DEAD BOOKS AND DYING AUTHORS.

BY EDWARD ROBINS, M.A.

I have great sympathy for dead books and forgotten authors, for I have written several books in my time, and I am quite sure that they are sleeping on the dusty shelves of libraries, no longer read or heeded. But I may at least flatter myself, if it can be called flattery, that I am in good company, and that my humble works rub elbows, or covers, with the decaying books of writers far worthier than I.

Did it ever occur to you—of course it has—how many books there must be in every large library that are not opened, perhaps, half a dozen times in as many years, although in the past they may have had thousands of readers? What a problem their presence creates for a progressive librarian; how he must often long to send a lot of them to the old book shop, to make room for current literature. Yet how to discriminate in getting rid of them? There's the rub. Some of these corpses may come back to life—who knows—and some of them may become prizes to be sought for by rich collectors. So it is with old newspapers, many of them worthless, but here and there is one that contains a precious mine of information for the historians of the future.

I remember, when I was a boy, how my father, when he had a quiet evening to himself, would take down a volume of Pope's poems, and read them with pleasure, and occasionally, following his example, I would do the same. But I wonder who reads Pope now, unless it be the student in literature, or the college undergraduate who is taking a course in English. Even now the charm of Pope persists with me, although modern
criticism holds that he is nothing more than a brilliant versifier. Two hundred years ago he was a great poet of the English-speaking race; one hundred years ago he was still a favorite, now he is one of those classics who have a place, handsomely bound and printed, in the proverbial gentleman's library, where they remain, undisturbed, until the gentleman dies and his effects are sold in London, or in New York or in Philadelphia. American tourists have been known to visit Twickenham, where Pope had his villa, but I venture the assertion that few, if any of them, have ever read a line of the wizened little man who wielded a pen that could drop either gall or honey with equal effectiveness.

Having tackled Pope in my boyhood, I next drifted to Samuel Johnson and his "Lives of the Poets" and to his immortal biography by Boswell. Fortunate was it for Johnson that he had his Boswell, for without him the great doctor might now be forgotten. For how could we have known him in later generations, save by his works, and these are no longer read. But Boswell has made his hero live for all time, or so long as the English language endures. Articles that are written about Johnson are eagerly read by people who would never dream of looking at his essays or "Lives of the Poets," or of consulting his once famous Dictionary. There is indeed a Philadelphian who is an authority on the Doctor and his biographer, and what he has to tell us about them always finds a wide audience.

As I look back it seems as if not a few of the poets I enjoyed have gone into permanent and total eclipse, while others, though not totally obscured, shine less brilliantly than of old. Dryden is surely an unread classic, and so would Gray be if he had not written his "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," whose beauty of diction may serve to keep him among the immortals.
There is still a certain cult for Lord Byron. The recent centenary of his death, and the publication of more letters, has helped to revive a slackening interest in him, but I believe it will be with Byron as it is with Samuel Johnson; his personality rather than his verse will keep him alive. Byron had a shrewd idea of the value of self-advertising; he kept his own generation guessing as to what sort of man he really was—was he as wicked as he painted himself—and so, no doubt, will future generations discuss him with a question mark. But who will concern themselves with his “Don Juan,” or “Childe Harold,” or “Manfred?” Not many, I fear.

