PRINCES of SONG AND STORY IN PARIS CAFES

Special Correspondence of The American.

PARIS, March 15.

ALONG the grand boulevards "the war" is almost the sole topic of conversation; the studios of the Latin Quarter echo to argument and counter argument, and the pages of the papers are filled with reports of the fortunes of the belligerents. Not a shot is fired, yet the conflict is as intense as any ever fought. For "the war" is not the clash between Turk and Bulgar, as you might imagine, but that between the right and left banks of the River Seine. The former is the home of journalism and the latter of literature. The first is a land of affluence and easy access to the ear of the multitude; the second a land of poverty, of long years of struggle with adversity, of ineffectual attempts to gain the applause of a skeptical public.

The two sides of the Seine have always been at daggers drawn, but actual conflict, in which the weapons are ink and pen and printing presses, broke out since the election of Paul Fort as "Prince of Poets." By right of his newly acquired royal position he is leader of the left; a similar position on the right bank is held by Ernest La Jeunnese, a famous "boulevardier;" and the contest is carried on through the publications on both sides of the river.

Although the two camps will never come to an agreement and the contest will never know finality, the struggle is worth while because it has drawn attention to some of the most remarkable characters in this city of contradictions. Although the modern Parisian is professedly republican, he dearly loves a "prince" and, since there are no longer any who legally can lay claim to the title, the Parisian spends a large part of his time "electing" them.

A PRINCE OF SONG

Most of these "princes" are, as the irreverent public call them, "illustrious nobodies." They also profess to belong to the "younger generation," although they are mostly on the wrong side of 40. They are elected, and hold their court in certain "literary cafes" in the Latin Quarter. Surrounded by a halo of smoke, they graciously accept "bocks" and other inspiring drinks from their long-haired, velvet-trousered satellites. They bitterly complain that the newspapers will not accept—and pay for—their prose poems and rhymed prose, and attribute the apathy of the general public to the jealousy of the right bank and a "conspiracy of silence."

Since the momentary success of the "cubists," "post-impressionists" and other artistic freaks, they are beginning to tire of the low living which is frequently associated with high thinking, and yearn for the flesh pots of Egypt. In other words, they want to be attired in purple and fine linen, dine and sup in fashionable restaurants and bask in the sunny smiles of rich hostesses.

The election of one of their number as a "prince" seemed to be the only way of emerging from the smoky obscurity of their haunts, and this accounts for the meteoric appearance of these unappreciated geniuses on the literary horizon.

The modern Parisian "princes" are not all, however, ambitious young men who make up in noise what they lack in talent. Some, such as Xavier Privas, the "Prince of Poet Singers," have been elected by public consent. These "chansonniers," as they call themselves, are descendants of the old French troubadours, who went about the country singing their own poetical compositions. The modern "chansonniers" write, compose and sing their own songs.

Xavier Privas is a man of great talent, who sings as well as he writes. He is the only "chansonnier" who is decorated with the cross of the Legion of Honor. He may one day attain parliamentary honors, like Couyba, who made his debut as "chansonnier" at the "Chat Noir," and occupied an important post in the late cabinet. Maurice Donnay, one of the best dramatic authors in France, was a member of the same troupe of troubadors, and is now a member of the Academie Francaise, the home of the 40 "Immortals."

The "Chat Noir" still flourishes, and is crowded nightly with bohemians who come to listen to and applaud the latest satirical songs of which only the words are new; the tunes never change.

A Prince of Song.

Between 10 and 11 o'clock a prosperous, portly man makes his appearance. On the lapel of his frock coat the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor stands out in brilliant relief. The noise of conversation and the clink of glasses suddenly stop. The prince of "chansonniers" sits down at the piano. His soft white hands hover for a second or two over the keys and then the opening notes of his famous song, Les Chimeres, float through the smoke-laden atmosphere of the low-ceilinged room. He sings of chimeras, those wild and fanciful dreams which haunt our brains when our spirit escapes, for a moment, from its earthly prison, and soars into the region of the great unknown. He sings as only a poet can sing. The audience, which but a minute before was boisterously applauding the mordant buffoonery of a satirical singer falls under the spell of the rich, melodious voice, which lingers lovingly over every word. They escape for a brief space from the obsession of daily toil, or the still more weary pursuit of pleasure, and are gently borne away to the land of dreams. There is no applause between the verses; everybody listens in reverent silence as the last words strike plaintively on the ear:

"Les chimeres sont des oiseaux
Que meurent avec les cervelles,
Les shimeres sont des oiselles
Qui meurent avec les cerveaux."

