

ing for the children; you see it has come as I said.'

"Mrs Alcott wanted comfort and counsel; for, though cheerful and uncomplaining, things had got pretty low. Mr Alcott was evidently not well, and she was quite anxious about him, and expressed some fears that the little sympathy and encouragement he received in regard to his views would depress him beyond what he could bear. However, after a good talk and a good crying-spell, her spirits rallied, and all was bright again. She told me of a miserable poor woman in her neighbourhood, who had just lost a drunken husband and was in a poor hovel with four children, and she had been aiding her in a small way to a little meal, and encouraging her to have a good heart and keep out of the workhouse, and had interested other neighbours in her behalf. She said it seemed as if this poor family had been brought to her notice to show her how much better her own situation was, and to give a change to her feelings by looking about and doing what she could to assist her.

"I went with her one day to see the family. In the course of the visit the woman mentioned Mr Alcott. 'I did not know he had been to see you.' 'Oh, yes; he was here yesterday and the day before, and sawed up some wood that had been sent me. I had engaged Mr Somebody to

saw it for me, and did some sewing for his wife to pay for it.' Said Mrs Alcott, 'Then Mr A.'s sawing it did not do you much good?' 'Oh, yes; they said they had as lief give me the money for it, so I had it to buy some meal'

"Whilst I was at Mrs Alcott's, of course I saw no meat, nor butter, nor cheese, and only coarse brown sugar, bread, potatoes, apples, squash, and simple puddings: of these materials were the staples for food. I was obliged to have tea occasionally, but, except that, I lived as they did, for I could not have the heart or the stomach to take out my beef. Mr Alcott thought his wife did wrong to prepare the tea for me. The Alcotts had just begun to do with two meals a-day, that the children might have the pleasure of carrying once a-week a basket of something from their humble savings to the poor family. Now the saving must be made for themselves.

"Mr Alcott said he could not live with debt burdening them in this way— that they must live simpler still. He started up and said he would go into the woods and chop for his neighbours, and in that way get his fuel. He has since entered upon this work."

If people like these be the practical outcome of "Transcendental" principles, then would to God that we all were both almost and altogether such as they— except those "cranks."

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Born, December 5, 1830, Charlotte Street, London.

Died, December 29, 1894, 30 Torrington Square, London.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

From a photograph in the possession of Mr W. M. Rossetti.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

OF all the woman-poets that England has yet produced— and they are neither feeble nor few— Christina Rossetti stands out pre-eminently as the most religious. Her thoughts instinctively ran in religious grooves. Now and again her intense love of symbolism carries her into quaint fancies and dainty turns of literary expression, while the restrained passion of "The Sonnet of Sonnets" makes us realise that she knew something of the breadth and depth and height of human love; but, in the main, she dwells chiefly upon the inner life of man: the life hidden in God is her favourite theme.

And we need be no rabid adherents to the doctrines of heredity and environment if we trace the source of her mystic piety to the influences which surrounded her.

Christina Georgina Rossetti was the youngest child of Gabriel Rossetti, the poet-patriot of Italy, and Frances Lavinia, the daughter of

Gaetano Polidori. Her upbringing was strangely different to that of most children,— in a home permeated with art and poetry, and which also had about it a romantic atmosphere of mystery and patriotism. The proscription of Gabriel Rossetti by King Ferdinand rendered his further residence in Italy impossible; but he would have found great difficulty in leaving the country had it not been for the kindness of the admiral in charge of a portion of the British fleet then stationed in the Bay of Naples. This timely friend assisted his flight by lending him an English uniform, and himself escorting the proscribed patriot to the safety of a steamer bound for English shores. Educated as a Roman Catholic and yearning to believe, he was yet destitute of the capacity of yielding himself to the simplicity of the Gospel story. But the poetry of religion, its beauty and its symbolism, appealed strongly to a nature that was keenly alive to all beauty; and though for many years he was unable to rejoice in the Light, it was an unseen Influence that regulated his life and conduct unconsciously to himself, while the poems of his later years show that his passive attitude towards Christianity had entirely changed.

