HOURS AT HOME;

A POPULAR

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THE "SPIRITUAL" MUSE.

OUR "Spiritual" brethren (as Mr. Parton might call them) are a body—a spiritual body—so very undefined and vague, that one finds it very difficult indeed fairly to get at them. We hear them, not unfrequently, asserting the rapid increase of their own adherents; and, as they are great in their familiarity with all kinds of "progression," they cipher out, by some kind of arithmetical progression of their own, an amazing sum of believers. But when one tries to find them; when statisticians of this lower and imperfect sphere take up the reckoning; when we begin to inquire soberly what this innumerable multitude of believers believe in, and what the army of adherents adhere to, presently the boastful claim begins to wear a misty, evanescent look, the crowd grows ghostly, and the figures dim. So that we begin to wonder whether they have not been counting in as their own partisans all who believe the supernatural in any way,—in which case their count might just as well have been yet larger; or whether they have not adopted as their own, without too rigid scrutiny, all that undenominated multitude to whom no one else in the rivalry of sects has made good claim; or whether, as would seem most likely, too great familiarity with shadowy things has not made our spiritual brethren altogether too uncertain guides in matters of substantial fact.

And what is true of our spiritual brethren as a class, is also partly true of their literature. As, when we come to count up the list of those to whom the name "spiritualist" technically belongs, and who do not more or less distinctly repudiate it, the number dwindles; so, when we come to look over the catalogue of spiritualistic literature, it turns out to be meagre and insignificant. Indeed, it seemed, when these researches were undertaken, that some shadowy mystery had beset the productions of the Spiritual Muse, and that she herself had vanished. Where once the Banner of Light waved luminously over dark Broadway, was emptiness and silence and terrestrial notice of a "room to let." Up two long flights of stairs, seeking for spiritual literature in high places, we toiled in vain. And when at last we found it at the News Company's, with whom it had been deposited (and who shall receive the benefit of this announcement gratis), we were looked upon as ourselves belonging to the seers, and were inquired of concerning the fate of Mumler, the ghostly photographer, as if we would be quite sure to know. Such risks and misconceptions must be dared in the quest of truth and in the interest of necessary criticism!

all power, and that have ceased to excite aught but derision and contempt.

But the end is not yet. Rome cannot be reformed. Destruction is the inevitable doom of every system that opposes itself to progress.

CHILDHOOD OF JOSEPH ADDISON ALEXANDER.*

After the removal to Princeton, Addison made brave advances. His proficiency in study, and the ease and exactness with which he mastered the elements of knowledge, were almost incredible. It is impossible to point to the time when he did not know his letters. He soon learned to read, under the tuition of a young lady then resident in the family, who has since that time been made a widow, and is believed to be now living in Texas. Once possessed of this delightful and invaluable art, his appetite for books became perfectly insatiable. He was never at rest. His thirst for knowledge was unquenchable and constant. He hungered after his intellectual pabulum as a carnivorous animal hungers after his prey. His eyes never wearied in the attempt to decipher unaccustomed characters. The strangeness of a foreign language was no invincible obstacle in his path. He would get hold of an old grammar, or part of a grammar, or else make one for himself that would answer for the nonce; he would disinter from a heap of waste paper and forgotten volumes some venerable dictionary, with the back gone, and many of the leaves torn out or hopelessly defaced, or in lieu of that he would store his mind with the new vocabulary as he went along. In this way he soon learned to knock a language to pieces, resolve it into its structural parts, and examine its hidden machinery; and all this he did with a vehemence of impulse and a rapidity of work that must have been very startling to the other boys, and was sufficiently surprising to all who were in any measure acquainted with his habits. But most of these efforts were put forth in solitude, and he did not care to speak of them to a living soul. Some of the facts here mentioned did not come to light till long afterwards.