The song is ended; the prince of "chansonniers" is on his feet, bowing his acknowledgment of the grateful applause which is the meed of the true artist who loves his work.

HE SINGS AS ONLY A POET CAN SING

The average Frenchman does not appreciate poetry, but he has some knowledge of the works of Edmond Rostand, Jean Richepin and Henri Bataille. When he heard that the poets of France had decided to elect a "prince" he shrugged his shoulders good-humoredly, and instinctively thought of the author of Chantecler and Cyrano de Bergerac. When requested to swear allegiance to the elected "prince," Paul Fort, he was annoyed; afterward, when he had read some of the master's poems, he laughed.

Poet and Story Writer.

Paul Fort, who was born in Rheims in 1870, has a head of hair as black as the plumage of the legendary jackdaw of the same town. This, and his disdain of rhyme or rhythm, constitute his chief claims to glory. The following is a specimen of his art:

"A young girl is sitting at the window;
She is shelling peas;
She shells them into her lap;
Some fall into the street;
The street is deserted.
The stones count the falling peas.
Will nobody come down the street?"

The French excel in the art of short-story writing. Every daily newspaper contains one or two short stories and the weeklies have three or four. Such men as J. H. Rosny, C. H. Hirsch, H. Duvernois and A. Hermant are known and appreciated wherever the French language is spoken. When an evening paper asked its readers to vote for a prince of short-story writers it was generally supposed that the palm would fall to one of these men, three of whom have received the cross of the Legion of Honor. The result of the voting again showed the public that they knew nothing about literary excellence. To the general surprise Hans Ryner came in an easy winner, the well-known writers mentioned above being relegated to the "also-ran" class.

The advent of the new "prince" left the public cold, as the French say. They had been bitten once and refused to take the new master seriously. He is not, however, such a nonenity as the "Prince of Poets." Hans Ryner was born 48 years ago, and his literary output is considerable. There are some reviews of real meri published in the Latin Quarter, and Hans Ryner's work is well-known to their readers. But these publications, like the Vicar of Wakefield's pamphlets, are only known to the "favored few." The consequence is that they cannot afford to pay their contributors.

Anyone who takes a seat in a French publisher's waiting-room will get a painful insight into the life of the struggling author. "Any of them," a publisher's reader told the writer of this article, "would be glad to sell the MS. of his book for a hundred dollars." Although he is the author of 20 books, some of considerable merit, and innumerable articles, Hans Ryner would never have emerged from the hungry crowd of unknown writers if he had not banged the big drum on his own behalf. This, coupled with the strenuous efforts of the "young school" of the Boulevard St. Michel, has procured him a grudging admission to the magazines and newspapers. In appearance, he is a fighter. His long beard, flowing locks and high cheekbones proclaim his decendance from those wandering tribes that left their mark on Europe. His principal works are The Folly of Misery, The Crime of Obedience, The Red Sphinx and the Human Ant.

Next The Prince of Thought.

The latest "illustrous unknown" who has been promoted to royal rank is Jean Pierre Brisset, the new Prince of Thinkers. When the votes were counted it was found that he had polled 200; Bergson, 50; Anatole France, 16; Maurice Barres, 10, Rodin, the sculptor, and Camille Flammarion, the famous astronomer, got five votes each.

Although the envious ones are saying that it is a pity that Rodin didn't know Brisset before he began to work on his statue of Le Penseur, which stands in front of the Pantheon, it is only fair to consider the new prince's work impartially. His "magnum opus" is a book entitled The Origin of Humanity. In the preface he modestly claims divine inspiration and states that "other philosophers will be crushed and confounded by these sublime thoughts." His doctrine is a simple one. He divides words into sounds and goes on from that to explain the creation of heaven and earth. Taking the word "poussin" (chicken) he finds the syllable "sein" (breast) and concludes that the hen was once mammiferous!

