

# THE WRITER:

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
FOR LITERARY WORKERS

VOLUME VIII  
JANUARY-DECEMBER, 1895

BOSTON:  
THE WRITER PUBLISHING COMPANY  
282 WASHINGTON STREET  
1895

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ing editors, by allowing such long times to elapse before returning the articles, he had accepted them?

C. P. N.

[Delay in rendering a decision upon a manuscript does not imply that the editor has accepted the manuscript, and the author has no claim upon the editor, unless the manuscript was solicited, or unless the editor has been requested to return it without further delay and has failed to do so. So far as the mere delay in rendering his decision is concerned, the editor referred to cannot be accused even of discourtesy. The delay was long, but so were the manuscripts, and there is no evidence that the editor did not render his decision as promptly as he could. What a writer should do is to make a courteous inquiry, after a reasonable time, as to whether a decision has been reached or not. If that letter is not answered, it should be repeated, and if the second letter receives no attention, the best thing for the writer to do is to recall his manuscript at once and try another publisher. Writers should remember that if an editor examines unsolicited manuscripts as quickly as he can, and returns them if he finds them unavailable, he fulfils all his obligations to his unsuccessful contributors. Editors are usually busy men, and it is often impossible for them to read and judge manuscripts without considerable delay. As a rule, the editors who receive comparatively few manuscripts are less able to handle them rapidly than the editors of the great magazines, who are able to employ all the help they need. — W. H. H.]

## HOW I CAME TO WRITE "JOHN MAYNARD."

The ballad of "John Maynard" has been included in so many "Speakers" and collections that I may perhaps be justified in assuming that it is known to the majority of my readers. Many inquiries have been addressed to me and to the editors of periodicals as to whether it is founded on fact or simply invented, like Robert Browning's famous lyric, "How the Good News Was Brought from Ghent to Aix."

To recall the ballad to some who may not be

entirely familiar with it, I will quote the first stanza: —

"'Twas on Lake Erie's broad expanse,  
One bright midsummer day,  
The gallant steamer Ocean Queen  
Swept proudly on her way.  
Bright faces clustered on the deck,  
Or, leaning o'er the side,  
Watched carelessly the feathery foam  
That flecked the rippling tide."

Suddenly a sailor discovers that the steamer is on fire. He carries the terrible news to the captain. A sailor named John Maynard is at the wheel. As the flames make rapid progress it is seen that the only hope of safety is to steer the ship to land. Under the captain's orders John Maynard undertakes the dangerous task. They are within half a mile of the shore.

"But half a mile! Yet stay, the flames  
No longer slowly creep,  
But gather round that helmsman bold  
With fierce, impetuous sweep.

"John Maynard" with an anxious voice  
The captain cries once more,  
'Stand by the wheel five minutes yet,  
And we shall reach the shore.'  
Through flame and smoke that dauntless heart  
Responded firmly still,  
Unawed, though face to face with death,  
'With God's good help I will!'

"The flames approach with giant strides,  
They scorch his hand and brow;  
One arm disabled seeks his side,  
Ah! he is conquered now!  
But no, his teeth are firmly set,  
He crushes down his pain,  
His knee upon the stanchion pressed,  
He guides the ship again."

In brief, he succeeds in his task, but as the steamer touches shore he sinks in death beside it. He falls a victim to the flames, but the passengers are saved. It will be seen that the story is a striking one.

One Sunday in the summer of 1866, my first year in New York, I attended an afternoon service at the Five Points Mission. It was a children's service, and a few speakers were present to address the children of the mission. One speaker told the story of John Maynard, though I cannot remember in what connection. It was told in a dramatic way, and I was so much impressed that after the service was over I inquired of him where I could find the particulars of the incident. He referred me to a weekly religious paper of recent date in the

reading room of the Young Men's Christian Association. The next day I went to the reading room, found the story, and copied it. I learned that it had been used by John B. Gough in one of his popular lectures. That evening in my room in St. Mark's place I sat down immediately after supper and set myself to turning the prose into verse. I adhered as strictly as possible to the language used, including the captain's orders, and did not stop writing till the ballad was complete. The evening was very hot, and I was forced to lay aside my coat, vest, and collar, but I became so much interested that I could not make up my mind to retire till the poem of nearly one hundred lines was finished. The next day I sent it to a juvenile magazine published in Boston. It appeared in an early number, accompanied by an illustration. I think I was paid the munificent sum of three dollars for the ballad. I never expected to hear from it again, but soon it began to be copied, and found its way into the repertory of public readers. Every year it got into some new collection. I think I have seen it in at least a dozen. One student at a Catholic college received a prize of all of Scott's works for declaiming it at an exhibition.

With all these evidences of public favor, I can give no further information of John Maynard than is to be found in the ballad. Probably the only man who could have given any more was John B. Gough, and I have always been sorry that during his life I did not apply to him for such details as he could give. I believe John Maynard to have been a real character, but who he was, where he was born, and when he performed the heroic act which has made his name so widely known I am afraid will never be ascertained.

NATICK, MASS. Horatio Alger, Jr.

## SKETCHES OF WRITERS.

### VI. — MRS. MARY CATHERINE LEE.

Personal acquaintance with an author furnishes, doubtless, the best commentary to her writings. A writer of merit is so much better than her works, that a knowledge of her personality not merely supplements her words,

but gratifies a just sentiment in the reader. The earlier short and later long stories of Mrs. Mary Catherine Lee have made her in-



MRS. MARY CATHERINE LEE.

teresting to a large circle, who ask to know more of one who has spoken to them so pleasingly.

If you should some day meet a symmetrical, womanly figure, clad in the gentler graces of refinement, with an easy charm of manner, looking out frankly from a smiling face, in which the eyes smile most, this lady might be the author of "A Quaker Girl of Nantucket." New Bedford has the merit of being her birthplace, and her first ancestor in this country was John Barclay Jenkins, a man of ability and influence, a foremost settler, and one of the largest land-owners of the "Old Colony" region of Massachusetts. He and his descendants have been stern, upright people of the Puritan stamp, who would have died for truth and right, as they conceived it.

Mrs. Lee's rare and charming personality is enhanced by a certain serenity and fine composure, derived from Quaker antecedents, through her mother, a descendant from Wil-