

SMITH, James, an author and humorist, was educated for the legal profession, and became solicitor to the Ordnance. After contributing a number of minor pieces to the magazines, he in 1812 published, in conjunction with his brother Horace, a volume entitled, "The Rejected Addresses," which instantly became highly popular. He subsequently wrote several entertainments for the elder Charles Mathews. B. in London, 1775; D. Dec. 24, 1839.

SMITH, Horace, brother of the preceding, with whom he wrote "The Rejected Addresses," was also the author of about twenty novels, the best known of which are "The Moneyed Man" and "Brambletye House." Like his brother, he also produced a number of light pieces of a humorous character, in prose and verse. B. in London, 1779; D. July 12, 1840.

A MEMORY OF  
JAMES AND HORACE SMITH.

BY MR. AND MRS. S. C. HALL.\*

"History may be formed from permanent monuments and records, but lives can only be written from personal knowledge, which is growing every day less and less, and in a short time is lost for ever."—DR. JOHNSON.

"We have undertaken to discourse here for a little on Great Men, their manner of appearance in our World's business, how they have shaped themselves in the World's history, what ideas men formed of them, what Work they did."—CARLYLE: *Hero Worship*.



HERE is no memoir of Horace Smith, but he wrote a biography of his brother James, to preface an edition of his collected writings; and although singularly, and perhaps blameably, abnegating himself, we thence gather a few facts and dates that may aid us in recalling both to memory. The brothers, of whom James was the eldest by about four years, were the sons of Robert Smith, Esq., an eminent legal practitioner of London, who long held the

office of solicitor to the Ordnance—an office in which James succeeded him. He was also a Fellow of the Royal Society and of the Society of Antiquaries, and in all respects an estimable and accomplished gentleman. Horace having eschewed the legal profession, preferred that of a stockbroker, a business, however, hardly more to his taste, and in which he made no "figure," being from his youth upwards better known at Parnassus than in the vicinity of the Exchange. Both wrote early in life, somewhat to the dismay of the father, who had paved the way to fortune through another and very opposite path.\* Notwithstanding, when Horace produced historical novels, he not only took interest in his son's productions, but gave him "aid and suggestions," which, by his extensive reading and profound knowledge of English history, he was well qualified to do.

James was born on the 16th of February, 1775, and Horace in 1779, at the house in which their father dwelt in Basinghall Street, London. There was also another son, Leonard, and there were six daughters.

The boys were educated at Chigwell, in Essex; in after years, when a "sexagenarian pilgrim," James frequently recalled to memory with pleasure and with gratitude the years there passed; and on revisiting the place towards the close of life, he thus murmured his latest thoughts:—

"Life's cup is nectar at the brink,  
Midway a palatable drink,  
And wormwood at the bottom."

James was articled to his father in 1792, became ultimately his partner, and in 1832 succeeded him. He had tried his "prentice han" in various short-lived periodicals, especially the *Monthly Mirror*, edited by Tom Hill.† At the close of 1812 the brothers "woke and found themselves famous." "One of the luckiest hits in literature" (thus Horace modestly speaks of the work) "appeared on the re-opening of Drury Lane Theatre in October of that year. The idea was suggested just six weeks before that event, and the "Rejected Addresses" occupied the writers no longer time. The copyright was offered to, and declined by, Mr. Murray, for the modest sum of £20. He

reluctantly undertook to publish it, and share the profits—if any; and it is not a little singular that the worthy publisher did actually purchase the book, in 1819, after it had gone through fifteen editions, for the sum of £131. May such results often follow transactions between publishers and authors!

James wrote the imitations of Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge, Crabbe, and Cobbett; Horace those of Byron, Scott, Moore, Monk Lewis, and Fitzgerald. The sarcasms were so genuine, the humour so ample, and the imitations so true, that no one of the poets took offence; on the contrary, they were all gratified. It has been rightly said by Mr. Hayward, "that the only discontented persons were those who were left out."

The brothers became "lions" at once; but they had no notion of revelling in notoriety; of literary vanity they had none, and they shrank from, rather than courted, the stare of "admirers," to whom any celebrity of the hour was—and is—a thing coveted and desired.

This story has been often told: when the venerable *bas bleu*, Lady Cork, invited them to her *soirée*, James Smith wrote his regret that they could not possibly accept the invitation, for that his brother Horace was engaged to grin through a horse-collar at a country fair, and he himself had to dance a hornpipe at Sadler's Wells upon that very night.\*

James reposed on his laurels; as his brother says, "he was fond of his ease," and unsolicitous of further celebrity, never again wooing a proverbially capricious public, contenting himself with flinging scraps of humour here and there, heedless of their value or their fate—while Horace became a laborious man of letters. Of James, Mathews used to say, "he is the only man who can write clever nonsense." He lived among wits—dramatic wits more especially—and from him some of them derived much that constituted their stock in trade. His motto was "*Vive la bagatelle!*" his maxim, "Begone, dull care!" His sparkle was that of champagne. But, as one of his friends wrote, "he ever preserved the dignity of the English gentleman from merging in the professional gaiety of the jester;" there was never aught of sneering or sarcasm in his humour—his wit was never a stab. On the con-

*Its choir all vocal things, whose glad devotion  
In one united hymn is heavenward sped,  
The thunder-peal, the winds—the deep-mouth'd ocean,  
Its organ dread*

*Horace Smith—*

*3<sup>d</sup> June 1835—*

trary, he was buoyant and genial, even when enduring much bodily suffering; and there was no mistaking the fact that he loved to give pleasure rather than pain.

