

## A CELEBRATED AUTHORESS.

**H**ARRIET MARTINEAU, the well-known authoress, was born at Norwich on the 12th of June, 1802. Her family was of Huguenot extraction but had adopted Unitarian views.

Like most persons of a high order of intellect, young Harriet Martineau at an early age resolved to walk alone, and not in educational leading-strings, and practically taught herself history and politics while her brothers and sisters were reading their "Goldsmith" and "Mrs. Markham." Not that she had any lack of teachers or instructors; but from a child she resolved to practise the virtue of self-reliance and to fit herself for life in earnest by such literary exertions as sooner or later, she felt, would at least make her independent.

A tendency to deafness showed itself early in her life. About her twentieth year the deafness became confirmed, and she habitually from that time used an ear-trumpet.

She was barely of age when she appeared before the public as an author. Her first work, however, was not one which gave any great scope to literary talents, and must be regarded rather as a proof of her internal piety, on the model of the Unitarian school in which she had been brought up, than as a criterion of her intellectual ability. It was entitled "Devotional Exercises for the Use of Young Persons," and was published in 1823.

It was, however, the harbinger of a long series of far more important works which were destined to appear thenceforth in rapid succession. In 1824 and the following year Miss Martineau came before the public as the authoress of two tales, entitled "Christmas Day," and a sequel to it, "The Friend;" these she followed up with several other stories all more or less dealing with social subjects, and more especially illustrating by argument and by example the rights and interests of the working classes. The best known of these are "Principle and Practice," "The Rioters," "The Turn Out," "Mary Campbell," and "My Servant Rachel."

About 1826, the young man to whom she was engaged, died, and shortly afterwards Mrs. Martineau and her daughters lost all their means by the failure of the house with which their money was deposited. Harriet had to earn her living, and being precluded by her deafness from teaching, she took up authorship in earnest and toiled with incredible industry.

In 1831 she published her "Illustrations of Political Economy." The sale—to the surprise of the publisher, who had given her very disadvantageous terms—was immediate and enormous, and from that time her literary success was secured. These "Illustrations" extended to above twenty numbers; they were afterwards republished in a collective form, and, having since been translated into French and German, have helped perhaps more than any other work of modern times to spread abroad, in other countries as well as in our own, a knowledge of that science which till our own day had been so little known and studied. These she followed up by two similar series on cognate subjects—"Illustrations of Taxation" and "Illustrations of Poor-Laws and Paupers."

In 1832 she removed to London, where she at once became the fashion and where her acquaintance was eagerly sought.

In the year 1834 Harriet Martineau paid a visit to the United States, whither she found that the fame of her social writings had travelled before her. There she met with a most cordial reception from the leaders of thought and action on the other side of the Atlantic; and on her return to Europe she published her comments on the social, political, and religious institutions in the United States, under the title of "Society in America," and her observations on the natural aspects of the Western World and its leading personages,

under that of "A Retrospect of Western Travel." On returning to England she found awaiting her plenty of offers of literary engagements from the leading publishers; but she chose to throw in her lot mainly with Mr. Charles Knight, who was then in the zenith of his high and well-earned reputation, as the publisher of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, under the auspices of such men as Lord Brougham, Grote, Thirlwall, and Lord John Russell. To Charles Knight's series of cheap and popular publications she contributed a most useful little manual called "How to Observe," which she followed up by others, respectively intended as guides for the Housemaid, the Maid-of-all-Work, the Lady's-maid, and the Dressmaker.

The veracity of her Maid-of-all-Work, it is said, led to a widespread belief, which she regarded with some complacency, that she had once been a maid-of-all-work herself.

With the object of lightening her literary labours by variety, she wrote a series of tales for children under the title of "The Playfellow." At the same time she addressed to children of a larger growth two novels of a very marked and distinctive character, called "Deerbrook" and "The Hour and the Man," the latter of which works passed through several editions.

About this time her health, which was never of the strongest, appears to have suffered so much from the continual strain of her literary exertions, that she was obliged to lay aside her pen, and Lord Melbourne offered and, we believe, even pressed upon her acceptance a literary pension. But she was either too proud or too independent to accept it; and possibly also even a higher motive came into play; at all events in declining it she was largely influenced by a feeling that "she could not conscientiously share in the proceeds of a system of taxation which she had reprobated in her published works." Her illness lasted several years; but she found means to turn even sickness to account by writing and publishing her "Life in a Sick-Room,"—a book suggested by her own experiences of suffering, and, therefore, appealing powerfully to the sympathies of many of her readers.

In 1844 she underwent a course of mesmerism, and in a few months was restored to health. Her recovery caused much controversy. She herself had no doubt as to its reality or of its being due to mesmerism, and not unnaturally resented the incredulity of others.

On her recovery she removed to Ambleside, where she built herself the house in which the greater part of her after life was spent. In 1846 she varied the monotony of her quiet and laborious life by a visit to the East; and she recorded her impressions of the scenes and countries through which she travelled in a book which she published in 1848, and which is still most justly popular—namely, "Eastern Life: its Past and Present."

Besides the works written by Miss Martineau which we have already mentioned, a large number of instructive and interesting books flowed from her pen. Her Forest and Game Law Tales met with great success; so did her "Household Education" and her Biographical Sketches form a volume which has justly become one of the best known of her works. She is also to be remembered for her "History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace," a book which is to be admired for its singular clearness and the studied impartiality of its views.

The weight of increasing years began to tell upon her, and after a long illness, in or about the year 1865, she almost entirely withdrew from literary engagements. She lived, however, till 1872. Her long and busy life bears the consistent impress of two leading characteristics—industry and sincerity. Her work was invariably sound, and its motive invariably respectable. She had the gift of seeing clearly, and of giving clear expression to what she had to say. She was neither a discoverer nor an inventor, but she was admirable as a populariser.

Her next efforts were the "Illustrations of Political Economy," which, although they had been rejected by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, and several publishers, proved a most decided success. "Illustrations of Taxation" and "Poor Law and Paupers" appeared next, and in 1837 she gave to the world her "Society in America," which was the result of a visit to the United States. "Deerbrook" and "The Hour and the Man" were the subsequent productions of her pen, but although two excellent novels, they did not attain great popularity. Between the years 1839-44 her health was exceedingly delicate, but on her recovery she resumed her pen with her former energy, and produced "Life in the Sick Room," "Forest and Game Law Tales," "The Willow and the Rock," and "Eastern Life, Past and Present," which last contained her travelling impressions of Syria and the Holy Land. Mr. Charles Knight having been compelled to relinquish the composition of the "History of England during the Thirty Years' Peace," Miss Martineau undertook the task, and was generally allowed to have produced a most interesting and valuable contribution to historical literature. She next published, in conjunction with Mr. Atkinson, a volume containing opinions relative to religious belief, which astonished the world by being directly opposite to those she had hitherto displayed. About 1856 she went to reside at a pleasant cottage she had built for herself at Ambleside. Her pen was next employed in the service of the "Westminster" and other reviews, and in occasional contributions to the daily and weekly press. Her last work of importance was a condensed reproduction of "Comte's Positive Philosophy," B. at Norwich, June 12, 1862. 171, 232-4