

## COURAGE OF JOHN PHILPOT CURRAN.

WHAT I last note in the eloquence of Curran is its courage. Danger is the test of manhood, whether in action or in words; and hardly a speech historically great has ever been spoken but at momentous hazard. This, here, I must simply assert. All who are conversant with the subject know that the assertion can be proved. No speaker ever had more courage than Curran, and no speaker ever more needed it. His courage was physical, mental, moral, political, constant, and consistent. Mortal combat was in the time of Curran frequently the cost of a word, and this cost, more than once, Curran was obliged to pay. At the very entrance of his active and professional life, he gave a magnanimous example of moral independence and physical intrepidity. An aged Catholic priest, Father Neale, in the discharge of his sacred duty, at the injunction of his bishop, excited the anger of a Protestant nobleman. The profligate aristocrat, Lord Doneraile, accompanied by his brother, Mr St. Leger, rode to the old man's cottage, called him out from his devotions, and, at his own door, beat him almost to death. But such was the dominion of Protestant ascendancy at the time, that lawyers refused to be concerned for a Catholic priest. Curran immediately undertook the case, and fearlessly and fiercely stigmatised the culprits. Considering the power which these culprits possessed, as Ireland was then ruled, the audacity of a young barrister in daring it was to some heroic, to others insolent, to all a novelty and a wonder. Curran gained a verdict against the nobleman, fought a duel with the nobleman's brother, whom, in the course of the trial, he had characterised as a ruffian and a coward. The venerable man, whose wrongs he so eloquently exposed, in quitting this mortal life soon after, sent for the generous advocate, and gave him his dying benediction. But well might Jeffrey, while commenting in the 'Edinburgh Review' on these events, express his astonishment that such things could ever have been. Demosthenes, it was said, ran away from battle. This was probably a calumny. But against Curran no such calumny was possible. Cicero has been accused not only of being a trimmer, but of being timid; and Mirabeau, it has been alleged, sold the popular cause for regal bribery. But Curran was as bold politically as he was personally, and he was as above interest as he was above fear. We cannot at this day estimate what Curran sacrificed to the popular cause, or how much risk he encountered for it. The part which Curran took in the rebellion-trials of 1798 has nothing in the whole history of defensive oratory with which we can compare it. Curran's position was a singular one, and the man was as singular as the position—as singular as either were the circumstances which created the position, and which glorified the man. A strange unity of national character prevailed then in Ireland amidst the most irreconcilable political hatreds. This very community of national genius, impassioned and intense, rendered contest all the fiercer, and made enmity all the darker. Power in its victory was cruel and unsparing; weakness in its defeat had nothing to plead, and nothing to hope. Humanity was asleep; conscience was blind; pity was deaf; but vengeance was all alive and all awake. Law was a dead letter; trial by jury was "a delusion, a mockery, and a snare." Any one who reads the records of those times will learn how universal was then in Ireland this reign of terror. The Marquis of Cornwallis, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, at the close of the insurrection, says that the executions by ordinary courts, or courts-martial, were nothing compared with the butcheries and burnings committed by armed and licensed murderers, who were not less abhorrent to the high and humane among the rulers than they were monstrous and merciless towards the people. In such a condition of things Curran had to stand nearly alone. He had to speak for the speechless, when words for the accused were almost accounted crimes; and he had to take the side of the doomed when the rancour of party spirit often confounded the advocate and the client.—'From Giles's Lectures.'

## SHREWISH WOMEN.

A. S. ISAAS has gathered together, as examples of warning, some notable instances of shrewish women, thus:

Perhaps one of the earliest shrews was the wife of Rabbi Jose. The story is forcibly told in the 'Talmud.' It seems that Jose, a rabbi of fair attainments and character, had the happiness of being married to a woman who was as perverse after marriage as she was gracious beforehand. One day, the story runs, the rich and learned Eliezer, the son of Asarya, paid a visit to Jose. Jose received his guest with great pleasure, and feeling himself highly honored in the company of one so wise and wealthy, entreated Eliezer to stay to dinner. He consented, unconscious of his friend's connubial blessedness. The wife delighted to vex her husband, turned her back upon his friend, and by sundry slips of the tongue and gestures, gave the unfortunate Jose to understand how little she cared for him or his learned companion. Jose good-naturedly took no notice of her churlish conduct, but merely asked her what she had for dinner. "Nothing, nothing," replied the termagant in a shrill voice, "nothing but a few vegetables." This Hebrew Xantippe had, however, prepared some very fine chickens for herself, which she afterwards ate with the greatest relish, leaving Jose and Eliezer to ponder over their scanty vegetables and the saying of Solomon, "It is better to dwell in a corner of a roof than with a quarrelsome woman in a roomy house."

Milton had a most vixenish wife. It might have added to his comfort to have been deaf instead of blind. To flatter his wife, Buckingham once called her a rose. "I am no judge of colors," replied the poet, "and it may be so, for"—he added with a sigh—"I feel the thorns daily."