In my youth Longfellow was, *par excellence*, the first of American poets; now he is called mid-Victorian, which is to damn him with faint praise, or no praise at all. I understand that he is more popular in England than in this country at the present time. How long will he last, outside the covers of a history of American Literature? I will not attempt to predict; perhaps some of my hearers can advise me on this point. William Cullen Bryant is surely passé; he is more likely to go down to fame as editor and proprietor of the *New York Evening Post* than for his dignified and scholarly verse. Tennyson appears to be gradually going down the toboggan slide, although time was when I raved about his “Idylls of the King,” and so did the rest of the world. Of course I may be wrong; Tennyson may simply be suffering from the reaction against Victorianism. Martin Farquahar Tupper is very dead, but he had one foot in the grave when I was young. Certainly no one could mourn his loss. Sir Walter Scott’s novels still have admirers, as they deserve, but who reads his poetry? Then there was “Owen Meredith,” Lord Lytton, son of Bulwer Lytton. I remember when everybody quoted “Lucille” and really thought it quite devillish in parts. It could now
be read in a Sunday school without bringing the blush of shame to the cheek of any scholar—but what scholar would bother with it? And so I might go on with the funeral of some of my once treasured poets, if the list were not so long. Yet a few of my favorites are bound to live, notably Shelley and Keats, who have the "divine spark" if ever humans have had. What of Coleridge and Wordsworth? Will you venture a prophecy? I cannot. Another genius, Edgar Allen Poe, will survive. But many of the lesser American poets have gone by the board. Boker will be remembered rather because of his fine play, "Francesca da Rimini" than for his poetry; John G. Saxe and a host of others are already unknown to this generation. Thomas Buchanan Read still clings to the pillar of fame because he wrote "Sheridan's Ride," which will endure so long as the history of the American Civil War endures. His name is linked with General Sheridan. Whittier is likely to go down the ages as a New Englander who wrote about "Barbara Freitche," although it is contended that Barbara never really did what he said, she did. But Whittier made a rattling good poem out of the old lady; she may become his only claim to being remembered. And here I would like to ask a librarian how often the works of this good old Quaker poet are asked for by his patrons?

Crabbe introduced a new style in poetry, but is hardly regarded now; Hood is dead save for two or three poems, and Southey has outlived his reputation of sixty or seventy years ago for want of any real genius. Yet it was Walter Savage Landor who said of Southey: "He is the only existing entire man of letters." Cowper and Young are both dead because there is no longer any keen interest for the religiously contemplative school of poetry, while Blake is an example of a dead poet who has been resurrected. There is something about Blake that deserves to live; with
all his madness he was a genius both as poet and illustrator.

I cannot leave the poets without alluding to Walt Whitman. Walt has been physically dead for many years, but he still lives in his works. As he was virile and masterful in his personality, so he remains virile and masterful in spirit and memory. Many a time have I seen him in Philadelphia riding on the front platform of the old-fashioned horse-car (it was before the advent of the trolleys) engaged in earnest conversation with the driver. I suppose it was only a pose, but Walt's gestures were always impressive. He was the most picturesque looking man I ever saw, with his magnificent head and flowing white beard, and superb figure and bearing—his grayish clothes and sombrero, and clean white shirt opening at the leonine neck. He looked the poet, unlike Swinburne, whose appearance was utterly unpoetic, and Robert Browning, who is described as being too prosperous-looking to suggest a disciple of the Muses.

When Oscar Wilde came to Philadelphia years ago to lecture I saw him and heard him. He called on my uncle, Charles Godfrey Leland, and asked his way to Camden, so that he might meet Whitman, whom he professed to admire greatly. He took the ferry on the Delaware and ventured into the modest house in Mickle Street, where he sat on a stool at Walt's feet, in order to express the fervor of his hero worship. Both poets were highly pleased at this incident; Walt because he loved incense, as do all poets, and Oscar because he could run back to Philadelphia and tell my uncle all about it. I believe that Wilde, who was one of the idols of the Mauve Decade, still has quite a circle of readers. His plays, although artificial and untrue to nature, are brilliant and rich in epigram, and his prose has many beauties. Certainly his "De Profundis," written from the heart, is a marvellous example of English diction.
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Oscar had little originality, but in imitation he often excelled his model. You have heard, no doubt, what Whistler said to him once, after the great artist had first uttered a clever witticism.

"I wish," cried Oscar, "that I could have originated that!"

"Never mind," replied Whistler; "you soon will, Oscar!"

Apropos to Browning and Swinburne, I infer, from the activity of Browning Clubs in the middle West, that the former still flourishes, though it has been many years since he died in Venice. It strikes me that Swinburne is on the wane, although he surely did have a wonderful command of the English language; the melody of his verse runs on like impassioned music. How wicked he seemed to us back in the eighties when he wrote of

"The lillies and languors of virtue,
The roses and raptures of vice."

