

ELECTRA:

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BELLES LETTRES MONTHLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

MAY, 1883, TO MAY, 1884.

"The shades of night were falling fast,
As through an Alpine village passed
A youth who bore through snow and ice
A banner with this strange device,
EXCELSIOR!"

EDITED BY

ANNIE E. WILSON AND ISABELLA M. LEYBURN.

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ELECTRA:

A BELLES LETTRES MONTHLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE.

VOL. I.

JULY, 1883.

No. 3.

SIR EDWIN LANDSEER.

FROM MISS THACKERAY'S SKETCH.

When he was a very little boy Edwin Landseer used to ask his mother to set him a copy to draw from, and then—so his sisters have told me—complain that she always drew one of two things, either a shoe or a currant-pudding, of both of which he was quite tired. When he was a little older he went to his father and asked him for teaching. The father was a wise man and told his son that he could not himself teach him to be a painter. Nature was the only school, observation the true and only teacher. He told little Edwin to use his own powers; to think about all the things he saw; to copy every thing; and then he turned the boy out with his brothers to draw the world as it then existed upon Hampstead Heath. Their elder sister used to go with them, a young mentor, and one can imagine the little party buoyant, active, in the full delightful spring of early youth.

When I last saw Sir Edwin Landseer something of this indescribable youthful brightness still seemed to be with him. Little Edwin painted a picture in these very early days, which was afterward sold. It was called the "Mischief-makers"; a mischievous boy had tied a log of wood to the tail of a mischievous donkey.

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When he was thirteen he exhibited the portrait of a pointer and puppy, and also the portrait of Mr. Simpson's mule, "by Master E. Landseer," as mentioned in the catalogue. His first real success was a picture called "Fighting Dogs getting Wind," in 1817.

When Sir Edwin gave up etching it was Thomas Landseer, his brother, who engraved his pictures and did them such full justice.

There is a pretty little paragraph in Leslie's autobiography about Landseer after he became a student at the Royal Academy. "Edwin Landseer," he says, "who entered the Academy very early, was a pretty little curly-headed boy, and he attracted Fuseli's attention by his talents and gentle manners. Fuseli would look around for him and say, Where is my 'little *dog-boy*.'" The little *dog-boy* was then about nineteen years old. When he was ready to set up in life for himself he hired a tiny little cottage with a studio, in St. John's Wood, and had his sister, Mrs. Mackenzie, for his house-keeper. In those days it must have been almost a country place. There, before the great eddying wave of life and popularity had reached the quiet place.

DUST FALLS.

BY REV. T. D. WITHERSPOON, D.D.

Near the famous summer resort of Interlachen, in Switzerland, there is a beautiful mountain valley lying almost under the shadow of the Jungfrau, with its crown of eternal snow. The verdure of the little valley is indescribably rich. Flowery meadows, with silvery streams dancing through them, shadowy forests of dark-green pine, roaring torrents, and stupendous masses of overhanging mountain, make a landscape of inexpressible picturesqueness and beauty. The name of the valley is a singular but somewhat musical one, Lauterbrunnen. It is derived from that which makes the peculiar charm of the valley, for *Lauterbrunnen* means *nothing but fountains*, and the valley is so called because of the multitude of cataracts that leap like fountains over the rim of the tall perpendicular cliffs into the valley below.

Most of these fountain-cascades are small, and though exquisitely beautiful have nothing beyond their beauty to commend them to regard. But there is one of such gigantic proportions that it has almost monopolized the name that originally belonged to them all. It is known as the Staubbach, or *Dust-Fall*, and is so remarkable as to constitute one of the wonders of Switzerland.

As you approach other cataracts of celebrity, your ear is saluted in the distance by the roar of the descending torrent, and as you draw nearer you feel the vibration of the earth beneath you, under the shock of the impinging waters.

