When Charles Godfrey Leland returned to Philadelphia from England in the early 80's, he seemed to come into my life like a fresh breeze—perhaps I might say a hurricane—into a hitherto quiet atmosphere. For I, hardly more than a boy, had been brought up in the conventional way in which most Philadelphia boys were brought up then,—but not now. I knew that my uncle was a distinguished author of vast versatility, but my ideas of literary men were old-fashioned, and I expected to find in Leland a scholarly recluse, with a mild manner, a bespectacled face and, perhaps, a rooted aversion to society. But what I beheld was something so different as to be startling. A man with the figure of an athlete, full of life and animation, strikingly handsome, with a gayety almost boyish and a temperament effervescing as champagne—such was “Hans Breitmann” as I first encountered him on his arrival in Philadelphia, at the old Hotel Stratford, Broad and Walnut Streets. The fact was, that I had expected a mummy and found, instead, a virile human being. I took to him at once, as did also my sister, Elizabeth, as was but natural, seeing how affectionate he was and how glad he and my aunt seemed to see us after all the years during which the Lelands had lived in London, keeping open house for its literary and artistic celebrities.

With the coming of the Lelands a new world was opened to us, new interests developed, and new and charming people introduced to us. No sooner had my uncle settled down comfortably in the old-fashioned house on Broad Street, which was afterwards built over
for the present Art Club, than he asked my sister and myself where any gypsies could be found. This seemed to me like asking where the Devil could be found, for my youthful idea of a gypsy was of a horse-thief or child-stealer. But when Leland began to talk of the history of gypsies and to teach us the Romany language, we soon became interested and it was not long before a camp of gypsies was discovered in Camden and visited. The amazement of the Romanys over a gentile who could speak their dialect with fluency was comic, but they quickly accepted Leland as one of themselves and dubbed him "the Rye" or Romany gentleman. In time "the Rye" became known to all the gypsies in this part of the state, and although some of his conventional friends looked with horror upon his visits to them, he was always adding to his knowledge of their language and customs. Sometimes a favored friend would be allowed to go a gypsying with my uncle, as, for instance, Miss Katherine Bayard, the daughter of the late Senator Thomas F. Bayard, who more than once came up from Wilmington to have her fortune told. And there was another recruit admitted to the sacred circle—a rising young artist just beginning his career—very thin, very meek in manner and most retiring. His name was Joseph Pennell. I remember my sister saying once: "My article in 'Our Continent' is to be illustrated by a nice young man named Pen-nell." This nice young man came home to my father's one night to dine with us, and I still retain a vision of a very bashful, silent person. But he was not too bashful to propose to my sister, which he did soon after, and was accepted. And you can now see what his alliance with the Robinses has made of him!

I forget whether Oscar Wilde, when he visited Leland in Philadelphia, while on his lecturing tour, was taken to see the gypsies or not, but I do recall that he went over to Camden and sat on a stool at Walt Whitman's
feet in the little house on Mickle Street—for he told my uncle all about it. Oscar gazed tenderly into Walt’s eyes, and Walt, who always appreciated incense, was delighted. He, too, told Leland all about it. Nor have I forgotten how Oscar, when he came to see my uncle,—it was in cold weather—wore a fur-lined robe of the type which elderly women much affected in those days. Some characteristic stories were told about Wilde just then. At a dinner party given to him in this city he sat next to Mrs. George H. Boker, wife of the poet and diplomat. “What do you really think of me?” he asked Mrs. Boker when the dessert came on. “I’d like you much better,” said Mrs. Boker, “if you’d shorten your hair and lengthen your trousers!” For Oscar had gone to the dinner in knickerbockers. When he met Miss Bayard at a dinner in Washington, he met his match. “Are you going on to the ball at Senator Smith’s tonight?” asked Miss B. “Perhaps,” drawled Wilde, “if I am not too tired after my lecture. Are you going to the ball, Miss Bayard?” “Perhaps,” drawled Miss Bayard, “if I am not too tired after your lecture.”

The names of Boker and Whitman always suggest to me my uncle, for he knew Walt well, and was the lifelong intimate of Boker. His introducing me to Whitman is as vividly pictured in my mind as though it occurred yesterday. The “good gray poet” was gazing into the bookstore of Porter and Coates, then at 9th and Chestnut Streets, opposite the present Post Office, and the one-time Continental Hotel. I was walking down the street with my uncle and my sister; to the latter the world was all beauty, for she had just had her first magazine article accepted by Thomas Bailey Aldrich for publication in the Atlantic Monthly. Whitman saw Leland, and at once came forward. What a picturesque poseur he was. The leonine head, with the spectacular white beard, the white linen shirt, open at the neck, the great slouch hat and gray trousers; he
might either have been a prosperous miller or an elderly cowboy, or the poet and iconoclast that he was. There was but one Walt Whitman.