Compare him, however, with some of the plays and novels of today, and he doesn't prove much more dangerous than the late Anthony Comstock. Subjects that were once prohibited in mixed company are now openly discussed; little is left to the imagination; silence is no longer golden.

My early reading was by no means confined to the poets; I went through the usual course of books that were considered the proper mental pabulum for the boys of that day. One of my earliest recollections is of "Robinson Crusoe," which thrilled me and made me long to live on a desert island. I wonder! Does any child ever demand "Robinson Crusoe" in these times of sophisticated infancy? My next experiences were in the "Rollo" books, and then in the "Swiss Family Robinson," which proved even more enthralling than "Robinson Crusoe." How I did delight in the shipwreck and the subsequent building of the home on the
bleak shore. I must confess that the tendency of the
Swiss father to drop on his knees at every conceivable
opportunity and invoke the blessings of the Almighty
rather bored me, but I kept this objection to myself
for fear of being accused of rank impiety. "Swiss
Family Robinson" would be considered hopelessly old-
fashioned now, for if the stranded family had only
possessed a radio they could have communicated with
civilization and been rescued by a luxuriously equipped
airplane. But in that case there would have been no
story to tell—which is another way of saying that if
we become too civilized we will crush out all of the
romance of the world. We have the loud-speaker, and
the wireless telephone and the flying machine, but we
have left behind us the poetry of the stagecoach, and
the four-poster bed and the sailing packet, that beauti-
ful ocean bird which could cross the Atlantic in the
extraordinarily quick time of three weeks. We have
gained in comfort what we have lost in picturesque-
ness. Science is King.

When I arrived at the mature age of eight "Sand-
ford and Merton" was placed in my hands with the
fervent hope, on the part of my aunt, that it would
help me to develop into being a "little Christian gentle-
man." For I was a bad little boy, as boys were rated
then, although perhaps my type of insurgency would
be deemed rather tame at present.

Have any of you ever read "Sandford and Merton?" It has always seemed to me the apotheosis of priggish-
ness. For it shows what the infant mind had to suffer
in the efforts of fond parents to bring up their children
in the ways they should go.

The leading characters in this classic were Harry
Sandford, a very good boy—the very prince of prigs—
Tommie Merton, a very bad boy, whom I adored, and
an awful tutor named Barlow—I think it was Barlow.
Barlow was always telling poor Tommie to imitate
Harry, who was a paragon of virtue, but Tommie wasn't anxious to become a paragon of virtue; he was full of animal spirits, a nice healthy boy, in fact, but Mr. Barlow wanted to turn him into a prig, like Harry. My memory is that the tutor succeeded. I shall always hate Harry to my dying day, and I shall always feel sorry for Tommie, just as I feel sorry for a caged robin which has to flutter feebly about his prison instead of being able to spread his wings towards Heaven.

Fancy a normal boy of today tolerating "Sandford and Merton." He may read the comic section in the Sunday newspapers, and he may read other things that won't help him, but he is no prig. This is an age of male precocity and feminine flappers, and whatever may be said against it, no one can accuse modern youth of being pedantic or prudish. So let us relegate "Sandford and Merton" to the remotest alcove in the attic of the library, and there let it stay until another Disraeli senior comes along to write another "Curiosities of Literature."

Thank Heaven that the children's books of this era are not ever trying to point a moral.

