

## Reviews

James and Lucretia Mott.\*

THE magnetism of personality is so beautiful and so important an element in the accomplished work of any great men or women, that biographies which preserve for us their individuality as well as the traditions of their greatness are invaluable factors in handing down their influence. Many think of the name 'Lucretia Mott' as a synonym for sweetness and light, who could not perhaps state accurately for what she became so well known; it is, therefore, delightful to have so charming a biography of her as that prepared by Mrs. Hallowell. Nothing about it has been more charming to us than the close association, in the work and in the title, of James Mott with Lucretia. We cannot express the reason for this more gracefully than Mrs. Hallowell herself has done: 'Although he was not so widely known as she, and his field of usefulness in consequence might seem more restricted, yet no one can contemplate the lives of two so united—each seeming the other's complement,—without realizing that *his* life made *hers* a possibility.' As fearless, as independent, as sympathetic as she, they formed together one of those rare and perfect unions of a pair to whom, in equal degree, could be given the praise, 'They feared not the face of man, and nothing could move them to the slightest bitterness.'

Many different points make the book what it is—a valuable addition to any library. First, it is delightfully interesting, filled with humorous and tender anecdote. As a biography, it preserves for us those endearing traits which we most wish to know about. To those who have thought of Lucretia Mott alternately as the most fearless and the most gentle woman of her time, it is enchanting to know that she dealt tenderly with little womanly frailties, and while choosing for herself the simplest of Quaker garb, had a lingering fondness for pretty things, illustrated in the little story of the Canton crape shoulder-shawl, bordered with a handsome knotted fringe four inches deep. 'Pleased with the kindness of the giver, and loth to wound his feelings, she put it on and wore it for several days, braving the comments it excited. One morning, however, she came down to breakfast with the shawl shorn of its pretty fringe, as far as the last row of knots! This still remained, jagged and uneven, and anything but ornamental, but she said it seemed such a pity to cut the whole off, that she had left one row!' Mrs. Hallowell has shown great wisdom in thus giving most vividly many of her grandmother's traits in simple incidents. She illustrates her fearlessness by relating how she told the gentleman who was escorting her and another lady through a mob, to take the other lady, adding, 'This man will take me through,' placing her hand quietly on the arm of one of

the roughest of the mob, who, startled into gallantry, actually did see her to a place of safety. What could better illustrate her philanthropy than to know that in her hall stood two roomy arm-chairs, known by the children as 'the beggars' chairs,' because in such constant requisition for applicants of all sorts, 'waiting to see Mrs. Mott, miss.' That she was not without humor, many anecdotes show; as when she entered a room where her husband and his brother were sitting, and said, 'I thought you both were in here; it was so quiet!' The accounts of her rigid economy are most interesting when we remember that the close saving was not niggardliness, but the saving on some things to spend lavishly on others, especially on what some one has called 'the necessary superfluities of life.' For not only did the Motts give away extravagantly, but they had a healthful belief that it was better to spend what they had in comforts for themselves and their dear ones while they lived, than to hoard up legacies for those who might come after them. In this, as in all other things, they seemed entirely free from 'les défauts de leurs qualités'; for if at one time Lucretia Mott asked some one to open a bureau drawer and hand her a feather which she had laid aside there, that she might put it back in a pillow in which she was sewing up the hole from which it had escaped, at another time she was quite capable of encouraging her husband to give up a lucrative business which involved trading in products of slave labor.

The memoir of the Motts, like their life, of course widens out greatly from the circle of their own household into questions of national importance. But the public part of their career is so well known that we have chosen rather to dwell on the personal element, so well brought out in this admirable book. The story would be worth reading, if only as a beautiful study of the love and life together for fifty years of a happy husband and wife; closing with the pathetic incident of James Mott's death, when, after a restless night, he fell asleep never to wake again, and the daughter who came into the room in the morning found her mother, worn with watching, fallen asleep with her head on the same pillow, to wake only to widowhood.

\* *Life and Letters of James and Lucretia Mott.* Edited by Anna Davis Hallowell. With Portraits. \$2. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co.