A PRINCE OF STORY

Another of his epoch-making discoveries is that frogs speak the French language. If this be true, it seems barbarous cruelty to use them for food. "Coaque (the noise made by the frog) is the same thing, says Brisset, as "quoi que!" What better proof is needed? "Not only do frogs speak our language," says the Prince of Thinkers, "but their eyes have a human expression, and their internal organs are very much like ours." He also claims that frogs can smoke cigarettes. "Therefore," he says, "we descend from frogs and not from monkeys." As befits a great genius, Brisset does not condescend to conform to the rules of spelling. He frequently makes use of the words "filosofer," "frase" (phrase), "ninfe" (nymph).

The acknowledged Prince of Humorists, Tristan Bernard, is, of course, known all over the world. His first great success was L'Anglais tel qu'on le parle, which is periodically played at the Comedie Francaise. His next piece, Le Costand des Epinettes, had a very long run, and his latest, Le Petit Cafe, is being played in several countries. He is a keen sportsman and never misses a boxing contest. He is often asked to act as umpire, and is very handy with the gloves himself.

The star of one prince, the Prince of Strikers, has already paled. Poor Pataud, who had his short hour of glory, has been cast out by his own subjects. He lives in a couple of tiny rooms on the sixth floor of an apartment-house, and bitterly complains that journalists never come and interview him now. "No matter," he melodramatically exclaimed the other day, "my time will come again."

M. MACDONALD.

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BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIAM HAND BROWNE BY ONE OF HIS ASSOCIATES

IN the Johns Hopkins University Circular for February appears an exceptionally complete and interesting biographical sketch of the late Dr. William Hand Browne, by James W. Bright Donovan, professor of English literature in the Johns Hopkins University as follows:

Dr. William Hand Browne died on the morning of December 13, 1912. He was born December 31, 1828, and had, therefore, almost completed the eighty-fourth year of his age. He was first connected with the Johns Hopkins University as principal librarian, 1879-1880. In the next year he began to take part in the instruction in English literature, and in the course of years his official designations were: Librarian and associate, 1880-1891; associate professor, 1891-1893; professor, 1893-1910; professor emeritus, 1910-1912.

Dr. Browne was the son of William Browne and Patience Hand Browne, and was born in Baltimore (Paca street). His father had removed to the city from Centerville, Queen Annes county, Md., and formed a partnership with his maternal uncle, Emmanuel Kent, under the firm name of Kent & Browne. They were commission merchants, trading largely with the West Indies.

Dr. Browne's mother, Patience Hand, was born in Birmingham, England, in 1787, and in 1794 came to Baltimore with her father, Moses Hand, who was the son of Richard Hand, a metallurgist of Birmingham. Moses Hand early showed talent for drawing and painting, and as a young man was apprenticed to the craft of decorating waiters, trays, etc., with landscapes, flowers and fruits. This occupation stimulated him to further development of his talent, and in due time he attained the rank of an artist as a painter of both portraits and landscapes. In 1794 he migrated to America with his wife and four children, at once settled in Baltimore and set about the practice of his art. He also conducted classes in drawing and painting. Among his engagements, he was employed by Col. John Eager Howard to paint ornamental designs (architectural). This meeting with Colonel Howard led to the formation of a lifelong friendship. The significance of this notice of his maternal grandfather will be acknowledged by every one that may reflect on Dr Browne's varied aptitudes. His handwriting indicated the perceptions and the muscular co-ordinations of the delineator, and his students will always remember the brown paper charts of the zodiac, of the astrolabe, of heraldic devices, etc., which he was wont to prepare, with so much apparent pleasure, for the illustration of his lectures. That he also did pictures admirably in water colors is, perhaps, the most important detail in this implied problem of inherited proclivities.

His Education.

All his education and training in schools was obtained in Baltimore. He first attended the private school conducted by T. P. Carter, and thereafter, in due succession, won the degree of A. B. in a local college (which was not long maintained, and of which the records are not accessible), and, at an early age, in 1851, the degree of M. D. in the University of Maryland. The practice of medicine was, however, distasteful to him, and he never entered upon it. It is also inconceivable that he should have felt a strong preference for a commercial career, but the practical demands of life had to be met, and for a decade, 1851-1861, he and his cousin, T. J. Hand, were associated under the firm name of T. J. Hand & Co., as commission merchants. In the year 1861, when this business firm was dissolved, Dr. Browne published in the South, a Baltimore daily paper, a translation from the German of a story entitled The Armourer. Because of the state of the public mind the story attracted wide attention, and the excellence of the translator's work was also duly recognized. This was the beginning of Dr. Browne's literary career, although a considerable period of private study and quiet country life now followed, during which it does not appear that he published anything of importance. From Dr. Browne's letters it is learned that in his recuperation from business he indulged in travel in the South, with some hunting and fishing. Soon after his return to Baltimore, in 1863, he married Mary Catherine Owings, daughter of Dr. Thomas Owings, of Baltimore, and removed to Baltimore county, where he kept his residence until the close of the Civil War. There is no record of his participation in the hotly disputed questions of that time, but when the disastrous consequences of the war had to be overcome, he at once sprang into prominence as a leader in the work of restoring the cultural conditions of the South, by his connection with several literary periodicals.