A much pleasanter recollection of my childhood is found in the stories of "Oliver Optic," otherwise William T. Adams. This author came of Puritan ancestry, and his young heroes had that veneer of conventional goodness so typical of the sixties and seventies, but he told interesting stories, and we boys—yes, and girls, too—thought him greater than Shakespeare. Some of his heroes fought in the "Civil War;" others went abroad on a training ship, which gave "Oliver Optic" a chance to skillfully instil into us a lot of information about foreign countries. The pill of instruction was well gilded; we cried for more, as babies are said to cry for a patent medicine. I never hear children of the present decade speak of this author, so I am unable to tell—but perhaps some of my hearers can—whether
or not his tales still have any public whatsoever. One thing is certain; "Oliver Optic" has descended from his pedestal of glory. Yet his name still has power to warm the cockles of my heart. Long after I was grown up I wrote a play which I sent to Sol Smith Russell, then a delightful high comedian who was winning laurels, and perhaps fortune, on the American stage. When Mr. Russell came to Philadelphia later he sent for me to come see him at the Hotel Walton; he told me he liked the play and would consider it further if I would make certain changes. His wife was in the room where we were talking; he introduced me to her, and when he mentioned that she had been a Miss Adams, and was the daughter of "Oliver Optic," I really felt as if I were meeting royalty. Of such is the aristocracy of letters.

As it turned out, my comedy never saw the light; Mr. Russell made a great success with some other play, which diverted him from mine; afterwards he lost his health and had to give up acting, just at the very apex of his career. But I never regretted the time I had wasted on my comedy, for had it not been the means of introducing me to the daughter of "Oliver Optic"? I felt as proud in shaking hands with her as I did when I shook hands with General Phil Sheridan, or General Foch, or President Cleveland, or Sir Henry Irving—or John L. Sullivan.

Contemporaneously with "Oliver Optic" I read the stories of Horatio Alger, Jr., whose heroes were principally humble poor boys who rose, after stirring adventures, to power and riches. I am told that there is a revival of Alger, and I suppose that Henty, the English writer of juveniles, is still read abroad. I never cared for Henty, particularly after I read one of his stories which had the American Revolution for a background. Mr. Henty pictured the British as not altogether wicked in the struggle. That didn't suit a
fourteen-year-old boy who thought all the Signers of the Declaration of Independence (including one of his own ancestors) were angels without wings, and considered poor old George the Third a brutal tyrant who sent all his enemies to the Tower of London to be beheaded. This was before the days of the "newer criticism" which seeks to prove that the British cause was not without logic, that some of the American patriots were no better than they ought to be, and that the immortal Washington drank Madeira at dinner and liked to glance at a pretty girl. Of course the early American biographers tried to paint Washington and other great men of his period as perfectly wooden and uninteresting specimens of humanity—as quite inhuman in fact. They could not do this with Benjamin Franklin, who was so delightfully frank about himself in his "Autobiography." This is why the "Autobiography" is still read, while John Marshall's ponderous life of Washington is dormant on the library shelves.

Just a word more about my juvenile reading. I read girls' books as well as boys' books, and some of them were very poor. I hope the girls of today have better fare. Perhaps they read only boys' books! I don't know. But one book for girls always entranced me. "Little Women" may be Victorian, and it pictures a mode of life that is gone forever, but it is full of charm, and I trust will long be kept out of the literary graveyard.

How unlike, sometimes, is the fate of different books by the same author. "Little Women" has not yet disappeared, but a sort of sequel to it called "Little Men," written to provide for boys what "Little Women" had furnished for girls, is no longer known. Nor does any one ever read the works of Miss Alcott's father, Bronson Alcott, but as no one but himself ever did read them, what earthly matter it is? Emerson referred to Bronson Alcott as a "tedious archangel." He wrote
"transcendental" nonsense, and couldn't support his family; Louisa had to do the latter through the sale of her books.

While Bronson Alcott is forgotten, Ralph Waldo Emerson, his friend, still maintains his niche in the Hall of Fame, although he may be looked upon as less of a god than in years past. His sane, if cold and calm philosophy, might well be heard in these confused times, when there are no fixed ethical standards and when the pursuit of pleasure is the highest aim of many of us, both young and old. We no longer "hitch our wagon to a star."