Walt immediately began to talk about himself and his writings. It appeared that some critic had been saying harsh things about him. "But my critics cannot harm me!" cried the poet, and he drew himself up into an attitude that made him look like a Solon about to administer some of his own laws. "I am like the king who suddenly became unpopular with his ignorant subjects, so that they threw his statue into the mud and defiled it. They fondly thought they had injured their sovereign. But the king remained the king—regal, untouched, undefiled. So it is with me!"

My uncle was duly sympathetic. He admired Walt, but had a very clear idea of his peculiarities. Once he asked Whitman to autograph one of his own works, perhaps an edition of the "Leaves of Grass," but the canny author refused to do it unless he was paid for it. Even poets are occasionally practical, although I should add, in justice to Whitman, that he explained that the money derived from his autographs went to some fund or other.

Leland would often point out Walt as he sat with the driver on the front platform of the old-fashioned street car that slowly meandered up Walnut Street and down Chestnut. I am afraid he would not have been sympatico with the modern Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company.

I once saw Boker, Whitman and Leland talking together at the corner of Broad and Chestnut, when Broad Street still bore somewhat the aspect of a main street through a country village. Three nobler looking specimens of humanity could hardly ever have been seen together in this or any other country. Boker was acclaimed the handsomest man in Philadelphia, although he looked less like a Philadelphian than any man
I ever saw. Possibly that was why he was so handsome. He looked more like an aristocrat or potentate of ancient Greece, and needed but sandals and a toga to complete the illusion. After all, I saw something worth seeing when I saw these three men together—Whitman, one of the most talked about personages in modern literature, whom thousands of the elect still worship; Leland, author of the "Hans Breitmann" Ballads, then known throughout America and Europe, and Boker, man of the world, playwright, poet and diplomat. Boker had been a few years before American Minister to the Court of St. Petersburg, and the then Czar (the one later to be assassinated) was devoted to him. I wish I could remember some of the stories that Boker told about the Czar, and how the two of them used to discuss, over their coffee and cigars after an informal dinner in the imperial palace in St. Petersburg, the political affairs of Europe.

But by this time Boker had settled down into a good Philadelphian once more, and spent every Sunday afternoon at the Lelands. How I did listen when the two talked and reminisced. And it was the suave Boker who, when Leland set about introducing industrial art education into Philadelphia, exerted all his influence, with success, to help him in the good work.

For Leland himself was the most undiplomatic of men and frequently antagonized people by his frankness. My aunt, as gentle in disposition as she was lovely in face, was always trying to "smooth things down," and unruffle the friends whom her "dearest Charlie" had sadly ruffled. My uncle was not given to telling conventional lies; far from it. If he thought you were stupid, and didn't understand some subjects as you should, he said so; it was not meant offensively, but in kindness. Yet a fairly long experience in life has taught me that certain forms of kindness are not acceptable, and some persons there were who did not
relish this frankness. A lady in the South once wrote asking him to criticize her literary style and to express his opinion as to her future career in the world of letters. He did not think that there was any future for her in such a world and promptly told her so. The medicine was cruel, but probably saved her from much literary greensickness in the end. The fiery Southern lady could not see it that way, however. She wrote to him one brief reply on a postal card. "You are no gentleman!" was all she said.

Leland had an enormous correspondence with people upon the various subjects in which he was interested—gypsies, the minor arts, American Indian folk-lore, German literature, Heine, the poet, history, psychology, and what not? When a stranger wrote him and signed his name illegibly, he never even troubled to decipher it; he merely pasted the offending signature on the envelope containing his reply and sent the letter on its way. Quite often the recipients of these signatures were furious, and a very tart correspondence would ensue, which always delighted Leland.

There were, of course, times when Leland tried to temper his frankness for the sake of domestic peace. Once, when my family had refurnished their back parlor in the old-fashioned house in Spruce Street where we lived,—I mean refurnished as to curtains and chair coverings and the like—Uncle Charles was brought in to see the improvement. There was a painful pause as he looked about him; the room was surely much more colorful than it had been. At last he spoke: "Yes," he said, "very nice—and—gaudy!" The family were all waiting breathlessly to hear some praise from the man who had founded the Decorative Art Club in Pine Street and who was running, with the assistance of Liberty Tadd, an industrial art public school in Locust Street, back of the Academy of Music. When the ominous word "gaudy" was uttered, a shiver went
round the family, individually and collectively. But this was my uncle's way of being polite. Had he followed his usual custom of telling the exact truth he would probably have cried: "Atrocious!" And perhaps he would have been right, for we of the older generation know only too well that the interior household decorations of the eighties were often rather terrible.

