

CHAPTER VIII.

"My library was dukedom large enough."

The student of human nature would wish for a clever pen when he writes of this ablest son of Kansas, and the lover of literature finds a delightful task in the consideration of the most illustrious phases of his character. The print-shop of public opinion sets up his name only in large capitals when the mentality of the man is put into type for history.

"He was an emperor in the realm of expression."

Beyond the senator of whom we have written, is the writer; and above and beyond that is the man himself.

Ingalls had three text-books: nature, humanity, and the dictionary. The first two gave him material and the third furnished him with implement or weapon according as his work was pacific or belligerent.

Ingalls was essentially an orator and a rhetorician. His whole inclination was toward a literary life. Was he therefore a misfit in politics? There are not lacking those who mourn that he did not devote himself to literature. It is easy enough to declare that a man has been a success or a failure in any field, but to assert that he would have been successful somewhere else is an assurance born of folly. There is not an over-production of literary ability to-day; whoever possesses it in a marked degree is assured of gracious hearing and an influence, especially in the halls of Congress.

Ingalls was formidable. His power of invective was something tremendous. Before his fierce words an enemy

could do nothing but writhe. Nobody who knew him ever walked carelessly or insolently on his preserves without regretting it. Of all degrees from mild ridicule to utter annihilation he was a cunning master. And with his keenness and originality one could never fore-judge where or how he would launch his weapon.

Ingalls' mind was of the critical type. His ideal of perfection was high. His sense of irregularity and of incongruity was keen. He was a born critic. No man who has a nice discriminating power can be otherwise than critical. It is said of Ingalls that he had no tolerance for a fool, no patience with mediocrity. We resent the authority of the man who sets himself in judgment over us. Yet if his judgment be accurate, ours may be the profit, nevertheless. It is not impossible that the man from Kansas did more with his criticism than the optimist could do in smoothing whitewash over sepulchres of corruption. Another quality of this noted mind was insight. No one can be critical without insight, which is not so much the ability to discern men's motives as the appreciation of their mental methods and status. He was shrewd in knowing people. The text-book of humanity he read on sight. Ingalls was a Cassius who thought much, was a great observer, and looked quite through the deeds of men. It was in the nature of things, too, that with this critical mind he should be satirical, and that his sense of humor should have an almost abnormal development. From ridicule that seared like white-hot iron, through all grades of sarcasm and satire, down to the most delightful mirth, his hand played all the keys. Some hint of a sense of the ludicrous cropped out perpetually. In his letters to his children, however brief, a smile crept in between the lines.

Ingalls had an innate dignity of bearing, and dignity of thought. In all his mental output, whether invective, or of humor, or pathos, whether instructive discourse or day-dream fancies, there was nothing of the coarse nor of the undignified commonplace.

Ingalls' style of composition was marked by picturesqueness, originality, and magnificence. It had in it a blending of Bacon and Addison, of Carlyle and Swift, of Shakespeare and Tennyson. Yet it was, above everything else, Ingalls' own creation. He lived so much in the realm of words that he came to the mastery over them. They served him gladly, for he grasped their uses and their potency. His pen was the stylus of the cameo artist, the chisel of the sculptor, the sabre of the warrior, the arrow of the gods.

In the text-book of Nature, John James Ingalls read the story of the universe.

He loved to take long solitary rides on horseback, or to ramble alone in the woods. He delighted to sit hour after hour and watch the shifting light and shadow on the great river that stretched away below his home and lost itself in the distant tangle of the landscape. The rolling prairie, the wooded ravines, the soft hazy skies of Kansas were to him an inspiration. In them he found an uplifting sense of peace. They gave to him, as their faithful lover, the benediction of the universe and the hidden tale of that drama

"That is still unread
 In the manuscript of God."

Ingalls reveled in the beautiful. So intense was his fine appreciation that it was next to pain. The dull, unthinking crowd never dream of the struggle in the mind of the artist who undertakes to realize in clay or color, in music or in

language, the fine ideal of beauty that the brain has created. When a man sees his own intense, exclusive thought stand out in words, when listening throngs wait for their utterance, when the resonance of their tones, the ripple of their music, the beauty of their figures, and the force of their truths cling like argument to the soul that takes hold of them—that man has the power of human mastery.

And here was the realm wherein John James Ingalls found himself—his best self. Whether or not it was the only work meant for him, God knows, and the adjustment of results is with Him.

Ingalls had a prolific mind. He had the gift of poetry in moderate degree. Sometimes the measures that fell from his lips were pearls, and sometimes toads and scorpions, depending altogether on the purpose whereunto he sent them.