Horace, on the other hand, became a worker; he took the pen seriously and re-

solutely in hand, and although not at any

\* The earliest anecdote recorded of Horace is this:—in a letter to Mathews, he relates that when at school being asked the Latin for the word cowardice, and having forgotten it, he replied that the Romans had none; which being fortunately deemed a *bon mot*, he got praise and a laugh for not knowing his lesson.

† Southey writes in one of his letters in 1813,—“Horace

time dependent on literature, became an

in London' was printed some years ago in the *Monthly Mirror*. I remarked it at the time, and wondered that it did not attract more notice." James wrote the first of the "At Homes" (in 1808) for Mathews; it was entitled "Mail Coach Adventures."

\* Horace says that though such a letter may have been written, it was never sent.

author by profession, joining the immortal band who

"live for aye  
In Fame's eternal volume."

James died on the 24th of December, 1839, in the sixty-fifth year of his age, and was buried under the vaults of St. Martin's Church. Horace died on the 12th of July, 1849, aged sixty-nine, and was buried in the churchyard of Trinity Church, Tunbridge Wells.

James "seldom wrote, except as an amusement and relief from graver occupation. Though he may be described as a wit by profession, his nature was kindly, genial, and generous." One who knew him intimately, avers that it was "difficult to pass an evening in his company without feeling in better humour with the world;" and many of his friends have testified to his inexhaustible fund of amusement and information, and his "lightness, liveliness, and good sense.

Of James, his brother writes:—"His was not the sly sneering sarcasm that finds most pleasure in the *bon mot* that gives pain nor was it of that dry quiet character, which gives zest to a joke by the apparent unconsciousness of its author. His good sayings were heightened by his cordial good nature, by the beaming smile, the twinkling eye, and the frank, hearty cachination that showed his own enjoyment." He had a remarkably tenacious memory, and was ever ready with an apt quotation from the old poets; and he pleasantly sang some of his own songs.

I recall to memory one of his *jeux d'esprit*; I am not sure if it be published:—

"Cælia publishes with Murray,  
Cupid's ministry is o'er;  
Lovers vanish in a hurry,  
She writes—she writes, boys.  
Ward off shore!"

And I have another in MS., "the alphabet to Madame Vestris:"—

"Though not with lace bedizened o'er,  
From James's and from Howell's,  
Oh don't despise us twenty-four  
Poor consonants and vowels.  
Though critics may your powers discuss  
Your charms, admiring, men see,  
Remember you from four of us  
Derive your X L N C."

Although I more than once visited James Smith at his house in Craven Street, I saw most of him—and it was the best of him—at the "evenings" of Lady Blessington, in Seamore Place. He was not far off from his grave, and was usually full of pain: it was often shown by that expression of countenance which accompanies physical suffering, and his round good-humoured face, although it was seldom without a smile, was generally contracted, and at times convulsed from internal agony.

Leigh Hunt described him as "a fair, stout, fresh-coloured man, with round features;" and N. P. Willis as a man "with white hair, and a very nobly-formed head and physiognomy; his eye alone, small, and with lids contracted into an habitual look of drollery, betrayed the bent of his genius."

He wheeled himself about the room in a sort of invalid chair, and had generally something pleasant, and often something witty to say to each of the guests, his beautiful and accomplished hostess coming, naturally, in for the largest share of both. He was tall and stout, and the merry twinkle of his eye gave evidence that his thoughts were redolent of humour, even when he did not speak.

Horace Smith was of another, and certainly a higher, nature. Leigh Hunt deposes to "the fine nature of the man"

(and well he might do so, having had experience of his liberality), and pictures him as "of good and manly figure, inclining to the robust; his countenance extremely frank and cordial, sweetness without weakness." And Shelley, writing of him, exclaims:—"It is odd that the only truly-generous person I ever knew who had money to be generous with, should be a stockbroker."\* "Gay, tender, hospitable, and intellectual," that is Lady Morgan's character of Horace Smith; and this is Southey's testimony to the credit of the brothers both:—"They are clever fellows, with wit and humour as fluent as their ink, and, to their praise be it spoken, with no gall in it."

Yes, certainly Horace was of a far higher nature than James; perhaps it was fairly said of them, "One was a good man, the other a good fellow." But Horace was happily married, and had loving children, enjoyed a healthy constitution, and lived in comparative retirement, away from the bustle of society, in a tranquil home; during the later years of his life he resided at Brighton—it was not then as it is now, London-at-sea, where everybody meets everybody, and nods of recognition are about as many as the steps one takes when promenading the Parade.

