Personal Recollections of Washington Irving.

A faithful portraiture of Washington Irving would demand the highest ability of which man is capable. It is a bow which I should not be able to bend. My address is not a biography. His admirable "Life & Letters" by his nephew Pierre M. Irving, are doubtless familiar to most of you, and fully meet every requirement of that nature.

But I wish, in this paper, simply to present to your reverent love and admiration, the name and character of Irving in some of his personal qualities and aspects, and my only warrant for such a venture, is my acquaintance with him the last six years of his life, & the somewhat intimate relation I held to him, as one who ministered to him in the sacred services of the Church.

Forty five (50 - 5) years have passed since his death, & but few

remain who knew him in the flesh, and yet Irving has set the impress of his seal upon the very soil he trod, upon the very haunts and scenes of his playful vision. When Moses stood before the burning bush, the symbol of the Divine Presence, he heard a voice, saying, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground;" and this is a warrant for the consecration of our Churches, where God's presence is manifested. But there are other consecrations beside these. The whole neighborhood in which Irving lived, we may reverently say, has a sacredness imparted to it by the very tread of ~~Irving's~~ his feet.

Irving was no ascetic who immured himself in a scholar's cell. He was a great lover of nature. He knew every hill & dale — every stream & rivulet in & around Tarrytown better probably more familiarly than any resident

of the place, & he peopled all these haunts with the play-
-ful creations of his fancy- so fantastic- so quaint, and
yet so real, that they seem to us veritable personages, who
once formed a part of our history. Wherever he has trod,
he has left the impress of his genius, the consecrating
power of his most winning personality. And it is not only
genius, but character, which he imparted to all around
him. Would that I were so gifted that I could awaken
in your minds such an enthusiastic admiration for
Irving, as to make you exclaim, "Oh! that I too could have seen him."

Hazlitt in his admirable Table Talk, has an Essay en-
-titled, "Of persons one would wish to have seen." Chas. Lamb
suggested the subject at a gathering of literary men, among
whom were Dr. Burney, Leigh Hunt, Hazlitt, and other cel-
-ebrities. The ghosts of departed greatness were summoned
before them, but with much diverse criticism. "What we

want to see" says Lamb, "are persons. Mr Locke & Sir Isaac Newton are not persons, that is, not characters. When you name them, you really mean, The Essay on the Human Understanding and The Principia." The discussion as to whom one would wished to have seen, seemed to turn, not simply upon the desire to look upon men distinguished by their works, but upon the point of personality. What we want most to see any one bodily for, is because of something attractive in the individual, some spiritual magnetism, - something more than we can learn from his writings, and yet which we are curious to know. The discussion closed by Lamb's saying "There is only ONE other person I can ever think of after this. If Shakespeare were to come into this room we should all rise up to greet him, but if that Person were to come into it, we should all fall down & try to kiss the hem of His garment"

5 I think most of us in this assembly would name Wash-
-ington Irving, as one we would most wish to have seen. We should
certainly have counted it a privilege to have looked upon
that distinguished man, around whose mind the sweet-
-est visions of fancy played like gleams of pleasant
sunshine; he who stood in the forefront of American
literature, and compelled its respect abroad, the
playful humorist, - the genial companion, the warm
hearted friend; one who has handed down to us the
legends of the past so vividly, - one whose mind was a
store-house of curious and quaint devices, & withal a
true, honest, winsome Christian gentleman.

To the citizens of New York, his native city, his
name should be a household word, loved & revered;
for there he wrote his first book, plucking the quaint
and venerable traditions of New Amsterdam, & weaving

them with inimitable humor into Knickerbocker's veritable history of New York.

And in Tarrytown-on-Hudson, where he built his unique cottage of Sunnyside, he has so animated the very hills and valleys around us, and has so peopled our neighborhood with the creatures of his fancy, that we accept them as real, and point out to our friends the old red school house in Sleepy Hollow, where Ichabod Crane taught school, and say, yonder is the bridge over which his prancing steed rushed, when pursued by the headless horseman who there bowled his fire-emitting head after the luckless lover, & in the morning a shattered pumkin only was left as proof of the truth of the story.

We all revere Irving for his works, and delight in the legendary charms with which he enwrapped the historic memories of his native city, and of the Hudson on whose banks he so long resided. But few

only are left who knew him in the serene evening of his days, amid the genial atmosphere of his pleasant home, few who can recall the cordial greeting, the playful humor, the uniform kindliness of his nature, and the winning sunlight of his smile. And so your speaker who knew him well, and loved him, undertakes this service of love.

Seldom has literary fame been so beautifully blended with personal attractiveness, - seldom has learning & humor formed so close an alliance, as in W. Irving. The name of Irving has taken a strong hold, not only upon the American heart, but wherever the English tongue is spoken. He invoked throughout Great Britain a just reverence & esteem for himself as the great American author & put to silence the calumny, "Who ever reads an american book". Charles

Kingsley of literary fame, and late Canon of Westminster abbey, says of him, that "he was the master of our common tongue, and his prose is as graceful & felicitous as Charles Lamb's, & certainly more manly, and his charming Essay on Westminster Abbey surpasses anything written upon it by any English author. And Kingsley quotes these gems from that Essay which will brighten this paper with their setting.

