

THE LATE "BARRY CORNWALL."

The literary world has lost an estimable scholar and writer of genial poetry, whose life had indeed been extended far beyond the time when he desisted from productive authorship. "Barry Cornwall" has been during more than fifty years the assumed publishing name of Mr. Bryan Walter Procter; and he died last Sunday at his house in Weymouth-street. He was eighty-six or eighty-seven years of age. At Harrow he was a schoolfellow of Lord Byron and Sir Robert Peel, both of whom afterwards spoke of him with friendly remembrance. Procter was brought up to the law, being first articled to a solicitor at Calne, in Wiltshire, and placed afterwards in a conveyancer's office in town. He practised as a conveyancer, and was called to the Bar as a member of Gray's Inn. In 1815 he published a volume of "Dramatic Sketches." Five years afterwards he gained public attention by "A Sicilian Story," which was followed by "Marcian Colonna" and the tragedy of "Mirandola;" this was acted with success by Macready at Covent Garden Theatre. A series of "English Songs," composed at a later period, is now more widely known. "The Sea" and "The Vine" are perhaps the most popular of these lyrics. Mr. Procter married a lady who was connected with the late Mr. Basil Montagu. He had two sons and four daughters. One of these, Miss Adelaide Anne Procter, inherited her father's genius, and wrote many thoughtful poems. She died several years ago. Mr. Procter held some time the office of a Commissioner of Lunacy. His chief prose works are a biography of Edmund Kean and memoirs of Charles Lamb, with whom he had been intimate. He also edited Ben Jonson, and wrote critical notices of the British poets.

The portrait is from a photograph by Mr. Herbert Watkins.

“Barry Cornwall” is dead; and his passing away has evoked a very sympathetic notice from the *Times*, which tells us that Mr. Bryan Waller Procter, better known by his literary pseudonym, was born in the year 1787 or in the early part of 1788. He would thus have been more than eighty-six or nearly eighty-seven at the time of his death. But the late, *cheu!* the late Mr. J. M. Bellew tells us in his charming compilation, “Poets’ Corner,” that Bryan Waller Procter was born in 1790. It does not matter at all. The gifted poet and excellent man who is gone had enjoyed for more than half a century the very brightest literary fame; and that Curtain whose advent at the hand of the Great Anarch was so gloomily predicted in the “Dunciad” will indeed “cover all” ere, in English letters he who told us that “Gamarra is a dainty steed,” he who wrote “The Stormy Petrel” and “The Admiral,” shall be forgotten. Barry Cornwall was as essentially a song writer as that exquisite French lyrist of whom Béranger wrote—

Je disais aux fils d’Epicure :
 “ Réveillez par vos joyeux chants
 Parny, qui sait de la nature
 Célébrer les plus doux penchants
 Mais les chants qui la joie inspire
 Font place aux regrets superflûs :
 Parny n’est plus !
 Il vient d’expirer sur sa lyre
 Parny n’est plus !

And Parny died on the verge of ninety. Anacreon lived, they say, to be a prodigious age; and I like to hear of patriarchal poets, because I like to think that the “Longevity of man,” about which Mr. J. W. Thoms is writing, just now, with so much genial wisdom, can be promoted by the study and the love of good and beautiful things. Mr. Procter’s reward from a grateful country was to be made a Commissioner in Lunacy; but the post, although seemingly strange as a guerdon for a poet, was a lucrative one, and decidedly preferable to Burns’s exciseman-ship. It is odd, moreover, that three most distinguished English men of letters—Bryan Procter, Samuel Warren, and John Forster—should all have been made Lunacy Commissioners. Can the Government have held that “great wit to madness nearly is allied”? Ambrose Phillips was a Commissioner of Hackney Coaches, Gifford Paymaster of the Band of Gentlemen Pensioners, and Wordsworth Stamp Distributor for Westmorland. We must take what we can get and be thankful. “I have often regretted that you were not in the Navy,” wrote a First Lord of the Admiralty, not quite a hundred years ago, to a provincial journalist who had helped him in some electioneering matters.

It is full of such tender writing
as this upon the death of Barry Cornwall:—

In the garden of death, where the singers whose
names are deathless

One with another make music unheard of men,
Where the dead sweet roses fade not of lips long
breathless,

And the fair eyes shine that shall weep not or
change again,

Who comes now crowned with the blossom of snow-
white years?

What music is this that the world of the dead men
hears?

Beloved of men, whose words on our lips were honey,
Whose name in our ears and our fathers' ears was
sweet,

Like summer gone forth of the land his songs made
sunny,

To the beautiful veiled bright world where the glad
ghosts meet,

Child, father, bridegroom and bride, and anguish and
rest,

No soul shall pass of a singer than this more blest.

Blest for the years' sweet sake that were filled and
brightened,

As a forest with birds, with the fruit and the flower
of his song;

For the souls' sake blest that heard, and their cares
were lightened,

For the hearts' sake blest that have fostered his
name so long;

By the living and dead lips blest that have loved his
name,

And clothed with their praise and crowned with their
love for fame.

Ah, fair and fragrant his fame as flowers that close
not,

That shrink not by day for heat or for cold by
night,

As a thought in the heart shall increase when the
heart's self knows not,

Shall endure in our ears as a sound, in our eyes as
a light;

Shall wax with the years that wane and the seasons'
chime,

As a white rose thornless that grows in the garden of
time.

The same year calls, and one goes hence with another,
And men sit sad that were glad for their sweet
songs' sake;

The same year beckons, and elder with younger
brother

Takes mutely the cup from his hand that we all
shall take.

They pass ere the leaves be past or the snows be come;
And the birds are loud, but the lips that outsang
them dumb.

Time takes them home that we loved, fair names and
famous,

To the soft long sleep, to the broad sweet bosom of
death;

But the flower of their souls he shall take not away to
shame us,

Nor the lips lack song for ever that now lack
breath.

For with us shall the music and perfume that die not
dwell,

Though the dead to our dead bid welcome, and we
farewell.

Swain Burne 171.24.R.3

the eagle /

and, when

to the

mean time, think of me as

Your very obliged & sincere

B. W. Procter

No 1 Belle view Terrace
Southsea, near Portsmouth
Hants.

Sir

I have just finished the enclosed Poem, which I trust you will think suitable for insertion in next year's Gem. As to your not approving of the French story I sent you about 2 months since, I can assure you the refusal requires no apology: the Editors of these works all have (or ought to have) systems for their completion, which no one should blame, because they do not understand them, & I had really so often to perform the painful task of refusing contributions to the "Comic Offering" that I am too well aware of the difficulties of your occupation, even to feel offended if a production of mine should not suit your views.

The enclosed poem is written for music, as I dare say you will discover from the style: having, however, a sufficient number of songs to bring out this season, I intend this one for the Annuals, & have let you have first choice. If I should not have the pleasure of suiting your taste in poetry, will you be kind enough to inform me of it as soon as you can, in order that I may send it elsewhere: but this I hope I shall not be obliged to do.

I remain Sir

Your Obedt Servt
Louisa Henrietta Sheridan.

The Editor of the Gem.

Belmont Street, 4th Nov 1831

March 1st 1831.

March 15th 1851.

The Editor of the "Gem".
at
Mr. Marshall's
Publisher
Holborn Bars
London.

Yours truly
A. M. C.