

visiting Hunt's Point, on Long Island Sound. A relative of Drake's lived in the delightful spot, and the poet now lies buried where he so often roved. Another place which Drake and Halleck resorted to was the house of Henry Eckford, a wealthy shipbuilder. His residence, situated several miles from what was then the heart of New York, had other attractions than the scenery which surrounded it, and the good dinners for which it was famous. In it resided Eckford's beautiful daughter, with whom Drake speedily fell in love, and to whom he was married in the Summer of 1816, Halleck acting as groomsman. In a letter to his sister, dated Jan. 20, 1817, Halleck wrote of this marriage as follows:

"As his wife's father is rich, I imagine he will write no more. He was poor, as poets, of course, always are, and offered himself a sacrifice at the shrine of Hymen, to shun the 'pains and penalties' of poverty. I officiated as groomsman, though much against my will. His wife is good-natured, and loves him to distraction. He is, perhaps, the handsomest man in New York—a face like an angel, a form like an Apollo, and, as I well know that his person was the true index of his mind, I felt myself during the ceremony as committing a crime in aiding and assisting in such a sacrifice."

As Halleck remained a bachelor to the end of his days the above statement may, perhaps, be taken cum grano salis. In another letter Halleck gives an interesting view of Drake:

"Even to the most common and trifling subjects he will give an interest wholly unexpected and unlooked for. His manner of reading Shakespeare is unique, and to the bombast of our old friend, Ancient Pistol, he will give a force beyond description. He has a taste for music, and plays the flute admirably. As I owe to his acquaintance many a pleasant hour, he has become endeared to me, and I must apologize for dwelling so long on a picture, the details of which are so uninteresting to one who has not seen the original."

To this may be contrasted Drake's own description of himself, written before he was married:

"A comical mixture, half bad and half good,
Who has skimmed over all things, and naught understood;
Too dull to be witty, too wild to be grave,
Too poor to be honest, too proud for a knave—
In short, a mere chaos, without form or rule,
Who approaches to all things, but nearest a fool."

In August, 1816, Drake wrote his greatest work, "The Culpit Fay." He was then about twenty-one years of age, and his youth and the remarkable circumstances under which it was written, together with its real beauty and merit, render it a most ingenious production. The poem was written in the short space of three days, in pursuance of a wager that arose from a conversation between him and his friends—Halleck, De Kay, and James Fenimore Cooper. The conversation had been on Scottish streams, and their subservency to the uses of poetry on account of their romantic associations. Cooper and Halleck held that American streams were not so adaptable, being less romantic. They further contended that it would be extremely difficult, if not well-nigh impossible, to write a purely imaginative fairy poem without bringing in human characters. Drake opposed them on both issues, and to prove his point read to them when they had reassembled a few days later, his poem, "The Culpit Fay," which he had written in 'the interim.' The poem as then read was nearly the same as when afterward published. The scene is laid in the Highlands of the Hudson, and the poem opens with this description:

"'Tis the middle watch of a Summer's night—
The earth is dark, but the heavens are bright;
Naught is seen in the vault on high,
But the moon, and the stars, and the cloudless sky,
And the flood which rolls its milky hue—
A river of light on the welkin blue,
The moon looks down on old Cronest
She mellows the shades on his shaggy breast,
And seems his huge gray form to throw
In a silver cone on the wave below."

A fairy who has broken his vow is called before the elfin court, where the King of the Fairies sentences him to the performance of various tasks as punishment for his delinquency. He performs them all successfully, and is restored to his former standing in the elfin circle. The poem is highly imaginative, and some of the descriptive passages in it are of exceeding beauty. The description of the fairy's armor may stand as a test:

"He put his acorn helmet on;
It was plumed of the silk of the thistle down;
The corslet plate that guarded his breast
Was once the wild bee's golden vest;
His cloak, of a thousand mingled dyes,
Was formed of the wings of butterflies;
His shield was the shell of a ladybug queen,
Studs of gold on a ground of green;
And the quivering lance which he brandished bright,
Was the sting of a wasp he had slain in fight.
Swift he bestrode his fiery steed;
He bared his blade of the bent-grass blue;
He drove his spurs of the cockle seed,
And away like a glance of thought he flew,
To skim the heavens, and follow far,
The fiery trail of the rocket star."