"The Sun was pouring down a yellow autumnal ray into the square of the Cloisters, beaming upon a scanty spot of grass in the center, & lighting up an angle of the vaulted passage with a kind of dusty splendor. From between the arcades the eye glanced up to a bit of blue sky, or a passing cloud, & beheld the sun-gilt pinnacles of the Abbey, towering into the azure heaven." Or this, in his description of Henry 7th's

chapel. "The very walls are wrought into universal orna-
-ment, encrusted with tracery, and scooped into niches,
crowded with the statues of Saints. Stone seems, by the
cunning labor of the chisel, to have been robbed of its
weight and density, suspended aloft as if by ma-
-gic, and the fretted roof achieved with the wonder-
-ful minuteness & airy security of a cobwet."
Says Kingsley, "dusty splendor!" "airy security!" epithets
so unexpected, & yet so felicitous as to be seemingly ac-
-cidental." They who have visited the Abbey, will
recall their vived appropriateness.

It is not only by the educated but by those whom Lincoln
calls "the plain people" that Irving's genius is rec-
-ognized & his fame secured. What largely evokes
this universal eulogy is the presence of the man
in his works. In him the affections & the intellect

10 were beautifully blended; the affections flowing in upon the intellect, tempering it with their hal-
-lowed grace & charity, & the intellect in return giving strength & dignity to the affections, illustrating what Coleridge so aptly terms, "the heart in the head."
I shall ever count it among the most precious memo-
-ries of my life, that I have held intercourse with one so rarely gifted in heart & mind as he, & have been priviled to minister to him in holy things.
Disappointment has been expressed, that in the "Life of Irving," so little light is thrown upon his religious character. But we learn that the materials for that work were mainly prepared by Irving himself, and that the most his biographer had to do was to weave them into shape. The latter him-
-self says, "It has been my rule to make the author, in every

stage of his career, as far as possible his own biographer." Indeed the work is largely made up with his own letters, which are models of style & beauty. Now Irving had the deepest religious convictions, but he was of a too modest nature to draw attention to them. It has been said that every man has two lives, that which is open & apparent to others, & that which is known only to himself & God. It was emphatically true of Irving, & his spiritual life was sacred to him in its privacy. It was to be lived, not to be talked about. This was largely due to the great modesty of his nature, which was almost feminine in its ~~natural~~ delicacy, & partly to the solemn awe with which the religion of Christ impressed him. If he had been constrained to express his faith in a Class-meeting, he probably would have complied by reciting the

Apostles Creed. Religion directed & moulded his life as an accepted law of his being. His religious convictions were deeply seated & sincere. To be all which his Master wished him to be & gave him power to be, became a law of his existence which he faithfully tried to fulfill. But everything like display was foreign to his nature. His piety was not obtrusive, but illustrative. It flowed, not with the noisy murmuring of the shallow brook, but with the calm peaceful, yet strong current of the river. He had the faith & humility of a child, & in no one has rare modesty with greatness, been more sweetly combined. Sallust's portrait of Cato is beautifully photographed in Irving; "He would rather be, than seem to be a good man, so that the less he sought glory, the more he obtained it." It was this which made his character

so attractive, & his companionship so endearing to his friends; & no one could draw near the inner sanctuary of his heart, as some were privileged to do, without the most confident assurance that he was a devout Christian man.

My acquaintance with Mr Irving began in 1853, & was soon ripened into friendship, under circumstances so tender, as to lead me ever after to regard him with the deepest reverence & affection. At the beginning of my ministry in Christ Church, J. Town, a heavy foreboding sorrow overshadowed one; & when the blow came, Washington Irving was the first one in the Parish to call upon me, & proffer me the comfort & strength of his tender sympathy. The sorrow of another, perhaps awakened the memory of his own anguish, that followed the loss of his betrothed

love. The warm & prolonged pressure of his hand made me feel the power of his sympathy, & then follow-ed these few words, softly & gently spoken, "Mr Spencer, they who minister to others must not themselves refuse the consolation". To me in my sorrow, it was a per-sonal revelation of human tenderness, next to the peaceful benediction of the Master Himself.

We often note how the world is surprised to learn, that a man, honored for great abilities, is a Christian, & the sur-prise is often accompanied by chagrin, for the world does not willingly part with its great men, as if there were something quite out of harmony between intellectual gifts, & the humility of Christian faith. But with Irving, that early sorrow of his did not leave his heart stranded upon the arid sands of mere worldly renown. Its chas-tening influence - its hallowed memories, made that

heart a sanctuary for more exalted hopes – for higher aspirations, than earth could ever satisfy; & while the world justly honors him with her admiration for his intellectual triumphs, the beautiful qualities of his heart may as justly challenge her profound esteem and love.

