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An Interesting Sketch.

Reminiscence of the Hon. S. S. Prentiss.

[We find in an old number of the *Field and Fireside*, comprised in one of a series of sketches from the pen of a talented author, the following incidental reference to the great orator of the Southwest, the lamented PRENTISS. Those who knew anything of this extraordinary man while living, and appreciated the many noble qualities that adorned his character, cannot fail to be interested in perusing this sketch; while those less fortunate will find much that is instructive and entertaining.—EDS. INTELLIGENCER.]

Emerging from a romantic dell, we came upon a high road, which led us to a small brick-enclosed cemetery, half hidden by shrubbery. We had enquired for Prentiss' grave, and we were told we should find it within this quiet enclosure, wherein three or four ancient looking, moss-grown tombs were visible, half obscured by vines. The iron gate was locked. I climbed it, and making my way through matted grass and tangled creepers, stood before the upright slab of white marble which marked the resting place of the great Orator. I bared my head in the presence of the mighty dead; for, with all his infirmities, Prentiss was the peer of the greatest intellect of his age. Justice has not yet been done to his noble character. His errors are all referable to his physical infirmity. He was lame—very lame, and had been so from his birth. When he grew to boyhood, sensitive and talented and ambitious, he felt keen his lameness and wept over a deformity which, in his own mind, degraded him in the presence of his schoolmates. Early he learned to taste the bitterness of an ambitious and lofty spirit, feeling physical inferioty, while he was proudly conscious of intellectual superiority. When he became a man, his painful sensitiveness to his lameness led him to withdraw himself from all female society. Under the cloud of his morbid feelings, he fancied *woman* scorned him He felt humbled and degraded in her presence. The barb thus rankled ever in his heart. He did not know till long afterwards, when a lovely woman gave him her heart and hand, that a true woman is interested more by the splendor of mind in man, than symmetry in person; that beautiful women look rather to the intellect and are dazzled by it, no matter how plain the casket.

For thirteen years of his earlier manhood he refused introduction to ladies. Such was the sensitiveness of this proud nature! He well knew his own intellectual powers, and, knowing them, he despised more and more his infirm body, and believed that all others did. Yet his face was wonderfully handsome. His head was large and noble and grand in outline. His smile was beautiful. His powers of conversation were imperial and unapproachable. Yet, constantly feeding upon his own morbid emotions, he despised himself. He felt (like some mighty angel in chains,) bound to a body that lacked the full and perfect impress of his kind. This one, unendurable idea was never absent from him. Once, an injudicious friend, indiscreet with wine, said, "Prentiss, what made you lame?"

Mr. Prentiss turned upon him a withering look of scorn, hatred and contempt, and answered in a hoarse and terrible whisper, before which the other trembled:

"*God's Curse, Sir.*"

Then turning his back upon him, with a lip tremulous from unfathomable feeling, he covered his face with his hands, and hastening to his chamber, cast himself upon his bed in a paroxism of bitter weeping. Who could not pity such a man? Who shall wonder, oh uncharitable Pharisee, that he sought relief at the gaming board, staking thousands recklessly upon a card; or in the intoxication of the wine cup? He gambled not for money—he drank not from love of strong drink, but to escape the pressure of damning thought. The sight of his infirm limb at times would drive this proud man to fierce despair! What cared he for the sots who flocked about him and drank at his expense! They were his tools. He made use of them to help him drown reflection! *They* drank for sensual thirst of drink; *he*, to quench the fires of thought! He despised them! Not one dare take a familiarity with him! He who spoke to him lightly of his lameness was unforgiven forevermore!

Who will fling the stone? Who will condemn? Who can judge him who was never in his place? What mind can conceive of the intellectual and moral torture of this proud, brilliant genius, going through life hating his own form, and shunning, for years, God's greatest and best gift to man, from a sense of self-degredation in woman's presence?

No, justice has not yet been done to this wonderful and great man. He was not understood but by a few of his nearest friends—*never by his boon-companions.* They fancied he was such an one as *themselves*, when he towered above them like a prince and despised them like a god.—His own brother, who wrote his life in two volumes, did not at all comprehend his true character, and has unawares left a false and unjust impression of him upon the mind of his readers.

Even the grave lifts up its voice in echo of the vulgar opinion which classes him with ordinary inebriates and reckless gamesters. It was with pain I read the inscription upon the headstone; it is with sorrow I copy it. I give it below:

"If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity,
who shall stand?
But there is forgivness with Thee that
Thou mayest be feared."

