

PAYNE, John Howard, dramatist, b. in New York city, 9 June, 1792; d. in Tunis, Africa, 10 April, 1852. He was the sixth of a family of nine children. His precocity was wonderful, and at the



John Howard Payne

age of fourteen, while a clerk in a counting-house, he clandestinely edited the "Thespian Mirror," a weekly journal. The following year he entered Union college, where he remained for two terms, publishing during that period twenty-five numbers of a periodical called "The Pastime." Payne made his first appearance as a professional actor at the Park theatre, New York, 24 Feb., 1809, as "Young Norval," subsequently appearing at Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and in other cities. On 4 June, 1813, he appeared at Drury lane theatre, London, as "Young Norval," afterward playing in the principal cities of Great Britain with a fair measure of popularity. Of Payne's appearance at this period a contemporary wrote: "Nature bestowed upon him a countenance of no common order, and though there was a roundness and fairness which but faintly express strong turbulent emotions or display the furious passions, these defects were supplied by an eye which glowed with animation and intelligence. A more extraordinary mixture of softness and intelligence were never associated in a human countenance, and his face was a true index of his heart." For nearly a score of years he pursued a career of varied success abroad as an author, actor, and manager. While living in London and Paris, where he was intimate with Washington Irving, he wrote a host of dramas, chiefly adaptations from the French. In one of these—"Clari, or the Maid of Milan"—occurs his deathless song of "Home, Sweet Home," which made the fortunes of all concerned except the always unfortunate author. By it alone Payne will be remembered long after his multitude of poems and dramas are entirely forgotten, which, indeed, has almost happened already. His tragedy of "Brutus," produced in 1818, with Edmund Kean in the principal part, is his only dramatic composition that still holds possession of the stage with the single exception of "Charles the Second," the leading character of which was a favorite with Charles Kemble. In 1832 Payne returned to the United States, receiving several substantial benefits in New York and elsewhere, and in 1841 was appointed American consul at Tunis, which office he held at the time of his death. The melancholy fact will be remembered in connection with his popular song, that the poor poet never knew what it was to have a home after the age of thirteen, when his mother died. His father soon followed, and, despite the tenderness of his heart, like his friend Irving, having lost the object of his early love, he maintained his celibacy and homelessness, dying on the distant shores of the Mediterranean, where a monument was erected to his memory in the Cemetery of St. George. But his ashes are no longer there. Payne's restlessness did not end with his life, and three decades after his death his dust was borne

across the ocean to find its final repose in the capital of his native land. At the reinterment in Washington in June, 1883, through the liberality of William W. Corcoran, the benediction of the ceremony was the blending of a thousand voices and instruments in the immortal melody of "Home, Sweet Home." Perhaps no single song-poet was ever so famous or so honored as Payne. He made handsome sums by his plays, but nevertheless he was always in pecuniary perplexities. He speaks with bitter jocularly in one of his letters of the struggles he had to keep afloat since he grew too portly for the stage, and began to fatten on trouble and starvation. Payne was a friend and correspondent of Coleridge and Charles Lamb, and intimate with many of the most eminent men of England. With Talma he was a great favorite. An octavo edition of his life and poems was published in Albany in 1875, edited by Gabriel Harrison. A second edition of this work has since appeared, and in 1885 there was issued another volume, entitled "John Howard Payne: A Biographical Sketch of the Author of 'Home, Sweet Home,' with a Narrative of the Removal of the Remains from Tunis to Washington, by Charles H. Brainard." There is a good painting of Payne by John Wesley Jarvis in the Corcoran gallery, Washington, another by his friend, Charles Robert Leslie, as "Young Norval," and a colossal bust in Prospect park, Brooklyn. The portrait that accompanies this article is copied from a painting exe-



cuted by Joseph Wood in 1812, and the ancient shingled house is the one in which Payne passed his early years at East Hampton, Long Island, to which place his father removed soon after his birth. A noble monument now marks Payne's grave in Oak Hill cemetery, Washington, and it is pleasanter to think of his lying where

"Of his ashes may be made
The violets of his native land,"
than as resting on the distant coast of Africa.