Shortly after his marriage, the young poet's health began to fail, and in the Spring of 1818 he sailed for Europe, accompanied by his wife and his friends De Kay and Langstaff, the latter being an apothecary of very eccentric demeanor, who kept a drug store in the basement of Drake's residence, on the corner of Park Row and Beekman Street, Drake being also a member of the firm. On his return from abroad in 1819 he commenced a literary partnership with Halleck, which bore fruit in the celebrated "Croaker" articles. The first of these sketches in verse appeared in the columns of The New York Evening Post in March, 1819. It was an address "To Ennui," by Drake. Drake's verses were signed "Croaker," "Halleck's "Croaker, Jr.," and

the ones they wrote in collaboration "Croaker and Co." These articles were satirical and quizzing hits on the topics of the times, political and otherwise, and attracted widespread attention. They set the town a-going for awhile, and were followed by a horde of imitators, who could never touch the originals. Mr. Coleman, the editor of The Post, was himself so struck with them that in the columns of his paper he asked for an interview with the writers. One evening Drake and Halleck called on him at his residence in Hudson Street. When Mr. Coleman entered the parlor he was rendered nearly speechless with amazement by being told that they were "Croaker and Co." "My God!" he exclaimed, "I did not think that we had such talent in America." The "Croaker" series was collected by somebody and published in pamphlet form. This pamphlet was sold for 25 cents originally, but twenty-five years ago a copy of it could not be bought for less than \$5. There is no telling what price it would bring to-day. In May, 1819, Drake wrote his famous "Ode to the American Flag," beginning:

"When Freedom from her mountain height."

This poem originally concluded with these lines:

"As fixed as yonder orb divine,
That saw thy bannered blaze unfurled,
Shall thy proud stars resplendent shine,
The guard and glory of the world."

Not liking them, however, he asked Halleck to suggest something better. Halleck, on the spur of the moment, wrote the following lines, which Drake accepted and incorporated in the poem:

"Forever float that standard sheet!
Where breathes the foe but falls before us,
With Freedom's soil beneath our feet,
And Freedom's banner streaming o'er us!"

In literary aid and suggestion Halleck and Drake were not unlike Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith. Not long after his return from Europe Drake began to show symptoms of consumption, and was advised to go South. He went to New Orleans, but the trip did him little good. He returned home, after an absence of several months, very much weakened. He lingered through the Summer, tenderly cared for by his friends. He died Sept. 21, 1820, at the early age of twenty-five years. On his deathbed he made a singular request. De Kay had collected and copied his poems, and thinking Drake would be pleased mentioned the fact to him. The poet's only reply was, "Burn them—they are valueless." A collection of his poems, however, was afterward made by his daughter, an only child, and published in October, 1835. She very appropriately dedicated the book to Fitz Greene Halleck. Drake was buried at Hunt's Point. Coming from the funeral Halleck remarked to De Kay: "There will be less of sunshine for me hereafter, now that Joe is gone," Halleck's monody on his friend, beginning:

"Green be the turf above thee,
Friend of my better days!
None knew thee but to love thee,
Nor named thee but to praise."

has become famous. A visit to the grave of the poet at Hunt's Point makes a romantic literary pilgrimage. Walking from the cars down a country road about a mile long, on each side of which are many fine country residences, one comes upon the old Hunt's Point Road, running along Long Island Sound. Turning to the left, a small grove of trees and high bushes, through which an occasional glimpse of a tombstone is caught, tell of the presence of a rural cemetery, and it is in the humble loneliness of this isolated graveyard that the remains of Joseph Rodman Drake rest. It is unnecessary to open the creaking wooden gate, whose iron hinges are rusted by the storms of years, for almost directly opposite the grave of Drake the dilapidated fence has fallen entirely down, and one needs but to step over the rail and walk a few feet through clinging bushes to come upon the last resting place of the poet.