S. S. PRENTISS,
BORN AT PORTLAND, ME.,
SEPT. 20, 1808.
Departed
THIS LIFE,
AT
NATCHES,
JULY 1, 1850.

Had not the Holy Bible some other verses than these bitter ones! We are all sinners; but why should this man be held up *thus* as a sinner more than all?

Permit me to add here the following tribute to my noble friend's memory, (for I knew him well,) as an offset, if possible, to this severe *memento mori*, which, it is to be hoped, will ere long be removed from the head of his grave it so inappropriately distinguishes:

When intelligence of his death was sent abroad, scarce a journal arrived without containing its tribute of respect to the memory of this gifted man. His hold upon the hearts of his countrymen was exhibited, not so much in cold homage to his greatness, as in the warm enthusiastic expressions of admiration, alike from political friends and opponents.—Equally gratifying was the response from the Northern States. Prentiss' fame was no sectional thing. His eloquence touched the heart and riveted the attention, while his personal qualities attracted the warm attachment of every one within his reach. I copy from the New Orleans cotemporaries some portion of their hasty, but eloquent and truthful eulogiums:

From the New Orleans Delta.

A weak and debilitated boy, with a gentle lisp and supported by sustaining cane, was soon seen stealing away the technical hearts of stern judges, and weaving seductive tales in the honest ears of sworn jurymen. Resistless as the penetrating breeze, his juvenile eloquence searched every avenue of thought and feeling. The classic page and the varied mass of modern literature were conveniently stored away in the massy caverns of his broad and fertile intellect. A close train of didactic reasoning on the most abstruse legal topic, was lit up with the pyrotechnic fires of fancy. The most ordinary incidents of life, the merest common places, were caught upon the wings of his imagination and blended and effectively commingled, in his illustrative oratory, with the boldest and most gorgeous metaphors.

Nor was his mind "cribbed, cabined, and confined" within the narrow limits of a mere professional life. He always identified himself with every project of patriotism, benevolence, charity, or literature, that was agitated in his vicinage. A monument to Franklin, or a sympathetic appeal in favor of struggling Hungary, or a donative response to the tearful orphan, or a commemoration of the birth-day of the Bard of Avon, would equally fire his soul and syllable his tongue. He possessed one of the most highly endowed intellects we ever knew. His memory was singularly retentive, so that he could repeat whole cantos of Byron on the moment. His logical faculty was very acute and discerning. It was often the complaint of the court and his brother lawyers, that he would argue a case all to pieces. He would penetrate to the very bottom of a subject, as it were, by intuition, and lay it bare in all its parts, like a chemist analyzing any material object, or surgeon making a dissection. His reading was full and general, and everything he gathered from books, as well as from intercourse with his fellow-men, clung to his memory, and was ever at his command. But his most striking talent was his oratory. We have never known or read of a man who equalled Prentiss in the faculty of thinking on his legs, or of extemporaneous eloquence. He required no preparation to speak on any subject, and on all he was equally happy. We have heard from him, thrown out in a dinner speech, or at a public meeting, when unexpectedly called on, more brilliant and striking thoughts, than many of the most gifted poets ever elaborated in their closets. He possessed a rare wit. His garland was enwreathed with flowers culled from every shrub or plant, and from every clime.

And if at times the thorn lurked beneath the bright flower, the wound it inflicted was soon assuaged and healed by some mirthful and laughter-moving palliative.

His heart overflowed with warm, generous, and patriotic feeling. He was as brave and chivalrous as Bayard—as soft, tender, and affectionate as a loving child, untainted by the selfishness of the world. All small, selfish, narrow feelings were foreign to his nature. His bosom was the home of honor—his imagination was full of lofty thoughts, and his mind disdained the grovelling feelings and considerations of the worldly minded. Let not his friends be inconsolable.

It is proper that such a mind should thus glide from these scenes of worldly trouble. It is just that a bright exhalation, which has shone so brilliantly, should disappear thus suddenly, ere it begins gradually to fade and flicker; that the fire of so noble an intelligence, should not diminish, and gradually and slowly go out, amid decrepitude and physical decay; but that, like the meteor shooting across the heavens, illuminating the earth, it should sink suddenly and forever, into the earth from which it sprung!

From the New Orleans Crescent.

Now that he is dead, it will not be deemed invidious to the living, for a friend to say that as a popular orator he had no equal in the Southwest. Gifted with a voice of great compass and power of modulation—with a face of eminent beauty and intellectuality—

——"His gestures did obey
The oracular mind that made his features glow,
And when his curved lip half open lay,
Passion's divinest stream had made impetuous
way."

