kindly appreciation on the part of various members of the royal family, the Queen appointing him one of her chaplains.

Time does not permit notice of his efforts for sanitary reform, his charming books on natural science, his remarkable controversy with Cardinal Newman, his great historical novel, *Westward Ho!* and his descriptive novel *Two Years Ago*; but no notice of Charles Kingsley, however brief, can pass over *Alton Locke* and *Yeast*. In these brilliant works he boldly treated the great social problems which regard the industrious classes. He brought to bear on these questions a deep human sympathy, a wide-reaching, intellectual earnestness, and a nature at once vigorous and gentle. *Alton Locke, Tailor and Poet*, is to show the evils of competition and the grievances of the working classes. The remedy proposed is the adoption of the principle of co-operation, combining capital and labour. *Yeast, a Problem*, is devoted more particularly to the condition of the agricultural labourers. These remarkable works, coupled with his defence of Chartism, his advocacy of "Christian Socialism,"

and his letters, published with the signature of "Parson Lot," brought down upon him for many years a bitter and vehement persecution.

Opinions will vary as to the remedies he proposed, and as to the extent of the grievances described, but all must admit that a genuine philanthropy inspired all his utterances. He was a politician because he was a Christian. He said of himself with truth: "I strive to drink in from man and Nature the good and the beautiful; I desire to raise up the fallen, and to comfort the weary." From 1848 to 1856 he very specially thus devoted his thoughts and energies to the service of the people. But he was not a bitter controversialist, either in politics or theology. He never lost sight of the principle he uttered. "I hate party books. Men think wrongly when they suppose that in order to combat error they must not allow their opponents to have the least right on their side; no opinion in the world is utterly wrong."

He frequently alluded to his indebtedness to Theodore Parker, Emerson, and Carlyle; but the intensest enthusiasm of his soul went forth to God, to Nature as the garment of God, to Christ as the Incarnation of God. The dogma of an eternal hell of suffering he, like his friend, Frederick Maurice, rejected, as opposed to the supremacy of God's love and goodness. It was his passionate desire to alleviate the sorrows of others, to lead them onward to a noble life, and to inspire them with the love of God and the love of Christ.

When preaching before the Queen, in the chapel of Windsor Castle, he said:—"Some pretend that the age of chivalry is past, that the spirit of romance is dead. The age of chivalry is never past so long as there is a wrong left unredressed on earth, or a man or woman left to say, 'I will redress that wrong, or spend my life in the attempt.' The age of chivalry is never past so long as we have faith enough to say, 'God will help me to redress that wrong, or, if not me, He will help those that come after me, for His eternal will is to overcome evil with good.'"

Thus, in that peaceful parsonage, the poet priest lived his noble life. By the Berkshire chalk streams, or beneath the Hampshire fir trees, he watched the wisdom and beauty of Nature, reading her solemn lessons, and exulting over her "inimitable fun." It was truly a perfect home, bright, beautiful, solemn, yet exuberant with laughter.

His love went forth not only over men, women, and children, but to animals, in whose future life he believed. Three favourite

dogs are buried under the great fir trees on the rectory lawn. He sat up two whole nights with one of them, given to him by the Queen, and remained with it till it died. A family of toads lived on from year to year in a hole in the green bank, which the scythe was never allowed to approach. He had two little friends in a pair of sand wasps, who lived in a crack of the window in his dressing room. The little bird who built its nest every year under his bedroom window was a constant joy to him. His children learnt to fondle gently and lovingly all living things as beings from God. During his frequent visits to Wellington College he fostered such tastes amongst the boys.

In the close of the year 1874, his wife, stricken with illness supposed to be mortal, lay in one room, whilst he was gradually dying of pneumonia in another room. It was impossible for either to be moved. They wrote little pencil notes to one another. The weather was bitter, and he had been warned that his recovery depended on the same temperature being kept up in his room, and on his not leaving it; but one day he leapt out of bed, came into his wife's room for a few moments, and taking her hand in his he said, "This is Heaven; don't speak," but after a short silence a severe fit of coughing came on, he could say no more, and they never met again. On January 23rd he died. His wife survived him, and to her loving pen we are indebted for the precious memorial of his life. His friend and parishioner, Sir William Cope, preached in this church his funeral sermon, wherein he said:—"No doubt other men hold, and have held, these doctrines as strongly, and taught them as plainly, but he, by belonging to no party, and by his fairness and liberal charity to those who differed from him, had an influence on many men and many minds which others have not. Therefore he occupied a most important place in the Church of England, which, as far as I know, no other man fills, and which his death has left void."

And on the same day, in Westminster Abbey, Dean Stanley, after alluding to the many distinguished men who had been wont to gather around this humble rectory, and who now mourned the death of their friend and counsellor, went on to speak of other classes of mourners. "Witness the tears of the rough peasants of Hampshire, as they crowded round the open grave to look for the last time on the friend of three and thirty years, with whom were mingled the hunter in his red coat, the soldier from Sandhurst, and the wild gipsy wanderers, mourning for the face that they should no more see in forest or on heath."

Charles Kingsley was eminently the man of letters, the man of books; he had learnt from books all that made nature wonderful and beautiful to him; all that enabled him practically to serve others; and yet, when Matthew Arnold began to praise his great literary acquirements, he said:—"He had all that, but what seemed to me unique in him was his generosity of thought, ever forward to praise what was good, ever most willing to admire; the most incapable of being made ill-natured, or even indifferent, by having to support ill-natured attacks himself. Among men of letters I know nothing so rare as this."

When he wrote some verses to a young friend they ended with a stanza which seems to express what inspired his own life:

Be good, sweet maid, and let who will be clever;
Do noble things, not dream them all day long,
And so make life, death, and that vast for ever
One grand, sweet song.

R. R. SUFFIELD.