And what of two more of Emerson's friends, Oliver Wendell Holmes and James Russell Lowell? I must leave it to their publishers to answer that question. Both men were typical of their period, which is another way of saying that their literary heritage was English rather than American. I know they would not be *sympatica* with many of the writers and playwrights of today. The passage of years has dimmed their lustre, but I, for one, must ever cherish a fondness for "Elsie Venner" and the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table." Lowell's essays, too, are full of charm.

And now, with pathetic, psychological "Elsie Venner," we come to novels—to novels which Thackeray playfully described as "sweets." Out of the wreck of many novels which have stranded there emerges, still afloat, the buoyant craft of James Fenimore Cooper. Many a night, as a boy, have I gone to bed with a cracker and apple to munch and a volume of "The Last of the Mohicans," or the "Spy" or another of the series, and long after the hour for "lights out" would I be pouring over the adventures of an Indian chief or an intrepid trapper. Ever and anon a twig would snap in the primeval forest, and an enemy Indian would come in sight, but as his eyes and sense of smell apparently failed him when he passed right by a party of
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Americans, hiding behind bushes within five feet of him, the latter always escaped with their lives. A few years ago I tried to read Cooper once more, but the spell had departed; to me he seemed artificial, even at times ridiculous. But I am very glad he still has readers; he helped to put America on the map, and, furthermore, I would like all boys to have the same joy in him that I did. Will they? Who shall say?

Among novels, "Ten Thousand a Year" by Warren, "Handy Andy" by Lover, Beckford's "Vathek," and such stories as "Rutledge" and "John Halifax, Gentleman" may be considered dead, although, in a way, all of them are standard. No one reads Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's novels save "Uncle Tom's Cabin," and George Eliot has long since departed from the ranks of a "best seller." I always feel, however, that George Eliot, whose "Mill on the Floss" should never die, may have a renaissance just as Anthony Trollope has had a tremendous revival in England. The great strength of Trollope is that he graphically pictures upper English life in the Victorian era, whereby there is already an historical value about all he has written. There is another Victorian novelist of whom I hear little nowadays; I mean Mrs. Oliphant, whom some of her fervent admirers used to place on a level with Thackeray.

Thackeray! Well, what of this great master of gentlemanly satire. I was brought up on him; I read him in season and out, openly at home, surreptitiously at school. That is to say, I read "Vanity Fair," "Esmond" and "The Virginians," and "Pendennis" over and over again; his other stories I didn't care for. Now in renewing my acquaintance with him, as I try to do every few years, I find in him a constant repeating of himself that becomes wearisome, and a too constant moralizing that is a trifle depressing. Is he one of the great Victorians who is on the decline? His
name is not a household word as it was in my adolescence. Do people really read him, or is he merely another beautifully bound library classic? The creator of Beatrix Esmond and Becky Sharpe deserves to live. As for myself, I can never forget “The Virginians” for its picture of colonial American life, and its delightful glimpses of young George Washington. I can always feel grateful to Thackeray, too, for a purely personal reason; when he visited this country he met my aunt, the wife of Charles Godfrey Leland (“Hans Breitmann”), and he declared that she was “the prettiest woman in America.”

As I read Thackeray so did I read Dickens. Everybody at home read Dickens; my father, my sisters, my brother, and myself. The humor, the clever exaggerations of “Boz,” enthralled me, but the melodramatic parts, the sentiment, bored me, because they never rang true. Of course Dickens had to supply them to make his books sell; a Victorian audience demanded that sort of thing, yet it has always seemed to me a pity that all his novels could not have been purely humorous, just as was the “Pickwick Papers,” his first novel. To be sure there is a villain in “Pickwick,” in the person of Alfred Jingle, but he is such a captivating villain that no one could possibly take him seriously. The lurid part of Dickens is not adapted to the taste of today; this is why I ask myself how much he is read, particularly by the young people. According to some reports there is still money in publishing his books, and I know that he has interest for us of an older generation, but what of the children? Within my limited experience I don’t find any enthusiasm among the latter for Dickens; not a few young readers have frankly confessed to me that they have no desire to read “David Copperfield,” or “Martin Chuzzlewit,” or the rest, nor indeed any intention of doing so. One young friend said she had tried “Pickwick” but could
see no humor in it! Now the question arises: Is the sublime "Pickwick" really stupid, from the modern point of view of humor? If so, then I am an old fogey—an alarming fact, indeed, which I have long feared.