He was at this time, in all strictness of speech, what is called an omnivorous reader. He read literally everything that fell in his way. This was one of his characteristics in after-life. Though he often checked himself in the indulgence of a taste for general literature, the propensity was always strong. Though he had habituated himself to the most severe and rigid courses of study, he did not disdain to read the smallest newspaper, or even the almanac. I have often heard him say, in response to a question about some particular book of travels, then just out, that "*all* books of travel were interesting to him." Though at all times a recluse, supposed to be conversant only with what was in books, the saying of Terence was applicable to him, and not only in regard to books, but in reference to everything else, *humani nihil alienum*. He would look out of his open window, as he gayly turned the huge leaves of his folios at Princeton, and see more of human nature in an hour than some men would see in a twelvemonth. But I am anticipating.

At the time I speak of, there were in the garret in his father's house certain old worthless books, that had been thrown away with other rubbish, and had many of them passed entirely out of recollection. There the boyish scholar would sit for hours together devouring the contents of these volumes. Among the works thus read was an old romance called *The Midnight Bell*, a book full of horrors and mysteries. He used often to speak with zest in after years, of the terror with which he gloated over the dark and bloody revelations of this story, in the silence, solitude, and gloom of that unfinished and unfurnished attic.

There was an odd mingling in him of the solitary and social tendencies. From

* Life of J. Addison Alexander, D.D. By Rev. H. C. Alexander. *To be published about December* 1, by Charles Scribner & Co.

early childhood he showed a disposition to communicate his stores of knowledge to others. When about six years old, it was his daily custom to repair after the evening meal to the kitchen, and read aloud to an aged black woman, who was cook in the family, from Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, stopping every now and then to explain and comment as he went along. This may be said to have been his first exegetical exercise, as well as his *coup d'essai* as an extemporaneous orator; and visitors were sometimes taken to the door which separated the kitchen from the apartments of the family, and would stand there, as if riveted to the spot, listening to the boy-interpreter, amazed at the display of so wonderful a talent for language and exposition in a mere child.

At a period somewhat later he became possessed of a copy of Miss Edgeworth's *Tales of Fashionable Life*, and growing deeply interested in them, he was not satisfied until he had read them aloud to another old black woman, who had succeeded his first pupil in the culinary department of the household.

His advancement in learning was now progressively rapid. It seems to have resembled the quick but regular and healthy budding-out of vernal plants during a favorable season. It was no hothouse vegetation that was thus maturing. There was no forcing of the natural processes. The ripening change that was going on was normal—spontaneous—joyous—and at the same time uninterrupted and sure. The growth of the human mind is always a surprising and edifying study. The process is carried on while men sleep. There is something apparently automatic about it. The seed cometh up of itself, the observer knoweth not how. The movement is conducted through a variety of stages, "first the blade—then the ear—after that the full corn in the ear." Great geniuses do not seem to be exempt from this universal law. The mightiest scholars have had to begin with the alphabet. Pascal rediscovers without assistance, and in childhood, the mysteries of geometry, but he has to proceed like other mortals, step by step, from the definitions; and his attainments are successive, and in the order prescribed by the experience of ages as a necessity of the human intellect. But in the case of these penetrating and comprehensive minds the *rate* of progress is increased indefinitely, and the results are sometimes so marvellous as to appear incredible. Such an one was Joseph Addison Alexander. As soon as he was able to understand the meaning of English words his father began to teach him Latin. His habit was to write out for him each day a number of Latin words on a slip of paper, with the meanings in English, and make him commit them to memory. The same plan was pursued with his other sons, and subsequently with his grandsons. It was not long before Addison had thus committed *a thousand* of these Latin vocables. In due course of time the number had amounted to many thousands. This was the foundation of that enormous vocabulary which was afterwards to be of such incalculable service to the commentator on Isaiah, on the Psalms, on the Acts, on Mark, and on Matthew, and the remote origin of that classical scholarship which shines with no dim or uncertain lustre in every page of his somewhat voluminous writings. It is instructive to notice here that the same method precisely of commencing the acquisition of a new language was followed by the polyglot—Cardinal Mezzofanti, who afterwards so much excited his marvelling curiosity.

