

Leigh Hunt.

An admirable little life of one of the most human and lovable of geniuses — Leigh Hunt — is published in the "Dilettante Library." Mr. R. Brinsley Johnson is in thorough sympathy with his author, and the book is written in a pleasant, cheerful style, which makes it wholly delightful. "Such a sweet sinner" was Leigh Hunt, as Father Taylor used to say; he was so attractive, so easy-going, so ready to sponge on his friends, and so ready to give to his friends what he owed to his creditors. But he was brimful of the milk of human kindness, which makes us deal as leniently with his trespasses as he dealt with those of other men. If we cannot give Leigh Hunt on his own account a niche in the temple of fame, his name will always be associated with those who have undeniable right there. One of the most interesting circumstances of Leigh Hunt's life was his intimate friendship with Shelley, and one of the most interesting portions of this biography is Leigh Hunt's own account of Shelley's funeral rites. This is one of the best bits of word-painting Leigh Hunt ever wrote. It was Leigh Hunt who summed up Shelley's life and character in his epitaph, "*Cor cordium.*" Mr. Johnson makes an admirable selection from Leigh Hunt's prose essays in his quotations. From Leigh Hunt's "An Earth upon Heaven," which one might almost believe to have been written by Heine, we cannot resist quoting. This earthly paradise shall contain

a mistress with one or two little angelical peccadillos. . . . The weather will be extremely fine, but not without such varieties as shall hinder it from being tiresome. . . . If we choose now and then we shall even have inconveniences.

This is delightful fooling, and of a kind seldom well done in English; it usually needs the real inbred German fantastical imagination to make a success of it. The paper on "Coaches," which Mr. Johnson quotes, is worthy of Lamb. Leigh Hunt rejects as "gouty and superfluous the carriage full of cushions and comforts," scouts "the ambition to have TANDEM written on his tombstone," and declares that "a postchaise involves the idea of traveling, which in the company of those we love is home in motion." Another delightful article on the libraries of the ancients says:

The idea of an ancient library perplexes our sympathies by its map-like volumes rolled upon cylinders. We cannot take kindly to a yard of wit or to thirty inches of moral observation.

From cover to cover Mr. Johnson's book is worth reading and enjoying, and its only fault is that rarest of failings — brevity. [Swan Sonnenschein & Co. 90c.]