In 1866 he joined Prof. Albert Taylor Bledsoe in founding The Southern Review [New Series]. Dr. Browne was editor and joint owner until two volumes [1867 and 1868] were completed, and then withdrew from this contract to become (in 1869) coeditor with Mr. Lawrence Turnbull, of The New Eclectic magazine, published in Baltimore by Turnbull & Murdoch [Vol. 1, January-April, 1868]. In 1871 this magazine became the property of Messrs. Murdoch, Browne and Hill, and the name was abruptly changed to The Southern Magazine, which accordingly was made to begin with volume VIII (1871). Dr. Browne was now editor and part owner; but somewhat later (1873) the publishing house of the Turnbull Bros., assumed the complete proprietorship. The magazine was continued under the editorship of Dr. Browne to the close of the year 1875 (Vol. XVII, July-December).

Industrious and Versatile.

Dr. Browne was always industrious, but seldom inordinately preoccupied by a particular undertaking. His humanely liberal view of the diversified obligations of a cultivated mind precluded the possibility of his being inaccessible or exclusive. He commanded, moreover, that matured and facile routine by which only the master of a craft performs his most difficult tasks quietly and with assured confidence. But if he ever appeared to be excessively industrious, it must have been during those 10 years of his editorial engagements. From his editorial chair he surveyed the world of letters, history and science in a manner that gives proof at once of extraordinary industry and of a most liberally cultivated mind. He chronicled events of a varied character, reviewed and criticised new books and poems, discoursed about new inventions in mechanics and new discoveries in physical science, translated foreign stories, wrote original ones, and indulged in occasional verse, usually humorous or burlesque in character. The same comprehensive range of interest is shown in the subjects of his original contributions, of which a notion may be conveyed by the following selected titles: Craftsmen's Association in France; Victor Hugo as a Novelist; Salem Witchcraft; The Vow of the Heron; The Microscopy of the Grain of Wheat; A Few Hints to Young Writers; Rise of a Commune in the Twelfth Century; Dictation Tours of the Chess Knight.

Deserving of special notice is the fascinating aspect of Dr. Browne's editorial aptitudes exhibited in his conduct of The Green Table, an editor's department, inaugurated in June, 1869 (The New Eclectic Magazine, Vol. IV.), and maintained to the close of the Southern Magazine (1875). His playful humor and grace of style may be illustrated by a few lines taken from the initial offering of The Green Table: "At present, what the editor ironically calls his sanctum, is by the public looked upon rather in the light of a sanctuary, or place of refuge for all persons guilty of mortal crimes against the time and patience of their fellowmen. We therefore, after much deliberation, have devised a something sancto sanctius, or place of refuge more sacred than the sanctum, to which we can flee upon occasion. . . . Suffice it, that it is closed by doors of rare device, which are both bore-proof and spy-tight, and that the way to it is known to those who have the right to enter there.

"The chief article of furniture of this modest cell is a Green Table, much littered with books and papers, around which at certain hours is seated a group of friends, looking over such as take their fancy, discussing events in all parts of the world, and indulging in some grave and much idle talk."

In the Green Table of June, 1874 (the Southern Magazine, XIV., 677), Dr. Browne availed himself of an opportunity to write in anticipation of the founding of the Johns Hopkins University. He had a clear and patriotic apprehension of the functions of a true university: "As it is a matter of concern to every Marylander, or at least to every one who has the welfare of his state at heart, that the great university to be established among us, by the munificence of a private citizen, shall be so organized as to confer the greatest benefits upon the state, and do the most ample justice to the designs of its founder, we have read with much interest Dr. Huxley's inaugural address before the University of Aberdeen, in which he lays down with great clearness the true place and functions of a university." Then, after comparing the German universities with Oxford and Cambridge, he adds this, for America as well as for England, strangely new doctrine: "To the English mind a professor without a class would be an irreconcilable anomaly, and yet that professor, by his studies and their fruits as embodied in his writings, may be teaching the world, and conferring lustre on the institution which claims him as her own."