But the young scholar was now to enter a new and boundless field for his exertions. He was to break the lock from the Semitic tongues, and to obtain an easy mastery over several of the languages of the Orient. As soon as he was six years old, or thereabouts, his father wrote out for him, in the same manner as before, the Hebrew alphabet, of which the little philologist soon possessed himself, and thus laid the groundwork of his subsequent proficiency in that and kindred languages. At a somewhat later period, the same kind and capable hand prepared for him a Hebrew grammar, adapted to

his years, which manuscript was carefully preserved by the youthful Hebraist, and was in his possession at the time of his death. That old manuscript Hebrew grammar, in the well-known handwriting of Dr. Archibald Alexander, is now one of the family treasures. The title-page of that grammar is now before me, and reads as follows:—

"HEBREW GRAMMAR,
WITH THE POINTS,
Translated from Leusden's
Compend of Buxtorf,
FOR JOSEPH ADDISON ALEXANDER.

Princeton, New Jersey,
A. D. 1819."

This date furnishes us with pretty exact information as to the time when he commenced the regular study of Hebrew. It was when he was just ten years old. He could read the letters almost as soon as he could read English. What extraordinary advances he afterwards made, in this and cognate languages, we shall presently have occasion to notice.

Little Addison taught himself to write, and was able to do so before the family were aware of it. He soon acquired that firm, beautiful hand, with which his friends are so familiar.

An extract from a letter from his father to his aunt, Mrs. Graham, dated July 22, 1817, gives an exact view of what he was at this time:—

"Addison is also learning Latin, and greatly exceeds all our other children in capacity. He does not equal James in quickness, nor William in memory; but in the clearness of his ideas, and his steady attention to whatever he undertakes to study, he is greatly superior to them both. He has written several poems, but they are not worth sending so far."

The following account by one who was the teacher who prepared him for college, is almost literally correct, but Addison began Hebrew and Arabic, and perhaps Persian and Syriac, at least two years before the date of his connection with that gentleman as a pupil: —

"Whilst pursuing his studies with me, Addison (or Addy, as the boys called him) commenced studying by himself the Hebrew language, and had made considerable progress in the Arabic before he entered College. I am not aware that he had at that early period of his life done much with the modern languages. In after years his acquisitions of both ancient and modern languages included nearly every one that is really worth learning. The Hebrew, with the cognate languages and dialects, he mastered when he was quite a young man. French, German, Italian, and other modern languages he next learned, including even the Turkish. The last languages which he acquired were the Danish and Coptic. What is wonderful about his linguistic attainments, they were in many cases made purely for the sake of the *literature* (poetry, &c.) which they contained."

Addison's early education was almost entirely domestic, for though before entering college he attended a variety of schools, in which all the usual branches were taught, he was, up to the time of his entering these schools, under the sole tuition of his father, to whom he owed more, even in the way of mere learning, than to any other living man. Nor is it too much to say, that at the time he entered the first of these schools, Addison, if judged by the ordinary standard, had already "received his education." This is a somewhat precarious assertion, but I hope to be able to show in the sequel, that at the time Addison entered school he was in point of scholarship in advance of many when they leave college, and are said to be "educated men."

It is difficult to say, we can only reasonably conjecture, in what relative order his remarkable powers first gave evidence of their existence, or what was the secret history of their successive or simultaneous appearances and steady and symmetrical development. He early showed a love of, and a taste and talent for music, and had he devoted himself to the cultivation of this gift, it is the opinion of one who was fully acquainted with the facts at the time, a contemporary and chosen playmate, and who is himself by no means insensible to the "con-

cord of sweet sounds," that he would have become as eminent in this department as he was in that to which he applied himself. This is saying a great deal. The expert commentator had certainly a fine ear for music.

There had long been lying about his father's house an old bamboo cane or staff. This staff was hollow, and had been perforated with holes as a flute. It also had a coarse common key. When about ten years old he took up this old cane flute, and upon it began to play. He studied and copied music, and learned it systematically. After practising for some time in this way, he was presented with a small octave flute, which after a few years was succeeded by a large one.

He became a proficient on the instrument, and for many years the use of the flute was his favorite recreation.