He was twice married, and left a daughter by each of his wives; his second wife was the maternal aunt of Mr. E. M. Ward, R.A., the artist, and it is from a sketch by him, of his uncle, that I engrave the portrait at the head of this Memory. Mr. Ward retains affectionate remembrances of Horace Smith, of his love for children, and the delight that was caused in his father's house whenever "Uncle Horace" was expected; his arrival was ever the signal of a merry-making. He usually placed the children on his knees, and regaled them with fairy tales told in extempore verse.

It was at Brighton I knew Horace Smith, so far back as the year 1835. My knowledge of him, though limited, enables me to endorse the opinions I have quoted from better authorities. He was tall, handsome, with expressive yet quiet features; they were frequently moved, however, when he either heard or said a good thing, and it was easy to perceive the latent humour that did not come to the surface as often as it might have done. It is saying little, if I say I never heard him utter an injurious word of any one of his contemporaries, although our usual talk concerned them; for I was at that time editor of the *New Monthly*, to which he was a frequent contributor, and he liked to know something of his associates in letters, the greater number of whom, I believe, he had never seen. He knew their writings, however, and was certainly an extensive reader as well as a sound thinker, and always a generous and sympathising critic. I copy one of his letters; it is evidence of that which was the leading characteristic of his mind—a total abnegation of self.

"17th October, 1831.

"10, Hanover Crescent.

"I am sorry you should deem the smallest apology necessary for returning my MS., a duty which every editor must occasionally exercise towards all his contributors. From my domestic

\* That, however, was not an "odd thing." It is known that on "the Stock Exchange" originate very many charities; that, indeed, scarcely a day passes there without some subscription list being handed about to relieve war or suffering, public and private. Many thousand pounds are there collected of which the world hears and knows nothing, and the number of persons thus assisted amounts to several hundreds annually. Some of the best "charities" of England had their birth at this place of busy traffic, where, apparently and outwardly, the mind and soul are exclusively occupied in money-getting.

habits and love of occupation I am always scribbling, often without due consideration of what I am writing, and I only wonder that so many of my frivolities have found their way into print. With this feeling, I am always grateful towards those who save me from committing myself, and acquiesce very willingly in their decisions. In proof of this, I will mention a fact of which I am rather proud. Mr. Colburn had agreed to give me £500 for the first novel I wrote, and had announced its appearance, when a mutual friend, who looked over the MS., having expressed an unfavourable opinion of it, *I threw it in the fire*, and wrote 'Bramblety House' instead. Let me not omit to mention, to the credit of Mr. C., that, upon the unexpected success of that work, he subsequently presented me with an additional £100.

"Begging your excuse for the gossip, I am, with renewed thanks, dear Sir,

"Yours very truly,  
"HORATIO SMITH."

His novels are still "asked for" at the circulating libraries, and perhaps as historical romances they even now hold their place next to those of Scott, while among his collected poems are many of great beauty and of much strength. I believe, however, that after the publication of "Rejected Addresses" he preferred to consider the comic vein exhausted; certainly he never wrote in that style for the *New Monthly*. If he does not hold the highest rank in the "republic of letters," he has a high place among the many who gave renown to the age in which he lived. They have had imitators and followers, but the wits of the present day are to those of the past but as tinsel compared with pure gold. Yes, not only in the loftiest walks of literature, but in those that are by comparison lowly, we miss the giants who in our younger days were on earth. We trust we are not "bigots of the past," when we grieve over the contrast between the wits of to-day and the wits of yesterday.

Horace was not rich; indeed, neither of the brothers were so—James never could have amassed money, notwithstanding he was Solicitor to the Board of Ordnance. He invested his whole capital, amounting to no more than £3,000, in the purchase of an annuity, and died three months after it was bought. Horace bequeathed to his widow and children an ample sufficiency, although he was far too generous to have become wealthy. Shelley did not know that it was out of comparatively limited means, and not a superfluity, that he relieved, at Shelley's entreaty, the pressing wants of Leigh Hunt. Many other instances may be recorded of his generosity in giving—or of lending, which means the same thing—to less prosperous brothers of the pen.

He was, indeed, emphatically a good man; of large sympathy and charity, generous in giving, even beyond his means; eminent for rectitude in all the affairs and relations of life, and "richly meriting" the praises that are inscribed on his tomb in the graveyard at Tunbridge Wells.

Sacred to the memory of  
HORACE SMITH, ESQ.,

Of Brighton, Sussex,  
Who departed this life July 12, 1849,  
Aged 69.

Gifted with the highest qualities of head and heart,  
His private virtues  
Outshone even his public fame.  
Ever resigning himself with heartfelt gratitude  
And reverent humility  
To the will of the Almighty;  
Ever overflowing with charity towards all men;  
He died as he lived,  
Loving and beloved,  
Full of trust, joy, and hope.

"Glory, and Honour, and Peace, to every man that worketh good."—ROMANS ii. 10.