Speaking of the founding of the Decorative Art Club, reminds me of the truly awful effect it had on certain fashionable women in Philadelphia, from whom the membership of the club was chiefly recruited. Never shall I forget, until memory dies, visiting the club one afternoon and seeing well-known dowagers pounding away at brass plaques until they were red in their faces, endeavoring all the while to create artistic designs, or else engaged in painting weird dragons or impossible birds on clay plates. Whenever I see a brass plaque in a latter-day Victorian home I think of these tired, perspiring ladies. Society was stampeded by decorative art; old ladies and fair debutantes dreamed of wood carving or leather embossing or painting dining-room crockery.

Well, it was all innocent enough, and a much milder amusement than some amusements of to-day. Of course Leland had a more serious purpose in his work than did most of these pupils, and this purpose found fruition in the classes for public school children established in the Hollingsworth School building. These classes paved the way for much that has been developed later in the public school system, in the line of industrial and mechanical arts, but Leland never received due credit for his pioneer work and many who are benefiting indirectly from it have never even heard his name.

It was the fate of Leland to blaze paths for others who came after him and who reaped the fame he missed.
I have often thought that his very versatility of literary achievement was against him and that had he confined himself to fewer subjects, and followed them up more systematically, he would be better known today. But his career was full of action and even adventure. He was born August 15, 1824, in a house on Chestnut Street, below Third, in which Dolly Madison had once lived as a young girl. In his childhood he saw and spoke to Daniel Webster, Joseph Bonaparte, Stephen Girard and other celebrities; he graduated from Princeton in 1845 and afterwards, having the *Wanderlust* and a prosperous father to help him, studied at Heidelberg and in Munich and Paris, and took an active part, as a barricader, in the French Revolution of 1848. On returning to Philadelphia he was admitted to the bar, but preferred literary work, to which he had always been devoted, contributed to leading periodicals, became a newspaper editor, and even started a magazine in Boston to further the cause of negro emancipation. During the Civil War he served for a time in an artillery company of volunteers known as Chapman Biddle’s Company, where one of his fellow-soldiers was Richard Watson Gilder, afterward the editor of *The Century Magazine*.

It was in 1868 that Leland leaped into fame as the author of “Hans Breitmann’s Party,” a poem followed later on by many other “Breitmann” ballads. The year 1869 found him in Europe again, this time with his wife, the daughter of Rodney Fisher, of Philadelphia, and a great beauty in her day. It was Thackeray who, once meeting her in New York, called her “the prettiest woman in America.” The Lelands lived for some time in London, where they kept open house and entertained Carlyle, Ruskin, Tennyson, Walter Besant and many other notables. During this period Leland wrote prolifically, developed into a world authority on gypsies, and finally became greatly interested in in-
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...industrial art. He had always had a happy gift for drawing and decoration. When he came back to Philadelphia with Mrs. Leland in 1880 he succeeded in establishing, under public school auspices, industrial art classes, and was a prominent figure in the life of Philadelphia. Several years later he and Mrs. Leland returned to Europe and finally settled in Italy, where he died in March, 1903. The ashes of himself and his wife, who had died before him, were brought to this country and interred in Woodlands Cemetery. Many of his relatives are prominent in this city, where his devoted sister, the late Mrs. John Harrison, was well-known in social and philanthropic activities.

Leland's wide range as an author may be seen in reading over the list of his books, including "English Gypsies," "Meister Karl's Sketch Book," "Pictures of Travel," "Sunshine in Thought," "The Music Lesson of Confucius," a biography of "Abraham Lincoln," "The Minor Arts," "Songs of the Sea and Lays of the Land," "Legends of Virgil," "Algonquin Legends of New England," the translating of the works of Heine (Leland was an accomplished German scholar) and the editing of a Dictionary of Slang. His own "Memoirs" are delightful to read, and give a charming idea of his energies in his prime, while the two volumes of biography prepared by my sister, Mrs. Pennell, are a noble memorial of his many sided genius.

As to his future place in American Literature, who can say? One thing is certain. In any history of American humour his name, as the creator of the immortal "Hans Breitmann," will always stand out in bold relief.

Leland was a shining example of how a man may succeed in literature without making much money from it. The "Hans Breitmann" ballads, the most popular of all his writings, brought him nothing, his other works very little compared to the receipts of the favorite...
novelists of to-day. Had he not had an independent income for the greater part of his life he must have starved.

I remember my aunt once saying to him, jokingly, that all authors must be shady characters because "they lived by their wits." "But I've never been able to live by my wits," laughed Leland; "I wish I could."

I am glad I did not see Leland in his last years; I rather like to think of him as I remember him in the Victorian eighties. And I like, too, a much earlier recollection of him when he took me, a boy of six, on his knee and sang me one of his own rhymes from his "Mother Pitcher" ballads:

"Ping Wing, the pieman's son,
   Was the jolliest boy in all Canton.
He stole his Mother's pickled mice,
And threw the cat in the boiling rice;
Then beat a gong and hollered he,
'Me wonder where me-ow cat be!'"

Is not that something by which to remember an uncle?