One of my first recollections is seeing him with a yellow flute in his hand or at his lips. He often played in my hearing, during my early boyhood, but it was for his own amusement, not mine. He preferred being alone on these occasions, and then I dare say his delectation was often great. He rendered simple and melodious airs with what afterwards struck me as perfect accuracy and much sweetness. I never heard him attempt anything *hard*, but on the other hand I never heard him attempt anything which he did not execute with consummate ease. His brother James was himself a delightful amateur flute-player. I never heard the two brothers playing in the same room.

Among the pieces thus melodiously rendered by the younger brother, was an affecting air which I shall always associate with an Arabic song, about a rose, which he was accustomed to sing to it. His voice was a high tenor, and plaintively sweet without being strong. He was fond of singing hymns, understood the mystery of "notes," and once pointed out to me a new tune, which has rung in my ears ever since. I also remember his song of the scales,* and one of the tunes sung by his ghosts.* His European journals are full of allusions to the chants and chorals and masses he went to hear, but in these foreign diaries (which were designed to be a mere record of facts) he has, for the most part, sedulously suppressed all outbursts of feeling. When he was in the mood for it, he would talk with enthusiasm of music he had listened to with rapture in London, in the chapels of the English Universities, in Strasbourg, in Berlin, in Rome. He heard a boy at Cambridge who "had a voice like an angel." But of all he ever heard he spoke with greatest admiration of the effect of a great number of priests' voices, accompanied by the organ, that on one occasion almost overpowered him, if I mistake not, at Rome. He sometimes affected to know nothing, and care nothing about music. This was his humor. He despised the poor American imitations of the Old-World ritualism. He had a certain æsthetic sympathy with the gorgeous cathedral service of the Old World. For the florid and effeminate church music of the New World he had none. He loved the plain old tunes, and regarded the old-fashioned congregational psalm-singing as the true way to worship God. He was sometimes irritated by the fastidious pertinacity of choirs, and never could understand the importance of "having the hymns." Yet he never failed in courtesy towards the musical gentlemen who solicited this slight but sometimes annoying compliance. He would say good-naturedly enough that the choristers who were most particular about "having the hymns" could do best without them, and that he had noticed that the singing was always better where the hymns were not given. He probably meant in this delicate way to express a preference for the time-honored tunes which are so apt to be lost sight of in the prevailing lust for novelty, and for music such as is heard on week-days in the theatre or at the opera-house.

Some of the most impassioned pages

* A pretty tune bringing in the eight notes.

* These ghosts were characters in some of his stories.

in his printed sermons are strongly colored by his native fondness for sweet voices and majestic harmonies. His unprinted sermons contain, perhaps, an equal quantity of this sort of writing, in which (especially near the close of the discourse), as by an accumulation of all his gifts and attainments toward a common centre, he makes painting, architecture, music, poetry, learning, genius—all he knew, all he imagined, all he felt, all he was, do tribute to the cross of Christ, or else shed a blaze of light on the joys or sorrows, the terrors or the glories of the eternal world. He exulted in the deep, mysterious, yet glorious organ-tones of the Revelation, reverberating as from afar with the roll of tumultuous waters. He actually seemed to have caught the sound of the "harpers harping with their harps," and the swelling cadence of that song, which peals like successive strokes of thunder through the Apocalypse, "Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."

It was characteristic of him that he found pleasure in what would have been to others nothing but toil. With him duty and satisfaction ran in couples. As a lad at school, he seems to have been nearly always in good spirits. He made everything around him conducive to his enjoyment, and while unremittingly engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, was as bright, joyous, and perfectly happy a boy as the sun ever shone on.