To complete the account of Dr. Browne's relations with periodical publications during the period just considered one must turn back to the year 1868, when there was begun in Baltimore a weekly paper called the Statesman. It was devoted to politics, literature and art, belonging thus to the type of papers now represented by the Nation; Dr. Browne was the editor-in-chief; Mr. Thomas W. Hall, Jr., the associate editor, and Mr. Holly Whyte the business manager. In this paper Dr. Browne published his translation of Friederich Spielhagen's novel, Hammer and Anvil. But the Statesman was short-lived, coming to its end after about a year and a half.

Some of His Books.

Before the close of the magazine period, as it may be called, Dr. Browne joined Col. Richard Malcolm Johnson in the preparation of a book entitled English Literature, a historical sketch of English literature from the earliest times (New York and Baltimore: University Publishing Company, 1873). His subsequently published books may now be named in chronological order:

History of Maryland. Prepared for the use of schools and academies. By William Hand Browne and J. Thomas Scharf. Baltimore: Kelly, Piet & Co., 1878.

Life of Alexander H. Stephens. By Richard Malcolm Johnston and William Hand Browne. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1878.

The Clarendon Dictionary. A concise handbook of the English language, in orthography, pronunciation and definitions, for school, home and business use. The pronunciation by S. S. Haldeman. New York: University Publishing Company, 1882.

Greece and Rome, Their Life and Art. By Jakob von Folke. Translated from the German. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1882.

Maryland: The History of a Palatinate. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1884.

George Calvert and Cecilius Calvert, Barons Baltimore of Baltimore. New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1890.

Selections from the Early Scottish Poets. Edited, with introduction, notes and glossary. The Johns Hopkins Press, 1896.

The Vicar of Wakefield. A Tale by Oliver Goldsmith. Edited for school use. New York and Chicago: Globe School Book Company, 1900.

The Taill of Rauf Coilyear. A Scottish metrical romance of the fifteenth century. Edited, with introduction, notes and glossarial index. The Johns Hopkins Press, 1903.

Concurrent with the principal portion of the work bestowed on these books was the academic career of Dr. Browne, which, as has been stated in the opening paragraph of these pages, began in the year 1879. Moreover, Dr. Browne's second period of editorial work began early in his academic career and ran parallel with it through its entire extent, and even exceeded it by the last two years of sustained activity. Because of this interlacing of the principal threads of the story, the exterior details of the second editorial period may be recalled at this point.

By an act of the General Assembly in January, 1882, the State of Maryland appointed the Maryland Historical Society of Baltimore to be the custodian of its provincial records, and instituted an appropriation of money for the publication, "under the supervision of said society," of "such of them as are of historical importance." The words of the enactment describe these papers as "all the records, archives and ancient documents of the Province and State of Maryland of any date prior to the acknowledgment of the independence of the United States by Great Britain." Dr. Browne was at once chosen by the society to be the editor of this important material, and he continued in this office to the time of his death. The first of the stately quarto volumes of the Archives of Maryland was accordingly published in 1883, and the indefatigable editor had just completed the reading of the "proofs" of the thirty-third volume when he was suddenly called to lay down his pen forever. With the exception of the eighteenth volume (Muster Rolls and Other Records of Service of Maryland Troops in the American Revolution, 1775-1783), Dr. Browne edited all the varied material reproduced in these volumes, the timely and accurate publication of which is reflecting acknowledged distinction upon the State of Maryland. Dr. Browne had previously established his reputation as an expert in the history of his state, and the enumeration of the descriptive heads of the sources of that history made accessible to the historian in the volumes of the Archives may give some indication of the expert knowledge, sound judgment and scholarly workmanship required for the highly commendable execution of this task of magnitude. In these volumes are now printed the Proceedings of the Provincial Council of Maryland, so far as these are in existence; all that has been preserved of the Proceedings and Acts of the General Assembly of Maryland, down to the year 1717; the Proceedings of the Provincial Court, down to the year 1657; the Proceedings of the Committee of Safety and of the State Council to the year 1779, and the correspondence of Gov. Horatio Sharpe, from 1753 to 1769. And it is to be observed that in many instances gaps in the manuscripts were filled by obtaining copies of papers preserved in the Public Record Office of England.