The "judicious" Hooker fared no less badly in his selection of a better half and experience with her. The picture of his domestic relations, as drawn by Whipple, though truthful, is by no means flattering. Whipple attempts to excuse, in a measure, the temper of Mrs Hooker, on the ground that Hooker married her to be nurse, and, "there being

no possibility of equality between them, she in spiritual self-defence, established in the household the despotism of caprice and the tyranny of the tongue." His snarling wife used to frequently bid him rock the cradle, and so annoy his friends on a visit that they rarely came to see him again, except when they knew that Mrs Hooker, with her "spiritual sarcasm," was not at home. To Cranmer, repining that his wife should not prove more "comfortable," Hooker replied: "My dear George, if saints have usually a double share in the miseries of this life, I, that am none, ought not to repine at what my wise Creator hath appointed for me, but labor as I do daily—to submit mine to His will, and possess my soul in patience and peace."

The famous Dr Parr had a wife who used to quarrel with her husband for expending so much money for his books while he allowed his library-chairs to be sadly out of repair. One day, meeting him in the library, she exclaimed: "Mr Parr, we should have new chairs for the library; they are in a very sad way." "I cannot afford it, Mrs Parr," quickly replied the doctor. "Not afford it!" returned the lady, "when you can give ten guineas for a musty book which you never open!" "I tell you, I cannot afford it," vociferated the doctor, growing angry with his wife's obstinacy. "Not afford it?" slowly said the lady, "when your rents are coming in so fast (pointing to fast widening gaps in her husband's garment's), when you are in as much need of repair as the chairs!" Dr. Parr, who had expected a scene, quietly collapsed at his wife's masterly stroke of humour, and immediately sent for the upholsterer and tailor, completely vanquished by his wife's sharpness.

Although James Ferguson, the celebrated astronomer, in his autobiography does not once allude to his wife's conduct, it has been well ascertained that her temper was not the most congenial. One anecdote illustrating the fact has come down to us. It appears that one evening in London while he was delivering a lecture on astronomy, his wife entered the lecture-room in a passion, and maliciously knocked down several pieces of the apparatus. Ferguson calmly surveyed the catastrophe, and turning to the audience quietly said, "Ladies and gentlemen, I have the misfortune to be married to this woman."

Even great artists have not been free from the sharp action of shrews. The wife of Albert Durer compelled that renowned painter to toil to gratify her own miserly disposition, and when, in disgust at her wretched treatment, he ran off, she allured him back to his death-bed. Disraeli the elder relates of Berghem, that his wife would constantly keep him busy, and she contrived an odd experiment to detect his indolence. He worked in a room above her own; ever and anon she cheered him by thumping a long stick against the ceiling, while the meek, obedient Berghem answered by stamping his foot on the floor, and clenching his fist, too, perhaps, to satisfy his wife that he was not napping, but that he still lived!

Molière was extremely unfortunate in his wife. Captivated by the grace and vivacity of the actress, Bejart, he married her, but only to find after marriage her grace became converted into giddiness, and her vivacity into coquetry. Her vanity and artifices often drove him to despair. She had no pity, to use his own words, for his sorrows, and ensnared by the desire of general admiration, laughed at his anxieties.

SENATOR SUMNER.—The Washington correspondent of the 'Athenæum' writes of Mr Sumner:—"He was familiar with the literature of many languages, and people from a distance frequently came to Washington to consult him about mysterious books and manuscripts. His occasional orations, legal arguments, speeches in Congress, and miscellaneous writings were sufficiently abundant to make ten or twelve volumes, and a very beautiful edition of them was in course of publication at the time of death. By way of showing the interest he felt in his unfinished work, I may mention that during one of the paroxysms of pain on the night preceding his death, he made this remark: My book, my book, I should not regret this had I finished my book. His style of writing was noted for its dignity and terseness, as well as for what has been termed a gigantic morality, and his ability in illustrating his thoughts by reference to the treasures of ancient learning was something rare. The range of subjects upon which his mind feasted was well-nigh without bounds; history and poetry, philosophy and the sciences, all contributed to his enjoyment; and there was an earnestness and lofty integrity in all that he did, with his pen and as an orator, which commanded the respect of even his political opponents, and was a cause of admiration on the part of his friends. As a means of self-education, and also for the benefit of his health, he visited Europe a number of times, made many friends among the highly cultivated wherever he went; and among his foreign correspondents were the leading statesmen and authors of the Old World. He was an advocate of all good measures intended to educate the people, and ever munificent in his donations to the literary institutions of the country, and especially to Harvard University. As an orator, Mr Sumner stood well-nigh alone. Having been unfortunate in his marriage, he lived after the manner of a bachelor. His house in Washington was completely filled with rare books, valuable pictures, and miscellaneous works of beauty. His means were always ample, and yet he was wont to speak of himself as poor, because it required so much money to gratify his tastes. He was devoted to all kinds of art, thoroughly posted in its literature, and had a special fondness for the art of engraving: a thousand dollars for a proof print would, at any time, be forth-coming, when he happened to be fired with the desire of possession."

The richest banks of coral and the most beautiful coral in the world are to be found off the coast of Algeria. In fishing for the product divers' jackets and diving bells are prohibited as tending to injure the bottom. Each bank is divided into ten parts, only one of which is "exploited" each year.

The spread of socialism in Russia has caused the St. Petersburg Government to place several of the south-western provinces of the Empire under martial law.