A large number of chickens on the place were called into requisition to minister to his enjoyment. He gave to each a name, and organized them into a "chicken college." He arranged them in classes, and printed in his fair round hand a catalogue of the matriculates. He also devised, and issued in the same way, a curriculum of study which they were supposed to be pursuing. He conducted imaginary examinations, and published the names of those who were proficient in each department. He would announce public exercises—oratorical exhibitions, &c., prepare bills of the same, and publish accounts of the performances. He would announce annual commencements, put forth programmes, and give reports of what occurred on these festive occasions. In all this there was the same completeness of plan and the same scrupulous nicety and finish of detail, which marked everything he ever did. In this innocent way would he spend hours of leisure which most boys would have devoted to pure idleness or even mischief. In company with the brother immediately older than himself, he would on holidays, or when not engaged in study, go to a room where they would not be interrupted, or to a secluded part of the grounds, and would there organize with him a sort of moot-court (the two acting alternately as judge and advocate), and would imagine causes, civil and criminal, argue cases, harangue and charge unseen juries, and render verdicts, or give judicial opinions. A favorite amusement was indicting and trying a black boy named Ned, a servant in the family. Sometimes they would erect themselves into a congress and declaim on topics of public interest, and in this way entire mornings and afternoons were not unfrequently consumed, the sessions sometimes lasting uninterruptedly for many successive hours. The usual arena for these intellectual contests was a chosen place at the back of the garden. Here they would resort and "speechify" till the sun had visibly and greatly changed its place in the heavens. These legal and senatorial efforts were no ignoble training for a life of oratory. The brother* who shared with the *soi-disant* advocate and politician in these entertainments, testifies that any readiness in public speaking, any knack of prompt reply, any appearance of self-possession in embarrassing circumstances, and any facility in adapting words, acts, and circumstances to the occasion, and pressing them into his service, which have stood him in stead during a long and active professional and public life, he ascribes to these early intellectual and forensic efforts, taken up, as they were, at the time as a mere matter of amusement. Sometimes the two boys, both of

* The Hon. W. C. Alexander.

them being gifted with remarkable powers of memory and fluency, would personate the different professions and callings in life; they would be lawyers, doctors, merchants, mechanics, officers civil and military, etc., etc., and would carry on dialogues, sometimes grave, sometimes gay, for hours.

It was to be expected that one so richly endowed with poetic faculties, and poetic tastes and sympathies, and so richly stored with the proper material for poetic composition, should turn his attention to the subject of verse and rhythm, and even put forth early essays in this style. Such we find to be the case. His earliest effort in metre is a piece composed in 1816, when he was about seven years old. It is an imaginative flourish on "the Seasons," and is not devoid of a certain excellence. The melody is perfect, and some of the epithets are happy. This was immediately followed by one on the Yellow Fever, and is marked by the same well-defined rhythmical structure which is conspicuous in his later effusions, and in some degree the same masterly command of language which could at all times bend the simplest words to the exigencies of the most measured cadence. This trait is singularly exemplified in some powerful lines entitled "Monosyllabics."

Yet he now and then indulged in children's games, perhaps for the amusement of others, though they were never of the ordinary kind, and always gave evidence of humor and originality. Mrs. Alexander, one day hearing a noise made by some children up stairs, as if applauding or laughing obstreperously, went up to see what it was. "She found in the room Addison and a parcel of children. In one corner of the room a counterpane suspended, formed a curtain. Mrs. A. peeping behind the curtain, discovered a small boy dressed up in red flannel, monkey-fashion, and seated. It thus proved to be a monkey-show, and Addison was the showman."

But in general it was true that he found his chief pleasure in pursuing mental or manual diversions, and none at all in the favorite sports of boys, in which a good deal of exciting bodily exercise is called into play. He dwelt alone. He looked out of his studious window with a kind of speculative interest upon the green where the lads of his own age and "set" were hard at work flying the kite or scampering after the ball; but he was not of them. His joys were of another realm.

Mr. Alexander, through life, took a strange pleasure in noticing people that had any laughable peculiarities, whether of looks or manner, or as evinced by some absurd remark. He would bring up these things years after, and would turn their comical speeches into household proverbs, or would bring the tears into his eyes as he rehearsed their little adventures.