I can never forget the embarrassment I first felt in preaching before Washington Irving. I painfully anticipated the criticism of one, who stood in the foremost rank of our authors, but I soon found that there was no more devout or attentive hearer in the Church than he. He sat in his pew, with his head lightly resting upon his hand, with his eyes intent upon the speaker, as one anxious to receive some truth for his soul's health. With all his powers of mind, he knew of no other spiritual sustenance than the Gospel

of Christ; & its plain simple truths such as a little child might comprehend, were to him like the precious feeding upon the loaves broken in the Master's hands.

On my first interview with him at Sunnyside, he introduced the subject of Church music which he greatly enjoyed, though I do not think he could sing a note; but the sentiment & the melody deeply affected him. He referred to the "Gloria in Excelsis." Repeating the words as if they were the joyful refrain of his own heart, "Glory be to God on high, & on earth peace, good will towards men," he exclaimed, his voice trembling with emotion, "That is Religion, Mr Spencer, that is true religion for you." A simple truth enough, say you, but it assumes a vast importance, when it becomes the devout utterance of the heart.

The love of God, and Peace on earth, what more does the world want, to make it a Paradise. Speaking of the same Divine hymn on another occasion, he said, "I like it above all things, & I never hear it without having my mind lifted up, & my heart made better by it."

On another visit, he spoke of a text which had profoundly impressed him. It was this, "My son, give me thine heart." Here was one of those instances where a single verse of Holy Scripture will stand out with marked distinctness, and, as if with a divinely magnetic force, draw the heart nearer to God. He must have long treasured up this text in his mind, for in a volume of Bp. Wainwright's sermons, ~~publish~~ I find one on this text, accompanied by the statement

18 that it was suggested ~~by~~ to the Bp. by Washington Irving as a text which he should like of all things to hear treated of in a sermon. And those who knew him well, have reason to believe that his character was formed & disciplined under a pro-found sense of obligation to God.

One Sunday, in the Church porch, he expressed to me with great feeling the same thought, in words which may be classed with the best and most beautiful he ever wrote; "Religion is of the heart, not of the head. We may indeed with the understanding approach the Vestibule of the Temple, but it is only with the heart that we can enter its holy precincts, and draw near its sacred altar".

It became a pleasant custom after morning

service in Christ Church, for the congregation to exchange cordial greetings with the venerable Dr. Creighton & Washington Irving at the vestibule, and sometimes the sidewalk would be quite thronged. Pleasant occasions these for the reunion of friends who could not often meet during the week. Children, of whom Irving was very fond, and who were easily won by his kindly manner, would hang round him, putting a boquet in his hand, or a flower in his button hole, & always receiving from him, a kind word or a beaming smile. He diffused the sunshine of his cheerful spirit all around him, & no one entered the charmed circle of his presence without feeling the better for it. Sometimes he would say, with a warm grasp of the hand, "I thank you for your sermon." He did

not intend by this to be complimentary. His true heart had no words to waste in flattery, but he loved the plainest truths of the Gospel, & prized them far beyond any mere accessories of eloquence. A strong sense of religious obligation must have influenced him early in life. For when a young man, He became interested in the services at Trinity Ch: N. Y. and attended there without his parents knowledge, for they did not approve of the Episcopal Ch:. When a Confirmation was announced, we read that he stealthily left his home, & was Confirmed by the Bp. in old Trinity. In this act, we may be sure he felt the conviction, that he could not obtain his father's consent, & so he secretly did that which he conscientiously felt to be right.

His after life was subject to many changes. Some

21 years were spent abroad, occupied as Secretary of
legation to the Court of S. James, and afterwards as U. S. minister
to Spain, and otherwise engaged in literary work.
But after he came to Tarrytown, to live in his Sunny-
-side cottage, he became an earnest member of
Christ Church. He once told me that when he first
attended Church, he was rather restless during the
long service, and waited impatiently for the
sermon. But one Sunday as he was entering the Ch:
the exhortation to Confession was being read, & the
thought struck him, that he had sins to confess,
and so he fell upon his knees, & joined in the solemn
confession of sins, "and" said he, with an emphasis
which carried with it the conviction of his sincer-
-ity, "from that day forward, the Church service
has ever been to me an increasing comfort & delight."

And who will say that the Bible & Prayer-Book of that fair maiden who was Irving's early & only love, "She who died in the beauty of her youth, & so in his memory was ever young and beautiful," — who will say that those treasured volumes which from his first irreparable loss, were ever by him, taken with him in all his travels, & at his death still lay by his side, were not, from their sweetly sad associations as well as from their spiritual Counsel & comfort, the means of hallowing that gifted heart with holy purposes of love & duty to God & man, & with the blessed hope of everlasting life in which he lived & died!