His magazine articles, his fragmentary bits of beauty in one or another form of the country's press, his splendid oratory, covering such a wide field of thought, all tend to reveal the compass of a mind that knew and knew how it knew. His sayings are household words. His figures are standards for all future rhetoric. His conception of beauty is a divine beneficent gift to the English-speaking people.

And now as to the man himself. Kansans do not profess to know him, but they never doubt that he knew himself. In this distance from the day of his activity certain traits are revealed.

He had the thrift of a born New Englander. With all of what might seem a drain on his resources, he lived in moderate luxury all his days, and left a competency to his family by bequest.

He had to a degree a fraternal spirit. He belonged to the Grand Army of the Republic, the Loyal Legion, and the Masonic Order. Fraternal organizations have, like other social institutions, come to be somewhat of business propositions, social ladders, and political and personal foundations to power. They may be a convenience, a benefit, or a mere source of pleasure to their members. What Mr. Ingalls' motive was in belonging can only be guessed at.

Ingalls was called cold, unsympathetic, unfeeling. Yet he was to the inner circle none of these. Is it not clear that the man who is reading Nature and humanity, and who from day to day becomes a more habitual student, cannot pour out his soul like water? He never failed those who needed him. Within the sphere of his legitimate love he moved a genial, tender, thoughtful spirit.

His intimate friends and associates were always of the aristocracy of brain and merit. With these he felt himself at home. No man in Kansas ever lived among more refined associations.

He was a critic, and he hated fraud with an uncompromising hatred. Some of his bitterest attacks were made on shams and insincerity. He was unsympathetic here, unsparing, irresistible. Perhaps this is why the public thought him cold and indifferent.

His was an intensely sensitive nature. He must have suffered deeply when pain and grief came to him. As deep, too, was his joy in the sunshine of existence. In January of 1883 he wrote to his wife:

"I have a little funeral oration to deliver this A. M. on Ben Hill, and am in terror, as usual, although it lies written out on my desk"

But when the listening Senate heard that funeral oration, it never dreamed of terror in the gifted speaker. When the press of the Nation copied it far and wide, neither editor nor reader guessed of the terror in the sensitive spirit of the author. Only the loving wife at home knew that he had gained another victory, and the price with which it was bought. We do rarely

"Think when the strain is sung
 Till a thousand hearts are stirred,
 What life-drops from the minstrel wrung
 Have gushed with every word."

John James Ingalls was not a Church-man, and not a creed-man. Must the world offer excuse for that? Must the Church and creed sit in judgment on him and condemn him to where the fire is not quenched and the worm does not die? An irreligious man, whose best friends were the noted ministers of the gospel! A doubter, who depended on truth for the power that made him strong! Fortunately, the thinking mind has at last reached the resting-ground of belief, that each man's problem he alone can solve. The magnificent, vindictive Ingalls, who laughed at the foibles of the man-made Church, found the unseen in his own fashion, trusted and questioned for himself, and at last, when his life-drama ended, he could say in the faith: "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

Where, after all, is the real man? Is it in him who has the gift "the applause of listening senates to command"? Is it in him whose business bent can put him on pleasant and profitable footing with the kings of commerce? Does it lie in the man who figures before the crowd? who is at home on the stump, in the prayer-meeting, at the club, on the

street corner? A man may be any or all of these and pass for one of Nature's successes, and yet to those who know him best, who must meet him daily and hourly at his meals, in his dressing-room, in his study—morning, noon, and night, must see him—he may be a rasping, wearing curse, a contemptible snob, a selfish, heartless wretch. And that may be the real man.

There was a Kansan once, the real man, whose fine mind was habitually studious, whose sensitive nature was tinged with sweetness, yet with a humor all redeeming, whose wonderful ability to express himself "after the use of English in straight-flung words and few" puts him into classic literature forever, who dwelt near to the great heart of Nature, and loved almost to worship her delicate sweetness and her superb magnificence; whose heart was kind and gentle; who lived in the lives of his home and made them radiant with sunshine; who was modest in prosperity, and patient in adversity; who studied God and His universe after the means the God of that universe had given to him; who grew weary one day, folded his tired hands, and was not, for God took him.

Then the real man who was king of his own household was mourned for with a heart-breaking sorrow. Then and now for all the future, the commonwealth of Kansas bows reverently to his memory, and with pardonable pride her people designate him,

JOHN JAMES INGALLS,
WRITER, ORATOR, STATESMAN,
THE IDEAL KANSAN.

WILLIAM ELSEY CONNELLEY.