But as you approach the Staubbach, there is no deafening roar, and no quivering rock. You reach the base of the great ledge of stone, nearly a thousand feet in height; you look up to its lofty crest, and there leaping over the rim of

the precipice, as if out of the very bosom of the sky, is a little stream that glistens in the sunlight like molten silver. Down, down into the deep gorge about you, it plunges, but not as in other cataracts, with maddening rush and roar. Far above the spot where it first meets your gaze, it has been partially broken into spray by the opposition it has encountered, and so with its specific gravity already diminished ere it takes its plunge, and with the resistance which it encounters from the denser atmosphere of the valley, and the conformation of the mountain's face along which it falls, it comes down with steadily expanding volume and steadily diminishing force, until it reaches the level of the valley in showers of pearly mist that "seem to float, rather than fall," and "alight as softly as a white-winged albatross on the bosom of the ocean."

So light and ethereal are these falling mists that the mountain breezes cause the column to sway hither and thither like some bridal veil of lightest texture and of purest white waving in the wind.

As Lord Byron, in his "Manfred," has so eloquently described it,

"The sunbow's rays still arch
The torrent with the many hues of heaven,
And roll the sheeted silver's waving column
O'er the crag's headlong perpendicular;
And fling its lines of foaming light along,
And to and fro, like the pale courser's tail,
The giant steed to be bestrode by Death,
As told in the Apocalypse."

If seen on some rough wintry day, the impression might be drear enough to suggest, as in Byron's case, some image connected with death. It could not be so with me, viewing it as I did on a clear and cloudless day in the month of Au-

gust. Then the imagery suggested was only that of life in its purest and most beneficent forms. For the gentle summer breezes, as they caught on their wings the lightly descending spray, bore it hither and thither over the face of the beautiful prairie that lies at the cataract's base, watering, as from an exhaustless fountain, its carpeting of grasses and wild flowers.

And so it was, that in the midst of the August heat, when other portions of the valley lay parched and wilted by the summer sun, the verdure of this little prairie was as fresh, its flowers as fragrant, and the song of its birds as blithe and cheerful as in the early spring. The "dust stream," descending with dove-like wing, watered it as from the fountains of heaven, and made it "blossom even as the garden of the Lord."

Nothing in all my tour of Switzerland impressed me more than this gentle, kindly "dust fall," in the valley of Lauterbrunnen.

It is to me in its contrast with other cataracts the perpetual illustration of what every true life should aim to be. There are many lives that can only be compared to the noisy, rushing, roaring torrents that you encounter so constantly in that land of mountain and glacier. They seem to be projected upon the principle of antagonism. Their mission seems to be to dash themselves in ceaseless and impotent opposition and discontent against the barriers that Providence has placed in their way, and then anger-

ed by the opposition which they themselves have invited, to go chafing and fretting on their way, murmuring against Providence and repining at the imagined grievances and wrongs that they have suffered at the hands of their fellowmen.

There are others whose lives are so quiet in their beneficence, and so beneficent in their quietness, that we can only compare them to one of these "dust falls," of which the Staubbach is the most celebrated representative. Realizing that they are not earthly, but heaven-born in their origin, that their mission is "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," that there are flowers to be cultivated and grasses to be watered, waste places to be made to "blossom as the garden of the Lord," sad hearts to be cheered, and drooping spirits to be revived: they pass through life so quietly that the great busy world is scarcely aware of their existence, and yet their gentle, quiet ministrations come down like pearly mists on the drooping flowers; their silent, potent influences go down with beneficent presence to the roots of all that is pure and lovely and ennobling in society. These are the noble lives. These are the successful lives. These are the lives that are deserving of all honor—not those that fill the world with the clamor of their self-assertion; but those that, having a heaven-appointed mission to perform, quietly and unostentatiously fulfill it, leaving their memorial behind them in the hearts they have "made to sing for joy."

BATTLE IN THE LABORATORY.

Between classes one day in the chemical laboratory, fire and water had quite a prolonged dispute as to which one of them belonged the palm of superiority. Water, with its accustomed fluency, poured forth in this exuberant strain:

Water—"I am obliged to undergo a great many inconveniences for the sake of science, but I do it without a grumble. At times, though, it really becomes too much for me to bear, and I actually *boil* with rage. In the first place, these

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