Yes, precious to him was the Church with her min-istry of reconciliation & peace, — her sweet Commun-ions, her solemn vows, her hymns of love & praise. and very dear to him was Christ Church. A constant

and thoughtful worshiper for many years, a faithful Vestryman & Warden, and communing with his brethren in the "Breaking of Bread" we see with what sincerity he recognized his obligation to the Church, & with what fidelity he discharged it. You can have no proper conception of the personality of Washington Irving without taking into consideration this virtue of Christian devotion which so thoroughly animated & controlled him.

Sunny side & Christ Church were built about the same time, 1836. That lovely, ivy crowned home of Irving, nestling amid the trees on the banks of his beloved Hudson, is familiar to all, & it is the mecca of many pilgrims from our vast country & from fatherland. How he loved his home, and its noble river! He says of it, "The Hudson is, in a manner, my first & last love, & after all my wanderings and seeming

24 infidelities, abroad I return to it with a heartfelt prefer-
-ence over all the rivers of the world." As the walls of
Sunnyside were rising so were those of Christ Church, and
his memory is interwoven with both. The ivy upon the church
tower was planted by his hand, a cutting from the vine
which now mantles in rich luxuriance the walls of Sunny-
-side, and was originally brought from Melrose Abbey, (as
was also the ivy that covers the walls of your beautiful
Chapel at Oak Hill.) Within Christ Church, there still
remains his pew, cushioned as when he last occupied it,
in which many pilgrims to this shrine of Irving's reli-
-gious life, love for a moment to sit, and feel that they
have been very near to Irving himself. The pew is
marked with his name, & after his death was not
rented, but set apart by the Vestry for the use of any
members of the Irving family who might worship with

us, if but for an hour. In the extensive renovation of the Church in 1897, this pew was moved a few feet to the Baptistry near by. Directly over it is a mural tablet erected by the Vestry to his memory. It is most delicately wrought & is in itself a poem in stone. In the center is the Irving Coat of Arms: two supporters holding a shield emblazoned with holly leaves, having as a crest a hand holding a bunch of holly. The tradition is that when Robert Bruce of Scotland was a fugitive from King Edward in 1306, on being pursued by his troops, he took refuge in a copse of holly, with two or three followers, among whom was William Irvin - the first Irving of whom we have any record, - and there escaped detection. On coming out, Bruce plucked a branch of the holly, & adopted it as his own crest, with the motto, "sub sole, sub umbra, virens" "thriving in sun or shade" i.e. "in prosperity or adversity"

When Bruce won his throne, he knighted Sir William de Irvin his faithful friend in adversity, gave him the castle of Drum, a part of his royal domain in Aberdeen-shire, and also his own coat of arms, in memory of their perilous escape. The Castle of Drum is now the oldest inhabited castle in Scotland. It has never been out of the possession of the Irving family, Alexander ~~Forbes~~ Irvine, the present laird of Drum, being in direct descent from the first William de Irvin. The castle was visited by your speaker in 1883, & he was kindly entertained by Irving's ~~ancestor~~ relative, who gave him me on leaving a twig of holly, with which the place abounds. It is framed and now hangs by the side of the Irving tablet. In this tablet, holly leaves and berries, carved in Caen stone, form the capitals of its marble columns, & to give it more expression, the front columns were made in

And it may be that Irving derived the name of Sunnyside for his pretty cottage on the Hudson from the motto on the coat of arms of his ancester, "Sub sole."

27 Aberdeen of scotch granite. The holly now becomes not only the sign of the deliverance of Irving's ancestor & his King, but also the emblem of Christmas joy into which our Irving so heartily entered. ~~thus~~ page 26½

On the Tablet is the following inscription.

Washington Irving

Born in the city of New York April 3d 1783

For many years a Communicant and Warden of this Church,

and

Repeatedly one of its Delegates to the Convention of the Diocese

Loved, Honored, Revered

He fell asleep in Jesus

November 28th 1859.

Irving was elected warden of Christ Church after his return ~~as U.S.~~ from his mission as U. S. minister to Spain. The office of warden he held until his death. The Vestry of Christ Church had for many years among its members, Rev. Dr. Creighton, Washington Irving, Gen. James Watson Webb, George D. Morgan and other men of marked intelligence, & we may imagine the wisdom & humor which sparkled at their meetings. Ge-nius, courtesy, racy, genuine humor, blended with the highest considerations of duty, will rarely so meet again on common ground. It became Irving's duty as one of the wardens, to gather the offerings of the Congregation, or in common parlance, "to take up the collection", and he claimed no right of exemption from what might not be supposed to con-stitute a very attractive performance. On coming out of Church one Sunday, he said, his eyes twinkling with humor, "I have passed that plate so often up & down the aisle that I

begin to feel ~~that I am~~ like a highwayman. I feel as if I could stop a man on the road, & say, your money, or your life"

At a Vestry meeting, he once remarked that he had now taken up the collection in Church for a very long time, & he ventured to ask if some one of his juniors in the Vestry would not relieve him of this duty. George D. Morgan sprang to his feet at once & said, "Mr Chairman, I protest against any such step on the part of Mr Irving. It will create great confusion in the Congregation; the service will be neglected, & the sermon unheeded. Now when I bring my friends with me to Church, the first question I am asked is, 'which is Mr Irving?' and all I have to say is, 'Mr Irving is the gentleman, who will, by & by, pass the plate in the north aisle';

But if he resigns this duty, I shall have to rise up in my pew, and point him out to my friends," (here, suiting the action to the word), "there he is! there he is!" Irving, who greatly enjoyed a joke, even at his own expense, ~~to~~ laughed heartily, said no more about declining, & "passed the plate" till the Sunday before his death.