His imagination was "as wild and free of wing as Eden's garden bird," which fluttered and toyed with every beautiful flower, while his wit relieved the tension of the heart strings, drawn to pain by his pathos. Never did we hear a man who had so much hold on the masses. A friend once said to him in our presence, "Prentiss, you always mesmerize me when you speak." He answered, "then it is an affair of reciprocity, for a multitude always electrifies me!" One secret of his great power undoubted was the sincerity of his speeches—the sympathy which bound him to his audience, was the tie which bound them to him. It was as a lawyer, however, that his early and intimate friends most admired his talents. It is rarely that vivid imagination, pointed wit and strong reasoning power are united. Where, however, there is this union we have the character of the orator. Such was O'Connell—such was Prentiss.

Of our friend, as a man, we have not the heart to speak. Where he was known he was loved as much for the kindness and generosity of his nature, as he was admired for the brilliancy of his genius and the power of his intellect.

He leaves a wife and children to mourn his death, but to treasure his memory. Amid the widow's weeds shall sparkle the brightest jewel, a husband's reputation, while the children, if rich in nothing else, have a princely heritage in the father's name. May they prove heirs as well to his eminent talents and his many virtues.

UNWISE MEN.—The following are a few of the characters coming under this head:

The jealous man; who poisons his own banquet and then eats it.

The miser; that starves himself to death, that his heirs may feast.

The mean man; who bites off his own nose to despite a neighbor.

The angry man; who sets his own house on fire, that he may burn up another's.

The slanderer; who tells tales, and gives his enemy a chance to prove him a liar.

The self-conceited man; who attaches more consequence to dignity than to common sense.

The proud man; who falls in the estimation of sensible observers, in proportion as he rises in his own.

The envious man; who cannot enjoy life and prosperity, because others do.

The dishonest man; who cheats his own soul more vitally than he does his fellow men.

The robber who, for the consideration of dollars and cents, gives the world liberty to hang him.

The drunken man; who not only makes himself wretched, but disgusts his friends.

The hypocondriac; whose highest happiness consists in rendering himself miserable.

The inconsiderate man; who neglects to pay the printer.

Selected Poetry.

The Sounds of Industry.

I love the banging hammer,
The whirring of the plane,
The crashing of the busy saw,
The creaking of the crane,
The ringing of the anvil,
The grating of the drill,
The clattering of the turning-lathe,
The whirling of the mill,
The buzzing of the spindle,
The rattling of the loom,
The puffing of the engine,
And the fan's continuous boom—
The clipping of the tailor's shears.
The driving of the awl.
The sounds of busy labor—
I love, I love them all.

I love the plowman's whistle,
The reaper's cheerful song,
The drover's oft repeated shout,
As he spur's his stock along;
The bustle of the market-man,
As he hies him to the town,
The hallo from the tree-top,
As the ripened fruit comes down;
The busy sound of threshers,
As they clean the ripened grain,
And huskers' joke, and mirth and glee,
'Neath the moonlight on the plain;
The kind voices of the dairy-man,
The shepherd's gentle call—
These sounds of active industry,
I love, I love them all.

For they tell my longing spirit
Of the earnestness of life;
How much of all its happiness
Comes out of toil and strife.
Not that toil and strife that fainteth
And murmureth on the way—
Not the toil and strife that groaneth
Beneath the tyrant's sway,
But the toil and strife that springeth
From a free and willing heart,
A strife which ever bringeth
To the striver all his part.

Oh, there is good in labor,
If we labor but aright,
That gives vigor to the day-time,
And a sweeter sleep at night.
A good that bringeth pleasure,
Even to the toiling hours—
For duty cheers the spirit
As the dew revives the flowers.

Oh, say not that Jehovah
Bade us all to labor as a doom;
No, it is his richest mercy,
And will scatter half life's gloom;
Then let us still be doing
Whate'er we find to do—
With an earnest, willing spirit,
With a strong hand *free and true.*

Cleveland Democrat.

Childhood.

Happy childhood! sunny hours,
Days of gladsome mirth and glee,
Roving forth amid the flowers,
Lovely, innocent and free.

Ever bright and free from sorrow,
Full of prattle, joy most wild,
Singing of the bright to-morrow,
Pure and tender, joyous child.

