

3.—*Memoir of Sir Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, with notices of his Daughter.* By GEORGE E. ELLIS. Published, in connection with an edition of Rumford's complete works, by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, Boston. Boston: Estes & Lauriat. 8vo. pp. 680.

THIS volume was prepared four or five years ago, at the expense of the American Academy, and is now offered for sale, we are told, at a price barely covering the costs of republication. It is, in fact, a very generous gift to the public from the Academy, as well as a very handsome monument to the ingenious and bountiful Count. Of the editor's work it would be difficult to speak too highly. For the points of industry, thoroughness, good taste, and literary skill, and, above all, a determination to do its subject perfect justice, neither less nor more, the book is a model. Where he has erred in judgment,—if he has,—it is in a direction which will win him the thanks of nine-tenths of his readers, and the reproaches—if there are any such—only of those who have to pay the bills. We have two capital portraits of the handsome Count, one of his daughter, engravings of his birthplace, two monuments, and half a dozen Rumford medals, facsimiles of autograph and seal, and even of the three amusing but inartistic drawings that adorn his daughter's manuscript journal. Every hint of information or scrap of correspondence that can illustrate the memoir seems to be gathered up with patience absolutely untiring; the very dates are given of the London newspapers that chronicle the details of some special enterprise; and the good luck that has attended the biographer, in the chance discovery of records, the falling in with letters, the dedication of monuments, or the allusions of the press, seems of a piece with that extraordinary run of luck which distinguished the career of Count Rumford above almost any ever recorded in biography.

Indeed, the outline of that career makes a story of romance which no judicious writer of fiction could ever venture on. A Yankee boy, ingenious, shifty, restless, vexatious beyond the average; with no capital but his wits and his handsome figure; by turns woodchopper, merchant's clerk, country school-master, and, above all, experimenter,—finds himself at nineteen married to a widow of not far from twice his age, of comfortable fortune, and a social standing of the very best. A bridal journey brings this young fortune-hunter to the notice of a royal governor of the colony, who at once gives him a major's commission, and makes him a conspicuous mark of militia envy. As popular feeling warms to revolutionary heat, he finds himself in such

danger from suspected disloyalty that he takes flight from wife and friends, whom he never sees again, and, after hovering a few weeks about the scenes of Cambridge, Concord, and Bunker's Hill, escapes—apparently in a fit of irritation and disgust at failing of a commission in Washington's army—into the British lines during the siege of Boston; bears to England the news of the surrender, and at once finds himself a trusted and favored servant of the Government, the associate of ministers and peers, and an officer of high rank in the British army; travels on the continent after the war is over, and with equal suddenness becomes the most trusted and influential adviser at the court of Bavaria; carries out a dozen plans of economy and reform, sets on foot the most radical and successful scheme ever devised for the cure of beggary, and is made a "Count of the Holy Roman Empire," with a generous pension for life, which passes to his daughter; afterwards avails himself of a few weeks' leisure in England to build up a "Royal Institution" with the prompt and liberal aid of science, rank, and wealth; and, a few years later still, resides in Paris, with a great fortune at his command, husband of one of the famous and brilliant queens of French society; his own scientific career, meanwhile, splendid alike in discoveries that gave his own name glory, and inventions that have added unspeakably to the daily comfort of the humblest of mankind.

The great merit of this biography is that it does full justice, down to the last details, to this extraordinary and shining career, and at the same time with unsparing hand shows where the cloud and the pain lay upon it. The most brilliant of adventurers, the most ingenious of contrivers, among the most painstaking and successful philanthropists that ever lived, Count Rumford seems borne along his path by that most imperious destiny which is the nature of the man himself. With that bright hemisphere of science and refinement beckoning to him from the east, "a born courtier" too as his biographer calls him, it was in the fitness of things that his curious and restless genius should not be cramped by the round of camp service, or wasted in the harder and ruder life of a New Hampshire village. Kindly and amiable to the marrow of his bones, he would quarrel with nobody if he could help it, and even seems to have felt at intervals as if his wonderful European experience was a long exile, visited by many a yearning to see his native land, his mother, and his child: of any such tenderness to his wife no evidence appears. This kindly temper, with some natural vanity (for he was then only a grown-up boy), made him as ready to court the flattering notice of a British governor as careful to keep the good will of his townspeople. Their rude fervor could not pardon