At one of the Vestry meetings, Mr Holmes was accompanied by an inoffensive pet dog who took refuge at his feet. A question of some serious moment had arisen which led to animated discussion. Mr Holmes pressed his views in an earnest manner upon the Vestry & the discussion threatened to be prolonged & serious. When he had ended, Irving, who was always a peace-maker, arose, & solemnly inquired of the Chairman whether Mr Holmes should be allowed to put all ^ of them in bodily terror, for he had not only come here to

advocate his measure, but had brought with him a fierce beast to overawe the Vestry & control their votes, and," he added, pointing to the little dog, "there he is now by his side, keeping guard." The irresistable drollery of his speech & manner, allayed at once the heat of the discussion, & diffused a feeling of perfect good nature over the meeting, which gave a satisfactory settlement to the question.

Mr Holmes was at one time complaining to Irving that some boys had broken the church windows, & that severe measures must be taken to stop them. "Now Holmes," says Irving, "you are the senior warden, and if any of the boys are to be punished, you are the one to do it, & not I." He would always be on good terms with the boys, & doubtless recalled his own boyish pranks; think of the innate love of fun which prompted him when a

boy on a visit to Gen. Paulding's house in Tarrytown, to rise at midnight, go up to the old Dutch church, and merrily ring the bell to the alarm of all the ghost fearing burghers round the country, & you have the germ of that mirth-provoking spirit which diffused cheerfulness & good-humor all around him, & made him the sunshine of the circle in which he moved. "Children" said he, "are great pets. I am very fond of the little creatures." At one time seated in the cars, an anxious mother sat in the seat in front of him, with an infant, & a little boy & girl who were restless & troublesome. Mr Irving at once interposed, & said to the children, "Now three minutes for each to look out of my window" and began to lift over to his lap, one & the other, each in turn, until they were greatly delighted. "ah! sir" said the relieved mother, "Any one can see

that you are a kind father of a big family." This amus-
-ed him greatly, & amply rewarded him, but he would
not spoil a good joke by explanations.

Hear this playfut freak with the boys. Irving tells the story
himself. While Sunnyside was building, he came from
the city one day, as he did occasionally, to see how the
work was progressing, & on passing through the grounds,
he picked up an apple from under a tree & tasted it.
Some boys, who were also testing the quality of the fruit,
saw him, & one cried out, "I say, Mister, them aint good
apples; come with us, & we will show you the good
ones, ~~"Thats good, say~~ but dont you let the old man
see you, or he will give you fits." "Thats good" says
Irving, "lets go." And so they went through the orchard,
~~stooping~~ & dodging behind the trees, until they led him
to his choicest apple tree, "and there," says Irving, his

eyes twinkling with humor, "I stole my own apples!"

On one occasion, returning with him from a funeral at the Cemetery, as we passed the old Dutch church, I pointed out to mr Irving the curious fact that the two weather vanes on the church pointed different ways. "Yes" he replied "they are indicative of the doctrine taught within."

And what a loving heart he had! What a true loyal friend he was! His personal attachments were very strong. His devotion to his brothers & sisters, his nephews & neices was unbounded, & he grappled friends to him with hooks of steel. He was on most friendly terms with all, & on his drives through the country would often stop and chat with some farmer or laboring man. He was every man's friend. Every one in the village felt that he owned a part in him. He was <u>our</u> Irving.

as a token of his personal kindness to me, I give the inscriptions

written with his own hand in my copies of his Miscella-
-neous works, and ~~in~~ his Life of Washington.

"To the Rev. J. Selden Spencer
in testimony of the affectionate regard
of his parishioner
Sunnyside, Nov. 5. 1858. Washington Irving"

The other in his Life of Washington, reads
"To the Rev. J. Selden Spencer
in grateful acknowledgment of the profit and
satisfaction derived from his ministry
Washington Irving
Sunnyside Nov. 5, 1858"

You will understand what such possessions meant to me.

In his conversation, as in his writings, there was no affec-
-tation — no parade of learning — no dazzling brilliancy,
but every thing was natural, simple, unaffected, often
mirthful, but never coarse, never rude. We all know how
difficult it is to wield the shafts of wit without inflicting pain

upon others. But there is a difference between wit and humor. Wit is a winged arrow with a poisoned tip which often rankles in the breast. Humor fascinates & charms; it hurts no one, but gives pleasure only. Irving was full of humor. I never heard an unkind or bitter word fall from his lips, nor do I believe anyone ever winced at his keen yet inoffensive humor. He acted upon the truth expressed in Sophocles' Antigone, "We are on this world to love, not to hate one another."