Do some of us recall the novels of Farjeon, who was acclaimed a second Dickens, and who enjoyed a great vogue in the seventies and eighties. I fear he has gone into oblivion with G. P. R. James, and possibly Harrison Ainsworth. Is Captain Marryat still read, or is he, too, a back number? He could invent stirring narratives and I seem to remember that he wrote an account of his visit to the United States, wherein he did not throw many bouquets at the Americans. Visitors didn't "say it with flowers" back in the middle of the nineteenth century, they usually threw brick at us, whereat we were duly incensed. That brings us to another forgotten book which was enormously popular once upon a time. It was Mrs. Trollope's "Domestic Manners of the Americans." Mrs. Trollope went to America to mend her fortunes; tried business in Ohio and failed. This soured her disposition, which could never have been very sweet. When she returned to England it was suggested to her that a book about the crude and barbarous American cousins might help her pocketbook. So it did, for Mrs. Trollope was shrewd enough to know that the only way to make the volume pay was to shower abuse on the Americans; had she said pleasant things about us, most people, and particularly the British, would not have been so anxious to buy. Dickens himself "ripped us up the back" in "Martin Chuzzlewit," but much that he wrote was true. After all, he never hesitated to poke fun at his own countrymen. It always rankled with Dickens, however, that there was no international copyright law between Great Britain and the United States, and that hundreds of thousands of his novels were printed in America from which he could derive little or no rev-
As I go over the names of novelists who loomed large in my youth, I conjure up Victor Hugo, Balzac, Miss Braddon, William Black, Eugene Sue, of "Wandering Jew" fame, Emile Gaboriau, Flaubert, Bret Harte, Ouida, Charles Reade, E. P. Roe (with "Barriers Burned Away") and others, ranging all the way from Charles Dudley Warner and Thomas Bailey Aldrich, editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, Frank R. Stockton, and Bayard Taylor, to Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth and Mrs. Anne S. Stephens. The two latter were ladies who are presumably very dead indeed, but whose lurid plots and backgrounds of luxury and refinement gave great pleasure to ill-paid seamstresses, and scullions who wanted to peer into what they imagined was the aristocratic world of adventure. A little later came Dr. S. Weir Mitchell, with his "Hugh Wynne," a captivating romance of colonial and Revolutionary times, which I trust is still read. Paul Leceister Ford's "Janice Meredith" was another popular Revolutionary story, and it was lavishly advertised.

It is quite impossible for me to tell, of some of the novelists I have just named, who are dead and who are living in their works. I suppose that Victor Hugo, Sue and Flaubert still charm. Balzac is a genius who will never die. Miss Braddon, who leaped into renown seventy or eighty years ago with her "Lady Audley's Secret," used to be taken very seriously. She wrote many stories and must have made money; she bequeathed her talent to her son, Mr. Maxwell, who has written "The Devil's Garden," et cetera, and has achieved an enviable reputation.

Are you familiar with Gaboriau? Is he defunct or otherwise? He was, as you know, a clever Frenchman, who invented the modern detective story, after drawing inspiration from Edgar Allen Poe. Since then the
story of crime has become an institution, as witness “Sherlock Holmes” and Fletcher’s murder puzzles. Bret Harte reads a bit stale to me in this year of grace 1927; I no longer have the glamor of youth to aid me in the pictures he painted of California mining life and the “Forty-Niners.”

“Ouida” produced high-flown trash excepting when she wrote of animals, and then she wrote with art, but Victorian ladies of a romantic habit adored her and her heroes. The latter were aristocratic devils, rich and highly gifted; they had wealth galore, were as handsome as Greek gods, and generally bathed not in common water but in eau de cologne. I know another author, more recent, who deals in heroes of this calibre, but I will not mention any names. Perhaps you can guess.