Mrs Rossetti possessed intellectual gifts of no mean order, and it is authoritatively stated that, had she not been content to subserve the still

greater endowments of her clever family, she too would have made for herself an honoured place in the world of letters. There have been many mothers who have voluntarily allowed themselves to be eclipsed by their children, but few who have produced such a brilliant quartette as gathered round her while she told her delightful stories or read to them from the masterpieces of English and Italian literature. Domestic dulness must have been unknown to any of them, but the general atmosphere was not conducive to that "mirth and merriment which bars a thousand ills and lengthens life." As circumstantial evidence of this, we notice that the sonnet entitled "Vanity of Vanities" was written before Christina was seventeen.

Maria Francesca, the eldest child, was scarcely less gifted than Christina, and "a born leader." Her 'Shadow of Dante' is a classic of its kind; and though the brothers considered Christina "the genius of the family," there is no doubt that the spontaneous reverence with which the latter regarded her sister was well deserved.

She subsequently merged her literary tastes and domestic cares in the interests of an Anglican sisterhood, and entering the community of All Saints, Margaret Street, in 1873, she died there three years later at the age of fifty-six.

Dante Gabriel was the second of this remark-

able family, each of whom inherited the artistic temperament which would be likely to accrue from a long pedigree of Italian progenitors. The pictures of the poet-painter will never be "popular," in the general acceptance of the word; but there is an under-sidedness to them all which will make them psychological studies to men and women who care nothing for their pictorial worth.

Of all the family, perhaps the only "practical" member was William Mitchell, who happily is still with us, and who unites a keen enthusiasm for the Arts with a carefully balanced judgment, and a good temper which nothing seems able to disturb.

In such a circle as this Christina grew up, and, as the junior of such a family, environed with such unusual influences, it is small wonder that she early developed unusual tendencies.

Given a father who was a poet patriot, a sister who was a religious mystic, and brothers who were respectively a poet painter and a poetic critic, the result is— Christina Rossetti; whose poems are equal in many respects to any that English literature can show, whose prose writings teem with religious symbolism and the mystic beauty of medieval days, and who yet possessed a clear common-sense, a stern devotion to duty, and a fortitude under suffering which never failed.

Her first verses were written in 1842, and were

printed in 1847 at her grandfather's private press, in conjunction with many others composed between the age of twelve and sixteen. They are full of poetic promise, and we cannot wonder at the pride and pleasure with which they were regarded by all the members of the family.

The publication of 'The Germ' in 1850 gave a further impetus, if indeed any were needed, to her poetic tendencies. This periodical, which only ran its brief course for four months, was the outcome of the formation of "The Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood,"—the "sacred seven" who were afterwards to make the world ring with their names.¹ Although Christina, with many of the other writers for 'The Germ,' was debarred from actual membership in the brotherhood, she was one of the principal contributors to the newspaper. William Rossetti was unanimously chosen as its editor, and the whole scheme had its origin in the active and enthusiastic brain of Dante Gabriel.

At this time he was only twenty-one; and when we notice the names of its youthful contributors—nearly *all* of whom have attained to more than mere temporary fame—we cannot but regret its short-lived existence. To this paper, under the pseudonym of "Ellen Alleyn," Christina

¹ These were William Woolner, Holman Hunt, John Everett Millais, James Collinson, Frederick George Stephens, and the two Rossetti brothers.

contributed no less than seven poems — "Dream-land" being perhaps the best known among them; and when we remember that she was then only nineteen years of age, their interest and value is accentuated. This exquisite little lyric is a mystical allegory, having within it an absolute faith in the "perfect peace" which lies beyond the charmed sleep He gives to His beloved. Several of her poems subsequently appeared in other magazines, but it was not until the publication of 'Goblin Market and other Poems' that much public attention was directed to their gifted writer.

There had been much anxiety in the little household for many years, when in 1853 it was at last determined that Mr and Mrs Rossetti should try, with Christina's help, to set up a school at Frome in Somersetshire. The study of Italian had "gone out of fashion" in London, and the high-souled refugee was neither strong enough nor rich enough to bear the strain put upon his resources by the loss of pupils and the then recently developed craze for things "made in Germany." So for eleven months they tried school-keeping in the country, while the remaining members of the family taught and studied in London. But the experiment was a failure, and in March of the following year (1854) they returned to London, where, only a month later, the much-revered husband