The grave is marked by a marble monument of imposing plainness, which is inclosed by an iron railing to protect it from the vandal hands that have damaged it so much already. The inscription on the monument is as follows:

Sacred to the memory of Joseph R. Drake, M. D.,
who died Sept. 21st, 1820, aged 25 years.
None knew him but to love him,
Nor named him but to praise.

The surroundings of this rural cemetery are very beautiful, and here in the soft glory of the Spring, the wild beauty of the Summer, the melancholy bleakness of Autumn, and the stern grandeur of Winter, the poet sleeps amid the very scenes he loved, and where in days of yore he had often trod.

The life of Joseph Rodman Drake was like the life of many another poet who could be named. It was full of those buds of promise that never bloom into the flowers of realization. Sudden breaks of industry, such as the one that culminated in the "Culpit Fay," often followed the long spells of dolce far niente that were pleasing to the nature of the poet. Perhaps the seeds of disease in his system had much to do with this. Despite high poetic talent he has suffered the fate of many brilliant men. Highly praised in his own generation, to many readers of to-day his name is scarcely more than a literary reminiscence.

Joseph Rodman Drake.

His Life in New York and His Grave at Hunt's Point—His "Ode to the American Flag."

Among the American poets of real genius whose works have suffered an unmerited neglect may be mentioned Joseph Rodman Drake, the author of "The Culpit Fay" and the "Ode to the American Flag." In this respect he has not been so fortunate as his friend and compeer, Fitz Greene Halleck. Halleck still has a certain circle of admiring readers, even though his poetry has lost its old-time popularity; but Drake's poems have been so far forgotten that to-day a copy of his "Culpit Fay" is to some extent a literary treasure. In view of these circumstances a review of the main incidents of the poet's career may not be out of place.

Joseph Rodman Drake was born in New York City Aug. 7, 1795. He was a lineal descendant of Sir Francis Drake, the explorer. His father, Jonathan Drake, a Revolutionary Colonel, was directly descended from John Drake of Devonshire, England, who, with his sons, settled at East Chester, N. Y., in the year 1630. The poet's mother was Hannah Laurence, the daughter of Effingham Laurence of Flushing, L. I. The Laurences were a family of highly respectable connections, so the poet could claim good ancestry on either side. He was an only son, and with three sisters was left in destitute circumstances, at an early age, by the death of both parents. The trials attendant on orphanship and the coldness and ingratitude he encountered in his early years fitted him to realize the value of true friendship when he was fortunate enough to meet with it in later life.

His generous and poetic nature showed itself when he was a small lad, and one of the stories told of him at this period illustrates his romantic disposition. For some childish offense he had been confined in the garret in a small closet-like recess that was shut off by wooden bars. His eldest sister, filled with girlish pity for her little brother, crept upstairs to see how he bore his punishment. She found young Joseph pacing up and down the floor with a "make-believe" sword upon his shoulder, at the same time furtively watching a heap of rubbish that lay in the corner. It afterward transpired that he had imagined he was Don Quixote standing guard over the armor in the church.

At ten years of age he had written some metrical compositions, and at fourteen wrote "The Mocking Bird" and "The Past and the Present," which, considering the youth of the author, were very respectable productions. About this time he had secured a mercantile position, but at the age of eighteen resigned it in order to devote himself to the study of medicine. This study he pursued diligently, and soon had the gratification of being enrolled among the metropolitan M. D.'s. It was during this period of his career that he was introduced to young Fitz Greene Halleck by a mutual friend, James De Kay. The utterance of a single sentence brought these two poets together in a friendship that was to last until death claimed Drake, a few years after.

The two young men were in a group of friends one afternoon after a shower, when Drake, noticing the beauty of the rainbow, remarked, "I should like nothing better than to be stretched on that rainbow with a copy of Tom Campbell in my hand." Hearing this, Halleck impulsively grasped Drake's hand and exclaimed: "We must know each other." From the day that these men became acquainted in such a charming way, until the time when Halleck penned his immortal epitaph for his friend, the warmest friendship, the most ideal companionship, and the closest intimacy characterized the acquaintance of the two "Croakers."

They were inseparable companions and frequently took long suburban excursions together, very often