his apparent halting between the two opinions which were death and life to them. He seems to have been sincerely astonished at the sudden obloquy that drove him out of town, and to have protested quite honestly that he was no way "inimical" to the American cause. But patriotic suspicion kept him from the service he professed to seek; at an informal trial he barely escaped judgment as being little better than a spy; and he probably had few compunctions, and more of a home-feeling, when he had once adroitly crossed the line. For this, and for his service a few years later as a sort of recruiting officer of the British army near New York, he seems to have felt that he had never been quite pardoned; and when, now rich and famous, he craved to see New England again, and to build a home of his own on the beautiful border of Menotony (Spy Pond), he still hesitated, and was anxious lest he should not make his peace with his old neighbors, whose suspicions he had proved so just. What he forfeited, too, of family affection and honor—for he lapsed too easily into foreign ways, and was not true to the simpler moralities and faith of his New England home-training—is shown in the restless and rather dreary life led by his daughter, whom he had left an infant and did not see for more than twenty years; whom he wished as a companion and comfort, though for many years together he could not offer her a home; who shared something of her father's talent, and a good deal of his restless, wandering way; who seems to have brought an excellent ability and genuine kindness of heart to a result pitifully out of proportion to the splendid opportunities he had made for her. The brilliant discoverer, the honored philanthropist, the flattered guest and favorite of three royal cities and of the first nobility of Europe, completely like a spoilt child of his domestic infelicities in his second marriage. To bolt the gates of an evening against his wife's invited guests, and leave her—sought as she was by the choice society of Paris—to hold converse with her visitors across the garden wall, was an odd performance for the accomplished courtier and the eminent man of science: as if all the suns of foreign favor could not ripen the shifty country boy into a real gentleman! The domestic side of his life thus seems, in several views of it, undignified and disappointing—even if not, perhaps, positively unhappy; and it is on this side, after all, that most of a man's happiness is staked. Where Benjamin Thompson sinned, Count Rumford smarted under the rod.

But a man's clear right is to be judged by his best, and not his worst. How kind-hearted he was, how patient, how wise, how generous, how truly philanthropic and humane, how untiring in industry for the good that seemed to him most important to the general hap-

pineness of men, it is for his biography to show. There are two things which remain, the distinct and permanent monuments of his fame. In pure science, as one result from an infinity of ingenious, fruitful, and valuable researches, he may be said to be the real discoverer of the mechanical theory of heat; to have established and confirmed by experiment the proposition—more valuable than almost any theoretical one that can be named of the last century—that *heat is a mode of motion*, which has been argued and illustrated within these fifteen years almost as if it were a new discovery; and to have approached quite nearly to declaring the precise mechanical equivalent of heat, which was fully established by still more detailed experiment some twenty years later. This one among his innumerable services in that line is what sets his place and rank in the lists of physical science.

The grand experiment in what may be called the science of Charity, or in dealing practically with the gravest of all problems in social science, is what gave Count Rumford his strongest immediate claim to the gratitude of men. It is this, and not his skill in physical research, that is most conspicuous on his monument at Munich, where the experiment was made.¹ No one could possibly have imagined the good fortune that made it not merely a success, but a possibility. The absolute confidence of a king to whom Sir Benjamin Thompson was but an officer on leave of the British army, almost a stranger, with some dim prestige of science across the ocean, commended only by his personal address and his winning gifts; the curious, self-confident skill, the clear, prompt, resolute, swiftly-ordered action, that put in operation all the details of an intricate machine perfectly adjusted from the start; the coöperation he found in the habit of subordination in the people, the disciplined skill of his helpers, the tractable and willing temper of the subjects of his experiment,—all these were needed to make it what it appears at first sight to have been, the most completely successful effort yet seen to deal with the beggary of a populous city. The problems of pauperism are as various as they are painful. The conditions of wealth, the causes of destitution, are entangled even to this day in a chaos of dispute. The underlying question of population itself, the law of its increase or decay, comes in still further to complicate the matter, when we try to form a judgment that will hold under a variety of circumstances and times. A scientific knowledge how to deal with it cannot be had by theory; most likely, only by

