



**Captain Sword And Captain Pen: "It is books that teach us to refine our pleasures when young, and to recall them with satisfaction when we are old."**

*Leigh Hunt*

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Leigh Hunt was born in Southgate, London, where his parents had settled after leaving the United States. Educated at Christ's Hospital from 1791 to 1799 but a speech impediment, later cured, prevented his going to university. "For some time after I left school," he says, "I did nothing but visit my school-fellows, haunt the book-stalls and write verses." His first poems were published in 1801 under the title of *Juvenilia*, and introduced him into literary and theatrical society. He began to write for the newspapers, and published in 1807 a volume of theatre criticism, and a series of *Classic Tales* with critical essays on the authors. In 1809, Leigh Hunt married Marianne Kent and over the next 20 years they had ten children. Whilst Leigh Hunt was more properly categorized as a minor poet this is not faint praise as the times were particularly rich poets of bewildering talents: Shelley, Byron, Keats, Coleridge. Perhaps though his work as a publisher and editor gives a better context for his talents. Though he worked on many publications times were difficult and financial troubles were never far from his door. Shelley was particularly generous to him but after his death life was to become rather more difficult until in 1844 some comfort was given with an annuity of £120 from Mary Shelley and further relief came in 1847 from Lord John Russell who procured him a pension of £200. Such contributions enabled Leigh Hunt to continue to write and publish. Interestingly Leigh Hunt was the original of Harold Skimpole in *Bleak House*. "Dickens wrote in a letter of 25 September 1853, 'I suppose he is the most exact portrait that was ever painted in words!' He died in Putney on 28 August 1859, and is buried at Kensal Green Cemetery. Here we publish Captain Sword And Captain Pen a superb example of Hunt's longer works.



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