Although the Archives represent Dr. Browne's supreme service to his state, he will also be gratefully remembered by the city of Baltimore and by the state for the efficient accomplishment of two additional tasks committed to him.

Began Teaching at Fifty.

Soon after the death of Severn Teackle Wallis (April 11, 1894), friends of this distinguished citizen of Baltimore formed a Wallis Memorial Association, of which one of the specific objects was the publication of a collective edition of Mr. Wallis' writings. Dr. Browne was selected "to see the entire work through the press," and under his editorial supervision, accordingly, there was published the memorial edition, in four volumes, of the Writings of Severn Teackle Wallis (Baltimore: John Murphy & Co., 1896). The second of the tasks referred to was the editing of the first five volumes (1906-1910) of the Maryland Historical Magazine, a quarterly publication established by the Maryland Historical Society. And it should be added that Dr. Browne also edited for this society the first two numbers of The Calvert Papers (1889 and 1894; Fund Publications, Nos. 28 and 34).

The dates of his official relations with the Johns Hopkins University show that Dr. Browne began to teach when about 50 years of age. This notable variation from the rule accounts, no doubt, for some of the marked features of his academic character as colleague and teacher. Because of the unusual preparation with which he came to the institution, he held, from the beginning to the end of his academic career, a unique place among his colleagues. His previous experience, which may be inferred, at least in part, from the present sketch, had enriched his quick and sympathetic mind with a fullness and diversity of knowledge that was quite exceptional, and the practice sprang up and was continued through the decades of consulting Dr. Browne for help and suggestions in connection with the most varied subjects. Most members of the staff of teachers found occasion at one time or another to avail themselves of the pleasure—for Dr. Browne's manner always converted it into a pleasure—of an interview with him on some obscured fact or hidden allusion, or it may have been some bit of folklore, or a technicality in music, in heraldry, or in astrology. The readiness with which he was able to assist one in most instances of such perplexities, and the polished and entertaining character of his conversation, whether technical or casual, placed him in the rank of the most indispensable and delightful of colleagues.

At the beginning of his work as a teacher of English, Dr. Browne encountered an active revolution in the philological world. The agitation or "reform" of the "neogrammarians," begun in Germany about the year 1876, was at once recognized in the new university. It was aimed especially at the philology (the science of language and literature) of the so-called modern languages, which included English. These languages and literature were now to be studied not only in accordance with the best traditions of classical philology, but also in accordance with certain recently formulated doctrines. The situation was stimulating, but it must have deterred the average man of maturity from making a new beginning; Dr. Browne, however, responded with fresh enthusiasm. He soon acquired a good working knowledge of Anglo-Saxon and Middle English, and joined contemporary scholars in the more accurate study of the literature of the early periods. He also grounded himself in the historic grammar of the language, according to the recent results of scholarship, and under the impulse derived from these newly deepened departments of his studies he came to select the Early Scottish poetry for his more special investigation and to be one of the regular subjects in his classroom work. He first supplied his classes with papyrograph copies of Scottish texts, which were afterward published in his Selections from the Early Scottish Poets (1896). In the "Introduction" of his later book, an edition of The Taill of Rauf Coilyear (1903), will be found what may be regarded as a more or less complete summary of the results of studies of the Scottish. There is A Brief Outline of Early Scottish Poetry, which brings the story down to the middle of the sixteenth century (pp. 3-22); a chapter on the "Language" (pp. 35-54), and one on "Metre and Versification" (pp. 54-62). All divisions of the subject are handled with fine appreciation of literary values, and with clearness of thought in technicalities. The subjects of some of his other courses on selected topics in English literature were Arthurian Romances, English and Scottish Ballads, The Plays of Ben Jonson, The Caroline Poets, Writers of the Eighteenth Century, The Sentimental Comedy.

Contributions to Literature.