“Ouida” reminds me of an anecdote. It is said that Mrs. John Bigelow once called on her in France, but that “Ouida” sent down word that she never received Americans. “Tell your mistress,” Mrs. Bigelow remarked to the butler, “that she should receive Americans, for they are the only people who read her trashy novels!”

I earnestly put in a word for Frank R. Stockton. The author of “Rudder Grange” deserves preservation. If he is dying, let him be resuscitated. As to the industrious Bayard Taylor I fancy he is about expiring, although the “Story of Kennet” has a local interest; and then, again, he was a Pennsylvanian, and almost a Philadelphian, so we of the Quaker City cherish a fondness for him.

Among Philadelphians I should not overlook Charles Brockden Brown and George Lippard. An interesting article might be written about Brown, who has been described, not inaptly, as the “veritable forerunner of the psychic fiction of today.” His novels have weird power, and subtle imagination; they can still be read
Brockden Brown was born in 1771, in Philadelphia, and died in 1810 on the birthday of Washington, whom he well remembered. He came of good Quaker stock, and was bred to the law, which he finally abandoned for authorship. Indeed, he is said to have been the first American who adopted literature as an actual profession—and must therefore have been looked upon by the worthy Philadelphians as a living curiosity. He was, no doubt, much in advance of his times, for in 1797 he wrote a treatise on divorce, which, we are told, he discussed "with some boldness." I must look up this bold paper some day; perhaps he had a word to say as to trial marriages! Brown's novels, which were very successful in the early part of the nineteenth century, included "Wieland," "Ormund," "Edgar Huntley," and "Arthur Mervyn." The last named book, containing a graphic description of the yellow fever epidemic of 1793 in Philadelphia, is well worth perusal, even now. Brown is an ancestor of Mrs. Anna Robeson Burr, herself a novelist.

George Lippard, another author of the Quaker City, who was born in 1822 and died in 1854, ranks nothing like as high as Brockden Brown, but his novels have at least, what might be called an antiquarian interest. He is described as "a brilliant but erratic genius"—although he hadn't Brown's touch of genius, by any means. He had a powerful imagination, along sensational lines, but his style was poor, and he belonged to a period when writers spoke of girls as "young females." He was devoted to the Indian traditions of the still beautiful Wissahickon Creek, which runs drowsily through Fairmount Park, and when he married he chose to have the ceremony performed at sunrise on the banks of that placid stream. His was a ro-
mantic soul. He wrote "Legends of the Revolution," "Blanche of Brandywine," "The Upper Ten and Lower Million," "Paul Ardenheim or the Monks of the Wissahickon," and much else. His novels must have stirred considerably the peaceful dovecotes of Quakerdom. But as a Bohemian he was quite harmless. The bark of a Bohemian is worse than his bite—nearly always.

If we want to realize how dead some books can become, in a comparatively short period, let us hark back to certain American humorists. Where are the jests and merry quips of Petroleum V. Nasby (one of Lincoln's favorite funny men), Josh Billings, Orpheus C. Kerr and their colleagues? Time was when their witticisms were the subject of general conversation, yet to the young people of today it is as though they had never lived. Only the elders can recall the title of "Hans Breitmann," whose ballads few of them have ever read. To be sure, my sister, Mrs. Joseph Pennell, edited, several years ago, a republication of these poems, which was a good thing to do, but the name of their versatile author, Charles Godfrey Leland, is unknown to the general public. Nevertheless, Leland was a widely-known writer in his day. I hope that some of his books of a serious character may survive, but his humor has outlived its usefulness. After all, the character of humor changes with the years; what was funny yesterday is flat tomorrow.

"The Widow Bedotte" papers and the "Peterkin Papers" were once the source of much innocent laughter; librarians can tell me, for I do not know, if they still entertain. I am under the impression that the really charming adventures of the Peterkin family, and their friend "The Lady from Philadelphia," have been reprinted.