MAXIMS FOR MARRIED WOMEN.—The unmarried woman, says an exchange, who can read this without indignation, ought to be married:

Let every wife be persuaded that there are two ways of governing a family. The first is by the expression of that will which belongs to force; the second to the power of mildness, to which every strength will yield. One is the power of the husband: a wife should never employ any other arms than those of gentleness. When a woman accustoms herself to say "I will," she deserves to lose her empire.

Avoid contradicting your husband. When we smell a rose it is to imbue the sweets of odor; we look for everything amiable in woman. Whoever is often contradicted feels insensibly an aversion for the person who contradicts, which gains strength by time, and whatever be her good qualities, is not easily destroyed.

Occupy yourself only with household affairs, wait till your husband confides to you those of higher importance, and do not read lectures to him. Let your preaching be a good example, and practice virtue yourself to make him love it.

Command his attention by being always kind to him; never exact anything and you will attain much; appear always flattered by the little he does for you, which will excite him to do more.

All men are vain; never wound his vanity, not even in the most trifling instances. A wife may have more sense than her husband, but she should never seem to know it.

When a man gives wrong counsel, never feel that he has done so, but lead him by degrees to what is rational, with mildness and gentleness; when he is convinced, leave him to the merit of having found out what is just and reasonable.

When a husband is out of temper, behave obligingly to him; if he is abusive, never retort, and never prevail over him to humble him.

Mrs. Partington says it makes no difference to her if flour is dear or cheap; she always has to pay the same price for half a dollar's worth.

The True Art of Teaching.

Dr. John A. Hart, of Philadelphia, a practical teacher, and long connected with educational matters, has delivered a lecture, in the course of which he evolved one grand fundamental fact in the art of teaching which ought to be fixed in the minds of all who undertake the education of youth. This fact is the absolute necessity of arresting and holding *attention.* Unless the *attention* of the child, or of the persons to be taught, is secured, little will be learned. Every teacher of youth knows how difficult it is to gain the attention of his or her class, but it is not every teacher who knows how to interest the minds of the pupils and win their attention. The mere commanding of attention cannot produce the desired effect; hence a boisterous exercise of authority, or the resort to different forms of punishment, of a degrading or painful character, are not only inefficient but harmful.

The mind of the child as well as the adult naturally resists compulsion. Coercion is the very worst plan in education. The forcing or "stuffing" system may appear to yield a temporary success, but it is calculated to destroy the powers of *attention*, and a permanent injury to the mind is the result. The giving of long "tasks" to children, or multiplying their studies to create the impression that they are making rapid progress is an error quite too common in our schools. Even the practice of stimulating children in Sunday schools, by offer of rewards, to learn weekly a great many verses of Scripture or hymns, is not to be commended. Better give the reward for learning a little well—for attention to what they are taught.

It ought to be the first and chief aim of every teacher, whether of children or adults, to develope the thinking or reasoning powers. The acquisition of knowledge should be a pleasant exercise. The mind should be taught to seek after information—to inquire into the meaning of what is obscure, and to be satisfied only with a clear and perfect understanding of the subject presented to it. The teacher who can make his pupils think is the only successful teacher. And how few, comparatively, have the happy art of enlisting the attention, and stimulating the faculties of the mind into active exercise.

This subject is indeed, not only one of surpassing importance, but of great comprehensiveness. It cannot be satisfactorily treated in one short newspaper article, but if we can induce those engaged in the benificent work of education to devote more *attention* themselves to the true art of success in the discharge of their duties, we will have accomplished some good. Attention is essential on the part of the teacher to win the attention of those who are taught.—*N. Y. Sun.*

DIRT.—Old Dr. Cooper of South Carolina, used to say to his students, "Don't be afraid of a little dirt young gentlemen. What is dirt? Why, nothing at all offensive, when chemically viewed. Rub a little alkali upon that 'dirty grease-spot' on your coat, and it undergoes a chemical change and becomes soap. Now rub it with a little water and it disappears; it is neither grease, soap, water nor dirt. That is not a very odorous pile of dirt you observe there. Well, scatter a little gypsum over it, and it is no longer dirty. Everything you call dirt is worthy of your notice as students of chemistry. Analyze it! It will all separate very clean elements. Dirt makes corn, corn makes bread and meat, and that makes a very sweet young lady that I saw one of you kissing last night. So, after all, you were kissing dirt, particularly if she whitens her face with chalk or fuller's earth. There is no telling young gentlemen, what is dirt."