¹ "To him who rooted out the most disgraceful public evils, Idleness and Mendicity: who gave to the Poor relief, occupation, and good morals, and to the Youth of the Fatherland so many Schools of Instruction." Erected in 1795 (Biography, pp. 196, 197).

long, difficult, and often disappointing experiment. It is Count Rumford's chief claim to honor that the one experiment put wholly in his hands, among a foreign people, still remains, for intelligence, instructiveness, and success, among the most valuable, as it is one of the most interesting, of all that have ever been tried.

J. H. A.

4.—*Three Memorial Poems.* By JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL. Boston: James R. Osgood & Co.

THESE "Three Memorial Poems" are the "Ode read at Concord, April 19, 1875," upon the one hundredth anniversary of the fight at Concord Bridge; "Under the Old Elm," commemorating the hundredth anniversary of the taking command of the American Army by Washington under the ancient tree still standing in Cambridge; and "An Ode for the Fourth of July, 1876."

We confess that we are always shy of *occasional* poems. By that we mean verses written to participate in and dignify some celebration of greater or less moment. They are commonly written to order, or we might almost, in view of the ordinary results, borrow a legal phrase, and say, "with *malice* aforethought." "Go to, now, let us write a poem" was never a good midwife to genius, nor brought into the world any very noble offspring of the Muse. With this preface, we are bound in frankness to say that, to our mind, this little volume of Lowell falls in with the rule, though containing passages that are notable exceptions. Especially the poem "Under the Old Elm" does not seem to us a work of merit at all equal to Lowell's genius or fame. In fact, if it were not Lowell's, and written with so much honest purpose and moral earnestness, we should not hesitate to call it very ordinary. Every one will read it once; no one will read it a second time. It will be laid down with the reflection that Lowell is a very skilful writer, and has toiled through a set task very successfully, barring considerable obscurity of expression which makes difficult reading, and is apt to belong to toilsome writing, if it must at the same time be stately. Of course, being from so true a poet as Lowell, it could not escape happy and strong expressions; but we do not include among these the "manly queen" with which the poem ends, and which we think neither pleasing, forcible, nor poetical. The line that most prints itself on our memory is,—

"The habitual full-dress of his well bred mind."

Also,—

"That energetic passion of repose."

The foregoing general remarks apply to the "Ode for the Fourth of July, 1876." But it is more pleasing to us, and has more passages that the reader will linger over. By very far the finest of the three is the "Ode read at Concord;" and it is, if not great or magnificent, a beautiful apostrophe to Liberty, and has many passages of poetic grace and strength. It is fresh, often glowing, vitalizing, and full of faith in, and love for, the temperate zone of freedom. Among happy and strong verses, we mark

"that era-parting bridge
O'er which, with footfall still as dew,
The Old Time passed into the New."

"She, a world-wandering orphan then,
So mighty now!"

"Freedom, O fairest of all
The daughters of Time and Thought!"

To our mind, the noblest number in the Ode is the following:—

IV.

"Whiter than moonshine upon snow
Her raiment is, but round the hem
Crimson stained: and, as to and fro
Her sandals flash, we see on them
And on her instep, veined with blue,
Flecks of crimson, on those fair feet,
High-arched, Diana-like, and fleet,
Fit for no grosser stain than dew;
O, call them rather christs than stains,
Sacred and from heroic veins!
For, in the glory-guarded pass,
Her haughty and far-shining head
She bowed to shrive Leonidas
With his imperishable dead;
Her, too, Morgarten saw,
Where the Swiss lion fleshed his icy paw;
She followed Cromwell's quenchless star
Where the grim Puritan tread
Shook Marston, Naseby, and Dunbar:
Yea, on her feet are dearer dyes
Yet fresh, nor looked on with untearful eyes."

J. V. B.