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BOOKS.

He that many bokes redys,
Cunnyng shall he be.
Wysedome is soone caught;
In many leues it is sought:
But slouth, that no boke bought,
For reason taketh no thought;
His thryfte cometh behynde.—*Selected.*

VICTOR HUGO.

Demorest's Magazine.

On the 23rd day of last February,
Victor Hugo completed his eighty-
third year, and all Europe united
with his own France in paying
him its tribute of love and reverence.

The *Gil Blas* of Paris issued an el-
egant "Hugo Supplement" wholly
devoted to the life and works of the
"master," and containing numerous
congratulatory messages sent him
from the foremost citizens of the
world.

"The 'Sublime Child,' as Chateau-
briand named him, deserves to be
called the sublime old man," was the
message of M. Pasteur, the greatest
of French scientists. "In this glori-
ous longevity, France presents a beau-
tiful spectacle to the world."

"Thy setting sun, seems but a fair, new dawn,"
was the opening line of Eugene Man-
uel's poetic tribute, while Francois
Copee, next to Hugo the first of con-
temporary French poets, enshrined
his congratulations in an exquisite
stanza which defies translation.

"It is only the lofty, snow-crowned
summits that give back the fires of
the setting sun," was the missive of
the gifted Queen Elizabeth of Rou-
mania, known to the reading world
as "Carmen Sylvia."

"I offer the tribute of my respect to
the great writer whose works are
worthy of his country, whose life is
worthy of his works," were the
words that flashed across the Channel
from Wilkie Collins, while the mes-
sage of another Englishman, Lord
Lyons, ran, "Still may you have—

"All that which should accompany old age,
As honor, love, obedience, troops of friends."

"This anniversary is a national festi-
val," wrote Pierre Veron. "Victor
Hugo, so long a man of combat, has
become a pacificator through the pow-
er of genius. Professional jealousy,
sectarian animosity and political
controversy are alike disarmed before
him."

Three months later, on the 22nd of
May, the great poet and novelist, the
stainless patriot, the revered and
honored citizen, whose hale, beauti-
ful old age had been thus gracefully
commemorated, died after a brief ill-
ness. All Paris, which had gathered
with congratulations and good wish-
es around the home of the venerated
poet, in the Avenue d'Eylau, now
flocked to view his remains as they
lay in state under the *Arc de Tri-
omphe*, whence they were borne, at-

tended by sorrowing thousands, to
the final rest in the church of St.
Genevieve, transformed in honor of
Victor Hugo into a Pantheon, as it
had previously been when in the days
of the Revolution it received the re-
mains of Mirabeau. Could the silent
singer and romancist have chosen his
place of sepulture, one inclines to the
opinion that it would have been the
cathedral of *Notre Dame*, the scene
and inspiration of his greatest ro-
mance.

Victor Hugo belonged to an an-
cient and noble family of Lorraine.
His father one of seven brothers, five
of whom had perished in the Revolu-
tion, was a general in the army of
Napoleon; his mother, a native of
La Vendee, was a devout Royalist.

Born at Besancon, when the star
of the all-conquering Corsican was in
the ascendant, he shared with his
mother and two elder brothers the
shifting, adventurous life of a soldier
of the consulate and the empire.

After various gallant military
achievements, notable among which
was the routing of *Fra Diavolo* and
his band of robbers, General Hugo
accompanied the new king, Joseph
Bonaparte, to Spain, and held high
office in the royal palace of Madrid.
When, years after, his son, Victor,
celebrated Spain and Italy in immor-
tal verse, he only revived the impres-
sions of a romantic boyhood.

The year 1812 found the Hugo fam-
ily in Paris, domiciled in the abbey
of the Feuillantines, a somber pile set
in a large garden. Here Victor and
his two brothers, Abel and Eugene,
studied with great ardor and under
the direction of excellent private tu-
tors. Victor, at the age of fifteen,
entered the lists as contestant for a
poetic prize, offered by the French
Academy. He received honorable
mention, and, but for his extreme
youth, would have been decreed the
prize. The next year he won two
poetic prizes from the Toulouse Acad-
emy. Chateaubriand was soon after
to recognize his genius, and give him
initiation into the ranks of French
poets, under the title of "The Sub-
lime Child."

A Royalist, because his mother
had nurtured him in that faith, he
hailed the downfall of Napoleon with
a delight that greatly exasperated
his father. Political differences led,
ere long, to a separation between Gen-
eral Hugo and his wife, the eldest
son, Abel, following his father's for-
tunes, the two younger sons remain-
ing with their mother until her death,
four years later.

In his fifteenth year Victor had
made a wager with his schoolmates
that he would write a romance with-
in a fortnight. *Bug Jargol* was the
result. Eight years later the work
was recast and published.

A youth of nineteen at the time of
his mother's death, he sought diver-

sion from his sorrow in a novel, en-
titled, *Hon d'Island*, a crude, but
strikingly original work, which both
surprised and enraged the critics. The
story is strong but grotesque, and
quite in defiance of the literary pro-
prieties.

Eugene Hugo also engaged in liter-
ature much to the displeasure of his
father, a practical man who declared
that his sons need expect no assist-
ance from him while they per-
sisted in such pursuits. Victor re-
plied loftily, that literature was
his vocation, by which he should
stand or fall. From that hour
he was thrown upon his own re-
sources. In the struggle with fort-
une that followed, he gained that
insight into the common lot of toil
and self sacrifice, which made him
ever after the friend and champion of
the poor. Here he received his con-
secration as the poet of all human-
ity.

The youthful Marius of *Les Misera-
bles* is Hugo himself at this time. In
the toils and sacrifices of his hero, he
but opens a page of his own history.

"Odes and Ballads," a volume of
royalist and religious poetry, ap-
peared in 1822, Abel Hugo defraying
the costs of publication. In one of
these odes, the praises of royalty are
sung in such dulcet strains that the
scholarly Bourbon King, Louis
XVIII., expressed his delight by
granting the young poet a pension of
one thousand francs from the royal
purse. Other small successes soon
followed, enabling the rising author
to marry, and Adele Foucher, a
young girl of eighteen whom he had
known and loved from boyhood, be-
came his wife.

The youthful pair set up their
household gods in a modest little
dwelling nestling amid the shrubbery
of *Notre-Damedes-Champs*. Their
house became, ere long, a literary and
artistic center. Here met weekly a
coterie called the *Cenacle*, and num-
bering among its members the bright-
est lights in the new school of French
art and literature.

A second volume of *Odes and Bal-
lads*, appearing in 1826, gave Victor
Hugo an assured place among poets.
Bug Jargol, the romance already
mentioned, soon followed, divested
of much of its boyish crudity, yet
violating every rule of conventional
art. The critics, almost with one
voice, declared Hugo a barbarian—a
writer who set at naught the Diction-
ary of the Academy, and the poetic
rules of Aristotle.

Urged by the great actor Talma to
write a drama, Hugo published his
Cromwell in 1827. In a very remark-
able preface to this work, he flings
down the gauntlet to his critics, and
declares that the writer need recog-
nize no rule but his own fancy; that
all which exists in nature exists in

[Continued on third page.]