A complete list of Dr. Browne's contributions to literary and more technical periodicals should be prepared for publication. During the "magazine period" he signed some of his work cryptically with the letters V. G. A., but for the most part there is no sign nor signature to mark his authorship except, fortunately, the pencilings in his private copy of the volumes edited by him. His contributions during the "academic period" would be more easily brought together. These came to be almost exclusively on subjects closely connected with his special studies, and the largest share of them was published in Modern Language Notes, although the the complete list would show some liberality in the distribution of favors. To characterize the major portion of the contributions of this last period, it may be said that they are especially important as representing Dr. Browne's alertness and acumen in the annotation of difficult passages in a play or poem. He coped successfully with many a crux in interpretation and explained many an obscure allusion. Unusual words and idioms were reported or traced in their history, and there were disclosures and appraisements of the debt one author might be owing to another. However slight and unpretentious some of these notes and jottings might be, the character of so sensitive, just and learned a critic gave assurance, in every case, of a nonnegligible value.

In criticism, as in all his work and play, Dr. Browne gave proof of the artistic temperament. He was, moreover, deductive rather than inductive; at all events, he had stored up matured and fixed judgments, to which he was disposed to adhere with singularly persistent confidence. Corresponding with this classic attitude in criticism was his style, which suggests the influence of the eighteenth century essayists and such writers as Landor, De Quincey and Lamb. It is reported that Keats once said: "I have something in common with Hunt," and that forthwith he threw off the restraints that would have fettered his genius. Whatever formative influences may have been most potent, Dr. Browne had achieved his own style, which reflected the man of extreme susceptibility and refinement of nature, clearness of intellect and seriousness of purpose. His style is notably positive in its virtues—a purity of diction, a neatness of phrase, and a simplicity of grammatical structure that at once arrest favorable attention; for every piece, however short or incidental, an appropriate design that shows the presiding sense of the artist. Distinctively prominent among the more subtle elements of his style are resourcefulness in allusions, a pervading kindliness of judgment, and an unfailing but unostentatious play of humor. Occasionally may be detected also the sting of wit, but never to vaunt self or to wound another. There is no violation of the law of good taste, but always a strict observance of the old maxim, commended by Lord Chesterfield as "a most excellent rule in everything," ne quid nimis.

Inevitably the word play has found a place in the preceding paragraph, for no approximately true notion of Dr. Browne's personality and aptitudes excludes a reckoning with his undisguised capacity for play. Versatility of mind and artistic skill of hand are discovered in most attractive alliance with amiability of disposition in his methods of relaxing from the strain of severer occupations. Few men played better, and the reward was a long life of undiminished freshness of spirit. Although this subject embraces such details as belong rightly to exclusively cherished memories, a bit of play was occasionally committed to public observation, as, for example, the poem On Receipt of a Rare Pipe, and articles on Tours of the Chess Knight. The public could not however, guess the volumes of Limericks and other nonsense poems and drawings, some prepared for his children and others for his grandchildren, in which he rivaled the genius of a Lear; and only very intimate friends became aware of his devotion, through many years, to the infinite intricacies of the tours of the chess knight, which he was perpetually figuring in drawings and carvings, though few of his designs were ever published. Dr. Browne was also accustomed to divert himself with ciphers and cryptograms, and was skillful in finding the key to such devices. He was also expert in the technicalities of heraldry, and thus added another division to his pastimes. Music would be still another of these divisions, if his scientific knowledge of the art and his considerable accomplishment in it did not place it above the list of merely pleasant distractions. He played the flute, and it will always be remembered, with peculiar interest in their friendship, that he and Sidney Lanier were accustomed to play together.

An abrupt close of this sketch is enforced by the prescribed limits of space. Keenly conscious of how this recital, chiefly of external events, may fail to gratify the wishes of those who would have a more adequate tribute to Dr. Browne's rich and charming personality, I must be content with a final word in acknowledgment of my indebtedness to my highly esteemed colleague and very dear personal friend. It is as impossible to describe the debt as it is to repay it. Of every senior colleague it should be true that he puts his associates under obligations for help and counsel. My good fortune far transcends that reasonable expectation. In respect of all the best elements of such a relationship, my intimate association with Dr. Browne, from the beginning of my academic career, was just what previously, in the indulgence of an extravagant wish, one might have desired. I could not now analyze his fine sincerity in constant helpfulness and in most unselfish cooperation. All that experience is interwoven with an affectionate friendship, which one must keep enshrined within. Submissively I bow in inexpressible grief.

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