And yet there was one singular exception, in which he was most strangely misunderstood. Some descendants of the old Dutch families of New York actually took umbrage at that mirth provoking book, Knickerbocker's History of New York, and openly charged Irving with holding up their ancestors to ridicule, and a lady recently told me that a gentleman now living in New York, a scion of a notable

Dutch family said to her that he had never forgiving Irving for writing that book, & that he never would. It seems incredible how any one could read such an intention into the mind & purpose of Irving, in writing that amusing history, in which, in order to make the record complete, he had to go back to the Creation of the world.

In his Introduction to Bracebridge Hall, He says, "I have always had an opinion that much good might be done by keeping mankind in good humor with one another. I may be wrong in my philosophy, but I shall continue to practice it until convinced of its fallacy." It was in this spirit that he wrote Knickerbocker's History of N. Y. — And Sterne wisely says in a sermon "that every time a man smiles, but much more so when he laughs, it adds somewhat to whatever fragment of life, as the years pass by, may be permitted him."

next page.

Charles Dickens in speaking of meeting Irving, who came on to Washington to pass a day or two with him, says that "those days were made among the most memorable of my life by his delightful fancy and genial humor. His captivating laugh was the brightest and best I have ever heard."

Irving told me that when he first came to Tarrytown, he was asked to attend a district school meeting at an old public school house ~~back in the country~~ beyond a penny bridge. The little school room was crowded chiefly with the Dutch farmers of the neighborhood, and Irving was elected chairman. The ~~building~~ school house was very old & out of repair, and some of the well-to do citizens wished to have a new & more modern school house.

When Mr Irving called the meeting to order, a gentleman moved that they should erect a new school house, and gave his reasons for it. Directly in front of the chair sat an old Dutch farmer, with his hat on, smoking a long clay pipe. When the motion was made, he called out in a loud voice, "Put the question, Mr Irving — Put the question Mr Irving," and the motion was voted down almost unanimously. The offer was then made, that if the meeting would vote for a new school-house, the cost would

be met by private subscription, and not a dollar would be assessed upon the town. Without any argument, the old Dutch farmer again cried out, "Put the question Mr Irving," and it was voted down again. Asked for their reasons, he said that the present school house was good enough for their fathers when they were children, & good enough for themselves, when they were children, and so it was good enough for their own children. Irving was both amused & annoyed at this display of obstinacy and ignorance.

Irving was slow and hesitating in conversation, & the first impression on hearing him talk might be one of disappointment, but you soon felt its irresistable fascination. He would often hesitate for a word, but when he found it, you saw at once that it was just the word needed to make the thought perfect. He told me that he wrote his MSS. in the same hesitating way, as it were, that is with con-

-tinual corrections, and even the proof sheets he would still alter & interline, to the disgust no doubt of the prin-ter, but to the clearer perception of his thought. Yet how simple is the style of Irving! It is elaborated painstaking simplicity. "Now" said he to me, as he had sent off ~~his~~ the last sheet of his final work, the Life of Washington, a work which had engaged his thoughts and pen for years, "Now, I feel as if I were just ready to sit down, & begin to write the Life of Washington."

He once said, "I often wish I could have twenty years more, that I might take down my books from the shelf one by one, and write them over again."

I remember meeting him at a dinner party in the parish where a certain young lady was quite the center of attrac-tion, but whose dress surpassed all others in the then pre-vailing style of amplitude. Some one remarked in Mr.

Irving's presence, that "Miss G. was the rose of the evening."
"Yes," said he, "a rose full blown."

At this same party, I was one of a little crowd gathered around him, to whom he told the following story, which I will give in his own words. He said, "Shortly after the Sketch Book was published in England, when I began to be recognized as an author, I entered a shop in London to make some purchases. Wishing them sent to my rooms, the shopkeeper asked me my name. "Mr Irving" I replied. "Ah! Mr Irving!" said the tradesman "That is you have the name of a great man, sir." "Thank you" with a look of becoming modesty I replied, "my friends are too considerate of me." "A great man, sir" said the other, "a great preacher! great preacher!" I then found that he was referring to Rev. Edward Irving, the Scotch preacher, who was then beginning to make a great stir in London, & I escaped

from the store, with the rising conceit taken all out of me."
Shortly after hearing this story, I came across an inci-
-dent in the Life of Thomas Campbell, which was so
exact a counterpart of Irving's, that I took it to Sunny
-side to read to him. The Poet had been greeted
under like circumstances with Irving, as the great
Mr Campbell, & his writings were held in the highest
esteem by the worthy shopkeepers. Flattered by the
undoubted sincerity of their admiration, he talked
with them for awhile, and willingly gave a guinea
subscription to some charity of which the wife was
treasurer. But when he was asked whether he
would ever make Christians of those horrible can-
-nibals, he found to his dismay that he had been
mistaken for a missionary to Africa bearing the
same name, & he left in haste, minus a guinea, and

a head shorter than he entered.