RESPIRATION AS AFFECTED BY FOOD.—A paper has been read before the Royal Society, London, by Dr. Edward Smith, giving the result of over two thousand experiments which he has been making, to ascertain the effect of different kinds of food on the carbonic acid expired from the lungs. He found that most kinds of food increase the carbonic acid given from one to three grains per minute, the effect commencing soon after the introduction of food into the system and attaining its maximum in about two hours. The most powerful stimulants of respiration are tea and coffee, which sometimes increase the quantity of carbonic acid evolved three grains per minute. The experiments showed that the following named substances are classed as follows in their effect on the lungs: Exciters of respiration—sugar, milk, cereals, potato, gluten, casein, gelatin, fibrin, albumen, tea, coffee, cocoa, chiccory, alcohol, rum, ales; non-exciters—starch, fat, coffee leaves, brandy, gin.

A Frenchman, wishing to compliment a girl as "a little lamb," called her a "small mutton."

SIXPENCE A DAY.—A London paper furnishes the following interesting anecdote, which we wish our young friends would read and think about:

What is said about sixpence spent daily for one thing that is useless or hurtful (strong drink, for example,) may be said of the same sum spent for any other hurtful or pernicious thing (tobacco, for example.) There is now an old man in an almshouse in Bristol, who states that for sixty years he spent sixpence in drink, but was never intoxicated. A gentleman who heard this statement was somewhat curious to ascertain how much this sixpence a day, put by every year, at five per cent., compound interest, would amount to in sixty years. Taking out his pencil, he began to calculate. Putting down the first year's savings (three hundred and sixty-five sixpences,) nine pounds sterling eleven shillings and sixpence, he added the interest, and then went on, year by year, until he found that in the sixtieth year the sixpence a day reached the startling sum of three thousand two hundred and twenty-five pounds sterling, nineteen shillings and ninepence. More than fifteen thousand dollars. Judge of the old man's surprise when told that, had he saved his sixpence a day, and allowed it to accumulate at compound interest, he might now have been worth that noble sum; so that, instead of taking refuge in an almshouse, he might have comforted himself with a house of his own, costing three thousand five hundred dollars, and fifteen acres of land, worth two hundred and fifty dollars per acre, and have left the legacy among his children and grand-children, or used it for the welfare of his fellow-men!

CHARACTER.—That which forms and reforms, and communicates life to the social world, is—Character. Character gives authority to opinion; puts meaning into words, and burns through all things that act as impediments to the weak heart and the dull in brain. Character is a measure of man's capacity. His understanding may play with thought, his conscience flirt with beautiful ideals of goodness, but character is the root and heart of his being. It is the expression of no particular mental quality, but of his whole nature, and therefore governs all his actions. Man is nothing unless he acts, and the evidence of his character may always be found in his works. It reveals itself through all masks and specious disguises, and to the pride of reason and the vanity of mere opinion, interposes its iron limitations.

The question has often been raised whether character is the creature of circumstances, or whether circumstances owe their origin to character. To admit the former part of the question is to strike out of character that vital causative energy which is its chief quality; to admit the latter is to affirm that the mind can create a world out of nothing.—Either would be caricature, not character. The truth is, circumstances are the nutriment of character. Goethe said: "Every one of my books has been furnished by a thousand persons. My work is the aggregate of a number of beings and taken from the whole of nature; it bears the name of Goethe."

LADY FRANKLIN.—Lady Franklin's name was Porden—Eleanor Ann Porden, and she was born in 1795. She early manifested great talents and a strong memory, and acquired considerable knowledge of Greek and other languages. Her first poem, "The Veils," was written when she was seventeen. Her next was the "Arctic Expedition," which led, in 1822, to her marriage with Captain Franklin. Her principal work was the "Cœur de Lion," which appeared in 1825. Her poems display much elegance, spirit and richness of imagination. The foregoing incidents in her life we find in a biographical dictionary. This lady has recently attracted the attention and excited the admiration of the civilized world, by her energetic and persevering efforts to send relief to her adventurous husband in the frozen regions of the North, or to ascertain his fate and that of his companions.

PRAYER.—As every sacrifice was to be seasoned with salt, so is every mercy to be sanctioned by prayer. As gold is sometime laid, not only on cloth and silk, but also upon silver, so prayer is the golden duty that must be laid, not only upon all natural and civil actions, as eating, drinking, buying and selling, but also upon our silver duties, upon all most religious and spiritual performances. "Prayer moves the hand that moves the universe."

The loss of goods and money is oftentimes no loss; if you had not lost them, they might perhaps have lost you.