Electricity—Hypothesis and Theory.

Thales, of Miletus, thought that the magnet was endowed with a sort of immaterial spirit, and to possess a species of animation. The Greeks knew also that rubbed amber attracted bits of straw, and supposed it to be endowed with life. Even Boyle, as late as 1675, imagined it to emit a sort of glutinous effluvium which laid hold of small bodies and pulled them toward the excited body. Du Fay, in 1733, conceived the double fluid theory, and Franklin, in 1747, invented the single fluid theory. Cavendish, in 1771, supplied some of the deficiencies of Franklin's theory, but it was Faraday who first exploded the fluid notion and originated the molecular theory of electricity, while Grove boldly classed electricity with light and heat as correlated forces and mere modes of motion. Light was thought by the Platonists to be the consequence of something emitted from the eye meeting with certain emanations from the surface of things, but no theory of light properly so-called was attempted until Newton produced his celebrated corpuscular theory in 1670, which has lasted until the present day. Even as late as 1816 Faraday himself said: "The conclusion that is now generally received appears to be, that light consists of minute atoms of matter of an octahedral form, possessing polarity, and varying in size or in velocity." Although Huyghens in Newton's own time conceived the undulatory theory, the superior authority of the great English philosopher overshadowed the lesser light, and it was not until Young and Fresnel, at the commencement of this century, took the matter up, that the present theory of light took firm root. Thus we see that all these sciences have passed through the same stages of mystery and fancy, and it is only within the present generation that they have emerged from the mythical to the natural, from mere hypothesis to true theory. Hypothesis is an imaginary explanation which remains to be shown probable or to be proved true. Theory is this supposition when it has been shown to be highly probable, and all known facts are in agreement with its truth.—*Address of W. H. Preece, in Nature.*

SOUTHEY.—Very few of the readers of these words, probably, have any knowledge of Southey. They may remember that the "Holy-Tree" and the "Battle of Blenheim," which they read in class-books at school, were his poems; and they may know his *Life of Nelson*—a model biography. But the only distinguished man of letters whom we have ever known who read Southey as other people read Wordsworth and Tennyson was Hawthorne. In the little upper study of the Old Manse which he has graphically described, in which Emerson wrote the first modest volume that announced the appearance of an original and exquisite genius, and from whose window Emersons's clerical ancestor saw the immortal fight at Concord bridge, and caught the flash of "the shot heard round the world," there were a few books upon some hanging shelves, one of which was a bulkey volume of Southey's poems in an American edition. Hawthorne said that he read him with pleasure. There are a few readers who would say so to-day.

Macaulay, again, fifty years ago, had pronounced the severest judgment upon Southey; but the *Edinburgh* could be hardly expected to speak kindly of one of the strongest supports of the *Quarterly*, just before the Tory catastrophe in the passage of the Reform Bill of '32. "Mr. Southey," says Macaulay, in his most *ex cathedra* tone, "brings to the task two faculties which were never, we believe, vouchsafed in measure so copious to any human being—the faculty of believing without a reason, and the faculty of hating without a provocation.....In the mind of Mr. Southey reason has no place." Macaulay then throws a sweeping glance at his chief works, praising the life of Nelson and Wesley. But "*The History of the Peninsular War* is already dead," and "*The Book of the Church* contains some stories very prettily told. The rest is mere rubbish." But the critic admits that he had always heard that Southey was an aimable and humane man; and now that critic and author are gone and their form of the old contention has passed away, it is more possible for us than it was for Macaulay to see *how* aimable and humane a man Southey was.

To show us this is the pious and pleasant duty which Mr. Dowden has discharged in the series upon Southey. He was a professional man of letters. In a sense he was a publisher's "hack," supporting not only his own family, but at times the family of his brother-in-law, Coleridge, and that of the other brother-in-law Lovel, by patient persistence in literary labor: no day without a line; no year without a book; his sequestered life gliding gently away in the midst of fond domestic affections, a recluse in his library dealing only at a distance with men and affairs. He was the Tory laureate of George the Third, and the ruthless Whig Macaulay says that his official odes were worse than Pye's, and as bad as Cibber's. But Whig or Tory, Macaulay or Milton, Chaucer or Shakespeare, any man of great or little fame in any degree might well be glad if the story of his life were as pure and blameless as that of Southey. It was absolutely devoid of incident, and yet, as Mr. Dowden tells it, following, of course, the copious biography by Cuthbert Southey, it is full of interest, and a charming picture—perhaps the most charming in literature—of the professional man of letters.