Irving was intimate with Campbell, & was much amused at the story which he had not heard before, & which gave an experience so like his own, only Irving's vanity had not cost him a guinea.

It must not be regarded as any disparagement of the estimate which Irving & Campbell put upon the vocation of a minister, that they were not flattered by being mistaken, one for the Scotch preacher, & the other for the African Missionary. But they found that they were absolutely unknown to these people. They had each earned his own laurels. Every man's life wherein he acts out his own true nature, is the best for him. The preacher & the missionary need not have regarded it as any addition to their deserved reputation, had they in turn been mistaken, one, for the author of the "Sketch Book," & the other for the author of the "Pleasures of Hope"

Let me add here an incident in the political career of Washington Irving which I received from his own lips. It is not noticed in his Biography, I suppose because it was not desired to give it publicity, while the one to whom it chiefly related was living. (Dare I tell it now in Washington?) Washington Irving was appointed minister to Spain by President Tyler in 1842, at the solicitation of Daniel Webster. Irving was not a politician, or a statesman, though a great lover of his country. The appointment was undoubtedly prompted by the desire to honor our distinguished author. Yet he brought eminent qualities to the discharge of his official duties. A prior residence in Spain had made him thoroughly conversant with the language & habits of the people, & his literary reputation & personal character gained for him at once the esteem and confidence of the Court.

He had also had some diplomatic experience as Secretary of the American legation to England. And when he went as minister to Spain he industriously made himself familiar with the requirements of his mission. It was during his official career, when that astute politician, James Buchanan, was Secretary of State, that the attitude of our Government towards Mexico caused some serious anxiety in the Spanish court, and the Queen's council plied Mr Irving with questions as to the intentions of our Government. "I wrote Sec'y Buchanan" said Irving "a full account of the State of feeling, but received no answer. I wrote again and again, but the Sec'y did not even deign a reply. I stood a mortified representative of my country, before that proud & sensitive court. And when I returned home I went on to Washington, hunted up the letters I had

written to Mr Buchanan, & place them myself on record as a part of the history of my mission."

You may imagine the effect of such treatment upon a refined sensitive nature as Irving's. The only time I ever saw him manifest the least spirit of indignation, or was during this narrative of his experience with Sec'y Buchanan.

His interest in the Church never flagged. He was always in his place, unless he were sick, or away from home. On one Sunday shortly before his death, a guest announced his intention of taking a good walk. "Better go to Church," said Irving, "that would be a good walk."

Last things in the life of a remarkable man are always interesting & affecting. Six days before the death of Irving, I gave a gentleman a letter of introduction to him. It was the last interview he ever had with a

stranger. My friend wrote me that Irving was exceed-
-ingly kind in his reception of him, as he uniformly was to
visitors. Among other things he writes; "I happened to men-
-tion the name of his dear old friend, Washington Allston.
It set Irving's soul all glowing with tender, affectionate
enthusiasm. To hear the great painter so praised by
the great author, with a voice tremulous, partly with
infirmity, but more with emotion, was something to keep
as surely as if every word had been engraved with a diamond
I did not say a word about his fame or his books, but I
knew that he recognized me as one of his thousands of
admirers, quite as surely as if I had spent the time in high
wrought encomiums upon his writings. Now that he has
gone, his kind reception of me will ever be cherished
as a benediction."

Irving died on Monday, November 28, 1859.

He had been in Christ Church the day before. His death was without a note of warning as he would have wished it. He closed his life on earth just with the close of the Christian year. With the very Advent season, his Lord came to him, & his immortal bliss began. Irving had no fear of death; he had been living in its shadow for a long while, for he knew his physical ailment. An eye witness of his death writes, "His departure was sudden, but so he was willing it should be. In the fulness of years, with unclouded intellect, crowned with the warmest affections of his countrymen, and with an assured hope of a blessed immortality, he has gone down, according to his own pathetic aspiration, "with all sail set." Who that loved him would have wished to recall him!"

Rarely has such a scene been witnessed as on the day of the funeral. All business was suspended & the shops

closed in Tarrytown. Public buildings & many residences were draped in black. The courts in New York city adjourned, & the bells in that city were tolled with responsive chords of sympathy, as the service in Christ Church began. Numbers of distinguished men came from all parts of the country to pay the last tribute of respect to the honored dead, while thousands of mourning spectators lined the road to witness the passing of the sad procession, in which were numbered 150 carriages & hundreds of people walking. With what reverence & sympathy & tears, was his body borne to the Church he so dearly loved, & from thence onward to the grave, while his spirit had passed to the Sanctuary above, where "Church bells beyond the stars are heard".

How beautiful & impressive are these lines of Longfellow at the grave of Irving! the tender Requiem of the Poet over the Resting place of the beloved Author!