It is too early to tell how long Mark Twain will remain on his pedestal. Some of his books may endure;
others will pass. Perhaps the one to last longest may be his biography of Joan of Arc, which is quite different from the rest of his output.

Artemus Ward is not yet forgotten in England, where he lectured to overflowing audiences when he really had one foot in the grave. I can easily see how we Americans admired Artemus back in the sixties and seventies, but it has always seemed strange to me that his humor, which was essentially American, should have appealed to the British. There are critics who claim that the British have no sense of humor; they are wrong; the British have as keen a sense of it as we have, but the only thing is that their humor and our humor are entirely different. Our humor is more or less paradoxical; theirs is more obvious, as befits a conservative nation. When I look at the funny supplement in the Sunday newspapers I wonder if we Americans really are as funny as we think we are; or perhaps the trouble is that I am very dense, or that my sense of humor is old-fashioned. All of which comes down to the fact that in humor every one has a different standard, and therefore it follows, as clearly as night follows day, that if my standard differs from your standard, therefore your humor is no sense of humor whatsoever.

Perhaps Artemus Ward, who is copiously quoted, still has an audience. But in lately renewing my acquaintance with his humor I could not help thinking of the playgoer who complained that "Hamlet" bored him because it was "so full of quotations." Artemus Ward has lost his freshness; and that is by no means his fault. It's a case of Tempus Fugit.

No doubt some English humorists of half a century back and more have gone in eclipse or total darkness. I won't try to name them. I do remember, however, one who was most popular in my salad days; one whom I read at every spare moment and at moments which
I should not have spared. This was Burnand, one time editor of *Punch*, whose “Happy Thoughts” delighted the world. I never hear of these “Thoughts” any more; perhaps the English still read them. *Punch* goes on living; it is younger and better than ever. It became very stupid at one period of its career.

What a curious thing is this rise, decline and fall of literary reputations! There must be so many reasons for it, including change of popular taste, the crowding out of old writers by new, and certain psychological causes, which are hard to explain. Sometimes these literary deaths are sudden; sometimes the patient lingers on for years before the last reader of his book returns it to the library. Macaulay has been a weary time dying, but if I live long enough I may be able to act as a mourner at his funeral. Among the other historians, Prescott and Bancroft and Motley are American classics; I cannot venture to say how many readers they have nowadays. Thomas Carlyle is still spoken of with respect, but his affected style and eccentric judgments do not command him to the ultra-modern delver into the cold gray facts of the past. Once I went through a course of Carlyle; I did my duty, and I am quite content if I never renew my acquaintance with him. I always pitied the unfortunate Jane Carlyle, who had to live in the same house with him while he was writing “Frederick the Great,” or the “French Revolution.”

No, I would never again read the sage of Chelsea, but I would always wander over once more Gibbon’s “Roman Empire” if I had the time, which I have not. Why could we not have a one volume condensation of this fascinating work? I believe it would pay the enterprising publisher who issued it.

This thought calls up another. Are there not a few of the old masters now peacefully slumbering who
Dead Books and Dying Authors.

could be brought back to life in this one volume form and published in such a way as to entice the unwary?

Surely Fame is a Fickle Jade. Washington Irving will endure, but why? Not because he wrote the charming "Sketch Book," or the "Knickerbocker" history of New York, or ambitious biographies; oh, no! He will endure because he wrote up the Alhambra and every tourist in Spain will read what he says about it so long as people continue to travel. He will be embalmed in Baedeker for ages, and can look down on the world from his place among the stars and laugh. Many another pleasant writer has sunk into oblivion and no guide book keeps his name before us!

Oh, the irony of Literature! As one walks about the inner recesses of a big library and sees shelves groaning sadly with forgotten books, one is tempted to ask the question "Qui bono?" But it is satisfying to have written a book and to see the creation of our fancy coming from the publisher beautifully printed, nicely bound, and tooled, and, best of all, with our name in gold letters on the cover. If the book dies, what of that? It will be buried decently and sleep in good company.