It would not be so if it were a tale of mere literary drudgery. But fortunately Southey's profession coincided with his taste. Books were his chief pleasures. He loved a library more than any other place, and he was a tireless reader as well as writer. It seems to be a queer freak of fate that a student of tastes so exclusively literary, and drawn, as in his poems, to remote branches of literature, should have become such a doughty political warrior. He was the toughest of Tories and the stanchest of Churchmen, and the polemic was unsparing. He would not have hesitated to free his mind about Macaulay as plainly Macaulay freed his about Southey. But he was very patient and sweet with the young Shelley, and he had endless patience with the multitude of hapless and hopeful and disappointed writers, who are always attracted to a conspicuous author. Charlotte Bronte appealed to him long before her fame, and he gave her most friendly counsel. All his bitterness was in the ink of controversy, and he never spilled a drop at home nor in his friendly correspondence.—EDITOR'S EASY CHAIR, in *Harper's Magazine* for June.

"Keep Gittin."

Here is a little sermon in colored English, but full of common sense for that class of people who feel that Dame Nature insulted them when she refused to allow them to be born rich. Even the hen has to scratch for the worm, but these people expect the worm to crawl within reach and ask for the privilege of being eaten. "My friends," said Plato Johnson, in one of his oratorical moods, "de worl' am so consterituted dat while dar am jest 'bout 'nuff fur everybody who is willin' to work, dar ain't a morsel left fur de man who sits under de trees, an' 'spects de apples to fall into his mouf. Now I'se studied apples all my days, an' I never knew one dat wouldn't hang on to de limb until it was shook down—dat is, ob course, a sound, sensible apple. Don't stan' roun' de corner ob de street wid a wild expectation dat de man who libs dar is goin' to come out on de cold sidewalk an' ask you to be his son-in-law. I've seen many a man loafin' roun' Forty-second Street Depot as though he felt sure dat if he stayed dar long 'nuff, Mr. Vanderbilt would come out, an' hand him a check of $1,000,000 an' say, 'Young man, take dis small pile an' be happy.' No, de better way am to git your eye fixed on some-thin' an' den keep movin', keep movin'. De whole philosophy of life is in de little words 'keep gittin,' and after awhile you are sure to fin' yourself somewhar."—*Ex.*

A Lump of Sugar.

Mabel Ferris was very fond of sugar. She could never get as much of it as she wanted, and her pockets were always sticky with the handfuls which she put in them.

"I must find some way of hiding my sugarbowl," said Mabel's mamma. "My little girl has such a sweet tooth she will make herself sick. Indeed, Dr. Benton tells me her teeth will be ruined before long."

"I would not hide it," said Aunt Louisa. "I would give Mabel something not so sweet as sugar every time she helped herself to it without asking—a little bit of the essence of strap."

Aunt Louisa sat up so straight, and looked so severe, that mamma decided she would never ask her to keep house if she went away on a visit.

"I would cure Mabel of her naughtiness," said kind Aunt Polly, "but I would not whip her. I would never whip a child at all unless for telling a lie."

"What would you do?" said mamma.

"I would give her the basin and a spoon, and set her down beside the table, and just *let* her eat till she was satisfied. And then I would *make* her eat till she was surfeited."

"It might make her sick."

"One real hour's sickness would be less hurtful than constant half-sickness," said wise Aunt Polly.

Mamma tried Mabel several times after that, but found that she yielded to temptation, and, though it was forbidden, helped herself to sugar.

So she tried Aunt Polly's remedy, and it proved a perfect cure. We seldom want what we have been satisfied and surfeited with.—*Companion.*

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