Here lies the gentle humorist, who died
In the bright Indian summer of his fame!
A simple stone, with but a date and name
Marks his secluded resting place, beside
The river that he loved and glorified.
Here, in the autumn of his days, he came,
But the dry leaves of life were all aflame
With tints that brightened and were multiplied.
How sweet a life was his! How sweet a death!
Living, to wing with mirth the dreary hours,
Or with romantic tales the heart to cheer;
Dying, to leave a memory, like the breath
Of summers, full of sunshine and of showers,
A grief and gladness in the atmosphere.

Tarrytown & Irving should never be divorced, as Shak-
-speare & Stratford are not. What a happy
conceit it would be if a handsome marble
bridge could span the Pocantico instead of the
present unsightly structure, with bronze tablets
inserted on each side, one, depicting the courtship
of Katrina by Ichabod Crane, and the other, the
scene of the headless horseman pursuing the un-
-fortunate lover and bowling his fiery head at him.
And then, as I have said, place Irving's statue in
front of our High School which bears his name.
This would give an honorable distinction to
Tarrytown, and with Christ Church and Sunnyside
make it a very Mecca for pilgrims who love
and honor the memory of Irving.

(The village of Tarrytown our country has more to give than admira-
tion for the works of such a man as Washington Irving.
The country at large does that. England does that. We
have indeed erected the Washington Irving High School,
unsurpassed perhaps by any in the State. But we reap
the benefit of that, and our children. I am persuaded
that we have a still further responsibility. Irving
told me that when he died, he wished no other monu-
ment over his grave, than such a simple headstone
and that wish has been granted He said
as marked the graves of others of his family. "Those
old black oaks, waving their requiem over me, with
the old Sleepy-Hollow church in the foreground, will
be a sufficient monument." And it is sufficient
for him. It would seem as if elaborate sculpture
were out of place over the grave of that gentle mod-
-est man. Sufficient for him? Yes, but not for us.

52, and I venture to hope that ere long there may be erected in front of our High School which bears his name, his statue in bronze, not for the glory of Irving, but for page 51. the honor of Tarrytown. It is for ~~our~~ honor and ~~our~~ glory that we should perpetuate the memory of Irving, not only of Tarrytown but of whole county the Author and the man. For in him, we have far more to commemorate than his services to Literature. These will not be forgotten. His playful fancy, his tender sympathy, his sparkling thought and flashing humor, have cheered & brightened his own times, as they will charm and brighten the coming ~~days~~ generations of our land. But we want portrayed in enduring bronze to have the man before us. In the village where he lived and died, we want to look upon him in person. We want to evoke from the shadows of the past, that form which once walked in our midst,

as the man of a kind, warm, tender heart, - a man loyal to every conviction of duty - a faithful friend, in the best sense of the word, a true Christian gentle-man, having no enemies, but all friends, so that one humorously denounced him with the woe in the Gospel, "because all men speak well of him." S. Luke. 6.26

And equally dear should he be to all his country-men. His very name links him with the father of our country. He was his namesake. Nay, more, he received his blessing; for when Irving was three years old, his scotch nurse brought him to Gen. Wash-ington in N. Y. City, and said, "Your honor, here is a bairn who is named after you." And Washington received him smilingly, put his hand on his head, & blessed him. If there be any virtue in such an act, surely that blessing followed him all his days.

And it is interesting to note that Irving ~~gave~~ in 1858 contributed $500 towards the purchase of Mt. Vernon and make it the property of the nation.

page 55

And here, in this great & magnificent city of Washington, should not Irving be honored, or rather should not the city honor itself and the country, by erecting a monument to his memory? There are You have statues in abundance in that city to military & naval heroes and statesmen, — noble men who have deserved well of their country. Why should not Literature also have its representatives among the sculptured adornments of this great Capital of the nation. It is learning, literature, that exalteth a people. Doctor Johnson says, "The chief glory of every people arises from its authors." The greatest monument in Edinburgh, is to the greatest of Scotland's authors. Can you there not with equal reason, be erected in a Nations Capital a Statue or monument to Washington Irving, the ~~founder~~ ablest man of American Literature? founder

The whole country would rejoice in such a recognition

Thackeray says that true humor is flavored throughout with tenderness — kindness —

See also Dickens on Irving in World's Orators vol 4 - p. 152 -

of one of our greatest and best men. (He was a good man, and nothing is so popular as goodness.

Such memories of good and wise men are a peoples' best heritage; they are the wealth of our land, far more than the gold of California, and the silver of Colora-do. They are worth treasuring up. In Irving's own beau-tiful words, which we may apply to him, to night, "there is a remembrance of the dead, to which we turn, even from the charms of the living."

So we, by an apotheosis of our reverent and loving hearts, place Washington Irving among the num-ber of those in our land, who have sanctified the greatness they have achieved by their goodness; who have added the softened lustre of all that is graceful and pure and lovely in life, to the valor of the soldier, to the eloquence of the statesman, to the learning of the author. And through the summer

of our Country's youth, and the winter of her age, Irving's memory shall be as green and fadeless as the Ivy that mantles his own sweet Sunnyside).