ANECDOTES FROM LITERARY VETERAN.

An Author's Memoirs of Authors.

BY MONCURE D. CONWAY, IN HARPER'S MAGAZINE.

On the 6th of May, being "Holy Thursday," as Ascension day is popularly called, I visited Westminster Abbey. There was some sweet old music, and Lord John Thynne preached a discourse suggestive of the etymology of his name. As I walked among those very venerable indications of how this, like other solemn days, is slowly fading into the light of a common day. Formerly it witnessed a general closing of shops, but on this day only one or two were shut. It is the old custom of the boys belonging to the Queen's Choir Schools to attend a discourse at St. Margaret's—on Easy Thursday—but out of nine companions with whom I used to go only attended church. I peeped into the Chapel Royal, Whitehall, where the Rev. Mr. Lake was closing a discourse to five people, including the beadle.

On leaving I perceived that Jupiter Terminus was still able to command the larger congregation. A small procession of barefooted and long-coated boys, each holding a white rod, some seven or eight feet long, was passing out. They were preceded by a curate, a parish official, and a beadle, the latter bearing in his hand a tremendous staff. Passing with a motley crowd I followed them. When they came to a public house, the boys made ready with their rods to beat the dividing wall. "Are you ready?" quoth the beadle. "Yes," echoed the boys, merrily. Then the beadle, striking them with his birches on the seat of honor, cried, "Now, with a loud voice, 'Beat your bounds!'" The white rods rattle against the wall, and presently the procession—the ghost of an almost immemorial pass—marched on to the next boundary. The harmless pleasure taken by the boys has generally superseded a custom still retained in some of the older parts of the city of taking a fellow boy and bumping the softest part of his body against the hardest part of the wall, the object being to make the one always living in each parish who shall have it severely impressed upon him that such is the boundary of the parish. The custom amounted to cruelty, and is disappearing. But the whole custom of "beating the bounds" must spring from antiquity. The boundaries often pass through gardens, belfries and houses, and gentlemen are annually hail in another and gentlemen are annually appealing against such invasions. The ordinance assumes, indeed, the boundaries of the city of London to be hol