Mr. Charles Campbell apprises me of the fact that a lady of Staunton, Virginia, now deceased, once gave his mother, Mrs. Campbell, an account of a very odd-looking and pompous little preacher, before unknown, who in these days visited Dr. Alexander and stayed all night. "He was of an outré appearance, looking like some kind of queer bird, *rara avis in terrâ*. He was quite conceited withal, and had a way of asserting trite truth in a very emphatic tone; *e. g.*, straightening himself up he would exclaim, *ore rotundo*, 'Dr. Alexander, I am firmly of the opinion that mankind by nature are totally depraved.' This eccentric little minister had the manner of a bantam cock. Towards bed-time, becoming uneasy lest the stranger should tarry all night, one of the boys inquired whether, if he did, he would sleep in *his* bed? to which Addison replied, 'No, he will roost on the tester.' At prayers the stranger officiated, and happened to read the CII. Psalm: 'By reason of the voice of my groaning, my bones cleave to my skin. I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert. I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the housetop.' When he read these ornithological verses, it was with difficulty that the ladies could repress their risibilities."

The following piece was written in his eleventh year:—

"SOLITUDE.

"Now in the eastern sky the cheering light
Dispels the dark and gloomy shades of night;
And while the lowing of the kine is heard,
And the sweet warbling of the songster bird;
Where from afar the stately river flows,
In whose bright stream the sportive gold-fish goes;
Where the thick trees afford a safe retreat,
From public eye and summer's scorching heat;
There let me sit and sweetly meditate,
Far from the gleam of wealth and pomp of state.
And while I listen to that murmuring rill
Which pours its waters down the neighboring hill,
I can despise the pride and pomp of kings,
And all the glory wealth or power brings.
Here in deep solitude, remote from noise,
From the world's bustle, idleness and toys,
Here I can look upon the world's vast plain,
And all her domes and citadels disdain."

LEISURE MOMENTS.

SOMEWHERE on the yellow covers of this number the publishers announce, in that stately, impressive way which the world looks for in publishers, the commencement, in the January HOURS AT HOME, of a new story by Georgiana M. Craik. "Brilliant, touching, interesting," they say it is, printed, too, from the gifted author's own manuscript, published exclusively in this magazine, and all that sort of thing.

Well, well! It is all most true, and full enough to tell the great wide world about it. But shall we, dear reader of these L. M's., open a little way for thee the canvas door, letting thee peep, for a moment, behind the scenes before the bell rings, the big painted curtain rolls up, and the drama begins in good earnest.

Those crisp, fresh, rustling leaves, all covered over with nervous, bristling, upright word traceries; the eager hours spent in poring over them, and the quiet giggles, and the —something in the eyes that makes the bold handwriting at times seem strangely dim and uncertain; the characters that live and breathe through them, and, above all, Hero herself, brilliant, tantalizing, misjudged, suffering, brave, and lovable woman that she is—ah, marvellous meaning in that phrase: the author's own manuscript!

Yes, we know—but we may not tell—just how the tale begins, and, more important yet, just how it ends; we have rejoiced with those who rejoiced, and wept with those who wept; and, at the end, we have bid them all good-by, regretfully enough; but knowing that though one pleasure had passed away, there still abode that help and strength which comes in familiarity with pure and noble minds, and in the inspiring, sweet story of heroic endurance and strong human love.

WE are apt to think that the very qualities and habits which render a man rich make him set such store upon his acquisitions that he cannot well help gaining the reputation of meanness. Often a man will run through an inherited estate in brief time, but when he earns his fortune he is not so likely to throw it away; and the thriftiness that brought the dollar will think twice before it parts with it on any pretext. But there are some exceptions to the rule that seems general, and the grandest is suggested by the name of that world-loved man, whose death is mourned by queens and potentates, shall we say? yes, but better still by the poor to whom he has given succor; by the people of every country where his philanthropy has been felt, or where the incense of his generous life has penetrated. The long list of his gifts to the cause of science, education, and charity, is as familiar as household words, and need not be repeated here. His was a wise and warm benevolence that knew no bounds of creed, condition, or nationality. Cities, grateful, may build monuments to his memory, but the name of George Peabody will be more lastingly shrined in the inmost hearts of his fellow-men. May his noble deeds bear golden fruit in all lands and among all peoples.

How many good dresses a good thought possesses. Sweet are the uses of adversity, says Shakespeare; Adversity is the blessing of the New Testament, says Bacon; The good are better made by ill, says Rogers; When the ploughshare of suffering passes over the